

**‘The Sphinx Will Speak at Last’: Theology and Egypt in
Nineteenth-Century Fiction**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract:

Nineteenth-century fiction participated in a wider cultural discourse through which a constructed spectacle of Egypt came to be understood as true. Each literary view of ancient Egypt was created and *recreated* by authors in the period, building a body of texts which reproduced ancient Egypt as exotic Other. There has been a recent rise in publications exploring the ways in which nineteenth-century British, French, and American authors used ancient Egypt in their texts to assert the West's imperial authority. However, there remains a persistent gap in this scholarship on how these Western literary creations of ancient Egypt as a land of mystical power contributed to broader debates concerning the religious beyond.

I call these texts 'Egyptianising fiction', a term that builds on the work of authors such as Maria Fleischhack, Roger Luckhurst, and James Curl. My definition of this term also develops the analyses of ancient Egypt and Western esotericism by Antoine Faivre, Olav Hammer, and Erik Hornung. Through my analysis of nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction, I explore concerns about the effect of evolutionary theory on Christianity, mid nineteenth-century religious debates about atonement, understandings of spiritualism and occultism in the period, and the effect of cemetery reform on representations of death in order to locate each piece of Egyptianising fiction within its wider nineteenth-century historical context. I suggest that nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction ultimately leaves the entrance to the tomb slightly ajar, allowing a tantalizing glimpse at the prospect of secrets to the unanswered questions and mysteries of the grave lingering within the pyramid.

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Introduction: Ancient Egypt and Nineteenth-Century Britain

If we knew the answers to these questions we should have solved the meaning of the secrets of our lives. But they are hidden by the blackness that walls us in, that blackness in which the sphinx will speak at last—or remain forever silent.¹

In this excerpt from his autobiography, H. Rider Haggard desires to find answers about the meaning of life. Brooding over eternal matters, he invokes the ancient Egyptian figure of the sphinx: a mythical creature supposed to possess arcane secrets. Here, Rider Haggard adopts the common nineteenth-century practice of portraying ancient Egypt as a repository of secrets about death and the afterlife. In this thesis, I explore the ways in which nineteenth-century authors use Egypt in their fiction to explore religious notions of life beyond the grave. Each literary view of ancient Egypt was created and *recreated* by authors in the period, building a body of texts which reproduced ancient Egypt as exotic Other. Such treatments of Egypt could be found in a number of religious and cultural discussions in the period and continue to underscore stereotypes of Egypt today.

Nineteenth-century fiction participated in the wider nineteenth-century cultural discourse through which the constructed spectacle of Egypt came to be understood as true. There has been a recent rise in publications exploring the ways in which ancient Egypt was represented by nineteenth-century British, French, and American authors.² Bradley Deane, Roger Luckhurst, and Maria Fleischhack have specifically noted how the creation of an occult Egypt in such fiction—known alternately as mummy fiction,

¹ H. Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life*, Vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926), p), pp. 22-3.

² For further reading on the role of ancient Egypt in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fiction, see Ailise 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), 411-43; Merrick Burrow ‘Conan Doyle’s Gothic Materialism’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 35.3 (2013), 309-23; David Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead: Egyptology in British Culture and Religion 1822-1922*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nickianne Moody, ‘Moral Uncertainty and the Afterlife: Explaining the Popularity of Marie Corelli’s Early Novels’, *Women’s Writing*, 13.02 (2006), 188-205; Lynn Parramore, *Reading the Sphinx: Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Egyptian gothic, or Egyptianising fantastic fiction—functioned to assert the West’s imperial authority.³ Recently, Eleanor Dobson has explored how the creation of an occult Egypt connected to wider nineteenth-century ways of articulating science.⁴ However, there remains a persistent gap in this scholarship on how these Western literary creations of ancient Egypt as a land of occult power contributed to broader debates concerning the religious beyond.⁵

This thesis responds to this gap by presenting a sustained analysis of how authors used ancient Egypt to explore their respective religious ideas of eternity. As I will go on to define, I call these texts ‘Egyptianising fiction’, a term that builds on the work of authors such as Fleischhack and Luckhurst. In doing so, I also respond to James Curl’s use of ‘Egyptianising’ to define a specific nineteenth-century practice of fashioning art in what was believed to be an Egyptian way, using this to develop the analyses of ancient Egypt and Western esotericism by Antoine Faivre, Olav Hammer, and Erik Hornung.⁶

³ Maria Fleischhack, *Narrating Ancient Egypt: The Representation of Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century and Early-Twentieth-Century Fantastic Fiction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015); Roger Luckhurst *The Mummy’s Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and ‘Gothic Colonies’, in *The Gothic World*, ed. by Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 62-71; and Bradley Deane ‘Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease’, *English Literature in Transition*, 51.4 (2008), 381-410.

⁴ Eleanor Dobson, ‘Science, Magic, and Ancient Egypt in Late Victorian and Edwardian Literature’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), ‘Gods and Ghost Light: Ancient Egypt, Electricity, and X-Rays’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 45.1 (2017), 119-35.

⁵ I have begun to explore this connection in my own recent publications. See: Sara Brio, ‘The Shocking Truth: Science, Religion, and Ancient Egypt in Early Nineteenth-Century Fiction’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 40.4 (2018), 331-44 and Sara Woodward ‘Prefiguring the Cross: A Typological Reading of H. Rider Haggard’s *Cleopatra*’, in *Victorian Literary Culture and Ancient Egypt*, ed. by Eleanor Dobson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, Forthcoming).

⁶ Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West*, trans. by David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2001); James Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: An introductory study of a recurring theme in the history of taste* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982). For further reading on the role of ancient Egypt in Western Esotericism, see Michael Bergunder, ‘What is Esotericism? Cultural Studies Approaches and the Problems of Definition in Religious Studies’, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 22 (2010), 9-36; Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994); Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

In what follows, I build on Edward Said's work to expose the ways Egyptianising fiction enforced Western cultural hegemony through its representations of Egypt. Said's theory of Orientalism focuses on the important ways in which the East (Orient) has been authorised, represented, and constructed by the West (Occident). The West accomplished this ownership of the East through political and cultural discourses which worked together to form a strong cultural hegemony that placed the Occident's views of the Orient above any 'real' representations. Said argues that 'the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West'.⁷ The ways in which the West speaks about and for the Orient set the West apart from and in a superior position to the East. Through these Orientalist discourses,

there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character.⁸

The nineteenth century created and reinforced its idea of Egypt in museums, bookshelves, drawing rooms, even cemeteries. Said's methodology in *Orientalism* relies on *strategic location*, which refers to 'a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material' and *strategic formation*, 'a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large'.⁹ As Liam McLeod and I have argued elsewhere, '[i]t

2013); Kocku von Stuckrad, 'Western esotericism: Towards an integrative model of interpretation', *Religion* 35 (2005), 78-97.

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 4th ed., (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 5.

⁸ Said, pp. 7-8.

⁹ Said, p. 20.

is at the intersection’ of different culturally-constructed representations of Egypt ‘that attitudes towards colonialism, race, gender, class, and indeed historiography are revealed’.¹⁰ In this thesis, I use the intersection of nineteenth-century representations of ancient Egypt and nineteenth-century theology to explore how Egypt was created as a land of secret religious wisdom. By using ancient Egypt to explore religious questions, these texts suggested that such questions could only be answered by the Other.

However, no matter how many times the pyramid was opened or the mummy resurrected, Egypt refused to speak. Its wisdom was nothing more than an empty reflection of the West’s inability to understand what lay beyond death.

In what follows, I set out the ways in which authors of Egyptianising fiction Orientalised their versions of ancient Egypt as a means to articulate their own religious beliefs. I explore concerns about the effect of evolutionary theory on Christianity, mid nineteenth-century religious debates about atonement, understandings of spiritualism and occultism in the period, and the effect of cemetery reform on representations of death in order to locate each piece of Egyptianising fiction within its strategic location. In the sections that follow, I explore some of the wider strategic formations that structured representations of ancient Egypt in the period. From the Christian motivations that informed Egyptology, to the popularity of travel narratives about Egypt, to the exhibitions which brought a version of both ancient and modern Egypt to Britain, Egypt was continually represented and displayed as something both alluring and dangerous, something belonging to but decidedly othered from Britain itself.

Egyptomania as Imperial Control: Representing Egypt in the Nineteenth Century

¹⁰ Sara Woodward and Liam McLeod, ‘Editor’s Note’, *Journal of History and Cultures*, 10 (2019), p. i.

Britain's imperial relationship with Egypt was inseparable from the cultural obsession known as Egyptomania.¹¹ Scholars such as Donald Malcolm Reid, Timothy Mitchell, and David Gange have noted how Britain used its position of imperial power as a means of owning and representing Egypt. After Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798 Britain joined with Ottoman troops to force France out of Egypt in 1801. Interest in Egypt soared in Britain after the savants Bonaparte brought with him into Egypt re-introduced the country to the modern world, particularly through Edward William Lane's *Description de L'Égypte* (1809). Britain maintained a relationship with Egypt from this point through a coalition with the Ottoman Empire, which governed Egypt via Pasha/Khedive Muhammad 'Ali (1805-48). This relationship protected Britain's industrial interests, particularly through the 1830 Treaty of Balta Liman, which limited tariffs on imported goods. 'Ali's successors continued his attempts to Westernize Egypt, incurring debts to European creditors that reached £90 million by 1875.¹² The sale of a majority stake in the Suez Canal helped reduce the debt but further placed Egypt under British control. In 1876, Egypt's finances were officially placed under foreign, primarily British, control which paved the way for Britain to take more invasive action to protect its foreign interests. British forces invaded Alexandria in September 1882 and

¹¹ For further reading on the colonization of Egypt in the nineteenth century, see P.J. Cain, 'Character and imperialism: The british financial administration of Egypt, 1878-1914', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34.2 (2006), 177-200; Felix Driver, 'Making Representations: From an African Exhibition to the High Court Justice', in *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 146-69; David Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*; F. Robert Hunter, 'Tourism and Empire: The Thomas Cook & Son Enterprise on the Nile, 1868-1914', *Middle Eastern Studies* 40.5 (2004), 28-54; James Jankowski, *Egypt: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000); Lanver Mak, *The British in Egypt: Community, Crime and Crises 1882-1922* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?: Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). For further reading on Victorian Egyptomania see Bob Brier, *Egyptomania: Our Three Thousand Year Obsession with the Land of the Pharaohs* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); James Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: An introductory study of a recurring theme in the history of taste* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982); Chris Elliot, *Egypt in England* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2012); Jasmine Day *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking World* (London: Routledge, 2006); Eleanor Dobson and Nichola Tonks, 'Introduction: Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Culture', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 40.4 (2018), 311-15; David Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*.

¹² Jankowski, *Egypt: A Short History* p. 88.

subsequently defeated the revolt by Egyptian nationalists led by Colonel Ahmed Urabi in the battle of Tel al-Kabir. From 1882-1914, Britain ruled Egypt through a veiled protectorate under the control of a British Consul-General.¹³

Britain legitimised its political control over Egypt through representation. P.J. Cain notes that the British ‘obsession with character’ helped them justify interference in Egyptian finances and government by representing Egypt as incapable of running itself. Lord Cromer, in particular, cast Britain in an altruistic role which freed Egypt from a ruler portrayed as an irresponsible, morally-challenged spendthrift.¹⁴ Britain, so the argument went, had the moral duty to control Egypt because Egypt was thought incapable of controlling itself. Lanver Mak notes how business opportunities and civil service positions were taken out of the hands of native Egyptians and given to Britons who began moving to Egypt to take advantage of their privileged role under the protectorate.¹⁵

However, Britain had exerted its control over Egypt’s cultural history even before the protectorate. Egypt’s past, for instance, was controlled through the British ownership of Egyptian antiquities, which flooded England after Napoleon’s invasion. The label of Egyptology was first applied to the study of ancient Egypt in the nineteenth century and the field was largely dominated by British and other European figures.¹⁶ Donald Malcolm Reid notes the removal of Egyptian Egyptologists from the history of the field, arguing that figures like Champollion, Flinders Petrie, and, later, Howard Carter, among others, eclipse Egyptians who ‘flicker in the shadows as trusty foremen, loyal servants, laborers, tomb robbers, antiquities dealers, obstructionist officials, and benighted nationalists’.¹⁷ Despite regulations preventing the extradition of Egyptian

¹³ British Consul-Generals: Sir Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer): 1883-1907, Sir Eldon Gorst: 1907-11, and Sir Herbert Kitchener: 1911-14.

¹⁴ Cain, ‘Character and imperialism: The british financial administration of Egypt, 1878–1914’, p. 183.

¹⁵ Mak, *The British in Egypt*, p. 11.

¹⁶ Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Reid, p. 10.

antiquities, British archaeologists continued to smuggle artefacts back to Britain to display.

The spoils of archaeological expeditions and museum holdings provided access to Egypt's past, represented as sublime but packaged so as to be consumable. Exhibitions and museums replicated the spectacles of ancient Egypt on British soil, allowing patrons to walk through 'ancient' tombs and still be home in time for tea. The adventures of the famous explorer and archeologist Giovanni Battista Belzoni, detailed in his *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia* (1820), were brought to life through the Egyptian Hall exhibition of 1821.¹⁸ Sophie Thomas notes how such depictions of Egypt in museums and panoramas focused on creating an atmosphere of sublimity which 'presented Egypt as mysterious and spectacular'.¹⁹ The wealthy did not even need to leave the comforts of home to experience ancient Egypt. Private mummy unwrappings were a popular pastime, offering a unique opportunity to interact with ancient Egypt in what Constance Classen refers to as a 'multisensory' experience involving touch, smell, and even taste.²⁰

The mummy in the drawing room, the granite head of Ramses II in the British Museum, and the adventure of Belzoni's tombs portrayed ancient Egypt as something that could be contained and owned.²¹ Egypt was also conveniently contained on the bookshelf in a multitude of texts. Numerous travel narratives and histories began

¹⁸ For further reading on Belzoni's influence on representing Egypt in the nineteenth century, see Lizzie Glithero-West, 'The Conjuror's Greatest Show: Belzoni and the Egyptian Hall', *Journal of History and Cultures* 10 (2019), 89-121 and Sophie Thomas, 'Displaying Egypt: Archaeology, Spectacle, and the Museum in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Literature and Science*, 5.1 (2012), 6-22.

¹⁹ Thomas, p. 11.

²⁰ Constance Classen, 'Touching the Deep Past: The Lure of Ancient Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Museums and Culture', *The Senses and Society*, 9.3 (2014), 268-83, p. 277. For further reading on the popularity of Victorian mummy unwrappings, see; Dobson, 'Literature and Culture in the Golden Age of Egyptology' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2016); Gabriel Moshenska, 'Unrolling Egyptian mummies in nineteenth-century Britain', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 47.3 (2014), 451-77; and Beverly Rogers, 'Unwrapping the Past: Egyptian Mummies on Show', in *Popular Exhibitions: Science and Showmanship, 1840-1910*, ed. by Joe Kember, John Plunkett, and Jill A. Sullivan (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 199-218.

²¹ The granite head of Ramses II was installed in the British Museum in 1819.

appearing after Edward William Lane's *Description de l'Égypte* (1809) including Lane's subsequent *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), John Gardiner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1837), Isabella Frances Romer's *Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia and Palestine in 1845–6* (1846), John Kenrick's *Ancient Egypt under the Pharaohs* (1850), Reginald Stuart Poole's *Horæ Ægypticæ: or, The Chronology of Ancient Egypt, Discovered from Astronomical and Hieroglyphic Records upon its Monuments* (1851), Amelia B. Edwards' *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (1877), George Rawlinson's *History of Ancient Egypt* (1880), E. A. Wallis Budge's *The Dwellers on the Nile: Chapters on the Life, Literature, History and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1885) and translation of *The Book of the Dead* (1895).²² The British defined Egypt through their domination of travel narratives published between 1798-1850, eclipsing French publications 114 to 54.²³

Egypt was also commodified by becoming an object of tourism. Thomas Cook & Son Co. first began running tours in Egypt in 1869 and quickly dominated the market. F. Robert Hunter notes that, by maintaining strong relationships with both British and Egyptian officials, Thomas Cook and his son, John, were able to create their own “‘empire” on the Nile’.²⁴ Cook was instrumental in facilitating transport for the British military after the Urabi revolt and continued to provide services throughout the

²² Amelia B. Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1877); John Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt under the Pharaohs* (London: B. Fellowes, 1850); Reginald Stuart Poole, *Horæ Ægypticæ: or, The Chronology of Ancient Egypt, Discovered from Astronomical and Hieroglyphic Records upon its Monuments* (London: John Murray, 1851); George Rawlinson *History of Ancient Egypt Vol I and II* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1880); Isabella Frances Romer, *Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia and Palestine in 1845–6 Vol I and II* (London: Richard Bentley, 1846); E.A. Wallis Budge *The Dwellers on the Nile: Chapters on the Life, Literature, History and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1885) and *The Book of the Dead* (London: Longmans & Co., 1895); John Gardiner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (London: John Murray, 1837).

²³ Reid, p. 43.

²⁴ F. Robert Hunter, ‘Tourism and Empire’, p. 36.

British occupation.²⁵ Through Cook's influence, Egypt was transformed into the 'playground of the fashionable world', a popular resort destination for the middle and upper classes where they were surrounded by familiar amenities.²⁶ Cook created a desirable version of Egypt by fashioning it into a place which catered to European taste.

For those who could not afford to journey down the Nile with Cook & Son there were always the sections dedicated to Egyptian history and culture that featured in exhibitions and world fairs. While early nineteenth-century exhibitions such as Belzoni's focused on ancient Egypt's splendour, later exhibitions reinforced imperial authority.²⁷ Timothy Mitchell notes that the Egyptian exhibit at the World Exhibition in 1889 was purposefully made to be 'carefully chaotic' with overcrowded bazaar streets and wandering donkeys.²⁸ Felix Driver describes how the Stanley and African Exhibition (1890) set up a binary opposition between Britain and Africa.²⁹ These recreations of modern Egypt as disorganized helped to both create and consolidate such a view of Egypt in the minds of visitors. This nineteenth-century emphasis on exhibition, Mitchell suggests, embedded in European culture an idea of the 'world-as-exhibition'.³⁰ Encountering the 'real' Egypt in the exhibition contributed to how Europeans acted when abroad, where they expected to encounter Egypt similarly as exhibitionised.³¹

The creation of a specific view of Egypt through display even extended to unexpected places, including the new cemeteries of the nineteenth century. Over the course of the period, the construction of new cemeteries helped redefine the role of the

²⁵ Hunter, p. 39, 41.

²⁶ Hunter, p. 46.

²⁷ For further reading on the colonising role of the exhibition space and museums, see Mitchell *Colonising Egypt*; Driver 'Making Representations'; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*; and Reid, *Whose Pharaoh's*.

²⁸ Mitchell, p. 1.

²⁹ Driver, p. 167.

³⁰ Mitchell, pp. 13-4, see also: Thomas, 'Displaying Egypt'.

³¹ Mitchell, pp. 13-4.

buried body: scholars such as Nichola Tonks, Elizabeth Broman, and James Curl have noted the popularity of Egyptian funerary architecture in these new cemeteries as a means of asserting the dead's eternal memory.³² Cemeteries and their imposing Egyptian monuments offered a more secure and permanent resting place for the corpse which recast death as merely a transition from one home to another.³³ In her exploration of nineteenth-century cemeteries as a heterotopic space which allowed for individual memorials, Tonks suggests that 'the Egyptianizing material culture of British cemeteries speaks of a society which longed to be remembered'.³⁴ Egypt was displayed in the cemetery as a symbol of eternal legacy, a lasting signifier of personal identity which could protect the memory of the corpse below.

Early in the century, corpses were still at risk of being stolen by 'resurrection men' or 'resurrectionists', who profited on the sale of fresh corpses to local surgeons.³⁵

³² For further reading on the popularity of Egyptian revival architecture in nineteenth-century cemeteries, see Elizabeth Broman, 'Egyptian Revival Funerary Art in Green-Wood Cemetery', *Markers: Annual Journal for the Association of Gravestone Studies*, 18 (2001), 30-67; Curl *The Egyptian Revival*; Chris Brooks, *Mortal Remains: The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery* (Exeter: Wheaton, 1989); Ronald W. Hawker, 'Monuments in the Nineteenth-Century Public Cemeteries of Victoria, British Columbia', *Material Culture Review / Revue de la culture matérielle*, 26 (1987), 19-26; Nichola Tonks, 'Obituaries and Obelisks: Egyptianizing Funerary Architecture and the Cemetery as a Heterotopic Space', in *Ancient Egypt in the Modern Imagination*, ed. by Eleanor Dobson and Nichola Tonks (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), pp. 117-27; Meredith J. Watkins, 'The Cemetery and Cultural Memory: Montreal, 1860-1900', *Urban History Review*, 31. 1 (2002), 52-62; Rachel Wolgemuth, *Cemetery Tours and Programming: A Guide* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Ken Worpole, *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West* (London: Reaktion, 2003); and Jolene Zigarovich, 'Egyptomania, English Pyramids and the Quest for Immortality', in *Ancient Egypt in the Modern Imagination*, ed. by Eleanor Dobson and Nichola Tonks (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), pp. 105-16.

³³ For critical reception of nineteenth century mourning culture and funerals, see: Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Julian Litten, 'The English Funeral 1700-1850' in *Grave Concerns: Death and Burial in England 1700-1850*, ed. by Margaret Cox (York: Council for British Archaeology, 1998), pp. 3-17; John Morley, *Death, Heaven and the Victorians* (London: Studio Vista, 1971); Cornelia D.J. Pearsall, 'Burying the Duke: Victorian Mourning and the Funeral of the Duke of Wellington', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27.2 (1999), 365-93; Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987); Geoffrey Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians: A study of the nineteenth-century theological controversies concerning eternal punishment and the afterlife* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); Catherine Waters, 'Materializing Mourning: Dickens, Funerals, and Epitaphs', 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 14 (2011), unpaginated online article; Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Sarah Tarlow, *Bereavement and Commemoration: An Archaeology of Mortality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

³⁴ Tonks, 'Obituaries and Obelisks', p. 117.

³⁵ For further reading on the resurrectionists, see Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute*.

While the 1832 Anatomy Act regulated the procurement of corpses, its influence did not extend to the state of the burial grounds themselves. Edwin Chadwick's extensive *Supplementary report on the results of a special inquiry into the practice of interment in towns* (1843) recorded the decrepit, insecure, and potentially dangerous state of old burial grounds and churchyards, which, he claimed, were responsible for ill health related to the noxious fumes they admitted.³⁶ His *Report* helped bring about the Cemeteries Clauses Act (1847) and the Burial Act (1852). These acts prevented further burials in the overcrowded grounds and regulated the joint stock cemetery companies who had begun opening large, meticulously-planned cemeteries which housed the dead in demarcated spaces away from overcrowded urban areas.³⁷ The largest of these cemeteries were known as the Magnificent Seven, comprising: Kensal Green Cemetery (1833), West Norwood Cemetery (1837), Highgate Cemetery (1839), Abney Park Cemetery (1840), Brompton Cemetery (1840), Nunhead Cemetery (1840), and Tower Hamlets Cemetery (1841). As Thomas W. Laqueur notes, by replacing the old churchyards, the new cemeteries moved the corpse from a 'community of the dead' to a new space where the deceased might be remembered.³⁸ By providing space for individual corpses, these cemeteries retained the link between the body and the individual even while keeping the corpse out of sight.³⁹

³⁶ Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain: a supplementary report on the results of a special inquiry into the practice of interment in towns made at the request of Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department* (London: W. Clowes, 1843).

³⁷ For further reading on Chadwick's report and the history of nineteenth-century cemeteries, see: Curl 'The Design of the Early British Cemeteries', *Journal of Garden History*, 4.3 (1983), 223-54; Richard A. Etlin, 'Père Lachaise and the Garden Cemetery', *Journal of Garden History*, 4.3 (1983), 211-22; Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*; John Claudius Loudon, *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries; and on the Improvement of Churchyards* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843); Morley, *Death, Heaven, and the Victorians*; Maximilian Scholz, 'Over Our Dead Bodies: The Fight Over Cemetery Construction in Nineteenth-Century London', *Journal of Urban History*, 43:3 (2015), 445-57; and Tonks 'Obituaries and Obelisks'.

³⁸ Laqueur, p. 138.

³⁹ Laqueur, p. 138.

The new cemeteries were filled with grandiose monuments and mausoleums attesting to the memory of the dead. Egyptian symbols such as pyramids and obelisks were common, further cementing the association between Egypt, death, and memory. Highgate Cemetery even featured an 'Egyptian avenue', where tall obelisks stood sentry at the entrance to a corridor of catacombs that opened onto the Circle of Lebanon. Luckhurst's suggestion that the nineteenth century's obsession private collections of Egyptian antiquities as 'symbols of private wealth and power' can also be seen in the erection of Egyptian revival funerary monuments to assert the significance of the corpse below.⁴⁰ Where the cabinet of curios signalled wealth and status of their owner in the home, so these funerary monuments proclaimed the status of the deceased in public and for all time.

For Britain, then, Egypt was a fantasy that was both a creation of the imperial project and one of its driving forces. When patrons strolled through Belzoni's Egyptian Hall, cruised with Cook & Son down the Nile, walked through modern Egypt in the World Exhibition, or gazed upon an obelisk in a cemetery, they were confronted with a carefully constructed version of Egypt. This construction reinforced Britain's authority over Egypt's past and present. The land of the pharaohs was represented as an important part of Britain's own Christian history while the chaos of modern Egypt reminded patrons of Britain's moral duty to both stabilise and civilise Egypt's economy. The exhibition continued the moment a traveller stepped into Cook's Cairo, where Egypt could be consumed in the familiar surroundings of a luxurious European hotel. Britain's privileged imperial position fostered an Egyptomania by presenting the spectacle of Egypt, both ancient and modern, as real.

⁴⁰ Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 143.

Excavating the Ancient Past: Using Egyptology to Validate Christianity

Britain used the fantasy of Egyptomania to construct a view of history that could draw upon ancient Egypt to buttress Christian belief. Challenged by the Higher Critics' reading of the Bible, nineteenth-century theologians turned to Egypt to provide a historical foundation for its contents. The ancient past was transformed from what, for the Victorians, appeared to be a barbaric polytheism to an important spiritual ancestor when its history was excavated in the fresh light of nineteenth-century religious beliefs.

Evangelicalism's emphasis on Christ's substitutionary atonement provided some with a religious justification for imperial control.⁴¹ Liberal theologies which underscored the need for salvation through atonement led to what David W. Bebbington called an 'evangelical zeal' that fostered a 'push for activism in Protestant communities'.⁴² Although not all social activism and missionary societies were founded on evangelical principles, evangelicalism's doctrine of providentialism offered a means to validate England's divine right and responsibility to bring the gospel to the nations as a means of civilising imperial subjects.⁴³ Hilary M. Carey notes that, while the focus of evangelicalism was essentially religious in nature rather than political, 'its proselytizing

⁴¹ As Michael Gladwin notes, no one theology universally supported colonialism. Michael Gladwin, 'Mission and Colonialism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. by Joel D.S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe, and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 282-304 (p. 300). For further reading on the influence of Christian theologies in colonialism see: Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), specifically 'Evangelical Anglicans', pp. 148-77; Lanver Mak, *The British in Egypt*, pp. 108-13; Hugh McLeod, 'Christianity and nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 15.1 (2015), 7-22; Bernard Porter, 'Empire and Society', in *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1-25.

⁴² David W. Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism', in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 235-50, (p. 238). For further reading on the role of atonement in nineteenth-century Christian thought, see: Annette G. Aubert, 'Protestantism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. by Joel D.S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe, and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 504-23; Michael Gladwin, 'Mission and Colonialism'; and Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴³ Gladwin, p. 286.

characteristics made it the natural partner of other, expansive political and social movements'.⁴⁴ Not all evangelical sects approved of colonialism's adoption of their religious beliefs, however. Hugh McLeod suggests that the broader relationship between Christianity and imperialism was complex and 'two-edged': although evangelical Protestantism's emphasis on spreading the gospel at home and abroad was sometimes used to validate imperialism, many Nonconformists spoke out against inhumane colonial practices.⁴⁵

These missional theologies relied on Scriptural authority that could be authenticated through excavations in ancient Egypt. In 1835, shockwaves began to reverberate throughout nineteenth-century Christian thought from Tübingen and the Biblical scholars who became known as the 'Higher Critics'. Grounded in the rational and scientific methods of the Enlightenment, Higher Criticism called for a rigorous appraisal of the Bible's historical authority. However, Higher Criticism did not simply call into question the historicity of the Bible, it also prompted reevaluations of the claims of Scripture. Such criticism raised questions about the connection between the literal historical facts of the Bible and the speculative theologies drawn from it. As Bebbington notes, Higher Criticism eventually became entrenched in theology but initially it prompted 'horrified opposition'.⁴⁶ Scriptural authority was at the heart of doctrinal issues in all Christian sects from the universal atonement of Universalism, to the liberal Calvinism of evangelical Protestantism, through to the role of the incarnation in High-Church Anglicanism. The influence of the Higher Critics was felt in Britain in the works of Benjamin Jowett, Ernst Troeltsch, and the publications in *Essays and Reviews* (1860), which called for rigorous appraisal of the Bible as a textual and

⁴⁴ Carey, 'Evangelical Anglicans', p. 151.

⁴⁵ McLeod, 'Christianity and nationalism', p.11.

⁴⁶ Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism', p. 247.

historical document before a theological one.⁴⁷ Understanding the history of the Bible became integral to understanding the various theologies it authorised and how the nineteenth century should behave in light of Scriptural claims.

Archaeological exploration allowed Egyptologists to represent Egypt's history as a historical basis for the Bible. Archaeological societies such as the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF), founded in 1882 by Amelia Edwards, Reginald Stuart Poole, and Erasmus Wilson, and the Society of Biblical Archaeology, founded in 1870 by Dr. Samuel Birch, used this desire to authenticate the historical claims of the Old Testament to fund their excavations. Whereas the EEF conducted excavations, the Society of Biblical Archaeology brought together published field reports from leading archaeologists to build a picture of how archaeological findings were connected to the Bible.⁴⁸ In his inaugural address to the Society of Biblical Archaeology, Birch claimed that while the Society's primary focus was archaeology above theology, 'to Theology it will prove an important aid'.⁴⁹ However, Birch also anticipated that excavations could present challenges to Biblical accounts. He therefore encouraged members not to be alarmed at 'slight discrepancies' between facts and biblical accounts which would arise.⁵⁰ The Society's aim then was not to prove the Bible's inerrancy, but instead to facilitate a better understanding of its role as a historical text.

The figures behind these societies presented the spoils of Egyptian digs as a tool that Britain could use to excavate the historicity of the Bible. They controlled how Egypt was presented to the public not just through their publications, but also in their work in the museum. Both Birch and Poole held posts at the British museum: Birch was

⁴⁷ William J. Abraham, 'Scripture', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. by Joel D.S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe, and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 628-42 (p. 633).

⁴⁸ Thomas W. Davis, *Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 19.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Davis, p. 19.

⁵⁰ Davis, p. 19.

Keeper of Oriental Antiquities from 1861-85, while Poole was Keeper of the Coins and Medals Department from 1870-93 as well as a Professor of archaeology at University College London.

The connection between ancient Egypt and Biblical authority appropriated Egypt's past as an important part of Christian history. Keeping their readership informed of new discoveries and how they affected Scriptural accuracy was important for these societies' survival. In an 1883 report submitted to *The Academy*, Poole hardly seems able to contain his enthusiasm at the biblical connections between the EEF's excavations at Pithom, the believed Pharaoh of Exodus (Ramses II), and the holes this discovery poked in the arguments of the Higher Critics. 'The bearing of the geographical result on Biblical criticism is of the first consequence' he writes:

It affords a new proof of the book of Exodus [...]. It is a matter for congratulation that such results as these, worth volumes of controversy, have rewarded the Society's first exploration [...]. No one but an Egyptologist of the first rank would have made this inference; no one else would have found, fragment by fragment, in the wreck of Pithom, the successive data which, in the German phrase, 'make an epoch' in Biblical criticism, for the Egyptian and Biblical history can now be synchronised, and the date of the exodus is now nearly as fixed as that of the accession of David.⁵¹

If an excavation could be connected to the Pharaoh of Exodus or Pithom, it could then be linked to Scripture, thus attesting to the Bible's accuracy and further appealing to the EEF's supporters. This trend continued for many years as the EEF still linked its excavations in Fayoum back to Ramses II almost ten years later.⁵²

⁵¹ Reginald Stuart Poole, 'The Progress of Discovery in Egypt', *The Academy*, 17 March 1883, pp. 193-4 (p. 194).

⁵² 'The ruined temple there is Ptolemaic but the cartouche of Ramses II has been found in the course of the excavations.' 'Notes from Egypt', *The Athenaeum*, 14 May 1892, pp. 640-41.

Viewing England as a more spiritually-evolved descendant of ancient Egypt allowed the polytheistic past to be reconciled to the modern age through the process of evolutionary transition. As Annette G. Aubert notes, the publication of *Lux Mundi* (1889), a collection of essays by Henry Ward Beecher and other Anglican ministers, discussed the idea of atonement as a long, evolutionary process whereby God reconciled himself to humanity.⁵³ In a similar manner, Egypt's history was cast as an evolutionary link in the transition from polytheism to a society founded on monotheism. This allowed Egypt's past to play an important role in the nineteenth century while also working to further reconcile Charles Darwin's evolutionary thought within Christian doctrine.

In *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy, and Ancient Egypt* (2000), Dominic Montserrat traces the portrayal of the heretic king, Akhenaten, in nineteenth-century Egyptology. His book examines the myths surrounding Akhenaten's controversial move of the Egyptian capital from Thebes to Amarna in order to worship the sun god, Aten. He illustrates how Victorian Egyptologists—particularly John Gardner Wilkinson (1797-1875), William Osburn (1793-1875), and William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853-1942)—revered Akhenaten for what they believed was the first step on the road from polytheism to monotheism.⁵⁴ Montserrat notes that Petrie's writing in particular used excavations at Amarna to show how archaeology could be used to assert the role of the Bible as a historical document.⁵⁵ Akhenaten was another 'celebrity' figure the EEF provided their Christian sponsors to connect themselves to the pagan past. The pharaoh, cast as a hero who sought to faithfully serve one god by leading his people into the desert, became as worthy of theological attention as Moses or David.

⁵³ Aubert, 'Protestantism', p. 515.

⁵⁴ Dominic Montserrat, *Akhenaten History Fantasy, and Ancient Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁵⁵ Montserrat, p. 66.

Connecting ancient Egypt to Biblical figures functioned as a way of appropriating Egypt's foreignness for British culture, which was still largely tied to the authority of the Church of England.⁵⁶ Gange notes that when E. A. Wallis Budge published his translation of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* in 1895, readers attempted to connect passages to familiar Bible verses or homilies.⁵⁷ He argues that 'this biblical harmonizing was not just rhetorical: it was essential to drawing readers into Egyptian texts and it defined how they read them'.⁵⁸ Elements of Egyptian history, such as the *Book of the Dead*, were repurposed for nineteenth-century readers who needed to know that their Bible could hold up to historical scrutiny.

Egypt's Hermetic Wisdom: Tracing the Use of Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Occultism

Egypt's ancient wisdom also provided a bridge connecting the supernatural elements of Christian faith to the revival of occult and esoteric beliefs in the nineteenth century. These beliefs recast Christian history into an overarching narrative of wisdom that appropriated the teachings of numerous religions and cultures. Some Egyptologists themselves were interested in the occult more broadly. Margaret Murray (1863-1963) studied Egyptology from 1894 at UCL under Flinders Petrie and later gave her own public lectures on Egyptology for the British Museum, the first woman to do so.⁵⁹ She

⁵⁶ For further reading on the rise and decline of the Church of England's authority see: Frances Knight, 'Anglicanism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. by Joel D.S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe, and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 524-39. Knight argues that 'The Church of England transitioned from a place of institutional power and authority at the beginning of the century to one among many Christian bodies, although it was still the largest', p. 526.

⁵⁷ Gange, p. 210.

⁵⁸ Gange, p. 210.

⁵⁹ For further reading on Margaret Murray's role as a pioneering female archaeologist, see: Ruth Whitehouse, 'Margaret Murray (1863-1963): Pioneer Egyptologist, Feminist and First Female Archaeology Lecturer', *Archaeology International*, 16 (2013), 120-7.

published widely on ancient Egypt, and, being a practitioner of magic herself, witchcraft and witch cults. Her research into witchcraft, particularly *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* (1921), later came to overshadow her contributions to the field of Egyptology.⁶⁰

While Murray's research interests in Egypt and Witchcraft were kept separate, nineteenth-century occultism drew upon Egypt alongside many others ancient cultures and sects as an ancient authority in their practices and beliefs. Alongside the developing Egyptomania in Britain there arose an interest in spiritualism, esotericism, and the occult. This did not necessarily preclude the connections made between Biblical archaeological societies and Christian history. Instead, occultism often incorporated both the hermetic wisdom of ancient Egypt and the authority of Christianity as important historical links in an overarching story of how ancient wisdom had been passed down throughout history.

Joscelyn Godwin dates the term 'occultism' to the nineteenth century and defines it as a means of differentiating occult science from scientific materialism.⁶¹ For spiritualists, occultists, and esotericists, science provided a way to lend authority to their beliefs while, in turn, restoring a sense of purpose to science that materialism had stripped away. Science was an important means through which both psychical phenomenon and later esoteric philosophies were articulated and validated. Olav Hammer calls this 'scientism', the 'active positioning of one's own claims' against 'academic scientific discipline'.⁶² These included 'the use of technical devices, scientific terminology, mathematical calculations, theories, references and stylistic features' but did not make use of 'methods generally approved within the scientific community, and without subsequent social acceptance of these manifestations by the mainstream of the scientific community'.⁶³ The articulation of occult beliefs through

⁶⁰ Margaret Murray, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921).

⁶¹ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, p. xii.

⁶² Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*, p. 206.

⁶³ Hammer, p. 206.

scientific terminology allowed for a commingling of the spiritual and scientific, even if there was resistance from some in the scientific community at their work being used in such a way.

The cultural presence of occult science often gets elided due to the way the occult is generally framed. As Wouter J. Hanegraaff notes, there is a strong misconception around the term ‘occult’ that originates in an inaccurate view of its history.⁶⁴ The term ‘occult’ became falsely embroiled in a science versus magic debate and subsequently became a catch-all term which defined a method of thinking seen as unscientific and unquantifiable due to its reliance on the hidden.⁶⁵

While nineteenth-century occultism sought to reconcile scientific materialism with spiritual beliefs, the ways in which this was accomplished differed between occult groups. Although spiritualism did not develop the complex philosophies of universal wisdom of, for instance, Theosophy and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, its popularity is important in understanding how occultism flourished in the nineteenth century. The beginnings of the Modern Spiritualist Movement are often claimed to be in the Hydesville Rappings in New York in 1848. However, in Britain, the ground had already been prepared by earlier ideas: spirits had been ‘modernised’ in Britain in the eighteenth century through the works of Emmanuel Swedenborg and Franz Mesmer. Swedenborg had promoted the existence of spirits as part of his theology, known as Swedenborgianism, while developed the theory of animal magnetism, an invisible but accessible force which inhabits all living things he called Mesmerism.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 158.

⁶⁵ Hanegraaff, p. 157.

⁶⁶ For further reading on the rise of spiritualism in the nineteenth century, see: Georgina A. Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England (1850-1939)* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, Ltd., 2010); Arthur Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918) and *The History of Spiritualism* (New York: Doran, 1926); William Crookes, *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* (London: J. Burns, 1874); Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*; Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*

What spiritualism introduced was the work of mediums who acted as intermediaries between the spirit world of the deceased and the world of the living. The Modern Spiritualist Movement spread throughout England through numerous periodicals and societies devoted to psychical phenomena. The *Yorkshire Spiritualist Telegraph* began in 1855 and was followed by newspapers and journals such as *Spiritual Magazine* (1860-77), *Medium and Daybreak* (1870-95), and *Light* (1881-present).⁶⁷ As Georgina Byrne notes, psychical phenomena developed from rappings that either responded to yes or no questions or spelled out messages using the letters of the alphabet to ‘clairvoyance and clairaudience’ and then, in the 1870s, materialisations: physical apparitions that would appear while mediums were locked in cabinets.⁶⁸

As well as periodicals and journals, societies devoted to the study and exploration of the psychical began to appear from the 1860s. The Ghost Club, the first of these societies, was founded in 1862 with the help of Stainton Moses.⁶⁹ It was followed by various societies such as the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (1872), The Society for Psychical Research (the SPR, 1882), the British National Association of Spiritualists (1883), and the London Spiritualist Alliance (1884). Each society, periodical, and journal had its own specific focus and purpose. Some used spiritualism to explain the supernatural elements of Christianity while others suggested that spiritualism revealed the needlessness of a religious view of the afterlife. There were also divisions within spiritualism between those who wanted to focus on the wonder of psychical phenomena and those who wanted to quantify it. Janet Oppenheim notes that ‘[t]he spiritualists [...] did not hesitate to assert the reality of communication

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) and *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁶⁷ For a more exhaustive investigation of nineteenth-century periodicals and spiritualist societies, see Oppenheim, *The Other World*.

⁶⁸ Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England (1850-1939)*, pp. 21-22. For further reading see: Oppenheim, *The Other World*, and Owen, *The Darkened Room*.

⁶⁹ Oppenheim, p. 77.

with the dead and to accept as genuine most of the phenomena that they witnessed at séances', whereas '[p]syhic researchers [...] trod with greater circumspection and even, in some cases, skepticism [...], psychical researchers claimed to be gathering information objectively, collecting the facts needed for strict scientific evaluation, and harbouring no preconceived explanatory theories'.⁷⁰ The differences between psychical researchers and spiritualists often resulted in tensions, particularly between the SPR and other spiritualist societies. Arthur Conan Doyle, initially a member of and dogged defender of the SPR, later broke away from the society as he became more interested in spiritualism than psychical research later in his life.⁷¹

The tenets of spiritualism served as a springboard for the more complex philosophies of later occult groups such as the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Such groups developed their occult science through a framework built from the repositories of knowledge developed by various historical and mythical occult groups from Egyptian Hermeticism to Alchemy to the supposed wisdom of Atlantis. As such, these groups had a significant impact on esotericism more broadly. Faivre has even suggested that occultism drew on practices that came from and found validation in the forms of thought authorised by esotericism.⁷²

The term esotericism, like the term occult, has a complex history and there is some debate about how it should be defined. Antoine Faivre suggested in 1994 that esotericism is a 'form of thought' which can be recognized by four 'intrinsic' characteristics—*correspondences, living nature, imagination and mediations, and experience of transmutation*—as well as two secondary, non-fundamental components—*the praxis of concordance and transmission*.⁷³ However, Hangraaf

⁷⁰ Oppenheim, p. 3. For further reading on the differences between spiritualists and psychic researchers, see Burrow, 'Conan Doyle's Gothic Materialism', p. 311.

⁷¹ Daniel Stashower, *Teller of Tells: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 435.

⁷² Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, p. 35.

⁷³ Faivre, p. 10, for further explanation of Faivre's components, see pp. 10-5.

suggests that Faivre's four intrinsic characteristics are problematic as they can 'become empty containers that may be filled with almost anything, theosophical or otherwise'.⁷⁴ Kocku von Stuckrad argues that Faivre both neglects his own typology in including mesmerism as esoteric while also excluding other philosophies which match his description of esoteric characteristics.⁷⁵ Von Stuckrad argues instead that 'claims of higher knowledge', 'ways of accessing this knowledge', and 'actual beliefs and views' be used to form a looser framework of analysis which examines common discursive transfers in order to better understand the role of esoteric thought in ancient and modern traditions of religion, philosophy, and science.⁷⁶ Michael Bergunder notes that von Stuckrad's approach moves away from Faivre's goal of historicising esotericism and understanding its use in specific historical times and esoteric currents.⁷⁷ Bergunder instead calls esotericism an 'empty signifier' that is 'articulated and reproduced' in different discourse communities.⁷⁸ In this sense, esotericism functions as a means of defining a philosophy in terms of what it is *not* within specific historical and cultural contexts.

Whereas Bergunder argues for the utility of the empty signifier, Hanegraaff notes how emptiness has worked against esoteric knowledge. Referring specifically to esotericism in the Enlightenment, Hanegraaff describes how such representations have led to the invisibility of occult currents and, by extension, the broader role of esotericism over time. Hanegraaff suggests that esotericism is commonly used as 'a conceptual waste-basket for "rejected knowledge"' and so is mistakenly considered a dead-end not deserving of study.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Hanegraaff, p. 360.

⁷⁵ Kocku von Stuckrad, 'Western esotericism', p. 83.

⁷⁶ von Stuckrad, p. 93.

⁷⁷ Michael Bergunder, 'What is Esotericism?', p. 17.

⁷⁸ Bergunder, pp. 31-2.

⁷⁹ Hanegraaff, p. 221.

Ancient Egypt's role in esoteric thought has also contributed to its misidentification, both in the nineteenth century and more broadly. As studies of Western esotericism have shown, particularly the work of Faivre and that of Hanegraaff, Roelof van den Broek, and Jean-Pierre Brach's in their *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (2006), Egyptomania has become falsely associated with esotericism, which has led to a cultural perception of esotericism as inherently Egyptian.⁸⁰ I follow Hanegraaff and Michael Bergunder in recognising the importance of locating both occultism and esotericism in specific historical contexts.⁸¹ Although the first major step in the translation of hieroglyphs in 1822 directly challenged an overtly-mystical view of ancient Egypt, Hammer notes that 'Egypt retained a role in post-Enlightenment esotericism superior to that of India well beyond the 1830s'.⁸² Faivre questions whether this 'Egyptian esotericism' even exists but argues that, if it does, 'it exists first of all in our modern imagination'.⁸³ The *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* refers to a specific type of Egyptomania known as 'Egyptomania of the esoteric type' which 'belongs within a more general context: that of the place of the Orient in Western esotericism'.⁸⁴ This type of Egyptomania implies two things: 'first, that the hieroglyphs, pyramids, etc. are bearers of hidden meanings of a gnostic, initiatic, or soteriological nature; and second, that Egypt, having long been the most ancient known civilization, was closer to the primordial Tradition'.⁸⁵ Erik Hornung has argued that this construction of an imagined Egypt as a repository of esoteric lore is an important means of understanding the West's perception of Egypt throughout history. He defines this view as Egyptosophy, 'the study of an imaginary Egypt viewed as the

⁸⁰ *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Antoine Faivre, Roelof van den Broek, and Jean-Pierre Brach (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁸¹ Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy* and Bergunder, 'What is Esotericism?'.
⁸² Hammer, p. 111.

⁸³ Faivre, p. 17.

⁸⁴ *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, p. 328.

⁸⁵ *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, p. 328.

profound source of all esoteric lore’ and traces such a view from Egypt’s Twelfth Dynasty through to the present day.⁸⁶ For occult philosophies, then, ancient Egypt has represented an important, though not exclusive, store of hermetic teachings for thousands of years.

In the nineteenth century, Theosophy was initially a prominent promoter of Egypt as a place of hermetic wisdom. Founded by 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and William Quan Judge, among others, the Theosophical Society played a crucial role in uniting multiple esoteric currents. It brought together a philosophy which incorporated wisdom narratives from multiple ancient and mythical cultures and religions from Hermeticism to Buddhism.⁸⁷

Theosophy’s famous figurehead, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-91), herself claimed ties to arcane Egyptian wisdom, which she explicated in her *Isis Unveiled* (1877).⁸⁸ Joscelyn Godwin suggests that Blavatsky’s public career could be split into an “‘Egyptian” or Hermetic period’ beginning in 1872 and an “‘Indian” or Oriental period’, which began in 1879 when Blavatsky arrived in Bombay.⁸⁹ Blavatsky’s philosophy incorporated elements of many different belief systems, including spiritualism (which she later denounced) and Buddhism, all of which she united under the overarching label of Theosophy. Hammer notes that Theosophy disembedded and reembedded elements of ancient and mythical cultures to build ‘an ageless wisdom, a *philosophia perennis* that has been accessible to the initiates of all times and places’.⁹⁰ While this would suggest that any religion, including Christianity, could be incorporated

⁸⁶ Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt*, p. 3.

⁸⁷ For further reading on the importance of the Theosophical Society in the history of Western esotericism, see: Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*; Maria Fleischhack, *Narrating Ancient Egypt*; Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*; Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*; and Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*.

⁸⁸ Helena Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (Point Loma: The Theosophical Society, 1906).

⁸⁹ Godwin, pp. 277-8.

⁹⁰ Hammer, p. 170.

in an esoteric worldview as a station of wisdom, Blavatsky rejected Christianity outright. She disliked Christianity's idea of a specific God invested in personal lives and, as Godwin notes, viewed Christianity as '[a]n absurd theology, supporting a corrupt priesthood and an unintelligible bibliolatry'.⁹¹

Instead Blavatsky drew largely from Egyptian, Indian, and purported Atlantean traditions. She claimed that much of the occult knowledge and wisdom she received came from her 'Masters', two of whom, Serapis and Tuitit Bey, were part of the Brotherhood of Luxor.⁹² Whereas mediums communed with the dead via séances, Blavatsky claimed that Serapis and Tuitit Bey were living and transmitted their wisdom to her to write down and disseminate to her Theosophical colleagues.⁹³ Wisdom was passed down through various cultures through these spiritual adepts in order to form a cohesive wisdom narrative. Blavatsky's writings defined Modern Theosophy in the nineteenth century, including works such as *Isis Unveiled* (1877), *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), *The Key to Theosophy* (1889), *The Voice of the Silence* (1889), and *Studies in Occultism* (essays that were originally published between 1887 and 1891 in Blavatsky's theosophical magazine *Lucifer*, and were collected and published posthumously in 1895).

In shifting Theosophy's focus away from Egypt to include India and Atlantis—which Hammer credits Blavatsky with introducing as a 'theme of esoteric speculation'—Blavatsky continued to portray a romanticized view of ancient wisdom as interconnected between cultures.⁹⁴ Hammer notes that non-Western 'sites of veneration' within the Esoteric tradition have an appeal particularly because they are Othered.⁹⁵ He uses the terms 'positive Orientalism'—which he defines as 'a generic term for

⁹¹ Godwin, p. 292.

⁹² Blavatsky also communicated with other Tibetan Masters, known as Mahatmas, named Morya and Koot Hoomi. For further reading see Hammer, pp. 380-1.

⁹³ Hammer, p. 60, see also pp. 380-1.

⁹⁴ Hammer, p. 103.

⁹⁵ Hammer, p. 89, explanatory note Hammer's.

homogenizing approaches to other cultures, and can as such be applied to peoples that in no way are part of a geographical East, even e.g. North Americans’—and ‘positive Others’—which he defines as ‘a kind of inverted Orientalism [...] which describes the ancient Orient as a place filled with mystery and wisdom’—to refer to the process whereby foreign cultures are ascribed a mythical quality.⁹⁶ ‘Positive’, here, still exists in a framework of domination and Blavatsky drew upon other cultures as positive others to create a ‘grand metanarrative’ that served her theology.⁹⁷ According to Blavatsky, wisdom had thus been passed down through various times and cultures, Egypt, India, through to Atlantis, in order to create ‘one single historic myth’.⁹⁸

The Theosophical Society was not the only group to draw on Egypt in their practices. Egypt had been seen as a source of spiritual wisdom and occult authority long before the nineteenth century. Hermeticism, founded on the texts of the *Hermetica*, were connected to the figure of Hermes Trismegistus, a mix of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth. Aside from Theosophy, Faivre notes that a number of esoteric ‘currents’ were inspired by Hermeticism, particularly Alchemy, Christian Kabbalism, Paracelsism, Rosicrucianism.⁹⁹ Hanegraaff notes how ‘both the ancient wisdom discourse of the Renaissance’ and the alchemists looked to

Egyptian Hermes Trimegistus as one of the earliest authorities, if not the very origin of the lost knowledge; and both believed that it had been transmitted, in a veiled and hidden manner, by divinely inspired sages or by alchemical ‘adepts’ from generation to generation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Hammer, pp. 167, 95.

⁹⁷ Hammer, p. 139.

⁹⁸ Hammer, p. 139.

⁹⁹ Faivre, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ Hanegraaff, p. 207. See also Hornung, pp. 48-54, and Reid, *Whose Pharaohs*, p. 25.

Ancient Egypt, through the hermetic wisdom of Hermes Trimegistus, represented an important, albeit not privileged, repository of ancient wisdom which had been passed down and reframed to inform the practices of nineteenth-century occultism.

Initiatory occult societies such as the Freemasons and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn also adopted Egyptian themes and symbology in their practices. Count Cagliostro founded a specific Egyptian branch of Masonry in France in 1785.¹⁰¹ Cagliostro's system as well as wider Masonic societies offered initiates the chance to have agency in attaining wisdom through rituals and practical ceremonies that contrasted with Blavatsky's ownership of Theosophy's wisdom. Hammer notes that theosophy was 'implicitly elitist', because it rested on Blavatsky's 'privileged and unreproducible experience'.¹⁰² Faivre notes that the erroneous assumption of secrecy surrounding Freemasonry has led to a view of esotericism as initiatory and secretive.¹⁰³ While Freemasonry may not have been as secretive as commonly believed, the perception did exist, which corresponded neatly with the broader conception of an ancient Egypt upon whose motifs and language Freemasonry drew.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn built upon Freemasonry's adoption of Egyptian themes and symbols to foster a view in the public imagination of ancient Egypt as occult in the sense of magical rituals and power. Founded in 1888, it named its temples after Egyptian deities, including Isis, Osiris, Horus, and Amen-Ra.¹⁰⁴ Faivre notes that the Golden Dawn 'gave a large place to ceremonial magic' and led to various offshoots.¹⁰⁵ One of the most infamous members of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, became involved in one of these offshoots. Under Crowley's influence, the *Ordo Templi Orientis*'s rituals exhibited a 'sexual and anti-Christian cast'.¹⁰⁶ These

¹⁰¹ For further reading on Egyptian Freemasonry, see Goodrick-Clarke, p. 149 and Hornung, pp. 121-7.

