BRITISH EGYPTOLOGY: MANIA, ADVENTURE, AND ORIENTALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By

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ABSTRACT

SAMANTHA RIVENBARK. British Egyptology: Mania, Adventure, and Orientalism in the Nineteenth Century. (Under the direction of DR. DAVID JOHNSON)

Archaeology in the nineteenth century acted as an arm of the British Empire. Archaeologists held deeply ingrained Orientalist beliefs that often dictated standards of practice. Britain's imperial power grew through acts of colonialism and through archaeological conquests, both of which Orientalism heavily influenced as an ideology. British greed for power and influence globally fed into growing Egyptomania. At the same time, the British nationalist identity grew amongst the working and middle classes. Britons were active participants in the crown's imperial actions and archaeological developments. Empire was not merely a place; it was an ideology that unified the nation. Empire encompassed imperialism, Orientalist ideologies, and archaeological success in "the Orient," which often occurred in Egypt. The wider British public participated in empire through reading and visiting museums, which allowed them to witness the international reach of the empire from home. Thus, the national identity relied upon imperial and colonial success over other Western nations, which was often represented through appropriation of artifacts from Egypt and other "Oriental" spaces. In my research, I examine the relationship between imperial archaeology's successes and the British public's active participation in empire and education. This thesis demonstrates the powerful influence of the nation on political and archaeological pursuits and its unintended consequences on British-appropriated Egyptian artifacts.

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DEDICATION

For Niko, my partner and editor. Thank you for the countless hours of listening to me ramble, reading my work, and giving me breaks. Without your unwavering patience and support I would not be where I am. Thank you for believing in me through every step.

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Egypt has long been considered two distinct places: there is Egypt as it is today, and there is ancient Egypt. The distinction sets ancient Egypt as a mysterious, foreign empire of gleaming gold statues and towering structures decorated with images that whisper about life and death in the ancient desert. In contrast, modern Egypt is considered a contentious country filled with people who do not care for or feel connected to the pyramids and temples that crowd hotels and skyscrapers between bustling streets. Most in the Western world who think about Egypt separate it into a glorious history and an uninteresting present; scholars, politicians, governments, and ordinary people alike fail to recognize Egypt as one place with one past. These views are not new, glorification of ancient Egypt is itself ancient, and disinterest or disdain for contemporary Egyptians is centuries old.[1] In the nineteenth century, British archaeologists excavating Egypt for its ancient artifacts largely regarded contemporary Egyptians as a nuisance or a source of "unskilled" labor. These archaeologists considered modern Egyptians to be inferior to Western peoples and in need of guidance, justifying British occupation, to "become civilized."[2] Such attitudes were widespread in Britain throughout the nineteenth century. British nationalism was felt across classes, and support for imperialism and the expansion of empire was common. Ancient Egypt became a target for imperial domination as a tool for asserting power and control over modern Egypt while also besting Britain's European rivals, chiefly France.[3] The culmination of British imperialism, the booming archaeology industry, and public participation in empire and nationalism resulted in

[1] Ronald H. Fritze, *Egyptomania: A History of Fascination, Obsession, and Fantasy* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 25-26.
[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Inc., 1979), 31-35.
[3] Said, *Orientalism*, 38-39, 190-193; Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 222-226.

Egyptomania in Britain and the appropriation of hundreds of thousands of ancient Egyptian artifacts.

The British working and middle classes in the nineteenth century were fascinated with a culture and history that seemed wholly alien to their own: ancient Egypt. This fascination was in part due to further developments in archaeology and linguistics. Historian Toby Wilkinson described the nineteenth century as the golden age of archaeology, especially for Egyptology.[4] In this "golden age" of discoveries, archaeologists acted as treasure hunters and missionaries of British nationalism.[5] To the British general public, archaeologists were brave adventurers who took on great risk of disease, injury, and curses in the name of gathering knowledge and material goods to bring to Britain as the spoils of their sacrifices. The reality of these people was less akin to Indiana Jones and more to the common thief; archaeologists bribed locals for guidance on places to dig and were little more than looters who pilfered Egyptian history. These practices, combined with the British public's romanticism and fetishism of ancient Egypt, helped encourage the British colonization of Egypt as archaeologists searched for more rare and seemingly fantastical artifacts. Contemporary Egypt fell to the wayside in the minds of the British public and scholars alike. Britain preferred to create an idyllic, romanticized version of ancient Egypt that they could emulate and appropriate.

Nineteenth-century Britain was a time of cultural shift that was impressive in scale and altered the lives of Britons and the colonized peoples living under British imperial rule. In Britain, the working and middle classes were, for the first time, becoming increasingly literate, attending school, and becoming active in intellectual pursuits through the Enlightenment

[4] Toby Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands: The Golden Age of Egyptology* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2020).
[5] Fritze, *Egyptomania*; Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*

movement that extended into the nineteenth century.[6] The public was fascinated with scholarly pursuits and sought out journals, news, books, and reports about history, non-European cultures, science, and the work of scholars in these fields. Education and literacy rose considerably for both British adults and children, regardless of sex. Throughout the nineteenth century, adults typically developed literacy and experienced education through informal means, such as newspapers and magazines, books, plays, museums, and public access to scholarly publications.[7] Children, however, received more formalized education through attending schools, which previously was a luxury only enjoyed by children belonging to middle and upper-class families.[8] As literacy rates rose, the public became more interested in topics of culture, politics, history, national identity, and science. The combination of natural curiosity and newfound voracity for the written word created large demands for more information, more scholarly publications, more literature, more news, and more exposure to the world through the British lens.

During this new intellectualism and fascination with culture and history, the British public became hyper-focused on Egypt and Egyptian archaeology. At the height of the craze, a distinction between ancient Egypt and modern Egypt emerged and remains a separation in historical study and in both scholarly and public interest of Egypt.[9] The distinction between two imaginary constructs of Egyptians developed first by British scholars studying "the Orient," which referred to the "Other" that often consisted of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.[10] British nationalism had become one with imperialism, the national identity that was growing in the

[6] Alison Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print: Media Literacy and Mass Culture in British Magazines, 1885-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 4-6.
[7] Amy J. Lloyd, "Education, Literacy, and the Reading Public," *British Library Newspapers* (2007).
[8] Lloyd, "Education."
[9] Sally MacDonald and Michael Rice, *Consuming Ancient Egypt* (New York: Routledge, 2016) 3-5.
[10] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Inc., 1979), 2, 31-32.

public celebrated British superiority over other countries. The British Empire competed with Western countries such as France, while those they perceived as Other, the "Orient," they viewed as corrupted and inferior.[11] The distinction of superior versus inferior extended to beliefs that modern Egyptians could not have built or maintained the same grand culture that characterized ancient Egypt, beliefs that the public and scholars alike held in Britain.

Finding the Orient

The idea of the Orient referred to those outside of the West as a nebulous concept of culture and space that was opposite to the "modern" West. The Orient was not a clearly defined space, it referred to Asia and Africa as homogeneous spaces, the countries, peoples, cultures, and histories within held no distinction as individuals. "Orientalism" initially referred to the study of "the Orient," which many scholars in the nineteenth century self-described as an area of expertise. In the twentieth century, Edward Said popularized "Orientalism" as a term to describe Western study of Eastern cultures. Said criticized Western scholarship as it erased cultures and invented ideas of "the East" as a single, monolithic space and people.[12] Said argued that the Orient and Orientalism "was almost a European invention" and that "the main thing for the European visitor was a European representation of the Orient and its contemporary fate."[13] In the nineteenth century, the British believed the Orient opposed "the Occident," the West, which was the perceived moral and cultural superior to the Orient. British beliefs about the East as Oriental removed agency from individuals in Eastern countries; "Oriental" peoples were, in the minds of the British, inferior in intelligence, education, morality, religion, and culture.[14] British ideas about the Orient extended to Egypt, and Said argued that "British knowledge of

[11] MacDonald and Rice, *Consuming Ancient Egypt*.
[12] Said, *Orientalism*, 1-5, 67-73.
[13] Said, *Orientalism*, 1.
[14] Matthew Ismail, *Wallis Budge: Magic and Mummies in London and Cairo*, (Kilkerran, Scotland: Hardinge Simpole, 2011), 444-447.

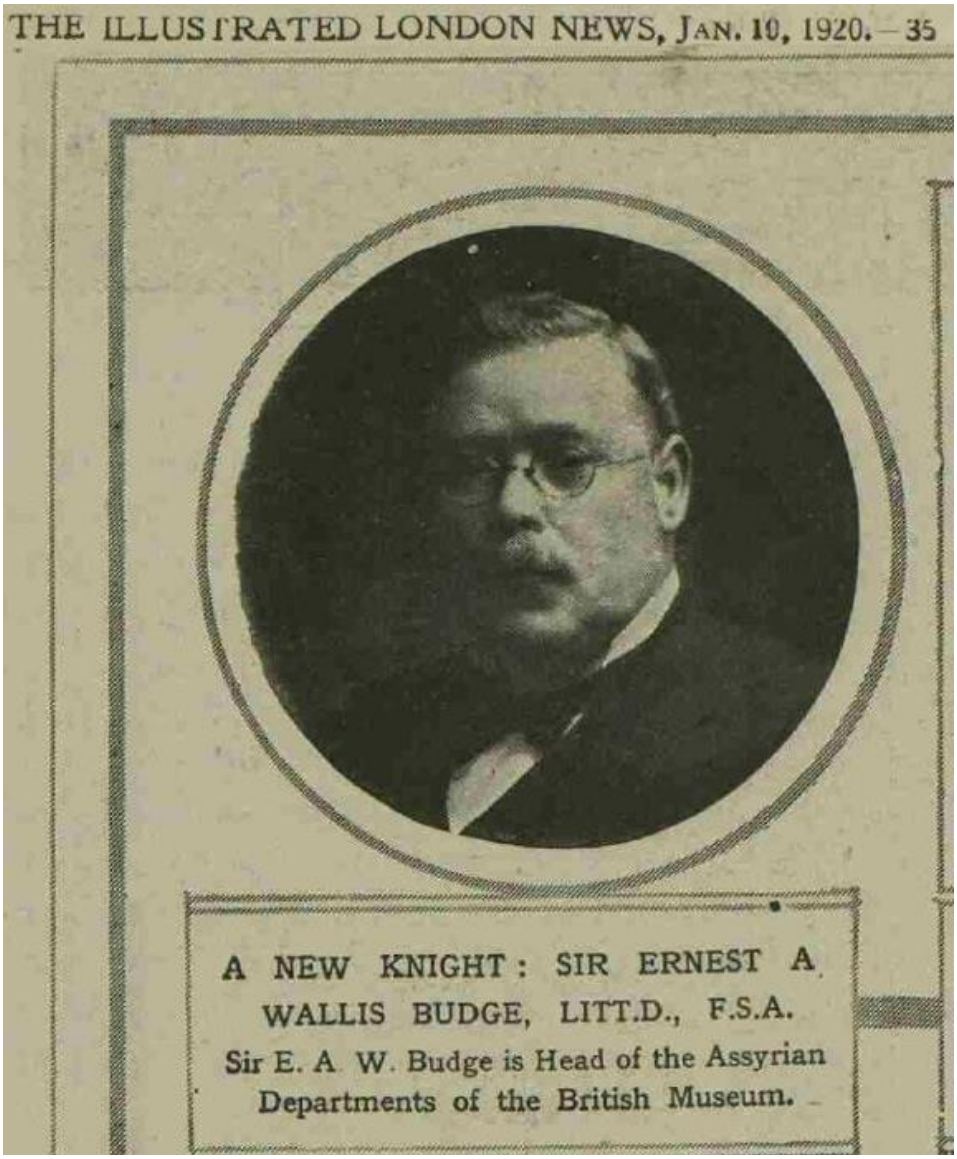
Egypt *is* Egypt."[15] Said argued that through imperialism and Orientalist imaginings, Britain had changed Egypt into what the British imagined it was. The concept of the Orient extended beyond the beliefs of the British as their dominance of the Orient and subjugation of its peoples cemented the Orient as a reality.

Orientalism in the nineteenth century took the form of belief and practices of Eurocentric and white saviorism. The dozens of archaeologists who championed the looting of Egyptian artifacts for the crown rarely consulted Egyptians about their own history. Britons had long ago created "the Orient" in their minds, and the British perceived the "Oriental" modern Egyptians as having consumed Egypt. The British believed modern Egyptians were only the fallen, corrupted versions of their ancient ancestors.[16] Orientalism was a common specialty amongst historians and archaeologists in nineteenth-century Britain. To the British, the "Orient" needed British intervention in government, historic preservation, and conservation of artifacts and culture. Orientalism became the explanation and justification of the supposed inferiority of Eastern cultures, especially those that the British wanted to colonize or study.

Britain weaponized archaeology as a tool of imperialism to assert power and control over Egypt and its ancient history. In essence, the British imperial doctrine was as follows: modern Egyptians, being Oriental, could not preserve or study ancient artifacts, nor could they govern themselves; Britain could, however, preserve ancient artifacts and lead Egypt onto the path of Western morality.[17] These opinions appeared not only as actions in archaeology and the British government, but Britons themselves plainly stated them. Arthur Balfour, a prime minister and career politician, argued "[Britain is] in Egypt not merely for the sake of the

[15] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 101-103; Said, *Orientalism*, 32-33.
[16] Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 101-104.
[17] Said, *Orientalism*.

Egyptians, though we are there for their sake; [Britain is] also there also for the sake of Europe at large."[18] British nationals spoke of Egypt both as a homogenous group and as a people in need of British governance. In the pursuit of knowledge about ancient Egyptians, archaeologists applied their preexisting belief in the Orient to Egypt to sanction their actions. One such archaeologist was Sir Wallis Budge, an Orientalist who was particularly outspoken in his opinions about the intelligence and capabilities of Egyptians and those in "the Orient" as a


THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, JAN. 10, 1920.—35

A NEW KNIGHT: SIR ERNEST A. WALLIS BUDGE, LITT.D., F.S.A.

Sir E. A. W. Budge is Head of the Assyrian Departments of the British Museum.

Figure 1: Announcement of Budge receiving a knighthood, print, The Illustrated London News, 1920.

[18] Said, *Orientalism*, 32-37.

whole. In the nineteenth century, Budge was an archaeologist and scholar of Egyptian and Assyrian history and later became a curator of the British Museum.[19] His role as "Keeper" of the British Museum and reputation as an Egyptologist permitted him a voice of authority in scholarly circles. He also entered into the public eye, which granted him further esteem and a level of prominence over of other scholars, at least to the British public.[20]

Budge was a proud nationalist who championed British imperial archaeology in his excavations of Egypt and in his capacity as an academic in Britain. His position of Keeper and extensive publications, including books on the mythology and language of the ancient Egyptians, made him an authority on ancient Egyptian history to both the public and scholars. Budge, being a staunch Orientalist, made his views on Egyptians well known to the wide audience of archaeologists and the British public. In response to criticisms that archaeologists were looting Egyptian tombs, Budge claimed:

> The outcry against the archaeologicist [sic] is foolish, and the accusations made against him are absurd. Very, very rarely does he take the mummies which he exports to his museum out of the tombs with his own hands, for nine times out of ten he buys the mummies which the natives have taken out of the tombs to suit their own purposes.[21]

Budge effectively opposed any accusations of theft, looting, or unethical practices and put all blame of those actions back onto Egyptians. His claim asserted that looting only occurred with the physical act of removing a mummy from its tomb and that purchasing stolen mummies was ethical. Current scholars consider looting to have been a lengthy and multifaceted process that

[19] Ismail, *Wallis Budge*, 53-57.
[20] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 26-28, 32-33.
[21] Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 389.

Budge, and many other archaeologists at the time, engaged in willfully.[22] While it was true that many times Egyptians did loot tombs and temples dating back thousands of years, Budge's claims served to exonerate archaeologists of wrongdoing and put the onus solely on Egyptians.[23]

The question of who was involved with looting is best answered with the motivations as to *why* someone would loot their own or another country's history. Roger Atwood, an archaeologist, argued that the motivations for looting were "demand for antiquities [which was] drilling the life out of the last undiscovered remains of the ancient world."[24] Atwood accused nearly every level of the antiquities business of partaking in looting or buying looted items, including "collectors, museums, auction houses, and dealers [of antiquities]."[25] Looting and tomb-robbing were businesses that began in ancient Egypt and carried forward to the nineteenth century.[26] Atwood shared his encounters with looting in the Middle East after the death of Saddam Hussein. Atwood noted that looting was an ancient career, but he argued that the practice had escalated to the point that by 2050 all ancient sites would be completely ransacked.[27] Atwood and other archaeologists now travel with the permission of the government, but archaeologists in the nineteenth century were traveling to Egypt without official sanctions or collaboration between the British and Egyptian governments, and most

[22] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 86-93; Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 12-17, 23-26; Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 31-33.
[23] Roger Atwood, *Stealing History: Tomb Raiders, Smugglers, and the Looting of the Ancient World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 11-15; Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 290-295.
[24] Roger Atwood, *Stealing History: Tomb Raiders, Smugglers, and the Looting of the Ancient World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 11.
[25] Atwood, *Stealing History*, 11.
[26] Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 1-4.
[27] Atwood, *Stealing History*, 242-245.

often these teams of scientists were digging and removing artifacts under the cover of night.[28] The only separating factors between theft and archaeology were the nationality of the thieves and who was funding them. Egyptian looters were Oriental and acting out of greed in the eyes of the British; therefore, they could not be archaeologists. The British, however, considered themselves superior to the Egyptians in knowledge and intentions, and their funds came from more "respectable" sources, namely British patrons.[29]

Budge was a treasure hunter like many other contemporary archaeologists; however, he had the luxury of connections to well-respected archaeologists and funds to lead numerous excavations.[30] His prolific excavations and publications allowed him access to the spoils of other archaeological excavations in Egypt; Budge studied, wrote about, or curated thousands of artifacts across his career, and he became a central figure in the world of archaeology in the nineteenth century. Budge's persistence in the field of archaeology and his dedication to obtaining artifacts for the crown made a lasting impression on the study of archaeology in nineteenth-century Britain. He was a significant actor in the development of British Egyptology and the British Museum's procedures when obtaining, restoring, and housing artifacts. Budge's outspoken opinions on Egyptians and his strong beliefs in Orientalism contributed to the general public's growing nationalism regarding British imperial pursuits.

Brian Fagan's *The Rape of the Nile: Tomb Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists in Egypt* detailed a history of looting, unethical archaeology by modern standards, and of several governments' systematic dismantling of Egypt's monuments.[31] Fagan argued that in addition to

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[28] Howard Carter, *Tutankhamun: Anatomy of an Excavation: Electronic Publication of Howard Carter's Records of the Excavation of the Tomb of Tutankhamun.* Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1990; Brian Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile: Tomb Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists in Egypt*. New York: Scribner, 1975, 3.
[29] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 3, 301-302; Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 79, 261, 389.
[30] Ismail, *Wallis Budge*, 20-27.
[31] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*.

traditional artifact looting, Christians, Arabs, and later Byzantines each used ancient Egyptian monuments, temples, and buildings as quarries due to the convenience that the precut granite blocks presented.[32] The loss of physical materials from ancient Egypt contributed to British Orientalist ideas that the ancient Egyptians simply could not have built grand structures themselves. Fagan argued: "without this historical sense they were at a loss… so the scholars shrugged and ascribed the works of ancient Egypt to giants or magicians long departed from the banks of the eternal river."[33] Fagan, like Atwood, argued that colonizing British scholars had no appreciation for the rich history of the new colony and were unable to translate hieroglyphs, thus scholars had little interest in attributing such history to contemporary Egyptians.[34] Once in Egypt, archaeologists would excavate sites after bribing locals and then smuggle out the artifacts they discovered, where the same archaeologists or their patrons would sell the artifacts to the highest bidders or to the British Museum.[35] As a result, wealthy British society and the British Museum became the primary owners and controlling interests of many ancient Egyptian artifacts, many of which have never returned to Egypt even in the twenty-first century. Most, if not all, scholars condemn looting practices of all forms and argue that nineteenth-century archeological ethics were strikingly different from that of twenty-first-century ethics, which has created irreparable damage to artifacts, studying of artifacts, archeology, and international relations.

[32] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 34-38.
[33] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 38.
[34] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 36-42. Hieroglyphs and hieroglyphics refer to two separate types of language. Hieroglyphics most often refers generally to pictographic languages, including the ancient Egyptian language or Cuneiform. Hieroglyphs typically refers to a certain pictographic language, most often Egyptian hieroglyphs. Both are general terms, but for the purposes of this thesis, 'hieroglyph' refers to the Egyptian pictographic language.
[35] Toby Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands: The Golden Age of Egyptology* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2020), 121, 292-293.

Many historians who have studied the looting issue in Egypt have found the British Museum and other wealthy buyers facilitated it to an extreme level in the nineteenth century.[36] However, protestations to looting practices are not a twenty-first-century development. Elliott Colla, author of *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity,* argued that while tomb raiding was prominent in the nineteenth century, not all who were associated with Egyptology and archaeology were supportive of looting practices.[37] Colla cited Jean-François Champollion as having "urged grand political reforms" and "argue[d] that there had to be balance between Egypt's power as a regional empire and its internal welfare."[38] Contemporary scholars noticed the domination that Britain and France were exerting over Egypt, which had previously been an independent power, and, like Champollion, advocated for a return to Egyptian national independence.[39]

Excluding and ignoring people classified as "Oriental" was a pillar of British imperial dominance over the Orient. During the nineteenth century, most European archaeologists hired Egyptians to lead them to dig sites, help them remove artifacts and mummies, and smuggle those goods out of Egypt and into Europe, especially France and Britain.[40] Rather than admitting to paying Egyptians for their physical labor and information on dig sites, they reduced the process of looting down to a single act and expanded archaeological work into a field that did not explicitly include direct excavation. Separating the two so completely not only absolved British archaeologists of the crime of looting but also effectively prevented all Egyptian laborers from being credited for their skillful labor in excavation. Since Egyptians were

[36] Atwood, *Stealing History*, 11-13, 242; Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities,* 91.
[37] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 98-99.
[38] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 98.
[39] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 95-96, 98-99.
[40] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 3, 5; Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 389; Dominique Vivant Denon, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt, during the Campaigns of General Bonaparte* Preface by E.A. Kendal (London: B. Crosby, 1802); Atwood, *Stealing History*, 11-15.

frequently hired to excavate sites for archaeologists, excluding them from the honorable work of archaeology prevented any risk that Egyptians could specialize in anything other than looting in the eyes of the British. In effect, by claiming it was only Egyptians who looted and only Europeans who conducted archaeological work, Egyptians remained subjugated and Oriental.

Figure 2: Henry Singleton, *Oriental with Beard, Reading a Book*, lithograph, The National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), 1803.

Contemporary scholars who have analyzed British archaeology of Egypt in the nineteenth century often look to motivations rooted in Orientalism. Said argued that colonization was in part due to Orientalist concerns of "serving" the Egyptians because they could not govern their own country without the modernity that Britain possessed and Egyptians

did not.[41] Fagan and Atwood argued that there had been a cycle of treasure hunting in Egypt and colonization quickly followed before another power intervened, just for the cycle to restart.[42] An important motivation of Britain's colonization of Egypt was treasure hunting, culture reaping, and Orientalist beliefs about benefiting the Egyptians through British rule. The British public became enamored with the romanticized idea of ancient Egypt rather than the reality, which was reflected in contemporary literature, newspapers, and museum exhibits.