¹⁰² Hammer, p. 469.

¹⁰³ Faivre, pp. 32-3.

¹⁰⁴ Owen, p. 54.

¹⁰⁵ Faivre, p. 91.

¹⁰⁶ Faivre, p. 91.

occult societies drew members away from other esoteric groups, particularly Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. As societies rose which focused on ceremonial magic and rituals, members could participate themselves instead of relying on Blavatsky's or another medium's powers.

Defining the Esoteric and the Occult in Egyptianising Fiction

In this thesis, I define the term 'occult' as a signifier of dark, ceremonial or practical magic wherein a particular figure invokes ancient Egyptian power either through magical spells or practical occult science. I define 'esoteric' as representative of a mythopoetic past which conceals its wisdom, revealing it only to the spiritually adept. My use thus differs from the way the occult and the esoteric are understood within the broader category of the history of Western esotericism as defined by Faivre, Bergunder, and von Stuckrad.¹⁰⁷ While important divisions between spiritualism, occultism, and esotericism were maintained both by their followers in the period and in subsequent scholarship, what I call 'Egyptianising' fiction gives these divisions little notice. Instead, this fiction perpetuated a stereotype of ancient Egypt as a source of primordial, secret wisdom, contributing to the Western construction of a particularly esoteric Egypt, as Faivre and Hornung have defined. Although some authors in the period represented ancient Egypt as an esoteric model of religious liberalism which blended elements of Christian afterlives with the possibility of reincarnation, others portrayed it as a land of dark, occult forces. This allowed the West to conceive of Egypt as the spiritual Other it needed for its own religious investigations. However, neither way of constructing Egypt confirmed what came after death. While nineteenth-century authors frequently opened

¹⁰⁷ For further reading on the history of Western esotericism, see Bergunder, 'What is Esotericism?'; *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*; Faivre *Access to Western Esotericism*; Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*; Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions*; Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge*; Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*; von Stuckrad, 'Western esotericism'.

the pyramids to resurrect figures from beyond the grave, these figures provided no answers. The mummy was always returned to the afterlife in possession of its secrets.

The term ‘Egyptianising’ has been used before, usually to denote things fashioned in a supposedly ‘Egyptian’ way. Although Fleischhack uses the term Egyptianising, her terminology in *Narrating Ancient Egypt* (2015) is fluid and differs in purpose from my own definition: she uses both the longer ‘Egyptianising fantastic fiction’ and ‘Egyptianising literature’ throughout. Drawing on Said, she defines Egyptianising literature as ‘fiction which features aspects of ancient Egypt, which describes it and makes use of it’.¹⁰⁸ Curl uses the term ‘Egyptianising’ to describe Egyptian revival art and architecture which is designed in an Egyptian style.¹⁰⁹ Hammer also refers to certain ‘Egyptianizing’ elements present in the history of Western esotericism.¹¹⁰

What I call Egyptianising fiction are those texts that authorise Egypt as intimately connected to knowledge of death and the afterlife. They Egyptianise the texts by defining their literary versions of ancient Egypt as *the* Egypt, in a similar manner to how Egypt was fashioned for the exhibition space or represented by Egyptologists as a precursor to Protestant Christianity. My definition takes much from the work of Fleischhack and Luckhurst but is distinct because of the emphasis on how ancient Egypt is figured as a store of secret wisdom.¹¹¹ Egyptianising fiction presents Egypt as inherently esoteric or occult, an orientalist representation that reimagines the country as a repository of forbidden knowledge of life and death. The Egyptianisation of Egypt that occurs in this fiction is thus central to my argument because it suggests that Egypt

¹⁰⁸ Fleischhack, p. 20.

¹⁰⁹ Curl, *Egyptian Revival*, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Hammer, p. 111.

¹¹¹ I have also used the term Egyptianising to delineate texts which cast Egypt as a store of ancient, continually-deferred wisdom in ‘Prefiguring the Cross’.

possesses knowledge that has the potential to validate religious beliefs about life and death.

While scholars writing on ancient Egypt in nineteenth-century fiction have noted the creation of an occult Egypt and explored the connection between science and the supernatural, the role of such knowledge in addressing religious doubts regarding death and the afterlife has been overlooked.¹¹² The mummy, for instance, is a frequent figure in Egyptianising fiction: such texts also uses other ancient Egyptian objects or might be set in ancient Egypt.¹¹³ Some authors, such as H. Rider Haggard, sought tutelage under the era's first and most prominent Egyptologists, attempting to establish a historical basis for their representations of the ancient world, while others, such as Jane Loudon and Marie Corelli, were far less interested in the actual history of ancient Egypt, exploiting it for its romance instead. Surveying the range of representations of Egypt in nineteenth-century fiction reveals how Egyptianising fiction attempts to exert control over death by making a mouthpiece of ancient Egyptian figures, objects, and settings.

Luckhurst refers to fiction about mummies or cursed Egyptian objects as 'Egyptian gothic', a sub-genre of the wider 'colonial Gothic'.¹¹⁴ The colonial Gothic is a reinterpretation of Patrick Brantlinger's three characteristics of the 'Imperial Gothic'—fear of degeneration, anxiety over the colonized infiltration the metropolis, and the allure of uncolonized territories.¹¹⁵ In Luckhurst's Egyptian gothic, cursed

¹¹² For further reading on the role of ancient Egypt in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century fiction, see Bulfin, 'The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia'; Burrow 'Conan Doyle's Gothic Materialism'; Dobson, 'Science, Magic, and Ancient Egypt in Late Victorian and Edwardian Literature' and 'Gods and Ghost Light'; Fleischhack, *Narrating Ancient Egypt*; Gange, *Dialogues with the Dead*; Luckhurst *The Mummy's Curse* and 'Gothic Colonies'; Moody, 'Moral Uncertainty and the Afterlife'; and Parramore, *Reading the Sphinx*.

¹¹³ For further reading on mummy fiction, see Nolwenn Corriou, "'Birmingham Ware': Ancient Egypt as Orientalist Construct", *Journal of History and Cultures*, 10 (2019); Deane, 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt'; Dobson, 'Emasculating Mummies: Gender and Psychological Threat in *Fin-de-Siècle* Mummy Fiction', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 40.4 (2018), 397-407. For an extended discussion of mummymania, see Jasmine Day, *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking World* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹¹⁴ Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 156; 'Gothic Colonies', p. 64.

¹¹⁵ Luckhurst, 'Gothic Colonies', p. 64.

mummies or objects question the imperial project by resisting their status as inert artefacts. According to Luckhurst, they ‘carry the knowledge that beautiful objects and sacred remains remain freighted with the colonial violence of their dispossession that their reification in museums or private collections cannot hide’.¹¹⁶

I prefer the shorter term Egyptianising fiction because, while a large proportion are gothic, not all of them are. My use of the term also incorporates those that portray ancient Egypt’s esoteric wisdom in a lighthearted, satirical manner. While the supernatural elements of Egyptianising texts is most often read as stemming from Britain’s imperial activity in Egypt, the malevolent supernatural forces animating mummies and curses the result of their dispossession, pre-occupation texts also use the supernatural to resurrect Egypt’s wisdom but without some of the more dramatic gothic trappings. Mummies might feature in both, but whereas the vengeful mummies of post-occupation gothic texts are most often silent, Jane Loudon’s *The Mummy! Or a Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827), widely recognized as the first piece of Egyptianising fiction, and Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ (1845) provide the chance for the mummy to share the wisdom of ancient Egypt. Luckhurst himself notes that these two texts ‘were mouthpieces for satirical commentary on contemporary mores, rather than ambulatory trajectories of vengeance’.¹¹⁷ The use of the broader term, Egyptianising, allows me to explore the continued fashioning of Egypt as an authority on death in both pre and post-occupation texts, regardless of their genre.

I build on Fleischhack’s use of Egyptianising to argue that the fashioning of Egypt as an esoteric or occult Other is the defining way authors make use of Egypt. Both gothic and non-gothic Egyptianising narratives imply that Egypt possesses knowledge of life and death but withholds what it knows. Luckhurst refers to ‘religious

¹¹⁶ Luckhurst, ‘Gothic Colonies’, p. 66.

¹¹⁷ Luckhurst, *The Mummy’s Curse*, p. 83.

transcendence' as one of the characteristics of Egyptian gothic fiction, but I suggest that this categorization is limiting.¹¹⁸ The supernatural and the occult have been recognized as important aspects of texts which employ ancient Egypt, particularly Arthur Conan Doyle's 'Lot No. 249' (1892) and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), both of which define Egypt as a violent threat through the figure of the mummy who resists categorization as an object of colonial control.¹¹⁹ However, sustained analysis of the influence of the supernatural in Egyptianising fiction prior to the occupation is lacking. Because ancient Egypt's perceived esoteric and occult authority is also present in these texts, it is better seen as a characteristic of Egyptianising fiction more broadly.

Authors of Egyptianising fiction created Egypt as a land of spiritual insight which ultimately reflected back the unsettling inability to validate their own religious beliefs. David Gange's *Dialogues with the Dead* (2013) traces the trajectory of the use of ancient Egypt across the period, noting how it was used to authorise the positions of Biblical archaeology, scientific societies, and the fields of occultism and spiritualism. However, while his text gestures towards the cultural influences behind Egyptianising fiction, his book is a historical survey across the period and, as such, does not focus on the religious concerns behind these contexts. He argues that authors of Egyptianising fiction, particularly H. Rider Haggard and Marie Corelli, infiltrated Egyptian beliefs with their own religions in order to connect ancient to modern, but does not account for wider assumptions about Egyptian religion.¹²⁰ The Egyptian beliefs which appear in Egyptianising texts contradict published Egyptological accounts of ancient Egyptian religion. Fleischhack notes that the stereotype of Egyptian magic continued to grow despite the increasing circulation of evidence that contradicted such wild and fantastic

¹¹⁸ Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse* p. 158.

¹¹⁹ Arthur Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', *Harper's Magazine*, September 1892, pp. 525-44; Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (New York: W.R. Caldwell and Co., 1904).

¹²⁰ Gange, p. 215-6.

theories.¹²¹ Nolwenn Corriou suggests that, despite the high value placed on Egyptian artefacts, ‘they gradually grew to represent an instance of the essential mystery of the Orient in the collective consciousness’.¹²²

The Orient’s mystery was embodied, literally, in the figure of the mummy. Fleischhack notes that ‘[l]iterary Egypt’ tended towards the supernatural which was ‘something which the Western protagonists yearn to either possess or destroy’.¹²³ Ancient Egypt and its mummies entice the reader through the allure of Otherness, most prominently Other bodies, who continually resist consummation. The mummy is often eroticised, enticing the Occidental male into an obsessive relationship. The mummy need not be entirely whole or alive in order to entice. The foot of a mummy is enough to induce visions of the beautiful Princess Hermonthis in Théophile Gautier’s ‘*La Pied de Momie*’ or ‘The Mummy’s Foot’ (1840).¹²⁴ Rider Haggard’s short story ‘Smith and the Pharaohs’ (1912-13) features a protagonist who encounters a bust of Queen Ma-Mee in the British Museum and ‘looked at it once, twice, thrice, and at the third look he fell in love’.¹²⁵ In Grant Allen’s ‘My New Year’s Eve among the Mummies’ (1879), the narrator abandons his English betrothed for the reanimated mummy of Hatasou, whom he attempts to join in mummification.¹²⁶

I argue that the desire to possess and control the seductive, taboo body of the Other stands in place of the futile desire to transcend death. Deane notes that the romance between Egypt and Britain is consistently deferred because it represents the imperial desire to dominate time.¹²⁷ He suggests that, rather than being a simple

¹²¹ Fleischhack, p. 13.

¹²² Corriou, p. 50.

¹²³ Fleischhack, p. 78.

¹²⁴ Théophile Gautier, ‘The Mummy’s Foot’, in *One of Cleopatra’s Nights and Other Fantastic Romances*, trans. by Lafcadio Hearn (Washington: Brentano’s, 1899) pp. 221-48.

¹²⁵ Rider Haggard, *Smith and the Pharaohs and Other Stories* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1921), p. 5.

¹²⁶ Grant Allen, ‘My New Year’s Eve among the Mummies’, *Belgravia: A London Magazine*, 37.148 (1879), 93-105.

¹²⁷ Deane, ‘Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt’, p. 385.

allegory for current political relationships with Egypt, mummy fiction's seductive but ever-deferred hopes of reincarnation and eternity are 'more deeply structured by the same narrative strategies of suspense and irresolution that were the fundamental conditions of British power in Egypt'.¹²⁸ The relationship between Britain and Egypt resists fulfillment because it represents broader anxieties about time and empire which can never fully be answered. Egyptianising fiction needs Egypt to have magic so that, no matter how many times the mummy returns to the grave, the possibility remains that the next one will finally disclose what lies beyond.

In Egyptianising fiction, the mummy and the Egypt it represents helped the nineteenth century explore and attempt to understand death. As a well-recognized cultural trope, the mummy was familiar enough with which to engage but also foreign enough to safely resurrect. The imaginative space of Egyptianising fiction offered Egypt as a place for the living to confront the dead. The mummy was not a corpse unearthed from the new memorial space of the cemetery, too familiar in time and space, but instead a symbol of Britain's control over Egypt. Egyptianising fiction invites the reader to unwrap and observe the mummy because it is Other: however, what is unwrapped is also uncomfortably familiar. A shared humanity allows the mummy to speak from beyond the grave but its cultural Otherness kept it at arm's length from the reader. The mummy was both human and object, relatable but also controllable. It could be raised in order for the author to explore their own religious anxieties and then returned to the grave. Although Egypt never fully revealed the secrets it supposedly held, it allowed authors to personify death in the form of the safely-distanced corpse of the Other.

In each of the texts addressed in this thesis, Britain encounters the bodies of ancient Egyptians. Whether alive, dead, or reincarnated, each ancient Egyptian figure is integral to the narrative's discussion of death and the afterlife. While the mummy often

¹²⁸ Deane, p. 401.

offers a safe way to explore death, it also consistently confronts Britain with the material unknowability of the corpse. Despite their perceived knowledge about eternity, their wisdom always remains tantalisingly out of reach. For all Britain's attempts to own ancient Egypt's secret wisdom through the figure of the reanimated mummy, the narratives silence Egypt's voice and defer its wisdom to the next awakened mummy.

In chapter one, I explore Jane Loudon's *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827) and Edgar Allan Poe's 'Some Words with a Mummy' (1845). Poe's text, originally published in the *American Whig Review* in 1845, was reprinted in Britain as part of the collection of Poe's stories *Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour* (1852) and remained well-known enough to be parodied in *Punch* as late as 1882. I consider Loudon's and Poe's pivotal place as early pioneers of nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction which authorises a view of Egypt as an esoteric authority. Both texts also use the figure of a mummy to comment on the relationship between religion and science in the early nineteenth century. In so doing, both Loudon and Poe portray ancient Egypt as a land of vast scientific knowledge with the power to alter the foundations of nineteenth-century religious thought. Loudon's quirky text combines past, present, and future by using galvanism as a means of reanimating the mummy of Cheops, who then becomes a vaguely threatening political advisor in twenty-second century London.

Loudon's seminal text is the first to cast a mummy in the role of the possessor of mystical knowledge about the nature of the afterlife. Cheops knows the secrets of the grave but warns that such knowledge is dangerous to the living. His warnings help mould the character of Edric into a natural philosopher who promotes divine boundaries to scientific knowledge as espoused by natural theologians such William Paley, William Kirby, and Adam Sedgwick. Loudon, herself raised Anglican, adopts an approach to scientific knowledge aligned with many early nineteenth century Protestants concerned

about the impact burgeoning views of evolution and transmutation would have on the Church of England, views which she continues to promote in her later botanical publications. *The Mummy!*, I argue, as the first recognized piece of Egyptianising fiction, sets up a trope of Egypt as associated with an intimate knowledge of the afterlife which recurs many times through the century.

Pairing Loudon's text with Poe's 'Some Words with a Mummy' reveals how this trope of the mummy as perceived authority on death and the afterlife continued to develop in Egyptianising fiction. Loudon projects her fears about science's ability to subvert religious moralism onto the future, crafting a narrative which reads as a cautionary tale. Contrastingly, Poe, originally raised Episcopalian, adopts the view that religion has no place in scientific thinking and presents such beliefs as a hindrance which must be cast aside. Reading his short story alongside his tongue-in-cheek scientific treatise, *Eureka* (1848), illustrates how Poe's satire responds to attitudes such as Loudon's in an attempt to render them as ridiculous as the name of his mummy, Allamistakeo. Poe's mummy possesses the secrets of cheating death but whereas Loudon's mummy refuses to divulge his secrets, Poe's instead mocks the nineteenth century for not being as advanced as ancient Egypt. Egypt is seemingly stripped of its spiritual authority through Allamistakeo's clear explanation of mummification as a scientific process entirely unconnected to religion. However, despite his mockery, Poe perpetuates a transcendent view of ancient Egypt by complicating the narrator's reliability, suggesting that the mummy might still harbour more secrets.

Chapter two moves on to closely examine two of H. Rider Haggard's Egyptianising novels *Cleopatra* (1889) and *Moon of Israel* (1918) in order to show the ways in which Egyptianising fiction evolved to address current religious debates.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ H. Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, published serially in *The Illustrated London News* between January 1889 and June 1889; *Morning Star* (New York: McKinlay, Stone, and McKenzie, 1916); *Moon of Israel*

Whereas Loudon and Poe engage with the effects of scientific exploration on religion, I read Rider Haggard's evolutionary view of religion alongside debates surrounding Calvinist and Arminian views of atonement as well as burgeoning interest in reincarnation as connected to Buddhism. *Cleopatra* and *Moon of Israel* form part of Rider Haggard's wider oeuvre of Egyptianising fiction which are unique in that the narratives are set in ancient Egypt. Both *Cleopatra* and *Moon of Israel* stand out from his other Egyptianising novels due to their direct engagement with themes of Evangelical atonement and atonement through reincarnation.

Rider Haggard's texts adopt a view of ancient Egypt as a spiritual descendent of Christianity promoted by the EEF and Society of Biblical Archaeology. Although *Cleopatra* appears to view Egyptian religion as a prefiguration of Christianity, reading the novel with a loose typological lens reveals inherent tensions about ideas of sin and atonement.¹³⁰ Rider Haggard employs a complex layering of Christianity and reincarnation in *Cleopatra* which suggest a hybridity of religious views. The novel returns again and again to themes of atonement and sacrifice, but also persistently draws on themes of reincarnation via a form of Egyptian metempsychosis, which the author admits he finds appealing in his own statements on religion.¹³¹ Rider Haggard's text anticipates a blending of religious doctrines which later authors of Egyptianising fiction cast onto Egypt. I conclude the chapter by briefly contrasting the hesitant commingling of ancient and modern religions in *Cleopatra* with Rider Haggard's later and rarely-read *Moon of Israel* in order to show the trajectory of his portrayal of religion in

(New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1918); and *Queen of the Dawn* (New York: Country Life Press, Doubleday Page and Co., 1925).

¹³⁰ Typology will be broadly defined in chapter two of this thesis. For further reading see: Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures Vol. II*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: E. Littel, 1825); George P. Landow, *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) and *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art, and Thought* (London: Routledge, 1980).

¹³¹ Egyptian metempsychosis will be defined in chapter two. For further reading, see J. Jeffrey Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

Egyptianising fiction from one rooted in Protestantism to one of liberal religious inclusivity which adopts an esoteric view of wisdom being passed from one religion to another.

While Rider Haggard sets his texts in ancient Egypt in order to revitalize his own Protestant faith, chapter three examines the use of ancient Egypt as a means to explore nineteenth-century occultism and spiritualism. Marie Corelli's *Ziska* (1897) and Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Ring of Thoth' (1890) and 'Lot No. 249' move away from a potentially redemptive view of ancient Egypt as esoteric authority and instead distance their beliefs from the black occult magic which they cast onto Egypt. Both Corelli and Conan Doyle portray ancient Egypt as a land of dark power, a foil to their own beliefs. *Ziska*'s ancient Egyptian cult is impenetrable, both bent on righteous vengeance but also demanding sacrifice in a way which contrasts to Corelli's explication of her electric Christianity in earlier novels. Conan Doyle's texts also draw a distinction between different elements of occult beliefs. As a burgeoning believer in spiritualism, Conan Doyle, himself a lapsed Catholic and staunch materialist prior to his conversion to spiritualism, promotes the rigorous testing and examination of supernatural phenomena in his texts. Egypt is presented as a land of dark, occult power which seeks to overcome or subvert death in direct opposition to spiritualism, which used psychical phenomena to prove that death is nothing to fear and, indeed, nothing to be avoided.

Chapter four turns to an examination of death itself through exploring the connection between the mummy as corpse and the corpse in the cemetery through Grant Allen's 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies' and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Allen and Stoker's work and the wider adoption of Egyptian motifs in nineteenth-century funerary architecture reveal that the concerns about science and religion raised by Loudon's and Poe's early Egyptianising fiction persist at the turn of the century. The mummies of Hatasou and Queen Tera, like Cheops and Allamistaeko,

are assumed to have authority on the relationship between science and a religious understanding of the afterlife. Despite the popularity of alternative religious views raised by Rider Haggard, Corelli, and Conan Doyle, Stoker's and Allen's Egypts still cannot provide concrete answers.

Allen's lighthearted text probes questions of legacy and memory from an atheist perspective. I argue that his narrator is denied the immortality enjoyed by the mummies in the pyramid of Abu Yilla because, for Allen, life ceases at the grave. Stoker's text focuses on the possibility of reanimating the mummy through occult science. However, the multiple editions of his text leave questions of immortality and legacy unanswered. I connect the tension between Tera as an uncanny corpse with wider concerns about the role of the corpse in the nineteenth-century cemetery. I build on Laqueur's definitive *The Work of the Dead* (2015) by examining the tenuous relationship between the deceased and the mourner fostered by nineteenth-century grave markers. Laqueur explores the cultural obsession with the dead and their roles in the lives of the living across history. 'The history of the work of the dead is a history of how they dwell in us—individually and communally', he argues:

It is a history of how we imagine them to be, how they give meaning to our lives, how they structure public spaces, politics, and time. It is a history of the imagination, a history of how we invest the dead [...] with meaning.¹³²

The public space of the cemetery was structured in such a way that it gave meaning not only to the identity of the dead through new burial spaces and grandiose monuments but also reminded the living of their own eventual demise. The incorporation of Egyptian funerary architecture in these cemeteries was a means by which the nineteenth century appealed to the enduring legacy of ancient Egypt, something which they desired for

¹³² Laqueur, p. 17.

their own eternal memory. Obelisks and pyramids also gesture towards a culture who drew a connection between care for the corpse and success in the afterlife.

Both Allen's and Stoker's texts are unable to define what it means to die and to be a corpse, with conflicting conclusions. They question death as a means of defining a life's narrative, revoking the authority of Egyptian funerary architecture in the cemetery. The return to life evidenced by the mummies in each of the two texts subverts the ability for a life to have a meaningful ending. I particularly focus on the alternate ending of Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, published in 1912, which introduces a more palatable marriage plot in the revised conclusion and reinstates the authority of death for Queen Tera. Although it is unclear whether Stoker wrote this alternate ending, readers' dissatisfaction with the original ending evinces an intrinsic discomfit with the idea of a corpse returning to life.

Throughout this thesis, I reveal the ways in which religion was used to authorise the portrayal of Egypt as a land of secret wisdom. I conclude this thesis by suggesting that Rider Haggard's hope that the 'sphinx will speak at last' remains purposefully unfulfilled. While each author makes Egypt speak through their narratives, the resultant dialogues reveal little about the afterlife. Egyptianising fiction uses Egypt's supposed knowledge as a means for authors to explore fears, doubts, beliefs, and questions surrounding death, the afterlife, and the role of religion in society. However, the narratives lack satisfyingly concrete conclusions. A clear picture of the afterlife is never fully articulated and Egypt preserves its spiritual authority just out of reach. When one sarcophagus is closed, another waits to be opened.

Nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction leaves the entrance to the tomb slightly ajar, allowing a tantalizing glimpse at the prospect of secrets to the unanswered questions and mysteries of the grave lingering within the pyramid. By using ancient Egypt to probe their own doubts, beliefs, and anxieties, Loudon, Poe, Rider Haggard,

Corelli, Conan Doyle, Allen, and Stoker attribute supernatural authority to ancient Egypt. Readers are invited to believe in the possibility that the dusty sands of an exotic, foreign country hold answers that would definitively prove the existence of a religious afterlife. The mummy thus does not rest, but is a captive in the tomb, an uncanny ventriloquist's dummy that seems to speak on behalf of the grave but is, in reality, a powerless product of a literary genre.

Chapter I: Jane Loudon, Edgar Allan Poe, and the ‘Spirit of the Age’: Exploring the Relationship between Science and Religion in *The Mummy!* and ‘Some Words with a Mummy’

While Egyptian mummies in fiction of the late nineteenth century and beyond are often typecast as vengeful aggressors, the earliest reanimated mummies were put to different purposes. These icons of the ancient world were resurrected in order to question the role of a Christian moral code in science. In plucking ancient figures from their pyramidal graves, early nineteenth-century authors bestowed an aura of mystical authority onto the figure of the mummy. Such representations constructed ancient Egypt as a land of esoteric power. Using galvanism to reanimate the dead, Jane Loudon (*née* Webb 1807-1858) and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) resurrect their respective mummies as figures who seem likely to reveal the nature of the afterlife, but ultimately remain silent on the secrets of the grave. While Loudon and Poe portray Cheops and Count Allamistakeo as figures who possess the power either to confirm a Christian understanding of the afterlife or destroy it entirely, the authors subvert the mummies’ undead authority by shifting the focus of the narrative. Instead of providing definitive answers on the nature of the afterlife, the role of the soul after death, and revealing ancient wisdom of the Egyptians, both mummies consistently turn the narrative back to a commentary on the role of knowledge in the nineteenth century.

Loudon’s and Poe’s narratives are important examples of nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction both because of their early publication dates and because their mummies are given an actual voice, albeit strictly controlled. Their resurrections pose broader questions about the religious consequences of

galvanism rather than presenting the mummies as dangerous practitioners of that science themselves. As Eleanor Dobson notes ‘it was not until the *fin de siècle* that ancient Egyptian characters would seize electricity for themselves’ in so doing ‘usurping the Western scientist and asserting their own superior intellectual enlightenment.’¹ Loudon’s and Poe’s use of ancient Egypt to ponder science in its early nineteenth-century infancy reveals a society teetering on the edge of abilities hitherto unexplored, the possibilities and potential dangers seemingly endless.

Loudon gives the voice of her mummy, Cheops, a moralising tone in *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827) in order to explore how natural theology should limit the margins of man’s knowledge. Her text, although eccentric and imaginative, is also heavy-handed and cautionary. She specifically addresses the importance of resisting inquiry into the afterlife and probes a religious understanding of the order of the natural world. Loudon explores the benefits of natural theology’s intellectual limitations, lauding the decision to voluntarily put aside the quest for knowledge of the afterlife as a means to preserve the sovereign immutability of Christianity and the moral code it sustains. Although set in 2126, Loudon’s text parallels England of the nineteenth century. Cheops warns nineteenth-century readers that pursuing an honourable life is of paramount importance because the nature of the afterlife is dependent upon one’s actions in the present.

In contrast, Poe’s reanimated Count Allamistakeo in ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ (1845) satirically mocks the progressive ‘spirit of the age’, which seeks to understand the origins of the universe and science’s bearing on religion.² The

¹ Eleanor Dobson, ‘Gods and Ghost Light: Ancient Egypt, Electricity, and X-Rays’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 45 (2017), 119-35, p. 120.

² Edgar Allan Poe, ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, *The American Whig Review*, April 1845, pp. 363-71 (p. 365).

story, originally published in the *American Whig Review* in 1845, was reprinted in *Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humour* in London in 1852. Benjamin A. Fisher suggests the popularity of this 1852 collection and its subsequent reprints, ‘probably more than anything else during the next several decades brought Poe’s work as a fiction writer before the British public’.³ That ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ influenced popular perceptions of Egypt can be seen in a short story published in *Punch* in 1882 entitled ‘Some More Words with a Mummy’ which claimed it was ‘Communicated by the Spirit of E.A. Poe’, and which featured the voice of a satirical mummy who mocked the ‘present muddle of Egyptian affairs’.⁴ Roger Luckhurst proposes Grant Allen’s ‘My New Year’s Eve among the Mummies’ as a reworking of Poe’s original story while Maria Fleischhack suggests that Poe’s tale ‘is a highly satirical answer to’ Loudon’s work.⁵ However, while both Luckhurst and Fleischhack note Poe’s pivotal place as an early author of fiction which utilizes the mummy, ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ is rarely given extended discussion. My extended reading of ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ here thus builds on Luckhurst’s and Fleischhack’s analysis in order to reveal the complexities in the development of Egypt as an esoteric authority in early nineteenth-century texts.

Poe’s light-hearted authority challenges readers’ expectations in order to remove any fear inherent in the relationship between science and religion. His humorous satire ridicules the belief that religion and scientific theories of the

³ Benjamin A. Fisher, ‘Poe in Great Britain’, in *Poe Abroad: Influence, Reputation, Affinities*, ed. by Lois Davis Vines (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), pp. 52-61 (p. 55).

⁴ ‘Some More Words with a Mummy’, *Punch*, 15 July, 1882, p. 22.

⁵ Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy’s Curse: The True History of Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 162; Maria Fleischhack, *Narrating Ancient Egypt: The Representation of Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century and Early-Twentieth-Century Fantastic Fiction* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015), p. 84.

nineteenth century are of any scientific value whatsoever by ridiculing emerging theories such as the geological timescale, transmutation, and the pseudoscience of craniometry. Instead, Poe prioritises the human ability to imaginatively engage the world around them, suggesting that an interaction with the natural world through artistic expression is far more important than deriving concrete answers. I read ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ as a precursor to Poe’s most famous treatise on science and religion, his 1848 prose poem *Eureka*. This poem develops Poe’s satire on scientific publications in a manner which led readers to believe his poem was an actual scientific treatise. The same satirising voice which mocks popular cosmology lectures in *Eureka* is present in the playfulness of Allamistakeo’s voice in ‘Some Words with a Mummy’. Whereas Loudon’s mummy stands as a warning not to pursue knowledge beyond the scope of God’s sovereignty because of the danger inherent in such understanding, Poe’s mummy illuminates the foolishness of seeking those answers at all because the clearest truth is found in an imaginative approach to the earthly life.

The Boundaries of Knowledge in *The Mummy!*

Very little biographical information exists on Jane Loudon before her marriage in 1830. She was born Jane Wells Webb in 1807 in Birmingham where she lived with her father until his death in 1824, finding herself with very little money at only seventeen. Her mother had died in 1819 when Webb was twelve. What little biographical information does exist suggests that Loudon was raised Anglican. Bea Howe notes that the Webb family attended the parish church in Frankley while Aileen Fyfe, in her work on the reception of John Aikin and Anna Letitia

(Aikin) Barbauld's *Evenings at Home*, refers to Loudon in a list of 'young Anglican readers'.⁶

The Mummy!: A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century was Loudon's first successful foray into the world of publishing through which she hoped to make a living. She had previously published a book entitled *Prose and Verse* (1824), but this was not as well received and has attracted little attention from scholars since its publication. The majority of what is known of the author comes from the period of her life after her marriage. Loudon's writing career took a sharp turn when she married John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843)—a prolific botanist and horticulturalist responsible for the design of national gardens and cemeteries such as the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Southampton Old Cemetery (among many others). Loudon went on to publish only one more work of fiction, *Stories of a Bride* (1829) after *The Mummy!* and her extensive literary legacy is built on her contributions to botanical publications rather than her fictional works.

Although scholars acknowledge *The Mummy!* as the first piece of fiction to employ a reawakened mummy, taking the novel at face value, it is easy to see why it has otherwise received very little analysis. Despite its eccentric appearance, *The Mummy!*'s futuristic setting offers readers a unique opportunity to engage with past, present, and future in a manner distinct to other fiction with ancient Egyptian characters. Loudon's resurrection of the ancient voice of Cheops as the connection between the three time periods casts the mummy in a role of a purveyor of mystical knowledge which continues throughout nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction.

⁶ Bea Howe, *Lady with Green Fingers: The Life of Jane Loudon* (London: Country Life, 1961), p. 29 and Aileen Fyfe, 'Reading Children's Books in Late Eighteenth-Century Dissenting Families', *The Historical Journal*, 43.2 (2000), 453-73, p. 465.

The text is a hodgepodge of genres and plotlines, with each set of characters' storylines leading in a seemingly different direction. Set in London in the year 2126, the beginning of Loudon's novel explores the political chaos of the future, which has only recently been stabilised through the re-establishment of Catholicism as a central religion and the institution of a female monarch. After having tried '[a]theism, rational liberty, and fanaticism,' ultimately, the England of the future determines that the link between government and religion is indissoluble and that '[a] fixed government seemed to require an established religion'.⁷ Loudon's society has realised that no system of governing provides more stability for a society than Christianity. Religion provides a moral code which underpins the way in which society approaches all aspects of life, particularly technological advancement.

At the novel's outset, the people are ruled by the fair and kind Queen. When the Queen dies, she names her niece Claudia as her successor and issues a decree that 'none of her successors should marry' and that 'all future queens should be chosen, by the people, from such female members of her family as might be between twenty and twenty-five years of age'.⁸ England is thrown into chaos when Queen Claudia dies and two eligible monarchs—Elvira and Rosabella—vie for the crown. Elvira is the principled foil to Rosabella's vice, who conspires with Father Morris to murder Elvira so she can win the throne.

While the bid for the throne ensues, two other characters, Edric and Dr. Entwerfen, journey to Egypt in a balloon in the hopes of reanimating a mummy with a galvanic battery in order to learn the secrets of the grave. The two awaken

⁷ Jane Webb Loudon, *The Mummy!: A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, ed. Alan Rauch (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1995), p. 7.

⁸ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 8.

the Pharaoh Cheops, who subsequently escapes them, travels back to England in their balloon, and proceeds to advise various characters on the political unrest. Edric and Dr. Entwerfen are left to travel back to England on foot and are captured and held prisoner in Spain. They are freed by King Roderick of Ireland, who also travels back to England under the pseudonym Henry Seymour and wins the heart of Elvira. At the novel's close, Britain and Ireland are united through the coronation of Queen Elvira and her marriage to King Roderick. The novel ends with Edric and Cheops back in Egypt, where Cheops is returned to the grave.

Edric restores Cheops to the afterlife without discovering definitive proof of its nature, voluntarily giving up his quest for knowledge in exchange for the peace which comes from choosing to live within a religiously-defined set of moral precepts. Loudon's use of an imagined futuristic society allows her to explore nineteenth-century scientific concerns with anonymity—not directly naming any particular philosopher or school of thought—but it is clear that the issues she addresses are of paramount importance to 1820s England.⁹ Reading the scientific context of the early nineteenth century onto the novel elucidates the theological stimulus for both *The Mummy!* and Loudon's later scientific publications.

The boundaries Cheops warns Edric to put in place in relation to his thirst for knowledge reveal the value of a religious code of ethics in maintaining a stable society upheld by a Christianity which observes a strict hierarchy of knowledge. These are values which Loudon would continue to weave into her own scientific writing after her marriage. In *The Mummy!*, Loudon presents the

⁹ Howe refers to the novel as 'curiously prophetic' due to the inventions it details which later came to fruition, such as air conditioning and coffeemakers, pp. 34-6.

ideal man of science as one who balances moral principles against progress. Alan Rauch, in the introduction to his 1995 reprint of *The Mummy!*, which has made large strides in reintroducing the novel to its well-deserved place in the study of Egyptianising fiction, suggests that Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829) was a significant influence for Loudon. Rauch suggests that Davy fulfilled the ‘noblest aim of science’ which he defines as working ‘in service of the community’.¹⁰ By refusing to patent his design for the safety lamp in 1815, Davy served the community by providing free access to his invention which would help to prevent mining explosions. This philanthropic approach to knowledge, which uses information to benefit society, informs Loudon’s portrayal of an ideal scientist in the character of Edric. Loudon helps readers ‘imagine the need to progress with the times by improving the standards of moral and social behaviour,’ Rauch suggests; she ‘challenges her readers to think progressively about two significant areas: religion and gender’.¹¹ It is difficult to read the novel as a whole, with its seemingly detached plotlines, but focusing on Edric and Dr. Entwerfen’s storyline and the scientists’ quest for knowledge highlights the religious base of Loudon’s moral code. I argue that this quest for knowledge underpins Rauch’s categories of religion and gender. The power of knowledge and its influence on society affects everyone in the social order from the monarchy, to natural philosophers, to the working class.

Loudon’s resurrection of Cheops specifically is an odd choice considering that he was of little interest in early nineteenth-century archaeology. Fascination around Egypt in the early nineteenth century was facilitated by the gregarious

¹⁰ Rauch, ‘Introduction’, p. xxii.

¹¹ Rauch, ‘Introduction’, p. xxiii.

figure of Giovanni Belzoni (1778-1823).¹² Referred to as the Great Belzoni, he was popular in the early nineteenth century for his archaeological excavations and particular flair for performance. His celebrity status transferred popular interest onto Egypt, but he had little to do with Cheops and his ‘Great’ pyramid. Belzoni is primarily remembered for his excavations of two central sites: the second pyramid of Giza—that of Cheops’ son, Khafre (or Chephren)—and the tomb of Seti I. His work on the tomb of Seti I was so renowned that it became known as ‘Belzoni’s Tomb’, his fame effectively replacing Seti I’s identity with his own. Belzoni himself had little to do with Cheops’ Great Pyramid, and so the celebrity status which revolved around him would therefore not have fallen onto this pharaoh or monument. Indeed, the Great Pyramid did not receive significant archaeological attention until well after the publication of *The Mummy!* when William Matthew Flinders Petrie systematically took its measurements in the 1880s.

As the largest of the pyramids of Giza, however, the Great Pyramid secured its own particular kind of monumental celebrity. Paired with the fact that it had not yet received the attentions of archaeology, the Great Pyramid could be more freely used as a space onto which Loudon might project her ethical musings. As Loudon’s mummy speaks to the futuristic England of 2126, he must be someone of importance. Comparing her futuristic society to that of the ‘Great’ Cheops, as the Pharaoh who commissioned and oversaw the construction of such a pyramid, allows Loudon to explore what makes a society successful.

¹² For further reading on Belzoni’s influence on Loudon and her choice of Cheops for the mummy, see Maria Fleischhack, *Narrating Ancient Egypt: The Representation of Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Fantastic Fiction* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 50, 147-8 and Rauch, ‘Introduction’, pp. xi-xii.

Fleischhack notes that Cheops is a geographical outsider, ‘and yet he has greater insight into events and the motivation for human action than any of the other characters in the novel’.¹³ Loudon presents Cheops as a ruler poised at the zenith of Egypt’s greatness. His magnificent pyramid cast him as an imposing figure of progress in both the ancient world and, subsequently, the netherworld and stood as a testament to all who saw it that Egypt was strong and imposing, towering—quite literally—over other civilisations. In Egyptological terms, aside from standing as a testament to the pharaoh’s greatness for thousands of years to come, the pyramid was also his final resting place. It evidenced his eminence among pharaohs and was designed to earn him a place of honour in the afterlife.

Edric desires the same fame in his futuristic era but, instead of using architecture, he employs scientific advancement in the form of galvanism as the means by which he hopes to achieve eternal fame. Ancient Egypt used architecture to testify to their progress as a civilisation whereas England in 2126 uses scientific and technological advancement. Fleischhack notes that Cheops as Other actually ‘soon turns out to be the moralistic voice of the *Self*’.¹⁴ Loudon juxtaposes the currency of progress in ancient Egypt and England of 2126 to show how that progress must be boundaried by a moral code. Rauch suggests that, by using Cheops to espouse ‘universal codes of morality’ instead of ‘denominational codes’, Loudon ‘demonstrates unusual sensitivity in recognising that God can be understood and misunderstood in various ways by different cultures’.¹⁵ However, Edric’s specific interactions with Cheops and their connection more broadly to

¹³ Fleischhack, p. 154.

¹⁴ Fleischhack, p. 74.

¹⁵ Rauch, ‘Introduction’, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

concerns about religion's role in scientific knowledge reveal these to be concerns most pertinent to nineteenth-century Christianity.

Early on in the novel, Father Morris, an ironically unchristian priest, notes that Egypt represented the epitome of an advanced society, apart from one area: religion. 'Egypt is rich in monuments of antiquity; and all historians unite in declaring her ancient inhabitants to have possessed knowledge and science far beyond even the boasted improvements of modern times' he says: '[a]re we even capable of conceiving works so majestic as those they put in execution? We assuredly are not; and in every point, excepting in their religion, they surpassed us'.¹⁶ Despite living in the most advanced society in history according to Father Morris, Cheops' society is far from greatness in terms of religion. Cheops himself admits his own ethical shortcomings, telling Edric of how he succumbed to the desire for incest, murdering his father for love of his sister, Arsinoë. For this murder, he is cursed by Osiris with an afterlife of continual reincarnation 'in the form of animals'.¹⁷ Cheops' afterlife suggests that there is some truth to ancient Egyptian religion, through the existence of Osiris, but such religion is presented as degenerative, with a reincarnation that leads not to betterment of the self, but rather animalistic rebirths. Through Cheops' actions, Loudon shows that all the knowledge and scientific advancement which allowed Cheops to commission one of the seven wonders of the ancient world was not enough to sustain his moral fibre. For all its magnificent monuments, ancient Egypt was no more advanced than Loudon's futuristic England. Without the moral compass provided by Christianity, corrupt leaders rule over society from ancient Egypt to the England

¹⁶ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 42.

¹⁷ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 112.

of the future. Cheops reaps the consequences of his actions and is sent back to earth in his original bodily form in order to caution Edric—representative of those who will lead the next generation into a new age of knowledge—to learn a vital lesson from his mistakes: no form of knowledge is worth the price of one's soul.

Loudon's novel lauds inventions which improve communication or create a safer, healthier society, such as the new system of delivering post via steam cannons.¹⁸ There are inventions which benefit the environment as well, such as new chemical supplies of light and heat: these supplies improve the quality of the atmosphere, which is 'no longer thick and cloudy'.¹⁹ Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall more broadly note the importance of this utopian manner of thinking about science. 'In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, utopian thinking about the vast social benefits made possible by scientific innovation was a powerful force for good' they write, '[a]dvances in anatomy, chemistry, electricity, engineering and the exploration sciences were saving lives and creating vast new economic possibilities, besides giving rise to some of the darker forms of human exploitation associated with the industrial revolution'.²⁰ The inventions and technological advances that are celebrated in Loudon's novel, then, are those which contribute to a safer and more connected community.

This type of science bent on improving community and quality of life is contrasted with science that seeks to replace God with man. This science is dangerous because it threatens to destroy the tenets of the religion which it has taken society thousands of years to achieve. Edric desires knowledge which could destabilise society's religious base and cause division in people's beliefs. The

¹⁸ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 28.

¹⁹ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 28.

²⁰ Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall, 'Introduction', in *Frankenstein's Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780-1830* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1-15 (pp. 2-3).

consequences of reawakening the mummy reveal the difference between the technological advances which improve society and those which threaten it. Edric's sacrilegious desire to reanimate a corpse to learn about the afterlife directly challenges the role of divine creator, wresting authority from God and placing it into human hands. 'I would fain know the secrets of the grave', Edric says,

and ascertain whether the spirit be chained after death to its earthly covering of clay, condemned till the day of final resurrection to hover over the rotting mass of corruption that once contained it; or whether the last agonies of death free it from its mortal ties, and leave it floating, free as air, in the bright regions of ethereal space.²¹

Edric seeks to know whether the soul is related specifically to Christian eschatology whereby the soul lives beyond death in an immortal afterlife, or if it dies with the mortal body. 'It was Cheops raised the pyramids from the dust by science,' Edric claims, 'and Cheops, by the force of science, shall be compelled to disclose their origin'.²² In resurrecting a corpse, Edric seeks knowledge that only death can bring.

While all who interact with the mummy feel an effect on their soul, it is only Edric who learns the connection between the pursuit of science and one's spiritual state. The narrator of the novel states that '[i]t was not, indeed, possible for human beings to hold daily intercourse with Cheops without feeling their souls withered'.²³ Other characters, particularly Father Morris, feel a negative effect on their souls after interacting with Cheops. Father Morris, a wicked priest

²¹ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 15.

²² Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 18.

²³ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 127.

who seeks to gain political power by pushing Rosabella to the throne by whatever means necessary—including murder—finds the mummy more terrifying and visually horrific than other characters. ‘I gazed upon the countenance of that tremendous being, and read there the traces of fierce and ungoverned passions, wild and destructive in their course as the raging whirlwind’, he relates, ‘[e]ven I dreaded the influence he might exert upon our destinies, and shuddered at the thought of such a creature’s being released from the fetters of the earth, and sent back as a destroying angel’.²⁴ Father Morris finds the mummy so visually terrifying because he himself is the most outwardly wicked character in the novel. He is willing to murder Elvira in order to help Rosabella ascend the throne, much like Cheops murdered his father for love of his sister. ‘[T]he mummy transforms into an evil character in this fact of human transgression’, notes Maria Fleischhack, ‘not by action, but interpretation’.²⁵ Acting as a mirror, Cheops reflects to each character the state of their own soul: thus, to Father Morris, Cheops appears ugly and desiccated because Father Morris’ own soul is equally repulsive.

It is only Edric’s interaction with Cheops, however, that reveals the potential impact of scientific quests on the moral fibre of society as a whole. While Father Morris is horrified at Cheops’ hideous form, Edric’s interactions with Cheops go beyond unsightly horror to disturb the physical nature of his surroundings. As he attempts to reanimate Cheops, Edric’s surroundings foreshadow the severity of his violation of divinely-set boundaries. As Edric and

²⁴ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 105.

²⁵ Fleischhack, p. 152.

Dr. Entwerfen ‘gazed [...] with deep but undefinable interest upon the sculptured mysteries of the tomb of Cheops’ they sense a warning coming from inside them.

[A] secret voice seemed to whisper in their bosoms—‘And shall finite creatures like these [...] presume to dive into the mysteries of their Creator’s will? Learn wisdom by this omen, nor seek again to explore secrets above your comprehension!’²⁶

Despite this, Edric persists and while he applies the galvanic battery to the appendages of the mummy, ‘a demoniac laugh of derision appeared to ring in his ears, and the surrounding mummies seemed starting from their places and dancing in unearthly merriment’.²⁷ Edric is shaken and ‘stood aghast amidst this fearful convulsion of nature. A horrid creeping seemed to run through every vein, every nerve feeling as though drawn from its extremity, and wrapped in icy chillness round his heart’.²⁸ Nature and Edric’s own senses recoil at the reanimation of inanimate matter but he pushes forward until, eventually, Cheops awakes and Edric faints after being overcome with the horror of his actions. When he revives, he and Dr. Entwerfen search for Cheops, but the mummy has disappeared. Dr. Entwerfen immediately realises that the contemplation of scientific experiment is far more pleasing than the actual results, ‘which I find is any thing in the world but pleasing in reality’.²⁹

Edric’s relief at the absence of his reanimated corpse recalls that of the eponymous scientist who believes his monster to have perished in Mary Shelley’s

²⁶ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 70.

²⁷ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, pp. 71-2.

²⁸ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 72.

²⁹ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 74.

Frankenstein (1818).³⁰ However, unlike Victor Frankenstein, who realises the immorality inherent in his actions but refuses to accept responsibility for his creation, Edric learns from Cheops instead of rejecting him. While the consequences of replacing divinity with science in *Frankenstein* is catastrophic, Loudon's text offers a gentler reproof. Cheops serves to guide the characters in the novel to a closer evaluation of the state of their souls and the consequences of their pursuit of knowledge. David Hogsette explains how 'Victor Frankenstein's transgressive autonomy, grounded in scientific materialism, results in a reductionism that ultimately leads to existential despair, individual crisis, and communal disintegration'.³¹ Cheops warns that the personal consequences of Edric's pursuit of knowledge of the afterlife would be equally catastrophic. '[S]eek not to pry into mysteries designed to be concealed from man and enjoy the comforts within your reach', cautions Cheops, 'for know, that knowledge, above the sphere of man's capacity, produces only wretchedness; and that to be contented with our station, and to make ourselves useful to our fellow-creatures, is the only true path to happiness'.³² Howe suggests that Cheops' warning was representative of '[a] philosophical belief very close to Jane's own heart and one to which she subscribed all her life'.³³ Through Cheops, Loudon suggests that a separation or rift between science and religion would bring only misery. John Robbins notes that while *Frankenstein* lauds the 'capacity for imaginative

³⁰ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor & Jones, 1818). For further reading on the connection between *The Mummy!* and *Frankenstein*, see Fleischhack, pp. 131-3.

³¹ David S. Hogsette, 'Metaphysical Intersections in Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Theistic Investigation of Scientific Materialism and Transgressive Autonomy' in *Christianity and Literature*, 60.4 (2011), 531-59, p. 533.

³² Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 298.

³³ Howe, p. 36.

creation, intellectual achievement, and ethical purity that the creation of the Creature represents,' at the same time, 'it also persistently questions the ramifications of such experimentation'.³⁴

The Mummy!, like *Frankenstein*, illuminates the consequences of scientific pursuit unfounded on religious precepts. While Fleischhack has suggested that, in Egypt, Edric and Dr. Entwerfen 'are robbed of their inherent right of freedom as colonisers of the country and of their belief in their scientific actions',³⁵ I argue that it is not the belief in scientific actions which is removed from Loudon's scientists: instead, Dr. Entwerfen and Edric realise that the horror they experience in resuscitating the Egyptian dead is a direct result of their violation of the ethics of Christianity. Through Cheops' own transgression—his patricide—Loudon shows that the temptation to give up one's principles for a seemingly greater alternative is an issue which faces humanity at large, from the time of the Egypt's supposedly progressive zenith to the point where England stands at the precipice of rejecting religion in favour of science.

Edric as Budding Natural Theologian: *The Mummy!* in Context

In removing religion from the creation process and replacing the role of a divine Creator with a scientist, Loudon connects *The Mummy!* to wider nineteenth-century approaches to science. Her novel addresses similar theological concerns to those which occupied William Paley, William Kirby, and Adam Sedgwick, who used a religious perspective to found their views on science. Rauch suggests

³⁴ John Robbins, "'It Lives!': Frankenstein, Presumption, and the Staging of Romantic Science', *European Romantic Review*, 28.2 (2017), 185-201, p. 188.

³⁵ Fleischhack, p. 151.

that Loudon's ability to reconcile scientific knowledge within a moral code was possible 'because the institutions of science and religion were not yet at loggerheads' so that '[s]cience could still be contained within a set of rules that applied to all human inquiry'.³⁶ Loudon's text imaginatively removes this limit, positing what science in the early nineteenth century was on the verge of declaring: that life began through evolutionary processes instead of divine conception. She uses Edric's actions to imaginatively portray the consequences of moving away from natural theology towards a godless view of science and the danger this move would represent for nineteenth-century England.

Philosophic and scientific writing in the early nineteenth-century often still sought to link those processes which produced human life to a divine creator and was content to stop scientific inquiry at this point. Although Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Robert Chambers espoused a belief in transmutation, such beliefs were opposed by more conservative voices such as Charles Lyell. Knellwolf and Goodall note that while 'the period radically curbed the Church's direct influence on civic matters', more broadly 'the secularisation of public administration was unable to undermine the Christian foundation of European society'.³⁷ Science was still a branch of public administration which remained closely connected to the the authority of the Church of England.

William Paley (1743-1805)—an English theologian and philosopher—used the authority of Christianity to authorise his views on science by showing science as a natural means by which humanity could learn more about God and draw closer to him. Through his *Natural Theology* (1802), Paley suggested that

³⁶ Rauch, 'Introduction', p. xxix.

³⁷ Knellwolf and Goodall, p. 3.

creation was designed in order to point towards an intelligent Creator.³⁸ His famous watchmaker illustration suggests that in finding no other explanation as to how the earth was put together in such a precise and exact manner, one must naturally assume that it was created by someone. He evidences this claim by suggesting that a person who finds a watch must assume, even if they know nothing about watch design, that someone carefully crafted it, as it clearly could not have commissioned its own existence. Employing various examples from nature and detailing the complexities of creatures and plants, Paley asserts that, like an intricately-constructed watch, the study of nature inherently and naturally points to an intelligent Creator. '[D]ivision of organized substances into animals and vegetables, and the distribution and sub-distribution of each into genera and species, which distribution is not an arbitrary act of the mind, but is founded in the order which prevails in external nature', asserts Paley, 'appear to me to contradict the supposition of the present world being the remains of an indefinite variety of existences; of a variety which rejects all plan'.³⁹ Each stratum of scientific classification and thought, for Paley, serve to prove the existence of a divine creator instead of dismantle such claims. Therefore, science and the study of man need not be feared or threatening to religion as they will, in Paley's view, only serve to point humanity closer to its divine Creator.

³⁸ William Paley, *Natural Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). For further reading on the attitudes towards natural theology in the nineteenth century see: William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1999); *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction*, ed. by Gary B. Ferngren (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017); Aileen Fyfe, 'Publication and the Classics: Paley's *Natural Theology* and the Nineteenth-Century Scientific Canon', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, 33.4 (2002), 729-51; Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Jonathan R. Topham, 'Biology in the Service of Natural Theology', in *Biology and Ideology from Descartes to Dawkins*, ed. by Denis R. Alexander and Ronald L. Numbers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 88-114.

³⁹ Paley, p. 39.

Paley's philosophy of natural theology formed the basis for many methods of scientific exploration in the early nineteenth century such as William Kirby's. Kirby (1759-1850)—a Fellow of the Royal Society and the founder of Entomology—held the soul to be used by God specifically to limit what knowledge humanity can and should attain. 'The most common mode of instruction is placing signs or symbols before the eye of the learner, which represent sounds or ideas', wrote Kirby,

and so the great Instructor of man placed this world before him as an open though mystical book, in which the different objects were the letters and words of a language, from the study of which he might gain wisdom of various kind, and be instructed in such truths relating to that spiritual world to which this soul belonged, as God saw fit thus to reveal to him.⁴⁰

According to Kirby, then, God chooses what to reveal to humanity by means of the soul, which directs humankind to interpret the specific symbols God designed them to understand. He encouraged his readers to be grateful to the Creator 'for enriching us with these admirable organs, which [...] are the immediate instruments that enable us to master the whole globe that we inhabit'.⁴¹ The soul allows humankind to harness not just 'the visible and tangible matter that we tread upon' but also 'the invisible substances that float around it, and to bottle up the lightning of the wind, as well as the waters. Thus by their means do we add daily increments to our knowledge and science'.⁴² There was no fear in Kirby's view of the soul and knowledge. The soul was created by God to lead humankind to investigate the universe which will allow them to grow in scientific knowledge,

⁴⁰ William Kirby, *On the power, wisdom and goodness of God as manifested in the creation of animals and in their history, habits and instincts*, Vol. II (London: W. Pickering, 1835), p. 524.

⁴¹ Kirby, p. 218.

⁴² Kirby, p. 218.

both physical and immaterial. Although it is clear that there are limits to what humankind should and should not know, Kirby rested in God's governing authority which reveals only what is necessary to 'our comforts, pleasures, and everything desirable in life'.⁴³

Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873)—one of the founders of modern geology, Woodwardian Professor of Geology at Cambridge, and an ordained priest—likewise had little fear that probing into the history of the world would be dangerous to society's moral principles. He, like Kirby, was content with—and in fact promoted—the beauty inherent in the limitations of humankind's ability to understand the inner workings of the universe. '[N]o opinion can be heretical except that which is not true. Conflicting falsehoods we can comprehend; but truths can never war against each other', he avowed in a lecture to the Geological Society,

I affirm, therefore, that we have nothing to fear from the results of our inquiries, provided they be followed in the laborious, but secure road of honest induction. In this way we may rest assured that we shall never arrive at conclusions opposed to any truth, either physical or moral, from whatsoever source that truth may be derived.⁴⁴

By grounding science in the close observation of nature, Sedgwick guards against dangerous theorizing. In so doing, he recognized that '[t]hat which is exact in science must be circumscribed and defined: but we have no power to foresee the limits; and there is an intense and poetic interest in the very uncertainty and

⁴³ Kirby, p. 218

⁴⁴ Adam Sedgwick, 'Address to the Geological Society', *The Philosophical Magazine or Annals of Chemistry, Mathematics, Astronomy, Natural History, and General Science* 2. 7 (1830), 289-315, p. 310.

boundlessness of our speculations’.⁴⁵ While Kirby suggested that God himself defines these limits, Sedgwick rooted them in humanity’s futility. However, both ultimately view the continuation of scientific inquiry as something positive for faith, what Sedgwick referred to as truth, instead of something dangerous.

Loudon initially posits Edric as a natural philosopher quite unlike Paley, Kirby, and Sedgwick, revealing the inherent danger in steering science away from the boundaries of natural theology. Where they trust in God to explain the universe according to his purpose, Edric seeks to become a creator himself. He is initially portrayed as someone who will break down the boundaries of knowledge previously guarded by religion. Loudon reverses his role by the novel’s close, however, in order to more closely align Edric’s approach to natural theology. Loudon uses Edric’s doubt and anxiety to ponder the future of scientific thought. She recognizes the potential risk inherent in scientific exploration, which could one day uncover knowledge that would disprove Christianity or sever the ties between science and religion.

By validating Edric’s decision to close the door of the tomb, Cheops shows that Edric is his opposite, choosing prudence and mercy over desire as Cheops himself did not. ‘[B]e happy, Edric, for happiness is in your power’, commends Cheops, ‘be wise, for wisdom may be obtained by reflection; and be merciful, for unless we give, how can we expect mercy?’⁴⁶ Edric’s happiness is indeed found in consciously choosing to put aside knowledge that could threaten his society’s religious foundation, something Loudon clearly hopes future scientists and philosophers will also do. Edric’s choice is cast as an act of mercy,

⁴⁵ Sedgwick, ‘Address’, p. 315.

⁴⁶ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 298.

not for himself but for religion as a whole. He chooses to put aside knowledge that possesses the potential to unravel religion's core, and, in so doing, chooses to accept that voluntary ignorance is indeed bliss.

Loudon's later publications, which earned her fame as a female scientific writer in a male-dominated field, adopt a similar philosophy. Where her predecessors asserted clear gender boundaries which discouraged women from the pursuit of scientific knowledge, Loudon used her position of authority to assert boundaries that were based on morals, not gender. After marrying John Loudon in 1830, she went on to become one of the foremost writers on horticulture in the era, publishing *Gardening for Ladies* (1840), *Botany for Ladies* (1842), *My Own Garden* (1855), as well as two horticultural periodicals the *Ladies' Magazine of Gardening* (1842) and the *Ladies' Companion to the Flower Garden* (1840-44).⁴⁷ Although Paul Alkon laments the decided loss for the literary world when Loudon began 'grinding out horticultural potboilers', Loudon's philosophical nature and defence of a religious approach to scientific inquiry continued to blossom within her horticultural writing.⁴⁸

Loudon rejected rote memorization of botanical classification, preferring instead to allow her emotions to lead her into scientific discovery, a practice she encourages her readers to cultivate. In her introduction to *Botany for Ladies* (1842), Loudon recounts her struggle to understand the scientific language of botany. '[W]hen I heard that plants were divided into the two great classes, the Vascular and the Cellulares, and again into the Dicotyledons or Exogens, the

⁴⁷ For further reading on Loudon's extensive botanical publications see: Sarah Dewis. 'Jane Webb Loudon, Editor and Author of Garden Publications', in *The Loudons and the Gardening Press* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 195-236.

⁴⁸ Paul K. Alkon, 'Fantasy and Metafiction: From *Les Posthumes* to *The Mummy*', in *Origins of Futuristic Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 192-244 (p. 232).

Monocotyledons or Endogens, and the Acotyledons or Acrognēs [...] I was in despair', she notes, 'for I thought it quite impossible that I ever could remember all the hard names that seemed to stand on the very threshold of the science, as if to forbid the entrance of any but the initiated'.⁴⁹ Loudon found the Linnean system of classification, developed by Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) 'excessively repugnant' and set about trying to learn the classifications of all of the plants in a more natural way.⁵⁰ Loudon recounts how she learned to classify plants because of 'a mass of beautiful crimson flowers' which attracted her attention and reminded her of other plants which she soon learned were of the same 'Malvaceous' family.⁵¹ Her entrance into the world of botany came through her passions and her senses upon which she built her horticultural foundations.

Loudon encouraged her female readers to form emotional connections with their learning because 'unless the inquirer knows something of botany, the name, if it be a scientific one, will seem only a collection of barbarous sounds, and will convey no ideas to the mind'.⁵² Instead of studying botany for botany's sake, she writes specifically to help women 'find as much pleasure in the pursuit as I have'.⁵³ The pleasure, for Loudon, comes from approaching science with a passion. She encourages her readers to devote themselves even to merely a minute understanding of botany because,

the name of a new plant, and the ascertaining the order to which it belongs, will recall a variety of recollections that will open up a new

⁴⁹ Loudon, *Botany for Ladies; or, A Popular Introduction to the Natural System of Plants, according to the classification of De Candolle* (London: J. Murray, 1842), p. iv.

⁵⁰ Loudon, *Botany for Ladies*, p. iii.

⁵¹ Loudon, *Botany for Ladies*, pp. iv-v.

⁵² Loudon, *Botany for Ladies*, pp. 1-2.

⁵³ Loudon, *Botany for Ladies*, p. vii.

source of interest and enjoyment [...] for we never can enjoy thoroughly anything that we do not understand.⁵⁴

The continued interest and enjoyment found in studying botany is not simply for pleasure alone, however. Instead, Loudon confines her scientific enjoyment to knowledge which helps her better appreciate botany through a Christian lens. ‘A wild plant in a hedge, a tuft of moss on a wall, and even the Lichens which discolour the stones, all present objects of interest, and of admiration for that Almighty Power’, she instructs, ‘[i]t has often been said that the study of nature has a tendency to elevate and ameliorate the mind; and there is perhaps no branch of Natural History which more fully illustrates the truth of this remark than Botany.’⁵⁵ Loudon does not indulge in botanical classification solely to increase her intelligence or even her enjoyment of nature. Her botanical interests possess a higher purpose and, just as she does in *The Mummy!*, Loudon draws clear margins to the pursuits of knowledge. She has studied so that she can educate others and Loudon is content for her readers to only learn ‘a very slight knowledge of botany’.⁵⁶ Loudon and, in turn, her readers do not need to commit themselves to a lifelong pursuit of botanical knowledge and learn everything possible about the properties of all plants. Writing on Shelley’s moral philosophy in *Frankenstein*, Knellwolf notes that ‘there is no reason why a nurturing education of noble emotions could not establish a healthy balance between humankind and nature’ so that ‘the study of human nature is not simply a worthy subject, but a moral imperative’.⁵⁷ Loudon’s aim to educate women on

⁵⁴ Loudon, *Botany for Ladies*, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Loudon, *Botany for Ladies*, p. viii.

⁵⁶ Loudon, *Botany for Ladies*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Christa Knellwolf, ‘Geographic Boundaries and Inner Space: Frankenstein, Scientific Explorations, and the Quest for the Absolute’, in *Frankenstein’s Science: Experimentation and*

horticulture likewise sought to balance passion for knowledge against a moral code governed by God. A passion for scientific discovery should bring one closer both to God and to nature. However, past this point, one must relinquish the mysteries of the universe to God and be content in his authority.

Loudon's horticultural writings encourage women in scientific pursuits where her female predecessors discouraged such practices. Loudon's writing develops a method of exploring horticulture that would specifically aid women in understanding the science of botany from the perspective of natural theology, which sets her apart from female educational authors who maintained strict gender boundaries. Sarah Trimmer (1741-1810), an eighteenth-century author of numerous books for children and educators, wove themes of divinely-inspired creation into historical, ecumenical, and natural education into her books.⁵⁸ Her educational periodical, *The Guardian of Education* (1802-1806), reviewed children's literature and offered educational theories that espoused the tenets of natural theology as a means of teaching children about God through an exploration of the natural world. In *An Easy Introduction into the Knowledge of Nature, and Reading the Holy Scriptures Adapted to the Capacities of Children* (1799), she follows the process of building a house, incorporating its design and construction as well as builders and bricklayers. She then reminds the two children in the text, Henry and Charlotte, that, just as the house must have been designed by the builders and bricklayers, so too must the materials used by the builders and bricklayers have been designed by a creator. Like Paley, she

Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780-1830, ed. by Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 49-70 (p. 63).

⁵⁸ For further reading on Trimmer, see Alan Rauch, 'A World of Faith on a Foundation of Science: Science and Religion in British Children's Literature 1761-1878' *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 14.1 (1989), 13-9.

continues on to discuss the intricacies of plant life and the overwhelming variety of species and types of plants. She concludes by questioning whether her overview of the natural world can produce anything except faith in God as Creator. ‘Do you not then, my dear children, perceive the hand of GOD in every little leaf and flower?’ she asks, ‘[a]re you not convinced that if there were no GOD, there would not have been any of these things? Or, in short, any thing that now exists?’⁵⁹ The intelligent order of the natural world and the intricacies and variety to be found in plants and animals, for both Trimmer and Paley, evidence an intelligent creator, but their theories allow little room for further investigation. They are both content to cease pursuing knowledge where further probing would stray into God’s sovereignty.

Loudon’s botanical publications break down the barriers that Trimmer sets up to a pursuit of knowledge. Trimmer encourages the children to stop pursuing knowledge lest they ‘overpower’ their minds: ‘The idea of God in his infinite perfections is too great for the highest human understanding,’ she writes: ‘and were even the sentiments which at this moment fill my own mind to be communicated to yours, they would overpower you so that you would be lost in wonder and admiration’.⁶⁰ Trimmer promotes the tenets of Paley’s natural theology which assert that there are types of knowledge ‘too great’ for the human mind to comprehend, but she also links the boundaries of knowledge to gender. For Trimmer, the need to cease attaining knowledge at a certain point is even more important for women. ‘I do not mean, my dear, to excite a desire in your

⁵⁹ Sarah Trimmer, *An Easy Introduction into the Knowledge of Nature, and Reading the Holy Scriptures Adapted to the Capacities of Children*, 10th edn (London: Longman, Gees, and Robinson, 1799), p. 137.

⁶⁰ Trimmer, p. 133.

mind of entering too deeply into the study of these things', she says, turning specifically to the female child: 'I would only have you read some easy books on the subject.'⁶¹ Although Loudon's horticultural publications maintain the same views as Trimmer's that one need not delve too intensely into the study of botany, her limits are set by religion not gender.

The pursuit of knowledge need only equip one with the ability to better revere the majesty of the Creator and rest in his sovereignty. In this way, scientific pursuit serves a significant religious purpose. Loudon uses Edric in *The Mummy!* to push the limits of knowledge, revealing that the danger is just as prevalent for men as it is for women. He initially resists the offerings of natural theology, which ties the nature of the afterlife to the benevolence of a larger force. In striving to learn the secrets of the grave by reanimating Cheops, Edric recklessly goes where natural theology will not.

Edric's realisation that the fulfilment of his desire to restore life comes hand in hand with severe consequences suggests that Loudon recognizes the inherent power of knowledge. 'Devoted from my earliest youth to the pursuits of science, I craved ardently for knowledge denied to mortals; I aspired to penetrate into the profoundest secrets of Nature, and burnt to accomplish wishes destined never to be realized', Edric reveals,

'[g]ive me change,' cried I in my madness, 'give me variety, and I ask no more; for even wretchedness itself were better to bear than this tiresome unvarying uniformity.' The unreasonableness of my wishes deserved punishment, and I have been curst with the very fulfilment of my wishes.'⁶²

⁶¹ Trimmer, p. 115.

⁶² Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 156.

While Rauch suggests that ‘knowledge is far more powerful than Loudon ever admits’, Edric’s acknowledgement of his transgression as a curse links his story to the account of humanity’s original sin in Genesis, which also stemmed from a desire for knowledge.⁶³

Loudon reverses the gender roles in the story of original sin the Garden of Eden, revealing that man and woman are likewise tempted by the offerings of knowledge. When Eve surrenders to the temptation to attain knowledge beyond her capacity and eats an apple from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil at the behest of the serpent, she commits the first sin and humanity is subsequently cursed. Edric, like Eve, is tempted to attain godlike knowledge by Father Morris, a corrupt religious figure not unlike the fallen angel Lucifer. The ‘idea suggested by Father Morris [...] as to the possibility of reanimating a dead body’ so appeals to Edric that it ‘took forcible possession of his mind’.⁶⁴ Edric clearly understands the immoral quality of his obsession with raising the dead and tries ‘in vain to subdue it; but it seemed to hang upon his steps, to present itself before him wherever he went, and, in short, to pursue him with the malignancy of a demon’.⁶⁵ Immediately upon reanimating Cheops, Edric feels regret at the power he has wielded. Just as ‘the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked’ when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, so too is Edric’s mind instantly aware of the horror of his actions.⁶⁶ In light of the knowledge of their nakedness, Adam and Eve experience shame and desire to cover themselves.

⁶³ Rauch, ‘Introduction’, p. xxix.

⁶⁴ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ Loudon, *The Mummy!*, p. 15.

⁶⁶ Genesis 3.7. All subsequent biblical references in this thesis are taken from the King James Version.

While Edric also feels shame at his actions and desires to find the object of his experiment, Cheops evades him and Edric is left to live with his curse.

For their sin, Adam, Eve, and every human being after them are born into sin and cursed with separation from God and the inevitability of physical death. God places a limit on the human lifespan by casting Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden ‘lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever’.⁶⁷ The entrance to Eden was guarded by ‘Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life’ so that humankind might never again attain eternal life on earth.⁶⁸ Loudon draws a parallel between the Genesis account and *The Mummy!* to show the necessity for a clear limit to the level of knowledge man should attain and the consequences for those who transgress that boundary. God specifically tells Adam and Eve ‘of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’.⁶⁹ It is this boundary line which Loudon’s mummy strictly cautions Edric to observe. Although Cheops’ adheres to belief in Osiris, the mummy promotes boundaries that would safeguard Christianity.

Just as Adam and Eve attained knowledge meant for God and his higher beings and have ‘become as one of us to know good and evil’, Edric has realised that man can stand in the role of creator.⁷⁰ His ability to comment on the consequences of sin, like Adam and Eve, comes from having tasted the severity of the consequences of transgressing God’s boundaries. God’s warning to Adam and Eve that death follows the quest of knowledge not meant for humans to attain, is mirrored in Cheops’ words to Edric that only wretchedness can come from asking

⁶⁷ Genesis 3.22.

⁶⁸ Genesis 3.22-24.

⁶⁹ Genesis 2.17.

⁷⁰ Genesis 3.22.

questions about the afterlife. Edric, under the same curse as Adam and Eve, has the potential to condemn his society to eternal separation from God should he pursue his scientific inquiries. Knellwolf notes in *Frankenstein* a ‘warning about the dangerous consequences of scientific curiosity’ which, ‘however, does not instruct us to desist from the desire to know but urges us to build the context for an understanding of self and world that benefits each and every one’.⁷¹ Loudon’s text offers a similar warning. *The Mummy!* does not discourage the pursuit of knowledge which will benefit society, only that which has the potential to destroy it. Should Edric discover the nature of the afterlife and continue to place himself in the role of creator, his society will lose its religious base and the ethical code it provides in relation to scientific pursuits.

By closing the novel with Elvira’s ascension to the throne, Loudon restores a hierarchy of religious morality above scientific inquiry. Elvira will continue to uphold Christianity with Roderick by her side. Edric is physically distanced from England, along with the science he represents, with his return to Egypt to restore Cheops to the grave. Loudon ends the novel in Egypt where Edric chooses to accept Cheops’ warning to leave the secrets of the grave unexplored. The science that underpins Elvira’s government will continue to focus on improving society through technology rather than looking to further the abilities of the scientist to create and destroy life. Edward T. Oakes notes of *Frankenstein* that ‘the real problem comes not from scientists but from the Prometheanism of science’.⁷² Likewise, Edric has learned that, while control of life and death may not be beyond the physical capabilities of the scientist, the role

⁷¹ Knellwolf, ‘Geographic Boundaries and Inner Space’, p. 65.

⁷² Edward T. Oakes, ‘Lab Life: Vitalism, Promethean Science, and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*’, *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 16.4 (2013), 56-77, p. 72.

of creator falls outside the moral precepts set by Christianity, boundaries which must be respected for the good of society.

Edgar Allan Poe and The Folly of Knowledge

Edgar Allan Poe, in his ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, mocks Loudon’s fear that scientific inquiry could present a danger to religious doctrine. Instead, Poe’s light-hearted satire suggests that 1840s America remains stuck in absolutist thinking which negates the power and influence of imaginative thought. Although Poe writes in an American context, his satirical mummy contributes to discussions also occurring in Britain, the origins of the universe, the boundaries of natural theology, and the authority of history. Poe’s imaginative approach to science in ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ and his later works added to the growing body of popular publications seeking to understand the historical origins of the universe, particularly Robert Chambers’ *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), which incited voracious discussion in Britain and America alike. For Poe, however, the answer to cosmological questions matters little: the true value is found in imaginatively engaging the question itself.

In ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, the narrator is summoned from his peaceful slumber by his friend Doctor Ponnonner and entreated to ‘[c]ome to me, by all means [...] [c]ome and help us to rejoice’.⁷³ The cause for late-night celebration is that Ponnonner has ‘[a]t last, by long persevering diplomacy [...] gained the assent of the Directors of the City Museum, to my examination of the Mummy’.⁷⁴ The narrator hurries over to Ponnonner’s house and the gathered

⁷³ Poe, ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, p. 363.

⁷⁴ Poe, ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, p. 363.

company proceed to unwrap and reanimate the mummified Count Allamistakeo, who subsequently explains to the company how ridiculous the nineteenth century's beliefs are when compared to those of ancient Egypt. Whereas Loudon's mummy urges a continuation of the union between religion and science, Poe's mummy mocks the fear that scientific thought could negate religious doctrine by satirising science's quest for knowledge and promoting an imaginative approach to the limits of human understanding. Poe subverts the burgeoning trope of an esoteric Egypt by turning the company's expectations on their heads. While the company expects the mummy to possess knowledge will help them understand the afterlife, Allamistakeo instead reveals the fact that no afterlife need exist because their understanding of death is incorrect.

Poe was no stranger to writing texts which combined serious and current scientific debate with humour: in fact, he promoted contentious readings of his works and purposefully obfuscated a clear understanding of them. Three of his short stories 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains' (1844), 'Mesmeric Revelation' (1844), and 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar' or 'The Facts of M. Valdemar's Case' (1845) engage with the popular pseudoscience of mesmerism, exploring its effects on death and the afterlife.⁷⁵ His stories so closely resembled published non-fiction accounts of mesmeric experiences that many readers believed Poe's stories to be real. Journals such as the *New World* and *American Phrenological Journal* included 'Mesmeric Revelation' as a first-hand account of mesmerism's merits and, as Antoine Faivre notes, Poe capitalised on this

⁷⁵ Poe, 'A Tale of the Ragged Mountains', in *Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book*, Vol. XXVIII (Philadelphia: Louis A. Godey, 1844), pp. 177-181; 'Mesmeric Revelation', *Columbian Magazine* v. 1-2 (1844), pp. 67-71; and 'The Facts of M. Valdemar's Case', in *The American Whig Review*, Vol. II (1845), pp. 561-5.

confusion over the truth of his writing and contributed evidence to both sides of the argument in order to foster discussion of his work.⁷⁶ Poe contributed quotations that suggested the work was both to be taken seriously and should be seen as a farce, fostering further controversy over its factuality. ‘Poe was amused’, Faivre asserts, and ‘[i]n social gatherings he took advantage of the misinterpretation’.⁷⁷

Poe’s work has continued to deceive readers to the present day, resulting in his work regularly being mislabelled. On the basis of Poe’s ‘The Atlantic has actually been crossed in a balloon’, Axel Gelfert claims he was ‘the inventor of [...] science fiction’.⁷⁸ This story, published in the *New York Sun* on 13 April 1844, was presented as if an actual account of balloon flight. However, Loudon had both imagined a futuristic society and depicted balloon flight in *The Mummy!* twenty years previously.

‘Some Words with a Mummy’ plays upon the tension between fact and fiction by exploiting the nineteenth-century obsession with Egypt in order to represent the foolishness of pursuing a conclusive scientific understanding of the universe. Allamistakeo implies that the search for definitive knowledge surrounding the earth’s age and creation, as well as an understanding of the afterlife is—as his name implies—all a mistake. Instead, Allamistakeo shows the artistic beauty to be found in exploring a question rather than focusing on determining a concrete answer.

⁷⁶ Antoine Faivre, ‘Borrowings and Misreading: Edgar Allan Poe’s “Mesmeric” Tales and the Strange Case of their Reception’, *Aries*, 7.1 (2007), 21-62, pp. 35-7. See also: David Sinclair, *Edgar Allan Poe* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1977), p. 13.

⁷⁷ Faivre, ‘Borrowings and Misreading’, p. 37.

⁷⁸ Axel Gelfert, ‘Observation, Inference, and Imagination: Elements of Edgar Allan Poe’s Philosophy of Science’, *Science & Education*, 23.3 (2014), 589-607, p. 589; Poe, ‘The Atlantic has Actually Been Crossed in a Balloon!’, *The New York Sun*, 13 April 1844.

Although Poe's story does not reject the importance of religion outright, its lampoon of the privileging of religious thought over scientific renders religion an ineffective lens through which to view science. The use of a mummy, much like Loudon's text, allows Poe to connect his work to Egyptomania as well as lend his stories a voice imbued with authority. This is what makes Poe's text particularly humorous. Having been conscious for thousands of years and coming from an era known for its scientific advancement, Allamistakeo should be able to provide advice, wisdom, and clear-cut truth: however, Poe's text leaves more questions than answers and the company are left befuddled. The use of an undead Egyptian character allows Poe to blend science and religion together in a way that focuses on the importance of imagination and the story of humanity instead of a formulaic answer to the questions of life, the afterlife, and the nature of the world.

'Some Words with a Mummy' invites a comparison between itself and Loudon's *The Mummy!* through the tongue-in-cheek use of galvanic battery. Poe seems aware of the literary representations to which his text might be compared and encourages juxtaposition of his story to other fictional uses of galvanism through the method of his mummy's reanimation. 'The application of electricity to a mummy three or four thousand years old at the least,' writes the narrator, 'was an idea, if not very sage, still sufficiently original, and we all caught it at once'.⁷⁹ Poe's reference to the use of galvanism as 'sufficiently' original suggests that he was aware of other literary uses of the method to reanimate a corpse, most assuredly *Frankenstein*, but the specific use of a mummy suggests he was possibly familiar with Loudon's Cheops. By resurrecting a voice from the past, Poe satirises the idea that any one era was particularly progressive and instead

⁷⁹ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 364.

creates an environment where knowledge—both scientific and religious—is seen to have been gained, lost, shifted, and changed for thousands and thousands of years and will continue to be revised and re-examined for years to come.

Poe's sarcastic jests disarm science's ability to affect religion's validity. He specifically targets the 'spirit of the age, which proceeds by the rule of contraries altogether, and is now usually admitted as the solution of every thing in the way of paradox and impossibility'.⁸⁰ Allamistakeo mocks the debates which assert that *either* science or religion holds the key to truth and purposefully muddles the two. In so doing, Poe shows the folly of overcomplicating scientific and religious thought and the imaginative beauty to be found in a commingling of the two spheres.

Whereas Loudon believes in religious limitations to scientific enquiry and uses her text to protect such boundaries, Poe removes truth from the base of religion and shows it to be a fluid concept. He accomplishes this by weaving together paradoxes throughout the text in relation to scriptural accuracy, theistic evolution, death and the afterlife, and moral approaches to science. The text is less a commentary on the effects of scientific thought and more an invitation to humorously examine science's consistently shifting viewpoints. These reveal humanity's ultimate inability to completely understand and define its own existence.

Allamistakeo targets two leading views on the creation of the earth, disproving them both as foolish. He instead reveals an alternative view of interpreting the geological timescale by proving the erroneous translation of scriptures upon which theories of biblical creation and a young earth geological

⁸⁰ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 365.

timescale are founded. Young-earth creationists, including William Kirby, held to more literal interpretations of the Genesis creation account, with some promoting a six-day creation.⁸¹ As Ralph O'Connor notes, rather than existing merely as a foil to dominant old-earth geologies, literal scriptural geologies occupied an important place in early nineteenth-century scientific discussion, forming 'part of a spectrum of do-it-yourself approaches to the history of the earth — radical, conservative, or neither — in which exegesis, theology, stratigraphy, inductive philosophy, antiquarianism, politics, and rhetoric were blended to differing degrees'.⁸² However, Allamistakeo's definition of biblical terminology eradicates any tension, perceived or otherwise, between evolution and creationism. 'During my time I never knew any one to entertain so singular a fancy as that the universe (or this world if you will have it so) ever had a beginning at all', Allamistakeo says:

I remember once, and once only, hearing something remotely hinted, by a man of many speculations, concerning the origin of the human race; and by this individual, the very word Adam (or Red Earth), which you make use of, was employed. He employed it, however, in a generical sense, with reference to the spontaneous germination from rank soil (just as a thousand of the lower genera of creatures are germinated)—the spontaneous germination, I say, of five vast hordes of men, simultaneously upspringing in five distinct and nearly equal divisions of the globe.⁸³

⁸¹ For further reading on nineteenth-century creationist beliefs, see Ralph O'Connor, 'Young-Earth Creationists in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain? Towards a Reassessment of 'Scriptural Geology', *History of Science*, 45.4 (2007), 357-403.

⁸² O'Connor, p. 390.

⁸³ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 368.

Allamistakeo's succinct commentary on the origins of the earth mocks any inherent tensions between the Genesis account of creation occurring in six days and thousands of years of evolutionary processes by rewriting the definition of biblical terminology. His joke regarding the use of 'Adam' invites speculation over the accuracy of sacred scripture or, at least, the possibility that it has been misread. The 'man of many speculations' who employed the word 'Adam' to refer to the theory of creation could easily be read as Moses, believed by nineteenth-century Christians to have been the author of the Pentateuch, specifically Genesis. Allamistakeo implies that the true interpretation of Adam is not a singular man designed by an omnipotent God, but a specific form of spontaneous germination. Moses' use of the term Adam has thus been mistranslated and led to a false understanding of human life as originating with an actual person by the name of Adam. Dana D. Nelson refers to Allamistakeo's treatment of creationism as a 'provincial, laughable speculation', but this misses the importance of the satirical structure of Poe's writing, which underpins both 'Some Words with a Mummy' and Poe's other pseudo-scientific ruses.⁸⁴

Poe's ridiculous narrative serves to reveal the foolishness of attempting to understand humanity's origins as well as worrying about the interaction between scientific discoveries and religion. He uses Allamistakeo's discussion of Egyptian deities to further render moot any perceived tension between religion and science. When asked about the nature of the Egyptian gods, Allamistakeo is shocked by his bystanders' misinterpretation of Egyptian religion as polytheistic and therefore barbaric. 'No nation upon the face of the earth has ever acknowledged more than

⁸⁴ Dana D. Nelson, 'The Haunting of White Manhood: Poe, Fraternal Ritual, and Polygenesis', *American Literature*, 69.3 (1997), 515-46, p. 534.

one god', Allamistakeo reveals, '[t]he Scarabaeus, the Ibis, etc., were with us (as similar creatures have been with others) the symbols, or media, through which we offered worship to the Creator too august to be more directly approached'.⁸⁵

Allamistakeo states that the Egyptians 'offered worship to a Creator' having previously mocked the belief that the earth had a specifically created beginning.

Poe creates tension in anticipation of a simpler, more imaginative commingling of scientific and religious thought. By offering an alternative explanation that at once unites religion and science, Allamistakeo embraces what many in the Church of England, who feared the spiritual ramifications of scientific advancement, Loudon included, viewed as impossible.

Allamistakeo and the Sensation of Transmutation

In gesturing towards a vaguely divine creator who implements evolutionary processes, Allamistakeo presents a view not dissimilar to the one published six months earlier in Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844). Chambers' initially anonymous publication was received with a sensational uproar on both sides of the Atlantic because of its romanticised view of progressive transmutation. Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie notes that *Vestiges* went through twelve British editions and eight American editions in Chambers' lifetime alone.⁸⁶ Poe would have been keenly aware of *Vestiges* particularly because, as Susan Welsh notes, *Vestiges*' popularity in America was tracked in the *Broadway*

⁸⁵ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 367.

⁸⁶ Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie, 'Robert Chambers and the Successive Revisions of The Vestiges of The Natural History of Creation' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1973), p. 5.

Journal, at that time under the editorship of Poe and Charles Biggs, alongside Alexander von Humboldt's *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*.⁸⁷ *Vestiges* subtly allows for a religious entity to stand at the helm of creation by instigating transmutation without overtly promoting either a religious approach to science or an irreligious one.⁸⁸ Critics of Chambers' publication railed at the text both for being too religious and, simultaneously, not religious enough. This quasi-religious motif lent *Vestiges* a staggering sensational appeal because it was either irreverent or pious, depending on whose opinion you asked. Sedgwick deplored the book for its bewitching prose, which he claimed tempted readers away from Christian truth. 'If our glorious maidens and matrons may not soil their fingers with the dirty knife of the anatomist', he writes:

neither may they poison the springs of joyous thought and modest feeling, by listening to the seductions of this author who comes before them with a bright, polished, and many-coloured surface, and the serpent coils of a false philosophy, and asks them again to stretch out their hands and pluck forbidden fruit [...] who tells them—that their Bible is a fable when it teaches them that they were made in the image of God—that they are the children of apes and the breeders of monsters—that he has *annulled all distinction between physical and moral*.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Susan Welsh, 'The Value of Analogical Evidence: Poe's "Eureka" in the Context of a Scientific Debate', *Modern Language Studies*, 21.4 (1991), 3-15, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁸ For further reading on the sensationalism surrounding *Vestiges*' anonymous publication, see James A. Secord, 'Introduction', in Robert Chambers, *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation and Other Evolutionary Writings*, ed. by James A. Secord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. vii-xlv; *Victorian Sensation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and *Visions of Science: Books and Readers at the Dawn of the Victorian Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁸⁹ Adam Sedgwick, 'Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation', *Edinburgh Review*, July 1845, pp. 1-85, (p. 3), emphasis author's.

Sedgwick, like Loudon, recognizes the inherent power that knowledge has to tempt readers—women specifically for Sedgwick—away from moral truths rooted in Christianity. Sedgwick later uses the term ‘she’ to describe *Vestiges*, which, as James A. Secord suggests, casts the book as ‘the temptress Eve, the whore of Babylon, or a common prostitute, disguised in the modest garb of philosophy’.⁹⁰ Whereas Sedgwick’s previous publications proclaimed that truth would win out in the face of false science, in his response to *Vestiges*, Sedgwick exhibits the same anxieties over the possibility of moral degradation that Loudon espouses in *The Mummy!*.

Vestiges rendered its romantic narrative of a vaguely divine creation into a controversial topic of fashionable conversation for men and woman alike. Secord notes that *Vestiges* made ‘an orthodox subject into something just dangerous enough to be attractive’ which allowed it to be read as ‘elaborating the conventional belief that God sustained creation through law’ but also in connection with ‘naughty new ideas about reproductive physiology and the status of the soul’.⁹¹ *Vestiges*’ popularity rendered discussion on scientific topics fashionable. Secord argues that ‘[b]efore *Vestiges*, the origins of humanity could be discussed only after the ladies left the men to their port and cigars’.⁹² However, after its publication, the authorship of *Vestiges* and the text’s moral standing occupied the conversation of everyone in the drawing room, male and female alike. By bringing science into the domestic sphere, *Vestiges* acted as a catalyst for conversation which paved the way for further theories of evolution—such as Darwin’s *On the Origins of Species* (1859)—to be discussed in the public

⁹⁰ Secord, *Victorian Sensation*, p. 235.

⁹¹ Secord, *Victorian Sensation*, p. 164.

⁹² Secord, *Victorian Sensation*, p. 166.

sphere, between men and women, and not just behind the closed doors of academic societies.

The company gathered at Ponnonner's in 'Some Words with a Mummy', like those who vociferously discussed *Vestiges* at dinner parties, come together to attempt to unravel the secrets of creation in reanimating Allamistakeo, who quickly subverts their romantic expectations. They seek to resurrect a voice from the ancient past to elucidate the historical progress of society as well as better understand the role of life and death in the universe much as Chambers weaves together his scientific narratives into an overarching romantic narrative of progressive transmutation. Whereas *Vestiges'* claims spawned heated debates for years over their religiosity, Allamistakeo rejects a romantic narrative of human existence. His succinct explanation of a creator using evolutionary processes as common, uncontested fact subverts his audience's expectations for a sensational narrative of human history.

Allamistakeo simply reveals that Egypt was monotheistic, acknowledged the possibility of a Creator intelligently designing evolution to bring about life forms, and maintains a Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The baffled bystanders at the mummy's unveiling are shocked by Allamistakeo's easy manner of deconstructing the strongest arguments facing their religious and scientific debates and are forced to acknowledge his superiority. Poe further relieves the pressure and anxieties surrounding the fear that the theory of spontaneous generation or evolutionary thought would disprove or threaten Christianity by suggesting that there can exist middle ground between evolutionary and religious thought. While Poe's text is decidedly satirical and meant as a farce, his comical dismantling of the walls between science and religion reveals the inherent folly in

assuming that belief in scientific theories could represent an annihilation of religious thought. The ease with which Allamistakeo converses on such seemingly contentious topics suggests that it is this perceived contention itself which he overarchingly mocks.

Allamistakeo stands as a unique specimen whose soul is split in two, accommodating both a physical understanding of death as a cessation of life and spiritual consideration of death as a means to an eternal life. His explication of the ancient Egyptian understanding of death ridicules the nineteenth century's two primary views of death that saw it as either an unavoidable, conclusive end to a life or a means to an eternal afterlife in heaven. There exists both a quantifiable physical capacity for life as well as an intangible, spiritual, and moral component which defies death. "Had I been, as you say, dead," replied the Count, "it is more than probable that dead, I should still be", he says, 'for I perceive you are yet in the infancy of Galvanism, and cannot accomplish with it what was a common thing among us in the old days'.⁹³ Instead of confining the human life to a consecutive set of years, the natural philosophers of Allamistakeo's age, working to promote advancement for the betterment of society, began to create a way to split up the human life: '[i]t occurred to our philosophers that a laudable curiosity might be gratified, and, at the same time, the interests of science much advanced, by living this natural term in instalments.'⁹⁴ The human lifespan was also much longer and extended to, on average, 'about eight hundred years'.⁹⁵ Unlike Cheops, Allamistakeo's 'death' was neither the end of his life nor the beginning of his afterlife. Allamistakeo illuminates how the Egyptians used embalming

⁹³ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 367.

⁹⁴ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 368.

⁹⁵ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 368.

specifically to cease the ‘animal functions of the body’, which, he says, he uses in ‘its widest sense, as including the physical not more than the moral and *vital* being’.⁹⁶ Despite being physically inert for thousands of years, Allamistakeo’s sentience remains intact. While his body ceases to function, his moral and spiritual self continues, allowing him to take in the elements of the world around him.

Imagination and Cosmology: ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ and *Eureka*

Poe develops his mockery of sensational theories of cosmology and the earth’s origins in his prose poem *Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe* (1848). Just as the company expected Allamistakeo to reveal the secrets of the grave, *Eureka* seems to promise to disclose Poe’s conclusive views on cosmology to readers. In this poem, which was initially delivered as a lecture, Poe mocks scientific peers who promised to reveal all the secrets of the universe through their latest scientific theories.⁹⁷ Ultimately, Poe’s poem reveals little about the universe itself. *Eureka* dazzles with rich analogies and beautiful prose which lulls readers into believing that the text is sombre science instead of an artistic expression.

The seriousness of both Poe’s short stories and *Eureka* was widely debated in Poe’s day and has been widely debated since in scholarly criticism. G. St. John Stott argues that Poe’s prose poem is meant to be read, like his fiction, as a hoax

⁹⁶ Poe, ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, p. 367.

⁹⁷ For further reading on Poe’s influences for *Eureka*, see Welsh, ‘The Value of Analogical Evidence’.

which invites imaginative speculation and ridicules the ‘spirit of the age’, which Allamistakeo too directly references in ‘Some Words with a Mummy’.⁹⁸ Indeed, Poe himself asserts that ‘it is as a Poem only that I wish this work to be judged after I am dead’, instead of as a scientific treatise or even an essay as *Eureka*’s subtitle proclaims it to be.⁹⁹ Axel Gelfert, however, praises Poe’s scientific ambition. ‘[H]e aims to offer nothing less than a transformative vision of the scientific universe’, he writes, ‘Poe’s *Eureka*, especially, deserves to be recognised, not as an ingenious anticipation of later scientific results, but as an imaginative analysis of how to approach, in thought, the complex world of natural phenomena around us’.¹⁰⁰ Although Gelfert recognizes the importance of imagination in Poe’s *Eureka*, he suggests that Poe uses a fantastical approach to scientific thought as a means to develop his personal metaphysical views, instead of viewing the entire essay as a farce. Poe’s *Eureka* does indeed appear to offer factual information. However, as Stott argues, Poe’s deliberate irony ‘pretends to offer a mesmeric revelation, yet gives us a text that reveals nothing’.¹⁰¹ This unfilled promise of cosmological knowledge is evident in both *Eureka* and ‘Some Words with a Mummy’.

The nature and seriousness of Poe’s religious convictions, and their subsequent bearing on his metaphysical speculations, are equally difficult to ascertain. After being orphaned in 1811, Poe was baptized into the Episocal church in 1812 by his foster parents John and Frances Allan. Harry Lee Poe refers

⁹⁸ G. St. John Stott, ‘Neither Genius nor Fudge: Edgar Allan Poe and *Eureka*’, in *452°F. Electronic journal of theory of literature and comparative literature*, 1, 52-64, p. 61.

⁹⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, *Eureka*, in *Eureka, Marginalia, A Chapter on Autography, The Literati* (Boston: Dana Estes & Company, 1900), pp. 1-157 (p. 1).

¹⁰⁰ Gelfert, p. 605.

¹⁰¹ Stott, p. 59.

to John Allan as a ‘dour, Calvinistic Scotsman’.¹⁰² However, little other religious affiliation is evident until later in his life when he came forward at a meeting of the Sons of Temperance in 1849. In his book, *Evermore: Edgar Allen Poe and the Mystery of the Universe*, Harry Lee Poe defines the Sons of Temperance as ‘one of the many evangelical Christian parachurch ministries of the nineteenth century’ which specifically emphasised the evils of alcoholism.¹⁰³ However Poe’s very public alignment with the evangelical group may not have been evidence of personal conviction. Harry Lee Poe notes that it could either have been a genuine statement of religious conviction and an admission of his need for help to combat his continual battle against alcoholism, or merely a ‘cynical gesture’ intended to gain the favour of his paramour, Elmira Royster Shelton.¹⁰⁴ ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, *Eureka*, and indeed Poe’s wider *oeuvre* do little to clarify the author’s specific religious beliefs. Instead, Harry Lee Poe suggests that what is revealed in Poe’s writings is an emphasis on the imaginative as a means of exploring religion and science and that ‘Poe discovered that the things that interested him (science, religion, and art) lay at the intersection of the rational, the empirical, and the imaginative’.¹⁰⁵ Rather than being an intersection, I suggest that it is through imagination that Poe engaged any topic. Discussing Poe’s writing on Mesmerism, Julian Symons notes that Poe’s exploration of death as metamorphosis ‘may sounds like orthodox Christian doctrine, but in Poe’s hands it is much more a basis for speculation’ on how death might be subverted.¹⁰⁶ Speculation on death

¹⁰² Harry Lee Poe, *Evermore: Edgar Allan Poe and the Mystery of the Universe* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), p. 166.

¹⁰³ Lee Poe, p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ Lee Poe, p. 57.

¹⁰⁵ Lee Poe, pp. 175-6.

¹⁰⁶ Julian Symons, *The Tell-Tale Heart The Life and Works of Edgar Allen Poe* (Cornwall: House of Stratus, 2001), p. 101.

and its relationship to religion is at the heart of both ‘Some Words with a Mummy’ and *Eureka*. These texts suggest that imaginative exploration of questions about the universe is of far more value than defining any one specific religious approach to scientific queries.

In order to emphasise the importance of the imagination, Poe connects *Eureka* to the popular dramas put on for the American public which promised scientific revelations but revealed only gaudy showmanship. Stott points to lectures given by John Bovee Dods on similar cosmological topics in 1843 as possible source material for Poe.¹⁰⁷ He concludes that ‘Poe’s genius was engaged in demonstrating that cosmological lectures, such as those of Dods, were nothing but fudge’.¹⁰⁸ Poe mocks the nineteenth century’s incessant need for cosmological understanding, hinting at the fluctuating and unreliable nature of popular pseudo-science and furthering a farcical interpretation of his text. Stott notes that ‘a new theory of the universe was not to be found in the efforts of fudges competing for the dollars of the American public’.¹⁰⁹ When discussing the term ‘infinity’ Poe writes: ‘I refer simply to the “utmost conceivable expanse” of space—a shadowy and fluctuating domain, now shrinking, now sweeping, in accordance with the vacillating energies of the imagination.’¹¹⁰ These ‘vacillating energies of the imagination’ subtly dig at the popular pseudo-scientific theories which are mocked later on in the text as ‘occasional fantastic efforts at referring it [gravity] to Magnetism, or Mesmerism, or Swedenborgianism, or Transcendentalism, or some other equally delicious *ism* of the same species, and invariably patronized

¹⁰⁷ Stott, pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁸ Stott, p. 61.

¹⁰⁹ Stott, p. 61.

¹¹⁰ Poe, *Eureka*, p. 23.

by one and the same species of people'.¹¹¹ He continually mocks scientific, philosophical, and metaphysical authorities throughout the essay, referring to Aristotle as 'Aries Tottle' and Francis Bacon as 'Hog'. He scorns *a priori* argumentation as restrictive of imaginative and creative thought, which, he argues, should be the cornerstone of metaphysical inquiry. 'All attempts at generalisation were met at once by the words "theoretical," "theory," "theorist"—all thought, to be brief, was very properly resented as a personal affront to themselves', he writes:

Cultivating the natural sciences to the exclusion of Metaphysics, the Mathematics, and Logic, many of these Bacon engendered philosophers—one-idead, one-sided and lame of a leg—were more wretchedly helpless—more miserably ignorant, in view of all the comprehensible objects of knowledge, than the veriest unlettered hind who proves that he knows something at least, in admitting that he knows absolutely nothing.¹¹²

In an attempt to combat what he claims are decidedly limiting ways of thinking, Poe sets out to promote his own system of metaphysical thought which prizes imagination over divining revolutionary answers.

Poe mocks the idea that the origins of the universe could ever be discovered. His farcical metaphysical conclusion in *Eureka* is that the force that created the world was gravitational attraction and repulsion, whose perfect timing and force was 'created by the Volition of God'.¹¹³ Poe asserts that this gravitational force lives within humanity and, furthermore, that this force is itself God. Humankind will all one day experience a 'self-diffusion' whereby all the

¹¹¹ Poe, *Eureka*, p. 45.

¹¹² Poe, *Eureka*, p. 9.

¹¹³ Poe, *Eureka*, p. 145.

souls of humanity will ‘be gradually merged in the general consciousness—that Man, for example, ceasing imperceptibly to feel himself Man, will at length attain that awfully triumphant epoch when he shall recognize his existence as that of Jehovah’.¹¹⁴ This conclusion, Stott points out, would have been dissatisfying to nineteenth-century readers familiar with the lectures of Dods and therefore clues the reader in to the farcical nature of the work. ‘The work’s view of humanity no doubt seemed a cruel joke to those who hoped to find their dignity and significance reaffirmed by the lecture’s rhetoric’, writes Stott,

The ultimate joke was on those who believed such speculations could even be trusted in an age of increasing disciplinary specialization; that the answers to questions about the origins of the universe could come from a clairvoyant, a former Universalist clergyman, or a journalist, even if we suppose them to be familiar with current scientific thinking.¹¹⁵

Poe’s assertions that the earth was formed through gravitational force which was enacted by the ‘Volition of God’ provides an answer that sounds revolutionary at the outset, but in reality, still subsumes the mysteries of the universe under the act of a divine being, much like Paley’s view of natural theology or Chambers’ vague divine deity who is responsible for progressive transmutation. In regards to his cosmology, Harry Lee Poe suggests that ‘Poe attributed this capacity of seeing what others cannot see to imagination’.¹¹⁶ The importance, for Poe, lies not in the answer itself, but in the imagination of discovering and the writing of an answer.

Poe’s texts use an elliptical structure to promote playfulness and imagination in their content without substantial conclusions. *Eureka*’s scientific

¹¹⁴ Poe, *Eureka*, p. 150.

¹¹⁵ Stott, p. 61.

¹¹⁶ Lee Poe, p. 119.

language and the presence of a reawakened mummy both seem to promise answers to questions of the earth's origins only to end with vague scientific claims. Allamistakeo simply shows that death has been misunderstood, while *Eureka* gestures towards all humanity eventually dissolving into a universal ether. Terence Martin notes how Poe's emphasis on imagination without a defining conclusion lies within the very structure of his sentences. 'Throughout Poe's work, and often in what we would call serious contexts, one finds sentences which build up somewhat dizzily only to drop off abruptly as if afflicted with stylistic vertigo'.¹¹⁷ In writing this way,

[h]e leaps far beyond any social strictures by the master stroke of denying the reality of everything but the imagination. By negating the earth, he sets the imagination free to play in a realm of its own where it is lord and master of all it surveys.¹¹⁸

Approaching science in this manner negates any fear inherent in the relationship between science and religion because each scientific discovery is an act of imagination, a guess at defining something which continually resists explanation.

The validity of Poe's assertions are not nearly as important as a consideration of his approach to penning them which, as he states at *Eureka*'s start, should be judged by readers as the creation of a poet, not a scientist. It is the presentation of the work, not the work itself, which should be given merit. Setting aside the unanswerable question of whether or not Poe means his readers to consider looking at all pseudo-scientific and philosophical theories as first and foremost works of imagination, Poe has at least given readers permission to

¹¹⁷ Terence Martin, 'The Imagination at Play: Edgar Allan Poe', in *The Kenyon Review*, 28.2 (1966), 194-209, p. 201.

¹¹⁸ Martin, p. 206.

consider and specifically judge *his* scientific treatise as a work of art. He denies his readers' expectations of cosmological knowledge in order to show them that knowledge for knowledge's sake is far less important than engaging with art.

Poe uses his definition of the soul as both a physical entity that controls the animal functions of life and a spiritual entity which is responsible for sentience and personality. In creating this dual role, Poe undermines religion's authority, revealing that scientific inquiry has no effect on the soul's afterlife. Whereas Poe concludes in *Eureka* that one day the physical aspect of the soul will perish and each person's individual, sentient being will be absorbed into one full, divine consciousness, 'Some Words with a Mummy' lacks such a clear picture of the fate of the sentient aspect of the human soul.

Sedgwick, refuting Chambers' claims for galvanism in *Vestiges*, asserts that Chambers' musing are useless 'unless he can re-animate a dead body, and continue the higher functions of life, sensation, and volition [...]. When he has done this, we will listen to his materialism; but not till then'.¹¹⁹ Poe does precisely this by reanimating Allamistakeo through galvanic battery. According to Sedgwick, this should lend Doctor Ponnonner authority on scientific matters as he is the one who has reawakened the (seemingly) dead. Instead, Poe places the authority with Allamistakeo, who quickly dismantles the company's most popular scientific theories. By redirecting Allamistakeo's commentary to contemporary concerns, Poe reveals the importance of living in the present. Just as Loudon denies Cheops the ability to reveal the secrets of the grave through Edric's resolute commitment to the moral boundaries of knowledge, Poe refuses to allow

¹¹⁹ Sedgwick, 'Vestiges', p. 5.

Allamistakeo to provide revolutionary insights on the universe's origin through subverting readers' assumption that Allamistakeo is a reanimated corpse.

Poe removes the authority of death by removing its existence. 'Had I been, as you say, *dead*', Allamistakeo explains, 'it is more than probable that dead I should still be'.¹²⁰ Allamistakeo is not dead: therefore, his personal actions have made no difference on his afterlife. Rejection of scientific theories on the basis of maintaining a moral, religious attitude in order to achieve a positive experience in the afterlife is thus rendered pointless. Allamistakeo's undeath so appeals to the narrator that upon awakening the next morning he declares that '[a]s soon, therefore, as I shave and swallow a cup of coffee, I shall just step over to Ponnonner's and get embalmed for a couple of hundred years'.¹²¹ In both texts, Poe combines the seemingly contradictory viewpoints of science and religion in a way that would imply a clear, simple solution, but he denies readers the satisfaction of answer. The point of scientific exploration is not to provide an answer to life's most mysterious quandaries, but instead to create a space in which to engage these questions themselves.

In 'Some Words with a Mummy', Poe further dismantles authority through his direct caricature of two historical figures in order to free his readers from the need to define life through a quest for absolute knowledge. He specifically mocks George Gliddon (1809-1857)—an American Egyptologist who worked to further the theories of craniometry and polygenesis—and James Silk Buckingham (1786-1855)—a journalist, travel author, and politician who helped to found multiple journals and periodicals including the *Athenaeum*.¹²² Anchoring

¹²⁰ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 367, emphasis author's.

¹²¹ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 370.

¹²² Donald Malcolm Reid credits Gliddon with popularizing ancient Egypt in America, *Whose Pharaohs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 58.

the text within a specific framework of contemporary Egyptology lends Poe's work an added level of satire. Gliddon and Buckingham are not painted in a positive light and the mummy specifically chastises them for their treatment of Egyptian antiquities. 'But you, Mr. Gliddon—and you, Silk—who have travelled and resided in Egypt until one might imagine you to the manner born' he admonishes:

[Y]ou, I say who have been so much among us that you speak Egyptian fully as well, I think, as you write your mother tongue—you, whom I have always been led to regard as the firm friend of the mummies—I really did anticipate more gentlemanly conduct from *you*.¹²³

Poe once again turns the tables on his readers' expectations by mocking the acquisition of knowledge. Instead of praising these popular figures for their intrepid unearthing of historical fact, Allamistakeo exposes Gliddon and Buckingham's methods as barbaric and ineffective. Those placed at the forefront of archaeological expeditions, and therefore those charged with the gathering of austere knowledge that could shape the course of human understanding, are revealed to be charlatans. They fail to act with 'gentlemanly conduct'. This is particularly poignant considering Gliddon's promotion of craniometry. Much like his treatment of mesmerism in his later texts, Poe here takes the opportunity to subtly mock the pseudoscience of craniometry by initially placing Gliddon in a position of power which ultimately leads to his own ridicule.

Gliddon is both a translator of Allamistakeo's narrative—Allamistakeo speaks in what the uneducated narrator tactlessly classes as 'very capital

¹²³ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 365

Egyptian’—and also the subject of his reproach.¹²⁴ Nelson discusses Gliddon’s friendship with other polygenecists Samuel George Morton (1799-1851), Joseph Nott (1804-1873), and Ephraim Squier (1821-1888), noting how the cohort created their own vocabulary in further efforts to dismantle the claims of natural theologians. Their terminology included ‘terms like “niggerology” for polygenesis, “moundology” for Squier’s work excavating Indian mounds, and “parson-skinning” for successful shots against natural theologians’.¹²⁵ Gliddon focused on proving how Egyptological studies were a vital means to understanding humanity’s history and make-up without the constraints of natural theology. ‘His role in spectacularizing remnants of the ancient civilization was complemented by his work at turning the attention of scientists toward ancient Egypt’s pivotal importance’, writes Nelson: ‘[a]s Gliddon showed, Egyptology was critical not only to achieving science’s definitive break with biblical interpretation by pushing human chronology back beyond theological consensus but also to emerging theories of separate racial origins’.¹²⁶ Gliddon wrote into existence new words pertaining to scientific theories and, poised in fiction as a translator of Allamistakeo’s ancient wisdom, his voice should be one readers can trust and learn from. In dismantling Gliddon’s authority, Poe quashes pseudoscience’s potential for ground-breaking scientific discovery by revealing its theories to be uncouth speculations already disproven thousands of years ago. By casting suspicion onto the person who translates a historical voice, Poe destabilises his readers’ ability to trust history as a means to understand the present.