Egyptomania in British Public Culture

Fascination with Egyptian history pervaded British culture throughout the nineteenth century. The public followed the archaeological work of significant archaeologists who traveled to Egypt and returned to Europe with exciting artifacts. These archaeologists became celebrities to the British public. Wealthy British patrons funded European archaeologists, many of whom were from Britain, France, or Italy, to travel to Egypt and use locals to find excavation sites.[43] A deep fascination with ancient Egypt pervaded the British public and demand for fiction and non-fiction literature on the subject increased with each new discovery. Each news article splashing the names and faces of celebrity archaeologists across front pages reinforced the new dialogue between scholars and the public. Were it not for rising literacy rates amongst the working class across both sexes, the public may have never been as able to participate in the fetishization of Egyptian history that scholars instigated. The newly literate population was voracious in their readership of news, literature, and scholarly publications and scholars were eager to appease their enamored public.[44]

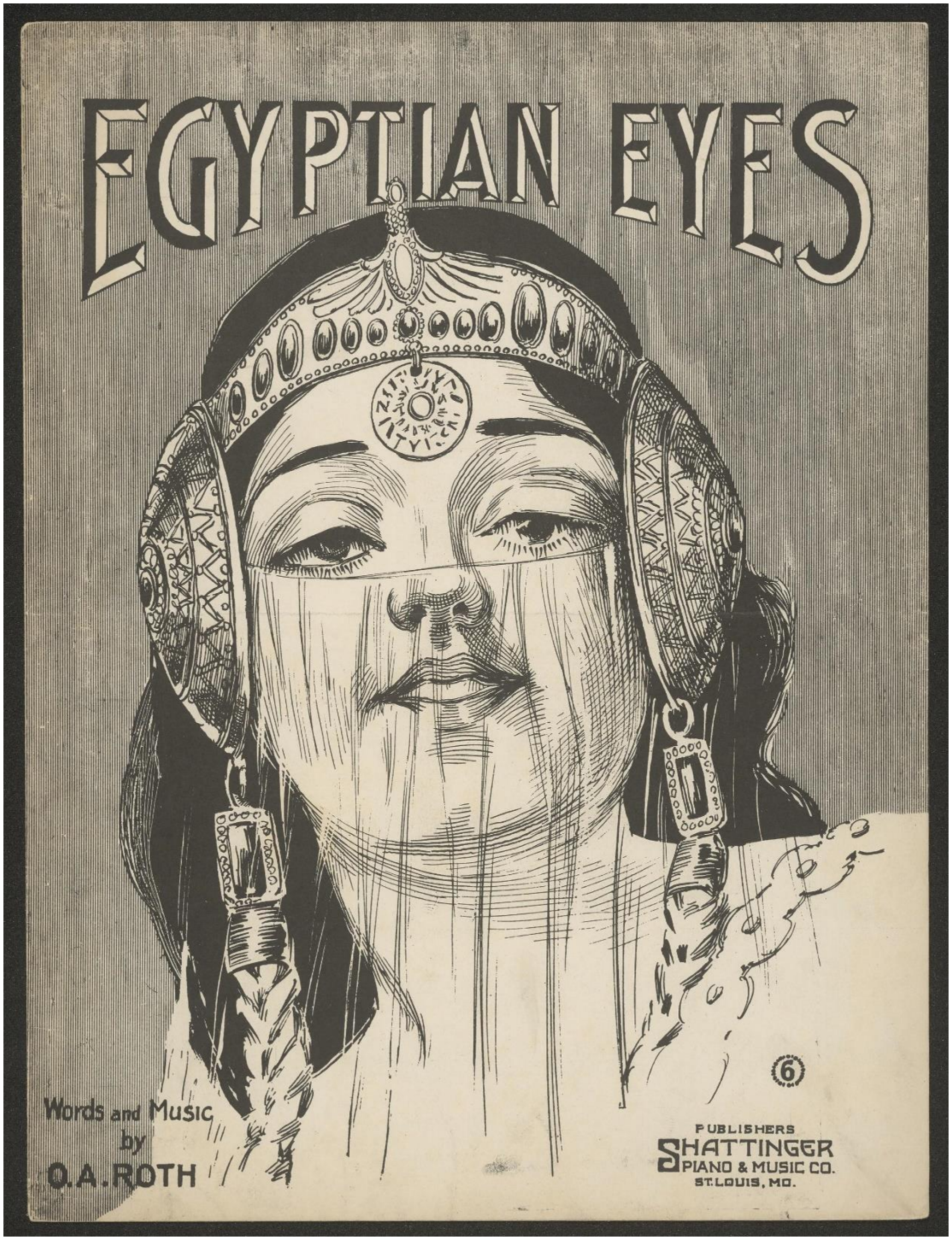
[41] Said, *Orientalism*, 32-39.
[42] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 38-39.
[43] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 186, 189-193.
[44] Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print*, 8-11; Lloyd, "Education."

What both archaeologists and the public were experiencing during the nineteenth century was Egyptomania. Ronald H. Fritze briefly defined the term as "a fascination with ancient Egypt in its many aspects."[45] In a more precise sense, Egyptomania is a romanticism of ancient Egypt and its perceived culture in both scholarly circles and amongst the public. In many cases of Egyptomania, the fetish with ancient Egyptian history evolved into an extreme that was harmful to Egyptians, most often severing contemporary Egyptians from millennia of their history. Fritze and other historians have referred to Egyptomania as a significant phenomenon throughout history. This thesis uses the term to refer to the fetishization of Egyptian history and culture that Orientalism, British imperialism, and archaeology endorsed.

Egyptomania is not a newly identified term or phenomenon. As Fritze, Colla, and Atwood asserted, fascination with Egyptian culture has existed as far back as ancient Greece.[46] Fritze and Colla both argued that Egyptomania developed independently across cultures through new discoveries, personal visitation to Egypt, antiquities entering the black market, or definitive events in history like the deciphering of hieroglyphs.[47] Egyptomania often alludes to or directly cites a lack of quality or respectability to Egyptology and Egyptian archaeology. Colla importantly indicated that a narrative of Egyptology as pure science and Egyptomania as fantasy and secondary exists amongst Egyptologists.[48] Colla argued that this narrative exists "to make sure that the unreason of Egypto*mania* does not contaminate the rationality of Egypto*logy*."[49] Colla's commentary on these differences serves to elevate twenty-first-century scholarship and even contemporary archaeology above that of public fascination and

[45] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 9.
[46] Atwood, *Stealing History*, 11-13, 242; Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 33, 47-52; Frtize, *Egyptomania*, 9-12.
[47] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 179, 308-309; Frtize, *Egyptomania*.
[48] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 179.
[49] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 179. Italics in original.

fetishization. In effect, historians and Egyptologists are ensuring the profession remains respectable while simultaneously absolving it of previous errors and deeming the public as



inferior due to their supposed irrationality. Some historians are acknowledging the participation

Figure 3: "Egyptian Eyes," print, Shattinger Piano and Music Co., 1919.

of scholars in Egyptomania and recognizing that it is still alive and thriving now. Fritze, for example, argued that archaeologists of the nineteenth century were swept up with Egyptomania's popular media in terms of imagery, press attention, publications, and funding.[50] The funding and publications meant that scholars had more freedom to spend several seasons excavating before returning to Britain with their spoils and several new publications to disseminate.[51] Egyptomania and its relationship to Egyptology was deeply ingrained throughout the nineteenth century, thus the ethics of perpetuating Egyptomania in the media and literature often disappears into the very fantasy that scholars try to eliminate and rationalize away.

Historians have analyzed the British public in the nineteenth century through several lenses, including literacy, medicine, radicalism, and gender roles. However, scholars have neglected the public's impact on politics, culture, education, and society through the lens of engagement outside of protest and subversion. When researching the British public in the nineteenth century, historians focus on the working and middle classes' radical change and protest of the world around, not least due to the revolutions, wars, and shifting borders of neighboring countries. The working and middle classes had a more subtle influence on their government, elites, and educational institutions that scholars have not directly studied. Historians studying the nineteenth century have noticed, for example, that the working and middle classes had an increased literacy that created an interest in media, scholarship, and education outside of a school system.[52]

[50] Frtize, *Egyptomania*, 181, 373-374.
[51] Archaeological seasons are periods of time determined by the anticipated weather of the geographical area a site is located in. These periods do not have a set timeline or part of the year and are largely determined by anticipated weather patterns and known seasons such as monsoon seasons in South Asia.
[52] Amy J. Lloyd, "Education, Literacy, and the Reading Public," *British Library Newspapers* (2007).

To study the public further one must first understand *who* the British public were. The scholars who were conducting research domestically and internationally were not a part of the public and instead were those providing the information to the public. Further, the elites of British society were set apart from the public in terms of status and funding of expeditions. The "public" are typically those who were reading and seeking information about ancient Egypt. This group was comprised of working and middle classes of literate people. However, there is a further distinction between the working and middle classes which comprised artists, writers, playwrights, or anyone else who created fictional information about ancient Egypt. Many historians have included this group of people as a part of the public while others have separated them. For this thesis, the public refers to consumers of Egyptophilic literature and news *and* the members of the middle and upper classes who published Egyptophilic fiction.

The study of literacy is often the groundwork of historians studying the nineteenth-century public and their reception of media. Amy J. Lloyd, in her article "Education, Literacy and the Reading Public," studied the growth of literacy through newspaper consumption in nineteenth-century Britain while also studying the readers as the wider audience of British literature and culture.[53] Lloyd argued that the rise in literacy amongst the working and middle classes was a direct result of an increase in schooling across the classes of British society.[54] However, Lloyd's arguments and perceptions of the British working and middle classes depicted them as passive in receiving education. Rather than acknowledging the public as active participants and enthusiastic in seeking out education and a part of culture, she depicted them as passive recipients who had literacy bestowed upon them.

[53] Lloyd, "Education."
[54] Lloyd, "Education."

Historians must acknowledge the power of agency and the culpability of people in historical events despite their race, class, ethnicity, or their relative significance as an individual. Historians attribute monolithic historical actors, like Wallis Budge, with agency and historical significance with ease. However, we often forget that a population of unnamed people are still actors, and they represent a collective of influence. For example, Alison Hedley broadly studied media and illustrated print as an increasingly common form of journalism in the nineteenth century. Hedley argued that imagery was a form of expression that historians can find throughout all of human history, but that nineteenth-century pictorial print media was a particular point of interest due to the simultaneous rise in literacy.[55] Hedley approached her research with the assumption that every person she encountered in her research had agency, and therefore influenced the development of literacy in some manner. In a more targeted study of Egyptomania in literature, Nolwenn Corriou studied the pervasiveness of literature in conjunction with Egyptomania in his article "The Egyptian Museum in Fiction: The Mummy's Eyes as the 'Black Mirror' of the Empire."[56] Corriou's study was specific to mummy fiction, which he and Fritze both noted was popular in the nineteenth century as a specific manifestation of both literature and Egyptophilic literature.[57] The combination of a rise in literacy and the presence of imagery could create a new kind of interest, as the images the British were seeing in their newspapers and magazines were almost unbelievable, as ancient Egyptian culture seemed entirely foreign and mystic.[58]

[55] Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print*, 173-175.
[56] Nolwenn Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum in Fiction: The Mummy's Eyes as the 'Black Mirror' of the Empire," *Cahiers Victoriens & Édouardiens* no. 93 (2021), 2-3.
[57] Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum," 2-7; Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 208-212.
[58] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 211-215; Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print*.

Historians have only briefly analyzed any influence the increase in literacy had on the revival of Egyptomania. Rather, scholars studying nineteenth-century Egyptomania focused on the pervasiveness of Egyptophilic literature. Fritze focused his study on the performative displays of mysticism that academics conducted in Britain and France.[59] While Fritze primarily focused on the scholarly work that perpetuated Egyptomania, he also discussed the influence on literature and famous contemporary writers.[60] What Fritze did not include in his book was the further influence such literature had on its readers, while Corriou studied the effects of literature on the public, albeit through the specific lens of mummy fiction.[61] Many more scholars write about Egyptology in the nineteenth century and note the occasional inclusion of contemporary authors, poets, and playwrights without studying why they were present in any depth. Brian Fagan and Barbara J. Black mentioned authors such as Lord Byron, Charlotte Brönte, Arthur Conan Doyle, and many others in passing without questioning *why* such a large number of authors wrote ancient Egyptian fanfiction.[62] While few authors have specifically studied the rise in literacy and its connection to the revival of Egyptomania, scholars like Lloyd, Hedley, Corriou, and Fritze address the existence of literature in the nineteenth century becoming more common in the homes of British citizens of every social and economic class. This thesis builds upon these foundations in the scholarship of Orientalism, imperialism, Egyptomania, and widespread literacy to argue the existence of a deeper relationship between the public and scholars and the consequences appropriation had on Egyptian history and ancient Egyptians themselves.

Chapter Outline

[59] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 181-185.
[60] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 181-185.
[61] Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum," 3-6.
[62] Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 215, 239; Black, *On Exhibit*, 79-84.

This thesis approaches the varied areas of historical study through major, but overlapping, themes. My thesis is split into two chapters which analyze Egyptomania and Orientalism through the eyes of ancient Egyptians and the nineteenth-century British public. My research explores the nature of agency and the consequences of Orientalism on Egyptian history and the continued separation of ancient Egypt and modern Egypt. The first chapter explores British scholarly research and correspondence, the British Museum and its exhibits, and the actions of contemporary archaeologists acting on behalf of the crown. However, the focus of chapter one is not on British archaeologists or the contentious actions of the British Museum. This chapter analyzes the history of three artifacts: Cleopatra's Needle, the Unlucky Mummy, and the Rosetta Stone. The second chapter introduces the British public as actors and explores the age of intellectualism that defined the nineteenth century. In this chapter, I analyze popular Egyptophilic literature as a representation of subconscious feelings of guilt, fear, sexualization, and fetishization that the British public felt for ancient Egyptians. I also argue that for Egyptologists who responded positively to public attention, there existed an appeal for fame, a respectable reputation among fellow scholars, and the potential for monetary gain and additional funding.

Chapter one provides a comprehensive background of Orientalism, British archaeology, and imperialism. I explore Orientalist ideas that Britain created around ancient and Modern Egypt through three artifacts: Cleopatra's Needle, the Unlucky Mummy, and the Rosetta Stone. Each of these artifacts is representative of Britain's appropriation of history and erasure of culture. Britons were deeply nationalist and supportive of the imperial pursuits their empire engaged in. Egypt was never an official colony of the British Empire, however, the empire

enjoyed an unofficial occupation that effectively rendered Egypt under the control of Britain.[63] The commonly cited justification for occupation and colonialism was Orientalism; the British firmly believed that they were the superior race and that it was their burden to "civilize the savages."[64] If there was an Orient, then there must be those who studied it. Orientalist scholars were a fixture of nineteenth-century British society and research, and their authority as experts only reinforced public nationalism and Orientalist ideology. Many archaeologists and historians who studied ancient Egypt were self-described Orientalists who specialized in "the Orient," which they had to further specify as a geographical area within this imagined space. The Orient that the West created was so vast and nebulous that even to Orientalists, the boundaries of who and where the Orient was could not be agreed upon. The prevalence of Orientalism and its influence on British national identity damaged the image of modern Egyptians and reduced them to an inferior race that could not have descended from the mythical ancient Egyptians. The British believed that they had a right over "the Orient" and thus acted according to that belief, colonizing and excavating Egypt to ship countless goods, raw materials, and artifacts back to Britain for the benefit of the British Empire and with little concern for Egyptians.

Imperial archaeology appropriated artifacts for empire; there existed a sense of ownership and a right to another culture's artifacts. This entitlement did not end with British politicians or archaeologists, but it was their ability to travel outside of Britain that set them apart from the public, most of whom would never leave Britain.[65] However, historians have been studying the lives and careers of nineteenth-century archaeologists for decades. Rather

[63] Said, *Orientalism*, 31, 34-37.
[64] Alfred Russel Wallace, "How to Civilize Savages (1865)," *Alfred Russel Wallace Classic Writings* 10 (2010); Henry Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages* (Outlook Verlag, 1921, repr. 2021), 8-10.
[65] John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 2003).

than add to a robust historiography, in this chapter I turn to the stories of the artifacts that British archaeologists stole and appropriated for their country. My research explores the movement and reception of Cleopatra's Needle, the Unlucky Mummy, and the Rosetta Stone rather than focusing on the archaeologists who discovered them and their purchasers. I first explore their original, ancient Egyptian history and their original purposes. All these artifacts have been subject to British appropriation, physical damage, erased and rewritten history, and demonization of ancient Egyptian religion. I argue that through these actions, the British imbued Egyptian artifacts with their own agency. These artifacts ultimately reflected the actions of the British back onto them, the agency that Britain refused to allow Egypt gave stolen Egyptian artifacts the power to instigate Egyptomania in the British Empire for centuries.

In chapter two, I explore the depth of emotions that the British public felt for Egypt, which included their mania, fear, guilt, and sexualization. This chapter is a comprehensive analysis of the British working and middle classes as they comprised the "public" audience of Egyptology and related fiction. This chapter explores the circumstances by which the British public became increasingly literate and how the pursuit of knowledge increased amongst the lower classes of Britain. Previously in British society, the scholarly and elite classes of society were the literate few and were therefore those who were interested in developing knowledge and understanding of the world. Once the working and middle classes became literate, however, they pursued knowledge with passion. The public consumed literature, research journals, attending museums, and newspaper and magazine articles about dozens of topics. I first establish the British public's interest in accumulating knowledge as the preamble for Egyptomania in Britain. In chapter two I analyze the fear of repercussions that Britons felt for purchasing, viewing, or even speaking about Egyptian artifacts. The British were fearful of

vengeful Egyptian spirits because they altered the appearance of artifacts, defaced monuments, destroyed and ate mummies, and bought and sold them like trinkets.[66]

Finally, in chapter two I address scholarly response to public interest in Egyptian history. The British public and scholars each developed an interest in ancient Egypt separately, although scholarly research influenced public interest. Here I examine the cycle of discovery, research, public consumption, increased funding, and increased interest that Egyptomania created in Britain. I argue the scholars who first deciphered the Rosetta Stone just 22 years after Napoleon's savants discovered it created a renaissance of Egyptomania in Europe, especially in Britain during the height of its imperial power. British colonization of Egypt would not have occurred had scholars, the elite, and the public of Britain not been enthralled with ancient Egyptian culture. Ultimately, collaboration between archaeologists and the public was the catalyst for the re-emergence of Egyptomania that led to Britain's appropriation, and at times complete destruction, of hundreds of thousands of Egyptian artifacts.

[66] Angela Stienne, *Mummified: The Stories Behind Egyptian Mummies in Museums* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 84-87; Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum," 1-5.

Chapter One
Adventure and Orientalism: Mystic Stories from Foreign Lands

Hundreds of thousands of Egyptian artifacts are scattered across the world, displayed in museums, private collections, or awaiting auction. The British Museum boasts over 100,000 Egyptian artifacts, many of which archaeologists acquired during the nineteenth century. Britain itself is the present-day home of hundreds of thousands of artifacts as other museums and the British government collected precious artifacts throughout the nineteenth century. The abundance of such artifacts in Britain has allowed scholars almost unfettered access to pieces of ancient history. Along with the artifacts themselves are their stories of rediscovery and the people who brought them to Britain. The careers of these antiquarians turned archaeologists are both fascinating and important to understanding the early days of Egyptology. Historians often focus on the life and work of one archaeologist, a brief period of time, or a relevant field such as looting, patronage, or the British Museum. These hundreds of thousands of artifacts have become footnotes to the history of nineteenth-century archaeology, rather than a focus on the innovations in Egyptology. Egyptian artifacts discovered in the nineteenth century are not only valuable as ancient artifacts, but also as case studies for the state of scholarship and political attitudes of nineteenth-century Britain. Egyptian artifacts brought to Britain during the nineteenth century were often surrounded by Egyptomania; artifacts became the birthplace of a curse or supposed evidence of exoticism. These same artifacts were also pawns in political hostilities between Britain and France. Finally, they were also used to support Orientalist views of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia as Egyptian history was still largely unknown during the nineteenth century.

Historians often characterize nineteenth-century Egyptology with the names of accomplished archaeologists who traveled to Egypt, curated the British Museum, bought and

sold artifacts, or fabricated provenance to cheat rivals out of artifacts. There were dozens of academics who flocked to Egypt and to the European museums that housed Egyptian artifacts to analyze their meaning or purpose. In focusing on the acclaimed academics of the era, the artifacts that they discovered and brought into Britain became seemingly irrelevant in the larger contexts of Orientalism, British nationalism, and Egyptomania. The British public viewed archaeologists as adventurers and champions of British excellence, which encouraged a rise in excavations across Egypt.[67] Upon returning with seemingly strange and exotic artifacts, both academics and the public became mystified and obsessed with Egyptian history and all interpretations of it. The artifacts themselves were a constant amongst the fluidity of mania and politics. Artifacts were swarmed with rumors, research, and political statements, which changed constantly with the motivations of their owners and viewers. This thesis will thus follow three significant artifacts from their discovery date through the most significant periods in their individual histories. The artifacts will remain as a constant at the center of European politics and developing Egyptological research. Hence, this study shifts the focus from famous archaeologists to Egyptian artifacts since these objects and their handling are indicative of wider attitudes of Orientalism, British nationalism, and mania that characterized the nineteenth century.

These Egyptian artifacts, robbed of their original meaning and purpose, have become representative of Britain's appropriation of Egyptian history. By taking artifacts out of Egypt and giving them a new British significance, Britain claimed ownership of Egyptian history. Scholarly advancements and media attention did not need to plainly explain that their beliefs

[67] Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 179; Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 83, 17-177.

that Britain deserved ownership of artifacts or that contemporary Egyptians were inferior to the British. The spectacle the British public and scholars jointly created around appropriated objects established British narratives of superiority and a right to the "Orient" and its inhabitants. "Cleopatra's Needle," for example, did not represent a piece of Egyptian political history once Britain took it to London. From the very moment that newspapers connected a British general's sacrifice to the obelisk it become purely representative of empire and British national identity. The synecdochic nature of British appropriation was not limited to the Needle, in fact the institution of archaeology in the nineteenth century was a leader in the national imperial cause.

Amongst the hundreds of thousands of artifacts just in the British Museum are a greater number of rumors, bits of disinformation, and politics. If a visitor were to walk through the Egyptian exhibits in the Museum and point at any artifact, they would likely point at one that was associated with a curse or a political conflict. Three such artifacts are surrounded by well documented cases of curses, disinformation, or political attitudes of nineteenth century Britain. The first artifact, known as "Cleopatra's Needle," is an obelisk that has suffered from false narratives and missing information from the moment of its rediscovery. The second artifact is an inner coffin lid from the sarcophagus of an Egyptian priestess, simply known as the "Unlucky Mummy." It, too, has been haunted by rumors of curses, death, and misfortune as long as it has been in Britain. Finally, the famous Rosetta Stone was the center of a race for intellectual excellence between Britain and France as well as being the discovery that allowed Egyptology to truly develop as a discipline. Without the Stone, hieroglyphs would likely not have been deciphered during the nineteenth century, and Egypt's ancient history would have remained a mystery to Western scholars. These three artifacts, amongst the hundreds of

thousands that England possesses, have moved through recent history distinct from each other since their British appropriation. Archaeologists in the nineteenth century were collecting artifacts not only for historical knowledge, but also for monetary and political gain, which will be explored in chapter two. Cleopatra's Needle, the Unlucky Mummy, and the Rosetta Stone are three distinct examples of British Egyptomania, nationalism, and Orientalism.

The three obelisks called "Cleopatra's Needles" currently reside in New York, Paris, and London. The British soldiers who discovered the "London obelisk" unwittingly began a seventy-year debate between the British, French, and Egyptian governments, scholars, and the British military. For those seventy years, the London obelisk was a point of contention as a gift, a spoil of war, a monument to a fallen British soldier, and a monument from Egypt's history. The name "Cleopatra's Needle" was a misnomer that some scholars at the time scoffed at, but the public, the British government, and many scholars continued to use the name even into the twenty-first century.[68] The incorrect naming of the obelisk and its removal from Alexandria have been the subject of debate amongst scholars since its discovery in 1801, as many historians and archaeologists find the name to be Orientalist and an erasure of important historical context. Other historians argue that removing the obelisk was pointless as it had no value due to its mundane political inscriptions.[69] The London obelisk is representative of Britain's insistence upon taking Egyptian artifacts out of Egypt to keep them out of the hands of the French. Britain's increasing interest in Egyptology and outmatching the French meant that despite any protests, the obelisk would go to London. As a result, the many books, newspaper articles, and drawings of it that appeared in the 1800s would only increase in volume once it landed there.

[68] Wallis Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles and Other Egyptian Obelisks*, (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 18, 55.
[69] Curran, Brian, *Obelisk: A History* (Cambridge, Mass: Burndy Library, 2009), 258.

The Needle became not only a prize, but also a symbol of British superiority over both the French as a rival power and Egypt as an imperial subject.

Hundreds of Egyptian sarcophagi entered Britain during the nineteenth century. Most of them were the purchases of wealthy patrons to the arts and history or the British Museum and were the discoveries of archaeologists that bribed and looted across Egypt. These sarcophagi typically became obscure pieces of history on display in private collections, in small museums, or in the British Museum's ever expanding Egyptian wing. However, one such sarcophagus retroactively became a painful and cautionary legend for all those who bought, looked at, visited, or even spoke about the Egyptian dead. The infamous "Unlucky Mummy" was blamed for over a dozen deaths and injuries and was rumored to have sunk the Titanic in 1912.[70] The mummy herself was rarely in its sarcophagus before she was destroyed, although the sarcophagus lid that became known as the "Unlucky Mummy" became a legend in the twentieth century, long after the unlucky events were rumored to have taken place. The legend of the "Unlucky Mummy" is more of a reflection of Egyptomania and fantastical thinking than it is an example of "the curse of the mummy." In reality, the sarcophagus lid only became well-known because of the writings of a few journalists, an infamous archaeologist, and minor injuries related to frequent travel in unsafe conditions. However, the curse of the "Unlucky Mummy" lives on as a cautionary tale of the dangers of purchasing Egyptian artifacts, especially funerary artifacts, and the ancient curse that such ownership could bring.

Today, any person who would like to see the Rosetta Stone in person must travel to the British Museum in London. What many visitors learn there is that the British acquired it from

[70] Angela Stienne, *Mummified: The Stories Behind Egyptian Mummies in Museums* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 86.

the French in 1802, only three years after its initial rediscovery.[71] The British Museum procured the Stone through the capture of the French frigate that was taking it to France.[72] The Museum promptly inscribed "Captured in Egypt by the British Army 1801" and "Presented by King George III" on the sides of the ancient stone.[73] These British inscriptions were not only an example of poor archaeological practice, which damaged one of the most significant Egyptian artifacts ever to be discovered, but also an illustration of Britain's deliberate and physical representation of British nationalist ideals that the government, the crown, and the general public shared in the 1800s. Prior to its public display in the British Museum, the Rosetta Stone was privately kept for scholarly study rather than public interaction. *Gentleman's Magazine* had quietly reported the capture and initial location inaccessible to the public in 1801. In his book *The Rosetta Stone and the Rebirth of Ancient Egypt*, John Ray surmised that its initial location in the Society of Antiquaries of London was "where it could be inspected by the academically curious."[74] However, Ray argued "[the Rosetta Stone] belonged to the entire nation, and a few months later it was transferred to the British Museum."[75] Ray observed that while the Stone did not initially garner "cheering crowds," academics and non-academically trained people alike would soon flock to the display due to its fascinating languages and because of its physical, almost touchable representation of British superiority.[76] The British taking of a French discovery, and later its partial decipherment by British linguist Thomas Young, served as an exhortation of British superiority and empire. Such displays of nationalistic dominance were not

[71] "Friday's Post," *Ipswich Journal*, July 31, 1802, *British Library Newspapers.*
[72] John Ray, *The Rosetta Stone and the Rebirth of Ancient Egypt* (London: Profile Books, 2014), 36-37.
[73] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 37.
[74] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 37.
[75] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 36-37.
[76] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 37.

unique to the British, but in the 1800s the British Museum became a home for hundreds of similar displays of superiority over all other countries. The British Museum was a place for all British citizens to feel the power of the British Empire and to connect that power to themselves, regardless of the truthfulness of that supposition. This museum experience allowed Britons to learn about the Orient through a British lens, and, importantly, it allowed ordinary people to feel a bond with each other as countrymen of a world-spanning empire. As John MacKenzie long ago claimed, such imperial activities in London and other British cities brought the empire home.[77] One no longer needed to leave Britain's shores to experience it; the empire could be readily felt at home.

Between the race for prestige that the Rosetta Stone promised linguists, the gift and funerary monument that "Cleopatra's Needle" became, and the exciting fear of a mummy's curse that came with the "Unlucky Mummy," Britain's Orientalist ideas became more pronounced and publicly accepted. Scholars like Jean-François Champollion, Thomas Young, and Wallis Budge used Egypt and the booming archaeological landscape to solidify their careers and project their authority in their fields. The British government, the British Museum, and private buyers also took advantage of the new artifacts to establish proud collections. The abundance of artifacts under British ownership supported a reputation of Britain as a haven for scholarship and material study. These practices also benefited the political game that Britain was engaged in with France, as both powers boasted scholars with impressive accomplishments and museums that drew in those same scholars and the public. For the French and British governments, being able to draw in large numbers of researchers to museums would establish that country as the epicenter of scholarship. It would also allow the government more power to

[77] John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 2003).

sanction more expeditions and purchase or move more artifacts out of their home countries and into theirs.[78] The political backing of European governments also supported scholarship across Europe and provided access to the wider public. These actions came at a time in which the public were becoming increasingly literate and educated, which developed into the reading public's investment in scholarly research and the wider world.[79] However, political strategies also meant that Europe, especially the British and French governments, used "the Orient" as a battleground figuratively and literally to assert dominance over each other and the peoples of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

In Britain's pursuit of power and scholars' pursuit of learning Egypt's secrets, Egyptian artifacts that Britain appropriated took on a new life. British scholarship often overwrote the histories of artifacts, of which Cleopatra's Needle, the Unlucky Mummy, and the Rosetta Stone are examples. The interactions scholars had with these artifacts were, as Elliott Colla argued, "not just products of human agency but also constitutive of it."[80] When scholars and the public engaged with Egyptian artifacts, either through study or observation, empowered them with their own agency. As this study shows, contemporary descriptions of Egyptian artifacts often reversed the roles of the observant and the observed; the viewer of the object instead felt viewed *by* the object.[81] Unique interactions with artifacts, such as rewriting their history or viewing them as a museum display, imbued them with agency and power over the perceptions and

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[78] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Inc., 1979), 212-215, 217-222.

[79] Laurel Brake, "The Serial and the Book in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Intersections, Extensions, Transformations," *Mémoires Du Livre*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2017, 1-3; Alison Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print: Media Literacy and Mass Culture in British Magazines, 1885-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 8-9; Amy J. Lloyd, "Education, Literacy and the Reading Public," *British Library Newspapers* (2007), 2-3.

[80] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 17.

[81] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 35, 70-71; Nolwenn Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum in Fiction: The Mummy's Eyes as the 'Black Mirror' of the Empire," *Cahiers Victoriens & Édouardiens (Online)* no. 93 (Spring, 2021), 6-9; Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* (OUP, 1903, repr. 1996), 35.

beliefs of their British viewers. Britain's imperial dominance was reversed by its own appropriation of Egyptian artifacts as they became the subjects of British fear and fantasy. If scholars and the public had not sensationalized them, these artifacts would have remained simply objects of history. The British ensured artifacts like Cleopatra's Needle, the Unlucky Mummy, and the Rosetta Stone became active participants in Egyptomania and its endurance throughout the nineteenth century.

An Obelisk as Palimpsest

When the British Army discovered a buried, lonely obelisk in the Egyptian sands, they had been searching for a private and hidden resting place for Sir Ralph Abercromby. In 1801, the British Army was marching on Alexandria to defeat the French Army and take Egypt for Britain's glory. During the Battle of Alexandria, Sir Abercromby eventually died of a musket-ball shot into his thigh, however, he first continued fighting until Britain had won and the French retreated.[82] His fellow soldiers on the field wished to recognize his sacrifice and the bravery of continuing to fight rather than receive aid, and thus they took his body to find an appropriately honorable place to lay him to rest. In this search, the men found a pedestal in the sand, which they used to create a monument to his life and death.[83] In the search to safely hide the new monument, which was necessary to the men for fears of it being destroyed, they discovered the obelisk that would soon become one of three named "Cleopatra's Needles."[84]

In the years following the 1801 discovery of the Needle, questions arose about how it became toppled and forgotten. Archaeologists Sir Wallis Budge and James King noted that the

[82] H.H. Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks* (New York: H.H. Gorringe, 1882), 96-97.
[83] Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks*, 96-97; Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 51-52.
[84] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 68-70; Obelisk, Victoria Embankment, Architecture and City Planning, Monument, London, England.

obelisk was partially buried under the sand.[85] How the obelisk became buried is uncertain, however, scholars in the nineteenth century assumed that the structures were abandoned as a result of vague, unnamed revolutions throughout Egyptian history.[86] Such blasé attitudes towards historic events were common amongst many British scholars of the nineteenth century, as they believed cultures in "the Orient" to have been uncivilized and savage, or to have become so after their ancient ancestors' empires collapsed.[87] There are potential answers for how the obelisk became buried that are less rooted in Orientalism and more so in environmental science. The obelisk could have become buried under the sand because of thousands of years of blowing winds or similar weather common to the Egyptian desert. Some structures became buried in the sands as time passed, as was the case with the Sphinx at Giza.[88] Other structures, however, were abandoned and forgotten, destroyed, or spoliated, as was the case with the Obelisk of Thothmes III and the Rosetta Stone.[89] Historians note how the obelisk came to Alexandria, where the British found it in 1801, through inscriptions that Romans had carved into it long after the obelisk was originally built.[90] The Roman inscriptions, which were under the original hieroglyphs, recorded who claimed the obelisk and the choice of moving it to Alexandria, Egypt. Fortunately, when the Romans appropriated the obelisk, their inscriptions did not obliterate the older hieroglyphs.[91] Once the obelisk reached Alexandria, it remained half-buried until the British rediscovered it in 1801.[92]

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[85] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 52, 64-65; James King, *Cleopatra's Needle: A History of the London Obelisk, With an Exposition of the Hieroglyphics* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1883), 42-43.
[86] Cooper, *A Short History*, 15-18.
[87] Said, *Orientalism*, 7, 31-35.
[88] *A Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt* (England: J. Murray, 1900), 463.
[89] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 3-7; Urbanus, "In the Time."
[90] Cooper, *A Short History*, 47; Obelisk, Victoria Embankment, Architecture and City Planning, Monument, London, England.
[91] Cooper, *A Short History*, 46-49.
[92] Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks*, 96-97.

Budge, who compiled various accounts of the Needle and combined them with his own research, described the accidental discovery as follows:

> [After] the inscription [of Abercromby's death] had been cut upon a slab stone, the soldiers looked for a suitable hiding place in which to bury it, and this they in the pedestal of Cleopatra's Needle [sic], which then lying on the ground close to the pedestal… a cavity, sufficiently deep [to] receive the inscribed tablet, was then cut in block of stone on which the pedestal had rested, and when the inscribed tablet had been laid in the cavity the pedestal was worked back into former position.[93]

From this description, which Budge largely drew from *The Bombay Courier*, an Indian newspaper written in English, the Needle was at least partially visible above the sand, although it had fallen onto its side.[94] It also appeared as though the Needle sat atop a pedestal when erected, which was then resting on another slab of stone.[95] However, Budge noted that some contemporary historians wondered if the tablet was inserted into the pedestal itself. He countered that the *Bombay Courier*'s description more clearly indicated that there was a stone that the pedestal had once rested upon.[96] Budge focused on the pedestal and the details of Abercromby's inscribed tablet, of which he wished could be found and displayed in a museum, rather than the obelisk itself.[97] Perhaps if the tablet had been found like Budge hoped, the British would have allowed the obelisk to remain in its home country, or at least its own history might have survived the journey to London. Aside from Budge, other contemporary accounts described the Needle in more detail, including its dimensions and eventual travel to London.

Egyptian obelisks varied in height and width due to their placement, the amount of money a pharaoh invested in one, and their ultimate purpose. The obelisk that currently stands

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[93] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 52.
[94] *The Bombay Courier* was a popular Anglo-Indian newspaper read by Britons who were serving or living in India.
[95] Brian Curran, *Obelisk: a History*, (Cambridge, Mass: Burndy Library, 2009), 232.
[96] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 52-53.
[97] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 52-53.

on the Thames in London is among the middle-range in height.[98] W.R. Cooper described the dimensions of the obelisk in more explicit detail than Budge:

> The following are the present dimensions of this obelisk: height 68 ft. 2 in.; eastern and west face, at the base, 6 ft. 3 in.; north and south faces, 6 ft. 1 in.; …It stands upon two broad steps, each about two feet high, and down the centre of each face runs a line of beautifully carved and distinct hieroglyphics. The apex of the obelisk is somewhat damaged, as it has evidently been covered by a capping of gilded bronze…[99]

Figure 4: Victor Pillement, and Dominique Vivant Denon, Cleopatra's Needle, sketch, n.d.

The dimensions of the obelisk proved to Cooper that there was little uniformity in commissioned obelisks. Cooper indicated that the dimensions were rectangular as opposed to the square shape archaeologists expected, and that such variances were common in a multitude of Egyptian obelisks.[100] For archaeologists studying Egyptian architecture, the dimensions of structures and any patterns found supported research into building conventions. For historians who wished to see the obelisk brought to London, however, the dimensions indicated that its transportation would not be simple or inexpensive.[101]

The Needle did not immediately become the possession of Britain upon rediscovery, nor was the period between the rediscovery and its eventual placement in London well documented. Budge wrote one of the most cohesive primary accounts of the Needle's rediscovery though his account was published in 1926, forty-eight years after the Needle reached London.[102] Budge's recounting of the rediscovery was colored with sentiments common in the nineteenth century; Budge was proudly nationalist and thus portrayed the British military excursions vaguely to

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[98] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 272-273.
[99] W.R. Cooper, A Short History of Egyptian Obelisks (London: S. Bagster, 1877), 23.
[100] Cooper, A Short History, 22-25.
[101] Budge, Cleopatra's Needles, 75, 196, 257.
[102] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 70; Curran, *Obelisk*, 260-267.

gloss over the violence of war and focus on the bravery of the men.[103] This depiction is an example of the blind desire to glorify the British at every opportunity, especially at the expense of other cultures. British superiority was a common justification for removing the Needle from Egypt as it was associated with a British military success. Similarly to his accounts of the taking of the Rosetta Stone, Budge described the "military operations which the British carried out in Egypt in 1798-1802 came to an end," as though British military operations in Egypt were a calm exchange rather than a forceful success.[104] Both this tone and the delayed publication of Budge's account suggest that there are likely to be missing or glossed over events. Gorringe, however, directly quoted the *Bombay Courier* article that Budge briefly mentioned and quoted. The notification of Abercromby's death and the French defeat read as follows:

> But, under Divine Providence, it was reserved for the British nation to annihilate [Bonaparte's] ambitious designs. Their fleet was attacked, defeated, and destroyed in Aboukir Bay, by a British fleet of equal force… and Egypt was rescued from their dominion by a British army, inferior in numbers, but commanded by General Sir Ralph Abercromby who… defeated the French on several occasions.[105]

The *Bombay Courier* article quoted here suggested that Budge's glossed over account was perhaps a pattern of vague triumph and British nationalism. The language in the article, carefully chosen for public readership, also reinforced ideas of Britain as the savior of the Orient and the civilizer of "less advanced" peoples, including Egypt. British soldiers discovered the Needle while hiding an inscribed tablet dedicated to Abercromby, which notably received only a few lines in the article, as it was only a footnote to the heroic death of a British general. Even in the first newspaper articles detailing the discovery of the obelisk, British national identity already began taking over the history, and importance, of the Needle. Additionally,

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[103] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles,* 51-55.
[104] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles,* 51.
[105] Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks*, 97.

Budge referred to the Needle frequently as a gift from Pasha Muhammad ‘Ali for “the splendid services that the British had rendered to Muhammad ‘Ali” and implied that it was the right of the British to take the Needle to England.[106] Budge and other contemporary accounts do not include what services the British provided to ‘Ali or Egypt at large. It could have been an Orientalist sentiment that the British occupation was a noble service to Egypt.

Before the obelisk of Thothmes III could come to London, it needed to become appealing to the British eye. The British had already overwritten its Egyptian and Roman decrees of superiority with their own; it needed a suitably *mysterious* and memorable moniker, which only the British could determine, of course. A British woman by the name of MacKillop named the obelisk “Cleopatra’s Needle,” although an account as to the reasoning does not exist. Surprisingly few historians from the nineteenth century until the twenty-first have approved of the name, which Egyptologist Toby Wilkinson described as “erroneous.”[107] Contemporary scholars such as W.R. Cooper suggested that Cleopatra was associated with the obelisk because of her recognizability and the Western tradition of assigning great Egyptian architecture to her.[108] Cooper found it “absurd” to refer to the obelisk as “Cleopatra’s Needle” and he argued that “it is almost certain that that popular tradition which has assigned to her the credit of erecting the monument which was to testify to her death and the destruction of her kingdom will remain.”[109] Here Cooper assumed that the primary reason that the Needle was associated with Cleopatra was due to her reputation as the last Egyptian pharaoh and the heavily rumored history of her relationships with Roman and Greek leaders. Cooper thought the name was “an

[106] Budge, *Cleopatra’s Needles*, 54, 62-64; Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks*, 96.
[107] Toby Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands: The Golden Age of Egyptology* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2020), 240.
[108] Cooper, *A Short History*, 47-50.
[109] Cooper, *A Short History*, 48.

anachronism and an absurdity" and instead referred to the obelisk as "the obelisk of London," which was a name that was indicative of Cooper's consideration of "the Orient" and the rights that Britain had over taking artifacts.[110] This name, like MacKillop's, dictated how the British public would perceive the obelisk and why it was important. Such negative descriptions of the name were common amongst historians describing the obelisk, although no alternate names were suggested or those that did not overtake the sensationalist "Cleopatra's Needle."

In truth, the obelisk long predated Cleopatra and the Ptolemaic period. The obelisk was built in approximately 1425 BCE under the order of Thothmes III in Heliopolis. The inscriptions on the obelisk acknowledged Thothmes III in traditional Egyptian style, which was to honor the pharaoh that commissioned the structure.[111] Pliny the Elder, a Roman author and philosopher, recorded a story that Thothmes III had a dream "warning" him to build the obelisks at the temple.[112] Cooper supposed that this could have been possible, as dreams can include any number of imagery that humans interpret as messages, but that Pliny's works must be scrutinized and not wholly trusted.[113] Several historians aside from Cooper, including Budge, Fritze, and Wilkinson, cited Pliny briefly as the only mention of the source and purpose of the obelisks. Most historians focus on the more recent history of the obelisks Thothmes III commissioned, which ignores important context from Egyptian history and royal traditions.

In fact, Pliny's account of Thothmes III's motivations for erecting the obelisks is only one theory. It is also possible that Thothmes III followed the tradition of countless pharaohs before him: securing his eternal afterlife through commissioned architecture. Pharaohs

[110] Cooper, *A Short History*, 48.
[111] Cooper, *A Short History*, 46; Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 91-94.
[112] Cooper, *A Short History*, 46; Curran, *Obelisk*, 36.
[113] Cooper, *A Short History*, 46-47; Curran, *Obelisk*, 36.

commissioned large quantities of structures with inscriptions to ensure future Egyptians remembered them. Being remembered was important for two reasons: the pharaoh's divine right to rule and securing a comfortable afterlife. In her summary of the complex religious traditions of the pharaohs, Joyce Tyldesley explained: "in order for the spirit or soul [of Egyptians] to live forever in the Field of Reeds [an Egyptian heaven], the body, the image, or at least the name of the deceased must survive on earth."[114] Thus, Thothmes III's motivations for commissioning the obelisks could have been a part of a larger plan to inscribe his name across Egypt and secure his afterlife. Incidentally, renaming Thothmes III's obelisks Cleopatra's Needles disrespected ancient Egyptian funeral rites in favor of a more intriguing and memorable name.

Figure 5: *Cleopatra's Needle, Thames Embankment, London*, photograph, *Rotary Photography Co.*, 1097-1914.

[114] Joyce Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut: The Female Pharaoh* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 216.

The misnaming of the Obelisk of Thothmes III was not the only issue that would arise with the obelisk in London. Budge, Cooper, and Henry H. Gorringe each recounted the complex relationship between Pasha Muhammad ‘Ali, the British government, and the scholars who wished for the obelisk to move to London. Brian Curran, a historian of antiquarianism, Egyptian antiquities, and author of *Obelisk: A History,* noted that “there were several proposals to collect the gifts in the 1830s and 40s, but none came to much.”[115] Budge, as one of the chief voices calling for the Needle to come to London, also recounted lack of interest in bringing the obelisk to England in his writings.[116] Prince Albert made some efforts to have the obelisk brought to England until he died, likely because there was a possibility that the French would take it to Paris first. Where Budge, Cooper, and Gorringe, each contemporary archaeologists, ignored the French interference and claims over the Needle, Curran argued that Prince Albert took an interest in the Needle largely in opposition to the French. Paris was London’s direct competition as a cultural center and living archive for Egyptian artifacts, which could attract European scholars or archaeologists in search of funding for further expeditions.[117]

Aside from Prince Albert, there seemed to be some interest in the obelisk amongst those involved with the British government.[118] Budge quoted the letters and appeals that several lords and distinguished military leaders wrote to Sir Benjamin Bloomfield, one of the ministers of King George IV, in 1820.[119] These letters came after a twenty year period of silence on the obelisk, but ultimately reignited campaigns to bring the obelisk to England. Budge recounted when ‘Ali “presented” the obelisk to King George, which Curran described as somewhat of the

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[115] Curran, *Obelisk*, 258.
[116] Budge, *Cleopatra’s Needles*, 194.
[117] Curran, *Obelisk*, 257-261.
[118] Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 240-242.
[119] Budge, *Cleopatra’s Needles*, 58-62.