¹²⁴ Poe, ‘Some Words with a Mummy’, p. 365.

¹²⁵ Nelson, p. 525.

¹²⁶ Nelson, p. 531.

Gliddon and the rest of the company present at Allamistakeo's unrolling are shocked by the mummy's revelations of the extent to which Egyptian science surpassed and rendered invalid popular scientific theories of the nineteenth century. While phrenology, mesmerism, and Gliddon's own craniometry are exposed by the mummy as mere 'tricks' compared with 'the positive miracles of the Theban *savans*', Allamistakeo also scoffs at the state of nineteenth-century technology.¹²⁷ When asked his thoughts on the railroad system, Allamistakeo states that they are:

rather slight, rather ill-conceived, and clumsily put together. They could not be compared, of course, with the vast, level, direct, iron-grooved causeways upon which the Egyptians conveyed entire temples and solid obelisks of a hundred and fifty feet in altitude.¹²⁸

The narrator 'mentioned our steel; but the foreigner elevated his nose, and asked me if our steel could have executed the sharp carved work seen on the obelisks, and which was wrought altogether by edge-tools of copper'.¹²⁹ Allamistakeo is likewise unimpressed with the construction of such marvels as the 'Bowling-Green fountain in New York' or 'the Capitol at Washington, D.C.', the latter representing the heart of the nation's government.¹³⁰ He

would not pretend to assert that even fifty or sixty of the Doctor's Capitols might have been built within these walls, but he was by no means sure that two or three hundred of them might not have been squeezed in with some trouble.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 369.

¹²⁸ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', pp. 369-70.

¹²⁹ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 370.

¹³⁰ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 369.

¹³¹ Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 369.

America's most significant building pales in comparison to the magnitude of Egyptian architecture and the efficiency with which such monuments were constructed. The company mistakes Allamistakeo's wry assertion that nothing such as 'the ingenuity, magnificence, and superiority of the Fountain at the Bowling Green [...] had ever been seen in Egypt or elsewhere' for a compliment on their superiority.¹³² Poe paints the company as inept: they are unable to match or even comprehend Allamistakeo's wit and so miss the point of his commentary. Their ignorance prevents them from progressing from ineffective pseudosciences to the level of scientific knowledge achieved in Allamistakeo's time.

The nineteenth century reveals its greatest weaknesses by clinging to faith in antiquated religious thought and shoring itself up behind grandiose architecture and speedy trains. By allowing themselves to be caught up in scientific quests to find an answer to questions of earth's origins and debating God's role in the creation process, humanity misses the truth that can be found through artistic expression. Artistic truth, for Poe, is not bound with any moral or religious confines. Allamistakeo can awake from the dead and dismantle the nineteenth century's most advanced scientific theories without disastrous moral consequences. Poe ends the narrative by attacking the pride behind the belief that consequences of scientific discoveries have the potential to unravel society's moral fibre and crumble the claims of religion. Allamistakeo's jests reveal that truth is relative and ultimately unattainable. By confining Allamistakeo's narrative to the physical world and denying him the ability to comment on the afterlife of the soul, Poe reveals the importance of finding truth in life.

¹³² Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy', p. 369.

Egypt as Esoteric Archetype

By connecting their narratives to an authority from ancient Egypt, both Poe and Loudon imply that their texts will reveal previously unknown esoteric secrets from beyond the grave. By subverting readers' expectations, these authors turn the authoritative voice of ancient Egypt onto the present. Cheops and Allamistakeo both aim their commentaries on the relationship between religion and science in the present age, instead of previewing the age to come. In so doing, both Loudon and Poe typecast ancient Egypt, creating a standard theme which subsequent Egyptianising fiction consistently resurrects throughout the nineteenth century. Egypt is cast a possessor of mystical knowledge which is consistently denied to readers.

Loudon's and Poe's texts are some of the only pieces of Egyptianising fiction which allow a mummy to have an actual voice in their narrative. As I will go on to show, other authors use the mummy as a speechless being onto which they can project their own voice. Loudon and Poe, however, craft the speech of their mummies to speak directly to the present. Both address the nineteenth century's quest for knowledge and focus on the foolishness of searching for answers on topics such as humanity's origin, the age of the earth, the nature of the afterlife, and the role of the soul, albeit with very different aims. While Loudon addresses anxiety over the ability of science to destroy Christianity, the voice of Poe's mummy directly responds in a mocking tone, revealing that the search for all knowledge is far less important than engaging with the question itself. In the next chapter, I continue to focus on the use of ancient Egyptians to address specific religious topics. Examining this in depth in relation to the idea of atonement, I argue that H. Rider Haggard combined the sensation of Egyptomania

with a loose typological structure in his *Cleopatra* (1889) in order to work out his own doubts about Christianity and the nature of the afterlife. Instead of bringing ancient Egypt to nineteenth-century Britain, Rider Haggard transports his readers back in time to show how the lessons of the past can and should affect the present age.

Chapter II: Ancient Afterlives: Exploring Commingling Religions

in H. Rider Haggard's Egyptianising Fiction

While early nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction gave the mummy a voice so as to share its wisdom on the relationship between religion and science, later nineteenth-century authors, such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Marie Corelli, and Bram Stoker, silenced the mummy, representing Egypt instead as a land of vengeful occult power. H. Rider Haggard's fiction, however, occupies a middle ground. He used his Egyptian narratives to incorporate a more liberal view of religion, challenging the popular portrayal of ancient Egypt by archaeological societies such as the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF) and Society of Biblical Archaeology, which viewed ancient Egyptian religion as an evolutionary pre-cursor to nineteenth-century Christianity. In contrast to the majority of Egyptianising fiction, many of Rider Haggard's novels are set in ancient Egypt. Instead of bringing Egypt to England and asserting the superiority of modern Christianity over polytheistic religion, Rider Haggard's texts explore issues of religion and the afterlife in ancient Egypt itself.

In this chapter, I explore Rider Haggard's first piece of Egyptianising fiction to be set fully in ancient Egypt, *Cleopatra* (1889). The novel raises complex questions about atonement and the fate of one's soul in eternity. In *Cleopatra*, Rider Haggard incorporates a complicated, tri-figure typological layering, involving the historical types of Jesus, Moses, and David. This typological layering produces a rich discussion of atonement and its inherent complications, as it is prefigured in Levitical law and fulfilled in the substitutionary atonement of Christ's death.

Alongside questions of the nature of atonement, the novel also introduces a positive view of reincarnation through the figure of the Egyptian goddess Isis. While the merits of reincarnation as connected to Buddhism were widely debated in the late nineteenth century, *Cleopatra*'s commingling of religions is hesitant and Isis cannot simply be read as an Egyptian version of the Buddha.¹ The narrative revels in the complex and unexplainable elements of the Egyptian cult of Isis and its high priest Harmachis. Rider Haggard uses the similarity between Harmachis' religious role and the Biblical characters to water down elements of typology and insert them into the narrative. This bridges the gap not only between past and but also evolution and theology by connecting them through types and antitypes in a supernatural context. Rider Haggard thus creates a quasi-Christian environment that invites a discussion of complex theological doctrines and explores questions of faith and practice. The use of typological layering allowed readers to see Christian allusions in ancient Egyptian history while also challenging a view of eternal damnation through the introduction of a form of Egyptian metempsychosis. This metempsychosis, which J. Jeffrey Franklin defines as a nineteenth-century synonym for reincarnation, offered more of an unknown, blank space 'onto which Victorians could paint their own projections and fantasies'.²

I end the chapter with a brief examination of Rider Haggard's rarely-read *Moon of Israel* (1918), published twenty-nine years after *Cleopatra*. Reading Rider Haggard's early Egyptianising fiction alongside his much later publication

¹ For further reading on Buddhism in the nineteenth century, see Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Christopher Clausen, 'Victorian Buddhism and the Origins of Comparative Religion', *Religion* 5.1 (1975), 1-15; J. Jeffrey Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

² Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion*, p. 97.

more clearly reveals the shift in his portrayal of reincarnation. His later fiction more confidently expresses the merits of ancient religions alongside contemporary ones. *Moon of Israel* recasts the figures of the Exodus narrative, telling the story from the perspective of the Egyptians and portraying the Hebrews as violent murderers. The god of the Hebrews—Jahveh—and the Egyptian deities vie for power, but the narrative ultimately concludes by asserting that, while one religion might be more dominant than another, multiple religions can coexist. Rider Haggard uses ancient Egypt to connect ancient religions to nineteenth-century Christianity not as a means to show the evolution of Christian religion as many nineteenth-century archaeological societies did, but instead to show the importance of allowing the past to revise religion for the present age.

Rider Haggard's Egyptomania and Egyptian Metempsychosis

Rider Haggard dedicated himself to intensely researching the history of the cultures he brought to life in his novels. While he incorporated many ancient cultures into his writing, he returns again and again to the themes of ancient Egypt including his first publication, *Dawn* (1884), one of his most popular novels, *She* (1886), and *The World's Desire* (1890)—a novel he co-wrote with Andrew Lang—among others.³ Maria Fleischhack notes that ‘at least fifteen’ of Rider Haggard’s stories feature ancient Egypt.⁴ ‘Smith and the Pharaohs’—for instance, published in *The Strand* between December 1912 and February 1913—revives

³ For further reading on Egypt in Rider Haggard’s fiction, see: Norman Etherington, *Rider Haggard* (Boston: Twayne, 1984); Maria Fleischhack, *Narrating Ancient Egypt: The Representation of Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century and Early-Twentieth-Century Fantastic Fiction* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014); and Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴ Fleischhack, p. 89.

figures from ancient Egypt, but sets them in the early twentieth century.⁵ Four of Rider Haggard's novels are specifically set in ancient Egypt: *Cleopatra* (1889), *Morning Star* (1910), *Moon of Israel* (1918), and *Queen of the Dawn* (1925).⁶ *The World's Desire* and *Moon of Israel* both include the story of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, but, as Richard Pearson notes, in *The World's Desire* this is 'very marginal to the storyline', whereas it is the primary focus of the plot of *Moon of Israel*.⁷ *Queen of the Dawn* and *Morning Star* also feature similar narratives. Both feature an Egyptian Queen who must win back her throne which has been usurped. Both are also similar in that they, unlike *Cleopatra* and *Moon of Israel*, do not directly relate to Christian themes. Karen Sands-O'Connor notes that, in *Morning Star*, Egypt is not cast in a pre-Christian role, 'rather Ancient Egypt and Modern Britain are connected through their concern with holding their empires together through religion, among other means'.⁸ *Queen of the Dawn* and *Morning Star* are both narratives which wholly immerse themselves in Egyptian religion, particularly in relation to the use of the Ka, or double.

The use of an ancient, foreign setting allowed Rider Haggard to explore his complex religious views in an environment safely distanced from his own. In his work on Rider Haggard, Norman Etherington notes that in other lands like

⁵ H. Rider Haggard, 'Smith and the Pharaohs', published serially in *The Strand Magazine* between December 1912-February 1913.

⁶ H. Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, published serially in *The Illustrated London News* between January 1889 and June 1889; *Morning Star* (New York: McKinlay, Stone, and McKenzie, 1916); *Moon of Israel* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1918); and *Queen of the Dawn* (New York: Country Life Press, Doubleday Page and Co., 1925).

⁷ Richard Pearson, 'Archaeology and Gothic Desire: Vitality Beyond the Grave in H. Rider Haggard's Ancient Egypt', in *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 218-44 (p. 221).

⁸ Karen Sands-O'Connor, 'Impertinent Miracles at the British Museum: Egyptology and Edwardian Fantasy for Young People', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 19.2 (2008), 224-37, (p. 231).

Africa or Iceland ‘the beasts which Victorians feared to encounter in themselves could be contemplated at a safe remove’.⁹ In ancient Egypt, Rider Haggard safely contemplates a religious view of the afterlife that interweaves Christian doctrine with a view of reincarnation. He reads Egypt through a Protestant lens, but that lens does not prevent him from seeing the inherent merits of religious beliefs other than his own and presenting those to his readers through a typological dialogue. Rider Haggard’s commingling of ancient and modern religion resists David Gange’s assertion that he ‘always unpicked Christian ideas from the superficially barbarous mythology of Egypt’.¹⁰ Instead, I argue that Rider Haggard uses an Egyptian setting to contrast evangelical substitutionary atonement with reincarnation as a means of atoning throughout multiple lifetimes. I claim that Rider Haggard does not, as Gange asserts, minimise ‘cultural difference’ and allow his own beliefs ‘to infiltrate the earliest Egyptian beliefs’.¹¹ Instead of superimposing evangelical Christianity onto ancient Egypt, *Cleopatra* and *Moon of Israel* assert the universal truth to be found within all religions, past and present. While *Cleopatra* does this more hesitatingly, both narratives wrestle with the complexities of interweaving ancient and modern religions. Neither narrative has a straightforward conclusion. Both evangelical atonement and Egyptian metempsychosis are allowed to co-exist. In doing so, Rider Haggard approaches seemingly pagan religions with far more reverence than his contemporaries, who portrayed Egyptian religion as Other and dangerous.

⁹ Norman Etherington, *Rider Haggard* (Boston: Twayne, 1984), p. 50.

¹⁰ Gange, p. 215. Gange also includes Corelli in his assessment. I discuss Corelli’s use of ancient Egypt in the next chapter.

¹¹ Gange, pp. 215-6.

Rider Haggard's keen interest in the links between Biblical archaeology and modern society was furthered by a discussion with a mystic friend of his, who revealed the identity of three of Rider Haggard's 'previous incarnations'.¹² In two of these incarnations, Rider Haggard lived in the time of ancient Egypt, 'one as a noble in the time of Pepi II who lived somewhere about 4000 B.C., and the second as one of the minor Pharaohs'.¹³ He had also lived as 'a Norseman of the seventh century, who was one of the first to sail to the Nile'.¹⁴ While Rider Haggard claimed to be sceptical of his friend's mystical claims 'since the reincarnation business seems to me to be quite insusceptible of proof', he continued to be fascinated by ancient Egypt and the concept of reincarnation throughout his life.¹⁵ Morton Cohen notes that Rider Haggard was drawn to themes of reincarnation from early on 'as explaining the mystery of life and death' in a similar way to many others who were shaken by the destabilisation of Christianity by Higher Criticism and scientific advancement.¹⁶ However, Rider Haggard roots that reincarnation not in the Far East, but in ancient Egypt. Cohen notes that Rider Haggard was, 'by the time he wrote *She*, already steeped in Egyptian lore and fascinated by Egyptian beliefs. His particular brand of metempsychosis comes primarily from ancient Egypt'.¹⁷

Rider Haggard admitted to feeling a deep connection to both Egypt and Iceland. In his autobiography *The Days of My Life*, written between 1910-1912 but published posthumously in 1926, he writes:

¹² Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life: An Autobiography Vol. I* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926), p. 254.

¹³ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol. I*, p. 254.

¹⁴ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol. I*, p. 254.

¹⁵ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol. I*, p. 254.

¹⁶ Morton Cohen, *Rider Haggard: His Life and Works* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1960), p. 111.

¹⁷ Cohen, p. 111.

[W]ith the old Norse and the old Egyptians I am at home. I can enter into their thoughts and feelings; I can even understand their theologies. I have a respect for Thor and Odin, I venerate Isis, and always feel inclined to bow to the moon!¹⁸

He visited both Egypt and Iceland—Egypt in 1887 and 1904 and Iceland in 1888—and showed a fervent commitment to studying the history of both countries as a means of understanding those aspects of himself which had previously lived in these historical contexts. Rider Haggard's dedication of *Moon of Israel* to Gaston Maspero (1846-1916)—French Egyptologist and author of *L'Archéologie égyptienne* (1887)—recounts Maspero's assertion that the novel was full of the 'inner spirit of the old Egyptians' so much so that Maspero 'could not conceive how it had been possible for it to spring from the brain of a modern man'.¹⁹ Rider Haggard regarded this statement as 'one of the greatest compliments that ever I received' and took pride in capturing an authentic portrayal of ancient Egypt.²⁰ He sought what he believed were the highest authorities on Egypt's history to validate his narratives, devoting much of his time to studying at the British Museum under one of the nineteenth century's most prominent Egyptologists: E. A. Wallis Budge. Rider Haggard dedicated *Morning Star* to Budge in 1910, claiming that it was only because of their friendship that he would dare dedicate a story of Egypt to him, 'one of the world's masters of the language and lore of the great people'.²¹ Rider Haggard immersed himself so deeply in his reverence of ancient Egypt, that he turned his home into a miniature

¹⁸ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol. I*, p. 255.

¹⁹ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, pp. v-vi.

²⁰ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel* p. vi.

²¹ Rider Haggard, *Morning Star*, p. v.

museum. He owned so many Egyptian artefacts that the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* catalogued his collection in 1917, describing plaques, numerous scarabs, signet rings, and a bronze head.²² Rider Haggard sought to craft narratives that were, first and foremost, historically grounded, but also and, more importantly, captured the spirit of the age of which he wrote.

Rider Haggard's reverent attitude towards Egypt is fictionalised in the character of James Ebenezer Smith in 'Smith and the Pharoahs' who is himself a reincarnation of the Egyptian sculptor Horu. Smith's love for and researches into the history of ancient Egypt are born out of his innate connection to a former life. Kate Holterhoff notes that Smith's love of ancient Egypt comes from a reverence for Egypt's beliefs 'rather than a callous inquisitiveness or a desire for monetarily precious antique relics'.²³ Instead, Holterhoff writes, 'Haggard's fiction lays out a template for proper archaeological science in order to separate research and collecting done in the proper spirit from that accomplished with scholarly rigor but without proper emotional investment in the subject matter'.²⁴ Rider Haggard's Egyptian romances are driven by his love of a culture to which he felt he belonged, a love that demanded respect and devotion. He appealed to the public in an article for the *Daily Mail* to consider the immorality of exhuming mummies solely to place them on display in museums, exclaiming '[y]et we who are Christians and share the cardinal doctrines of their faith treat them thus'.²⁵ He

²² Aylward Blackman, 'The Nugent and Haggard Collections of Egyptian Antiquities,' *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 4.1 (1917), pp. 39-46 (pp. 43-6). For further reading on Rider Haggard's collection of Egyptian antiquities, see Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, pp. 193-9.

²³ Kate Holterhoff, 'Egyptology and Darwinian Evolution in Conan Doyle and H. Rider Haggard: The Scientific Imagination', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 60.3 (2017), 314-40, p. 332.

²⁴ Holterhoff, p. 332.

²⁵ Rider Haggard, 'The Trade in the Dead,' *The Daily Mail*, 22 June 1904, p. 4.

lends this sense of moral unease to the exhumation and destruction of the pharaoh Menka-Ra in *Cleopatra*.²⁶ When Cleopatra journeys to the tomb of Menka-ra to find valuable jewels hidden in his body, a giant bat flies out of the opening of the tomb, which Harmachis believes to be ‘the spirit of Menka-ra, the Osirian, who, taking on himself the form of a bat, flew forth from his holy House in warning’.²⁷ Despite the horror this omen incites, Cleopatra refuses to heed the warning and ‘took the dagger, and with set teeth the Queen of this day plunged it into the dead breast of the Pharaoh of three thousand years ago’.²⁸ The Eunuch traveling with them pays the price for their crimes as he is discovered dead, ‘on his countenance [...] frozen such a stamp of hideous terror as well might turn the beholder’s brain [...] and lo! fixed by its hinder claws, even to his chin, hung that mighty bat’.²⁹ With no bats to assault visitors to the British Museum, Rider Haggard uses his writing as a means to guide readers towards a respectful devotion to an ancient culture who viewed the preserved mummies of their deceased as sacrosanct.

Rider Haggard’s pursuit of accurate historical representation in his novels did not always work to make his writing more appealing to his readers. He writes that he was sneered at for researching his ancient civilisations because ‘[l]iterature, I was told, should be independent of such base actualities’.³⁰ This sneering is clearly evident in Andrew Lang’s critique of the first volume of *Cleopatra*. Lang (1844-1912) was a renowned folklorist, mythologist, pioneering psychical researcher, and one of Rider Haggard’s closest friends and critics.

However, Lang found the first volume of *Cleopatra* to be ‘too long, too full of

²⁶ As Pearson notes, later editions of *Cleopatra* adopt the spelling ‘Menkau-ra’. Pearson, p. 235.

²⁷ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 6 April 1889, p. 430.

²⁸ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 13 April 1889, p. 464.

²⁹ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 13 April 1889, p. 464.

³⁰ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, p. 279.

antiquarian detail, and too slow in movement to carry the general public with it'.³¹ Despite Lang's criticism, Rider Haggard refused to part with these sections of the novel, viewing them too much as a 'brick built from a wall'.³² He defended the amount of historical detail in his author's preface, signalling its connection to an understanding of religion as a whole:

For such students as seek a story only, and are not interested in the Faith, ceremonies, or customs of the Mother of Religion and Civilisation, ancient Egypt, it is, however, respectfully suggested that they should exercise the art of skipping and open this tale at its second book.³³

Using Egypt's authority as spiritual matriarch was an important way for Rider Haggard to investigate his own attraction to religions outside of the bounds of Protestantism. In doing so, he challenged nineteenth-century practices of biblical archaeology, which appropriated cultural icons and artefacts as precursors to Christianity.

As Eleanor Dobson notes, Rider Haggard's blending of 'historically accurate details of ancient Egyptian magic with their modern counterparts', suggests that 'he appears to delight in confusing notions of time and space in a way that itself references ancient Egypt's impact on a variety of magical discourses'.³⁴ Both *Cleopatra* and *Moon of Israel* confuse historical narratives, subsuming elements of the soul's rebirth within evangelical themes to challenge a Christian reading of history. As Julia Reid observes, Rider Haggard 'recognized the romance author's part in opening up inaccessible regions of the world', and

³¹ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, p. 269.

³² Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, p. 271.

³³ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, p. 271.

³⁴ Eleanor Dobson, 'Science, Magic, and Ancient Egypt in Late Victorian and Edwardian Literature', (unpublished master's thesis, University of Birmingham, 2013), p. 68.

used ancient Egypt as a means to explore the unexplainable and fantastic elements of faith.³⁵ These included the popular evangelical themes of sacrifice and substitutionary atonement, as well as ideas surrounding life after death and reincarnation. Such theological topics were easily woven into an Egyptian-themed narrative which inherently invited these discussions: mummies, curses, communion with ancient gods and goddesses, all such elements would be readily expected by an audience already inculcated into the unresolved mystery commonly found within Egyptian narratives.

Rider Haggard's fiction allowed him to assert a more liberal view of religion than he himself ever fully embraced. Early in his life, he vacillated between the traditional, limited theological tenets of Anglicanism and the more liberal assertions of universalism and doctrines of reincarnation: ancient Egypt facilitated a place where he could explore Christian views of atonement alongside themes of karmic reincarnation. As Emily Mace notes, the liberal religious congregations of certain Unitarian and Ethical Culturalist sects expressed an interest in using knowledge about world religions brought about through the growing field of comparative religious studies to better understand religion as a whole.³⁶ These congregations hoped 'that by placing Christian and non-Christian sources side by side, they could demonstrate what they saw as religion's essential unity in a world made ever smaller through the movements of immigrants and imperialist ventures'.³⁷ While Rider Haggard may not have publicly embraced a

³⁵ Julia Reid, 'Gladstone Bags, Shooting Boots, and Bryan & May's Matches: Empire, Commerce, and the Imperial Romance in the *Graphic's* Serialization of H. Rider Haggard's *She*', *Studies in the Novel*, 43.2 (2011), 152-78, p. 167.

³⁶ Emily Mace, 'Comparative Religion and the Practice of Eclecticism: Intersections in Nineteenth-Century Liberal Religious Congregations', *The Journal of Religion*, 94.1 (2014), 74-96, p. 79.

³⁷ Mace, p. 87.

comparative view of religion in the same way as liberal religious congregations, his personal writings on religion evince a desire to incorporate non-Christian beliefs into Anglicanism. In so doing, his fiction contributed towards destabilising the Church of England's High Anglicanism as the dominant religious authority in nineteenth-century Britain.³⁸

Rider Haggard's explanation of his personal views on religion are equally as complex as his fictional exploration of faith. His belief in the continued existence of the human spirit differs from traditional Anglicanism but neither does it belong to the popular conception of Buddhist reincarnation. While his 'Note on Religion' from *The Days of My Life*, makes it clear that he believes humans are often 'coming into active Being and departing out of Being more than once', he rejects this statement as having any connection to reincarnation as it was related to Buddhism.³⁹

Rider Haggard's view of Buddhism and its understanding of reincarnation as simply annihilation was a common objection to Buddhism in the nineteenth century. Buddhism had been represented by and for the West since the early nineteenth century. Philip C. Almond suggests that the British understanding of Buddhism was founded upon an 'an ideal textual Buddhism', the result of textual analysis of primarily non-Buddhist texts, such as the accounts of Buddhism from Christian missionaries, throughout the early nineteenth century which contributed

³⁸ For further reading on the role of various Christian sects in relation to Anglicanism in the nineteenth century, see: Annette G. Aubert, 'Protestantism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought*, ed. by Joel D.S. Rasmussen, Judith Wolfe, and Johannes Zachhuber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 504-23; David W. Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism', in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 235-50; *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) and *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Christian Thought* more widely.

³⁹ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol II*, p. 241.

to an overarching mode of discoursing about the religion predicated upon Western ideals.⁴⁰ These discourses were developed in the popular representations of Buddhism's founder, Gautama Buddha, in three book-length poems, by far the most popular of which was Sir Edwin Arnold's bestseller *The Light of Asia: Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism* (1879). Despite Buddhism's popularity, Almond notes that certain elements of Buddhism 'remained essentially Oriental, essentially *other*'.⁴¹ One of these elements was the understanding of *nirvana*, the goal of Buddhist life. While Buddhist ethics were lauded, even by Buddhism's fiercest critics, the atheistic cessation of the individual soul in *nirvana* was difficult to reconcile. Franklin notes that even Arnold's laudatory view of the Buddha is careful to deftly redirect the poem from negative Western perceptions of *nirvana*.

Rider Haggard, too, was troubled by a view of Buddhism which upheld a cessation of individual existence, labelling it 'a religion of Death'.⁴² However, despite discrediting the religion, a few pages later he states that 'like the Buddhists, I am strongly inclined to believe that the Personality which animates each of us is immeasurably ancient, having been forged in so many fires, and that, as its past is immeasurable, so will its future be'.⁴³ These tensions between the two differing beliefs on life after death remain unresolved both in Rider Haggard's own statements on faith as well as his novels. Franklin notes that 'Haggard himself, as well as characters in his novels, preached religious tolerance, but he struggled to understand the similarities and contradictions

⁴⁰ Almond, p. 40.

⁴¹ Almond, p. 41.

⁴² Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol II*, p. 238.

⁴³ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol II*, p. 241.

between his tacit Anglicanism, his attraction to the occult, and his belief in reincarnation and karma'.⁴⁴ Franklin suggests that Rider Haggard adopts a blend of Buddhist and Hindu beliefs along with an Egyptian metempsychosis in his novels.⁴⁵ Both *Cleopatra* and *Moon of Israel* leave readers with a vague version of what Franklin refers to as a 'hybrid religion', which incorporates a belief in reincarnation with faith in a Christian afterlife achieved by belief in Christ's atoning sacrifice. Rider Haggard carefully roots his statements of untraditional beliefs, which his audience could misconstrue as falling more in line with 'pagan' ideas, within a strong affirmation of Anglicanism.

Rider Haggard's had reason to be preoccupied with death and the afterlife. He explains in *The Days of My Life* that he dedicated *Cleopatra* to his ailing mother, Ella Haggard, 'because I thought it the best book I had written or was likely to write'.⁴⁶ Rider Haggard discusses his mother's own writing and transcribes an excerpt from one of her poems, believed to be the last words she wrote before she died in December of 1889:

Lo! in the shadowy valley here He stands:

My soul pale sliding down Earth's icy slope

Descends to meet Him, with beseeching hands

Trembling with Fear — and yet upraised in Hope.⁴⁷

That this poem mirrors Harmachis' spiritual journey throughout *Cleopatra* is eerie. Awaiting his death for betraying Isis, Harmachis writes of the same fearful hope of Rider Haggard's mother's poem:

⁴⁴ Franklin, p. 113.

⁴⁵ Franklin, p. 107.

⁴⁶ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, p. 271.

⁴⁷ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, p. 25.

Now all things end in darkness and in ashes, and I prepare to face the terrors that are to come in other worlds than this. I go, but not without hope I go: for, though I see Her not, though no more She answers to my prayers, still I am aware of the Holy Isis, who is with me for evermore and whom yet I shall again behold face to face.⁴⁸

Both passages betray doubts about their reception by deities in the afterlife.

Although Ella Haggard died after the novel was published, Rider Haggard never knew if she was able to read it herself because of her failing eyesight.⁴⁹ Just before he introduces his mother's verses in *The Days of My Life*, Rider Haggard confesses:

The Protestant Faith seems vaguely to inculcate that we should not pray for the dead. If so, I differ from the Protestant Faith, who hold that we should not only pray for them but to them, that they will judge our frailties with tenderness and will not forget us who do not forget them.⁵⁰

These uncertainties surrounding the dead's role in the lives of the living as well as their influence on the soul's posthumous judgment are ones that Rider Haggard had struggled with from a very early age. Etherington notes that,

The conventional notions of religion and morality which he had been taught as a boy on his stern father's Norfolk estate had been shaken by his reading of Comte, Hegel, and Darwin. He felt strongly in his own bosom the tensions between morality and passion, science and religion, national independence and empire which dominated the thinking of his generation.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 29 June 1889, p. 816.

⁴⁹ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, p. 272.

⁵⁰ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol I*, pp. 24-5.

⁵¹ Etherington, p. 2.

An ancient Egyptian setting offered Rider Haggard the opportunity to engage the doubts which had plagued him from childhood, to his mother's deathbed, and which would continue after the death of his son, Jock, in 1891. Rider Haggard could wrestle with the spiritual afterlife from the Egyptian temples of Isis and Amen through to the Protestant church. The tension over Harmachis' fate in *Cleopatra* and the joyful reunion of Seti, Merapi, and Seti II in *Moon of Israel* speak to an emotional depth, evidenced by Rider Haggard's personal experiences with death. This is a depth which Rider Haggard's earlier representations of reincarnations, such as in *She*, lack.⁵² As his mother's life waned and Rider Haggard worked to complete what he believed would be his best work and one which he would dedicate to her, he attempted to reconcile tensions between ideas of atonement and self-sacrifice through a complex typological dialogue.

Typology and Doubt in *Cleopatra*

In the way he published *Cleopatra*, Rider Haggard capitalised on the combined effect of the public's clamour for all things Egyptian and their expectation of the sensational in fiction. Serially publishing *Cleopatra* meant that readers would be drawn into the narrative only to be left at a peak of emotional sensation until the next issue was released. Dobson notes that *The Illustrated London News* published excavation reports alongside *Cleopatra*'s narrative.

'Associated with factual writing', Dobson writes, 'this layout actively encourages

⁵² For further reading on reincarnation in *She* see Etherington, *Rider Haggard*; Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion*, pp. 88-127; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*; Shawn Malley, "'Time Hath No Power Against Identity": Historical Continuity and Archaeological Adventure in H. Rider Haggard's *She*', *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 40.3 (1997), 275-97; and Reid, "'She-who-must-be-obeyed'"

the ironic imagination of the fictional text as “real”.⁵³ Andrew Griffiths has argued that fact and fiction were becoming ever more closely connected in the nineteenth century, so much so that “[t]he boundaries between novels and news, and between news and the events it reported, were increasingly blurred from the mid-1880s”.⁵⁴ This meant that ‘British readers experienced their empire as a polyglossic discourse formed from the contact between novels, news and imperial activity’.⁵⁵ Rider Haggard also strategically begins the novel with an account of an excavation, as Dobson notes, and uses a narrator at the beginning to ‘transcribe’ the story from papyrus discovered within an unmarked tomb.

This papyrus relates the story of the High Priest of Isis, Harmachis, and his divine charge to kill the Ptolemy usurper Cleopatra. However, Harmachis falls in love with the beautiful pharaoh and fails to kill her. Realising his mission, Cleopatra orders Harmachis’ death, but he escapes with the help of Cleopatra’s servant, Charmion. Harmachis hides in the desert, perfecting his skills in magic under the pseudonym Olympus until Cleopatra believes him to be dead. Years later, rumours of his magical abilities reach Cleopatra who, by this time, has fallen in love with the Roman leader Antony. She orders her guards to bring Olympus to her and, through this reunion, Harmachis is able to fulfil his divine calling and facilitate Cleopatra’s death. Aligning Harmachis’ narrative with Christian figures allows readers to view the story not as emblematic of the supposedly pagan past, but instead as a crucial part of their own Judaeo-Christian story. Harmachis is not just a fallen priest of Isis, he is a type of Christ and

⁵³ Dobson, ‘Science, Magic, and Ancient Egypt’, p. 41. For further discussion on the serialisation of *Cleopatra* see also Pearson, ‘Archaeology and Gothic Desire’.

⁵⁴ Andrew Griffiths, *The New Journalism, the New Imperialism, and the Fiction of Empire, 1870-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 2.

⁵⁵ Griffiths, p. 2.

mirrors the historical type of Moses whose shortcomings and failings taught nineteenth-century readers that the allure of sin was equally dangerous for the shrivelled mummies in the British Museum as it was for the flesh-and-blood Victorian viewer standing before them.

Common in the nineteenth century as a means of spiritual allusion, typology was a form of interpreting religious symbols and certain characters, concepts, or circumstances as anticipations of Jesus Christ. Typology necessarily functioned through a type/antitype relationship, which George P. Landow illuminates using the English theologian, librarian, and author Thomas Hartwell Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (1818). For Horne, 'types' refer to an imperfect form of something or, in the more theological sense, can be 'prepared and evidently designed by God to prefigure that future thing'.⁵⁶ The antitype is found in the perfect fulfilment of God's design: Jesus Christ. 'Typology is a Christian form of scriptural interpretation', writes Landow, it 'claims to discover divinely intended anticipations of Christ and His dispensation in the laws, events, and people of the Old Testament'.⁵⁷ Landow suggests that encountering typology in paintings and sermons caused Victorian readers to 'cultivate a love of paradox and enigma', and develop a habit of identifying biblical symbols and allusions.⁵⁸ What is paradoxical and enigmatic about typology is the fact that it combines something equally physical and spiritual. Using the example of Christ, Landow shows how Christ's identity

⁵⁶ Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures Vol. I* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1818), p. 609.

⁵⁷ George P. Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art, and Thought* (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 3.

⁵⁸ George P. Landow, *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p. 13.

combines a historical, physical corporeality with a higher, spiritual identity, which typological symbolism seeks to connect.

Landow sees typology worked out most clearly through nineteenth-century artwork, for instance William Holman Hunt's *The Scapegoat* (1856).⁵⁹ However, reading the same principles onto Rider Haggard's *Cleopatra* illuminates the richly complex religious discourse that runs throughout the novel. Having gripped his readers with sensational gothic elements of a concealed secret diary buried within archaeological ruins, Rider Haggard incorporates a loose but complex typological layering into his narrative, involving the antitype of Jesus and historical types of Moses and David as well as the legal type of atonement.⁶⁰ Harmachis, although not a tangible historical figure, represents a concrete period of human history and simultaneously symbolises the physical/spiritual person of Christ and Moses, as well as the obscure concept of atonement. Horne argues that a type is manifested in three distinct ways: historical, legal, and prophetic. Harmachis' narrative interweaves historical and legal types. Rider Haggard, perhaps unconsciously, prepares and designs them in Horne's theological sense to prefigure the antitype of Christ in order to wrestle with his own complicated relationship with the Church of England.

The inherently religious nature of Harmachis' role as a priest of Isis allows Rider Haggard to easily connect *Cleopatra*'s narrative to Christian figures and types. The novel begins by casting Harmachis as a type of Christ through his divine birth. Like the Judaeo-Christian Messiah, Harmachis is believed to be the product of divine conception, a child of an earthly woman and the Kneph, whom

⁵⁹ See Landow, *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*.

⁶⁰ For further reading on Rider Haggard and the gothic, see Pearson, 'Archaeology and Gothic Desire'.

Rider Haggard casts in the role of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the same one said to have ‘come upon’ Mary to enable her to conceive Jesus.⁶¹ As Harmachis’ mother lies dying, she is filled with a prophetic voice and proclaims that her son will ‘purge the land’ and ‘rule and deliver Egypt’, from the oppressive, colonial rule of the Ptolemies.⁶²

Employing a divine birth at the beginning of the narrative prompts readers into a typological reading of the novel. Readers accustomed to typological symbolism would likely recognize the Judaeo-Christian messianic structure to Harmachis’ birth in relation to Christ’s. When visited by an angel, Mary is told that she is pregnant and that her son will become a great ruler who will ‘reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end’.⁶³ Both Harmachis and Jesus are destined to rule, uniting their subjects under one religion.

If Harmachis is a type of Christ, then at some point in his story he must fail or fall short of being humankind’s redeemer: only in the antitype of a typological structure is perfect fulfilment found since a type is, according to Horne, ‘a rough draught, or less accurate model, from which a more perfect image is made’.⁶⁴ Harmachis’ failure is thus understood from the beginning of the novel. The story begins with the discovery of a scroll written by Harmachis wherein he refers to himself as ‘the doomed Egyptian’ who cries out ‘from that dim Amenti where to-day he wears out his long atoning time’.⁶⁵ Pearson argues that the early revelation of the narrative drive is connected to ‘a fatal sexual desire’.⁶⁶ However, conducting

⁶¹ Luke 1.35.

⁶² Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 5 January 1889, p. 11.

⁶³ Luke 1.32-33.

⁶⁴ Horne, p. 609.

⁶⁵ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 5 January 1889, p. 11.

⁶⁶ Pearson, p. 232.

a typological reading of *Cleopatra* suggests that Harmachis' sexual transgression relates more broadly to his inability to fulfil the type of Christ and his own messianic mission, since the type prefigures that which will be perfected in the antitype.

Although Harmachis can be read as a type of Christ in his own right, adding a further typological layering—a historical type—creates a tangible link between *Cleopatra* and the practices of biblical archaeological societies and shows how Rider Haggard's narrative subtly challenges their cultural appropriation. As a historical type, Harmachis represents 'some eminent persons recorded in the Old Testament, so ordered by Divine Providence as to be exact prefigurations of the characters, actions, and fortunes of future persons who should arise under Gospel dispensation'.⁶⁷ Harmachis' story also aligns with the historical type of Moses, whose representation of Old Testament Levitical law places him as the type to Christ's atoning sacrifice in the New Testament. Within their narratives, both Harmachis and Moses are chosen messengers of God, who are called in miraculous ways and tasked with leading their god's people. Both also fail in their divine calling. Moses fails when he angrily strikes a rock in the desert of Kadesh to produce water for the Israelites, a symbol of his distrust in God. As punishment for his disbelief, the Lord tells Moses that he will see the Promised Land but not be the one to lead his people there.⁶⁸

This vision of the Promised Land and representation of a view of future atonement without participation in it was a commonly represented type referred to as the Pisgah sight. The term 'Pisgah' refers to Mt. Pisgah where Moses was

⁶⁷ Horne, p. 609.

⁶⁸ Numbers 20.12.

given this glimpse of the Promised Land he would never inhabit. The Pisgah sight is used in various typological ways in literature and art, as Landow notes, but its overarching theme is one of unfulfilled anticipation which reaches its fulfilment in the redemption of Christ's sacrifice.⁶⁹ Moses, the representative of Levitical law, is shown to be incapable of bringing the Israelites into perfect community: only Christ's atonement can bring the Israelites from the law into freedom.

The illustrations that ran alongside the serial publication of *Cleopatra* in the *Illustrated London News* on 25 May and 15 June picture Harmachis in two variations of the Pisgah sight. The first shows Harmachis looking out from the tomb of Ramses II where he hides after the death of his father (fig. 2.1). Harmachis has been perfecting his skills in magic and using them to astonish the local people under the pseudonym 'Olympus'. Eventually, this draws the attention of Cleopatra, who commands her soldiers to bring Olympus to her. The illustration shows the Roman soldiers standing before Harmachis/Olympus at the mouth of Ramses' tomb. Light flows from behind the soldiers into the darkness of the tomb behind Harmachis, who wears a long, flowing white robe and headdress. Harmachis, shorter than the soldiers, looks up at them and out onto the 'Valley of the Dead.' His hands are open before him, as he willingly submits to the guards' demands. This submission ultimately leads to his death and the rebirth of Egypt at the hands of the Romans, a promised land he will never inhabit.

In this rendition of the Pisgah sight, Harmachis looks out at the future of Egypt, a future of invasion, which Isis prophesies over him. The ancient customs of Egypt, reflected in the hieroglyphs on the wall of the tomb and a statue, are cloaked in shadow. The floor of the tomb is covered in rock and rubble, evidence

⁶⁹ Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows*, p. 205.

of their future burial in the sands of the desert. They are part of the old order that will pass away as Egypt is brought into the future, eventually resulting in the same tombs being unearthed, excavated, and recast in the light of Biblical archaeology. Placing Harmachis within the tomb of Ramses II conflates the historical and the spiritual, connecting Harmachis' narrative to the wider Biblical Mosaic account. Just as Victorian Egyptologists believed that the Israelites escaped from slavery under the (supposed) rule of Ramses and fled to the desert to worship God, many supporters of religious archaeology believed that Christianity 'escaped' from connection to the seemingly pagan past to eventually evolve into the Protestant Christianity of Rider Haggard's day.

This Pisgah sight is inverted in the second illustration from 15 June (fig. 2.2). Harmachis has re-joined Cleopatra, though she still believes him to be the magician Olympus and not Harmachis, whom she assumes has died. Dressed in similar flowing robes, the wizened Harmachis looks down on a dying Antony. Cleopatra, bedraggled and unkempt, kneels at Antony's side, lamenting his impending death. Whereas in the previous illustration the focus of the gaze is drawn outward, in this illustration Harmachis' vision is drawn downward onto Antony and Cleopatra. He sees the future of destruction, death, and chaos his sin has wrought, but he looks at it through a gaze of judgment indicative of his Old Testament type. His mouth is set in a hard line and his pointed features all bespeak the judgment and condemnation of Levitical law which is transformed by Christ's atoning sacrifice in the New Testament. Harmachis' and Cleopatra's deaths are required as part of the atonement for Harmachis' wrongs at the end of

the novel, but Isis tells Harmachis he must await true redemption in Amenti while ‘new Religions [...] arise and wither within the shadow’ of Egypt’s pyramids.⁷⁰

Viewed as a historical type, Harmachis is representative of a leader unable to redeem his people. His sin—the initial failure to kill Cleopatra and rid Egypt of her oppressive rule because of his love for her—prevents him from leading Egypt into the future. Whereas Isis commands Harmachis to remain pure in order to ‘sit upon that kingly throne and restore my ancient worship in its purity’, once Harmachis has failed, redemption and purity must come to Egypt via other means.⁷¹ In his last communion with Isis, Harmachis receives an ominous prophecy. This prophecy, however, becomes a form of the Pisgah sight itself, connecting Egypt’s past to the atoning salvation of Great Britain’s Christianity. ‘Khem [Egypt] shall no more be free till all its temples are as the desert dust’, Isis tells Harmachis,

still, when the very name by which thou knowest Me has become a meaningless mystery to those who shall be after thee [...] [i]f thou wilt but atone and forget Me no more, I shall be with thee, waiting thine hour of redemption.⁷²

Just as Moses cannot enter the Promised Land because the true redemption of the Israelite nation comes through Jesus, Harmachis cannot succeed in his Messianic mission. Here, as he stands looking upon Isis for the last time, is his Pisgah sight. He is given a glimpse into Egypt’s future, when Egyptian religion has been stripped away and Isis’ name is indecipherable.⁷³ He awaits redemption in the

⁷⁰ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 18 May 1889, p. 624.

⁷¹ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 2 February 1889, p. 140.

⁷² Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 18 May 1889, p. 624.

⁷³ The fact that Isis’ name will become a ‘meaningless mystery’, could be interpreted as a nod to a time when British archaeologists were still learning to decipher hieroglyphs, literally making the names carved on Isis’ temple ‘meaningless’.

form of religions ‘rising and withering’ until the ‘hour of redemption’, when divinity is once again brought to Egypt in the form of the seeming antitype to Isis worship: Christianity’s Jesus Christ.

Landow defines legal types as prefigurations of the Christian doctrine of atonement which held that ‘only the sacrifice of innocent blood could atone for man’s sinning against God’.⁷⁴ Traditionally, legal types hearken back to Judaeo-Christian Levitical law and the use of myriad sacrifices to atone for sin. The book of Leviticus details how the Israelites were expected to atone for various sins and offences, all of which required a sacrifice in order for the sin to be forgiven and the Israelite allowed to move from the status of unclean to ceremonially clean. If atonement was not made for lesser sins—ones that did not require capital punishment—the offender suffered various social and spiritual consequences, the gravest of which was being refused access to the temple, the locus around which Hebrew life revolved. To be cut off from the temple meant being cut off from the very centre of Israelite culture.

The importance of atonement in the fate of a person’s afterlife was also an important topic of debate in the nineteenth century. As Jan-Melissa Schramm notes, the publication of Frederick Denison Maurice’s *Theological Essays* (1853) prompted renewed discussion of the nature, extent, and meaning of atonement as well as the literal value of self-sacrifice. It ‘opened the floodgates for a dynamic, often vitriolic, debate about the function and efficacy of sacrifice’.⁷⁵ The two main voices in these debates were the traditional views of the Anglican Church and the liberal assertions of Universalism. The Anglican Church maintained views

⁷⁴ Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century Narrative* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 147.

of Christ's sacrifice as perfect atonement for the sins of the 'elect' or 'predestined'.

The broad scope of the atonement debates in the 1850s-60s is evidence of a culture on the brink of upheaval in multiple realms; the legal, personal, judicial, and theological ramifications surrounding these discussions reveal the idea of atonement as a point of tension and fundamental crux in relation to understanding themes of identity and selfhood. 'At stake in these debates', writes Schramm, 'are some of the most pressing questions of the period: what it means to be human, what it means to suffer, and the ways in which others might benefit from one individual's painfully acquired experience'.⁷⁶ Atonement and sacrifice were complex concepts which, Schramm illustrates, relied on literary expression to illustrate the complex nature. 'Redemption' she writes, 'can only be approached by metaphors that are simultaneously illuminating (in that they derive from everyday transactions with which we are familiar) and oblique (in that repayment of a debt is simultaneously like and unlike attaining salvation)'.⁷⁷ Schramm introduces Samuel Taylor Coleridge's discussion of sacrifice from *Aids to Reflection* (1825) as a basis for understanding atonement later in the nineteenth century in relation to the literal value of Christ's sacrifice, but does not comment on the fact that Coleridge himself viewed Christ's death and role of mediator as typological fulfilment of Levitical law. Coleridge highlights Christ's *active* role as priest and mediator. Christ both offers and accepts his own sacrifice because he is both 'Judge' and 'Advocate':

⁷⁶ Schramm, p. 236.

⁷⁷ Schramm, p. 235.

Here is a Sacrifice, a Sin-offering for the whole world: and a High Priest, who is indeed a Mediator, who not in type or shadow but in very truth and in his own right stands in the place of Man to God, and of God to Man; and who receives as a Judge what he offered as an Advocate.⁷⁸

This is the heart of Christ's role as antitype. Schramm notes that, for evangelicals, 'only Christ was both victim and priest'.⁷⁹ This view differs from the doctrine of Universalism, which held that the sins of every person were atoned for through Christ's sacrifice, not just the elect. Such a belief, as Schramm notes, had implications that reached beyond theology to impact man's moral responsibilities. If all humanity is saved, then good works and moral behaviour need not be a significant factor in determining a person's afterlife.

The contentious discussion in the mid-nineteenth century was inherently momentous because it delved straight into the heart of the Judaeo-Christian faith and drove a rift between those who adhered to developing Unitarian beliefs that all humanity would be saved and the High-Church Anglican position. The judicial implications of Christ's death are the linchpin of the Christian faith and therefore what made the atonement debates so fundamentally significant:

The site of greatest conflict was the penal and forensic understanding of Christ's death on the cross—whether his death was in any way literally 'in place of' mankind (substitution rigorously defined) or simply a supreme example of self-abnegation and submission to the perceived will of God.⁸⁰

If Christ's death could not be considered as a substitutionary atonement, then the very nature of a Christian's salvation would be called into question. Questions of

⁷⁸ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. 9 Aids to Reflection*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn and Bart Winer (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 325.

⁷⁹ Schramm, p. 177.

⁸⁰ Schramm, p. 149.

free-will, predestination and election, the existence of hell and the afterlife, and a Christian's moral obligations in the present all stem from the central issue of understanding and defining Christ's atonement. The atmosphere of tension and anxiety created by these debates can still be seen in the legal typology of Rider Haggard's treatment of atonement and self-sacrifice in *Cleopatra*. Schramm notes that 'the Atonement controversy' died down by the 1860s but its effects continued to be felt in wider attacks on Christianity as the period progressed.⁸¹ *Cleopatra* can be read as a fictional microcosm of these larger atonement debates. While Isis commands Harmachis at the beginning of the narrative to remain 'pure' and cleanse Egypt of foreign gods and rulers, he initially fails to do. The rest of the narrative focuses not on the outcome of Harmachis' atonement in the afterlife, but instead emphasise his efforts to make reparation.

The only way for the Israelites to make reparation for sins and be restored to spiritual community was through atonement before God, which could take various forms: animal or harvest sacrifice, monetary reparation, or both. It was essential that the animals used for sacrifice be 'without blemish'; other translations of the Bible phrase this concept using the word: 'spotless'.⁸² For atonement to be effective, the sacrifice had to be innocent and without defect. Only through offering perfection could the soul's perfection before God be redeemed. This mirrors the innocent, spotless death of Christ in the New Testament, which produced a powerful shift in the way that sin and sacrifice were viewed. In Judaeo-Christian tradition, there had never existed a perfect human being and therefore, when Christ was sacrificed, it altered the nature of atonement

⁸¹ Schramm, p. 179.

⁸² Leviticus 4.3.

itself. Levitical law was a type, inherently imperfect, because the only sacrifices available were not powerful enough to redeem the person from more than one sin at a time. Christ's death, in presenting a truly 'perfect' sacrifice that could satisfy a just God, differed radically from the offerings of Levitical law:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.⁸³

Christ's death was an 'incorruptible' sacrifice compared to the sacrifices of 'corruptible' things which were required according to the 'tradition' of Old Testament, Levitical law. Furthermore, Jesus acts as an antitype to the legal type of Levitical law through his dual role as man and God: priest and divine judge.

Harmachis' sin against Isis in *Cleopatra* and his journey towards atonement allow Haggard the imaginative space to explore the nature of atonement and the afterlife, doctrines he struggled to understand from a solely Protestant perspective. Isis commands Harmachis at the beginning of the narrative to remain 'pure' and cleanse Egypt of foreign gods and rulers. To do this, he must kill Cleopatra and assume the throne himself. As has already been shown, he fails, but the root of his failure itself is imperative in understanding the nature of the specific atonement required. His sin lies in his love of and lust for Cleopatra, which Pearson suggests is a 'gothic perversity of desire' that Rider Haggard connects to archaeology and Egypt specifically throughout his novels.⁸⁴ This trope of a man seeking atonement for his sins with a woman is also common in typological narratives. Within this

⁸³ 1 Peter 1.18-19.

⁸⁴ Pearson, p. 226.

legal type lies another historical type in the form of a connection to the story of David and Bathsheba.

Scholars of typology also view King David, a ‘man after God’s own heart’, as a prefiguration of Christ.⁸⁵ He, like Harmachis, was called into God’s service at a young age when he was anointed by the prophet Samuel and destined to rule as king over Israel.⁸⁶ Just as Harmachis was cautioned by his mother’s prophecy, his priesthood, and Isis herself to live a life of purity, David is also commanded to live a holy life according to Levitical law. However, like Harmachis, David is tempted and led astray by a woman: Bathsheba. Psalm 51 is widely believed by biblical scholars to have been penned by David after he brought about the death of Bathsheba’s husband to conceal their adultery. This act and subsequent psalm present a discourse on biblical atonement: although David would have been expected to offer sacrifices for his sin, he muses on the nature of sacrifice in the psalm and says that ‘[t]he sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise’.⁸⁷ Despite the fact that Levitical law demanded David and Bathsheba’s deaths, instead of losing his life for his sin, he is forgiven.⁸⁸ That the sacrifices of a ‘broken and a contrite heart’ were acceptable is evident from the fact that David is included in the lineage of Christ according to Matthew 1.6.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Acts 13.22: ‘And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave their testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.’

⁸⁶ 1 Samuel 16.12-13.

⁸⁷ Psalm 51.17.

⁸⁸ Leviticus 20.10

⁸⁹ ‘And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.’