Pasha surrendering ownership to the British as a sign of good faith and due to the strength of the British military.[120] Whether or not the Pasha intended it as a true gift or was relenting a precious artifact to a threatening power cannot be confirmed, as the Pasha's account is neither cited nor independently published. It was several years after the rediscovery of the obelisk that the Pasha gifted it to the British, although the exact date is unclear, Budge and Curran suggested it occurred in the early 1800's; initially there was no mention of the Obelisk of Thothmes III as a gift and the British originally intended to take it regardless.[121] Unfortunately, Pasha 'Ali's original intentions with the obelisk have been lost as he did not record them and no British officials or scholars cared to include them in their accounts. However, in 1835, 'Ali wrote a decree in which he stated: "[f]oreigners are destroying ancient edifices, extracting stones and other worked objects and exporting them to foreign countries… the government has judged it appropriate to forbid the export abroad of antiquities found in the ancient edifices of Egypt."[122] This decree implied that he was wholly against any export of Egyptian artifacts, although his opinions on gifting artifacts could have changed as a result of continued or increased exportation. The decree suggested 'Ali felt that Western powers, including the British, were erasing Egyptian history with their actions. Regardless of the Pasha's intentions or opinions, there was no avenue to reclaim the obelisk; in the decades after 'Ali gave the obelisk to Britain, historians and members of the British government occasionally discussed potential plans to bring it out of Egypt into London.

The Obelisk of Thothmes III is characterized by a history of waning interest and very little sensationalism. The obelisk was largely ignored for its historical contributions to Egyptian

[120] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 58-62; Curran, *Obelisk*, 257-265.
[121] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 194; Curran, *Obelisk*, 257-265.
[122] Donald M. Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?: Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 21.

and Roman history. Despite its historical value or lack thereof, the obelisk became a pillar of British nationality. The British used the obelisk as a political and military success story, one that glorified the empire above all others. The obelisk's history no longer existed, instead, the British depiction of its history and its new name defined its value.

As the Needle was unburied and eventually brought to London, historians increasingly analyzed its inscriptions. After Jean-Francois Champollion and Thomas Young deciphered hieroglyphics in 1822, translations of the Needle soon followed. Budge, H.H. Gorringe, Champollion, and many other historians and linguists provided their translations.[123] The inscriptions on each side of the obelisk glorified the pharaoh who erected it and its twin. In typical fashion of Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions, the inscription glorified the works of the gods, chiefly the sun god Ra, and the dutiful worship of the pharaoh.[124] Current historians, armed with the knowledge of over two-hundred years of Egyptology, have dispassionately noted that "obelisk inscriptions are actually rather dull" in their purpose and content.[125] Obelisks functioned as an unavoidable representation of the divine right of the pharaoh and were inscribed with such sentiments, as well as why and when they were erected.[126] When hieroglyphs were accurately translated, historians became more jaded and particular with the artifacts they studied as the disappointing reality that the ancient Egyptians were not a mystical people imbued with unique knowledge.

There were several scholars during the nineteenth century that did not want the Needle to be brought to England at all, including Cooper, Gorringe, and John Gardner Wilkinson.[127]

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[123] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 168-171; Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks*, 1882, 70.
[124] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 168-171.
[125] Curran, *Obelisk*, 240.
[126] Curran, *Obelisk*, 240-242.
[127] King, *Cleopatra's Needle*, 42.

The reasons Egyptologists listed for not bringing the obelisk to England primarily concerned the importance of the artifact. Despite the hieroglyphics and Latin inscriptions from the two main periods of its use, British historians and archaeologists felt that the Needle was unimportant to Egyptian history and its study.[128] By the mid-1800s, when discussions of how and why to bring the obelisk to London were at their peak, the scholars who opposed this felt that more "relevant" artifacts, such as the Rosetta Stone, were the best artifacts to study and more logistically sensible to bring to England due to their smaller size.[129] The Rosetta Stone, of which I will talk in much greater detail below, was quite large, but in comparison to the Needle it was much easier to move, as was the Dendera Zodiac, numerous sarcophagus lids, mummies, and canopic jars belonging to great pharaohs. The Rosetta Stone, a similarly political edifice, was foundational to translating hieroglyphics. The Dendera Zodiac, on the other hand, is a remarkably well-preserved star map that pinpointed the position of stars during the Ptolemaic period. Funerary materials provided insight into the religion and culture of Egyptians across thousands of years; each of these artifacts have allowed Egyptologists to better understand the ancient Egyptians.

Regardless of arguments to the obelisk's value to historical study, smaller or seemingly insignificant artifacts often were brought to Britain for study. Many of the sensationalized artifacts were valuable to historical research, however, less groundbreaking discoveries provided vital context to Egyptian history. Such artifacts were also more often bought and sold privately, away from discussions of museums and governments, and were often the trophies of rich British travelers. The lack of historical sensationalism sometimes allowed for a particular

[128] Curran, *Obelisk*, 240-242.
[129] Cooper, *A Short History*, 84.

artifact to become a modern sensation. Egyptomania and superstition created patterns of fear and hysteria amongst the reading public and scholars, all of whom believed in a mummy's curse that would cause injury or death to anyone who came across the mummy. These insidious rumors were a result of Orientalism and British stereotypes of the "Other."[130] While mummy curses and rumors of death permeated the British public, some artifacts became a sensation of Egyptians haunting the world from the afterlife.

Misfortune of the Priestess of Amen-Ra

For some avid readers and members of British society, the sinking of the infamous *RMS Titanic* was never a mystery. Rather, a sinister Egyptian curse thousands of years old had been unleashed on the ship through human hubris. In Britain there had been small stories of curses living in Egyptian objects, sneaking out of pharaohs' tombs, and following owners of such cursed artifacts across the globe and across the title deeds. Once the *Titanic* sank, however, the stories exploded. There were two rumors spreading across Europe in the wake of the tragedy, both of which involved the same curse infecting the ship and causing it to sink. To believers, there was no human error, ship malfunction, or subpar materials, but only the possibility of an angry Egyptian soul taking revenge for its rest being interrupted in the nineteenth century.

The "Unlucky Mummy," as the owners of the coffin lid and the public came to know it, had been rumored to carry a curse almost from the date of its discovery. The public narrative of its rediscovery followed four traveling British men who wanted to find and claim an ancient Egyptian artifact. For these men, the artifact would serve as the prize of a hunt which they would return to England with and add to their latest display of wealth and artistic taste. The rumors surrounding the mummy and her initial discovery are fraught with disinformation,

[130] Stienne, *Mummified*, 92-94.

contradictions, assumptions, and embellishments. Roger Luckhurst, a historian of superstition in literature and culture, conducted the most thorough research into the Unlucky Mummy; Luckhurst gained access to newspaper articles, correspondences, and personal journals of several individuals involved in the creation and dispensation of the curse of the Unlucky Mummy. In the years following the publication of his book *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy*, historians have recognized the Unlucky Mummy as an integral precursor to the curse rumors that exploded in 1923, when Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamun's tomb.[131] Aside from Luckhurst's work, little information exists about the Unlucky Mummy outside of the rumors of misfortune, death, and destruction.

The reconstructed, but largely unconfirmed, events surrounding the Unlucky Mummy unfolded as follows: while in Egypt in the 1860's, four or five men were offered a coffin containing an Egyptian "princess" that one of the men purchased.[132] In Luckhurst's version of the rumor, the men "were entertained by a lady of title," during which a man named Thomas Douglas Murray "decided to buy a memento of the trip."[133] Stienne, however, described the events as though someone offered the party the mummy and her inner coffin and one, presumably Douglas Murray chose to purchase the mummy.[134] After Douglas Murray made the purchase, the men drew lots to determine who would keep the mummy upon returning to England. In every variation of the story historians have recounted, one man purchased the mummy before the group of men drew lots to decide who kept it. A description of the coffin lid, often included in the narrative, noted both the mysterious beauty and malevolent presence of the

[131] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 227-230.
[132] Stienne, *Mummified*, 86; "Mummy Board," British Museum.
[133] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 31-32.
[134] Stienne, *Mummified*, 86.

coffin.[135] Luckhurst determined that the man who won the coffin was Arthur Wheeler, the man whose name is associated with the later donation to the British Museum.[136] In Stienne's description, the man who purchased the coffin later "disappeared in the desert and never returned," although whether this was Douglas Murray or Wheeler is uncertain.[137] According to Luckhurst and Fritze, however, "[o]n the return journey of the party, one of the members was shot accidentally in the arm by his servant, through a gun exploding without visible cause." Fritze noted that in some versions of the story, it was Douglas Murray who suffered the shot.[138] Wheeler learned, either upon his return to Britain or to Cairo, that his entire fortune had disappeared in his absence. In various versions, one or two men lost their entire fortunes as well, with one of them doing so "within a year of returning home to England."[139] Due to the contradictory nature of the story and the lack of research, historians have not come to a consensus on the true version of events that occurred prior to the Unlucky Mummy entering Britain.

The rumors that followed the Unlucky Mummy did not become any less murky or riddled with embellishments and disinformation after the events of the 1860's. The story continued that the next man to purchase the coffin lost three of his family members in a car accident and then suffered his house going up in flames, after which he donated the coffin to the British Museum.[140] However, Fritze and Luckhurst did not include these events in their descriptions; rather their research indicated that Wheeler, upon losing his wealth, gave the

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[135] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 228; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 31-32; Stienne, *Mummified*, 85-87.
[136] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 32, 33; "Mummy Board;" *Mummy Board*, c. 950 B.C.E., wood and plaster, British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA22542#object-detail-data.
[137] Stienne, *Mummified*, 86.
[138] G. Russell, "The Mysterious Mummy," *Pearson's Magazine* 28 (1901), 163-164, quoted in Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 32; Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 228.
[139] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 228; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 31-32; Stienne, *Mummified*, 85-87.
[140] Stienne, *Mummified*, 86; "Mummy Board."

coffin to his sister, Mrs. Warwick Hunt, who would eventually donate it to the British Museum in Wheeler's name.[141] During the coffin's time under Warwick Hunt's ownership, an occultist warned her that the coffin "radiated evil intent," and Warwick Hunt eventually donated it to the British Museum.[142] The myth continued: in the days after the coffin arrived at the British Museum, it caused enough injuries and deaths that the coffin was placed in the basement.[143] While some occultists and scholars at the time claimed that the Unlucky Mummy would wreak no more havoc in the museum, the rumors of misfortune did not end there.

One iteration of the rumor claimed the curse quieted after the mummy and her coffin went to the basement of the British Museum in the late 1890's, until the *RMS Titanic* sank in 1912. In the wake of the tragedy, believers in the curse asserted that a mummy from Egypt could cause a ship to sink. The British public soon became convinced that the "Unlucky Mummy" was responsible for the *Titanic's* fate. There are several stories about the mummy sinking the *Titanic*, all of which place the blame solely on the curse of the mummy. In one of these stories, a passenger aboard the ship spoke about the "Unlucky Mummy" over dinner, which was enough for the curse to take out its revenge and sink the ship.[144] In another story, a man from Southampton brought the mummy on board with him. In yet another, the mummy was not only aboard the *Titanic* but survived, which scared the owner enough that they had it returned to the previous owner. In that story, the mummy caused another ship to sink after the *Titanic*.[145] All of the stories are simply that; there are no confirmed reports of the mummy being anywhere near the *Titanic* at any point in time. Each rumor surrounding the Titanic

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[141] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 228-229; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 31-33.
[142] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 32.
[143] Stienne, *Mummified*, 86.
[144] Stienne, *Mummified*, 86.
[145] Stienne, *Mummified*, 86-87; "Mummy Board."

conveniently ignored that the British Museum owned and held the mummy in storage. Further, the supposed injuries and bankruptcies that followed the owners of the coffin lid have not been fully confirmed since the rumors surfaced.[146]

There are three significant reasons this mummy and her coffin became infamous as a cursed object. First, the nineteenth century was a time when many mummies and sarcophagi were rumored to have been cursed by ancient Egyptian priests. Second, there were a number of newspaper articles published in the early 1900's about the "Unlucky Mummy" and her time in England from the 1890's onward.[147] The third is that Budge, in his capacity as the curator of Egyptology at the British Museum, did little to effectively dissuade rumors about the mummy and her insidious curse. While Budge publicly denied the rumors, he associated with Douglas Murray and allegedly shared the story with Bertram Fletcher Robinson, the journalist who published the initial articles in the *Daily Express*.[148] Even Budge, who answered countless letters from the public in which he denied the curse, could not deny that he held some belief in mysticism. Such beliefs drew him towards Douglas Murray and other occultists, and it led him to research Egyptian mythology and religion extensively throughout his lengthy career.[149] Luckhurst drew much of the information about the Unlucky Mummy from a 1995 informational sheet the British Museum compiled the rumors according to Budge's account. However, Luckhurst claimed that Budge's motivations concerned "tarring his rival Flinders Petrie with occult associations."[150] Douglas Murray was himself associated with the occult as well as

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[146] Mark R. Nelson, "The Mummy's Curse: Historical Cohort Study," *British Medical Journal* 325, no. 7278 (2002), 1482-1484.
[147] Stienne, *Mummified*, 84-89; Roger Luckhurst, "The Mummy's Curse: A Study in Rumour," *Critical Quarterly* 52 (2010), 9-10.
[148] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 25-28; Stienne, *Mummified*, 88.
[149] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 30-34.
[150] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 26.

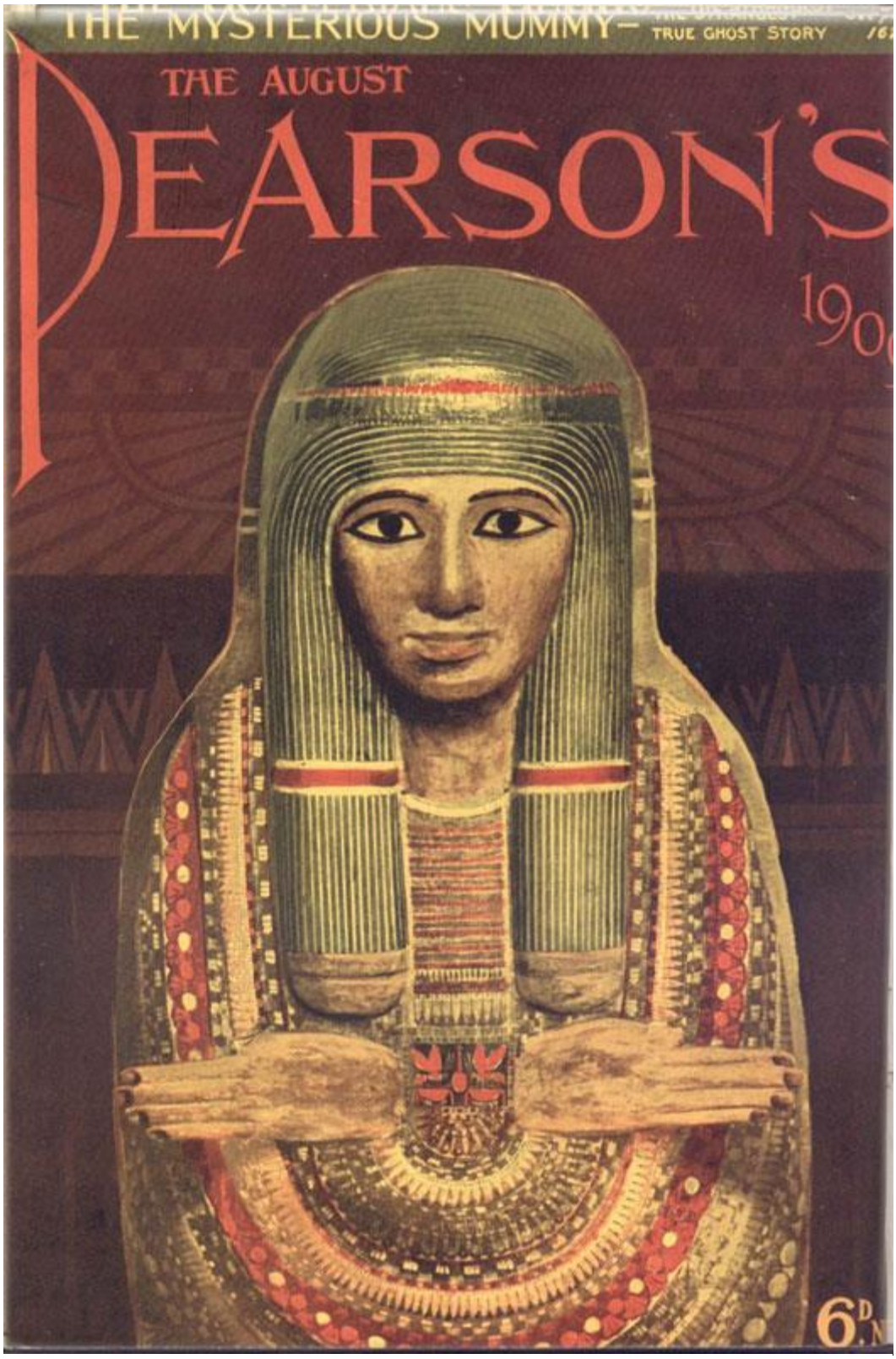

Figure 6: *The 'Unlucky Mummy,'* print, Pearson's Magazine, 1909.

Flinders Petrie. Luckhurst argued that Budge's account "obscure[d] significant details,"

especially regarding the role of Douglas Murray, one underlying cause of the pervasiveness of the rumors: British supremacy.[151]

The British Museum, and Budge acting as curator, fed into the rumors subtly while denying them publicly. Rumors of the *Titanic* sinking due to the Unlucky Mummy brought questions as to *why* it had left the museum, which hearsay suggested was due to the British Museum selling it to an American to be rid of the curse. In fact, the coffin lid never left the museum, nor had an American purchased it. Budge firmly denied the allegations that the British Museum would sell an artifact as a result of an ancient curse. In response to persistent rumors that the British Museum had done so, Budge wrote: "[t]he statement that the cover is to be removed from the [display] case is wholly untrue."[152] If the British Museum, and Budge by extension, relented to the curse rumors and sold the coffin lid, they would be both admitting to believing in, and being afraid of, the curse as well as suggesting that the British Empire and its institutions were not the best place to house ancient artifacts. Budge firmly held, as an Orientalist, that there was no place more equipped to care for and study artifacts than the British Museum and Britain as a whole. Budge argued that "[the Egyptian's] sole object was to preserve his body in a complete state, presumably that his "sāḥu," or "spirit-body," might… rise from it."[153] Budge related the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians to the public to support and justify the exportation of Egyptian artifacts into Britain. He, like the journalists and occultists who fabricated the rumor of the Unlucky Mummy, manipulated Egyptian history to service his worldview and public status. Budge openly insulted the intelligence of contemporary Egyptians,

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[151] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 26-33.

[152] E.A. Wallis Budge, "Response to Ernest Brain" (28 September 1909), Budge Correspondence Files, 1906-13, British Museum Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan Archive, quoted in Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 37.

[153] E. A. Wallis Budge, *By Nile and Tigris: A Narrative of Journeys in Egypt and Mesopotamia on Behalf of the British Museum Between the Years 1886 and 1913* (England: J. Murray, 1920), 388-390; Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut*, 216.

often at the same time as glorifying that of the ancient Egyptians. He believed that Egypt, as a part of the supposed Orient, was less than Britain, thus it was the duty of the British to "save" Egyptian artifacts and appreciate them.[154]

Several people were involved in the dispensation of the Unlucky Mummy rumors, but few had such public respect as Wallis Budge. He seemed not to believe in the rumors, although he reaped the benefits of public fear when Warwick Hunt donated the coffin lid to the British Museum. Stienne described Budge as a leading voice in dispensing propaganda about British superiority. She noted that Budge frequently claimed "Europeans are better equipped to look after ancient Egyptian artefacts [than Egyptians]."[155] This claim was in direct contrast to the events that Stienne recorded, which was that "at the hands of collectors who had very little idea of what to do with fragile human remains, or institutions that quite simply did not care much about mummies, the remains of ancient Egypt have experienced quite a few misfortunes."[156] For example, many of the mummies the British Museum held became damaged due to lack of care and poor conditions in the facilities the curators stored them in. The "Unlucky Mummy" itself was actually only the inner coffin lid due to the sarcophagus being damaged and the mummy being destroyed either for her valuable jewelry, or because of her insidious curse. Reports conflict on the true reason the mummy was destroyed, and who did it is unknown. Stienne implied that she was damaged out of fear, as has been the case for other mummies.[157] The British Museum maintains that the mummy's fate is unknown, but that it was presumably

[154] Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*; Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut*, 216.
[155] Stienne, *Mummified*, 87; Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 389.
[156] Stienne, *Mummified*, 84.
[157] Stienne, *Mummified*, 87.

left in Egypt.[158] The true reason the mummy was destroyed, and who destroyed her, remains unclear.[159]

Beyond the myths and rumors that followed the mummy, a real history existed of the person whom British elites bought and sold. The original owner of the coffin was the person who purchased it for her own burial, which the British disturbed and disregarded. The priestess who once rested in the coffin was a priestess of Amen-Ra who lived during the twenty-first dynasty of Egypt during the Third Intermediate Period, approximately 950 C.E..[160] Exhibit EA22542, which the British Museum lists as a "mummy-board," a specific term for the innermost coffin lid, is the last surviving record of an Egyptian woman. In place of the real history of an Egyptian priestess, fear and rumor triumphed in British society. Curse stories were common in the nineteenth century and the mummy of a priestess would have been the perfect scapegoat. It is first important to discern where the lies ended and the truth began where possible. Contrary to the rumors that surround the coffin lid, such as the four British men who suffered after purchasing it in Egypt, the mummy likely did not come to England until 1887-1889. A Mrs. Warwick Hunt gifted the coffin lid to the British Museum in A.F. Wheeler's name after French archaeologist Victor Loret uncovered it "a decade earlier."[161] Luckhurst confirmed that the man who purchased the coffin lid prior to Wheeler's 1889 donation was Thomas Douglas Murray. Luckhurst noted there was a provenance as far back as the 1860's or 70's, during which time there were "incidents" of death and injury that remain vague and unconfirmed.[162] Luckhurst's assertions contrasted with Stienne's, who primarily focused on the

[158] "Mummy Board."
[159] Stienne, *Mummified*, 85-86; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 25-28, 31-34.
[160] *Mummy Board*; "Mummy Board."
[161] Stienne, *Mummified*, 85.
[162] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 26-27.

period in which the mummy became relevant to British hysteria.[163] The greatly differing accounts from current historians suggest that the primary material is lacking in consistency and must be approached with a level of uncertainty, including information that Budge or journalists reported.

Luckhurst's research into the coffin lid and its accompanying curse is currently the most comprehensive study into the incident, thus his work takes precedence. His research consisted of all known and previously unknown information from the 1860's. His timeline continued until the rumors of a mummy's curse exploded in Britain in the wake of Howard Carter's discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1923. Luckhurst also gained access to a number of newspaper articles and personal letters that other historians have not previously and have not been digitized, including the vital newspaper articles two journalists wrote in the early 1900's that created the public hysteria.[164] Stienne is one of the few historians to conduct research on the Unlucky Mummy rumors after Luckhurst, although her research builds on his foundations and access to primary works. Stienne added additional information to the story and timeline of the Unlucky Mummy; her work branched off of Luckhurst's in that she did not focus on the British men involved in the creation and dispensation of the rumors but instead focused on the mummy herself.

As is often the case in Egyptomania, the truth of what happened to the priestess and her coffin is convoluted and at times deliberately obscured. The mummy, in truth, was not unlucky, nor did she possess malicious intent. The myth of the Unlucky Mummy became so pervasive that the priestess' body may have been "destroyed irreparably" and her name lost.[165] The

[163] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 26-28, 32-33; Stienne, *Mummified*, 85-88, 202-204.
[164] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 26-28; Luckhurst, "The Mummy's Curse," 8-11.
[165] Stienne, *Mummified*, 87; "Mummy Board."

surviving inner coffin lid is the image of a woman, her chest-length black hair is ornamented with bands of color; her almond-shaped eyes are wide and lined with black makeup. Though some of the paint on the coffin has worn away or faded, she has the lighter, yellow toned skin coloring indicative of an Egyptian woman as portrayed in traditional art from the period. Her upper body is similarly ornamented as it appears to be laid with beads that fall from the shoulders to the waist. The lower half of the lid depicts religious iconography, which the hieroglyphics inscribed on the coffin align with.[166] The priestess' name is not inscribed on the coffin, but her name may have been on an outer coffin or in the tomb Loret allegedly discovered her in.[167] Without a name to determine the gender of the mummy, Budge and other archaeologists concluded that she was a woman through the few indicators on the coffin. The British Museum's information pamphlet, which was a retelling of Budge's account and archaeological findings, noted the following markers: "[t]he beardless face and the position of the hands with fingers extended show that it was made to cover the mummy of a woman."[168] Further, Egyptian women were often depicted with lighter, yellow toned skin while Egyptian men were depicted with darker, red toned skin.[169] Both the beardless face and skin tone of the person on the coffin lid indicate that the mummy was a woman, although her life, name, and profession are much harder to determine.

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[166] "Mummy Board."

[167] *Mummy Board*; "Mummy Board;" "The UNLUCKY Mummy and the Titanic," *British Museum Antiquities: Further Information*, 1995, archived November, 1996, at the Wayback Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/19991127194221/http://www.british-museum.ac.uk/egyptian/EA/unlucky.html; Stienne, *Mummified*, 85-89.

[168] "The UNLUCKY Mummy and the Titanic."

[169] Gay Robins, "Gender and Sexuality," in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2014), 122-124; "Pair Statue of Ptahkhenuwy and His Wife," Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/137139/pair-statue-of-ptahkhenuwy-and-his-wife?ctx=fc4619da-9918-44c5-aa21-c36177ea34b6&idx=8.

Due to the religious inscriptions and imagery on the coffin lid, archaeologists have assumed that the woman in the coffin was a religious figure; the high quality of the coffin also suggested that the woman inside was likely high ranking, and thus archaeologists determined that the woman could have been a priestess.[170] So little is known about the discovery of the priestess and her tomb that it is unclear how certain details were determined, such as why she was attached to Amen-Ra. Loret could have discovered her in a tomb near, within, or associated with a temple of Amen-Ra, although the British Museum's most recent description of the coffin lid noted that the religious images on the coffin included Osiris and "the name of Amenhotep I, the dead king worshiped as a local deity in Thebes."[171] The British Museum has not committed to naming the woman depicted as a priestess or as a member of the cult of Amen-Ra; the British Museum has listed the name of 22542 as "The Unlucky Mummy."[172]

The British Museum often defaced artifacts with museum identification numbers, a fate which the priestess of Amen-Ra suffered. Conservators of the museum in the nineteenth century permanently marked hundreds of artifacts rather than using removable, non-damaging methods. Conservation of artifacts in the twenty-first century often involves labeling and marking practices, in which labeling is to attach the accession number to artifacts and marking is to write the accession number directly onto them. Choosing whether to mark or label a piece is dependent on the material, age, and integrity of it as "[i]nappropriate marking techniques can cause irreversible damage. The mark or label should be as permanent as possible but be easily removable, if necessary, without causing damage to the object."[173] Such considerations appear

[170] "Mummy Board;" "The UNLUCKY Mummy and the Titanic."
[171] "Mummy Board."
[172] "Mummy Board."
[173] Helena Jaeschke, "Marking and Labelling Museum Objects," South West Museum Development, 2022, https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Marking-and-Labelling-Guidelines-2022.pdf.

not to have existed in the British Museum during the nineteenth century. The accession number 22542 was permanently etched into the neck of the priestess' coffin lid.[174] Visitors to the museum in the nineteenth century were first drawn to the eyes of the priestess, and second to thick, black numbers that signified the British Museum's irreversible dominance over her and

Figure 7: *The 'Unlucky Mummy,'* wood and painted plaster, The British Museum, London. Note the museum identification number and acquisition date etched and painted into the neck.

Egypt's history.

The priestess' body is gone, her outer coffins and sarcophagus lost, her name forgotten, and her tomb ravaged. Her last physical attachment to the living world is her inner coffin lid, which the British appropriated and effectively decimated her last chance to remain in the Field of Reeds. Her real life and history were of no value to the journalists, archaeologists, occultists, and elites of British society who fabricated and spread the devastating rumors that curse the priestess to this day. To humanize this mummy would have been, to the British, a challenge to

[174] *Mummy Board*.

their deeply held belief in the Oriental and their own superiority over it. Denying the curse unequivocally would have similarly shattered the fantasy that the Egyptomanic British public and scholars built together. Contemporary archaeologists may not have believed in such curses or wished the public to, but once the rumors spread, scholars and prominent public voices clung to them.[175]

Mysterious Egypt, Unveiled

In 1799 Napoleon's army and scientists pillaged the Egyptian desert for valuable artifacts. While some such artifacts would be destroyed for their gold or jewels, Napoleon hoped to bring back mystical pieces of the Egyptian past to bolster his power and French nationalist superiority. Amongst scientific excavations that included dynamite, local Egyptian laborers, and bribes, a large granodiorite stela emerged from the wall of a well in Rosetta, in the Nile Delta. The stela itself was one of several copies that existed at one time, but many more have likely been lost in the sands of Egypt.[176] What made this stela fascinating to archaeologists and historians for more than 200 years, however, was the three languages carved into the stone. Greek, Demotic, and Hieroglyphs were each inscribed onto the stone. Ancient Greek, which was the third and final language inscribed on the stone, was the key linguists used to decipher the two other languages, of which historians and linguists consider Demotic the more difficult due to its simplified form.[177] Not only did the ancient Greek text provide the first concrete opportunity to understand the two previously undeciphered languages, it also indicated the time period in which the stela was carved and erected. The Greek inscriptions indicated that the stone was likely commissioned during the Ptolemaic period, which began with Alexander the Great in

[175] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Lot No. 249* (1892, repr. Penguin, 2016); Luckhurst, "The Mummy's Curse."
[176] Andrew Middleton and Dietrich Klemm, "The Geology of the Rosetta Stone," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 89 (2003), 207-208; Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 2-4.
[177] Kevin McGeough, *The Ancient Near East in the Nineteenth Century: Appreciation and Appropriations* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 80-81.

332 BCE.[178] Following its rediscovery in 1799, the next twenty-three years consisted of linguists and historians studying the stone in efforts to decipher the Demotic and hieroglyphs.

Two thousand years earlier, Egyptian priests commissioned several stelae, each with the same transcription of three spoken and written languages used throughout Egypt. The priests were commemorating the young Pharaoh Ptolemy V for his victory over a faction of Egyptians that were opposed to Hellenistic Egypt.[179] While erecting monuments celebrating military victories or simply commemorating rulers were not unique practices to Egypt, the Hellenistic rulers of Egypt created duplicates and carved their names into their monuments, much like Egyptian pharaohs had for thousands of years. The priests acting on behalf of the fourteen-year-old pharaoh decided that the stelae would transcribe the commemoration in three languages to ensure all Egyptians would honor their pharaoh and the gods.[180] The Rosetta Stone and its copies were identical in their text and design, but their locations may have varied. According to the inscription the Stone itself decreed that a copy would be erected in "every sizable temple in the land."[181] With much of the original stela lost due to damage, it is impossible to know what criteria the priests who commissioned the series of stelae to be a sizable temple. Unfortunately, many of the other stelae have been lost, and archaeologists and historians theorize that the loss is due to repurposing the stelae. According to Egyptologist John Ray, this theory could be a viable explanation due to the French finding the Rosetta Stone as a supporting stone in a well.[182]

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[178] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone,* 2-3.
[179] Middleton and Klemm, "The Geology," 207-208; Jason Urbanus, "In the Time of the Rosetta Stone," *Archaeology* 70, no. 6 (2017), 51-52.
[180] Urbanus, "In the Time," 51-52.
[181] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone,* 1.
[182] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone,* 3-5.

While there are "a few copies" of the stone in other museums, all of them are too damaged to fully piece together the original texts.[183]

The Rosetta Stone was erected in 196 B.C.E., but it is currently unconfirmed how the Stone became a piece of building material or even when this occurred.[184] The next confirmed movement of the Stone was in 1799, when French scientists recovered the Stone. Napoleon had his men bring it back to France, but the British intercepted the frigate carrying it and brought it to London, where historians, archaeologists, and linguists would spend the next 23 years racing to decipher it.[185] The British Army, a constant opponent of Napoleon, overtook the French Army in Alexandria in 1801.[186] Following Britain's military success, the government quickly arranged to bring the goods Napoleon's army had collected back to Britain as the spoils of a successful military operation. Several British newspapers ran stories about "Egyptian Antiquities… collected by the French" being brought to the British Museum.[187] The *Ipswich Journal*, which published one of the many reports about the British success over the French Army, described the exchange of artifacts as though the French were carrying the antiquities back to France, but the English intercepted their ships and calmly rerouted the antiquities to the British Museum.[188] However, the reality was that of a British Navy success in tandem with the Alexandria operation; British newspapers wrote vaguely about such military excursions to provide a more "palatable" story for average readers, being the British working and middle classes. British newspapers similarly used evasive and vague language to glorify the empire's

[183] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 1,
[184] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone,* 3-7; Urbanus, "In the Time."
[185] McGeough, *The Ancient Near East,* 36-37, 80-81.
[186] "From The French Papers," *Bury and Norwich Post,* 7 Jan. 1801, *British Library Newspapers.*
[187] "Friday's Post."
[188] "Friday's Post."

acquisition of the Obelisk of Thothmes III following a military success.[189] The particular means by which the British Museum obtained the Egyptian artifacts was in part due to Colonel Sloane's frequent petitioning of the House of Commons to provide parliamentary relief to the Museum's "insufficient" funds.[190] From 1802, access to the Rosetta Stone was at the discretion of the British Museum, which made French scholars have a more delayed access to the inscriptions. However, the delays were not large enough to stop English scholars worrying about *who* would decipher the Stone first.

Deciphering the stone was a competition for those who were able to study it; the person who deciphered it *first* would be the most influential and important scholar in the fields of Egyptology or linguistics. Egyptology and Orientalism, which originally referred to scholars who studied the so-called Orient, were burgeoning disciplines stunted by the translation problem. Jennifer Westerfeld, an Egyptologist who studies appropriation of Egyptian artifacts, argued:

> Translation plays an absolutely central role; indeed, the birth of Egyptology as a scientific discipline is typically associated with the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in the early 1820s, which allowed ancient Egyptian texts to be translated for the first time in approximately 1,500 years.[191]

Contemporary scholars knew that translation was the crucial next step in Egyptology and perhaps Oriental studies, as there were secrets that could never be revealed without the translation of the pictographic languages. Additionally, scholars studying hieroglyphics and Demotic knew that the first to translate them would become famous, their analyses would be more valuable and their tenure more sought after. In the nineteenth century, scholars were not

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[189] Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*, 52-53, 272-273; Cooper, A Short History, 22-25; Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks*, 95-97.
[190] "House Of Lords," *Aberdeen Journal*, 3 Mar. 1802, *British Library Newspapers.*
[191] Jennifer Westerfeld, "Decipherment and Translation: An Egyptological Perspective," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 16, no. 1 (2016), 29.

dissimilar to celebrities. Many people of all classes closely followed their work, their publications widely read, and their opinions were heavily considered.[192] As such, every scholar knew that to be first would be to become famous and potentially rich. Unlike modern celebrity, this was more than fame: it was public influence and national pride.

Shortly after the British brought the Rosetta Stone to England, linguists and philologists who had expertise in translation flocked to the British Museum to study the famous Stone. In the centuries of scholarship before the Stone was discovered, Egyptian history was largely mysterious and unknown.[193] Ray argued: "scholars [were] laboring under the misconception that everything to do with the country was a lost, impenetrable mystery."[194] Thus, the discovery of the Rosetta Stone was a shattering revelation to scholars of ancient history. Scholars across Europe knew that this new discovery could be the key to deciphering the complex and previously unknown Egyptian written languages.[195] Prior to Napoleon's savants discovering the Stone, all traces of hieroglyphs that archaeologists had discovered did not include any other languages. Scholars had been attempting to decipher the pictographs for centuries, but being unable to compare texts made the process much more difficult. The trilingual inscription was perhaps the sole artifact at

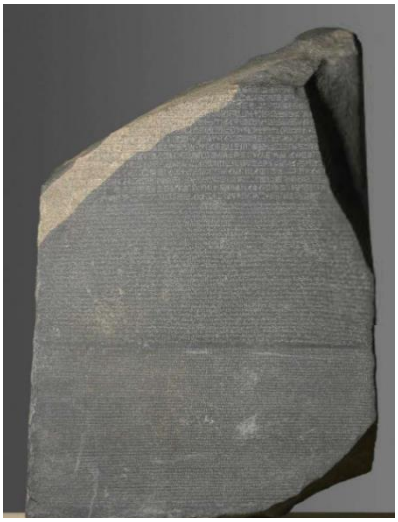

Figure 8: *The Rosetta Stone*, granodiorite, The British Museum, London.

[192] Nicholas Lanoie, "Inventing Egypt for the Emerging British Travel Class: Amelia Edwards' A Thousand Miles up the Nile," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 2 (2013): 151; Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 222-226, 231-237; Brian Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile: Tomb Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists in Egypt* (New York: Scribner, 1975).

[193] Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 11-13.

[194] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 7.

[195] Jed Z. Buchwald, "Thomas Young and the Decipherment of Egyptian Hieroglyphs," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, no. 115 (2018), 871; Frank L. Holt, "Egyptomania: Have We Cursed the Pharaohs?" *Archaeology* 39, no. 2 (1986), 61-62; Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 38-40.

the time that could have allowed for translation of two ancient languages. By the nineteenth century historians had long since translated ancient Greek into several European languages.[196] Once scholars realized that there was enough of the Stone remaining to read and translate ancient Greek, it became clear that the following two languages on the Rosetta Stone, Demotic and hieroglyphs, could finally be translated.

At the same time, Cuneiform, the ancient pictographic language of the Mesopotamians, was also being deciphered. German specialist Georg Friedrich Grotefend initially made developments with Cuneiform in 1802, which Jean-François Champollion used with his knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphs to further develop Grotefend's work.[197] While the ancient languages were both complex and vastly different, linguists often used formulas and code-breaking methodologies to decipher multiple languages. Since both Cuneiform and hieroglyphics were pictographic in origin and had evolved into logographic languages over centuries of use, linguists found that similar methods of decipherment worked for both.[198] The discovery of the Rosetta Stone aligning with Grotefund's developments with Cuneiform culminated in scholars realizing that unveiling Egypt and Mesopotamia's long-held secrets was quickly becoming likely.

Deciphering both hieroglyphics and Cuneiform were important breakthroughs in archaeology and history, however, they also became a part of political hostilities in Europe. Britain and France were in opposition of each other throughout the nineteenth century, trading colonies, artifacts, victories, and advancements with each other through wars and political

[196] Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 39; Thomas Young, *An Account of Some Recent Discoveries in Hieroglyphical Literature and Egyptian Antiquities* (London: Murray, 1823), 8-9.
[197] Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 43-44.
[198] Logographs, also called logograms, are pictures or symbols that represent words and phrases.

stratagems.[199] Both governments used scholarly advancements as evidence to their superiority, especially over the other, and as a justification for colonization or occupation in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Newspapers at the time also stressed the British-French rivalry through Thomas Young and Jean-François Champollion's race to translate the stone, which only amplified feelings of nationalism and Egyptomania.[200] The French government used Champollion's accomplishments to assert French superiority in history, archaeology, and linguistics.[201] While Young was less famous than Champollion, he "won" the race to decipher part of the Rosetta Stone, which the British government exploited in the never-ending competition with France. Scholars and governments supported such competition for different reasons; governments used the advancements to justify nationalist policies regarding imperialism and superiority, while scholars raced to become the most accomplished and successful name in their fields. Champollion and Young entered the spotlight of the British-French nationalism debate through their groundbreaking work in translating the elusive Egyptian scripts. Both Champollion and Young endeavored to decipher the Rosetta Stone and cement their reputations as historians and linguists. Champollion, a French linguist, primarily focused on hieroglyphics, the more famous and mystifying, while Young, a British physician, focused on the more complicated Demotic text.

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[199] "Friday's Post;" Said, *Orientalism*, 32-37, 169, 191; Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 21.

[200] "An Account of Some Recent Discoveries in Hieroglyphical Literature and Egyptian Antiquities," *Morning Herald*, March 22, 1823, *British Newspaper Archive*; "An Essay on Dr. Young's and M. Champollion's Phonetic System of Hieroglyphics," *Saint James's Chronicle*. May 14, 1825, *British Newspaper Archive*; "Egyptian Writings," *Sun*, October 11, 1821, *British Newspaper Archive*; "Cambridge, April 3," *Sun*, April 4, 1823, *British Newspaper Archive*.

[201] "Cambridge, April 3;" "Curious Ancient Manuscripts," *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*, August 29, 1828, *British Newspaper Archive*.

Demotic was the simplified cursive form of hieroglyphs that became more commonly used in writing as literacy increased in Egypt.[202] Demotic emerged roughly 450 years before the Rosetta Stone was carved, approximately 650 B.C.E. Demotic was likely a prominent or highly recognizable written language to a wide audience during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods of Ancient Egypt. The priests who commissioned the Rosetta Stone ordered its inscription with three languages for one purpose: to ensure as many Egyptians and Greeks as possible could read the stela. In Ptolemaic Egypt, Hellenistic priests and royalty often chose to preserve Egyptian gods in the Greek pantheon, refer to kings as pharaohs, and use traditional Egyptian languages in order to gain the loyalty of the native Egyptians. They combined these practices with imported Hellenistic Greek traditions in hopes of converting Egyptians without using direct force.[203] Because Demotic was less rigid in writing than hieroglyphs, it was more complex than the consistent written language of the priesthood and the gods. As a result, most scholars who attempted to decipher the Rosetta Stone focused on hieroglyphs as doing so provided a larger number of sources to work from.[204]

Hieroglyphs served more religious purposes than practical. Hieroglyphs were the most ancient of the three traditional Egyptian languages, which included Hieratic and Demotic. Both languages were cursives that descended from hieroglyphics; understanding the oldest Egyptian language would most likely have allowed linguists to translate its descendants more easily. While there was a level of consistency in hieroglyphic characters that appealed to philologists, it was not an easy task to decipher their meaning. In the early nineteenth century, scholars believed that the ancient pictographs were conceptual rather than alphabetical, which stifled

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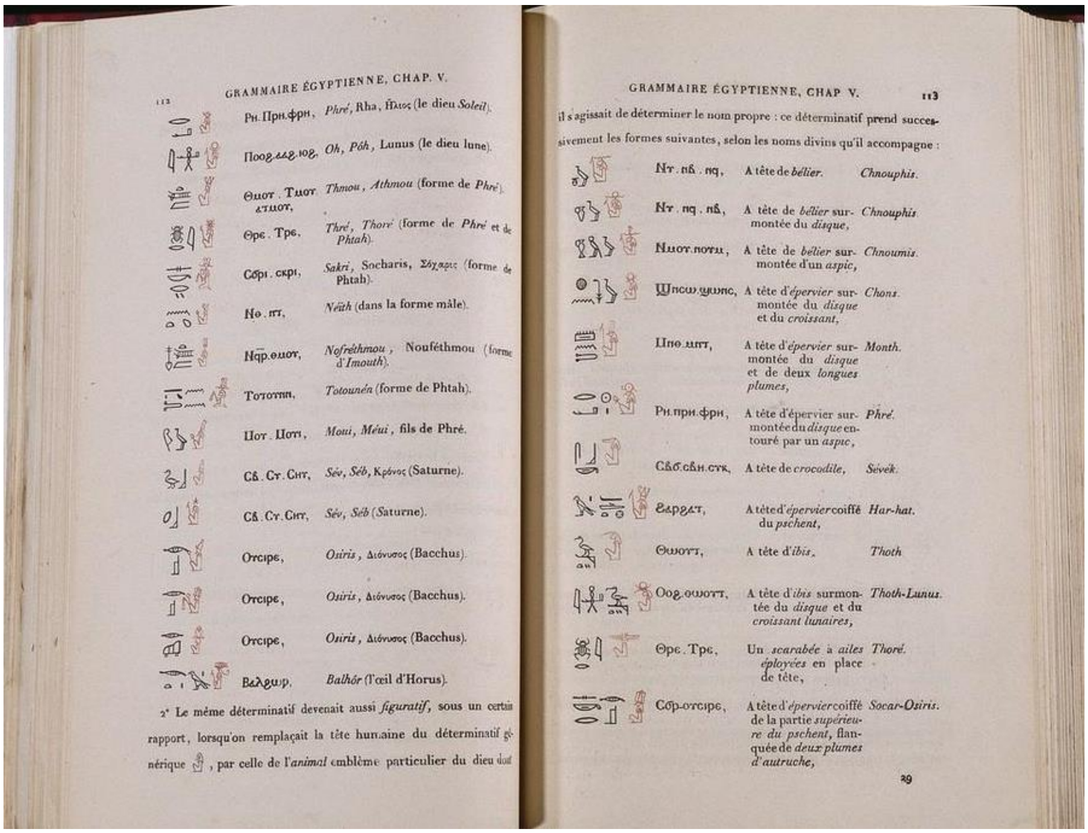
[202] Brian Fagan, *Eyewitness to Discovery: First-Person Accounts of More Than Fifty of the World's Greatest Archaeological Discoveries* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 79-80.
[203] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 3, 137
[204] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 11-14, 32.

translation efforts at first.[205] For thousands of years, as early as the Greeks and Romans, those who studied Egyptian hieroglyphs believed that the language was withholding ancient, esoteric knowledge. Such belief was passed down through disinformation built into the early translation attempts, which included some accurate assumptions of meaning imbued with false declarations of the origin of said meaning. Ray argued that such translations were to "show that the Egyptians fashioned their entire writing system on a series of allegories and rarefied meditations about the universe."[206] Greeks, Romans, and later the British and French, portrayed Egyptians as mysterious, exotic, romantic, and frightening. Hieroglyphics, the mystical and confounding basis of such narratives, were more often used in religious and political texts; their mystery lay in their linguistic nature rather than their content.