Sacrifices of a 'broken and contrite' heart also comprise part of Harmachis' atonement to Isis. After failing to kill Cleopatra, he immediately acknowledges that the physical act of kissing her was 'more deadly and more strong than the embrace of Death', in which 'were forgotten Isis, my heavenly Hope, Oaths, Honour, Country, Friends, all things—all things save that Cleopatra clasped me in her arms, and called me Love and Lord'.⁹⁰ Cleopatra recognizes the severity of Harmachis' spiritual betrayal and mocks him for it: 'With what eyes, thinkest thou, will the Heavenly Mother look upon Her son, who, shamed in all things and false to his most sacred vow, comes to greet Her, his life-blood on his hands?' she asks: "'Where, then, will be the space for thy atonement?— if, indeed, thou mayest atone!'" Then I could bear no more, for my heart was broken within me. Alas! it was too true—I dared not die!'.⁹¹ Harmachis fears death because he feels, as Cleopatra articulates, that without any hope of atonement the only afterlife awaiting him is one of eternal punishment and damnation. It is not surprising that a discussion of the consequences of earthly decisions and their aftermath in the afterlife are raised in a novel whose narrative reflects Rider Haggard's own difficulty accepting a Protestant view of eternity. Writing of the complex religious afterlife in *Ayesha*, Franklin notes 'Haggard could not send Ayesha to heaven, and, despite mixed professions of faith by himself and by his characters, he did not trust Christian doctrine to provide sufficient correction and guidance'.⁹² If death is simply a means to a reawakening of consciousness via reincarnation then atonement need not be achieved in one lifetime on earth. Reparation for wrongs can be worked out through various reincarnations via

⁹⁰ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 23 March 1889, p. 366.

⁹¹ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 30 March 1889, p. 392.

⁹² Franklin, p. 113.

karma. A life lived well—with strong morals and good deeds—results in a person returning to a higher, more privileged existence, whereas a life of evil requires atonement by being born into difficulties such as poverty or a lower life form. In contrast, if life on earth decides a singular, eternal existence then atonement is a much more pressing issue. Franklin suggests that although Rider Haggard professed scepticism about Buddhism, ‘he ultimately turned to karma and reincarnation as the source of ethical order in the universe and the adjudicator of spiritual progress’.⁹³

In *Cleopatra* specifically, Harmachis’ fear of death indicates some kind of belief in an afterlife wherein one would be required to pay for his sins in an unpleasant, eternal manner. Therefore, fully atoning on earth is of vast importance for his fate in the afterlife. Firstly, Harmachis seeks spiritual atonement from Isis herself. In his final communion with the goddess he brings to her the ‘sacrifices of God’ which David writes of in Psalm 51. He prays that Isis will:

put away Thy wrath, and of Thine infinite pity, O Thou all pitiful, hearken
to the voice of the anguish of him who was Thy son and servant, but who
by sin hath fallen from the vision of Thy love.⁹⁴

Expecting to be smote by the power of her fury, Harmachis is surprised by the grace the goddess offers. Isis cautions Harmachis to return to his duty promising that

if thou wilt but atone and forget Me no more, I shall be with thee, waiting
thine hour of redemption. For this is the nature of the love Divine,

⁹³ Franklin, p. 113.

⁹⁴ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 18 May 1889, p. 624.

wherewith It loves that which doth partake of its divinity and hath once by the holy tie been bound to it.⁹⁵

The concept of divine love redeeming what belongs to it suggests a combination of both a Levitical, sacrificial method of atonement in connection with the power of a divine, atoning sacrifice. After facilitating Cleopatra's death, Harmachis ultimately pays for his sin with his life, in concordance with the Levitical capital punishment for crimes such as adultery and idolatry. The priesthood of Isis assures that this punishment is fulfilled by burying Harmachis alive in an unmarked tomb without the necessary funeral rites and passages from *The Book of the Dead* that would enable him to reach the afterlife. The nature of salvation in the cult of Isis as well as its parallels to Christianity seem to indicate that Harmachis will reach Amenti and be brought before Isis once again after death. However, it is not clear whether Harmachis' atonement on earth will completely restore their relationship when they meet face to face.

When Harmachis first comes before the goddess Isis, in a manner reminiscent of the cleansing rituals of Israelite priests, he is shown a series of visions which teach him the many mysteries of his religion, only revealed to the highest order of the priests of Isis. One such vision mirrors the Christian narrative of Christ's death and substitutionary sacrifice. Harmachis sees:

[T]he bright spirit of Good, who is of us called Osiris, but who hath many names, offer himself up for the evil-doing of the race that had dethroned him. And from him and the Divine Mother, of whom all nature is, sprang another spirit who is the Protector of us on earth, as Osiris is our justifier

⁹⁵ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 18 May 1889, p. 624.

in Amenti. For this is the mystery of the Osiris [...] I understood the secret of religion.⁹⁶

Osiris's sacrifice, 'the secret of religion' is recast as the atoning sacrifice of Christ, since Osiris 'has many names.' Such a sacrifice justifies the believer in the afterlife: 'Amenti' for Harmachis and Heaven for the Christian. However, the term 'justified' is vague in relation to Harmachis' afterlife. The sacrifice of Osiris, and presumably the sacrifice of Jesus, assures a believer entrance into the afterlife upon death, but it would appear from the narrative that atonement might still be required once the afterlife is reached. The end of the narrative finds Harmachis fearfully awaiting death. 'Now all things end in darkness and in ashes, and I prepare to face the terrors that are to come in other worlds than this,' he writes,

I go, but not without hope I go: for, though I see her not, though no more
She answers to my prayers, still I am aware of the Holy Isis, who is with
me for evermore and whom yet I shall again behold face to face. And then
at last in that far day I shall find forgiveness.⁹⁷

Although he has attempted to atone for his sins, the nature of his relationship with Isis in Amenti is uncertain. This fear does not prevent Harmachis from doing everything within his power to redeem his actions on earth. He devotes eight years to the study of magic and astrology to work out his 'penance' and 'make atonement' for his sin.⁹⁸ The skills he learns during this time allow him to once again be admitted into Cleopatra's presence so he can fulfil his original mission and facilitate her death. In this way, he atones for his sin by adhering to Isis'

⁹⁶ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 2 February 1889, p. 140.

⁹⁷ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 29 June 1889, p. 816.

⁹⁸ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 25 May 1889, p. 656.

command to remember him. Harmachis remembers his original call to rid Egypt of its usurper and gives Cleopatra a poison that ensures a slow, terrifying death.

He also atones by willingly subjecting himself to the punishment demanded by his priesthood, which mirrors that of Levitical law. He once again offers a broken and contrite heart, returning to his birthplace and revealing himself to the priests in the temple.⁹⁹ The shocked priests remind Harmachis of the penalty for his crimes against their priesthood to which he replies: 'I court that awful doom.'¹⁰⁰

Having atoned as fully as he can on earth, Harmachis willingly partakes in the last rite of atonement: his own sacrifice. Speaking of the quest for supernatural knowledge evident in *She*, Cohen suggests that 'in the end, Haggard knows, unconsciously if not consciously, that the answers to his questions about life, death, and immortality are not to be had in this world'.¹⁰¹ Harmachis, too, must accept an ambiguous fate. He trusts that the 'secret of religion', Osiris' sacrifice, as well as Isis' promise of redemption will follow him to the afterlife. The end of the novel returns the narrative voice to the present with an insertion by a British archaeologist who writes that '[h]ere the writing on the third roll of papyrus abruptly ends. It would almost seem that the writer was at this moment broken in upon by those who came to lead him to his doom'.¹⁰² Harmachis is led to the grave with as clear a conscience as possible, but this is not enough to ensure a definite picture of his eternal afterlife.

⁹⁹ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 29 June 1889, p. 816.

¹⁰⁰ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 29 June 1889, p. 816.

¹⁰¹ Cohen, p. 114.

¹⁰² Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 29 June 1889, p. 816.

Pearson suggests that, for Harmachis, '[t]he Tomb reveals the conflicts of desire still being fought out in death'.¹⁰³ While Pearson reads this as Harmachis' 'never-resolved desire' for Cleopatra, I argue that Haggard gestures more widely to the conflicting nature of atonement and eternal life.¹⁰⁴ Pearson's suggestion that the 'terror of the male never quite dying' wherein 'vitality is never quite extinguished, but never quite fulfilled either' can also be more broadly applied to the vitality of the individual soul and the tensions found between reincarnation and atonement in Rider Haggard's early works.¹⁰⁵ While Harmachis is eternally separated from Cleopatra, there is also the potential of separation from Isis. Both Harmachis' earthly desires and eternal hopes remain unresolved. The one guarantee that remains is the divine voice which promises: 'Always will I be with thee, my servant, for my love once given can never be taken away, though by sin it may seem lost to thee.'¹⁰⁶

Landow suggests that typology effectively transforms 'arcane rituals of an alien religion' into something relatable to the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁷ In *Cleopatra*, the alien aspects of the Egyptians' worship of multiple gods transforms into an early prefiguration of Judaeo-Christian monotheism which focused on the importance of atonement and sacrifice, but also allows for the infusion of an Egyptian metempsychosis. Isis tells Harmachis that she has 'watched Universes wither, wane, and, beneath the breath of Time, melt into nothingness; again to gather, and, re-born thread the maze of space'.¹⁰⁸ Isis dies out in Egypt to be reborn again as the Christian messiah who will bring the 'hour of redemption'.

¹⁰³ Pearson, p. 230.

¹⁰⁴ Pearson, p. 230.

¹⁰⁵ Pearson, pp. 242-3.

¹⁰⁶ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 2 February 1889, p. 140.

¹⁰⁷ Landow, *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁸ Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 18 May 1889, p. 624.

Harmachis' role as historical type is not just ordered by divine providence to be an exact prefiguration of, as Horne describes, 'future persons who should arise under Gospel dispensation' but is instead an active character in a story of universal truth.¹⁰⁹ The typological structure of *Cleopatra* allows the gods of Egypt to exist simultaneously with the Judaeo-Christian God in a dialogue which connects to the shared human experience. Isis, reborn as the Judaeo-Christian God, returns to Egypt via an influx of religious Victorian archaeologists.

The Gods Reborn—Enduring Truth in *Moon of Israel*

Whereas *Cleopatra* weaves the merits of a belief in reincarnation into a complicated typological structure which subsumes metempsychosis under a Christian belief in atonement through Jesus Christ, *Moon of Israel* allows ancient religion and Christianity to confidently stand alongside one another. Instead of layering his desire to believe in reincarnation underneath a narrative which recalls numerous Christian types, in *Moon of Israel*, reincarnation is ascribed the label of 'truth'. In the text, Rider Haggard reveals a view of religion which suggests that, while one religion might be more dominant within a culture, truth can be found in every faith.

Moon of Israel retells the story of the Israelite Exodus from the perspective of the Egyptians. The story is narrated by Ana, the scribe to Seti I who is next in line for the throne of Egypt. Seti is a benevolent leader, whose sympathy towards the plight of the Hebrews causes his father, the Pharaoh Menephtah, to disinherit him from the throne. When Menephtah dies, Amenmeses

¹⁰⁹ Horne, p. 609.

ascends the throne in Seti's place and maintains a firm hatred of the Hebrews. This hatred invokes the anger of the Hebrew god, Jahveh, who sends the ten plagues of Egypt and ultimately results in the drowning of Amenmeses and the Egyptian army when they attempt to follow the Israelites through the Red Sea.

The novel juxtaposes Egyptian and Hebrew faiths and, while Jahveh triumphs and is revealed to be the most powerful, Egyptian religion is not defeated. The understanding that '[t]o men's eyes God has many faces, and each swears that the one he sees is the only true god. Yet they are wrong, for all are true' spoken by Ki—an evil Egyptian magician—pervades the novel.¹¹⁰ Ki's villainy furthers the narrative's driving theme, that truth can be found in all people and all religions. Even evil characters can reveal important truths. Early on in the novel, when Seti first meets a Hebrew woman, Merapi—the Moon of Israel—who will later become his lover and the mother of his firstborn son, he notes how their gods may be the same but have different names. Seti asks Merapi to 'swear by Kephera the creator, and by Maat the goddess of truth and all, to speak nothing but the truth', which Merapi refuses to do because she is 'a daughter of Israel'.¹¹¹ Merapi explains that she can only swear '[b]y Jahveh, O Prince, whom we hold to be the one and only God, the Maker of the world and all that is therein'.¹¹² Instead of promoting Kephera above Jahveh, Seti merely suggests that 'perhaps his other name is Kephera [...]. But have it as you will. Swear, then, by your god Jahveh'.¹¹³ Seti sees an underlying connection of truth between all religions that other characters in the novel struggle to grasp. '[I]t seems to me more simple to believe that what she says is true; that her god is greater than Amon [...]. I do not

¹¹⁰ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 77.

¹¹¹ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 18.

¹¹² Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, pp. 18-9.

¹¹³ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 19.

think that they [the Egyptian gods] are false, Ana, though mayhap they be less true'.¹¹⁴ Truth runs throughout all religions, with certain gods having more or less truth—and therefore more or less power—than others.

Despite Jahveh being more powerful than the Egyptian gods, his followers are not cast in a positive light. Throughout the novel, the Israelites are portrayed as an uncouth, violent people. Seti and Ana are attacked after humbly traveling to Goshen to hear the plight of the Israelites and prepare to plead their case before Seti's father, Pharaoh. Seti and Ana, traveling with only two guards, are set upon by 'a horde of fierce, hook-nosed men, brandishing knives and swords'.¹¹⁵ Such anti-semitic tropes further villainise the Israelites. When Merapi joins the fight and stabs one of her own kinsmen to stop him from choking Seti to death, she is branded a traitress and exiled from her people. Jabez, a priest of Israel, comes to her at Seti's palace and curses her, but he goes beyond his role as priest and attempts to murder Merapi. 'Waving his arms and rolling his wild eyes' Jabez

poured out some hideous curse upon the head of this poor maid, much of which, as it was spoken rapidly in an ancient form of Hebrew, we did not understand. He cursed her living, dying, and after death. He cursed her in her love and hate, wedded or alone. He cursed her in child-bearing or in barrenness, and he cursed her children after her to all generations. Lastly, he declared her cut off from and rejected by the god she worshipped, and sentenced her to death at the hands of any who could slay her. So horrible was that curse that she shrank away from him, while Jabez crouched upon the ground hiding his eyes with his hands, and even I felt my blood turn

¹¹⁴ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, pp. 148-9, explanatory note mine.

¹¹⁵ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, pp. 112-3.

cold. At length he paused, foaming at the lips. Then, suddenly shouting ‘After judgment, doom!’ he drew a knife from his robe and sprang at her.¹¹⁶

Jabez’s murderous intentions reveal the consequences of having such a narrow-minded view towards religion. While it is later revealed that Jabez acted in accordance with Hebrew law in cursing Merapi, he strays too far in attempting to murder her. He attempts to add to Jahveh’s judgement by cursing her with doom after judgment. The violence of the priests of Israel stands in stark contrast to Seti’s calm, level-headed demeanour. Despite being unjustly attacked by the Israelites and nearly losing his love to their violence, Seti continually promotes the Israelites’ cause both to his father and Amenmeses when he ascends the throne.

Seti’s liberal mindset towards religion is shown to be wise through the rewards bestowed upon him by both the Egyptian gods and Jahveh. When the plagues begin to descend upon Egypt, ‘in Seti’s palace there were no flies, and in the garden but a few. After this a terrible pest began among the cattle, whereof thousands died. But of Seti’s great herd not one was even sick, nor, as we learned, was there a hoof the less in the land of Goshen’.¹¹⁷ Seti and Merapi are given the same protection as the Israelites in Goshen in every plague apart from the final: the death of the firstborn son. However, where Jahveh takes Seti and Merapi’s son, Seti II, the Egyptian gods intervene to protect Seti II in the afterlife.

Before his death, Seti II has a dream of a ‘a woman, dressed as Mother was in the temple,’ who ‘took me by the hand and led me into the air [...] the

¹¹⁶ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 165.

¹¹⁷ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 218.

woman with the feather cap told me she was taking me to beautiful big star where Mother would soon come to find me'.¹¹⁸ Seti II refers to his mother's appearance when she was taken to the temple of Isis by the Egyptians who, overwhelmed with terror at the horror of the plague of darkness, drag Merapi to the temple of Isis and clad her in the garments of a priestess. They place her upon Isis' throne and beg her to '[p]ray for us, Mother Isis [...] that the curse of blackness may be removed'.¹¹⁹ Merapi prays to Jahveh and the blackness lifts, but it is clearly Isis, whose garments and appearance Merapi assumed in the temple, who appears in Seti II's dream and prepares to take him to the afterlife. Merapi herself hopes to attain 'a life eternal in the heavens, and thither I would go to seek that who is lost, and to wait that which is left behind awhile'.¹²⁰ This afterlife belongs to '[t]he faith of these Egyptians which we despise' instead of the afterlife described in the Hebrew faith.¹²¹

Merapi's desire to seek her son who has gone ahead of her echoes Rider Haggard's dedication of his autobiography 'to the memory of our son whom I now seek'.¹²² Rider Haggard had a premonition when he travelled to Mexico which he took to mean 'almost without doubt, that in this world he and I would never see each other more. Only I thought *it was I who was doomed to die*'.¹²³ He felt responsible for Jock's death and, Etherington notes, 'secretly believed that the child's death was a divine retribution for his own carnal sins'.¹²⁴ Merapi reminds Seti that the death of their son is the fulfilment of 'the sorrow which Jabez my

¹¹⁸ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 252.

¹¹⁹ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 244.

¹²⁰ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 261.

¹²¹ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, pp. 260-1.

¹²² Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol. I*, p. v.

¹²³ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol II.*, p. 42, emphasis author's.

¹²⁴ Etherington, p. 14.

uncle warned you would come, if ever you had aught to do with me', but Seti is comforted with the thought that Seti II might one day be reincarnated.¹²⁵ Written after the death of Rider Haggard's mother, son, and lifelong love—Lily 'Lilith' Jackson in 1909—*Moon of Israel*'s fictionalisation of the hope which a belief in reincarnation affords is much more poignant than that of *Cleopatra*.¹²⁶ The hope of being reunited with loved ones or having them return through reincarnation is much more sharply articulated here in 1918 than in 1889 when Rider Haggard had not yet experienced such keen loss.

The eternal life which Merapi desires does not exist solely on one side of the grave. Whereas in *Cleopatra*, Rider Haggard weaves together themes of Christian atonement and reincarnation, in *Moon of Israel*, he connects a belief in reincarnation to Egyptian religion, distancing them from Christianity which is portrayed as a powerful but legalistic religion. Before Seti falls in love with Merapi, Ki proclaims that Seti has 'met her often and often [...] you have known her for thousands of years, as you have known that man at your side [Ana] for thousands of years'.¹²⁷ While Seti is skeptical of this, he does admit that Egyptian religion's view of the afterlife 'teaches us [...] that, after death we live eternally elsewhere in our own bodies, which we find again on the day of resurrection'.¹²⁸ He continues to explain the nature of this eternal resurrection as 'having no end [...] it is a circle. Therefore if the one be true, namely that we live on, it would seem that the other must be true, namely that we have always lived'.¹²⁹ Seti's own beliefs are spoken over him after the death of his son. 'Grieve not over much,

¹²⁵ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 253.

¹²⁶ For further reading on the relationship between Lily Jackson's and Rider Haggard's belief in reincarnation, see Etherington, p. 17.

¹²⁷ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 75, explanatory note mine.

¹²⁸ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 76.

¹²⁹ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, pp. 76-7.

Prince', says Bakhenkhonsu—a wise and understanding Egyptian magician who acts as Ki's foil—'the game will begin afresh, and what you have lost shall be found anew [...] Ki's magic is not all a lie, or if his is, mine holds some shadow of the truth [...] not for nothing were you named Lord of Rebirths'.¹³⁰

The Egyptian gods themselves are portrayed as actors in the universal story of rebirth. As Seti and Ana witness the drowning of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, they 'seemed to see mighty shapes fleeing landwards along the crest of the wave, which shapes I took to be the gods of Egypt, pursued by a form of light and glory that drove them as with a scourge'.¹³¹ They believe this to be the fulfilment of an earlier prophecy which foretold that 'Amon, god of the Egyptians, and Jahveh, the god of the Israelites, cannot rule together in the same land. If both abide in Egypt there will be a war of gods wherein mortals may be ground to dust'.¹³² Seti rejects Ana's suggestion to pray to the gods saying that '[t]he gods of Egypt are [...] dead, slain by the god of Israel'.¹³³

The novel ends six years later. Merapi has died and Seti—who was crowned Pharaoh upon Amenmenses' drowning, has 'reigned over a broken land' which he has 'striven to bind together, reigned over a sick land which I have striven to heal, reigned over a desolated land which I have striven to make forget. Oh! The curse of those Hebrews worked well'.¹³⁴ Still believing the gods to have been driven out of Egypt by the power of Jahveh, Seti prepares for what he believes is his imminent death. As he lies on his deathbed, he and Ana both have a vision of Merapi and Seti II alive and joyful, beckoning Seti to join them. 'We

¹³⁰ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 254.

¹³¹ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 284.

¹³² Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 125.

¹³³ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 286.

¹³⁴ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 300.

have seen the dead', he exclaims joyfully, 'and, oh! Ana, *the dead still live*'.¹³⁵

His joy comes not just from knowing his wife and son await him on the other side, but that they await him in the afterlife described by Egyptian religion.

Merapi's name, the Moon of Israel, is apt. Just as the sun and the moon each have their time and place to rule in the sky, so too do Jahveh and the Egyptian gods, for not only do Merapi and Seti still live, but so do the gods of Egypt.

Christianity is certainly portrayed as a key figure in the story of universal truth through the power of Jahveh, but Jahveh is not the only player. While Carolyn Burdett confidently asserts that *She* 'is Christian, certainly, but it is a Christianity revitalised and reanimated by the doctrine of reincarnation', the same cannot be said of *Moon of Israel*.¹³⁶ The narrative does not end with the annihilation of the gods of Egypt at the hands of the one true religion: they assert the validity of their presence by living on and sheltering Seti, Merapi, and their son and promising that death is not the end. Although as different as the sun and moon, each god has their place and purpose in the narrative.

Through *Moon of Israel*, Rider Haggard brings his Egyptianising fiction forward toward a more liberal conception of religion which more confidently engages other religions and proclaims their truth. Franklin notes that both Marie Corelli and Rider Haggard transition from 'sometimes indirect but unmistakable allusions to Hindu and/or Buddhist reincarnation and karma' in their early works to 'explicit and unapologetic use of those doctrines, both in plot and in theme' in later novels.¹³⁷ Thus, while in *She*, Burdett suggests that 'Holly and Leo are being

¹³⁵ Rider Haggard, *Moon of Israel*, p. 302.

¹³⁶ Carolyn Burdett, 'Romance, Reincarnation, and Rider Haggard,' in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Brown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 217-35 (p. 229).

¹³⁷ Franklin, p. 107.

prepared for esoteric knowledge, a knowledge which turns out to be the supplementation (and thus regeneration) of Christianity with reincarnation', in *Moon of Israel* reincarnation comes to stand alongside Christianity through the gods of Egypt.¹³⁸ Portrayed by benevolent characters such as Seti and Merapi, reincarnation takes on a desirable quality which is absent in *She*. In *She*, reincarnation is tied to a figure who incites awe with fear and power, casting a sense of sublime terror onto ancient faiths which offered the ability for such figures to return. By portraying the ancient figure of She-who-must-be-obeyed as capable of assuming 'absolute rule over the British dominions, and probably over the whole earth', this rule would come 'at the cost of a terrible sacrifice of life'.¹³⁹ Reid notes that 'the novel's representation of degeneration, its thematic insistence on survival, and its movement from scepticism to belief in the occult' works to 'unsettle faith in linear temporality and to suggest the enduring potency of the past'.¹⁴⁰ *Moon of Israel* similarly destabilises the linearity of the Christian faith, which works toward an eternity apart from earth: the novel replaces the terror surrounding Ayesha with a sense of joyful anticipation in Seti's unending reunion with his deceased family and the persistence of the Egyptian gods much as Rider Haggard believed that 'surely my spirit will find his [Jock's] spirit, though it must search from world to world'.¹⁴¹

Uniting Ancient History and Nineteenth-Century Religious Practice

¹³⁸ Burdett, p. 228.

¹³⁹ Rider Haggard, *She* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 256.

¹⁴⁰ Reid, 'She-who-must-be-obeyed', p. 369.

¹⁴¹ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol. II*, p. 44, explanatory note mine.

Although Rider Haggard's later publications more confidently assert the merits of reincarnation, tension still surrounds the subject of the afterlife. The complex religious representations present in Rider Haggard's Egyptianising fiction destabilise any concrete religious view of the afterlife. Franklin suggests that Corelli and Rider Haggard's novels 'de-emphasize heaven/hell' so that, in both author's works, '[d]eath, God, and heaven have not been removed, but they have been decentered to accommodate other alternatives'.¹⁴² In Rider Haggard's Egyptianising fiction, eternal judgment mixes with reincarnation to form a confusing blend of religions which evinces an author in turmoil over the nature of the afterlife. Rider Haggard paints ancient Egypt as an active participant in the shaping of nineteenth-century faith, probing the possibility that truth can be found in a cohesion of ancient and modern religious thought. By rewriting the context of nineteenth-century debates about atonement and the value of reincarnation through an ancient Egyptian setting, Rider Haggard interweaves Egyptian deities, metempsychosis, and Christianity in a complex dialogue in which no one religion is wholly favoured over another. He reaches into the past to break down the rigid structure of a strict Protestant understanding of sacrificial atonement as leading to a non-reincarnational afterlife.

Rider Haggard's Egyptianising fiction presents a more holistic view of religion as interconnected and integral to an informed understanding of faith. He accepts that, though he might search for truth his entire life,

[W]hat we behold is but a few threads, apparently so tangled that go to weave the Sphinx's seamless veil, or some stupendous tapestry that enwraps the whole Universe of Creation which, when seen at last, will

¹⁴² Franklin, p. 108.

picture forth the Truth in all its splendour, and with it the wondrous story and the meaning of our lives.¹⁴³

Instead of promoting the progress of the present, Rider Haggard seeks to better understand his faith by looking to the past. *Moon of Israel* uses the veil of fiction to represent Rider Haggard's assertion of a belief in universal religious truth.

Etherington notes that Rider Haggard was inherently fearful of revealing his inner thoughts. 'He, who was so fearful of revealing his secret thoughts and desires', he writes, 'that he felt that if they were ever committed to paper, the incriminating manuscript must be buried for at least five hundred years, felt a palpable shudder at the prospect of the beast within himself being released to roam at large in England'.¹⁴⁴ Rider Haggard never allowed himself the religious license he allows his characters in *Cleopatra* and *Moon of Israel*. In ancient Egypt, Harmarchis and Seti are free to connect with Jahveh, Isis, Kephera, Maat, and Amen, simultaneously asserting Jahveh's power while being assured of an afterlife in the care of the Egyptian deities with the promise of rebirth. Rider Haggard, however, remained trapped, continually hovering between faiths, while publicly standing behind the Church of England.

The religious freedom Rider Haggard writes onto ancient Egypt sets his work apart within the genre of nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction. By placing the narrative at a remove in ancient Egypt, he is able to cast ancient Egyptian religion as equal to Christianity. This view is further developed through nineteenth-century occultism's interaction with ancient Egypt, which promoted Egypt as a land of esoteric wisdom. Later Egyptianising fiction drew upon the

¹⁴³ Rider Haggard, *The Days of My Life Vol II*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁴ Etherington, p. 36.

occult authority projected onto Egypt by organizations such as the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, but whereas Rider Haggard welcomed religious hybridity and embraced the freedom of incorporating ancient beliefs into modern faith, Marie Corelli and Arthur Conan Doyle opened up the pyramid in order to show the danger lurking within. The next chapter examines the occult authority Corelli and Conan Doyle place on Egypt. Their vengeful and sinister Egyptian figures changed the way in which Egypt appeared in fiction. While Loudon's, Poe's, and Rider Haggard's Egypt was presented as a land of spiritual and moral authority, after Corelli and Conan Doyle, ancient Egypt was typecast as a land of sinister occult power.

**Chapter III: Empowering Egypt: Creating the Occult in Marie
Corelli's *Ziska* and Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Ring of Thoth'
and 'Lot No. 249'**

While the Egyptianising fiction explored in this thesis has previously constructed ancient Egypt as a land of esoteric wisdom, the turn of the century cast ancient Egypt in a new role. This chapter discusses an important shift in the fictional representation of ancient Egypt from a land of wisdom to a land of dangerous occult power in the works of Marie Corelli (1855-1924) and Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930). Corelli's *Ziska* (1897) and Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Ring of Thoth' (1890) and 'Lot No. 249' (1892) create Egypt as a land of black magic which the narratives associate with the occult.¹ While Roger Luckhurst recognizes 'Lot No. 249' as 'the *first* mummy depicted as the agent of a malign magician', I suggest that *Ziska* and 'The Ring of Thoth' are equally important examples of fiction which contributed to an image of Egypt as a land of dangerous power and agency.² Corelli accomplishes this by delineating between the 'occult science' of her personal esoteric creed and 'occultism', a label she uses to refer to spiritualism, Theosophy, and anything which does not root its spirituality in the Christian God. In contrast, Conan Doyle represents Egypt as an occult Other whose alchemical and incantational magic assert that death can and should be overcome. I suggest the occult is othered as a means to define his burgeoning

¹ Marie Corelli, *Ziska* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1897); Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', *Cornhill Magazine*, 1890, pp. 46-61; Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (Sep 1892), pp. 525-44.

² Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 158, emphasis author's.

Spiritualist beliefs which embraced death as a means of transitioning to the next phase of the soul's existence.

Both texts draw upon what Olav Hammer refers to as '[m]ythic reinterpretations of foreign cultures' in the way that they present Egypt.³ These narratives reinterpret ancient Egypt and mythologise its past in order to create occult overtones. Imagined as a land of occult power, Egypt becomes a mythopoetic culture which resists interpretation. Corelli advocates the occult science of her personal creed throughout the majority of her works: however, *Ziska* (1897) blurs these distinctions by situating the narrative in Egypt. Conan Doyle, on the other hand, relies upon material science as a means of distinguishing between the occult black magic of Egypt and the rigorously-tested psychical phenomena of spiritualism.

Corelli's and Conan Doyle's narratives both play upon the trope of nineteenth-century occult societies focusing on incantational and practical magic and anchor these practices in Egypt. Antoine Faivre defines the dark side of occult philosophy in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries as '[w]itchcraft and its spells, black magic, pacts with the Devil, and incantations' which, he notes, 'are not directly linked to the concept of esotericism [...] but represent the black side of *Philosophia occulta* and an important part of the collective imaginary of the time'.⁴ This distinction between esoteric/Spiritualist beliefs and a darker, more incantational occult existed in the nineteenth century as well. As detailed in the introduction to this thesis, certain nineteenth-century occult societies, such as the

³ Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 139.

⁴ Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 66.

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the *Ordo Templi Orientis*, offered participants the chance to engage in incantational, practical rituals. These societies offered members the ability to participate in initiatory practices themselves instead of relying on Helena Petrovna Blavatsky or another medium's powers. *Ziska's* Egyptian cult, the priests of Thoth, and the cryptic hieroglyphic curse that awakens Doyle's mummy—known only by the number given to it when it is auctioned: Lot 249—suggest that death can and should be overcome. In so doing, these narratives contribute to a body of writing which presents practical occult magic as practical, dangerous, and unnatural.

While both *Ziska* and Conan Doyle's short stories define the occult, occultism, and occult science in distinct ways, all three narratives promote a mythopoetic view of ancient Egypt as a land harbouring arcane, mystical secrets. Instead of having British characters draw upon this wisdom, however, Egypt is instead imagined as a land of uncontrollable, indefinable power which threatens the authors' respective Christianised approaches to the supernatural. Corelli and Conan Doyle create a literary version of ancient Egypt which imbues it with the power to subvert death and wreak vengeance on the living: however, in giving ancient Egypt such power, they make it inscrutable. As Egypt is written as having occult power, it is also given the power to hide its secrets within the depths of its tombs or pyramids or in indecipherable hieroglyphs. Ancient Egypt therefore comes to symbolize power that is beyond human understanding, power which is best left unexplored.

Corelli and Conan Doyle construct Egypt as the abject other by using ancient Egyptian cults and priesthoods as a contrast to their own beliefs. Through defining Egypt as occult they also define an appropriate means of blending of

science and religion in their own esoteric and spiritualist beliefs. Whereas Hammer suggests that describing ‘the ancient Orient as a place filled with mystery and wisdom’, is a common trope in esoteric systems, Corelli and Conan define their own spiritual identities as distinct from a darker form of occultism which they project onto Egypt.⁵ Wouter J. Hanegraaff suggests that ‘[p]opular nineteenth-century images of “the occult”—and even, eventually, new forms of occultist practice—have been influenced to a remarkable extent by literary fiction for the general public’.⁶ I suggest, however, that instead of simply influencing occultist practice in the nineteenth century, Corelli and Conan Doyle’s narratives authorise a wider Western view of Egypt as a land of vengeful undead which still exists today.

Corelli’s Creed: Occultism vs. Occult Science

Marie Corelli’s novels have largely been categorised as mere ephemeral fiction instead of being recognized as fictional representations of an esoteric worldview.⁷ Between 1886 when her first novel, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, was published, and 1925, Corelli published over thirty-six works of fiction, pamphlets, and articles including *Vendetta* (1886), *Ardath* (1889), *The Soul of Lilith* (1892), *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), *The Mighty Atom* (1896), *The Master Christian* (1900), *The Treasures of Heaven* (1906), and *The Secret Power* (1921). Christine Ferguson notes that ‘[s]he characterized her own writing as an attempt to re-

⁵ Hammer, p. 95.

⁶ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 222.

⁷ Hanegraaff also names Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *Zanoni* (1842) as a fictional account of an esoteric worldview, suggesting it is ‘the crucial occult novel of the nineteenth century’, p. 228.

establish forgotten spiritual truths that had been lost as a result of decadent and sloppy representation'.⁸ In an article for *The Idler* in 1894 entitled 'My First Book', Corelli explains how she viewed herself as fulfilling the self-proclaimed role of medium of religious truth. In the article, she claims that her goal in writing *Romance* was to communicate 'a simply-worded narration of a singular psychical experience, and included certain theories on religion which I, personally speaking, accept and believe'.⁹

Until recently, the esoteric undercurrents of Corelli's work have been passed off as part of her characteristically melodramatic style. Ferguson suggests that '[h]er life, like that of so many celebrity authors, has overshadowed her art, and her books tend to be read, if at all, as illustrations of an admittedly flamboyant personality'.¹⁰ This interpretation of Corelli's work has recently shifted, with critics—particularly Ferguson, Nickianne Moody, Joy Dixon, and Jill Galvan—introducing a new perception of Corelli as an author keenly alert to the popular interests of her readers. Hammer has also noted the importance of *Romance* from the perspective of the history of Western esotericism, claiming it as one of many 'esoteric adventure stories that are said explicitly or implicitly to convey spiritual truths'.¹¹ This scholarship has begun to recognize Corelli's role in producing literature that negotiated an esoteric worldview that participated in but was also delineated from the wider nineteenth century occult milieu, which included spiritualism and Theosophy.¹²

⁸ Christine Ferguson, *Language, Science and Popular Fiction in the Victorian Fin-de-Siècle* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 57.

⁹ Marie Corelli, 'My First Book,' *The Idler*, January 1894, pp. 239-52 (p. 239).

¹⁰ Ferguson, *Language, Science and Popular Fiction*, p. 49.

¹¹ Hammer, p. 158.

¹² For further reading on Marie Corelli's role as a popular author see: Joy Dixon, 'Modernity, Heterodoxy, and the transformation of religious cultures' in *Women, Gender, and Religious*

Corelli had her own definitions for occultism and occult science, which differed from the ways in which her contemporaries defined these terms. I suggest that one reason this difference is so noticeable is that critical studies of Western esotericism tend to focus on the substantial role Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and her Theosophical Society played in developing esoteric thought throughout the nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries. Joscelyn Godwin notes that Blavatsky's entrance brought together 'the anti-Christianity of the Enlightenment, and the nineteenth-century revival of the occult sciences'.¹³ Corelli, however, specifically distances her esoteric Christian beliefs from Blavatsky's Theosophy and therefore her views resist the difference between occultism and occult science which Blavatsky defined for the nineteenth century.

Although the terms 'esoteric' and 'occult' have important distinctions, scholars usually include certain schools labelled as 'occult science' in their definition of esoteric belief systems. In his definition of the occult, Godwin, for instance notes the important distinction between 'occult sciences' and 'occultism'. He notes that '[t]he *occult sciences* in the West include astrology, alchemy, ritual magic, practical Kabbalah, certain breathing and sexual practices, and various forms of divination'.¹⁴ He also suggests that '[s]ome developments of Mesmerism

Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940, ed. by Sue Morgan and Jacqueline deVries (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 211-30; Ferguson, *Language, Science and Popular Fiction*, pp. 47-71; Annette R. Federico, *Idol of Suburbia: Marie Corelli and Late-Victorian Literary Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Jill Galvan, 'Christians, Infidels, and Women's Channeling in the Writings of Marie Corelli,' *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 31.1 (2003), 83-97; Elaine M. Hartnell, 'Morals and Metaphysics: Marie Corelli, Religion, and the Gothic', *Women's Writing* 13.02 (2006), 284-303; Sharla Hutchison, 'Marie Corelli's *Ziska* A Gothic Egyptian Love Story', in *Monsters and Monstrosity from the Fin de Siècle to the Millennium*, ed. by Sharla Hutchison and Rebecca A. Brown (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2015) pp. 29-49; Richard L. Kowalczyk, 'In Vanished Summertime: Marie Corelli and Popular Culture', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 7.4 (1974), 850-63.

¹³ Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 292.

¹⁴ Godwin, p. xii, emphasis author's.

and spiritualism may also be included' as occult sciences.¹⁵ However, as discussed in this thesis's introduction, occultism, for Godwin, is a nineteenth-century concept which works to imbue science with a greater meaning which materialism sought to strip away.¹⁶ Antoine Faivre suggests that the 'so called occult sciences' that should be considered esoteric are 'Magic, Astrology, and Alchemy'.¹⁷ Kocku von Stuckrad includes Faivre's definition of the esoteric occult sciences and also suggests occultism as a separate esoteric 'current'.¹⁸

All of these views of occult science and occultism seem to carefully leave out the work of practical magic or practical occultism. Practical occult societies, particularly the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, are not considered by certain scholars to be esoteric due to their emphasis on practical rites and rituals. Hanegraaff notes that 'Faivre made a point of demarcating esotericism not only from witchcraft, but also from magic, astrology, and the mantic arts: these "occult" arts qualified as "esotericism" only insofar as they appeared in a theosophical context'.¹⁹

Corelli, however, offered her own definitions for occultism and occult science in the nineteenth century. In her preface to the second edition of her first novel, Corelli refers to 'disciples of "occultism"' as 'persons who are generally ready, nay, even eager to be deceived'.²⁰ This type of occultism appears to include, perhaps even revolve around, spiritualism. Corelli mocks the physical manifestations of spirits in séances, noting the specifically unscientific quality of

¹⁵ Godwin, p. xii.

¹⁶ Godwin, p. xii.

¹⁷ Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, p. 14.

¹⁸ Kocku von Stuckrad, 'Western esotericism: Towards an integrative model of interpretation', *Religion*, 35 (2005), 78-97, p. 79.

¹⁹ Hanegraaff, p. 344.

²⁰ Marie Corelli, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, 2nd edn (New York: M.J. Ivers, 1888), p. 5.

the ‘skipping about of chairs and tables’ and ‘dematerialisation of matter’ which allows spirits to be seen ‘jumping through a ceiling without making a hole in it’.²¹

Corelli thought occult science was the appropriate method to understand what appeared to be supernatural phenomena: she decries spiritualism as ‘a “craze” which condemns itself at the outset by the manner in which its victims fall easy dupes to the merest charlatanism’.²² Spiritualism, for Corelli, was a species of occultism, and she contrasts this with what she refers to as ‘the secrets of occult science’ in which ‘the teachings of Christ’ can be found.²³ Occult science demonstrates

all the keynotes of the myriad, upward-sounding scales of the highest *active* spirituality—spirituality that has nothing to do with a morbid imagination and a debilitated or diseased physical frame, but that, on the contrary, is strong and calm, useful and beneficial wherever it works [...]. Such spirituality, the outcome of the electric spirit of Divinity in man, corresponding to the supreme centre of Divinity in the Creator, can see and converse with angels—can heal the sick and console the afflicted [...] and even retain you much longer than materialists dream of [...] and can triumph in death, knowing Death to be but this world’s name for Life.²⁴

Corelli’s use of the term ‘occult science’ functions as her way of demarcating the esoteric elements of her electric creed from Theosophy, spiritualism, and the other practical occult rites and rituals she deplores. She draws a clear line between her

²¹ Corelli, *Romance*, p. 5.

²² Corelli, *Romance*, p. 7.

²³ Corelli, *Romance*, p. 12.

²⁴ Corelli, *Romance*, p. 12-13.

occult science and occultism, rooting her creed in the occult science of what she calls Christianity's 'electric principles' and the rest as deluded charlatanism.

Her occult science is presented most clearly in *Romance*, which conveys the story of an unnamed heroine suffering from depression who is cured by electrical remedies administered by Casimir Heliobas, a 'Chaldean' holy man. Heliobas, along with his sister Zara, teach the protagonist the tenets of their electric creed, known as the 'Electric Principle of Christianity', and restore her to full health and spiritual belief.²⁵ According to this Electric Principle, recognising God's electric force is the means to unlocking higher realms of thinking and being both on this earth and in the realms between earth and the electric circle of heaven. God comprises and lives within an electric ring of light which forms the basis of the human universe and means of divine communication. Heliobas' creed, which he calls 'purely scientific fact', remains bound up in vague religious language, which roots the source of electricity and the intricacies of its workings in a heady vision of God's ultimate electric power.²⁶

Corelli's approach to science is not derived from any particular body of scientific knowledge. Instead, it is what Hammer calls 'scientism', using scientific language to validate esoteric beliefs while, at same time, 'reechanting science'.²⁷ In this way, as Hammer notes, '[e]soteric spokespersons can construct a dichotomy between positive/spiritual and negative/materialistic forms of science'.²⁸

Corelli opposed scientific materialism, offering a more active, spiritualised, science in its place. In *The Mighty Atom* (1896)—published shortly

²⁵ Corelli, *Romance*, p. 228.

²⁶ Corelli, *Romance*, p. 93.

²⁷ Hammer, pp. 206, 323-4.

²⁸ Hammer, p. 218.

before *Ziska*—she argues that scientific materialism is dangerous. Unable to bear the weight of his father's strict educational regime, which refuses any religious element, eleven-year-old Lionel Valliscourt hangs himself at the novel's close. Despite being inculcated in the theory that the world began from a single atom, 'the Mighty Atom', as distinct from the theory that it was created by a benevolent deity, Lionel reasons that '[i]t seems to me much more natural and likely that it [the Mighty Atom] should be a Person. A Person with brain and thought and feeling and memory'.²⁹ The active spirituality behind scientific principles, such as the Mighty Atom, and electricity, are of primary importance in Corelli's work.³⁰

For Corelli, this spirituality is rooted in a heterodox Christianity, which functions as a means of delineating occult science from occultism and empowering women. As Annette R. Federico notes, Corelli's rhetoric is one of 'fairness and egalitarianism' through which the Corellian twofold 'female quest' can be completed.³¹ This quest accomplishes both 'spiritual union with a masculine counterpart through death or some other means of mystical recognition' as well as 'female self-discovery'.³² This is a role Corelli herself attempted to play. Federico refers to the author's 'self-mythology' through which she recreated biographical details of her life such as moving the location of her convent education to the more exotic setting of France or Italy.³³ Federico suggests that by referring to her father as her 'adopted father', Corelli embodies both '[h]eartfelt sympathy and self-pity' in the '(perhaps) self-protective fabrication of the poor

²⁹ Corelli, *The Mighty Atom*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1897), p. 142.

³⁰ For further reading on the antirational in Corelli's works, see Nickianne Moody, 'Moral Uncertainty and the Afterlife: Explaining the Popularity of Marie Corelli's Early Novels', *Women's Writing*, 13.2 (2006), 188-205, p. 198.

³¹ Federico, p. 132.

³² Federico, p. 132.

³³ Federico, p. 5.

orphan, a familiar Corellian blend of genuine feeling and melodramatic invention'.³⁴ Many of Corelli's female heroines fulfill her romantic visions for herself. They are beautiful, powerful women who use occult science to empower themselves and restore balance and justice to an unequal society. Occult science is thus beneficial to the Christian faith because it helps the Christian, most notably the female Christian, realise the full scope of God's power on earth and in the higher realms. Occultism, on the other hand, detracts from a deeper spiritual understanding of the Christian faith. Occult science should lead to a more intimate understanding of Christian morality and principles. It functions to elevate society by restoring balance between both God and humankind as well as male and female.

Ziska, however, seems to muddy Corelli's usually clear distinction between occultism and occult science. The novel tells the story of British travellers vacationing in Egypt who encounter the reincarnated Ziska-Charmazel, an ancient Egyptian dancer. Ziska seeks to avenge her death by killing her lover and murderer, Araxes, who has been unwittingly reincarnated as the French painter Armand Gervase. In the preface to *The Life Everlasting* (1911), Corelli notes how she wrote seven romance novels 'to serve as a little lamp of love whereby my readers might haply discover the real character of the obstacle which blocked their way to an intelligent Soul-advancement'.³⁵ In her unpublished 1965 thesis on Corelli, Joyce Gutzeit suggests that *Ziska*, along with *The Young Diana* (1918) and *The Secret Power* (1921) could also be considered as one of these

³⁴ Federico, p. 4.

³⁵ Marie Corelli, *The Life Everlasting* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911), p. 22, also quoted in Joyce Gutzeit, 'The Novels of Marie Corelli' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Loyola Marymount University, 1965), p. 34.

prophetic novels, though she brands *Ziska* ‘a negligible effort’.³⁶ While *Ziska* does incorporate Corelli’s view of occult science, *Ziska*’s occultism problematizes the prophetic ability of the novel. Gutzeit refers to *Ziska* herself as a ‘passionate Gothic villainess [...] who precipitates a series of wildly melodramatic events that defy acceptance even in a Marie Corelli setting’.³⁷ This contrasts with more contemporary readings of *Ziska* which view the title character as a strong, female figure. Sharla Hutchison views *Ziska* as a model of a ‘sexual liberation feminist’ whose ‘vengeance acted out in her violent murder of Armand, becomes an act of karmic retribution sanctioned and orchestrated by greater spiritual powers, imbuing her character with a frightening but intoxicating new power’.³⁸ In bringing about the death of her former lover and murderer, *Ziska* is indeed a powerful liberator, but it is unclear who or what exactly she liberates or indeed where the source of her power lies.

Although every character in the novel attempts to understand *Ziska* through Western discourses, she ultimately eludes definition and categorization. The English travellers attempt to understand *Ziska* by assimilating her into British society. In contrast, Dr. Maxwell Dean appears to recognize and appreciate the wisdom to be found in the careful study of ancient Egypt: however, he attempts to understand *Ziska*’s supernatural identity through the lens of scientism. While his scientism allows for the reality of the occult, it still forces the occult to speak through the West’s understanding of science and religion. *Ziska* never fully reconciles the tensions of its narrative, suggesting that those who impose their own cultural standards upon ancient Egypt will be left wanting. The novel’s vague

³⁶ Gutzeit, p. 34.

³⁷ Gutzeit, p. 51.

³⁸ Hutchison, p. 32.

ending stresses the importance and power of the unknowable which cannot, and perhaps more importantly, should not be understood.

***Ziska*'s 'Impenetrable Darkness':**

Ziska initially sets up a reading of Egypt—both ancient and modern—from the perspective of a middle-aged newspaper editor, Sir Chetwynd Lyle, whose goal in coming to Egypt is to marry off his two daughters, Muriel and Dolly. Instead of functioning as a means of setting the scene of the novel, the opening of *Ziska* satirizes the British view of Egypt. The reader is quickly taught *not* to view Egypt as a savage land by suggesting that imposing British expectations on Egypt aids in 'reducing the city [...] to a more deplorable condition of subjection and slavery than any old-world conqueror could ever have done'.³⁹ In subjugating Egypt by imposing 'the heavy yoke of modern fashion', much is missed:

[T]he English 'season' whirls lightly and vaporously, like blown egg-froth, over the mystic land of the old gods—the terrible land filled with dark secrets as yet unexplored,—the land 'shadowing with wings,' as the Bible hath it,—the land in which are buried tremendous histories as yet unguessed,—profound enigmas of the supernatural,—labyrinths of wonder, terror and mystery,—all of which remain unrevealed to the giddy-pated, dancing, dining, gabbling throng of the fashionable travelling lunatics of the day.⁴⁰

³⁹ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Corelli, *Ziska*, pp. 11, 17.

Modern Egypt is colonised by the British descending upon its hotels and imposing the English season, but in acting the coloniser, the British, in turn, condemn themselves to a vapid, unenlightened existence. Thus they can sit at the very feet of an emblem of esoteric knowledge, the Sphinx, and merely view it as ‘a fine target for empty soda-water bottles’ the ‘granite whereof the ancient monster is hewn is too hard for [them] to inscribe [their] distinguished name thereon’.⁴¹ They cannot inscribe their own mark on the Sphinx because they do not understand its significance. Although the tourists attempt to make Egypt speak by imposing British social standards, Egypt resists, protecting itself through its inscrutability. Only those who are willing to understand the importance of Egypt’s impenetrable stones and respect the wisdom that lies within can hope to learn something of Egypt’s ancient wisdom.

Dr. Dean, in contrast to the other British characters in the novel, believes in the value of studying Egypt. He understands that Egypt is more than a holiday destination, and readily acknowledges that there is much that he does not yet know. Denzil Murray, who falls madly in love with Ziska and does not recognize her true identity, admits that he

never was very much interested in those old times,—they seem to me all myth. I could never link past, present and future together as some people can; they are to me all separate things. The past is done with,—the present is our own to enjoy or to detest, and the future no man can look into.

In contrast, Dr. Dean understands the importance of viewing history as being interconnected. He knows that his society is not any greater or more lasting than the ones that came before it, suggesting instead that ‘[a]ll history from the very

⁴¹ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 13, explanatory notes mine.

beginning is like a wonderful chain in which no link is ever really broken, and in which every part fits closely to the other part'.⁴² Yet for all his knowledge, there are still gaps in his understanding. He quickly concedes that 'why the chain should exist at all is a mystery we cannot solve'.⁴³ He also fails to realise that there are secrets still left within the pyramids, claiming that they 'have been very thoroughly explored [...] [n]othing of any importance remains in them now'.⁴⁴ The novel ends with the meaning of Ziska and Gervases's deaths being enclosed within the Great Pyramid as Egypt once again resists being spoken for.

Dr. Dean takes strides of which his proud countrymen, convinced of their British superiority, are incapable, and therefore comes far closer to achieving a higher form of knowledge. He is the only character to recognize Ziska's true identity: he aptly identifies her as 'an Egyptian. Born in Egypt; born OF Egypt. Pure Eastern!' saying '[t]here is nothing Western about you', where other characters assume she is of European descent.⁴⁵ His language also mirrors Ziska's own when he discusses his understanding of the soul. Ziska claims that

[t]he Soul begins in protoplasm without conscious individuality. It progresses through various forms till individual consciousness is attained. Once attained, it is never lost, but it lives on, pressing towards perfection, taking upon itself various phases of existence according to the passions which have most completely dominated it from the first.⁴⁶

Dr. Dean uses the same concept when describing his own views: he suggests that the soul 'commenced, of course, originally in protoplasm; but it must have

⁴² Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 190.

⁴³ Corelli, *Ziska*, pp. 190-1.

⁴⁴ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 75.

⁴⁶ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 140.

continued through various low forms and met with enormous difficulties in attaining to individual consciousness as man,— because even now it is scarcely conscious'.⁴⁷ Both Ziska and Dr. Dean emphasise the development of the soul through various forms. Their use of the term protoplasm suggests a connection to late nineteenth-century theories of heredity, such as Ernst Haeckel's theory of recapitulation and August Weismann's theory of the germ-plasm. Weismann (1834-1914), a German biologist, first published his theory of the germ-plasm in 1883 in an essay 'On Heredity' and later developed it into *The Germ-Plasm: A Theory of Heredity* (1892). P. Kyle Stanford notes that the Weismann's theory of the germ-plasm posits that

development and inheritance would have to be explained by the transmission of discrete nuclear elements in a continuous germ line from ancestors to offspring, consisting of fundamental vital particles whose hereditary influence on an individual organism was somehow predetermined by and encoded in their respective heterogeneous material constitutions.⁴⁸

Ziska reappropriates the theory of germ-plasm in protoplasm and provides a scientific rationale for reincarnation whereby the soul passes down information from generation to generation, attaining higher and higher levels of consciousness.

While Dr. Dean looks back to where the soul originated and follows this up until the point where the soul attains consciousness, *Ziska* looks beyond the current underdeveloped phase of the soul, suggesting that it will continue to seek

⁴⁷ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 165.

⁴⁸ P. Kyle Stanford, 'August Weismann's Theory of the Germ-Plasm', in *Exceeding Our Grasp: Science, History, and the Problem of Unconceived Alternatives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 105-40 (pp. 107-8).

perfection through further phases of existence. In asserting that the soul has undergone transformation through various phases and still requires further perfecting, Dr. Dean shows that he understands the role of reincarnation as a means of transformation. However, he misidentifies the source of the soul's power in relation to Ziska. While Dr. Dean's occult science allows him to identify Ziska's true nature as a reincarnated Egyptian, the force behind her spirituality is not what he expects.

Dr. Dean believes that Ziska acts as an agent of God's vengeance. He claims that she is a 'scientific ghost', a being which he defines as an outworking of the 'Spiritual law of vengeance'.⁴⁹ '[A]llowing for an exactly-moving Mind behind exactly-working Matter, it follows that there can be no such thing as injustice anywhere in the universe', he claims,

Yet seemingly unjust things are done every day, and seemingly go unpunished. I say 'seemingly' advisedly, because the punishment is always administered. And here the 'scientific ghosts' come in. 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord,—and the ghosts I speak of are the Lord's way of doing it.⁵⁰

Dr. Dean approaches the supernatural through the lens of science, using logic to explain the unexplainable and link it to Christianity. This allows him to immediately identify Ziska as something otherworldly, unlike the other characters who are mystified by her.

Hutchison labels Dr. Dean's philosophy a 'weird mix of psychic research and theosophy' which 'act as a mouthpiece for a range of popular beliefs about

⁴⁹ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 102.