While Young and Champollion carried out their tedious work on different pieces of the linguistic puzzle the Stone embodied, they worked off of differing theories. Champollion drew upon previous theories and attempts at translations, including that of William Warburton. Warburton pioneered the theory that ancient Egypt was "a rational society with a history like any other."[207] Astoundingly, this hypothesis determined that Egyptians, being rational, likely had a similarly rational progression in their language, one that could be traced through careful scientific method. Young, on the other hand, drew from previous linguistic theories involving Chinese and Coptic, many of which originated with Danish philologist Georg Zoëga. Young combined the assumptions that hieroglyphics and Demotic, like Chinese, were "bound to resist decipherment by virtue of [their] impenetrability" and that Coptic could have been another

[205] Fagan, *Eyewitness to Discovery*, 79-81; Jed Z. Buchwald and Diane Greco Josefowisz, *The Riddle of the Rosetta: How an English Polymath and a French Polyglot Discovered the Meaning of Egyptian Hieroglyphs*, 1st ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 5-9.
[206] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 11, 13-14, 18-19.
[207] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 23.

descendant of hieroglyphs.[208] Champollion and Thomas both, in their different approaches to previous scholarship and translation theory, determined some correct grammar and translations of hieroglyphics and Demotic respectively. What both men initially failed to realize was that hieroglyphs were indeed an alphabetical language. In those thousands of years of linguistic scholarship, nearly all of those who approached hieroglyphs assumed that they were conceptual and symbolic rather than phonetic.[209]



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Рн. Прн.фрн, *Phré*, Rha, Ἥλιος (le dieu *Soleil*).
Пооϩ.ιοϩ, *Oh*, *Póh*, Lunus (le dieu lune).
Θμοτ. Τμοτ. ατμοτ, *Thmou*, *Athmou* (forme de *Phré*).
Θρε. Τρε, *Thré*, *Thoré* (forme de *Phré* et de *Phtah*).
Cбpι. cκpι, *Sakri*, Socharis, Σόχαρις (forme de Phtah).
Ne. ιτ, *Néith* (dans la forme mâle).
Nϥp.θμοτ, *Nofréthmou*, Nouféthmou (forme d'*Imouth*).
Τοτοτнн, *Totounén* (forme de Phtah).
Μοτ. Μοτι, *Moui*, *Méui*, fils de Phré.
Cб. Cτ. Cнτ, *Sév*, *Séb*, Κρόνος (Saturne).
Cб. Cτ. Cнτ, *Sév*, *Séb* (Saturne).
Οτcιρε, *Osiris*, Διόνυσος (Bacchus).
Οτcιρε, *Osiris*, Διόνυσος (Bacchus).
Οτcιρε, *Osiris*, Διόνυσος (Bacchus).
Βαλϩωρ, *Balhór* (l'œil d'Horus).

2° Le même déterminatif devenait aussi *figuratif*, sous un certain rapport, lorsqu'on remplaçait la tête humaine du déterminatif générique , par celle de l'*animal* emblème particulier du dieu dont

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il s'agissait de déterminer le nom propre : ce déterminatif prend successivement les formes suivantes, selon les noms divins qu'il accompagne :

Nτ. nб. nϥ, A tête de *bélier*. *Chnouphis*.
Nτ. nϥ. nб, A tête de *bélier* surmontée du *disque*, *Chnouphis*.
Nμοτ.νοτμ, A tête de *bélier* surmontée d'un *aspic*, *Chnoumis*.
Шнсω.шωнс, A tête d'*épervier* surmontée du *disque* et du *croissant*, *Chons*.
Μnθ.μντ, A tête d'*épervier* surmontée du *disque* et de deux *longues plumes*, *Month*.
Рн.прн.фрн, A tête d'épervier surmontée du *disque* entouré par un *aspic*, *Phré*.
Cбб.cбн.cτκ, A tête de *crocodile*, *Sévek*.
Ϩαρϩατ, A tête d'*épervier* coiffé du *pschent*, *Har-hat*.
Θωοττ, A tête d'*ibis*, *Thoth*.
Οοϩ.θωοττ, A tête d'*ibis* surmontée du *disque* et du *croissant lunaires*, *Thoth-Lunus*.
Θρε. Τρε, Un *scarabée* à *ailes éployées* en place de tête, *Thoré*.
Cбp-οτcιρε, A tête d'*épervier* coiffé de la partie *supérieure du pschent*, flanquée de *deux plumes d'autruche*, *Socar-Osiris*.

29

Figure 9: Jean-François Champollion, except from *Grammaire Égyptienne*, 1832.

Both Champollion and Young initially argued that hieroglyphs were entirely symbolic. This fell in line with the majority of previous scholarship, chiefly from Zoëga and Egyptian priest Horapollo, who published his own translations of hieroglyphs in the fifth century C.E..[210]

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[208] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 44-47; Buchenwald, *The Riddle of the Rosetta*, 38.
[209] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 11-14, 22-24, 44; Buchenwald, *The Riddle of the Rosetta*, 5-9, 161-163.
[210] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 18-19.

Strangely, Champollion appeared to have ignored Warburton's and Zoëga's tentative speculations that hieroglyphics contained *both* phonetic and symbolic definitions. Zoëga in particular approached Horapollo's translations by "read[ing] between the lines" to prove that Coptic-derived phonetics existed in hieroglyphs. Champollion wrote, in the famous *Lettre à M. Dacier*, that the language *did not* contain phonetisc and was only idiographic. Champollion's radical stance later changed in the face of numerous theories to the contrary becoming increasingly hard to fight.[211] Scholars could not reconcile hieroglyphics as one or the other, rather, the language was both ideographic and alphabetical, or phonetic, in nature. Warburton had first suggested that during its evolution as a language, like many other pictographic languages, hieroglyphs began largely pictorial and ideographic, and soon it developed arbitrary alphabetical associations that translated to spoken language. Several linguists who studied the three Egyptian languages determined that Warburton's theory had been largely correct, although these linguists refined the details and accurate translations.[212]

Ultimately, Young made correct assumptions about Demotic translations before Champollion. Champollion's work with hieroglyphics fascinated the public and scholars alike while Demotic was less known and less famous as "the ancient Egyptian picture-writing."[213] Both men became famous for their breakthrough works, and for their rivalry that mimicked Britain and France's. In the excitement and competition of the new discovery, the Rosetta Stone was forgotten. Its value was in its inscriptions and how it served the British and French Empires, its commonplace history as a pharaoh's monument was overwritten in the process.

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[211] Fagan, *Eyewitness to Discovery*, 79-81; Buchenwald, *The Riddle of the Rosetta*, 8, 316-319, 337-339, 365; Andrew Robinson, "The Race to Decipher Egyptian Hieroglyphs: A Pair of Scholars Recount the Rivalry That Defined Efforts to Interpret the Rosetta Stone," *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)* 369, no. 6511, 2020.

[212] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 22-24; Buchenwald, *The Riddle of the Rosetta*, 337-339, 350-352, 365.

[213] Jean-François Champollion, *Lettre à M. Dacier*, quoted in Fagan, *Eyewitness to Discovery*, 85.

The Stone transformed from the declaration of Ptolemy V's supremacy to the declaration of British supremacy. When the British Empire defeated the French and forcibly took the artifacts Napoleon's savants had gathered, the British military inscribed "Captured in Egypt by the British Army 1801" and "Presented by King George III" on the rough sides of the Stone.[214] Like the priestess of Amen-Ra, the Rosetta Stone was defaced to assert ownership, dominance over the "Orient" and France, and to erase its Egyptian history. Defacement and appropriation were common tools Western counties, especially the British Empire, used to justify their possession of the Orient and their ability to purify it.

Conclusion

There was no single factor that created or maintained Egyptomania in the nineteenth century. Rather, Egyptomania was a symptom of Britain's cultivated culture of empire and imperialism. Britain asserted its dominance over the East, the Orient, to justify its domination over the Orient as well as its superiority to other Western countries like France. Egypt became a particular object of interest to the Orientalist British Empire. British scholars reduced Egypt to a set of ideas based on imperialism and Britain's perceived political, religious, cultural, and moral superiority.[215] One set of ideas regarded ancient Egypt: a venerable, almost unknowable society with incredible knowledge, one that earned the respect of the West as a virtuous and intelligent society. In opposition to the monolithic ancient Egypt were the Orientalized ideas of modern Egypt: the great kingdom of Egypt fell into disrepute, modern Egypt, and modern Egyptians, were corrupted, less intelligent, and in need of Britain to purify and educate them.[216] In essence, two Egypts existed in the same place centuries apart; in British ideology "[t]he Orient… existed

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[214] Ray, *The Rosetta Stone*, 37.
[215] Said, *Orientalism*, 120-123.
[216] Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 101-104; Said, *Orientalism*, 84-85, 323.

as a set of values attached, not to its modern realities, but to a series of valorized contacts it had had with a distant European past."[217] Ancient Egypt was intellectually and morally equal or superior to Britain, while modern Egypt was morally corrupt and therefore less educated and rational than Britain.

The British had to assert their dominance over Egypt, to take their artifacts and imbue them with their new, British history. To not do so would have been to confront the agency of Egyptians, ancient and modern. British Orientalists were unable to accept the agency of Egyptians without also accepting the agency of all individuals in the supposed Orient. With agency came intelligence, morality, religion, individuality, competition, and, worst of all to the British, the ability to choose. If Egyptians had the ability and power to choose, then they would likely have chosen not to entertain British Egyptology and archaeology.[218] The Orient had evolved from an idea of Western superiority and responsibility to govern the East into a deeply entrenched belief, one that was in constant threat. The threat originated in the Orient itself, because the reality of it was that it was only an idea and belief; Eastern countries were varied in culture, religion, politics, ethnicities, and history and were even further varied within each individual country. No homogenous entity that embodied the Western idea of "the Orient" truly existed, but the British had the capacity to reinforce their belief regardless of the reality.

British Egyptologists who exported artifacts out of Egypt decontextualized the artifacts and removed them from their history. By doing so, Egyptologists altered or completely erased the history of Egyptian artifacts and the history of Egypt piece by piece. British archaeologists conducted archaeological excavations by employing teams of skilled Egyptian laborers to

[217] Said, *Orientalism*, 85.
[218] Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, 21.

excavate their own history, but they would not be able to take part in rediscovering it.[219] Archaeologists, including Budge, ensured that Egyptians would not be allowed to become active participants in Egyptology by accusing them of looting. These actions, which served to strip Egyptians of their agency and assert authority over Egypt and its history, had an unintentional consequence to the artifacts the British exported into their museums and private collections.

The British infused Egyptian artifacts with the agency they could not allow Egyptians to possess. While unintentional, the interactions the British had with ancient Egypt and individual artifacts gave them a unique agency. The obelisk of Thothmes III, the coffin lid of an unnamed priestess, and the Rosetta Stone each would have fallen into obscurity as they had in history if it were not for the British. Scholars ascribed their own meanings to each of these artifacts, which gave them power over those who believed in those meanings. If these objects, and many others that the British appropriated, had been left in Egypt or if they had retained their own histories, they would not have become the sensations and focal points of Egyptomania that they had. Instead, the artifacts took on a new life of their own, one that was out of control of scholars. The obelisk of Thothmes III, "Cleopatra's Needle," became an unmistakable monument to imperialism, to Britain's imperial superiority over Egypt, the Orient, and the Romans who had appropriated it thousands of years before them. The coffin lid of a priestess of Amen-Ra, the "Unlucky Mummy," became a haunting specter of British guilt for their imperial pursuits, a malevolent spirit intent on retribution for being defaced and demonized. The Rosetta Stone lost all meaning as a political noticeboard and became, like the obelisk of Thothmes III, a

[219] Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 389; Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 3, 5; Middleton and Klemm, "The Geology of the Rosetta Stone," 207-208; Roger Atwood, *Stealing History: Tomb Raiders, Smugglers, and the Looting of the Ancient World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 11-15; Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 290-295.

monument to British superiority, this time over the French and other Western powers. It also shattered the British fantasy of the mystical, hyper-intelligent ancient Egyptians that held secret knowledge. When Champollion and Young deciphered the Stone, they unintentionally revealed ancient Egypt to be a civilization like any other rather than a superior one. The new, British-created histories of these artifacts and hundreds more spurned Egyptomania and created a cycle of fascination and mystery, new artifacts to examine, and later disappointment at the banal reality. British scholars, many of whom were Orientalist or imperialist, inadvertently gave the Egyptian artifacts they studied to the agency to influence British society and Egyptomania.

However, scholars were not the only active contributors to the reassigning of agency. The British public were active participants in Egyptomania and in ascribing agency to artifacts. The public, which included the working and middle classes, engaged with scholarly publications, fictional literature about ancient Egypt, and public spaces for education like the British Museum.[220] The collaborative engagement of British scholars and the public created the environment for Egyptomania to flourish. Fascination with material objects that Egyptomania instilled in the British breathed new life into Egyptian artifacts. The conflicting histories of the obelisk of Thothmes III, the coffin lid of a priestess, and the Rosetta Stone evidence the hypocritical and often contradictory nature of Orientalism and British imperialism; were these artifacts mystic, entrancing, and supernatural in nature? Or, were they the mundane creations of the ancestors of modern Egypt? The British, unable to confront the reality that they were not saviors of the Orient nor were they the owners and protectors of Egyptian secrets, retreated further into the promise of unveiled mysteries and secret knowledge that their collective fantasies promised.

[220] Brake, "The Serial and the Book," 1-3; Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 336-338; Lanoie, "Inventing Egypt," 150-151.

Chapter Two
Mania in Popular Culture: The British Public's Infatuation with Egyptology

> More than once as I thought, the multitudinous presence of the dead and the past took such hold on me that I caught myself looking round fearfully as though some strange personality or influence was present.[221]
>
> Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*

The British, in their fascination with ancient Egypt and its dead, filled hallways, rooms, and even buildings with artifacts from Egypt. Many people who visited these places, in museums or in private collections, first gazed at the artifacts with awe. That awe, however, sometimes turned to fear of being watched by some strange presence. Some, like the protagonist of Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*, were fearful of mummies watching him.[222] Others, like many members of the British public, felt that there was a sinister curse infecting the owners or viewers of the artifacts. At the same time, scholars and literary authors were publishing works about ancient Egypt, Egyptian artifacts, and ancient languages from the Middle East. They were producing such content while also consuming it as part of the public. This cycle of production and consumption created a near echo chamber of fear, guilt, mania, and demands for more information.

The British public, which primarily included the working and middle classes of British society, felt a mix of fear and utter entrancement with ancient Egypt and its artifacts. The British public refers to the members of the public that consumed information, rather than producing it. Thus, authors, scholars, and the British elite who contributed financially were the

[221] Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* (OUP, 1903, 1996), 5.
[222] Stoker, *The Jewel*.

producers of information on Egypt. This separation serves to highlight the different contributions to Egyptomania that consumers and producers of information on Egypt brought to the subject. Scholarly work, museums, pictures, engravings, paintings and drawings, literature, and news articles pervaded British society during the nineteenth century; the public had access to these resources and began seeking them out. The British public was also consuming written works and intellectual hobbies like reading and visiting museums at increasing rates during the nineteenth century.[223] Ronald Fritze, in his book *Egyptomania: A History of Fascination, Obsession and Fantasy*, posited that Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798 "founded Egyptology as a modern empirical discipline and launched modern Egyptomania."[224] Historians define Egyptomania as "a fascination with ancient Egypt in its many aspects" which many scholars consider to border on obsession.[225] Fritze stated that while Egyptomania existed amongst scholars in particular, it was "also a widespread and persistent aspect of popular culture."[226] Roger Luckhurst concurred with Fritze on the rise of modern Egyptomania, stating "[t]he first wave of Egyptomania is commonly held to have hit England in the wake of the French surrender of Egypt in 1801."[227] Both Luckhurst and Fritze argued that the first notable public attention given towards Egyptology and its scholarship was in regards to Dominique-Vivant Denon's *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt During the Campaigns of General*

[223] Laurel Brake, "The Serial and the Book in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Intersections, Extensions, Transformations," *Mémoires Du Livre*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2017, 1-3.
[224] Ronald H. Fritze, *Egyptomania: A History of Fascination, Obsession, and Fantasy* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 158.
[225] Fritze, *Egyptomania,* 9; Nicholas Lanoie, "Inventing Egypt for the Emerging British Travel Class: Amelia Edwards' A Thousand Miles up the Nile," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 2 (2013): 151.
[226] Fritze, *Egyptomania,* 9.
[227] Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 90.

Bonaparte in that Country, which reached Britain with an English translation in 1803, two years after its original publication.[228]

Scholars and authors became increasingly interested in Egyptology as Egyptomania rose in Britain; the working and middle classes eagerly awaited novels and scholarly journals about Egypt to engage in discussion and rumors. Newspaper archives documented increased numbers of articles that featured subjects such as ancient Egypt, Egyptology, or mummies throughout the nineteenth century.[229] Dozens of newspapers featured information about ancient Egypt, cartoons, current events in Egyptology, and exciting exhibits in museums like the British Museum.[230] The increase in articles written about Egypt did not indicate why there was a rise or who was interested in reading them. Scholars responded to the fascination by producing more research in hopes of establishing their reputations and profiting from funding and book sales.[231] This chapter explores both why the British became fascinated with Egyptology in the nineteenth century and how the public influenced the production of literature about Egyptology.

Current historical research on Egyptology in the nineteenth century primarily focuses on Orientalism, imperialism, and colonialism. Literacy research, on the other hand, focuses on education, class, gender, and sexuality. Scholars have not typically connected Egyptology's history with that of literary history. Historical research often includes evidence of Orientalism and colonialism found in popular culture. Likewise, scholars often cite academia's influence on popular readership, although the public's participation in Egyptomania as an influence on scholarly work has not been widely researched. Presently, historians recognize the influence

[228] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 163-164; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 90-91.
[229] Tamar Atkinson, "How Ancient Egypt was Presented in Nineteenth-Century Newspapers," *Gale Review*, 2022.
[230] Atkinson, "How Ancient Egypt was Presented;" "Comic Column," 80; "Cleopatra's Needle," 85.
[231] Lanoie, "Inventing Egypt," 153-4.

Orientalism, colonialism, and Egyptomania had over Britain's general population. Scholars have not suggested that the wider public, especially consumers, had any influence over scholars' or the government's actions and pursuits. Very few historians have recognized the influence the public had over their government and the research of scholars. For example, Fritze and Luckhurst recognize Egyptomania and the existence of popular literature about ancient Egypt.[232] These and other scholars have not conducted in-depth analyses of the extent of popular Egyptomania or considered whether the public held influence over scholarly research, archaeological expeditions, or colonialism. This chapter analyzes how literacy and popular culture as it related to Egyptomania influenced the producers of research and literature.

Previous scholarly work did not reach the public as pervasively as prior to the nineteenth century because literacy had previously been tied to education.[233] During the nineteenth century, however, the lower classes of British society gained freer access to public education and learned how to read.[234] Literacy in the nineteenth century went through an exponential growth, according to Amy J. Lloyd: "[i]n 1800 around 40 percent of males and 60 percent of females in England and Wales were illiterate; by 1900 illiteracy for both sexes had dropped to around 3 percent."[235] The British public, with a new passion for reading, sought out literature both fictional and non-fictional. Thus, scholarly work became in increasingly higher demand from a wider audience, although new problems arose from scholarly literature.

The combination of scholarly fascination, publications about Egyptology and ancient Egypt, art and antiquities on display in museums, and events such as mummy unwrapping

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[232] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 208-214; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 185-190.
[233] Alison Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print: Media Literacy and Mass Culture in British Magazines, 1885-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 8-9; Amy J. Lloyd, "Education, Literacy and the Reading Public," *British Library Newspapers* (2007), 2-3.
[234] Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print*, 8-11; Lloyd, "Education."
[235] Lloyd, "Education."

created a cycle of sensationalism in Britain. Historians and archaeologists continued their expeditions and publications about Egyptology, which then reached the public through an increasingly streamlined and cheaper printing process. Middle-class authors and artists consuming scholarly publications then produced literature and art featuring Egyptians and ancient Egypt as its own entity. Both of these types of creation, scholarly and fictional, reached the public and fueled their own fascination with ancient Egypt.[236] This cycle of production and consumption of information and artifacts about Egypt bolstered the growing mania about Egypt, its mummies, mysterious languages, and its curses. Such mania, even hysteria at times, led to mummy unwrapping ceremonies, consuming mummies as medicine, and a growing sense of fear of the terrible and violent curses that British buyers or purveyors of Egyptian artifacts suffered.[237]

Literacy and the Rise of Hobby Reading

In the nineteenth century, a cycle of fascination, publication, and consumption emerged. Novels, newspapers, scholarly journals and books, and museums became increasingly popular through rising Egyptomania.[238] Scholars became more interested in Egyptology; they "wanted to know who the ancient Egyptians were as a culture and a people."[239] A significant factor that contributed to increased literacy was the expansion of education across classes. Children of lower classes were, for the first time, able to attend schools where they were taught to read and write. Working-class children in particular were attending schools more frequently; Lloyd noted that "Much of the rise in literacy was brought about through increases in the provision of

[236] Lanoie, "Inventing Egypt," 150-151; Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 336-338.
[237] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 208-209.
[238] Toby Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands: The Golden Age of Egyptology* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2020), 290-291.
[239] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 183.

schooling during the nineteenth century—especially for working-class children."[240] Religious leaders also became more concerned with education as religion departed from primarily emotional or superstitious teachings.[241]

Figure 10: Jean-François Millet, *The Reading Lesson*, Black crayon on paper, 1860, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

[240] Lloyd, "Education."

[241] Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 113-114.

Scholars, both religious and secular, had been leaders of information and transcription for centuries.[242] Simon Gunn argued that several Christian denominations turned towards education and scholarship as a refined method of religious teaching, which was reflected in printed media.[243] Gunn noted "before 1870 the number of new books on religious subjects outstripped those of any other variety, including fiction, while in 1875 some 37 percent of all periodicals were defined as 'religious in tone.'"[244] The combination of secular education amongst children and religious books and periodicals aimed towards adults contributed to the stark decline in illiteracy across the nineteenth century.

Stratification in literature and similar print media created a divide between the less educated working classes and the more highly educated scholars. Antiquarians who became the historians and archaeologists that specialized in Egyptology and Oriental studies were overwhelmingly upper middle class and upper-class men.[245] Many people sought out more to read in the form of newspapers, books, journal articles, periodicals, comics, and magazines. The public worked to sustain themselves while the upper classes lived in excess. Literacy allowed the working class to invest in a hobby outside of labor. The upper middle and upper classes that had previously enjoyed being the only literate classes now enjoyed producing literature for the lower classes to read. Bram Stoker noted "as long as we have human passions we shall have people who try to make money by gratifying them."[246] Scholars and authors gained attention and money from producing literary works on the subjects they and the public were interested

[242] Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print.*
[243] Gunn, *The Public Culture*, 113-116.
[244] Gunn, *The Public Culture*, 115.
[245] Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842-1954), Friday 14 February 1890, 3.
[246] Extracted from the Mail Papers, "Obiter Dicta," *Natal Witness* (1908), 4.

in.[247] Egyptology became the next subject of interest, thus scholars and authors published more about Egypt. Historians and archaeologists saw a monetary gain from bringing artifacts out of Egypt, but the demand for literature promised a new avenue for income. Many scholars of the nineteenth century began as antiquarians, upper class men who became interested in a subject and engrossed themselves in that subject until they became experts in their field of interest.[248]

Nineteenth century scholarship operated under a different standard of ethics than twenty-first century ethical. The early days of historical scholarship and ethical practices differed greatly from those of twenty-first century ethics and standards in how historians and archaeologists did research. While scholars formalized history as a discipline and created professional standards in the late nineteenth century, archaeology as a discipline developed more slowly until the mid-twentieth century.[249] Scholars of the twentieth century were already further developing their ethical standards, but after Howard Carter's discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun archeologists tried to move away from endorsing superstition in response to rumors of curses and bad luck.[250]

Scholars and members of the British government attempted to remain accurate to the history and culture of ancient Egypt in their writings; however, their ideas of the Oriental were evident. Edward Said noted of the former British prime minister in *Orientalism:* "[Arthur James] Balfour nowhere denies British superiority and Egyptian inferiority."[251] Scholarly imaginations of the Orient and the role of the British Empire and the Occident bled into

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[247] "Multiple Display Advertisements," *The Gentlewoman and Modern Life* XXVII, no. 701 (1903), 7.
[248] James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World: Hans Sloane and the Origins of the British Museum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 192-194.
[249] Larry J. Zimmerman, Karen D. Vitelli, and Julie Hollowell-Zimmer, *Ethical Issues in Archaeology* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press in cooperation with the Society for American Archaeology, 2003), 10-12.
[250] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 222-226.
[251] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House Inc., 1979), 31-35.

publications.[252] Despite hiring them on his expeditions, Wallis Budge himself said that the Egyptians he worked with were "the principle [sic] robbers of tombs and wreckers of mummies have been the Egyptians themselves."[253] As Brian Fagan noted, Budge hired Egyptians to break into hotels, houses, and archaeological sites to access artifacts that another archaeologist or the Egyptian government had claim over.[254] Academic publications and the opinions of scholars influenced the public further. Budge's own mentor Samuel Birch, at one time the "keeper of oriental antiquities" at the British Museum, and J. Gardner Wilkinson, Egyptologist and author, frequently appeared in newspapers discussing hieroglyphs, Egyptian artifacts, and the current and past work in Egyptology.[255] The public reading scholarly quotes and literature in newspapers was a more direct, but informal, method for the public to feel engaged with scholarship and learn about Egyptology. The unintentional effect of this engagement, though, was the rise in Egyptomania across British society.