⁵⁰ Corelli, *Ziska*, pp. 101-2.

psychic research and spiritualism, ideas that blend the scientific dignity of the psychic detective with the mysticism of Madame Blavatsky's theosophy'.⁵¹

However this neglects Corelli's clear attempts to distance her creed from both spiritualism and theosophy specifically.⁵² Hutchison further suggests that 'Dr. Dean, acting as a psychic detective, solves what might otherwise be unsolvable: Ziska's mission to avenge wicked deeds and lift a centuries old curse'.⁵³ Dr. Dean does mark Ziska's identity from very early on in the novel. When Denzil Murray admits that '[s]ometimes I fancy she [Ziska] IS a ghost', Dr. Dean says 'I have thought the same thing of her myself—sometimes'.⁵⁴

The more Dr. Dean pursues his scientific theory, however, the more Ziska resists his categorization. The narrative continually pushes towards obfuscation rather than clarification and the only mystery that is solved is the revelation that the mysterious exists. Towards the end of the novel, Dr. Dean begins to doubt that Ziska works on behalf of God to enact just vengeance. He explains to Gervase that he is attempting to 'analyze the nature of the particular desire that moves her, controls her, keeps her alive'.⁵⁵ He is confident that 'it is not love [...] and it is not hate,—though it is more like hate than love. It is something indefinable, something that is almost occult, so deep-seated and bewildering is the riddle'.⁵⁶ All he can conclude is that 'the Princess is *not human*' and 'has the soul of a fiend'.⁵⁷ The more Dr. Dean pushes to analyse Ziska, the more he is faced with

⁵¹ Hutchison, p. 41.

⁵² For further reading on Corelli's complicated relationship with spiritualism and Theosophy, see Robyn Hallim, 'Marie Corelli: Science, Society, and the Bestseller' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 2002).

⁵³ Hutchison, p. 42.

⁵⁴ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 39, explanatory note mine.

⁵⁵ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 243.

⁵⁶ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 243.

⁵⁷ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 243.

something indefinable and occult. His discoveries only serve to unsettle his scientific theories and force him into an uncomfortable position of unknowing.

Ziska initially appears to fit the description of Corelli's spirituality as described earlier, which is above and beyond the physical, benefits whatever it encounters, and is able to transcend death. Yet the novel's vacillation between positive and negative descriptions of Ziska leave her character in a state of tension. That this tension is never reconciled attests to the importance of recognizing occultism and its power. Dr. Dean is fearful of this power because he has not understood it and, in this fear, he attempts to read Ziska's powers as connected to Egypt specifically. Whereas at the novel's start, Dr. Dean is eager to learn from Egypt and study it, by the novel's end, he views Egypt as the abject Other, seductive and dangerous, and seeks to distance himself from the occultism he cannot define and control. He suggests to Denzil Murray that they should return to England as soon as possible because '[w]e shall all be better away from this terrible land, where the dead have far more power than the living!'⁵⁸ Dr. Dean's earlier insistence that scientific ghosts work at the behest of God is abandoned here in his moment of fear.

The ambiguity of Ziska's colouring also reveals that she cannot be so easily identified as one of Corelli's heroines of occult science. She is alternately described in the novel as being 'so white, so light, so noiseless and so lovely' and as 'a dark woman' with 'dark eyes' or the 'eyes of a vampire bat' and 'dark hair [...] like the black remnants of a long-buried corpse's wrappings'.⁵⁹ When Gervase attempts to paint Ziska's portrait he notes that '[i]t is difficult to find the

⁵⁸ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 305.

⁵⁹ Corelli, *Ziska*, pp. 39, 120, 238, 70, 238, 8.

exact hue' of her skin as 'there is rose and brown in it; and there is yet another color which I must evolve while working,—and it is not the hue of health. It is something dark and suggestive of death'.⁶⁰ Jill Galvan notes that '[a]n inconsistency in the racial depictions of Corelli's Eastern figures turns up [...] in her delineations of their complexion and coloring'.⁶¹ While

[i]n *Romance* and *Lilith*, characters from the East may or may not exhibit physical attributes in keeping with their ancestry [...] the non Christians are drawn with tritely dusky, sinister features, Easterners steeped in Christianity have attributes more obviously appropriate to their white companions.⁶²

Ziska's colouring resists such a clear reading. She possesses both light and dark features, which simultaneously entice and repel the various characters in the novel. Her Egyptian cult, though exhibiting some of the characteristics of Corelli's view of occult science, moves away from Christianity and is aligned with something which, by her own admission, is decidedly 'Egyptian'.

The novel refuses to define Ziska's spirituality as either positive or negative: all that is clear is that Ziska, by her own admission, is part of an 'Egyptian cult'.⁶³ At the novel's climax in Araxes' pyramid, Gervase struggles to understand Ziska. Prior to realizing his identity as the reincarnated Araxes, Gervase describes Ziska's face as,

spectral and pallid as a waning moon [...] her form grew thin and skeleton-like, while still retaining the transparent outline of its beauty; and

⁶⁰ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 133.

⁶¹ Galvan, p. 88.

⁶² Galvan, p. 88.

⁶³ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 140.

he realized at last that no creature of flesh and blood was this that clung to him, but some mysterious bodiless horror of the Supernatural.⁶⁴

Recognising the otherworldly supernatural in Ziska fills him with horror until he understands his kinship to Ziska. Accepting the truth of his reincarnated identity transforms Ziska in Gervase's eyes.

[T]he eyes softened and flashed with love, the lips trembled, the spectral form glowed with a living luminance, and a mystic Glory glittered above the dusky hair! Filled with ecstasy at the sight of her wondrous loveliness, he felt nothing of the coldness of death at his heart,—a divine passion inspired him, and with the last effort of his failing strength he strove to gather all the spirit-like beauty of her being into his embrace.⁶⁵

However, this beauty lasts but a moment as his realisation of his inner self also means the realisation of his impending death. Gervase remembers the crime he, as Araxes, committed in murdering Ziska-Charmazel and, in so doing, realises that Ziska's intention is for him to die for that crime. Ziska prepares to enact her vengeance, declaring,

[c]losed are the gates of Heaven,—open wide are the portals of Hell! Enter with me, my lover Araxes!—die as I died, unprepared and alone! Die, and pass out into new life again—such life as mine—such torture as mine—such despair as mine—such hate as mine!⁶⁶

In the final moments of his life, Gervase implores Ziska to remember 'Love—Love! [...] Not hate, but Love! Come back out of the darkness, soul of the woman I wronged! Forgive me! [...] Hell or Heaven, what matters it if we are together!

⁶⁴ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 297.

⁶⁵ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 301.

⁶⁶ Corelli, *Ziska*, pp. 299-300.

[...] Love is stronger than Hate!’⁶⁷ At the very last, Gervase grasps the importance of love.

Love is explained earlier in the novel as the thing which is missing from modern society. Addressing the reader, the narrative voice claims that ‘[w]e have made a mistake—we, in our progressive generation’.⁶⁸ It suggests that materialism has ‘banished the old sweetness, triumphs and delights of life, and we have got in exchange steam and electricity’.⁶⁹ Thus,

this great heart of human life [...] is losing more than it gains, hence the incessant, restless aching of the time, and the perpetual longing for something Science cannot teach,—something vague, beautiful, indefinable, yet satisfying to every pulse of the soul; and the nearest emotion to that divine solace is what we in our higher and better moments recognize as Love.⁷⁰

Grasping this understanding of love appears to save Gervase. As he and Ziska stand together on the brink of death, a voice exclaims ‘Peace! The old gods are best, and the law is made perfect. A life demands a life [...] Let them go hence the curse is lifted’.⁷¹ Gervase’s body lies on floor of the tomb and a

spectral radiance gleamed, wandered and flitted over all things [...] till finally flashing with a pale glare on the dark dead face [...] it flickered out; and one of the many countless mysteries of the Great Pyramid was again hidden in impenetrable darkness.⁷²

⁶⁷ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 301.

⁶⁸ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 215.

⁶⁹ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 215.

⁷⁰ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 215.

⁷¹ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 302.

⁷² Corelli, *Ziska*, pp. 302-3.

Ancient Egypt once conceals its mysteries within an inscrutable monument which resists interpretation.

Dr. Dean's fear of and inability to interpret Ziska's motivation stems from her connection to this Egyptian cult which resists understanding. In contrast to Corelli's other novels which clearly prioritise Christian themes, *Ziska*'s religious morality is veiled. While Galvan suggests that '[w]hat Corelli begins to outline in *Romance*'s heroine is women's resemblance to Christ in their faculty as moral message-bearers, the communicators of God's love and intelligence', the same cannot be said of Ziska.⁷³ The purpose of Ziska's reincarnation is to seek vengeance.

By the novel's end, Dr. Dean adamantly states that 'The Princess Ziska was a ghost!' but he is reticent to discuss his views, exclaiming,

I know what I know; I can distinguish phantoms from reality, and I am not deceived by appearances. But the world prefers ignorance to knowledge, and even so let it be. Next time I meet a ghost I'll keep my own counsel!⁷⁴

He publishes his *Scientific Theory of Ghosts* but eventually the book is read by 'scientists only,—men who are beginning to understand the discretion of silence, and to hold their tongues as closely as the Egyptian priests of old did, aware that the great majority of men are never ripe for knowledge'.⁷⁵ The scientists who read Dr. Dean's treatise are aligned with Egyptian priests in their exclusivity and discretion. Both groups recognize that their respective knowledge must be protected because it is powerful.

⁷³ Galvan, p. 86.

⁷⁴ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 311.

⁷⁵ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 312.

The novel's final words again suggest that love has conquered hate and that '[n]othing—since the Old and the New, the Past and the Present, are but as one moment in the countings of eternity, and even with a late repentance Love pardons all'.⁷⁶ However, the novel's dedication to 'the present living reincarnation of Araxes' hints that the cycle of reincarnation will continue. Despite making reference to eternal resting places, heaven and hell, the narrative's ending seems to suggest that Ziska and Araxes will continue to find each other again and again throughout eternity.

Ziska's motivation throughout the novel is hateful vengeance. She warns Gervase that 'hate is eternal, as love is eternal'.⁷⁷ His life is still demanded as a sacrifice for his past sins: he is stabbed with the very same dagger he originally used to murder Ziska even after he understands the power of love over hate. This demanding of a sacrifice contrasts with the principles set out in *Romance*. In *Romance*, the narrator learns that '[t]he idea of sacrifice is a relic of heathen barbarism; God is too infinitely loving to desire the sacrifice of the smallest flower'.⁷⁸ The need for Araxes to die for his crimes in order to break the curse does not demonstrate the teachings of Christ, which Corelli claims occult science should do.

Ancient Egypt, initially viewed by Dr. Dean as a land of wisdom and scientific ghosts acting on behalf of God, ultimately resists interpretation. Once Dr. Dean realises that Ziska's power is not rooted in a Christianised occult science but is instead connected to the force of an Egyptian cult, he is filled with fear and distances himself from Egypt entirely. *Ziska* authorises a view of Egypt as

⁷⁶ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 315.

⁷⁷ Corelli, *Ziska*, p. 297.

⁷⁸ Corelli, *Romance*, p. 233.

distinctly non-Christian, powerfully occult, and unknowable. By contributing to a body of popular fiction that conceived of occultism as rooted in ancient cults, *Ziska* furthers a connection between practical occult societies and ancient Egypt as the key to releasing wisdom which could illuminate the ‘impenetrable darkness’ held within the pyramids. What that darkness contains however, is unclear. Perhaps ancient wisdom would reveal that love does pardon all or perhaps, like the dagger lying beside the corpse of Armand Gervase, such knowledge is a double-edged blade.

‘The Ring of Thoth’ and ‘Lot No. 249’: Fusing Materialism and Spiritualism in Conan Doyle’s Early Works

Whereas Corelli portrays Egypt as a land of powerful undead in *Ziska* in order to promote an esoteric Christianity and distance herself from occultism, Conan Doyle contrasts Egyptian occult practices to the empiricism of spiritualism. Occultism in his narratives is thus aligned with anything which contradicts the fundamental beliefs of spiritualism, namely that death is nothing to fear and merely releases the spirit to transition to its next form. ‘The Ring of Thoth’ presents a positive view of death as appropriate and natural through the undead figure of Sosra, a priest of Thoth. Similarly, ‘Lot No. 249’, observes the threat of the invasion of the occult and its negative perception of death from the view of a medical student named Smith who must overcome the mummy, Lot 249.⁷⁹ Both narratives allow Conan Doyle to connect the power to restore the dead to their

⁷⁹ When referring to the character of the mummy, I will use Lot 249 in order to distinguish between the character and the story’s title, which I write as ‘Lot No. 249’.

original bodies with danger and vice by associating this practice the Other. He contrasts the power to awaken the dead with a respectful approach to death epitomised by societies like the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), which emphasised the importance of a sceptical approach to psychical phenomena, rooted in empirical research. Conan Doyle juxtaposes the characters of the undead Egyptian Sosra and Lot 249 with the British scientists Vansittart Smith and Abercrombie Smith, respectively, in order to expose the dangers of practical occult magic which has the power to raise the dead.

Conan Doyle's protagonists both come from academic arenas and attempt to approach the paranormal with balanced and rational logic. However their logic fails when they are faced with phenomena that defy their reason and force them to accept the existence and power of the occult. Vansittart Smith in 'The Ring of Thoth' and Abercrombie Smith in 'Lot No. 249' both exhibit a commitment to methodologies based on deductive reasoning paired with an openness to psychical phenomena. The tension between membership in a spiritualist society and avowed materialism, which surrounded Conan Doyle's relationship with psychical phenomena in the early 1890s, is reflected in the complicated representations of the supernatural in these two stories. The two narratives trace the journeys of scientific materialists who learn to respect death as the necessary end to a physical life in this plane and the continuation of the spirit in the next.

In both stories, clear boundaries are set between evolved, verified supernatural phenomena and more dangerous, uncontrollable forces. Conan Doyle roots his openness to spiritualism in rational, scientific British characters and associates less-evolved spiritual attitudes or phenomena to undead, otherworldly Egyptians. In so doing, Vansittart Smith and Abercrombie Smith foreshadow the

type of psychical researcher Conan Doyle himself became. Conan Doyle uses these characters to promote the ideal attitude of a psychical researcher, who should approach death from a view inclusive of psychical phenomena that had been tested and approved. The undercurrent of impending imperial danger is persistently linked to practical dark magic, suggesting the dangers inherent in an incorrect or uninformed approach to occultism which could threaten the tenets of spiritualism.

In 1918, Arthur Conan Doyle published the account of his conversion to spiritualism in *The New Revelation*, detailing how he had come to fully embrace spiritualist beliefs and become one of its most dogged defenders. He published widely on the subject in the latter half of his life including *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist* (1921), *The Coming of the Fairies* (1922), *The Spiritualist's Reader* (1924), and a two-volume *History of Spiritualism* (1926) among many other books, pamphlets, and articles. He joined multiple spiritualist societies including the Society for Psychical Research and The Ghost Club and also opened The Psychic Bookshop in London in 1925.

Prior to accepting spiritualist beliefs, Conan Doyle was a resolute materialist, having lapsed from Catholic beliefs. When he was first introduced to spiritualism, he embarked on years of rigorous academic and scientific appraisals of psychical phenomena in order to determine the veracity of spiritualism's claims. However, his earliest encounters with spiritualism in the late 1880s-early 1890s are difficult to trace. Conan Doyle's biographers each assert different dates for his first séances or forays into spiritualism. Daniel Stashower notes that Conan Doyle attended a lecture in 1881 entitled 'Does Death End All' and argues that

this is evidence of his ‘early flirtation with spiritualism’.⁸⁰ John Dickson Carr asserts that Conan Doyle began attending séances around 1887, having been introduced to the subject by General Alfred Wilks Drayson.⁸¹ Another biographer, Martin Booth, claims that it may have been the Ford family, Arthur Vernon Ford and Douglas Morey Ford, who helped Conan Doyle take his first steps towards psychical exploration.⁸² Georgina Byrne opts for 1886, claiming this date is taken from Conan Doyle’s ‘own account’.⁸³

Conan Doyle’s personal beliefs are difficult to pin down in these early years. His normally effusive correspondences and diaries remain frustratingly silent on his early psychical explorations. A prolific letter writer, Conan Doyle wrote a large majority of his letters to his mother, Mary Doyle, with whom he discussed all aspects of his life—writing, marriage, career decisions, and family life.⁸⁴ For Conan Doyle’s biographers, these letters comprise the majority of information on the author’s thoughts, actions, publications, and movements throughout the years, but a discussion of his interest in spiritualism is decidedly lacking. ‘The degree of his conviction would rise and fall during the years to come, but apparently he did not write home about the seances he attended’ note Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower, and Charles Foley;

⁸⁰ Daniel Stashower, *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* (London: Penguin Group, 1999), p. 92.

⁸¹ John Dickson Carr, *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (New York: Carol & Graf Publishers, 1949), p. 50.

⁸² Martin Booth, *The Doctor and the Detective: A Biography of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 1997), p. 121.

⁸³ Georgina Byrne, *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England 1850-1939* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), p. 72.

⁸⁴ For further reading on Conan Doyle’s epistolary relationship with his mother, see *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, ed. by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower, and Charles Foley (London: Harper Perennial, 2008).

Whether this was due to discretion, given a knowledge of his mother's views on the subject, or as a result of open disagreement [...] is unclear, but his letters to his mother concentrated instead upon medicine, literature, finances, and family.⁸⁵

Whether an initial letter broaching the subject of spiritualism was ever sent to Mary Doyle is uncertain as Lellenberg, Stashower, and Foley note that 'very few letters have survived from 1885'.⁸⁶

Conan Doyle may have believed his mother would have disapproved of his developing spiritualist beliefs as he had come to reject the Catholicism she so strongly upheld. While he was still a materialist in 1882, Conan Doyle claims to have maintained belief in a divine being and admitted to being an 'earnest theist'.⁸⁷ 'I did not, of course, believe in an anthropomorphic God', he writes in *The New Revelation*: 'but I believed then, as I believe now, in an intelligent Force behind all the operations of Nature—a force so infinitely complex and great that my finite brain could get no further than its existence'.⁸⁸ What he found in his psychical research did nothing to alter this, and in fact strengthened this belief. Writing in *The New Revelation*, he notes that Christianity's Jesus Christ, whom he refers to as the 'Christ Spirit' does appear in the next world according to spirit accounts, but he exists in a more diminished capacity than traditional Christianity suggests.⁸⁹ However, the spirits' testimonies do not privilege one religion above another. Recalling the testimony of the spirit of Dorothy Postlethwaite, Conan Doyle notes that 'she had been a Catholic and was still a Catholic, but had not

⁸⁵ Arthur Conan Doyle: *A Life in Letters*, p. 269.

⁸⁶ Lellenberg, Stashower, and Foley, p. 238.

⁸⁷ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), p. 14.

⁸⁸ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 15.

⁸⁹ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 57.

fared better than the Protestants; there were Buddhists and Mohammedans in her sphere, but all fared alike'.⁹⁰ The only means of purgatory spirits appear to suffer in the afterlife is temporary and related to morals rather than religious beliefs.⁹¹

However open his later spiritualist beliefs came to be regarding the religious democracy of the afterlife, when discussing his early belief in psychical phenomena, Conan Doyle claimed he maintained his belief in materialism. He notes in *The New Revelation* that he was 'a convinced materialist as regards our personal destiny' upon the completion of his medical education in 1892 and that 'when it came to a question of our little personalities surviving death, it seemed to me that the whole analogy of Nature was against it'.⁹² Psychical phenomena was 'the greatest nonsense upon earth'.⁹³ In *The New Revelation*, Conan Doyle does mention the year 1886 as the starting point for his interest in spiritualism, but notes the date as only the beginning of his research into the subject.

About this time—it would be in 1886—I came across a book called *The Reminiscences of Judge Edmunds*. He was a judge of the U.S. High Courts and a man of high standing. The book gave an account of how his wife had died, and how he had been able for many years to keep in touch with her [...]. I was sufficiently interested to continue to read such literature as came in my way.⁹⁴

He also references the article he published in the popular spiritualist research journal *Light* in 1887, but makes no more mention of particular dates until 1891, when he states that he joined the SPR.⁹⁵ In *Memories and Adventures*, Conan

⁹⁰ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 25.

⁹¹ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 111.

⁹² Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, pp. 14-5.

⁹³ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 16.

⁹⁴ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁵ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, pp. 13-4.

Doyle is even less clear on the history of his spiritualist education, simply noting that '[i]t was in these years after my marriage and before leaving Southsea that I planted the first seeds of those psychic studies which were destined to revolutionise my views and to absorb finally all the energies of my life'.⁹⁶ These conflicting accounts, both open to spiritualism and staunchly materialist, are difficult to reconcile: all that can be said is that his connection to the Society for Psychical Research reveals a positive predisposition towards the subject or, at the very least, an interest in examining the subject rigorously.

The SPR's methods were a primary influence on Conan Doyle's earliest interactions with psychical phenomena. The SPR's commitment to the verification and testing of psychical phenomena helped to make it one of the most prominent societies of the era interested in psychical phenomena. Instead of blindly accepting a medium's power, the SPR would send researchers out to verify a séance's credibility. Janet Oppenheim notes an important distinction between the approaches of psychical researchers, like those of the SPR, and the wider label of spiritualist. She notes that spiritualists were less hesitant in accepting psychical phenomena while psychical researchers scientifically evaluated the facts of individual cases of phenomena.⁹⁷

Conan Doyle's interest in the SPR during the early days of his psychic research reveals his likeminded dedication to rigorously examining the truth of psychical phenomena.⁹⁸ He quoted an excerpt from the SPR's manifesto in *The*

⁹⁶ Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 82.

⁹⁷ For further reading on the difference between spiritualists and psychical researchers, see Oppenheim, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Later in life, Conan Doyle began to doubt the effectiveness of the SPR's investigative methodology and their dogged commitment to defrauding fraudulent mediums, claiming that such

History of Spiritualism, noting that it was founded in order to make ‘an organised and systematic attempt to investigate that large group of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical and Spiritualistic’.⁹⁹ Around the publication of ‘Lot No. 249’, Conan Doyle was sent out by the SPR as part of team to investigate a case of supposed paranormal activity. In *The New Revelation*, he records the details of multiple such investigations into the activities of supposed poltergeists during which he and other members of the Society would ‘take every precaution’ to ensure no practical jokes or false phenomena were at play.¹⁰⁰ He discusses the importance of the personal testimonies of respected scientists and academics which helped Conan Doyle see a logical and rational basis for acceptance of spiritualist beliefs. ‘When I regarded Spiritualism as a vulgar delusion of the uneducated, I could afford to look down upon it’, he writes:

but when it was endorsed by men like Crookes, whom I knew to be the most rising British chemist, by Wallace, who was the rival of Darwin, and by Flammarion, the best known of astronomers, I could not afford to dismiss it.¹⁰¹

The desire to root his approach to spiritualism in the testimonies of acclaimed scientists and academics can be seen in ‘The Ring of Thoth’ and ‘Lot No. 249’ and also forms the basis for the distinction between the methodology of British spiritualism and the dangerous occult power of foreign lands. Conan Doyle presents a clear distinction between psychical studies promoting a positive

investigations were against spiritualism’s main beliefs. For further reading on his tension with the SPR see *The History of Spiritualism* vol. II (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1926).

⁹⁹ *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1 (1882), p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 34.

¹⁰¹ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 18.

understanding of the afterlife which negates the horrors of death and the manipulation of occult forces to better or prolong an earthly existence.

‘The Ring of Thoth’ (1890) examines the danger of treating death as an enemy, seeking to eradicate or manipulate it. While researching Egyptian antiquities in Paris, the British Egyptologist John Vansittart Smith encounters an undead Egyptian named Sosra. Sosra is not a mummy, but he has the appearance of one. In actuality, he is a semi-immortal Egyptian, the son of the chief priest of Osiris, who discovers a chemical elixir for stopping death during the reign of Tuthmosis in the eighteenth century BC. Sosra realises the folly of his actions soon after ingesting the elixir when his love dies as a result of a plague before he can provide her with protection from the illness and he is left to live his unending life alone. After thousands of years, the elixir’s effects are still potent. Sosra details his attempts over those years to find the ring of Thoth wherein a fellow priest had long ago hidden an antidote which would restore Sosra’s ability to die. Finally, through the various excavations enacted by Britain and France, Sosra learns that the ring was buried with the mummy of his love, which is on display at the Louvre. He hopes at last to consume the antidote and be reunited with her physically—joining her in becoming a corpse—and spiritually in death.

Sosra’s voice provides the bulk of the story and his characterisation is used to other the desire to overcome death rather than seeing it as the next step on the journey to another phase of spiritual existence. He represents a violation of Nature’s laws and it is left up to the British scientist—John Vansittart Smith—to record Sosra’s story in order to illustrate the positive relationship with death that a British understanding of spiritualism allows. Sosra begins his life with a scientific outlook not unlike Conan Doyle’s former materialist mindset. ‘Of all the

questions which attracted me there were none over which I laboured so long as over those which concern themselves with the nature of life', Sosra says:

I probed deeply into the vital principle. The aim of medicine had been to drive away disease when it appeared. It seemed to me that a method might be devised which should so fortify the body as to prevent weakness or death from ever taking hold of it [...]. There was nothing of mystery or magic in the matter. It was simply a chemical discovery, which may well be made again.¹⁰²

In his medical studies, Sosra presents a figure similar to the British materialist who methodically approaches death as something to be understood and, eventually, overcome.

Unlike Loudon's Cheops who uses emotive language to manipulate British politics and passionately entreats Edric to heed his warnings, Sosra's vocabulary is methodical and devoid of emotion, with a focus on logical inference. Merrick Burrow notes that 'Sosra's transcendence of death is beyond the normal course of nature, but is the work of science and as such is aligned with Britishness'.¹⁰³

Sosra's methodical approach to eradicating the effects of disease and decay upon the body is similar to Conan Doyle's views on British materialism, which denies the ability for spirit to live without matter.¹⁰⁴ Conan Doyle uses the link between the inherent danger of the foreign 'other' and a scientific 'Britishness' in Sosra's character to illuminate the dangers of viewing death as something to fear rather than something which could enhance the spiritual nature of life on earth and the hereafter.

¹⁰² Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', *Cornhill Magazine* (1890), pp. 46-61.

¹⁰³ Merrick Burrow, 'Conan Doyle's Gothic Materialism', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 35.3 (2013), 309-323, p. 318.

¹⁰⁴ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 53.

Sosra's lover, Atma, recognizes death as a natural feature of the human experience and one that is the specific element of a plan enacted by a supernatural force. When Sosra attempts to convince Atma to join him in an extended human existence, she expresses a concern that such action is wrong and goes against the god Osiris' decrees. "'Was it right?" she asked, "was it not a thwarting of the will of the gods? If the great Osiris had wished that our years should be so long, would he not himself have brought it about?"'¹⁰⁵ Sosra continues his attempts to persuade Atma but she defers her decision for one night because '[s]he wished to pray to Isis for help in her decision'.¹⁰⁶ The next day proves to be too late: by the next morning, Atma has contracted the plague and quickly dies. Sosra then realises the foolishness of going against 'Nature' or, as his love believed, 'the will of the gods', crying out: 'Fools, fools, that we were to take death to be our enemy!'¹⁰⁷ The timing of Atma's death suggests that death is the divine answer to her prayer. When Sosra finds the antidote to the original elixir, he rejoices. 'The old curse is broken', he exclaims: 'I can rejoin her. What matter about her inanimate shell so long as her spirit is awaiting me at the other side of the veil!'¹⁰⁸ Instead of representing the end of their relationship, Sosra's and Atma's spirits will reconnect in the afterlife.

Conan Doyle suggests a negative view of the occult by using an elixir as the means of overcoming death. He sets the elixir's invention in ancient Egypt within the priesthood of Thoth, which connects Sosra's priesthood to the ancient

¹⁰⁵ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 56.

¹⁰⁶ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 56.

¹⁰⁷ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 57.

¹⁰⁸ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 53.

practice of alchemy. Godwin refers to alchemy as ‘that most profound of occult sciences’.¹⁰⁹ In defining alchemy, Hanegraaff suggests that it is a

complex historical and cultural phenomenon that does *not* have a conceptual core or essence (whether scientific, rational, religious, spiritual, or psychological) but is characterized by basic procedures of transmutation that can be pursued in laboratory settings *and* function as narratives in religious or philosophical discourse.¹¹⁰

Alchemy is linked to Thoth specifically through the figure of Hermes Trismegistus and the *Hermetica*. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke notes that Thoth was ‘the Egyptian god of wisdom and magic’ and that ‘[a]ll magical and occult powers were attributed to Thoth’.¹¹¹ Conan Doyle aligns ‘The Ring of Thoth’ with alchemy by casting Sosra as a priest of Thoth: the elixir is distanced from spiritualist beliefs by cursing the drinker with eternal life, which traps the spirit in the corporeal form.

Although young Sosra desired to avoid death through alchemical magic, thousands of years’ worth of wisdom have taught him that the spirit of a person extends beyond death’s veil. Sosra has come to understand an idea that is central to the spiritualist understanding of death. Jennifer Bann, writing on the connection between spiritualism and the ghost in nineteenth-century fiction, notes how ‘[j]ust as mortal life was only one stage of human existence, to be followed by various levels of ascendance through an afterlife with its own material landscape, so was matter capable of existing in a number of different forms’.¹¹² Bann suggests that

¹⁰⁹ Godwin, p. 147.

¹¹⁰ Hanegraaff, p. 197.

¹¹¹ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 17.

¹¹² Jennifer Bann, ‘Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: The Changing Figure of the Nineteenth-Century Specter’, *Victorian Studies*, 51.4 (2009), 663-85, p. 668.

the tripartite division of body, soul, and spirit, which was fundamental to spiritualist theology, centered upon this rather unusual idea of physicality; after death, the self retained some form of spatial individuality in the form of the spirit, which in life existed as an intermediary between soul and body. Made up of an ethereal matter invisible to the living, the spirit assumed a form resembling the mortal body after death, and could also choose to clothe itself in any other form of physical matter if it wished.¹¹³

Viewed from this tripartite model, death does not represent a cessation of life—which would cause fear—but instead a graduation to a new form of life without the physical body. Sosra knows that Atma’s spirit will be recognisable on the other side of death. Though they both leave the shell of their physical bodies behind, the spirit can take a form similar to the one on earth.

Sosra acts as a warning to those materialists who view death as a cessation of individual consciousness and who, therefore, attempt to use their rational minds and scientific methodologies to delay or eradicate it. Instead, as Conan Doyle and Sosra have done, they should turn their talents to examining death as a means of access to other spheres through a scientific appraisal of psychical phenomena. Conan Doyle claimed that it was this central tenet of spiritualism, that the spirit exists beyond death, which rendered his materialist beliefs illogical and erroneous. ‘If spirit can live without matter’, he suggests, ‘then the foundation of Materialism is gone, and the whole scheme of thought crashes to the ground’.¹¹⁴ Embracing the division of soul, body, and spirit broadened Conan Doyle’s perspective and allowed him to fully embrace spiritualism. ‘[T]he reports

¹¹³ Bann, p. 668.

¹¹⁴ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 53.

from the other world are all agreed as to the pleasant conditions of life in the beyond', he writes;

They agree that like goes to like, that all who love or who have interests in common are united, that life is full of interest and of occupation, and that they would by no means desire to return. All of this is surely tidings of great joy, and I repeat that it is not a vague faith or hope, but that it is supported by all the laws of evidence which agree that where many independent witnesses give a similar account, that account has a claim to be considered a true one.¹¹⁵

The spirit maintains a similar personality to the deceased after ascending to the next form, retaining the same mannerisms and individuality: the spirits are thus able to find others with whom they can sympathise. They are content in the next form leading Conan Doyle to logically assert that the afterlife is familiar, comforting, and desirable.

Sosra's physical body attests to the necessity of death. His corpse-like appearance is described as 'inhuman and preternatural'.¹¹⁶ His skin is 'glazed and as shiny as varnished parchment'.¹¹⁷ Sosra does not appear as the strong masculine man of science as he was in his younger years, but is instead depicted as shrivelled, fragile, inhuman, his skin written over and over again with the wear of thousands of years. His appearance testifies that defying death is unnatural and destructive. The human body cannot withstand infinite existence. The elixir has stayed the arrival of death, but it cannot save Sosra's body, which has become as

¹¹⁵ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, pp. 69-70.

¹¹⁶ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 48.

¹¹⁷ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 48.

desiccated as a corpse. The body accepts the inevitability of death by slowly morphing the body into a visual relic of the grave.

Vansittart Smith, as an Egyptologist seeking immortal fame similar to young Sosra, is given a similar inhuman description, foreshadowing his fate as he takes up ancient Egyptian occult magic. Like the bird-headed god Thoth, Vansittart Smith ‘held his head in a birdlike fashion, and birdlike, too, was the pecking motion with which, in conversation, he threw out his objections and retorts’.¹¹⁸ He is offended when he overhears fellow museum-goers’ conversation in the Louvre who conjecture that ‘by the continual contemplation of mummies the chap has become half a mummy himself’.¹¹⁹ Vansittart Smith assumes the conversation refers to his own countenance and turns to confront them, only to realise they are speaking of Sosra. By taking offence at their comments, Vansittart Smith recognizes that his ‘ostentatious and overdone disregard of all personal considerations’ may have taken a toll on his physical appearance.¹²⁰

By linking Vansittart Smith’s and Sosra’s appearances, Conan Doyle casts the study of Egyptology as something dangerous and degenerating for one’s spiritual and physical health. While studying zoology and botany, Vansittart Smith’s friends hailed him ‘as a second Darwin’, but he becomes discontented and moves to chemistry where ‘his researches upon the spectra of the metals had won him his fellowship in the Royal Society but again he played the coquette with his subject’.¹²¹ It is only when he finds Egyptology that he believes he will understand ‘the extreme importance of a subject which promised to throw a light

¹¹⁸ Conan Doyle, ‘The Ring of Thoth’, p. 47.

¹¹⁹ Conan Doyle, ‘The Ring of Thoth’, p. 47.

¹²⁰ Conan Doyle, ‘The Ring of Thoth’, p. 47

¹²¹ Conan Doyle, ‘The Ring of Thoth’, p. 46.

upon the first germs of human civilisation and the origin of the greater part of our arts and sciences'.¹²² Through his studies, Vansittart Smith comes to understand a study of Egypt as intricately linked to an understanding of both humanity as a whole and the basis of knowledge itself. All his scientific study up until this point is rendered moot when placed in connection to a study which promises to reveal an understanding of humanity and knowledge itself. Science can only go so far in revealing the germs of human civilisation, whereas a study of Egyptology allows Vansittart Smith the opportunity to discover something deeper.

Although Vansittart Smith has advanced quickly in the field of Egyptology and is respected as one of the best in his field, Sosra shows the inaccuracy of his arguments since they fail to recognize mystical beliefs as the foundation of ancient Egypt's wisdom. 'The whole keystone of our old life in Egypt was not the inscriptions or monuments of which you make so much', Sosra explains, 'but was our hermetic philosophy and mystic knowledge, of which you say little or nothing'.¹²³ Sosra reveals that a true study of ancient Egypt should lead to the revelation of mystic knowledge, which Vansittart Smith has failed to grasp. Vansittart Smith is adept in studies which rely on scientific materialism and he expects that the same skills will serve him well in Egyptology. However, Sosra recasts the study of Egyptology as the study of arcane hermeticism and mysticism. Like Dr. Dean, Vansittart Smith has underestimated the occult roots of Egyptian power.

¹²² Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 46.

¹²³ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 53.

Sosra's mannerisms while attempting to find the ring of Thoth link his foreign identity with danger and mystery. When he first encounters Sosra hunting for the ring after being locked in the Louvre overnight, Vansittart Smith notes that

there was something so stealthy in his movements, and so furtive in his expression, that the Englishman altered his intention [...]. The fellow wore felt-soled slippers, stepped with a rising chest, and glanced quickly from left to right [...]. Vansittart Smith crouched silently back into the corner and watched him keenly, convinced that his errand was one of secret and probably sinister import.¹²⁴

Sosra's 'felt-soled slippers' cursorily identify him with Oriental culture and imbue his clothing and mannerisms with a sinister air. Sosra uses his attire to aid him in infiltrating the very heart of this symbol of imperial dominance. While seeking what belongs to Egypt, Sosra is forced to hide his expertise and his identity when he applies to the Director of the museum for the role of attendant which would allow him to obtain access to the ring of Thoth. 'It was only by blundering, and letting him think that he had over-estimated my knowledge', says Sosra, 'that I prevailed upon him to let me move the few effects which I have retained into this chamber'.¹²⁵ The knowledge Sosra possesses, his quest for the antidote to the elixir, and his knowledge of how to violate nature's boundaries threaten imperial domination and must be accomplished secretly under the cover of night.

Vansittart Smith is attracted to Sosra's surreptitious behaviour: he 'thrilled all over with curiosity, and his birdlike head protruded further and further from

¹²⁴ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', pp. 50-1.

¹²⁵ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 61.

behind the door'.¹²⁶ Vansittart Smith 'crouched silently back into the corner and watched him keenly' mimicking the surreptitious behaviour of the Other in order to learn his secrets.¹²⁷ He is initially attracted to the air of mystery surrounding Sosra but, like Dr. Dean, this attraction to and fascination with the Other fades as the story unfolds.

When Sosra discovers Vansittart Smith observing his actions, he is tempted to kill him but reconsiders. '[I]t may be decreed that I should leave some account behind as a warning to all rash mortals who would set their wits up against workings of Nature', he says, telling Vansittart Smith to '[m]ake such use as you will of it. I speak to you now with my feet upon the threshold of the other world', almost as though he were already a spirit communicating messages from the beyond.¹²⁸ The similarities in Vansittart Smith's and Sosra's appearances reveal the danger for the Westerner in inculcating themselves too deeply into the occult world of the Other, which must not be allowed to eradicate death.

Maria Fleischhack suggests that 'Doyle therefore portrays Egypt as incredibly advanced in mystical knowledge and practice,' which contributes to blurring 'the borders between the *Other* and the *Self*'.¹²⁹ In recognising the similarities between himself and Sosra, Vansittart Smith recognizes the desire to unlock an understanding of life and death. The boundaries between Sosra as Other and Vansittart Smith as the occidental Self are blurred in order to show the potential for Vansittart Smith to continue along a path of Egyptological inquiry, which will, as Sosra notes, lead to mystical knowledge. The difference between the Self and the Other must be retained. The Other, and the occult wisdom he

¹²⁶ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 51.

¹²⁷ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 51.

¹²⁸ Conan Doyle, 'The Ring of Thoth', p. 54.

¹²⁹ Fleischhack, p. 97, emphasis author's.

represents, is a harbinger of danger. Sosra's story shows the importance of embracing death as a means of releasing the spirit to move beyond the veil.

The danger inherent in becoming enmeshed with the foreign occult and losing the boundaries between self and other is further developed in 'Lot No. 249'. Conan Doyle examines the repercussions of disrespecting and misunderstanding occult forces through a character who is not unlike Conan Doyle himself. Abercrombie Smith is an astute medical student at Oxford who embodies a materialist mindset and 'puffed his scientific contempt' at the idea of 'spooks' and anything unexplained by scientific study.¹³⁰ Despite his own lack of belief in psychical phenomena, Smith encounters the undeniable presence of the supernatural in the form of a mummy which his neighbour—Edward Bellingham, a student of Eastern Languages—reanimates in order to exact vengeance on his enemies.

In contrast to Sosra, the mummy in 'Lot No. 249' has no voice. When the mummy is inert in its case, Smith looks it over with a 'professional eye', describing it in very detached and inhuman terminology.¹³¹ 'The blotched skin was drawn tightly from bone to bone, and a tangled wrap of black coarse hair fell over the ears', Smith continues;

Two thin teeth, like those of a rat, overlay the shrivelled lower lip. In its crouching position, with bent joints and craned head, there was a suggestion of energy about the horrid thing which made Smith's gorge rise. The gaunt ribs, with their parchment-like covering, were exposed, and the sunken, leaden-hued abdomen.¹³²

¹³⁰ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 534.

¹³¹ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 531.

¹³² Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 531.

Although the mummy is human, it is denied human qualities. Inert in his case, Lot 249 bears more resemblance to an animal than a human. Lot 249 has teeth ‘like [...] a rat’, a ‘shrivelled lower lip’ and is ‘gaunt’, ‘horrid’, ‘parchment-like’: Elsewhere it is described as having a ‘clawlike hand’, a ‘horrid, black, withered thing’.¹³³ Crafting Lot 249 as something otherworldly and inhuman enables the mummy to become a grotesque blank space on which Conan Doyle can write the perceived occultism of foreign Egypt. He writes the mummy as an agent of foreign trickery, an emblem of the Egyptian occult who reveals the danger posed by the misuse of psychical power connected to the undead colonised.

That danger is epitomised in Bellingham, the mummy’s interpreter. As a student of foreign languages, Bellingham believes he understands how to control the mummy’s power. Similar to Gervase, he is both within and without Egyptian culture. He restores Lot 249 to life through an ancient spell, believing he can control the culture of the Other and force Lot 249 to exact revenge on his behalf. ‘There’s something damnable about him—something reptilian’, Smith’s friend, Jephro Hastie remarks:

Eastern languages. He’s a demon at them [...] he just prattled to the Arabs as if he had been born and nursed and weaned among them. He talked Coptic to the Copts, and Hebrew to the Jews, and Arabic to the Bedouins, and they were all ready to kiss the hem of his frock-coat.¹³⁴

Bellingham immerses himself in foreign cultures and, once he returns to England—naturalised in these foreign cultures—he represents a dangerous risk to British society by becoming an agent of foreign occult power. His familiarity with

¹³³ Conan Doyle, ‘Lot No. 249’, p. 530

¹³⁴ Conan Doyle, ‘Lot No. 249’, p. 527.

Egypt alienates him from his British coursemates who are unable to understand his personality and feel threatened by him. His prowess at eastern languages transforms him into an otherworldly ‘demon’ who manipulates the occult in order to exact revenge on his enemies.

Bellingham begs Smith not to destroy the papyrus which contains the spell to reawaken the dead. He attempts to persuade Smith to instead preserve it by revealing that ‘[i]t is unique; it contains wisdom which is nowhere else to be found’.¹³⁵ Bellingham acts as an interpreter of the foreign occult, using the relics of Egyptian culture to perform magic that exists only in ancient materials. Patrick Brantlinger notes how imperialism’s broad functions included the maintenance of ‘an esoteric import trade in ancient religions’ in ‘everything from Buddhism to Rosicrucianism, as a “spiritual” accompaniment to materialistic trade’.¹³⁶ Bellingham’s ability to communicate in the language of the Other while studying at one of the foremost British institutions, allows him to import the occult to England. Conan Doyle’s ‘Lot No. 249’ presents imperialism as a dangerous portal through which the occult could flood into Britain.

As a relic of a foreign culture, one would expect Lot 249 to rest securely in a British museum or a stately home: mummies acted as a souvenir of British dominance. However, when Bellingham brings the occult to Britain even the dead represent a very real threat. Whereas the spirits present in British séances speak of the peace to be found in the next phase of psychical existence and remain content beyond the veil, Bellingham’s mummy is forced back from death and let loose to exert his vengeful power on Oxford, the heart of the British academy.

¹³⁵ Conan Doyle, ‘Lot No. 249’, p. 544.

¹³⁶ Patrick Brantlinger, ‘Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914’, *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 28.3 (1985), 243-252, p. 246

Bellingham's black magic thus contrasts with Conan Doyle's pursuit of spiritualism. Whereas early in his psychical career, Conan Doyle adhered to strict practices and controlled psychical experiments enacted by the SPR, Bellingham's supernatural interactions show the dangers of engaging in exploration of psychic phenomena without such measures. In the final lines of *The New Revelation*, Conan Doyle attempts to show the safety and encouraging nature of modern spiritualism by assuring his readers that, though psychical phenomena can seem violent and unpredictable, 'in the many cases which have been carefully recorded there is none in which any physical harm has been inflicted upon man or beast'.¹³⁷ This comforting message contrasts with Bellingham's mummy whose sole purpose is to harm by hunting down and killing Bellingham's enemies. Lot 249 is not a friendly spirit summoned in a séance who can assure sitters of the continuation of their familiar spirit in the afterlife. He is undead, a corpse who has been returned to life and who threatens the infrastructure of spiritualism, which necessitated death so the spirit could pass on to the next phase of its existence.

'In 'Lot No. 249' there is a line between what fits in with a 'proper' approach to the supernatural and what falls outside it. William Monkhouse Lee, the other neighbour of Smith and Bellingham, reveals that his open-mindedness only extends so far. 'I'm not strait-laced, but I am a clergyman's son, you know', he says, 'and I think there are some things which are quite beyond the pale'.¹³⁸ His refusal to interact with the mummy is linked to his faith: 'Lee, like a decent Christian, would have nothing to do with such a business'.¹³⁹ Smith himself has trouble accepting the facts of mummy's existence, but when he can no longer

¹³⁷ Conan Doyle, *The New Revelation*, p. 122.

¹³⁸ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 536.

¹³⁹ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 542.

deny the existence of an undead creature and Bellingham's agency in commanding it, he immediately associates it with something unnatural. 'What had been a dim suspicion, a vague, fantastic conjecture, had suddenly taken form, and stood out in his mind as a grim fact, a thing not to be denied', he says: '[a]nd yet, how monstrous it was! How unheard of! How entirely beyond all bounds of human experience'.¹⁴⁰ The facts of Lot 249's existence are undeniable but they are also unnatural. Bellingham's actions go beyond the boundary line of death which spiritualism respects and attempts to promote and thus stray too far.

What brands the occult in these texts as outside the sphere of the acceptable supernatural in the narrative is its identification with Egypt. Smith tells Bellingham after almost being killed by the mummy that his 'filthy Egyptian tricks won't answer in England'.¹⁴¹ Bellingham's magic is connected to foreign superstition and chicanery, not British spiritualism, which used methodical enquiries to test each case of paranormal activity to ensure there were no 'tricks' being enacted by phony mediums.

The danger of the foreign occult is that it escapes detection. Smith expresses his astonishment that the mummy has escaped notice in so populated a town and is told that '[i]t has been seen. There is quite a scare in the town about an escaped ape, as they imagine the creature to be'.¹⁴² The mummy embodies the literal definition of occult as hidden by moving 'in the shadow of the hedge, silently and furtively, a dark, crouching figure, dimly visible against the black background'.¹⁴³ The mummy is relegated to the shadows and denied entrance into

¹⁴⁰ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', pp. 538-9.

¹⁴¹ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 539.

¹⁴² Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 542.

¹⁴³ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 540.

the light, which only lends his figure more power. The dark, mysterious colonised refuses to stay hidden, however, and chases Smith to the very door of a friend's house, which allows him to be seen as 'a man, rather thin' and 'tall, very tall'.¹⁴⁴ The mummy's true corporeal form is only seen by those who recognize the danger of occult power. Ignorance of the occult's presence in England is therefore potentially deadly.

The rest of Oxford still believe the mummy to be nothing more than a loose primate. With this animal imagery Conan Doyle capitalises on the popularity of evolutionary tropes stemming from Darwin's theories to make a more nuanced commentary on the dangers of degeneracy, a fear which Hunt Hawkins suggests came from anxiety over exposure to the savagery of imperial lands.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, Bellingham himself appears to be suffering the effects of degeneration. When Smith and Bellingham first become acquainted, Smith detects 'a dash of insanity in the man' and calls his habit of talking to himself 'a frequent herald of a weakening mind'.¹⁴⁶ The former description of Bellingham as 'reptilian' dissociates him from humans and also recalls satanic imagery of the snake in the Garden of Eden, further suggesting that connection to foreign occultism is dangerous for both one's physical body and moral compass.

The difference between the grotesque occultism of Bellingham's mummy animation and British spiritualism lies in Bellingham's desire to control paranormal agents instead of seeking to use messages from the beyond to benefit the living. The same is true in 'The Ring of Thoth'. For Conan Doyle, the danger of the occult seems to come when characters attempt to control death in its

¹⁴⁴ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 541.

¹⁴⁵ Hunt Hawkins, 'Heart of Darkness and Racism', in Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. by Paul B. Armstrong (London: Norton, 2006), pp. 365-75 (p. 370).

¹⁴⁶ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 532, 533.

various forms instead of embracing the spirit world as a guide and encouragement for the present life. Bellingham tells Smith that '[i]t is a wonderful thing [...] to feel that one can command powers of good and evil—a ministering angel or a demon of vengeance'.¹⁴⁷

Through Bellingham's and Lot 249's actions, Conan Doyle shows that these dangerous foreign customs, these 'filthy Egyptian tricks', must be controlled and annihilated to pave the way for modern British spiritualism, which harmonises communication between the living and the dead. Smith accomplishes this control by forcing Bellingham to stab and subsequently burn Lot 249. 'I must make a clean sweep of all your materials', Smith says, '[w]e must have no more devil's tricks. In with all these leaves! They may have something to do with it'.¹⁴⁸ Unsure of what the Egyptian materials represent and threatened by their potential for harm, Smith burns them. Burrow notes that 'Lot No. 249' foregrounds 'the anxiety over oriental influence', deploying 'a representation of the scientist in order to contain and neutralise it'.¹⁴⁹ Smith enacts his role as the rational scientist by eliminating the occult threat to a rational view of life and death. By rejecting the occult's ability to reanimate the dead, Smith promotes a view of spiritualist view of death as a natural part of life.

The dead are not willing to remain silent, however. Lot 249's body cries out as it is destroyed. 'The creature crackled and snapped under every stab of the keen blade [...]. Suddenly, with a rending crack, the backbone snapped asunder, and it fell, a brown heap of sprawling limbs on the floor'.¹⁵⁰ The sounds cease when the backbone—the spinal cord without which the brain cannot function—

¹⁴⁷ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 532.

¹⁴⁸ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 544.

¹⁴⁹ Burrow, p. 317.

¹⁵⁰ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 544.

snaps. Lot 249 appears most human at the moment of his destruction, which Smith takes as proof of the danger of the foreign, realising that allowing the orient into England can result in losing control over the colonised. Fleischhack notes that the representative of the foreign Other in Egyptianising fiction is either deconstructed or destroyed when brought into contact with Western culture. However, '[w]hile the destruction concerns individuals as representatives', she writes, 'the image of ancient Egypt itself does not seem to change and is not questioned'.¹⁵¹ Although Smith has destroyed Lot 249 as a representative of Egyptian occultism, the narrative ends with an imposing imperial threat which portrays the persistence of his fear of the foreign occult infiltrating Britain. 'You'll hear from me again', he warns, 'if you return to your old tricks. And now good-morning, I must go back to my studies'.¹⁵² Smith's warning shows that any resurgence of the foreign will be met with violence.

The illustrations that ran alongside 'Lot No. 249' in its publication in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* reveal a suppression of foreign culture from the story's outset. Hastie seeks out Smith in order to borrow a skull for his medical studies and it is here when he first warns him of Bellingham's dubious character. In a drawing entitled 'Good-night, my son, and take my tip as to your neighbour' (fig. 3.1), Hastie holds the skull in his arm, his hand firmly clamped over the skull's mouth. Death itself will be forced into silence by the epitome of rational thought: the materialist medical student, representative of imperial Britain.

Despite Smith's attempts to suppress the effects of the foreign occult upon Britain, the final words of the story issue both a warning and an implied question

¹⁵¹ Fleischhack, p. 74.

¹⁵² Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 544.

on transgressing Nature's boundaries. 'But the wisdom of men is small', Smith says: 'and the ways of Nature are strange, and who shall put a bound to the dark things which may be found by those who seek for them'.¹⁵³ His words warn that the tempting mysteries of the foreign occult will continue to threaten British shores. What seems like a rhetorical question takes on a stronger tone when viewed through this imperial lens. As a scientist, Smith takes on this role of silencing Bellingham's 'dark things' and warns that others must do the same.

Science as Boundary Line

There seemed to be safety in approaching the paranormal through the guise of science. Corelli distanced the psychical nature of her electric creed from occultism by narratively aligning it with her esoteric view of occult science. In his early forays into psychical research, Conan Doyle was confident in phenomena which had been tried and tested with methods approved by the SPR. Corelli and Conan Doyle create ancient Egypt as a land of occult power so that their characters can explore the occult and realise its dangers. Their respective occult sciences are synonymous with an approach to the supernatural that is grounded in British morals and standards. Alex Owen, quoting Conan Doyle's own words from an article for *Pearson's Magazine* in 1924, notes that 'Christian ethics can *never* lose their place whatever expansion our psychic faculties may enjoy'.¹⁵⁴ Corelli and Conan Doyle respond to the public embrace of the supernatural with fiction that links the black magic of the occult to the foreign other in an effort to

¹⁵³ Conan Doyle, 'Lot No. 249', p. 544.

¹⁵⁴ Conan Doyle, 'Early Psychic Experiences', in *Pearson's Magazine*, March 1924, pp. 208-9, emphasis author's.

alienate forces which might threaten or destabilise Christianity or British spiritualism.

The Egyptian characters in *Ziska*, 'The Ring of Thoth', and 'Lot No. 249' portray those things which go 'beyond the pale'. As long as their British characters end their adventures by re-embracing perspectives rooted in a scientific approach to the paranormal, then their foreign counterparts are free to toy with the allure of the undead.

In line with Hanegraaff's views, the portrayal of ancient Egypt as a land of dark occult power in these narratives shifted the way in which Egypt was invoked in fiction published at the turn of the century. Such portrayals had a powerful effect on the reception of ancient Egypt. By empowering Egypt, writers such as Corelli and Conan Doyle created a view of ancient Egypt which began to seep off the written page.

With Hanegraaff's suggestion that such fiction influenced occult practices in mind, in the next chapter I suggest that this image of ancient Egypt worked to destabilise the nineteenth-century definition of death in the works of Grant Allen and Bram Stoker. Allen and Stoker built upon the fear of the corpse returning to life due to premature burials, which destabilised the authority of Egyptian funerary architecture in cemetery reform. This subsequently creates a tension between the person and the corpse, which is fictionalised in the undead mummies of Allen's 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies' and Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Allen and Stoker's mummies challenge the authority of death in defining legacy and facilitating mourning, upsetting the balance between the dead and the living.