Egyptomania has existed for centuries, from the Greeks to the Romans to the French and British.[256] The West, especially France and Britain, had been fascinated by the ancient Egyptians for decades prior to Champollion's and Young's work with the Rosetta Stone In 1822, however, Western Egyptomania exploded across Britain in the wake of Champollion and Young's respective decipherment of the Rosetta Stone.[257] For the first time in modern history the language of the ancient Egyptians was readable, revealing the secrets of this awe-inspiring

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[252] Said, *Orientalism*, 32-33, 38.
[253] E. A. Wallis Budge, *By Nile and Tigris: A Narrative of Journeys in Egypt and Mesopotamia on Behalf of the British Museum Between the Years 1886 and 1913* (England: J. Murray, 1920), 389.
[254] Brian Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile: Tomb Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists in Egypt* (New York: Scribner, 1975), 301-304.
[255] "Hieroglyphic Science," *Leader*, 28 February 1857, *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*.
[256] Fritze, *Egyptomania.*
[257] Jean-François Champollion, *My Journey to Egypt,* ed. by Peter A. Clayton. Gibson Square, 1832, 2019; Fritze, *Egyptomania.*

civilization. In the years following 1822, books, plays, movies, articles, and newspapers highlighted ancient Egyptian culture and history. Those who produced print media, scholars and authors of fiction, hoped to discover those secrets. Scholars produced what was, in their opinion, the factual accounts of how the Egyptians once lived and worshipped. Other producers of Egyptian literature, primarily fictional stories and plays, believed that they were revealing the possibilities of what ancient Egypt was and its role in British culture. Despite the opposite methodologies, both scholars and authors of fiction hoped to reveal to themselves and the larger public the secrets of the seemingly mystical and exotic ancient Egyptians.

Scholars and authors alike gained more attention from the wider public than they had in previous decades, even centuries. The rise of literacy in the working and middle classes also saw a growing interest in science, fiction, history, culture, politics, global news, and nationalist pursuits.[258] With the price of newly published books being more expensive than most of the working class could afford, other forms of print media became higher in demand.[259] Magazines, newspapers, and publicly available periodicals became popular. The high costs of new books and the public's increasing interest in reading created the demand for a cheaper book trade.[260] The result of these demands was more cheaply made books and serials, which gave additional access to lower income individuals. Demands centered around Egyptology as the public visited museums full of Egyptian artifacts and read articles and novels about the mysterious ancient Egyptians.

[258] Laurel Brake, "The Serial and the Book," 3-6.
[259] Brake, "The Serial and the Book," 2-3.
[260] Brake, "The Serial and the Book," 1-3.

With the increasing demands for information about ancient Egypt, historians and archaeologists were under more pressure to produce information in a written format. The

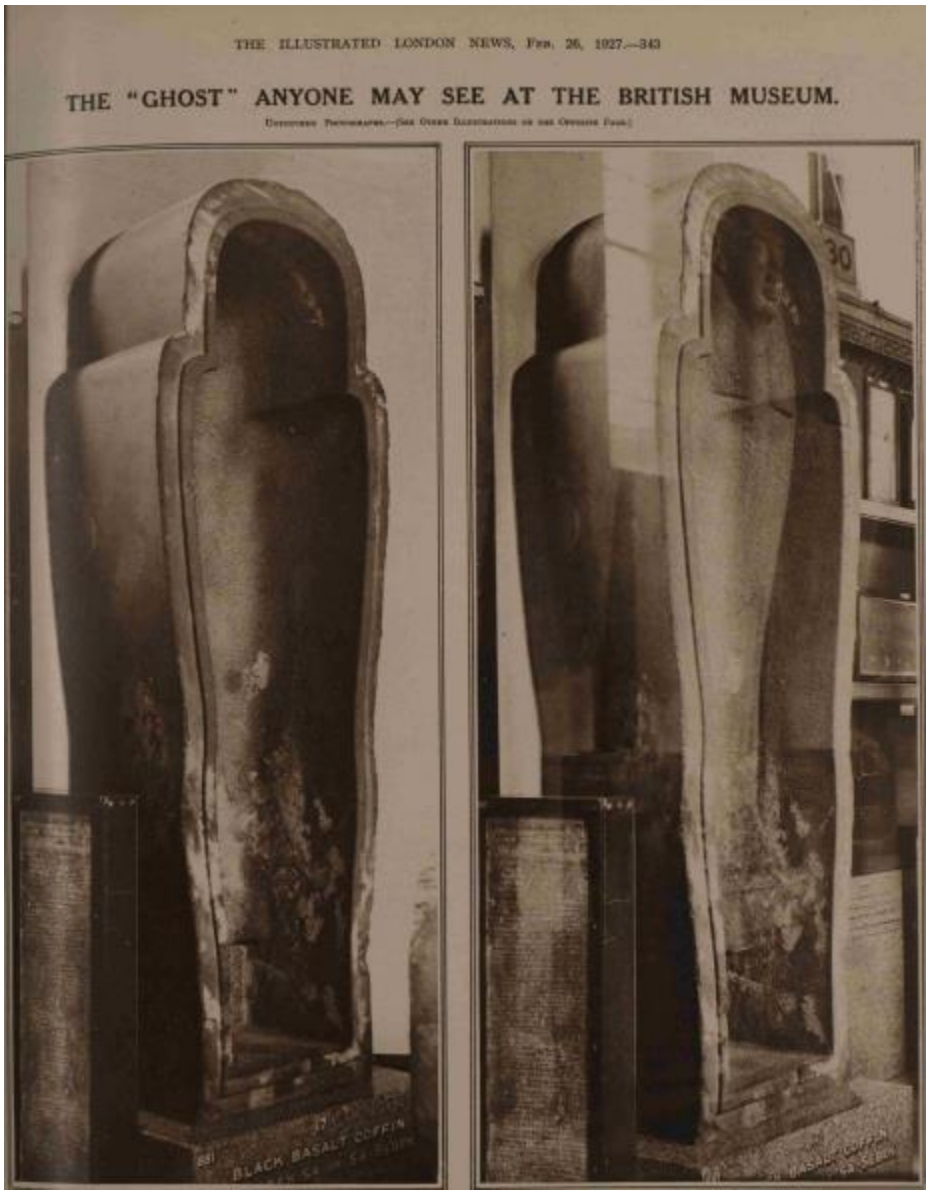

Figure 11: "The 'Ghost' Anyone May See at the British Museum," photograph, The Illustrated London News, 1927.

public's interest also created a higher demand for material artifacts, which they were able to see in the British Museum. Scholars, the British Museum, and the British government became

determined to meet the demands. Archaeologists searched for more funds for their expeditions, which private buyers, museums, and occasionally governments funded and supported.[261] Private patrons appeared to be the most common source of funding, as they had large sums of money, unspecified interests in Egypt, and typically only the small stipulation of joining the journey.[262] Archaeologists cared about having the freedom to go to Egypt, choose what artifacts to return to Britain with, and write books and articles on their findings.[263] These archaeologists also gave or cheaply sold some of the looted artifacts they found on expeditions to the funding parties as a show of appreciation for their money.[264] Private buyers were a solution for archaeologists trying to meet demands for more information and support their own works and image in the public and amongst other scholars. Private buyers were also satisfied with smaller or less historically significant artifacts, while the British Museum would be more discerning. An unspoken undercurrent of the public demands for more artifacts was the entitlement to Egyptian artifacts and history; scholars similarly felt entitled to that history and brought artifacts out of Egypt without consulting the Egyptian government.[265]

The British public were equally as interested in fictional literature as scholarly works, to which Lloyd noted that "[t]he rise in literacy in nineteenth-century Britain led to an increase in

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[261] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 181, 373-374.

[262] Dominique Vivant Denon, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt, during the Campaigns of General Bonaparte* Preface by E.A. Kendal (London: B. Crosby, 1802); Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 373-374; Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 121, 292-293.

[263] Denon, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*; Giovanni Belzoni, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia* (London: Johny Murray, 1820); E. A. Wallis Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles and Other Egyptian Obelisks: a Series of Descriptions of All the Important Inscribed Obelisks, with Hieroglyphic Texts, Translations, Etc* (New York: AMS Press, 1975); E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Rosetta Stone* (Project Gutenberg, n.d).

[264] Denon, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*; Belzoni, *Narrative*; Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 79; "Erasmus Wilson Paid Mr. Dixon, a Civil Engineer, Fifty-Thousand Dollars for the Erection of Cleopatra's Needle on the Banks of the Thames." *The Western and Southern Medical Recorder* I, no. 25 (1878): 484.

[265] Fritze, *Egyptomania*; Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 298-304.

the size of the reading public."[266] However, fiction was initially much more difficult to purchase for the working and middle classes. British printmakers were still streamlining the printing process in the early 1800s, during which time the printing remained a time consuming and skilled task.[267] As a result, newly printed books, especially fiction, were more expensive than most of the public could afford. Older works became more popular amongst the public, but new prints were of higher interest and demand. A book trade began in Scotland and quickly spread across Britain during the 1820's and 1830's due to the lack of money for expensive books and public libraries.[268] Periodicals and scholarly journals were cheaper than books and thus more easily accessible; as the public purchased more periodicals and journals, they were more exposed to and interested in history, science, and culture in Britain and in the wider world.

Print media in Britain existed in the same hierarchy as British class structures. Printing companies printed books and pamphlets on different materials, in different lengths and volumes, and with different print runs depending on genre, author, or audience. Middle-class audiences with more money could purchase books printed with higher quality materials that were often longer than books lower classes could afford. Working-class audiences, on the other hand, could only afford to purchase small books, pamphlets, or novels that were printed in short editions in magazines.[269] Ralf Schneider, in the chapter "Shocking Readers: The Genres of Victorian Popular Fiction, the Classes and the Book Markets" in *The Making of English Popular Culture*, argued "a market for novels popular with the middle classes existed side by side with a fairly separate market of literature produced for the working classes— the latter being the one

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[266] Lloyd, "Education."
[267] Brake, "The Serial and the Book;" Bracebridge Hemyng, "Mischievous Mat; or, Mirth and Mystery," *Sons of Britannia* XIII, no. 332 (1876); Reuter, "Immoral Fiction," *Natal Witness*, 9 Oct. 1908, p. 5; Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842-1954), Friday 14 February 1890, 3.
[268] Brake, "The Serial and the Book," 2-4.
[269] John Storey, ed., *The Making of English Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 118-121.

meaning of the term 'popular' in cultural studies."[270] While printed literature reflected class structures of British society, scholarly literature did not stratify its pricing or availability to those interested in reading it.[271]

Fictional literature printed in single volume books made with quality materials, which are common in the twenty-first century, were much more expensive in the nineteenth century. Printing processes were still time consuming and costly, cheaper materials were still used to create books and pamphlets that were less expensive.[272] As a result, working classes could buy the cheaper books, often called "penny dreadfuls," "shilling shockers," or "chapbooks," which were targeted towards working class audiences.[273] These cheaper books were named penny dreadfuls due to their subject matter and pricing: the books were cheap to buy and most often featured horror as the subject. They also were printed in runs of eight to sixteen pages at a time, which appealed to less educated people like those in the working class, and could create a series in a novel that enticed continued readership.[274] Longer books that came in single or multiple volumes, however, cost much more and typically featured romance, the arts, or other subjects that traditionally appealed to the middle classes. The popular opinion of penny dreadfuls in the nineteenth century was that they were low-brow books for the lower classes of British society.[275]

Fantasy, Fear, and the Female-Form in Fiction

Egyptomania was booming in Britain due to the discoveries such as the Rosetta Stone, Cleopatra's Needle, the "Unlucky Mummy" and hundreds of other artifacts. The British public

[270] Storey, ed., *English Popular Culture*, 119.
[271] Storey, ed., *English Popular Culture*; Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print*, 4-9, 21.
[272] Hedley, *Making Pictorial Print*, 9, 17-18, 21.
[273] Storey, ed., *English Popular Culture*, 121-122.
[274] Storey, ed., *English Popular Culture*, 120-122.
[275] Storey, ed., *English Popular Culture*, 121-122.

were just as intrigued by ancient Egyptian culture as the archaeologists and historians who visited and researched Egypt. The public's interest bled into fictional works, newspaper articles and advertisements, plays, and scholarly work. Lloyd indicated that "[d]evelopments in the

WHAT we all require, and we all get—Air.
A REQUIRED Vice—Advice.
A SMALL Vice—Crevice.
SYMPATHY—Putting a threepenny piece in a collection plate and taking out a sixpence.
WHAT animal does a troublesome person resemble?—A bore (boar).
LIGHTHOUSES—Paper Buildings, in the City.
WHY does Cleopatra's Needle resemble a useless needle?—Because it is without an eye.

Figure 12: "Comic Column," comic, Boy's Herald III, no. 57 (1878).

newspaper press during this period thus went hand-in-hand with these changes in education and literacy, which created new markets and new audiences."[276] Even children were exposed to Egyptology as a result.[277] Newspapers such as *Boy's Herald* and *Champion Journal for the Boys of the United Kingdom* published articles about Egypt and Britain's exploits; *Boy's Herald*'s "Comic Column" published the joke "[w]hy does Cleopatra's Needle resemble a useless needle?—Because it is without an eye" in 1878, just one year after the Needle came to London.[278] While *Boy's Herald,* a newspaper for British youth, only dedicated a single line to

[276] Lloyd, "Education."
[277] "Cleopatra's Needle," *The Champion Journal for the Boys of the United Kingdom*, vol. I, no. 6, 20 Oct. 1877, 85. Nineteenth Century Collections Online; "Comic Column," *Boy's Herald* III, no. 57 (1878): 80.
[278] "Comic Column," 80.

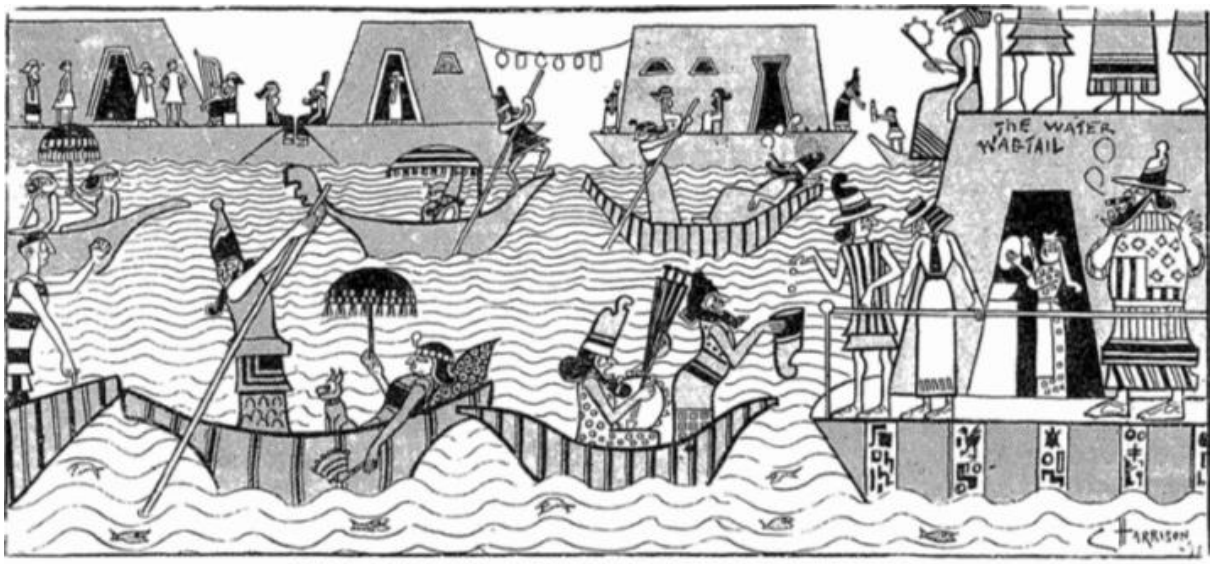
Egypt, others dedicated pages of articles to it.

Many newspapers predicted that Egyptology and specific artifacts, like Cleopatra's Needle, would "soon be an attractive object to all English people."[279] While the public were reading more frequently, newspapers may have been preemptive in pushing forward stories that promised more information. Archaeology and literature were reflective of Egyptology increasing in popularity amongst scholars and writers; journalists may have wanted to push information about Egypt to ensure several months of articles. If newspapers did prioritize publishing information about Egypt and Egyptology, it could have further influenced the public's interest in the writings of scholars. Between 1825 and 1900, dozens of newspapers included articles about ancient Egypt, mummies, and Egyptological developments from British and French scholars.[280] The imaginings of the public often imprinted British culture and nineteenth-century ways of life. Satirical magazines like *Punch* both mocked and contributed to such Egyptomania in cartoons that highlighted the absurdity that the ancient Egyptians mirrored nineteenth-century Britain. Cartoons depicting imaginings of typical Egyptian life, often celebrating British holidays or participating in British activities, such as Christmas or a Regatta, in the British-imagined ancient Egyptian style emerged.[281] These satirical images showed that the British public imagined the ancient Egyptians to be like themselves in community and customs, but different in fashion and culture. Even though the cartoons were satire, they reflected larger public sentiments as satirical magazines parodied pop culture.[282] Such cartoons

[279] "Cleopatra's Needle," 85.
[280] Atkinson, "How Ancient Egypt was Presented."
[281] "The Ancient Egyptian Henley Regatta," *Punch,* July 10, 1897, 12, *Punch Historical Archive, 1841-1992*; C. Harrison, "The Festive Season in Ancient Egypt. A Little Marketing in the Nineveh New Road," *Punch,* 1 Jan. 1897, *Punch Historical Archive*, 1841-1992.
[282] Ailise Bulfin, "The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia: The Curse of the Suez Canal," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 54, no. 4 (2011), 411-413.

also contributed to and fueled Egyptomania in their viewers; British readers of satire may not have imagined ancient Egyptians in their image, but the curiosity of how they did live persisted.[283] Further, newspaper articles that wrote about the discovery of pyramids, mummies, tombs, and monuments indicated that the public closely followed archaeological expeditions in Egypt.[284] The content of the newspaper articles about ancient Egypt and the increase in such articles suggests that the public became more interested in Egyptology over time through both scholarly publications, publicly available exhibitions, and news.

The public most often turned to newspapers and journal articles for factual information about Egypt, but they also turned to works of fiction. Where reportedly factual accounts



provided schematics, photographs and etchings, measurements, and personal accounts of

Figure 13: "The Ancient Egyptian Henley Regatta," comic, Punch, July 10, 1897, 12.

archaeological work, fictional works could be more fascinating. Authors of fiction wrote about the curses of Egypt, the mystic goings on in tombs and quiet museums. They wrote about

283 Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 339-340.
284 "Monumental History of Egypt," *Leader*, February 10, 1855, Nineteenth Century Collections Online, 138; "Discovery of Early Pyramids," *Watchman*, April 20, 1881, *Gale Nineteenth Century Collections Online*, 122.

mummies coming to life, of the rage and contempt that ancient Egyptians held for Britain.[285] The fictional accounts of Egypt held the fantasy that all people sought after, the mystery of the Valley of Kings and the Great Pyramids, the secretive hieroglyphs that spelled out curses. These books also reflected the feelings of the writers and of the public: feelings of fear, guilt, intrigue, and sexual fantasy.

Dozens of contemporary authors published books, plays, novellas, reviews, and personal musings about ancient Egypt during the nineteenth century. Bram Stoker, Agatha Christie, Jane Webb Loudon, Théophile Gautier, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Henry Rider Haggard were a few of the dozens of authors who wrote about Egypt. The abundance of literature about Egypt and the subject matter featuring the unraveling of ancient Egypt's mysteries suggests that reportedly factual accounts could not answer the questions about Egypt that the British public had. These stories also reflected the underlying feelings that their authors and readers felt towards Egypt and British national pursuits.[286] Some authors, such as Arthur Conan Doyle and Henry Rider Haggard, were in favor of British control of Egyptology and Egypt itself, while others, such as Amelia Edwards and Jane Webb Loudon, opposed colonialism. Other authors perhaps only cared about the fascinating mysteries of Egypt and its archaeological sites, as the mystery of a cursed mummy or newly deciphered inscriptions were more interesting to some than the political notions of colonialism and Orientalism.

Scholars felt ownership of ancient Egypt's artifacts and secrets as a result of Orientalist and nationalist philosophies, while the public felt fear of the repercussions of that ownership. Reading fictional stories about Egyptians and their artifacts could have assuaged the fear that

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[285] H. Rider Haggard, *Smith and the Pharaohs* (Project Gutenberg, 2006).

[286] Nolwenn Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum in Fiction: The Mummy's Eyes as the 'Black Mirror' of the Empire," *Cahiers Victoriens & Édouardiens (Online)* no. 93 (Spring, 2021), 2; Haggard, *Smith and the Pharaohs*; H. Rider Haggard, *Cleopatra*, Project Gutenberg, 2006.

the public was feeling as a result of reports of injury and death surrounding those artifacts.[287] These stories also often supported those fears, providing accounts of the evils that could happen to people who anger ancient Egyptians. Many books written about Egyptian mummies featured them coming to life, stealing the life of the living characters, or becoming an enraged enemy for the characters to ward off and return to its afterlife.[288]

Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* is the story of an Egyptologist who wished to revive an Egyptian mummy, Queen Tera. During this mission, Queen Tera possessed the man's daughter, urging the characters to act faster.[289] The characters of the book included the archaeologist Mr. Trelawny, his daughter Margaret, Dr. Winchester, and the narrator, barrister Malcolm Ross. The story began with Ross receiving a mysterious summons to the house of Mr. Trelawny, where Margaret had discovered her father unconscious in his bedroom that was filled with Egyptian artifacts, including a mummified cat.[290] The mummified cat and a seven-fingered hand had both been mysteriously covered in fresh blood during the story. Egyptian artifacts went missing and then appeared again, and a sarcophagus with the mummy of Queen Tera loomed over the story. Several times throughout the novel, Ross noted the "strange smells" of Egyptian spices that appeared to affect everyone who stayed in the room for extended periods. Stoker described lavish Egyptian artifacts, overcrowded rooms of mysterious hieroglyphs,

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[287] Alexander Wilder, "Dust and Contagion," *The American Eclectic Medical Review*, vol. VI, no. 5, 1870, 207; "Cleopatra's Needle to Go to England," *Methodist*, 1877, 183; "The 'Ghost' Anyone May See at the British Museum," *The Illustrated London News*, 1927; Richard Penlake, "Links with the Past," *The Photographic News*, vol. XLIX, no. 499, 1905, 460.