**Chapter IV: The Unstable Grave: Probing Victorian Anxiety over
Death and Identity in Grant Allen's 'My New Year's Eve among
the Mummies' and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars***

While Corelli and Conan Doyle argued that death was the next stage of existence, being dead in the nineteenth century represented a complex transition from person to corpse. Nineteenth-century cemetery reform and the opening of private-enterprise cemeteries offered the ability to purchase timeless monuments that allowed identity to persist beyond one's natural lifespan. The cemetery shifted the view of burial grounds from a place of inert remains to a place where the dead could continue to live. The mouldering corpse below was hidden away while the monument above stood seemingly eternal.

This chapter explores the complex relationship between the living and the dead in the nineteenth century. Egyptianising fiction develops the understanding of life and death as encountered in the nineteenth-century cemetery and its Egyptian funerary architecture. The popularity of Egyptian revival motifs in nineteenth-century funerary architecture betrays a persistent anxiety over the future of personal heritage. Egyptian funerary monuments neatly suited the desire to be remembered in death by connecting the names, birth and death dates, and epitaphs to symbols of eternity. Egyptian funerary architecture is different to traditional gravestones, which often evoke images of heaven and blessed rest. While such monuments did not literally preserve the body, obelisks and pyramids are connected to a vague, indefinable eternity.

The mummy in the museum seemingly offered the nineteenth century a further means to explore and understand death. As a well-recognized cultural trope, the mummy was familiar enough to engage with but also foreign enough to

safely resurrect. A shared humanity allowed the mummy to speak from beyond the grave but their cultural Otherness kept the reader (at least) one step removed. The mummy was both human and object, relatable but also controllable.

However, Egyptianising fiction complicates the nineteenth-century understanding of death as it was defined by the monument in the cemetery and the mummy in the museum. Fictional mummies could be raised and then returned to the grave in order for the author to explore their own religious anxieties, but there always remained the possibility that the mummy could once again return to life. I suggest that these fictional representations work to destabilise the role of the Egyptian funerary monument. Such mummies suggest that, despite their cultural differences, death is as unstable for the mummy in the museum as it is the body on its way to burial under a granite obelisk. Roger Luckhurst traces superstition around ancient Egyptian artefacts or relics to the gothic fiction of the late nineteenth century. He proposes that the association such fiction raised between ancient Egyptian artefacts and curses was a key motivation for narratives of curses surrounding excavation of Tuthankamun's tomb in the 1920s.¹ I suggest that such fiction also lent its superstition to the Egyptian symbols in the cemetery. This is not to suggest that a sense of fear became attached to obelisks and pyramids, but simply that the popularity of Egyptian funerary architecture gestures towards a desire for the preservation not just of memory, but also the corpse. Just as the pyramids in Egyptianising fiction raise corpses, so the pyramids in the cemetery suggest similar preservation, inviting passers by to imagine the deceased preserved as they once were and awaiting resurrection.

¹ Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 20.

In this chapter, I explore how Grant Allen in 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies' (1880) and Bram Stoker in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) use mummification to explore the anxieties surrounding the permanence of death.² Both Allen's unnamed narrator and Stoker's Queen Tera challenge the conceit of the Egyptian funerary monument, revealing the uncanny tension in separating memory and legacy from physical remains. While the obelisk stands atop a grave as a testament to the ability of a physical monument to proclaim a person's personality and physical presence, the body must remain below, out of sight and unseen, or the tenuous balance between memory and corpse is lost. Allen and Stoker use the safe space of fiction to resurrect the body, rendering the mummies' grave markers useless. By raising the mummy, these texts complicate the permanence of the eternity symbolised by Egyptian funerary monuments.

The Identity of the Dead

Previous research on Victorian mourning culture has suggested that the grave was a crucial site for both deceased and bereaved. Prior to the opening of the large garden cemeteries of the nineteenth century from the 1830s, the grave was not secure. Burial took place in overcrowded, dilapidated churchyards. As Ruth Richardson has noted, bodies, most often those of the poor prior to the Anatomy Act of 1832, were also at risk of being snatched from their graves and sold to

² *The Jewel of Seven Stars* was originally published in 1903, however I cite the 1904 edition which incorporates the same original ending. For clarity, I differentiate in the footnotes which follow between the 1904 edition (and therefore the original 1903 ending) and the abridged ending which began appearing in 1912.

anatomists for dissection.³ Richardson suggests that ‘dissection represented not only the exposure of nakedness, the possibility of an assault upon and disrespect towards the dead—but also the deliberate mutilation or destruction of identity, perhaps for eternity’.⁴ Without the body existing in the grave, out of sight but preserved through a monument above, there was no place to anchor a person’s memory. There were also theological concerns, as John Morley has noted, regarding whether a body was necessary for future resurrection upon Christ’s second coming.⁵ The removal of the corpse thus erased both the possibility of the relationship between deceased and bereaved to continue at the burial site and risked the body’s future ability to be resurrected.

Charles Dickens graphically portrays the potential fate of remains in dilapidated burial grounds in *Bleak House* (1853). In *Bleak House*, Jo can only identify Nemo’s corpse to Lady Dedlock through its relation to other, nameless remains. He lies ‘[o]ver yonder. Among them pile of bones and close to that there kitchen winder’.⁶ Malcolm Andrews has identified the burial ground in the novel as St. Mary-le-Strand’s burial ground, where the poor were subjected to the same nameless burial Dickens assigns Nemo.⁷ Unable to afford any form of monument, Nemo’s bones mingle with the bones of his fellow dead as one unidentifiable mass. A poem in *Household Words* (1850) portrays the ‘the half-unburied dead’ whose bones ‘peep forth [...] with jagged end of coffin-planks’.⁸ The bones are so

³ For an extensive discussion on the history of the resurrectionists, see Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

⁴ Richardson, p. 29.

⁵ John Morley, *Death, Heaven and the Victorians* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), p. 32.

⁶ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 240.

⁷ Malcolm Andrews, ‘Where was Nemo Buried?’, *Dickensian*, 111.3 (2015), 245-56, p. 247.

⁸ John Delaware Lewis, ‘City Graves’, *Household Words*, 14 December 1850, p. 277.

decrepit '[t]hat e'en the worm disowns / And once a smooth round skull rolled on, / Like a football, on the stones'.⁹ The skull and bone fragments poking out of the grave offers a macabre visualisation of the fate of many bodies after death. Reduced to namelessness, its bones displaced, the body loses all sense of identity, becoming a disrespected object for children to kick about.

The opening of large cemeteries witnessed a shift from the communal identity of the dead which had existed in churchyards to an individual identity safeguarded in the cemetery. The formation of the General Cemetery Company in 1830 brought about the opening of Kensal Green in 1833 and numerous cemeteries followed, specifically West Norwood Cemetery (1836), Highgate Cemetery (1839), Nunhead Cemetery (1840), Brompton Cemetery (1840), and Abney Park Cemetery (1840), among many others. Here, the relationship between dead and living could continue beyond the funeral.

Moving from the churchyard to the cemetery also facilitated a transfer of power from the Anglican Church to the specific identity of the deceased, which complicated the relationship between religion, memory, and identity. Thomas Laqueur notes that 'the churchyard was and looked to be a place for remembering a bounded community of the dead', instead of 'a place for individual commemoration or mourning'.¹⁰ The churchyard offered clear identification with a religious community. Writing on a popular commentary on death in the poetry of John Keble's *The Christian Year*, Michael Wheeler illustrates that the concept of the grave 'as a place of sleep "within the church's shade" combines a sense of

⁹ Lewis, 'City Graves', p. 277.

¹⁰ Thomas Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 138.

place (in the shade of a church) and a sense of membership (in the Catholic and Apostolic Church)'.¹¹ There were clear demarcations between those who belonged in the membership of consecrated ground and those who did not. Dissenters were identified through burial in a specified and decidedly other area of the churchyard.

Instead of removing religious burial grounds altogether, new cemeteries respected the desire for identification with a spiritual community in death and continued to assign what Julie-Marie Strange refers to as 'denominational space' which 're-created distinct communities of Nonconformists, Anglicans and Roman Catholics'.¹² With the Church no longer in charge of demarcating who was within and without of a specific religious community, the onus of attesting to the deceased's religious affiliations was split between the bereaved and the monument. Nichola Tonks notes that the new cemeteries 'became a heterotopic space in which imagery and cultures could be embraced in ways that Christian churchyards and conventional burial spaces have previously not permitted'.¹³ Those who buried the deceased in these new spaces could choose which distinct religious community they would join while the monument stood and attested to the character of the deceased.

The rise of grandiose and personalised monuments in the cemetery, as Laqueur notes, 'served the dead in the interest of the new deities of memory and history'.¹⁴ The carefully-landscaped cemetery was a far cry from the horrors of

¹¹ Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 61.

¹² Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief, and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 166.

¹³ Nichola Tonks, 'Obituaries and Obelisks: Egyptianizing Funerary Architecture and the Cemetery as a Heterotopic Space', in *Ancient Egypt in the Modern Imagination*, ed. by Eleanor Dobson and Nichola Tonks (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), pp. 117-27 (p. 121).

¹⁴ Laqueur, p. 286.

the burial grounds of the poor where bodies were piled on top of one another.

Laqueur cites Laman Blanchard's 1842 article on Kensal Green Cemetery, which marks the breadth of the shift between former burial grounds and the cemeteries.

'There is no late step so broad as the distinction between the city Churchyard and the suburban Cemetery', he writes, '[h]ere there has been nothing to repel, nothing to shock, nothing to wound the profound and sensitive feeling. The mourner here has held uninterrupted intercourse with the mourned'.¹⁵

Victorian mourning culture encompassed a large trade in elaborate funeral pageantry and items which contained something of the deceased, but lacked the permanent role performed by the monument atop a grave. Catherine Waters has illustrated the Victorians' use of memorial 'things', which enabled 'a form of proximity, a form of touch'.¹⁶ The cost of these objects and the expenses of funeral and burial constantly haunted the minds of the lower classes: a portion of their livelihood throughout their lives would most likely have gone towards future funerary costs.¹⁷ John Morley cites the 'Average and aggregate expenses of funerals' chart compiled by Edwin Chadwick in 1843, which calculated the average yearly cost of funerals in England and Wales at a staggering £4,871,493.¹⁸ Pat Jalland suggests that these funeral customs and things were more than extravagant displays of mourning. Instead, they worked to ease the pain of the grieving process and aided 'an ultimate return to a more normal way of life'.¹⁹

¹⁵ Laman Blanchard, 'A Visit to the General Cemetery at Kensal Green', *Ainsworth's Magazine*, July 1842, pp. 177-88 (p. 178).

¹⁶ Catherine Waters, 'Materializing Mourning: Dickens, Funerals, and Epitaphs', 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 14 (2012), unpaginated online article.

¹⁷ Morley, p. 25.

¹⁸ Morley, p. 70.

¹⁹ Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 193.

The emergence of the gated, neatly-kept burial plots offered in private-enterprise cemeteries promised more than just a secure burial site: they allowed identity to be sustained over time and provided mourners a place to visit, commune, and commemorate their loved ones. Whereas graves in a churchyard were in a constant state of turnover as the demand for bodies increased, in cemeteries, private graves could be purchased for an extended period of time, if not indefinitely.²⁰ However, this came at quite a hefty cost. Private burial in Highgate's Egyptian Avenue cost £126.²¹ The security of burial under an extravagant monument was a luxury. Maximilian Scholz argues that these cemeteries 'were profit-seeking enterprises, and Londoners immediately perceived this truth and branded the cemeteries unsavoury financial innovations'.²²

This financial focus, however, does not account for the motivations behind the grandeur ascribed to funerals and, more importantly, the grave itself. Monuments, obelisks, pavilions, statues, and headstones sold because they catered to the need to be remembered. The economic enterprises of the cemetery fit neatly within the desire for memory, which the rich were willing to purchase. Tonks notes that 'new cemeteries offered the opportunity to personalize the grave, to incorporate a design to the deceased (or family's) preference, and presented a way to display wealth and status in a way churchyards had not'.²³ Grand monuments captured attention as people walked down cemetery paths. They acted as a means

²⁰ Laqueur, p. 291.

²¹ Information taken from a personal tour of Highgate Cemetery on 14 May 2018.

²² Maximilian Scholz, 'Over Our Dead Bodies: The Fight Over Cemetery Construction in Nineteenth-Century London', *Journal of Urban History*, 43.3 (2015), 445-57, p. 455.

²³ Tonks, p. 122.

for the dead to speak and the living to respond by returning to the grave, perhaps leaving a wreath of flowers.

Such graveside visits momentarily imbue the dead with life by restoring a relationship whereby gifts are given and received, albeit passively. John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843)—renowned nineteenth-century landscaper, cemetery designer, and husband of Jane Loudon—admired the style of Père Lachaise cemetery in France precisely because it bridged the gap between the dead and the living.²⁴ ‘It is there the custom for surviving friends to visit the tombs of their relatives, and, as a token of recollection and respect to their memory, to weave a garland of flowers, and hang it on their monument’ he writes. ‘In that asylum of death, there is nothing found save that which should touch the heart or soothe the afflicted soul.’²⁵ The transition from overcrowded churchyard to the burial plots of the cemetery changed the nature of mourning.

Blanchard’s account of his tour to Kensal Green is a tour of remembrance. He moves from ‘the family grave of “John Gosling”’ whose epitaph ‘seeks in the form of poetry an expression to which ordinary forms of language seem hopelessly inadequate’ to the grave of ‘Mary Scott Hogarth, sister of Mrs. Charles Dickens,’ whose epitaph is so emotive that Blanchard notes how his ‘tears called forth by the inscription thus recorded fall upon the grave’.²⁶ Blanchard pauses at each monument, not only to admire their grandeur, but also to meet the deceased

²⁴ For further reading on the influence of Père Lachaise cemetery on British and American cemeteries, see James Stevens Curl ‘The Design of the Early British Cemeteries’, *Journal of Garden History*, 4.3 (1983), 223-54; Richard A. Etlin, ‘Père Lachaise and the Garden Cemetery’, *Journal of Garden History*, 4.3 (1983), 211-22; and John Morley ‘Cemeteries’, in *Death, Heaven, and the Victorians* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), pp. 41-51.

²⁵ John Claudius Loudon, *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries; and on the Improvement of Churchyards* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843), p. 10.

²⁶ Blanchard, p. 179.

and join their family in mourning, as ‘these are graves indeed, and not vacant monuments’.²⁷

The grave thus facilitated the transition from body to corpse whereby the grave marker came to stand—quite literally—in the place of the body. Discussing the role of the corpse in funerary rituals whereby the corpse was actively viewed and interacted with, Richardson suggests that there was ‘confusion and ambiguity concerning both the definition of death and the spiritual status of the corpse’ which resulted in ‘an uncertain balance between solicitude towards the corpse and fear of it’.²⁸ The body loses its familiarity as it becomes a decaying corpse, which can only be restored once the corpse is buried under the recognisable narrative assigned by the grave.

This treatment of the corpse as both an object that needed to be sanitarily disposed of but also a vestige of personality, a subject, creates an uncanny understanding of the deceased as both dead and alive. The grave and any accompanying monument attested to the deceased’s memory, but it was understood that, beneath the ground, there was a decaying object. This precarious tension between subject and object was important. The corpse was a mouldering, decaying object and so needed to be hidden. The grave could only facilitate the grieving process when the abject corpse was permanently buried.

The occurrence of premature burials violated this tenuous relationship between dead and living. Luckhurst notes that the fear of premature burials was linked to the rapid spreading of sensationalised accounts of it occurring.²⁹ In

²⁷ Blanchard, p. 186.

²⁸ Richardson, p. 7.

²⁹ Luckhurst, *The Mummy’s Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy*, p. 60.

1828, *The Mirror of Literature* notes how '[a] lady once told St. Foix, that in her will she had ordered her body to be opened after her death, as she was afraid of being buried alive'.³⁰ An article in *The London Journal* in 1878 begins a story entitled 'Buried Alive' with a warning specifically for '[p]eople who have a horror of being buried alive' who 'will not be reassured by the following incident'.³¹ The article then goes on to describe the story of a woman who had presumably died in Naples whose premature interment by an Italian doctor was only discovered when her grave was opened to receive another body. It was then discovered 'that the clothes which covered the unfortunate woman were torn to pieces [...] she had even broken her limbs in attempting to extricate herself from her living tomb'.³² The unsettling similarities to the live burials referenced in eighteenth-century gothic fiction are carefully downplayed by relaying the punishment for the doctor who erroneously declared his patient dead, the author quipping—with, no doubt, pun intended—that his imprisonment for involuntary manslaughter is '[r]ather a slight punishment for so grave an error'.³³

Although they were not actually dead, the prematurely buried incited shock when they attempted to return to familiar domestic spaces because they appeared to have reversed the transition from body to corpse. An article for *Chamber's Journal* in 1879 related how some servants, who witnessed the return of their mistress to life after her supposed death, interrupt the wake to tell her husband that 'Missus' ghost is walking!'³⁴ The sight of their mistress's familiar body in her own home is unnerving because she is no longer allowed to inhabit

³⁰ 'Buried Alive', *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, 11 (1828), p. 96.

³¹ 'Buried Alive', *The London Journal, and weekly record of literature, science and art*, 2 March 1878, p. 132.

³² 'Buried Alive', p. 132.

³³ 'Buried Alive', p. 132.

³⁴ 'Nearly Buried Alive', *Chamber's Journal*, 19 April 1879, p. 253.

the space in the same way after her death has been declared. The servants are more confident in asserting that their mistress has returned as a spirit than recognising that she was incorrectly assumed dead: the transition from body to corpse, thought to be permanent and irreversible, cannot be challenged when other explanations suggest themselves, no matter how irrational. The spirit's persistence in the world of the living is the easier conclusion to reach.

Sigmund Freud suggests in 'The "Uncanny"' (1919)—a term which comes from the German *unheimlich*, meaning 'unhomely' or unfamiliar—that when the permanence of death is called into question it becomes uncanny. Freud acknowledges this type of uncanny as doubt regarding the primitive beliefs of ancestors. 'The condition under which the feeling of uncanniness arises here is unmistakable', Freud states:

We—or our primitive forefathers—once believed that these possibilities (the return of the dead) were realities, and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them [...] but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation.³⁵

Freud writes that '[a]s soon as something *actually happens* in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the uncanny'.³⁶

Premature burials, and their sensationalised retellings in print, were uncanny because it seemingly confirmed that people could easily return to life after death.

³⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, 2nd edn (London: W.W. Norton & Company), pp. 824–41 p. 838, emphasis author's.

³⁶ Freud, p. 838.

Death thus needed to be permanent in order to allow for mourning and remembrance to begin. The bereaved could only shift their relationship with the dead to one of graveyard visits and commemoration once the body was buried and the agency moved from deceased to mourner. The dead must then trust to the monument to fulfil its role and assert their name and eternal legacy.

Complicating Eternity-Egyptian Revival Funerary Architecture and Eternal Legacy

The symbology of Egyptian revival funerary architecture seemed an ideal motif for a monument whose role was to preserve the memory of the deceased. The iconic symbols of an obelisk or pyramid naturally signify eternity. A pyramid also recalls the meticulous Egyptian practice of preserving the corpse through mummification. Such preservation prolonged the transition from body to object which was so necessary to the grieving process in the nineteenth century.

Egyptian revival funerary architecture thus complicates the role of the nineteenth century funerary monument through its historical and esoteric associations. Such monuments represented a view of eternal memory that was both familiar and attractive and, because Other, unsettling and strange.

Egyptian revival funerary architecture stands out from other motifs because of its historical connection to legacy and preservation. The rise in Egyptian revival style grave markers specifically in the nineteenth century has been noted in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada particularly.³⁷

³⁷ Elizabeth Broman, 'Egyptian Revival Funerary Art in Green-Wood Cemetery', *Markers: Annual Journal for the Association of Gravestone Studies*, 18 (2001), 30-67; Curl *The Egyptian Revival*; Chris Brooks, *Mortal Remains: The History and Present State of the Victorian and*

Curl notes that ‘Egyptianizing tendencies in funerary architecture began to be associated with the new cemeteries’ of the nineteenth century.³⁸ Elizabeth Broman, in her work on Egyptian revival funerary art, notes the pyramid as ‘probably the most highly recognized and distinctly Egyptian form: they contain the aura of mystery that ancient Egypt represents and are most closely associated with burial and death’.³⁹ Another common motif that James Curl, Frances Clegg, Ronald Hawker, and Rachel Wolgemuth note is the obelisk.⁴⁰

Despite Jolene Zigarovich’s assertion that ‘compared with other funerary styles Egyptian monuments and commemorative statues in cemeteries were relatively rare, exotic and costly’, Egyptian grave markers were common enough that they were treated as part and parcel of the cemetery by those who visited them.⁴¹ Blanchard notes in his visit to Kensal Green Cemetery that ‘among the obelisks’ are two he particularly singles out as belonging to Sir Robert Baker and Mrs. Tremaine.⁴² George Blair points out how the monuments of the Glasgow Necropolis ‘embrace every variety of order and style, from the simple grandeur of the Doric to the exquisite elegance of the Corinthian—from the massive Egyptian obelisk to the picturesque Gothic, the graceful Italian, and the formal yet fanciful

Edwardian Cemetery (Exeter: Wheaton, 1989); Ronald W. Hawker, ‘Monuments in the Nineteenth-Century Public Cemeteries of Victoria, British Columbia’, *Material Culture Review / Revue de la culture matérielle*, 26 (1987), 19-26; Tonks, ‘Obituaries and Obelisks’; Meredith J. Watkins, ‘The Cemetery and Cultural Memory: Montreal, 1860-1900’, *Urban History Review*, 31. 1 (2002), 52-62; Rachel Wolgemuth, *Cemetery Tours and Programming: A Guide* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); and Ken Worpole, *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West* (London: Reaktion, 2003).

³⁸ Curl, *Egyptian Revival*, p. 161.

³⁹ Broman, p. 33.

⁴⁰ Curl, *Egyptian Revival*, p. 161; Frances Clegg, ‘Problems of symbolism in cemetery monuments’, *Journal of Garden History*, 4.3 (1983) 307-15, p. 307; Hawker, p. 31, and Wolgemuth, p. 41.

⁴¹ Jolene Zigarovich, ‘Egyptomania, English Pyramids and the Quest for Immortality’, in *Ancient Egypt in the Modern Imagination*, ed. by Eleanor Dobson and Nichola Tonks (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), pp. 105-16 (p. 113).

⁴² Blanchard, p. 182.

Elizabethan'.⁴³ Chris Elliott has noted that, prior to the nineteenth century, the obelisks which appeared in churchyards were based on classical sources rather than actual Egyptian relics.⁴⁴

The access to Egypt facilitated by Napoleon's Egyptian campaign led to a resurgence of Egyptian revival aesthetic in numerous areas. Curl notes that 'there was indeed a marked increase of interest in the architecture and art of ancient Egypt in the first decades of the nineteenth century'.⁴⁵ Ken Worpole suggests that '[t]he elision between Victorian funeral culture and that of ancient Egypt, seen [...] in many other cemeteries of the period' stems both from 'the enormous archaeological interest in ancient Egypt in Europe from the eighteenth century onwards' and the connection to 'Freemasonry and repertory of symbolic forms and imagery, which became stock items in cemetery architecture, including pyramids, obelisks, flaming torches, and sun motifs'.⁴⁶ Although monuments such as urns and columns also evoke historical connotations of enduring legacy, particularly that of ancient Rome, Egyptian funerary architecture had its own unique symbology.

An obelisk or a pyramid symbolised eternity through its connection to a culture whose monuments lasted for thousands of years. The ability to purchase a permanent burial site and erect an obelisk atop a grave safeguarded the name of the dead and the location of their remains, gesturing towards the significance of the person beneath. As Tonks notes, '[i]mmortality [...] could be achieved with

⁴³ George Blair, *Biographic and Descriptive Sketches of Glasgow Necropolis* (Glasgow: Maurice Ogle & Son, Thomas Murray & Son, 1857), p. 351.

⁴⁴ Chris Elliott, 'Cemeteries: Catacombs and Cornices' in *Egypt in England* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2012), pp. 32-42 (p. 32).

⁴⁵ Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Worpole, pp. 138-9.

the erection of a suitable obelisk, pyramid or draped urn, cast in stone for posterity'.⁴⁷ Egyptian funerary architecture claimed that the deceased was someone who should be remembered for time immemorial. Broman suggests that 'Egyptian funerary monuments' would infuse viewers 'with sublime associations of gloom, solemnity, and the finality of death, as well as the idea of eternity'.⁴⁸ These are contradictory associations, simultaneously symbolizing both the finality of death and enduring eternal memory. In their contradictory associations, such monuments evoke an uneasy, unknowable eternity.

An obelisk demanded attention and asserted dominance in the cemetery. Building on an original survey conducted in 1992, Mary Shaw, Helena Tunstall, and George Davey Smith note a 'positive correlation between height of commemorative obelisks and the social standing of the deceased (and their length of life)'.⁴⁹ The study collected data from 843 obelisks in Glasgow graveyards dating from 1808-1921 and concluded that 'every metre in height of the obelisk translated to 1.42 years later age at death for men and 2.19 years for women'.⁵⁰ The higher the obelisk, the more enduring the earthly legacy and, hopefully, the eternal. Robert Naismith captures the futility of such attempts to tower over others in death in his 1847 poem 'Necropolis' when he notes that

Here stands an obelisk rearing high
Its top o'er humbler tomb-stones nigh;

⁴⁷ Tonks, p. 122.

⁴⁸ Broman, p. 36.

⁴⁹ Mary Shaw, Helena Tunstall, and George Davey Smith, 'Seeing social position: visualizing class in life and death', *International Journal of Epidemiology* 32 (2003) 332-5, p. 334. For further reading on the study behind this article, see George Davey Smith, Douglas Carroll, Sandra Rankin, David Rowan, 'Socioeconomic differentials in mortality: evidence from Glasgow graveyards', *BMJ*, 305 (1992), 1554-7.

⁵⁰ Shaw, Tunstall, and Davey Smith, p. 334.

Perhaps the clay
 It marks, once also towered in pride,
 O'er humbler neighbours by its side,
 In pride's short day.⁵¹

Obelisks and pyramids aligned the deceased with the ancient pharaohs. Broman suggests that 'they perhaps felt themselves worthy of the distinction and esteem given to those Pharaohs of old'.⁵² However, like Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Ozymandias', Naismith notes that pride's day will not last forever.⁵³

The obelisk did not just commemorate the life lived, but also guaranteed that the legacy of the deceased would live on. Richard V. Francaviglia has noted that obelisks were a 'symbol of eternity', though one that, in Naismith's mind, might come to represent the deceased's vanity.⁵⁴ The ability to purchase a permanent burial site and erect an obelisk atop a grave safeguarded the name of the dead and the location of their remains as well as gestured towards the significance of the person beneath. They were someone who should and intended to be remembered for time immemorial.

The inscription on the base of an obelisk erected for John Ely (1793-1847), one of the few remaining monuments still standing in the former Leeds General Cemetery (fig. 4.1), is a key example of the conflation between religious conceptions of death and the afterlife raised by Egyptian funerary architecture. The obelisk notes his service to East Parade Chapel in Leeds and was erected 'as a tribute of grateful affection by the members of his bible classes' (fig. 4.2). Ely's

⁵¹ Robert Naismith, 'Necropolis' in *Necropolis and Other Poems* (Glasgow: William Collins, 1847), 5-45 (pp. 11-2).

⁵² Broman, p. 63.

⁵³ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Ozymandias', *The Examiner*, 11 January 1818, p. 24.

⁵⁴ Richard V. Francaviglia, 'The Cemetery as an Evolving Cultural Landscape', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 61:3 (1971) 501-9, p. 507.

monument is characteristic of the tensions created by blending Egyptian effigies with Christian tradition. First and foremost, this was an expensive monument. The Leeds General Cemetery interred a total of 97,121 people between its opening in 1835 and the last interment in 1992.⁵⁵ Ely's grave is the most costly of the 546 persons interred in 1847 at £17 19s 6d.⁵⁶ Placing a costly obelisk atop the grave of a minister also mixes religious metaphors. The seemingly pagan monument complicates a Christian understanding of death as leaving the earthly body and awaiting a spiritual body. In her discussion of Egyptian architecture, specifically pyramids as funerary monuments, Zigarovich suggests that '[t]he English pyramid intersects both ancient symbol of immortality with the Christian belief in the afterlife'.⁵⁷ The Christian would be expected to cry 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?', but instead, Ely's flock clings to the vestige of his earthly remains, desiring to preserve the legacy of their beloved bible teacher.⁵⁸ Egyptian funerary architecture thus allows for a belief in the afterlife while also securing the deceased's legacy by standing guard over the corpse.

Preserving Ely's memory through an expensive obelisk designed to continue his legacy on earth seems to suggest that the heart is not in heaven, where the Bible encourages its believers to 'lay up for yourselves treasures', but instead is found in the legacy left atop the grave on earth.⁵⁹ Unable to know how

⁵⁵ Leeds General Cemetery Burial Index, Brotherton Library Special Collections, https://library.leeds.ac.uk/news/article/373/leeds_general_cemetery_burial_records_online [accessed 13 December 2017].

⁵⁶ *Day Book of Receipts and Payments 08 Aug 1835-07 Feb 1868*, Leeds General Cemetery Ltd. Archive, Brotherton Library Special Collections, University of Leeds, MS 421/5/1/2.

⁵⁷ Zigarovich, p. 115.

⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 15.55.

⁵⁹ Matthew 6.19-21.

legacy was preserved in heaven's vague treasures, legacy was firmly established on earth by ascribing the name of the deceased on enduring stone because its position on earth and above the person's physical remains was familiar, in contrast to the uncomfortable unknown.

Broman argues that '[c]hoosing a pyramid or other Egyptian monument must have expressed meaningful ideas and deep convictions outside of the mainstream of popular religion, culture, and funerary tradition'.⁶⁰ George Blair in his *Biographic and Descriptive Sketches of Glasgow Necropolis* (1857) notes that funerary monuments;

are neither essentially Christian nor necessarily sepulchral in their devices. Their only claim to be regarded as tombs is their position in the resting-places of the dead. Erect them in any other locality—surround them with different associations, and their object, apart from the inscriptions, would be somewhat difficult to divine.⁶¹

The pyramid was not connected to the more familiar heaven and hell which were, themselves, theologically unclear concepts in the nineteenth century.⁶² Michael Wheeler discusses conceptions of heaven in the nineteenth century and notes that there were 'two ideas of heaven—as community or as a place of worship' which 'proved difficult to reconcile' so that '[s]ome of the radical truth claims in the New Testament concerning the future life, which had always seemed either enigmatic or contradictory, now became questionable in light of the Higher

⁶⁰ Broman, p. 57.

⁶¹ Blair, p. 352.

⁶² It is worth noting that Freemasonry also associated itself with Egyptian symbolism, incorporating magical rituals and retreats into the masonic quest for immortality. See discussion on Egyptian symbolism in Freemasonry in the introduction to this thesis.

Criticism of the Bible'.⁶³ Similarly, the concept of eternal damnation was equally contested. Geoffrey Rowell claims that eschatological debates surrounding hell between 1830 and 1880 led to further destabilization of belief in fire and brimstone.⁶⁴ If, as Wheeler suggests, 'the Victorian novelist or poet who attempted to write of the "invisible world"' of the Christian afterlife faced a challenge in trying to 'speak of that which is "beyond words"', the obelisk complicates the invisible world even further.⁶⁵ Broman suggests that '[t]he appropriateness of Egyptian styles for funerary art and architecture posed religious questions and objections'.⁶⁶ Eternity, meant as a comfort to both dying and bereaved, loses some of its balm when conflated with the Egyptian afterlife. The afterlife symbolised by obelisks and pyramids is at once a safer alternative to the imprecise Christian heaven, while also simultaneously troubling in its ambiguity.

Such uncertainty was also connected to the Egyptian corpse itself. Egyptian revival funerary architecture raises recollections of a culture which painstakingly preserved their dead. This preservation destabilises the crucial balance necessary between the monument and the corpse. The only way an obelisk could attest to the memory of the deceased was for the deceased to remain a mouldering object buried underneath. The mummies in nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction challenge the legacy assured in the nineteenth-century cemetery by returning from their grave. Where Broman notes the obelisk's ability to simultaneously symbolise both death's finality and eternal life, Egyptianising

⁶³ Wheeler, p. 4.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians: A study of the nineteenth-century theological controversies concerning eternal punishment and the future life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 212.

⁶⁵ Wheeler, p. 4.

⁶⁶ Broman, p. 37.

fiction embodies this uncomfortable tension through ultra-preserved corpses who challenge death's authority.

Fictional portrayals of mummies in the period challenge the permanence of death as understood in the relationship between monument and corpse.

Whereas the corpse is a thing, an object buried beneath a monument, the mummy is both thing (corpse) and person. The mummy refuses to perform the role of the dead, remaining out of sight to allow the monument to stand in its place, and instead returns to challenge what the monument both records and represents.

Egyptian funerary architecture exploits the association between Egypt and eternity, but in its exoticised otherness, provides the opportunity for writers to speculate about uncanny return.

Denied Immortality in 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies'

Mummies are resurrected in Grant Allen's 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies' in order to affirm that death is natural and inevitable. Published under the pseudonym J. Arbuthnot Wilson in *Belgravia* in 1879, it tells the story of an unnamed narrator who discovers a party of resurrected mummies banqueting and feasting in the previously-unopened pyramid of Abu Yilla on New Year's Eve. After spending the evening in their company, the narrator decides to become a mummy himself, but he is interrupted while undergoing the necessary operation and wakes in a Cairo hospital. The story ends with the narrator attempting to ensure the veracity of his experience will live on by publishing a challenge in the *Belgravia* to open the pyramid in 2877 and witness the resurrection of the mummies.

The narrator's immediate reaction on witnessing 'the whole drama of everyday Egyptian royal life, playing itself out anew under my eyes, in its real original properties and personages' is a mix of emotions.⁶⁷ Confronted with proof of resurrection, the narrator responds with fear. 'Never as long as I live shall I forget the ecstasy of terror, astonishment, and blank dismay which seized upon me when I stepped into that seemingly enchanted chamber'.⁶⁸ His belief that death is the end of human existence on earth has been challenged and the result is an uncanny shock.

The mummies identify with their former selves in name only. Desiring to know more about the alluring Egyptian Princess Hatasou—who is present at the banquet—and distance himself from the uncanny nature of her undead character, he asks 'to know *who* you are'?⁶⁹ He appeals to her former identity which he assumes has been restored when the princess's body was resurrected. However, despite being alive, Hatasou does not return to being a person. 'What, don't you know?' she replies in the plural, "[w]hy, we're mummies".⁷⁰ Hatasou does not primarily associate with her previous human identity, but with the plural community of the undead mummies. She remains a thing. The narrator notes this distinct identification saying that '[s]he made this astounding statement with just the same quiet consciousness as if she had said, "we're French," or "we're Americans"'.⁷¹ Hatasou recognizes that returning to life once a millennium does not re-associate her with her former status as an Egyptian. Her identity now

⁶⁷ Grant Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', *Belgravia: A London Magazine*, 37.148 (1879), 93-105 (p. 96).

⁶⁸ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', pp. 95-6.

⁶⁹ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 100.

⁷⁰ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 100.

⁷¹ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 100.

transcends labels of race, nationality, or even species. She is not human or Egyptian but instead ‘mummy’. Luckhurst suggests that ‘mummies remain *things*, things that resist any stable categorisation between subject and object and which remain stubbornly resistant to theory’.⁷² Resting in the liminal space between subject and object, Hatasou and the other mummies personify the struggle to understand what it means to die and be dead.

Both Hatasou and the narrator try to define this liminal identity by using language designed to normalise the mummies’ unnatural immortality. Hatasou reveals that the purpose of the mummies’ embalming was not to return to a normal life, but to preserve their immortality. ‘Once in every thousand years we wake up for twenty-four hours, recover our flesh and blood, and banquet once more upon the mummied dishes and other good things laid by for us in the Pyramid’.⁷³ After the mummies have awakened and feasted they do not return to death but simply ‘go to sleep for another millennium’.⁷⁴ Hatasou further attempts to lessen the uncanny nature of their afterlife by specifically comparing the thousand-year wait for resurrection to the average human sleep cycle. ‘Suppose [...] you were to become a mummy’ she suggests, ‘[y]ou would then wake up, as we do, every thousand years; and after you have tried it once, you will find it just as natural to sleep for a millennium as for eight hours’.⁷⁵ Hatasou uses her comparisons to make the mummies’ way of life more familiar to the narrator. As the narrator learns more about the mummies, he attempts to assimilate his experience to the familiarity of his human life. He is unsure what to call the

⁷² Luckhurst, *The Mummy’s Curse*, p. 146, emphasis author’s.

⁷³ Allen, ‘My New Year’s Eve among the Mummies’, p. 101.

⁷⁴ Allen, ‘My New Year’s Eve among the Mummies’, p. 101.

⁷⁵ Allen, ‘My New Year’s Eve among the Mummies’, p. 102.

pyramid as it houses something that is simultaneously dead and alive, mirroring the cemetery as a home for the dead: he reconciles this tension by referring to Abu Yilla as a 'strange tomb-house'.⁷⁶ The pyramid is both home and tomb, terrifying and familiar, and the more the narrator is able to connect the experiences of the mummies to elements of his daily life the more he attempts to relate Hatasou's existence to a gross parody of human life.

He learns more about how the Egyptians underwent an 'operation' in order to be mummified and, believing this to be more akin to sleep than death, decides to have the operation done himself, similar to the narrator in 'Some Words with a Mummy'. He quickly acquiesces to being placed under the influence of chloroform and loses consciousness as an Egyptian priest begins to cut open his chest. However, the operation is interrupted and the narrator awakes in a Cairo hospital, returned to his familiar land of the living.

When the narrator attempts to violate the natural balance of active life ceasing at death, he is thwarted by an unknown force. Although he receives a commendation for his accidentally opening the previously elusive pyramid, the narrator cannot convince anyone of the validity of his claims about the ancient Egyptians. He refuses to believe that his experience was a dream or a hallucination. 'My own theory is either that the priest had not time to complete the operation, or else that the arrival of the Fitz-Simkins' scouts frightened back the mummies to their cases an hour or so too soon', he says; '[a]t any rate, there they all were, ranged around the walls undisturbed, the moment the Fellahin entered'.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 101.

⁷⁷ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', pp. 104-5.

The narrator's published account of his experiences in the *Belgravia* functions uneasily as a grave maker. '[A]s a copy of this BELGRAVIA ANNUAL will be preserved for the benefit of posterity in the British Museum', he says:

I hereby solemnly call upon Collective Humanity to try the veracity of this history by sending a deputation of archaeologists to the Pyramid of Abu Yilla on the last of December, Two thousand eight hundred and seventy-seven. If they do not then find Thothmes and Hatasou eating in the central hall exactly as I have described, I shall willingly admit that the story of my New Year's Eve among the Mummies is a vain hallucination, unworthy of credence at the hands of the scientific world.⁷⁸

He conveniently forgets that in a thousand years he will be incapable either of admitting his error or lauding his story's veracity as well as forgetting that mummies already lay in the British Museum and had presumably not awoken on previous New Year's Eves. While Luckhurst suggests that curse narratives and superstitions around the museum mummy render them 'unhoused or uncanny, arrested somewhere between object and artefact', for all the gothic superstitions that surround them, real-life museum mummies remained immobile.⁷⁹

The narrator's memory is thus entombed within the pages of an annual, a fleeting glimpse into a collection of moments from a specific year, which offers a different form of commemoration to the defined relationship between corpse and monument in the cemetery. In his work on the longevity of paper, Andrew Stauffer notes that as the Victorians 'walked the streets of London, visited Highgate cemetery, and found themselves in the British Museum and Library,

⁷⁸ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 105.

⁷⁹ Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 146.

they were negotiating simultaneous paths in an unsettled terrain of commemoration'.⁸⁰ While the Museum offers a protected space for this memory to exist, the narrative joins a collection of things which have been buried in the Museum whose legacies are endangered because they do not participate in the demarcated relationship between corpse and monument officiated by the cemetery. Whereas John Ely's obelisk commemorates a specific life and preserves his memory, the narrator's story becomes yet another object alongside inert mummies and relics of various ages.

The narrator's afterlife is irreligious both in the sense of its burial and the nature of mummification. Religion is hardly mentioned in the story and the brief mention of fish swimming in a fountain which are 'gods of great sanctity' is farcical.⁸¹ Death and reanimation are both presented as a matter of physiological processes, unconnected to religion. The mummies' unhesitating agreement to mummify the narrator shows that religious affiliation is not required for entrance into immortality and neither is morality. The narrator lies about his identity, claiming to be 'a younger brother of our reigning king', as well as readily giving up his obligations to his betrothed when he 'flung Edith, life, and duty to the dogs, and resolved at once to become a mummy'.⁸² Were a moral character a requirement for access to immortality, then Allen's narrator certainly would not qualify. But this is clearly not the case as the priest who performs the embalming 'at once acceded to my wishes' without any inquiry into the narrator's integrity.⁸³

⁸⁰ Andrew Stauffer, 'Ruins of Paper: Dickens and the Necropolitan Library', *Ravon: Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 47 (2007), para. 28.

⁸¹ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 101.

⁸² Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', pp. 99, 102.

⁸³ Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 102.

A possible explanation for why the narrator is denied immortality can be found in Allen's personal history. In an anonymous article written for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1892, Allen recounts a story from his childhood when he fell through ice while ice skating and subsequently drowned. '[O]nce in my life I really and truly died', he says, 'died and dead as it is possible for a human being to die: and [...] was afterwards resurrected'.⁸⁴ He claims that this experience is the basis for his fearless attitude towards death.

He specifically discusses the irreligious nature of death as he experienced it. 'Just before I died, however, I noticed—deliberately noticed—for I am psychological by nature—that my whole past life did *not* come up, as I had been given to understand it would, in a single flash before me', he writes:

Mere theological theorists may talk about something they call the soul not having yet left the body. I know nothing of all that [...]. For all I know to the contrary, it may have gone meanwhile to the hypothetical place of departed spirits—always unconscious [...]. So far as consciousness goes, therefore, I was then and there dead, and I never expect to be any deader.⁸⁵

Allen is confident that 'death itself, as death, it seems to me, need have absolutely no terrors for a sensible person', because of his positive experience with a death devoid of an afterlife.⁸⁶ He has been as dead as one can be and is confident that he has proven the non-existence of a religious afterlife or conscious flight of the soul to any other realm.

⁸⁴ Grant Allen, 'How It Feels To Die By One Who Has Tried It', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 September 1892, p. 1.

⁸⁵ Allen, 'How It Feels To Die', p. 1.

⁸⁶ Allen, 'How It Feels To Die', p. 1.

Allen describes his experience with death as painless and emotionally calm. 'I *know* how it feels; and, though it is momentarily uncomfortable, it isn't half as bad as breaking your arm or having a tooth drawn', he assures readers,

In fact, the actual dying itself, as dying, is quite painless—as painless as falling asleep. It is only the previous struggle, the sense of its approach, that is at all uncomfortable [....] I noticed at the time that there was a total absence of any craven shrinking—the sensation was a mere physical one of gasping and choking. Whenever I have stood within a measurable distance of death ever since, my feeling has been always the same—I have been there already, and see no cause to dread it.⁸⁷

Allen offers his own atheistic experiences in contrast to two accounts of death published in the July 1892 edition of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* which 'contains some remarkable experiences by contributors who claim to have been at least temporarily dead'.⁸⁸ Both of these contributors 'allege that they passed into a new and conscious after-death existence'.⁸⁹ Allen's atheistic account rejects a belief in an after-death experience and promotes the cessation of conscious existence after death. He commits his narrator to a fate similar to his own experience in 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies'. The mummification is interrupted in order to ensure the narrator is forced to experience death.

Luckhurst reads this denial of immortality differently, however, and suggests that 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies' is a prime example of mummy romance fiction wherein the inability to join Hatasou in immortality is

⁸⁷ Allen, 'How It Feels To Die', p. 1.

⁸⁸ Allen, 'How It Feels To Die', p. 1.

⁸⁹ Allen, 'How It Feels To Die', p. 1.

due to her status as foreign other. 'The dreamy state in which the narrator encountered the gorgeous Hatasou loosens the Reality Principle that polices desire for the exotic other and holds out the prospect of an ecstatic if deathly union', he writes, 'taboo is avoided whilst that proleptic state of delicious desire for the exotic Egyptian woman is preserved'.⁹⁰ The narrator certainly does desire to be united with Hatasou in immortality, but to relegate the narrative to the trope of mummy romance misses out its deeper implications in relation to nineteenth-century struggles to understand and define death. Christine Ferguson notes that Allen upholds the same conventions that he himself formerly criticised 'by refusing to represent, even in fiction, a fruitful and happy union between individuals from different ranks of civilization'.⁹¹ Allen polices Hatasou and the narrator's relationship, but I read this as a commitment to the necessity of death. The narrator cannot be united with Hatasou and join the mummies' immortal sleep-death, because, as Allen himself has experienced, it is not the reality of death. To indicate its unnaturalness, Allen steeps his narrative in the unsettling unfamiliarity of the uncanny. The narrator consistently attempts to assimilate the mummies' existence into the homely but, because it ultimately is *unhomely*, Allen denies his narrator entrance into an immortal life.

Allen's narrator lacks the ability to comprehend the importance of the secrets of the pyramid. He looks on at the live mummies, 'taking in all its details in a confused way, yet quite incapable of understanding or realising any part of its true import'.⁹² His primary focus is the beautiful Hatasou and attaining immortality. He recognizes the uncanny nature of the mummies' return to life

⁹⁰ Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 162.

⁹¹ Christine Ferguson, *Language, science and popular fiction in the Victorian fin-de-siècle: The Brutal Tongue* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 90.

⁹² Allen, 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies', p. 96.

which should indicate to him that their reanimation is unnatural. Instead, he and Hatasou attempt to familiarise the uncanny by connecting it to common aspects of the human experience. In the end, the narrator flings aside any remaining doubts in the form of attachment to his fellow men and attempts to embrace a mummy's death-life. He, like those contributors Allen attacks in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* who offer experiences of a conscious afterlife, must be set straight by the truth that there is nothing beyond death.

Although Allen himself was 'resurrected' through resuscitation, he makes it clear that '[u]nless extreme remedies had been applied, I would have remained stone-dead till the present moment. If nothing more had been done, my body would have undergone no further change till decomposition set in'.⁹³ Setting 'My New Year's Eve among The Mummies' in a pyramid speaks directly to this uncanny doubt that perhaps bodies do not remain inert after death and perhaps, somewhere deep in a foreign pyramid, corpses return to life. The narrator's only hope for immortality lies in a pyramid in a distant land. The mummies in the British Museum or the Louvre do not possess the same potential for resurrection because they function instead as souvenirs of imperial exploits, no longer interred inside protective monuments, but being subject to the persistent gaze of the museum visitor that confirms their status as corpse.

The mummies in the Egypt imagined for Egyptianising fiction, however, inhabit an unfamiliar territory of possibility. Perhaps, in their pyramid, their tomb house, the mummies may indeed return to life. Death may not be as permanent as the eternal obelisk in the cemetery suggests. The memory of the deceased is not secured when it does not lie permanently underneath a monument. In Allen's

⁹³ Allen, 'How It Feels To Die', p. 1.

story, the narrator's memory is buried in the British Museum alongside mummies who, separated from their monuments, are merely collected things. In seeking eternal life as a mummy, the narrator misses out on the security of the memorial relationship effected in the cemetery.

Restoring the Finality of Death in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*

Bram Stoker's mummy in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* also attests to the necessity of the corpse remaining dead in order to memorialise the deceased. Whereas Allen accomplishes this by denying his narrator eternal life and burying his memory in *Belgravia*, Stoker focuses on the importance of the corpse itself. There is a persistent confusion in the novel between subject and object in relation to the mummy of Queen Tera, whose corpse resists definition and returns to life in order to restore her legacy.

The Jewel of Seven Stars begins with the narrator, Malcolm Ross, a respected barrister, being summoned to the home of a woman he has recently met—and fallen in love with—Miss Margaret Trelawny. Upon arriving at her home, he learns that an unknown assailant has attacked Margaret's estranged father, Abel Trelawny, who lies unconscious upstairs. As the novel progresses and Trelawny regains consciousness, he reveals the disconcerting tale of Queen Tera, whose mummy, severed hand, and mummified feline companion, they subsequently realise, are all somehow simultaneously responsible for Trelawny's attack. The company recreate the conditions of Tera's tomb in an attempt to continue the resurrection Queen Tera had begun before her death, with tragic results.

The confusion in the novel between corpse and person recall the tensions raised in the nineteenth-century cemetery. The characters are unsure how to refer to Trelawney's attacker, confused between naming it as a thing or a person. They vacillate between the two terms and their meanings throughout the opening of the novel. During the early stages of the investigation into the attack on Mr.

Trelawny, Ross admits the vague identity of the attacker, referring to them as '[s]ome one, or some thing'.⁹⁴ But his companions are uncomfortable with this tension. 'Let us make it "some one," Mr Ross!' exclaims Sergeant Daw,

Such things are all very well in books where your amateur detectives, who know everything before it's done, can fit them into theories; but in Scotland Yard, where the men aren't all idiots either, we generally find that when crime is done, or attempted, it's people, not things, that are at the bottom of it.⁹⁵

Sergeant Daw cannot reconcile himself to the idea of an object as the culprit behind a vicious crime. He insists upon naming it as a person, a someone, in order to connect the crime with those which he has previously encountered. People can be understood: they have motives. The Sergeant finds comfort in connecting the attack on Mr. Trelawny to the previous cases of crime dealt with by Scotland Yard.

Ross appears to accept this logic as he uses the term 'someone' in his next enquiry. However, he is contradicted once again when Doctor Winchester takes the opposite approach in his response. When asked if he suspects anyone, Winchester responds with an astounded 'Suspect any one? Any thing, you mean. I

⁹⁴ Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (New York: W.R. Caldwell and Co., 1904), p. 79.

⁹⁵ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 79.

certainly suspect that there is some influence; but at present my suspicion is held within such limit'.⁹⁶ The reactions of Sergeant Daw and Doctor Winchester reveal the extent of the tension between subject and object. Both men are in the profession of interpreting people. The sergeant's job is to determine the motives behind a crime and judge the nature of people he comes across in his investigations. Conversely, the doctor is intimately acquainted with a person's physiology, what comprises the human body and its intricate mechanisms. Both are unable to determine the character of the attacker. Sergeant Daw finds comfort in his understanding of human motivation and therefore reads the personality behind the attack, thus deeming the attacker as 'some one'. Doctor Winchester cannot reconcile the facts before him with his definition of human biology and therefore refers to the attacker as a 'thing' until further evidence can be supplied.

The language shifts once Mr. Trelawny regains consciousness and recounts his story of excavating Tera's tomb. Instead of someone or something, the characters now vacillate between 'Queen Tera' and 'the mummy'. This vacillation only changes when they are in the presence of Queen Tera's body. To a certain extent, the Sergeant is correct in his assumption that personal motives are at work, but the revelation of the figure behind the attack does not fit into the cut and dry cases of Scotland Yard's repertoire and neither does the attacker fit neatly into Doctor Winchester's categorisation of 'thing'. When it is revealed that Queen Tera is the active force behind the novel's events, she is shown to be both thing and person. Her mummy challenges categorization as a corpse through its preservation.

⁹⁶ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 89.

Margaret Trelawny is the first to acknowledge the Queen's lingering personhood and identifies her specifically by gender. 'Father, you are not going to unswathe her! All you men...! And in the glare of light!' She protests:

'Just think, Father, a woman! All alone! In such a way! In such a place!

Oh! It's cruel, cruel!' She was manifestly much overcome. Her cheeks were flaming red, and her eyes were full of indignant tears.⁹⁷

Margaret objects to unwrapping Tera's mummy and appeals to the indignity and indecency of baring the naked form of a woman. Her father corrects her, reminding her that it is '[n]ot a woman dear; a mummy'.⁹⁸ Once again, solace is found in defining the Queen as an object not a person. In this case, objectifying the remains allows the men to negate the necrophiliac nature of their unswathing. If Tera is viewed as a mummy, a corpse, and an object, then unveiling her naked corpse is not wrong or indecent.

Margaret persists in asserting Tera's femininity in order to provoke her male companions into feeling shame at their actions. She argues that '[s]ex is not a matter of years! A woman is a woman, if she had been dead five thousand centuries!'⁹⁹ Her companions persist, and, as the layers of wrapping are stripped away, Ross is forced to acknowledge the humanity before him. 'Then, and then only, did the full horror of the whole thing burst upon me [...] through all, showed that unhidable human figure, which seems to look more horrible when partially concealed than at any other time'.¹⁰⁰ Tera's humanity is 'unhidable' and, after the removal of the outer wrappings but before the naked form is before him, Ross connects with the horror of the men's actions. Her unnaturally preserved

⁹⁷ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 292.

⁹⁸ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 293.

⁹⁹ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 293.

¹⁰⁰ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 295.

form is no corpse, but instead a body as recognizable as it was when it was buried.

Building on an analysis of the work of M.R. James, Luckhurst connects Ross's uncanny horror to the dangerous subject/object discontinuity connected to mummies. 'The comfort and security of stuff, the binding of identity through the accumulation of objects', he writes,

comes with a glimmer of a superstitious thought that these things might slip from commodity fetishes back into roles as genuine magical fetishes, gaining a secondary agency and escaping their inanimate fixity to fling themselves furiously in the faces of their complacent owners.¹⁰¹

The tension, for Luckhurst, lies in the object's ability to become a subject once again and wreak havoc on the living. But what is more uncanny, for Ross, is not so much the potential for Tera to return to life—though that is the aim of the novel's great experiment—as it is the unfamiliarity of the perfectly preserved form.

When Tera's body is fully exposed, the vitality of her corpse evokes in Ross an abject sexual desire. 'I felt a rush of shame sweep over me. It was not right that we should be there, gazing with irreverent eyes on such unclad beauty: it was indecent; it was almost sacrilegious!' Ross admits, '[a]nd yet the white wonder of that beautiful form was something to dream of. It was not like death at all [...]. There was none of the wrinkled toughness which seems to be a leading characteristic of most mummies'.¹⁰² Tera's corpse is not a familiar, shrivelled, unidentifiable object, but instead a 'white wonder'. Ross' exclamations grow

¹⁰¹ Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 175.

¹⁰² Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 299.

increasingly strong, starting with indecency and escalating to sacrilege. He quickly and succinctly attempts to condemn the pleasure he feels at seeing Tera's exposed body appealing to moral and religious codes of conduct, but is still drawn to voyeuristic contemplation.

Ross attempts to justify his necrophilia by returning the discussion to a scientific contemplation of death. He relates her corpse first to an understanding of death as a whole before localising it as uncharacteristic of a typical mummy form. He grants himself permission to look at a naked woman because he is attempting to understand her relationship to death. She is not a typical corpse, but neither will Ross admit that she is close enough to a woman to earn the respect due to the live female form. This is despite the fact that, once her body is unveiled, he refers to her as a 'woman' and 'could not think of her as a mummy or a corpse'.¹⁰³

Tera's body resists the transition from person to object brought about through burial. The only evidence of decay on Tera's body is near her severed limb. Her perfectly white body 'like ivory, new ivory' is marred by a 'shattered, blood-stained wrist, and missing hand' which 'had lain bare to exposure'.¹⁰⁴ Since decomposition was a means of defining death in the nineteenth century, the unnatural vitality of Tera's corpse unsettles the company.¹⁰⁵ Her body is an emblem of life when it should be a darkened, desiccated object. Ross senses that his awe of her form is as unnatural as her body.

¹⁰³ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 300.

¹⁰⁴ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 299.

¹⁰⁵ For further reading on the role of decomposition in declaring death, see Laqueur, p. 308.

Tera's resemblance to Margaret heightens Ross's attraction. Abel Trelawny 'quite broke down' because, he exclaims, 'it looks as if you were dead, my child!'¹⁰⁶ Ross himself is 'amazed at the likeness to Margaret'.¹⁰⁷ Ross is attracted to Tera's body because it is both familiar in its likeness to his lover and because it is decidedly unfamiliar in death. It is an exotic other, an abject object, a corpse which should be hidden away beneath a monument but is instead subjected to a decidedly voyeuristic gaze.

The taboo of gazing upon Tera's body is twofold. Conventionally, Ross should not be able to look upon the naked form of his lover (until they are married, at least), but secondly, he is gazing upon the abject body of the deceased. The corpse, out of necessity, was buried and hidden. The fact that he can view a dead body which so closely resembles his lover makes Tera's form irresistibly appealing, but also deeply unsettling.¹⁰⁸

Tera's non-corpse raises questions about the nature of death itself. The male company justify their actions by claiming that the purpose of their experiment to resurrect Queen Tera—which they refer to as the 'Great Experiment'—extends beyond science and mere human curiosity. Instead, they theorise that the Great Experiment will resolve underlying doubts surrounding death. 'The whole possibility of the Great Experiment to which we were now pledged was based on the reality of the existence of the Old Forces which seemed to be coming into contact with the New Civilization'. Ross says,

¹⁰⁶ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 300.

¹⁰⁷ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 300.

¹⁰⁸ For further reading on the erotic desire surrounding mummies, see Bradley Deane 'Mummy Fiction and the Occupation of Egypt: Imperial Striptease', *English Literature in Transition*, 51.4 (2008), 381-410.

If there were truth at all in the belief of Ancient Egypt then their gods had real existence, real power, real force. Godhead is not a quality subject to the ills of mortals: as in its essence it is creative and recreative, it cannot die.¹⁰⁹

The Great Experiment encompasses the uneasy tension of the company's hopes, fears, and doubts. Ross's explanation gestures towards a hesitant belief. He desires to believe in the possibility of understanding the godhead's immortality but cloaks this desire with the reluctant and tentative 'if'. He places all the burden of proof on the Experiment to reveal the validity of ancient Egypt's beliefs. 'Of course,' he remarks, 'if the Old Gods had lost their power, or if they never had any, the Experiment could not succeed'.¹¹⁰ Ross expresses a tentative belief that perhaps the Old Gods previously had power but have since lost it, but, again, veils his belief with stoic scepticism. He makes it clear that he does not believe they ever had any power, although the reader is meant to understand that the hopes of the company are all pinned on being proved wrong.

It is clear from the text that Tera's resurrection would illuminate the nature of death and whether or not the ancient Egyptians experienced death as the nineteenth century understood it. Margaret senses that Tera's death differs from the norm, particularly the lasting and final death of her mother just after her birth. 'It could not be real death, if she is to rise out of it!' she exclaims; '[y]ou have led me to believe that she will come alive when the Coffin is opened!'¹¹¹ Whatever Tera's corpse represents, it is not 'real death' in Margaret's eyes, which makes her unwrapping all the more sinister.

¹⁰⁹ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 232.

¹¹⁰ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 232.

¹¹¹ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 293.

Abel Trelawny too seems to believe that Tera's death is not final, but a key to unlocking the definition of what it means to be a corpse. He hopes to unveil the mysteries of the universe in awakening Queen Tera. 'Oh what possibilities are there in the coming of such a being into our midst!' he exclaims:

One whose experience began before the concrete teaching of our Bible
[....] who can link together the Old and the New, Earth and Heaven, and
yield to the known worlds of thought and physical existence the mystery
of the Unknown—of the Old World in its youth and of Worlds beyond our
ken!¹¹²

This 'mystery of the Unknown' is given a similar character to Ross's conception of death. While Bradley Deane suggests that '[t]he unspecified "possibilities" about which Trelawny dreams are, like his own Egyptological research, linked in the novel to imperial power', I read Trelawny's enthusiasm less as a desire to master occult power, like Sosra and Bellingham in Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, and more as a means to understand what it means to die.¹¹³ He specifically yearns to comprehend how death can influence the living, how it can yield knowledge, not just of other worlds but also of the relationship between the living and the dead in the afterlife: more broadly, he desires to know what it means to a person, a subject, in a physical sense.

There were two published versions of *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, Stoker's original 1903 version and an abridged version published in 1912. The abridged version, Kate Hebblethwaite notes, eliminates this entire discussion of gods and the possibility of resurrection by removing the chapter 'Powers—Old and

¹¹² Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 269.

¹¹³ Deane, p. 405.

New'.¹¹⁴ This chapter suggests that the power of the ancient gods of Egypt which underlies the resuscitating power of Tera's resurrection stems from a religion which combined divine power and scientific exploration. 'May it not have been possible that they learned to store light, just as we have learned to store electricity?' he asks, continuing with '[t]his new metal radium—or rather this old metal of which our knowledge is new—may have been known to the ancients. Indeed it may have been used thousands of years ago in greater degree than seems possible today'.¹¹⁵ Ross finds comfort in Trelawny's cohesion of the scientific and religious. 'These scientific, or quasi-scientific discussions soothed me. They took my mind from brooding on the mysteries of the occult, by attracting it to the wonders of nature'.¹¹⁶ The removal of this chapter denies the possibility of a quasi-scientific explanation for resurrection, instead leaving Tera's resurrection, or lack thereof, an unexplained phenomenon.

In both versions of the novel, however, the physicality of Tera's death illustrates the fear surrounding post-mortem identity and memory in the startling image of her severed hand. Towards the novel's close the culprit behind the attack on Abel Trelawny, as well as the murderer behind numerous deaths throughout history, is revealed to be the severed hand of Queen Tera. This hand takes vengeance on anyone who attempts to disturb Tera's remains. The hand claws its way into the world of the living and forcefully asserts Queen Tera's identity. However, it is unclear whether the hand acts as under its own agency or if its violence is a conscious production of Queen Tera's will. The latter would mean that Tera is indeed not dead, but very much alive, if life is defined by the ability to

¹¹⁴ Kate Hebblethwaite, 'Introduction', in Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp. xi-xliii (p. xxvii).

¹¹⁵ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 236.

¹¹⁶ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 238.

interact with or affect the lives of the living in a physical, purposeful sense. ‘I have come to the conclusion’, Trelawny asserts, ‘that Queen Tera expected to effect her own resurrection’.¹¹⁷ The ability to bring about her own reanimation implies that Tera maintains a level of consciousness and corporeality in death that allows her to put the physical objects necessary for resurrection in place.

Trelawny also believes that Tera’s identity was split into various ‘functions’, which served different purposes for the physical body. Stoker bases these functions on E. A. Wallis Budge’s translation of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (1895). ‘First there is the “Ka,” or “Double,” which, as Doctor Budge explains, may be defined as “an abstract individuality of personality” which was imbued with all the characteristic attributes of the individual it represented, and possessed an absolutely independent existence’, Trelawney relates:

Then there was the ‘Ba,’ or ‘soul,’ which dwelt in the ‘Ka,’ and had the power of becoming corporal or incorporeal at will [...]. Again, there was the ‘Khu,’ the ‘spiritual intelligence,’ [...] the ‘Sekhem,’ or ‘power’ of a man, his strength or vital force personified. These with the ‘Khaibit,” or ‘shadow,’ the ‘Ren,’ or ‘name,’ the ‘Khat,’ or ‘physical body,’ and ‘Ab,’ the ‘heart,’ in which life was seated, went to the full making up a man. Thus you will see, that if this division of functions, spiritual and bodily, ethereal and corporeal, ideal and actual, be accepted as exact, there are all the possibilities and capabilities of corporeal transference, guided always by an unimprisonable will or intelligence.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 220.

¹¹⁸ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 219-20.

Categorising each aspect of human existence reveals how Tera's consciousness—her 'unimpressible will or intelligence'—could survive the death of the 'khat' and work independently. Trelawny, instead of using the terminology he has just painstakingly explained, refers to this intelligence in the common currency of spiritualist terms as Queen Tera's 'astral body' and locates the favoured physical receptacle of the astral body in her severed hand. Tera's hand acts on her behalf while the rest of her body remains inert, strangling anyone who attempts to move her body and endanger her chances of resurrection.

Tera's severed hand violates the role of the corpse in the cemetery. Corpses—all parts of them—were intended to remain in the grave, an inanimate representation of a formerly animate personality. Aviva Briefel notes the hand's refusal to be categorised as an 'inanimate, exchangeable thing'.¹¹⁹ She suggests that, when threatened, the hand 'engages in a warped form of craftsmanship that conflates creation with destruction' by which 'the hand's retaliation transforms its victims into versions of itself: they become surfaces that recreate its multi-digit image or its injured state'.¹²⁰ Tera's hand is horrific because it unnaturally inhabits spaces where creation reigns, among the living, and destruction abounds, in the tomb. The hand can literally create death through its violence.

The need for Tera to assert her identity comes from the fact that she was not mourned and her legacy nearly eradicated. Hebblethwaite explores the balance between Egyptian religion and Christian allusion in the novel, suggesting that 'Tera's resurrection mirrors both that of the Egyptian God Osiris and that of Christ; the idea that the removal of a person's name can bring about the

¹¹⁹ Aviva Briefel, 'Hands of Beauty, Hands of Horror: Fear and Egyptian Art at the Fin de Siècle', *Victorian Studies*, 50.2 (2008), pp. 263-71 (p. 269).

¹²⁰ Briefel, p. 269.

destruction of their eternal soul also has a biblical source' in Revelation 20.15.¹²¹ The priests who buried Tera attempted to erase her name from history and eradicate her identity in this world and the afterlife. Because she was a powerful sorceress well versed in 'black magic, not the magic of the temples, which [...] was of the harmless or "white" order', they seek to strip her of a legacy as punishment for transgressing magical moral boundaries.¹²² The priests recognize that names are powerful in death. By attempting to erase Tera from Egypt's historical records, it will be as if she never existed. Hebblethwaite notes the similarities between Tera and Queen Hatshepsut, whose tomb was discovered one year prior to the publication of the novel and who also had her name erased from historical monuments.¹²³

The violence with which Tera reasserts her identity betrays the root the nineteenth-century obsession with remembrance; the fear of being forgotten. Both the deceased and the bereaved relied on a carved name on a grave marker to assume the identity of the deceased. In a way, the granite obelisk or the carved urn atop a grave becomes the Victorians' Ka, their double, which serves to tell their story while they themselves lie beneath, unable to contribute further to their story. The idea of a gravestone being erased could represent the erasure of an entire family as multiple family members were often buried beneath the same monument. Names are vital for preserving memory and legacy. Tera must literally claw her way back into history in order to ensure her name survives.

Although they believe that erasing Tera's name will stop her infamy and mystical power from spreading, the priests instead imbue her with even more

¹²¹ Hebblethwaite, p. xxxi.

¹²² Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 161.

¹²³ Hebblethwaite, pp. xxii-xxiii.

power as a nameless myth. The fellaheen who live near Tera's tomb refer to it as the burial place of a 'great Sorcerer [...] a King or a Queen'.¹²⁴ Although they seem to know what her name is, '[t]hey could not give the name, persisting to the last that there was no name; and that any one who should name it would waste away in life so that at death nothing would remain of him to be raised again in the Other World'.¹²⁵ Because she is unknown, Tera is feared. Since they cannot ascribe facts and solid reality by speaking her name, the fellaheen substitute reality for fear and myth, ascribing power to Tera that she does not actually possess because there is a void of information. While this works in Tera's favour, and protects her body from violation from local Egyptians, it also illustrates the ability for legacy to be redefined after death. Without information from gravestones that definitively assert name, birth and death date, and oftentimes occupation and personality traits through descriptive epitaphs, the deceased's memory is left to the beholder to invent.

Tera's identity asserts itself by possessing an object, turning something familiar into something horrifically unfamiliar. Stoker's novel is a macabre inversion of Theophile Gautier's 'The Mummy's Foot' (1840), a story in which the narrator falls in love with a mummy's foot after buying it from an antiques dealer. Whereas Gautier's narrator reunites the foot with the mummy and asks for her hand in marriage, which is ultimately denied, the reunion of Tera's hand with her body begets a more sinister response.

Tera's hand is laid upon her body and the Great Experiment begun. Seven ornate lamps are arranged on seven points which mimic the conditions of Tera's

¹²⁴ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 138.

¹²⁵ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 139.

original tomb and a magic coffer is placed nearby. After the lamps are lit, the coffer lifts, emitting a great light and a green vapor which begin to move towards the sarcophagus. As the body in the sarcophagus begins to glow, Ross notes that ‘the forces of Life and Death were struggling for the mastery’, until the company are blinded by a flash of great white light.¹²⁶

After the flash, Ross attempts to carry Margaret out of the cave wherein the experiment takes place, but he mistakenly carries Tera out instead. When he looks back to the body after lighting a match, all that remains on the bed is ‘Queen Tera’s bridal robe, and surrounding it the girdle of wondrous gems. Where the heart had been lay the Jewel of Seven Stars’.¹²⁷ He returns to the cave to find Margaret dead on the ground. The novel ends a few sentences later in what Deane asserts ‘may be the most stunningly abrupt and inconclusive ending in Victorian fiction’.¹²⁸ Tera is resurrected and all of the characters in the novel, apart from Ross, lie dead on the floor of the tomb. ‘There, in that lonely house, far away from aid of man, naught could avail’, Ross explains; ‘[i]t was merciful that I was spared the pain of hoping’.¹²⁹

Tera’s resurrection cannot be replicated for Ross’s friends, as it is tied to an unexplainable occult science. The open-ended finale denies the reader a familiar and expected resolution to the novel as well as denying death the ability to provide an ending to Tera’s life. Tera reverses the transition from body to corpse, making it impossible for her to be remembered. She has broken the tenuous balance between corpse and monument. Tera’s new life lacks meaning

¹²⁶ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 307.

¹²⁷ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 310.

¹²⁸ Deane, p. 404.

¹²⁹ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1904), p. 311.

because it continues without an end in sight. As Luckhurst suggests, she moves ‘from lifeless artefact to renewed spirit’.¹³⁰ Her pyramid lies empty, useless as a grave marker because its name has been erased and her corpse does not lie within. The Great Experiment has not revealed the undiscovered possibilities Trelawny expected and, instead of uniting the old world and the new, only serves to harm the new. Hebblethwaite suggests that Tera is ‘[n]either reincarnated nor resurrected,’ but has instead ‘quite literally become a “new woman” through transmutation’.¹³¹ Hebblethwaite’s theory is that the possession of Margaret’s soul allows Tera to return to life.

This theory is problematic, however, because it contradicts Trelawny’s painstaking explanation of Egyptian religion which he illuminates earlier in the novel. The entire novel is predicated on the idea that Tera’s ‘Ba’ or ‘soul’, which can become ‘corporeal or incorporeal at will’ is acting on her behalf. Even if Margaret were Tera’s ‘Ka’ or ‘double’, then Tera would simply continue using Margaret’s body and would not require her original one. Tera never needed a soul to inhabit: hers had never died. What seems more likely is that Tera somehow briefly possesses Margaret’s ‘Ab’ or ‘heart’, until she can reunite her own heart with her body. Tera’s own heart is symbolised by the jewel of seven stars, from which the novel derives its name.

Through the novel’s vague, unsettling ending, Stoker maintains the possibility that death is not the end. However, a return to life comes at a gruesome price and leaves more questions than answers. Tera is resurrected, but at the cost of Ross’s companions and intended bride. Her future is unknown: she is left to

¹³⁰ Luckhurst, *The Mummy’s Curse*, p. 174.

¹³¹ Hebblethwaite, p. xxx.

wander the earth possessing dark occult power. There is no indication what she may or may not do with her newly-restored body. All that is left behind is a symbol of ancient superstition, which, due to the suspicious absence of the Queen's body, appears to have worked. The jewel is left in the cave to encourage the doubt surrounding the permanence of death and possibility that the beliefs of Freud's primitive forefathers may in fact have merit.

Stoker's most famous novel, *Dracula*, similarly destabilises the permanence of the corpse lying under a monument. Like Tera, Lucy Westenra's identity is in flux after she becomes an undead vampire. It is only through death that familiarity and identity is restored. 'There in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had so dreaded and grown to hate but Lucy as we had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity'.¹³² It is clear in *Dracula* that death is natural and desirable while eternal life is a curse.

The concept of death as something desirable is inverted in *The Jewel of Seven Stars* with horrific consequences. Characters are seduced by a desire to understand Tera's continued existence expressed in her perfectly-preserved corpse and astral body. They engage in the Great Experiment to attempt to learn her secrets and redefine death. This experimentation is the reason for their deaths at the novel's close. Ross, as narrator and storyteller, is allowed to live so he can record the legacies of the deceased as a warning. For the nineteenth century, death is the end and any attempt to return to consciousness and re-enter one's narrative must be stopped. Tera's return to life is not a scientific breakthrough or a discovery that will alter the understanding of death: it is a curse. Her power is

¹³² Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 202.

unleashed on the world and the reader is left with no resolution and no meaning because death has been denied.

Stoker's readers struggled to comprehend the novel's abrupt and mysterious ending. W. T. Stead's *Review of Reviews* offered Stoker a tentative compliment on the novel's juxtaposition of ancient and modern but this combination is held up to scrutiny as the novel is recommended for '[t]hose who like the weird and the uncanny' and who wish to 'possibly addle their brains over this mystifying medley of ancient Egypt and the twentieth century of the Christian era'.¹³³ *The New York Times* admitted that '[i]t would be impossible to say just one what really does think of Mr. Bram Stoker's "The Jewel of Seven Stars"', while *The Sketch* noted how '[i]t begins with a mystery and ends with an even greater mystery'.¹³⁴ All three reviews emphasise the unresolved nature of Tera's vague and undeveloped resurrection which, in its uncanniness, renders it difficult to develop a viewpoint on the novel. The lack of an ending unsettles readers and they do not know how to respond except to call the novel 'weird', 'uncanny', and 'mystifying'. Although Stoker's novel is recognized as riveting and inventive, these positive characteristics are subsumed under an inherent discomfort. Hebblethwaite notes how '*The Jewel of Seven Stars* [...] stands alone in the degree to which its ending is obfuscated' in contrast to Stoker's other novels where 'the ending is always clear-cut'.¹³⁵

A revised edition of the novel with a different ending was published in 1912. Hebblethwaite suggests that '[w]hether or not Stoker himself penned this

¹³³ 'Some Novels of the Season', *Review of Reviews*, 28 (December 1903), p. 638.

¹³⁴ 'An Egyptian Mystery: The Jewel of Seven Stars', *New York Times*, 5 March 1904, p. BR157; 'The Jewel of Seven Stars', *The Sketch*, 44.564 (18 November 1903), p. 167.

¹³⁵ Hebblethwaite, p. xiii.

later revision remains unclear, however, as by 1912 he was dangerously ill'.¹³⁶

The new ending inverts the original: everyone lives happily ever after apart from Queen Tera, who presumably dies. All that remains after the Great Experiment: 'was a sort of black film of greasy soot [...]. The white sheet still lay over part of it [the couch]; but it had been thrown back, as might be when one is stepping out of bed. But there was no sign of Queen Tera!'¹³⁷

No one sees Tera die, as the Great Experiment results in a burst of light which conveniently blinds everyone so no one is able to witness Tera's resurrection/disintegration. She is presumed dead because what is left is charred remains, evidence that a body was destroyed in a loose form of cremation. The characters are thus confident that Tera is gone and that they are now safe. Tera's identity transitions from active story to passive legacy only when her body is allowed to disintegrate. Because there is no threat of interference from her active astral body, Margaret and Ross 'often think of the great Queen' and 'talk of her freely' in their married bliss.¹³⁸ They are free to remember her and close her narrative because she is well and truly dead with no shred of a body left to reanimate. The abridged ending reasserts the familiarity of death and the comfort to be found in dying. 'Do not grieve for her! Who knows, but she may have found the joy she sought?' Margaret reassures her husband:

Love and patience are all that make for happiness in this world; or in the world of the past or of the future; of the living or the dead. She dreamed her dream; and that is all that any of us can ask!¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Hebblethwaite, p. xiv.

¹³⁷ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1912), p. 249.

¹³⁸ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1912), p. 250.

¹³⁹ Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, (1912), p. 250.

Tera is now referred to in the past tense and assigned to the world of the dead where it is hoped she found happiness. Margaret and Ross speak of her often, with a fondness that death, time, and distance provide. They are able to forget the fact that Tera nearly killed Margaret's father and possessed Margaret herself for portions of the novel. Tera's death lends a finality to her story which frees the new Mr. and Mrs. Ross to look back on her character with charity rather than fear because Tera no longer represents a threat to them in the realm of the living.

The safety and familiarity brought through Tera's death in the abridged ending became the standard ending for subsequent editions of *The Jewel of Seven Stars*.¹⁴⁰ The abridged ending restores familiarity by reinstating death as final and resolute. Tera is not allowed to disappear into the world of the living: her attempts to re-enter the narrative of her life fail and she is reduced to ash, consigned to memory. The British characters then continue about their lives and the novel ends with the traditional marriage plot. Tera is merely a memory for the happy couple to reminisce over. Normality has been restored through the comforting familiarity of death as the end of life's narrative.

The Empty Pyramid

Whether or not Stoker himself wrote the abridged ending, the open-endedness of Tera's death was too unsettling for the public. Tera's return to life connected to the wider anxieties surrounding what it meant for to die. Both Allen's and Stoker's texts suggest that bodies could return to life, destabilising the relationship between corpse and monument brought about through nineteenth-century

¹⁴⁰ Hebblethwaite's 2008 edited version reintroduces Stoker's original ending.

cemetery reform. Although there is an underlying wonder at the possibility of resurrection, when that imagined possibility is followed through, the result is horrific. When deceased loved ones returned to homes after being prematurely buried, the immediate response of the family was horror, disbelief, and an instantaneous assumption of supernatural manifestations.

Egyptianising fiction throughout the nineteenth century portrays Egypt as a land of corpses resting uneasily under their funerary monuments. The pyramid, as a funeral monument, promises the persistence of memory for the deceased, a permanence which is undermined by authors of Egyptianising fiction who resurrect the mummy's corpse. While Loudon's and Poe's mummies offer light-hearted satire on the role of religion in the early nineteenth century, by the turn of the century, the mummy had come to signify horror, an abject object out of its natural space.

Allen's jocular tale negates the possibility of resurrection by consigning the narrator's ridiculous story itself to the category of things, safely stored within a museum, as the mummies remain within their pyramid. Stoker, however, unleashes the undead corpse from its monument, rendering the story horrific. Bodies are meant to remain unseen objects in a grave, while monuments above denote identity and promote mourning and contemplation of the past life beneath. Even so, as an 1877 woodcutting of Highgate Cemetery shows (fig. 4.4), the obelisk looms over and eclipses the security of the grave, casting a shadow of doubt on the permanence of the corpse beneath. While obelisks and sarcophagi gestured towards a culture who believed a person could take up the mantle of their physical body, perfectly preserved, and live again in the afterlife, there is an innate understanding that mummies are meant to remain in their pyramids or inert

in a museum case. The mummy in the pages Egyptianising fiction thus serves as an unsettling reminder of the equivocal nature of the grave, death, and the afterlife.

Conclusion: Tracing the Impact of Nineteenth-Century Egyptianising Fiction

In *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (2015), Thomas Laqueur suggest that the fascination with the dead throughout history is ‘a history of how they dwell in us—individually and communally’. He further suggests that,

[i]t is a history of how we imagine them to be, how they give meaning to our lives, how they structure public spaces, politics, and time. It is a history of the imagination, a history of how we invest the dead [...] with meaning.¹

The nineteenth century did not produce revolutionary ways of commemorating and memorialising their dead. However, what was distinctive about the Egyptianising fiction of the nineteenth century was the use of ancient Egypt to explore religious ideas of death and afterlife. Such authors used the ancient Egyptian dead to give meaning to the dead in their own culture and time and, in so doing, created a specific image of ancient Egypt which redefined it as a land of mystery and magic, a place where the dead could rise again.

Throughout the nineteenth century, ancient Egypt was portrayed as a land possessing ancient secrets about eternity. Authors of nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction furthered the connection between religion and ancient Egypt by resurrecting the Egyptian dead and casting them as authorities on death and the afterlife. The genre of Egyptianising fiction maintains its mystery by refusing to relinquish the mystical knowledge it supposedly possesses. While early Egyptianising fiction suggests that such secrets are best left unexplained, later

¹ Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 17.

Egyptianising fiction often accounts for this denial of knowledge by casting ancient Egypt as a dark occult force.

Ultimately, however, I have shown how the supposed possession of mystical ancient Egyptian secrets is itself the reason the mummies are silenced and the quest for knowledge is denied. The projection of mystical knowledge onto ancient Egypt is just that: a projection. Such authors casted their own doubts and anxieties onto ancient Egypt so that they could explore those doubts from a comfortable distance. Their imagined ancient Egypt offered a place from which authors could safely contemplate death, dying, and afterlife. The sensationalism surrounding ancient Egypt in the nineteenth century and the presence of the foreign dead in homes and museums presented the ideal subjects for these texts.

The authors discussed in this thesis pioneered a genre which still thrives today. From twentieth-century Egyptianising fiction to current cinematic blockbusters, Egypt's role as a powerful Other concealing ancient secrets is continually reprised. As Jeb J. Card has noted in the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft, 'Egypt is not the point'.² Rather, 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'.³ Card's summation of Lovecraft's use of ancient Egypt in the early twentieth century could just as easily be applied to works by Corelli and Conan Doyle in the nineteenth. By creating a body of texts which associated ancient Egypt with esoteric wisdom or occult power and silencing the undead before they can reveal their knowledge, nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction created a stereotype of ancient Egypt as a land of ancient curses and

² Jeb J. Card. "'Older than brooding Egypt or the contemplative Sphinx": Egypt and the Mythic Past in Alternative Egyptology and the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft', *Journal of History and Cultures*, 10 (2019), 22-44, p. 38.

³ Card, p. 38.

superstition. Jasmine Day argues that ancient Egypt is still being manipulated to suit the needs of popular culture and that '[t]ogether, people negotiate standard meanings for particular motifs and establish the manner of their use in particular contexts'.⁴ One need look no further than the example of the rampant sensationalism surrounding and readiness to believe in the curse of the tomb of Tutankhamun, opened in 1922 by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon, for proof that the public were primed to believe in arcane power of undead Egyptians. This is an idea Roger Luckhurst traces at length in *The Mummy's Curse*.⁵ While Day suggests that popular images of ancient Egypt in contemporary culture continually manipulate history to serve the purposes of entertainment and notes the origins of the mummy's curse in nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction, I argue that these are the same myths appearing again and again.

The ancient Egypt created by authors in the nineteenth century is still the ancient Egypt presented in novels and cinemas today. A study of the history of ancient Egypt must incorporate these myths because it is important to understand how the dissemination of history changes and morphs through various cultural interactions. In so doing, it becomes clear that the origins of the horrific, undead mummies summoned from their pyramids to terrorise helpless maidens on the silver screen are not rooted in any actual ancient Egyptian occultism, but in the literature of the nineteenth century.

The earliest talking mummy film, Universal Picture's *The Mummy* (1932), starring Boris Karloff, borrows tropes from 'Lot No. 249', in that both mummies

⁴ Jasmine Day, *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking World* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

⁵ Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

are revived using an ancient scroll.⁶ There had been numerous silent films prior to the 1932 *Mummy* which used Egyptian themes including the 1917 silent film *Cleopatra*. This film starring Theda Bara was based on Rider Haggard's novel, but, unfortunately, the original film has been lost. Universal's film, however, has lived on much like the mummy it portrays. It was remade in 1999 starring Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz and this remake spawned a movie franchise which included two sequels: *The Mummy Returns* (2001) and *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008), a further 2017 remake starring Tom Cruise, as well as spinoff films involving a character from *The Mummy Returns* known as the Scorpion King. The plot of Stoker's *Jewel of Seven Stars* has also been loosely translated into films in *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb* (1971), which maintains the characters of Margaret and Tera, as well as *The Awakening* (1980), which features a Margaret and a Queen Kara, and *Bram Stoker's Legend of the Mummy* (1998), which features four of the original named characters. There was another adaptation, *The Tomb* (1986), but its connection to Stoker's original text is maintained solely through a plot which sees an Egyptian Queen reanimated in order to reclaim artefacts stolen from her tomb and does not incorporate any of Stoker's original characters.

Nineteenth-century representations of ancient Egypt as the powerful, undead Other have even been translated into popular video games. Maiken Mosleth King has explored how the parallels between Egyptian myths and

⁶ For more information on the links between mummy films and nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction, see Day, *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking World*; Richard Freeman, 'The Mummy in Context', *European Journal of American Studies*, 4.1 (2009), unpaginated online article; and Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy*.

biblical narratives in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation* act as a way of reinforcing the positive role of the protagonist of the game, transforming her ‘from treasure hunter to saviour of the world’.⁷ In defeating an Egyptian curse, ‘Lara fulfils the role of the hero-archaeologist’.⁸ Michelle Hui Yee Low has also noted the perpetuation of inaccurate historical facts and reappropriation of ancient Egypt in *Assassin’s Creed: Origins*: she suggests that such inaccuracies should be used as tools to help younger generations learn to separate fact from fiction.⁹

Throughout all their various incarnations, the mummy is continually returned to its afterlife, an afterlife which is vague and tenuous, unresolved and mysterious. From 1827 to the present, ancient Egypt has been cast as a land which knows the secrets of the grave, secrets which are never ultimately revealed and are categorically portrayed as dangerous. The vanquishing of the mummy saves the world from destruction and, in the case of Universal’s 1999 *The Mummy*, allows the two main characters to ride off into the romantic desert sunset on a noble camel laden with valuable treasure. The British or American heroes are seen as conquerors of an evil, foreign, and occult power which has been forced into submission.

However, there always remains the possibility that if one mummy has risen, then another might rise again. The answers to the questions surrounding death and the afterlife are consistently denied as well as deferred in Egyptianising fiction and continue to be deferred in representations of mummies today. Perhaps

⁷ Maiken Mosleth King, ‘A Biblical Prophecy and the Armour of Horus: The Myth of Horus and Seth in *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*’, *Journal of History and Cultures*, 10 (2019), 143-64, p. 161.

⁸ Mosleth King, p. 161.

⁹ Michelle Hui Yee Low, ‘Fiction Dressed in Facts: *Assassin’s Creed: Origins*’, unpublished paper delivered at the conference ‘Tea with the Sphinx: Reception of Ancient Egypt’s Myth, Magic, and Mysticism’ (University of Birmingham, 28-30 June 2018).

the next tomb, the subsequent mummy will divulge the secrets of the hieroglyphs depicting Amenti, the resurrected Osiris, and Anubis weighing his souls against the feather of truth. The nineteenth century linked the inherently human need to relate to the dead to ancient Egypt; in so doing, they created a mystical dialogue between the two that has been perpetuated ever since.

Scholars have tended to focus their criticism on the postcolonial nature of this dialogue but, as I have shown, there was a deeper anxiety at play in this genre which underpins such colonial control. These anxieties surrounding death and the afterlife are crucial to understanding the emotional motivation behind this mystical depiction of ancient Egypt and understanding their impact on theology. Cultural differences were thus exploited in order to ask deeper questions. These authors relegated ancient Egypt to a fantasy space wherein it could act on their behalf and be subjugated under Britain at the end of the narrative.

The medium of an ancient, foreign past provided an imaginative space onto which Jane Loudon, Edgar Allan Poe, H. Rider Haggard, Marie Corelli, Arthur Conan Doyle, Grant Allen, and Bram Stoker projected their own fears, hopes, and attitudes towards Anglicanism, spiritualism, Buddhism, Theosophy, and atheism. This study has shown that the nineteenth century was preoccupied with thoughts of what would happen after death. Concerns over the moral fate of society in the face of scientific advancement, the possibility of reincarnation, the ability to commune with those already deceased (and vice versa), and the legacy of mortal remains and identity all stem from a consideration of and preoccupation with death. The authors' use of ancient Egypt was built on a perception of the ancient culture as one of both biblical significance as well as mystical occultism. Egyptianising fiction addresses numerous anxieties surrounding death and the

afterlife which cannot be confined solely to occultist beliefs, as Loudon's pioneering text reveals. While societies such as the EEF and Society of Biblical Archaeology used excavations in Egypt as a means to prove the Bible's accuracy and garner monetary support, burgeoning occult societies incorporated Egypt's deities into their own religious practices, lending their religion authority by connecting it to ancient history.

As the popularity of Christianity, spiritualism, and occultism variously waxed and waned, the nineteenth century consistently returned to the question of what it meant to die not only for themselves, but also for their predecessors, and their future descendants. This became the question that no amount of advance in scientific, religious, or philosophical thought could fully and definitely answer. Loudon's anxieties surrounding the future of scientific advancement in the nineteenth century and the potentially catastrophic effects those inquiries could have on Christianity in *The Mummy!* shows that, while a scientific understanding of the afterlife could be attained, that quest for knowledge should be resigned in favour of preserving the sanctity of Christianity and promoting a moral society. Poe satirises the nineteenth century's quest for knowledge and focuses on the foolishness of searching for answers on topics such as humanity's origin, the age of the earth, the nature of the afterlife, and the role of the soul. He critiques the 'spirit of the age' which sought answers to unknowable questions and missed the importance of an imaginative approach to science and religion that enhanced life in the present.

Rider Haggard presents a complex dialogue which addressed the value and implications of Christ's death as substitutionary atonement, the origins of Christianity, and the inherent fear and doubt surrounding security in

understanding the nature of eternal life after death from a solely Anglican perspective. *Cleopatra*'s complicated typological narrative and his later *Moon of Israel* offer imaginative perspectives on the history of biblical archaeology in the nineteenth century and probe the possibility that cohesion of ancient and modern religious thought, a commingling of 'pagan' and Christian, might exist outside the boundaries of legalistic Protestantism.

Both Conan Doyle and Corelli present vague, tenuous beliefs which reveal authors in conflict. Although Conan Doyle would later cast off his fears about the public's reaction and fully embrace spiritualist writing, to the detriment of his career and reputation, Corelli continually sought to promote her own unique brand of esoteric Christianity. Conan Doyle presents an acceptance of death as something to be desired and embraced in 'The Ring of Thoth' and 'Lot No. 249' as a result of his exploration into the merits and validity of spiritualism occurring at this time in his life. He others a strict adherence to scientific materialism which treats death as an enemy and leaves no room for understanding and appreciating the ability to communicate with the other side.

Allen and Stoker use the seemingly safe space of fiction in 'My New Year's Eve among the Mummies' and *The Jewel of Seven Stars* to resurrect the body, rendering their grave markers useless. Both Allen's unnamed narrator and Stoker's Queen Tera challenge the conceit of the Egyptian funerary monument. In so doing, they reveal the uncanny tension in separating memory and legacy from physical remains.

Through their fictional grappling, authors' anxieties demand answers which their texts cannot or, more importantly, will not answer. These authors use their fiction to suggest that answers to questions of death and the afterlife could

be found within the enigmatic mysticism of ancient Egypt. This suggests the possibility that these questions do indeed have answers that *could* one day be discovered. Cheops, Allamistakeo, Harmarchis, Ziska, Lot 249, Hatasou, and Queen Tera are all portrayed as possessors of arcane knowledge which could redefine the nineteenth century's understanding of death as final and absolute. However, each is silenced at the narrative's end, forbidden to reveal the veracity of any one religion's beliefs.

Loudon and Corelli silence their protagonists with Christian moralism, claiming that such secrets should never be brought to light due to their potential to damage Christian theology. Rider Haggard and Conan Doyle kill off their Egyptian characters because they themselves have no answers. Rider Haggard, processing his vacillating religious beliefs, cannot allow Harmarchis to cheat death because Rider Haggard himself does not understand the role of atonement in the afterlife. Conan Doyle's Sosra and Lot 249 must die because, while Conan Doyle's burgeoning beliefs on spiritualism indicate that there is an afterlife that can be reached psychically, the nature of that is still cloudy and only death itself should grant full access to and knowledge of the other side. Hatasou and Queen Tera, likewise, cannot be allowed to cheat death, but their final ends remain vague and unclear. They are *most likely* dead, but their death cannot be conclusively proven. These vague deaths lead to uncanny narratives which rest in the uncomfortable tension between the need for death to define legacy and the disconcerting suggestion raised in Egyptianising fiction that death might not be final.

While Rider Haggard's sphinx has not remained silent per se throughout this thesis, she continues to prove enigmatic. The desire to believe in something

beyond the self and the possibility of life beyond the grave recurs again and again in Egyptian fiction. Although no answer ever seems fully assured, there is still the hope that the sphinx might still speak at long last, that she both possesses and will finally divulge the answers on what it means to die. Egypt becomes an imaginative space—separated from historical fact—wherein the secrets of the afterlife are given the potential to speak through their connection to the undead.

Even if mystical knowledge does not actually exist, nineteenth-century Egyptianising fiction invites a willing suspension of disbelief. Readers are invited into a world where a mummy *could* return to life, if only for the span of a few chapters. It is clear that the sphinx can never ‘speak at last’ because she is real, a silent stone sentry of historical fact in the Egyptian desert. Egyptianising fiction functions as a space to probe fantasies about death and afterlife because it is decidedly unreal and therefore safe to explore. Left in the fictional deserts of ancient Egypt, the pyramids stand as hollow symbols of mystical fantasy and possibility. While they are empty of mystical lore, they remain ever present in the fantastic imagination signifying the possibility of wonder within.

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Photo Appendix

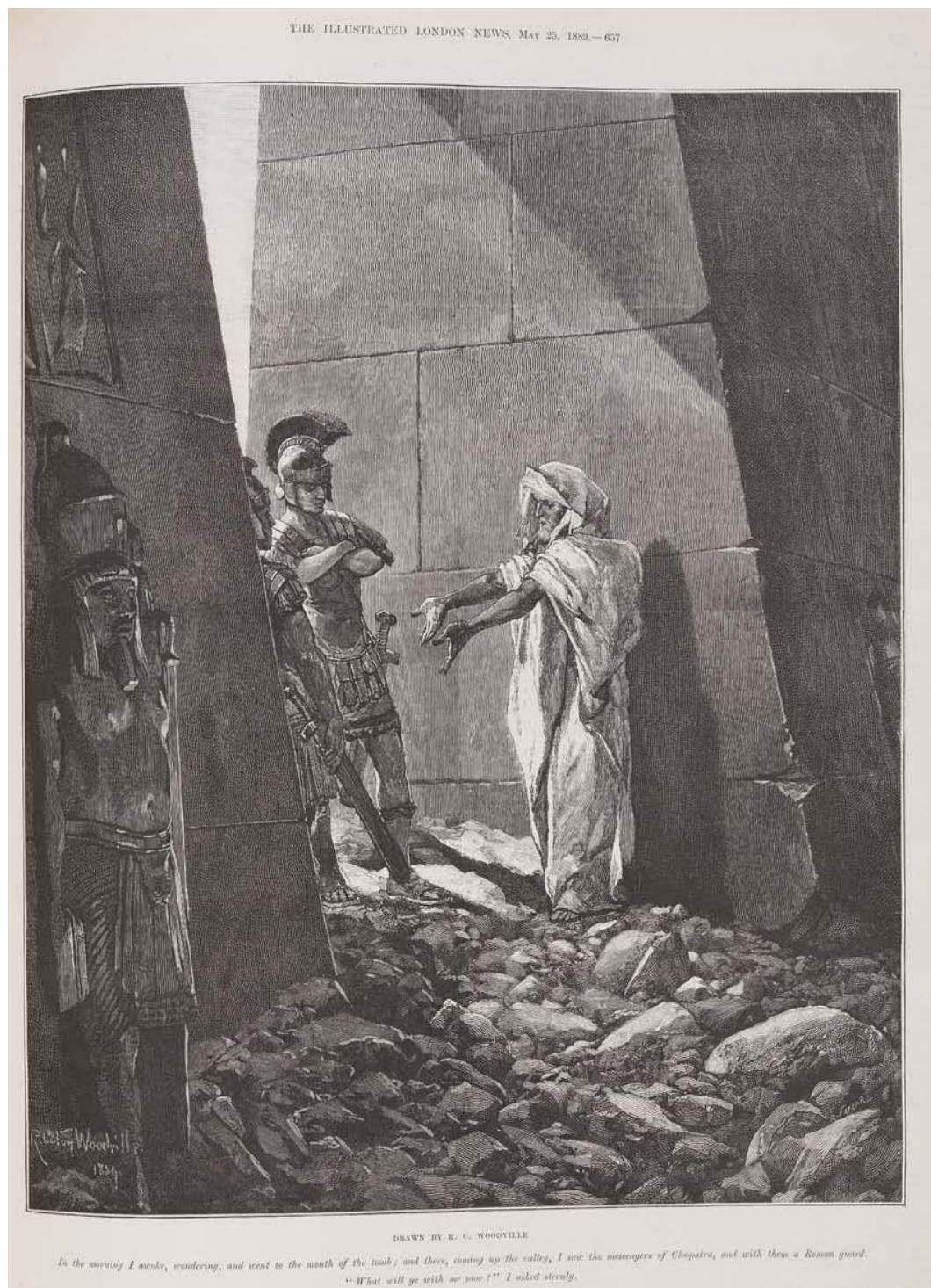


Figure 2.1: 'In the morning, I awoke, wondering, and went to the mouth of the tomb; and there, coming up the valley, I saw the messengers of Cleopatra, and with them, a Roman guard: "What will ye with me now?" I asked sternly', R.C. Woodville, *Illustrated London News*, 25 May, 1889, p. 657.

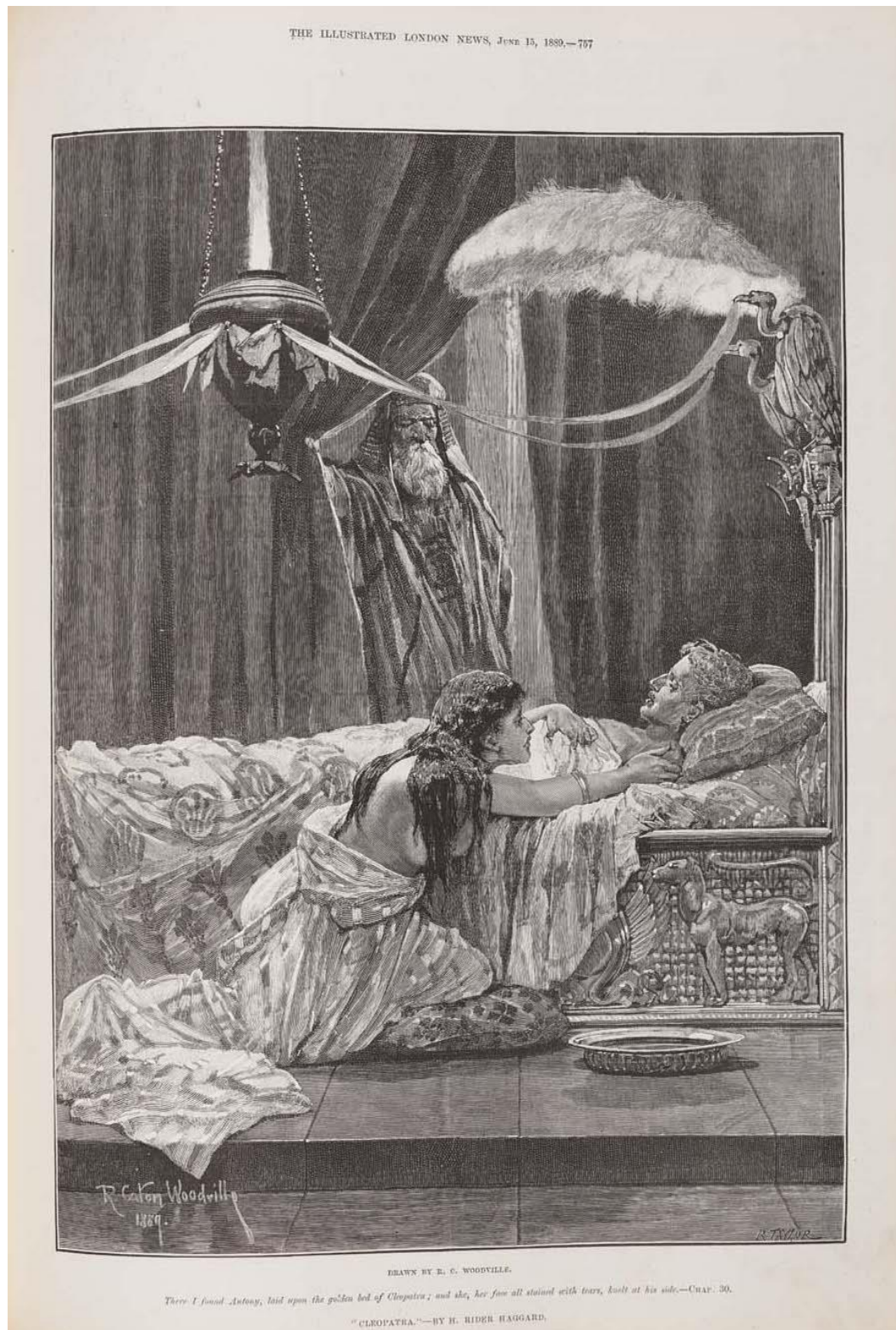
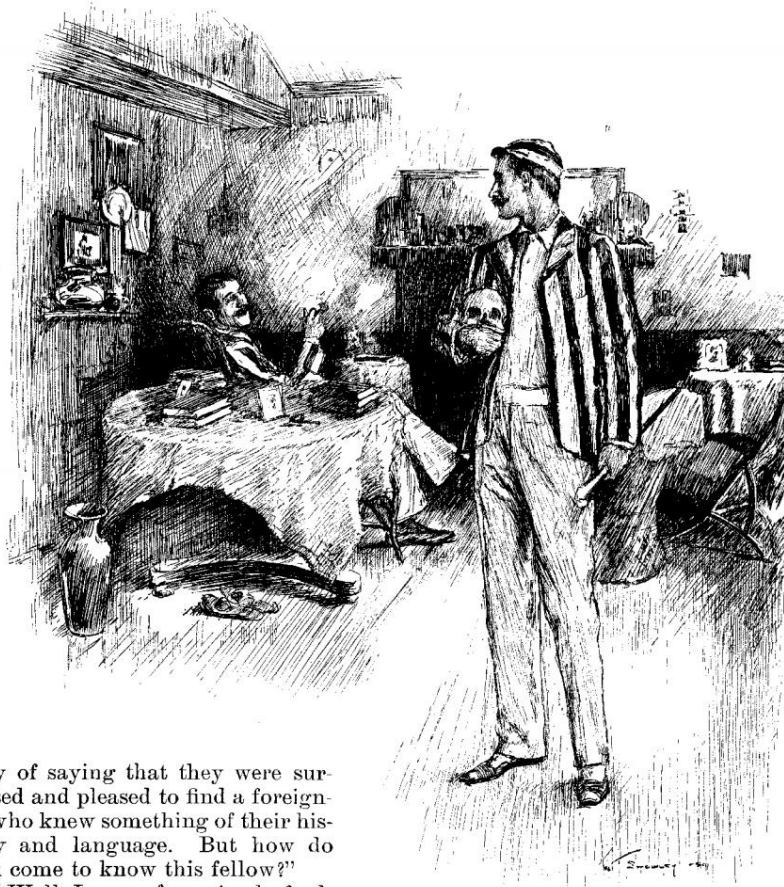


Figure 2.2: 'There I found Antony, laid upon the golden bed of Cleopatra; and she, her face all stained with tears, knelt at his side.—CHAP. 30', R.C. Woodville, *Illustrated London News*, 15 June 1889, p. 757.



way of saying that they were surprised and pleased to find a foreigner who knew something of their history and language. But how do you come to know this fellow?"

"Well, I come from Applesford, you know, and so does young Monkhouse Lee. His father is vicar there, and he has a sister, Eveline Lee, who is as nice a little girl as you would wish to see. When Lee

"GOOD-NIGHT, MY SON, AND TAKE MY TIP AS
TO YOUR NEIGHBOR."

Figure 3.1: 'Good night, my Son, and Take my Tip as to Your Neighbor', William

Thomas Smedley, *Harper's New Magazine*, September 1892, p. 528.



Figure 4.1: The obelisk dedicated to John Ely in the grounds of the former Leeds General Cemetery.



Figure 4.2: The inscription on the base of the obelisk of John Ely.



Figure 4.3: The entrance to the Egyptian Avenue at Highgate Cemetery.

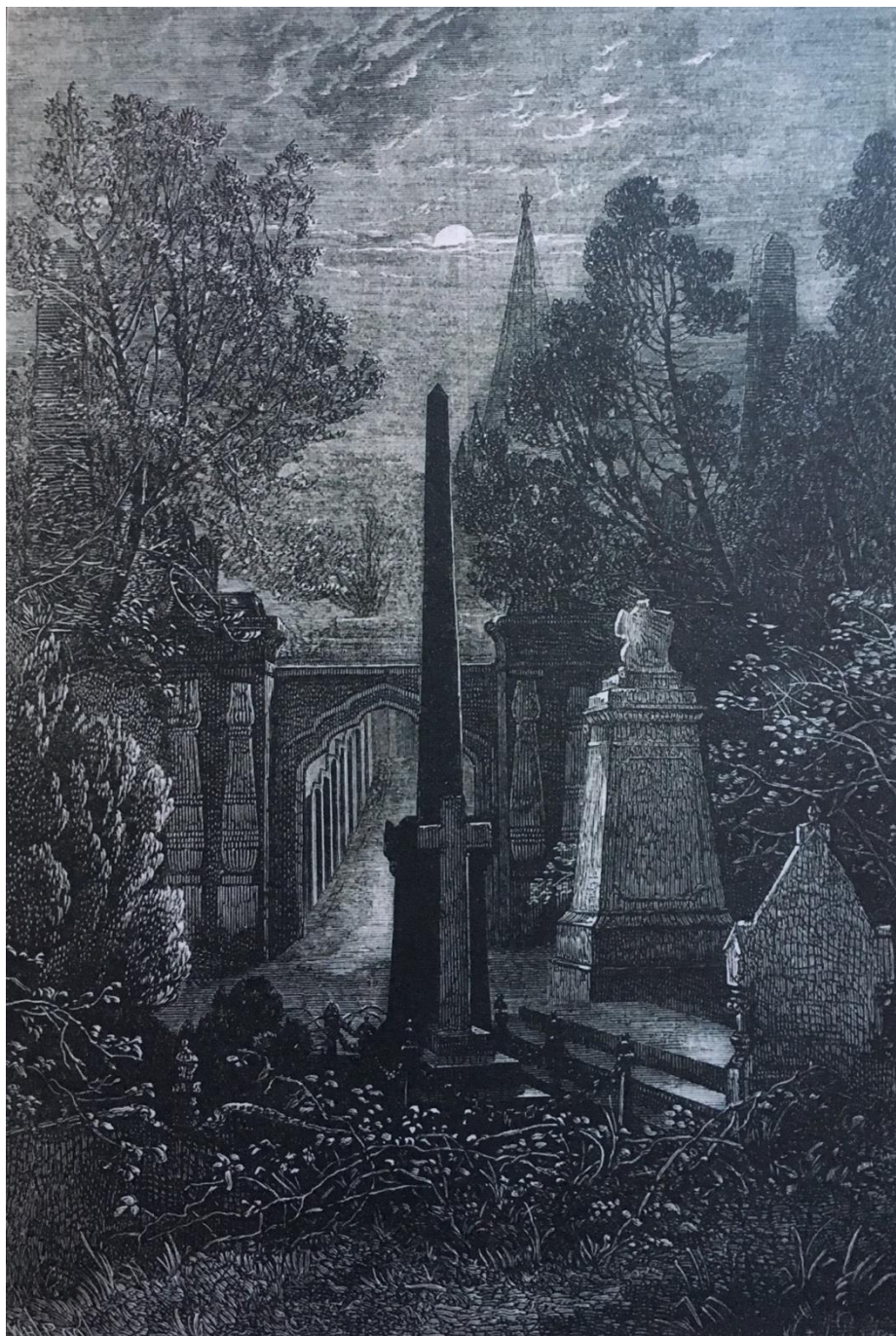


Figure 4.4: 'A View of Highgate Cemetery' (1877), artist unknown.