[288] Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum," 2-5; Jane Webb Loudon, *The Mummy!*, S.l.: Mint Editions, 1827; Haggard, *Smith and the Pharaohs*; Haggard, *Cleopatra*.

[289] Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum," 8-10; Stoker, *The Jewel*, 136-141.

[290] Stoker, *The Jewel*, 23-24.

jewels, and smells.[291] Stoker created an atmosphere of fear and confusion that were shrouded in the secrets of the ancient Egyptians and a female mummy.

Margaret, the only living woman featured in the novel, defended the modesty and autonomy of Queen Tera and her mummified cat. Archaeologists had removed the wrapping of many mummies during the nineteenth century, especially female mummies, in order to see the bodies underneath and analyze the materials.[292] Margaret, however, opposed the men in the story unwrapping Queen Tera and her mummified cat. Margaret pleaded with them "Father, you are not going to unswathe her! All you men...! And in the glare of light!...Just think, Father, a woman! All alone! In such a way! In such a place! Oh! it's cruel, cruel!"[293] Stoker could have allowed the unwrapping to occur without opposition. He instead highlighted the act as unseemly and cruel to the human being. Mr. Trelawny argued with Margaret, telling her that Queen Tera was "not a woman, dear; a mummy!"[294] Here Trelawny, and the other men in the room, considered the queen an object for them to possess and alter as they wished, rather than a person who was owed dignity in their death. Stoker here highlighted the imperial attitudes that persisted in Britain, especially in regard to "the Orient" and opportunities for colonial pursuits. Egypt offered rich resources in history, culture, and imperial control to rival other western countries like France.[295]

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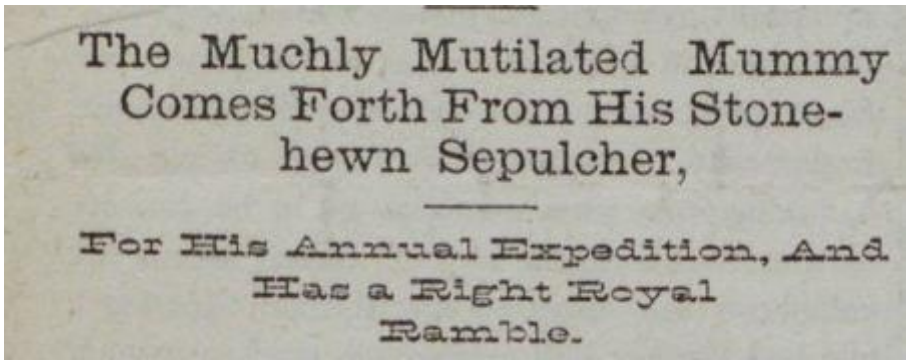
[291] Stoker, *The Jewel*, 23-26, 30-33.
[292] Stoker, *The Jewel*, 152; Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 83.
[293] Stoker, *The Jewel*, 151.
[294] Stoker, *The Jewel*, 151.
[295] Said, *Orientalism*, 11, 31-37.

Margaret's objection to her father undressing Queen Tera also highlighted the themes of sexual dominance and ownership that persisted over female mummies. Margaret felt a kinship with the queen; while her father argued that a mummy of five thousand years is not truly a woman, Margaret argued "What does that matter? Sex is not a matter of years! A woman is a woman, if she had been dead five thousand centuries!"[296] Margaret pleaded with her father and ultimately lost, as did Queen Tera. Both women wished for the queen to be left alone to rest, as Egyptians did not wrap their mummies with the intention of ever being naked again.[297] Margaret and the queen both lost this fight, as the men present were more dominant and had no intention of listening to the wishes of the women. Stoker may have been opposing the prominent sexual ownership over female mummies that existed in Britain, or he might have been equating sexual dominance with imperialist attitudes.


The Muchly Mutilated Mummy Comes Forth From His Stone-hewn Sepulcher,

For His Annual Expedition, And Has a Right Royal Ramble.

Figure 14: "Foraging for Fun," headline, Egyptian Star, January 1880.

Stoker was a popular writer amongst several classes of British society. Newspapers often dedicated columns or pages to new novels and non-fiction books that the public may be interested in. *Designer and the Woman's Magazine* declared that *The Jewel* was "one of the best supernatural stories published for many years" and hailed it as a striking novel full of mystery

[296] Stoker, *The Jewel*, 152.
[297] Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum," 9-11.

with "a tragic and powerful end."[298] Several newspapers also endorsed Stoker's novels, and *The Jewel* was no different.[299] Of these newspapers, many were women's magazines and newspapers; literature was advertised as frequently as a woman's hobby like needlework, although the genre of the novels did not appear to matter. Horror and thriller novels, like Stoker's *The Jewel,* were advertised to women along with novels such as *The Story of Susan, The One Woman,* and *The Call of the Wild*.[300] Women reading these novels, especially those with themes of sexual dominance like *The Jewel,* could have read such stories and identified with the women and the female mummies. While these women might have connected with the sexual dominance and male ownership over a woman's, or mummy's, body, they also would have felt a responsibility to protect Egyptian women. During the same time as Egyptomania's peak in Britain, women's feminist movements were also rising. British women were fighting for rights that British men considered "unfeminine" including the right to vote and emancipation from men.[301]

A core tenet of nineteenth-century suffrage movements was to improve upon imperialism for the women of British colonies. These suffragettes believed that British women were responsible for and capable of creating and sustaining "a more ethical kind of imperial rule."[302] Oriental and otherwise, the female "other" was a responsibility of British women according to the suffragettes. Britain was, within British society, both superior as a nation and as a race. Antoinette Burton, author of *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women,*

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[298] Alice Ranous Chubb, "Notes of New Books," *The Designer and the Woman's Magazine* XXI, no. 1 (1904), 92.
[299] Chubb, "Notes," 92; "Multiple Display Advertisements," *The Gentlewoman and Modern Life* XXVII, no. 701 (1903), 7.
[300] "Multiple Display Advertisements," 7.
[301] Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 1-5.
[302] Burton, *Burdens of History,* 17.

and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915, argued "woman as savior of the nation, the race, and the empire was a common theme in female emancipation arguments."[303] As a result, women in British colonies, including Egyptian mummies, became the mode through which British women highlighted mistreatment in the colonies and amongst British women.

British women in the nineteenth century witnessed sexual dominance and ownership of a woman's right to remain covered in death, which could have initiated opposition to standard imperial practices in Egypt and the undressing of female mummies. Feminists opposed the treatment of women across Britain and in the empire and often protested or advocated for their beliefs. Their goal, however, was not to end imperialism and colonialism, or even to subvert Orientalism in favor of a "global sisterhood."[304] The suffragettes' goal was to gain the vote to create space for women both as British citizens and as saviors of "uncivilized" colonized women.[305] Unfortunately for British feminists, the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1884 excluded women from voting; after the Reform Act of 1884 passed, it became obvious that it was "the final suffrage bill that would be passed for some decades."[306]

Once feminists determined that the legal avenue had come to a halt, they turned to more direct actions. Suffragettes went on hunger strikes to protest the standard of imperialism and the treatment of colonized women.[307] In response, the British government imprisoned and force-fed the hunger-striking suffragettes to silence the movement, which often served to circumvent the intention of the strikes.[308] By force feeding the women who were protesting colonialism as a

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[303] Burton, *Burdens of History*, 3.
[304] Burton, *Burdens of History*, 1-3.
[305] Burton, *Burdens of History*, 41-45.
[306] Susie Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London ; Routledge, 2012), 51.
[307] Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, 51.
[308] Ian Miller, "Necessary Torture?: Vivisection, Suffragette Force-Feeding, and Responses to Scientific Medicine in Britain c. 1870–1920," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 64, no. 3 (2009): 360-361.

larger part of protesting the treatment of women in Britain, they were silencing the women without answering their demands or letting them die. British women protested against Britain for barring them from voting and for the treatment of colonized women. Suffragettes stood against imperialist status quo but were striking for a new kind of imperialism: a more feminine, "pure," imperialism.[309] For the suffragettes, Egypt was less of interest for its treatment of colonized women and more for its sexualization of "exotic" women. Novels written about ancient Egyptian women, even mummies, often characterized them as exotic sexual beings that could control men almost magically.[310] Such characterizations either led to a male character owning, undressing, or displaying a corpse, or he would fall victim to her spell at the cost of his life.[311] Owning and displaying mummies, almost exclusively female, was typical of museums and private owners. However, the desecration of unwrapping a mummy served as an act of British superiority over the "other" for the purpose of amusement.

The British performed mummy unwrapping events until the early twentieth century. These unwrapping "parties" often featured female mummies rather than males.[312] They were primarily hosted for a male audience, although women were known to attend as well. Men who hosted the unwrappings sought out female mummies because male attendees preferred to see women unwrapped. Additionally, wealthy British buyers largely considered the ownership of females to be more exotic and mysterious.[313] British men most often unwrapped mummies in universities, hospitals, and public meeting halls. Angela Stienne argued that Britain dehumanized Egyptians and their mummies in these practices, which has carried forward into

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[309] Burton, *Burdens of History*, 3, 16-17.
[310] Haggard, *Smith and the Pharaohs*, 473; Haggard, *Cleopatra*, 91, 129; Corriou, "The Egyptian Museum," 5-6, 10.
[311] Stoker, *The Jewel*, 149-151; Haggard, *Cleopatra*.
[312] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 144.
[313] 115-119; "Unrolling a Mummy," *Champion*, March 12, 1837, *British Library Newspapers*.

the twenty-first century.[314] Giovanni Belzoni and Thomas Pettigrew, a surgeon and antiquarian, collaborated in the 1820s and 1830s to procure mummies and garner a crowd to watch Pettigrew unwrap her. Unwrappings had been shrouded under the guise of science, but the hundreds of attendees from all classes and educations suggested otherwise. Pettigrew used public interest in mummies to elevate himself in the public eye, which bolstered his medical career and made him a wealthy enough man to purchase his own mummy.[315] Pettigrew's unwrappings made a spectacle of the Orient with "an insidious political message" that produced Egyptomania in the public and profit for the practitioners.[316] Pettigrew was only one of many scholars who reinforced Orientalist narratives that the British Empire was entitled to Egypt's history and mummies.

Feminists in the nineteenth century likened the removal of a woman from her tomb and then her shroud to the subjugation of British and colonized women alike.[317] These practices were a more direct allegory for the rape of a woman and the rape of the so-called Orient. Mummies were Other, a spectacle to profit from and to own, rather than the desecrated remains of a woman. By unwrapping female mummies in public spaces, scientists and scholars asserted dominance of men and empire over the Orient. Stienne concluded "[i]t was to be understood that some people were not just different – they were inferior. And in this sordid display of racism and othering, the Egyptian mummy became a powerful tool of persuasion."[318] British nationalism had been firmly intertwined with Orientalism and had placed British men in a hierarchy of power over women, over their colonies, and over the Egyptian dead.

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[314] Stienne, *Mummified*, 218-220; "Unrolling a Mummy."
[315] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 98-102; Stienne, *Mummified*, 127-129.
[316] Stienne, *Mummified*, 135-138.
[317] Loudon, *The Mummy!*, 69.
[318] Stienne, *Mummified*, 138.

Feminists, in a country where women were considered "the inferior sex of the superior race," sought to elevate their status in British society through their salvation of Oriental women.[319] Many women went on hunger strikes, while others, primarily middle class, educated British women, wrote about their experiences or the experiences of Egyptian women. Loudon and other authors, men and women alike, wrote stories of mummies coming to life once unwrapped to satirize and criticize such events.[320] Amelia Edwards and Agatha Christie, among others, traveled to Egypt and British colonies and wrote about the culture, history, and beauty they found there.[321] Wealthy British women bought their own Egyptian mummies and refused to allow anyone to remove their shrouds, although they still put them on display. All of these actions protested the treatment of Egyptian mummies and of colonized women. However, women were profiting from Egyptomania and its opposition just as men were. Women used Egypt as a means for elevating themselves within British society, selling books, or owning and displaying Egyptian artifacts as a display of wealth.

Egyptomania as Profit

Archaeologists and historians received funding from British institutions and donors that were interested in Egyptian artifacts coming into British possession. The rise of tourism to Egypt also created a need for travel agencies, like that of Thomas Cook and Son, to plan and arrange for travel. Authors, many of whom had visited Egypt themselves, began writing about their experiences or, more often, fictional stories about Egypt. Journalists wrote dozens of articles about Egypt and Egyptological developments. All of these people and the institutions they worked for or that funded them profited from their work and the growing Egyptomania.

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[319] Burton, *Burdens of History*, 35.
[320] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 83.
[321] Nicholas Lanoie, "Inventing Egypt for the Emerging British Travel Class: Amelia Edwards' *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 40, vol. 2, (2013).

While these people were themselves enthralled in the fantasies of Egyptomania, they had not become blind to opportunities to make money and garner fame. Archaeological work often made scholars famous in the public eye in addition to their field, while the patrons or institutions funding them made more money themselves.[322] Travel agencies, authors, and newspapers benefited from the public's interest in Egypt by creating more avenues to Egypt or information about it. The British government profited by funding expeditions, bringing more artifacts into Britain, and by justifying and increasing British presence in Egypt.[323] Stoker himself believed any interests people held, there would be those who tried to profit from those interests.[324]

Newspapers report on anything deemed newsworthy, such as current political events, popular culture, new books, and scientific or historical discoveries. The discoveries that British or British-associated archaeologists made in Egypt were often in the news, however, such discoveries were not the only way that newspapers wrote about Egypt. Books about Egypt, both fiction and nonfiction, featured in articles about new publications of interest in women's magazines.[325] Mentions of Egyptian artifacts also entered children's cartoons and as anecdotes in news stories about unrelated subjects.[326] Even museums and private collectors advertised in newspapers about public displays or auctions of Egyptian artifacts.[327] Travel agencies also advertised Egypt as a fantasy vacation destination and the perfect place to travel to learn about and experience history.[328] Dozens of British newspapers published edition after edition that

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[322] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 176; Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 38-40, 44-47.
[323] Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman, eds., *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 33-36.
[324] "Obiter Dicta."
[325] "Candour in English Fiction;" Chubb, Alice Ranous. "Notes of New Books," 92.
[326] "Cleopatra's Needle."
[327] "The 'Ghost' Anyone May See at the British Museum;" "Multiple Display Advertisements."
[328] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 191-195.

mentioned Egypt or its study throughout as a response to the public popularity of Egypt. When the readers of newspapers were interested in hearing about Egyptology or artifacts on display, newspapers responded in order to maintain or increase sales.

In addition to newspapers, authors wrote about Egypt and its surrounding myths for profit. The motivations for authors to write such novels varied: some were themselves fascinated with Egyptian history and the mystic rumors surrounding it while others were more motivated to profit off of their readers' Egyptomania.[329] Without clear implications from individual authors, it is difficult to categorize which authors were producing literature based on their own interest and those who were seeking profit. For example, Henry Rider Haggard wrote several novels that featured myths about ancient Egypt, including *Smith and the Pharaohs* and *Cleopatra*. Haggard might have written these novels as a result of his own Egyptomania, or he could have been capitalizing on trends in popular culture. Despite the difficulty in determining motivations, nearly all of the authors who wrote a book, novella, serialized newspaper novel, or short story profited off writing about ancient Egypt and garnered a larger number of loyal readers.[330] Haggard himself became known for his novels about "exotic" peoples and places and used that reputation to expand to writing about other parts of Africa and South America.[331] Stoker's *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* was the first of his novels since *Dracula* (1897) to reach a widespread level of popularity beyond dedicated horror readers.[332] Regardless of the initial intentions of some authors writing novels about Egypt, the interest and demands of popular culture created a space for authors to both profit and make a name for themselves.

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[329] "Obiter Dicta."

[330] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 337-340; Bracebridge Hemyng, "Mischievous Mat; or, Mirth and Mystery," *Sons of Britannia* XIII, no. 332 (1876).

[331] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 194-195.

[332] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 206-207.

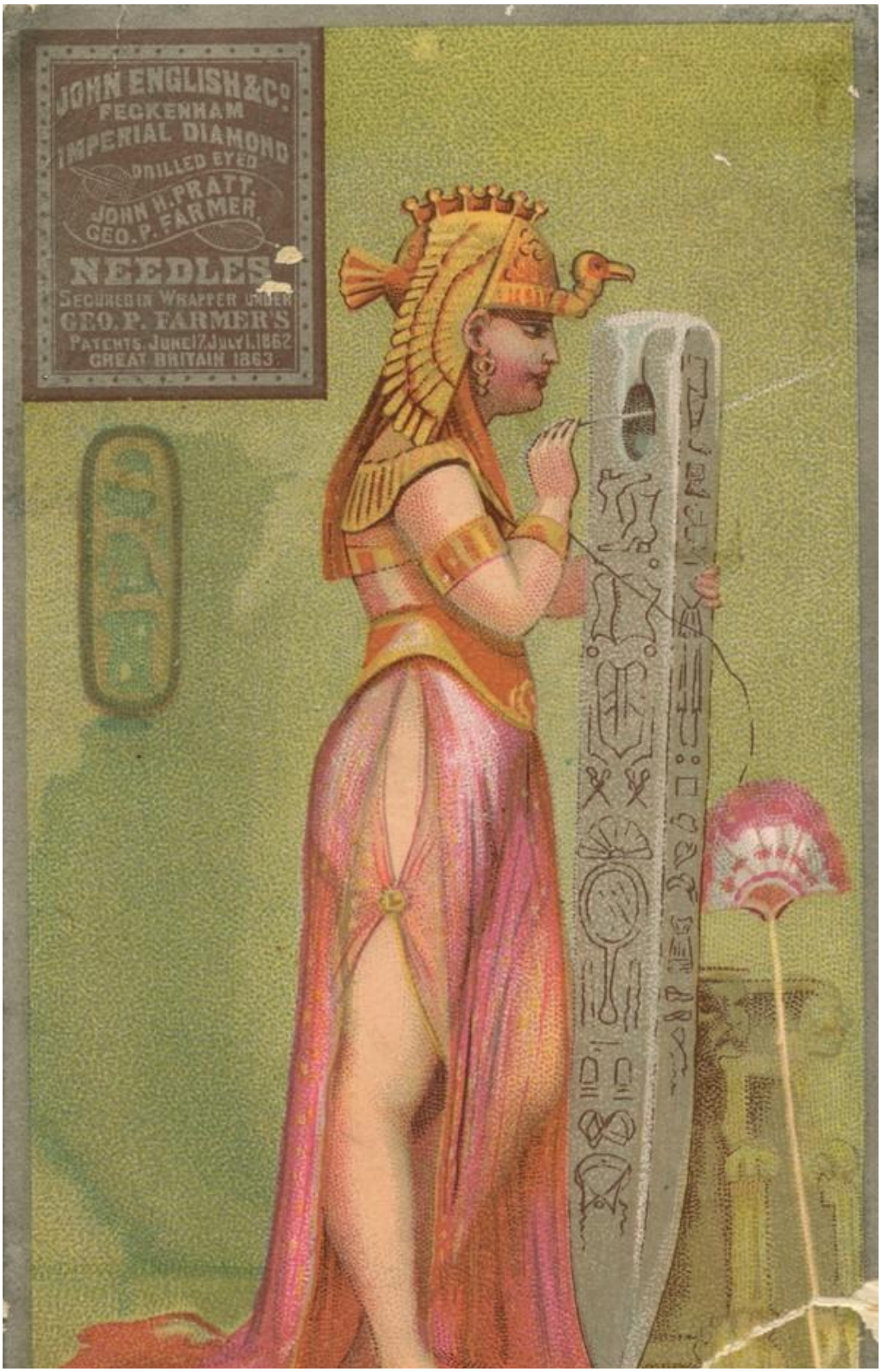

Figure 15: Advertisement for Needles, Potsdamer and Co. Lithographic Firm, Philadelphia, created for John English & Co. Needles, print, ca. 1880's. Depicted is a woman in suggestive clothing and Egyptian-esque jewelry threading a needle through "Cleopatra's Needle." Note the use of "Cleopatra's Needle" to advertise a needle-making company.

Following the growing scholarly interest and production of literature, artists and authors

began producing art and literature featuring Egypt. In 1845, Edgar Allen Poe wrote 'Some Words with a Mummy,' a short story about mummy unwrapping ceremonies.[333] The public similarly became intrigued by ancient Egypt and its scholarship, which led to increased production of literature and art, but also mummy unwrappings.[334] Mummy unwrappings were a popular middle class society event that seemed impervious to the common rumors of curses that surrounded Egyptian mummies. Luckhurst noted that "[l]ocal scientific institutes organized events centred on the unwrapping of mummies gifted by wealthy benefactors for the education of the public."[335] Many members of British society, including scientists and doctors, also ground mummies into particles small enough to be ingested or mixed with medicine, which Fritze referred to as *mumia* in reference to the root word of "mummy."[336] Public visitations of mummies served as evidence that Egyptomania was on the rise in nineteenth century Britain.

The public spectacle of the mummy indicated a larger demand for Egyptian artifacts and knowledge about ancient Egypt. Museums across Europe vied for Egyptian antiquities and competed with each other for them. Archaeologists raced to excavation sites to dig and to fight for antiquities dealers to buy from. Scientists ground Egyptian mummies into a powder they combined with medicine in belief of a mystical healing property the mummies possessed. Novelists wrote books and serialized newspaper stories for decades as both a response and contribution to Egyptomania.[337] Further, museums did not simply purchase artifacts and display them plainly—they curated immersive experiences for visitors to feel as though they were

[333] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 184.
[334] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 83.
[335] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 83.
[336] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 182-183.
[337] Toby Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands: The Golden Age of Egyptology* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2020), 290-296; Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 182-183, 336-337; "Obiter Dicta;" Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 100, 98-102.

entering the world of ancient Egypt. Such immersion extended to British architecture developing a neo-Egyptian style even beyond museums. Luckhurst indicated that these spaces were "nearly always a commercial entertainment experience" which served to facilitate "exotic consumption."[338] Museums, businesses, and authors curated these experiences in the hopes of entrancing the public into purchasing souvenirs, goods, and books. Capitalist business models were the primary focus rather than dispensing well-researched information to a newly literate population.

Egyptomania did not only create a demand for knowledge and artifacts, but also for celebrity. The public tracked authors for new novels, scholars for new research, archaeologists for new artifacts, and museums for new experiences. Such dedication was tantamount to modern celebrity status. Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Henry Rider Haggard, and dozens more authors capitalized on the public mania while feeding their own. Scholars from many disciplines, including linguists like Thomas Young and Jean-François Champollion competed for first place in solving Egyptian mysteries or publishing new research. Archaeologists raced against each other to bribe local Egyptians, pay them to work, or trade with antiquities dealers to smuggle artifacts out of Egypt to resell. Museums, most famously the British Museum, bought newly discovered artifacts from auctions and privately hired archaeologists.[339] A common thread was the notion that archaeologists were treasure hunters; they were imagined as brave men who ventured into the dangerous Orient to return with artifacts priceless to history and to their own bank accounts.[340] Fame and money brought power and influence, which men like Wallis Budge used to procure prestigious jobs at universities and

[338] Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 116-117.
[339] Fritze, *Egyptomania*, 336-340; Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 290-298; John Ray, *The Rosetta Stone and the Rebirth of Ancient Egypt* (London: Profile Books, 2014), 36-37; Stienne, *Mummified*, 76-79.
[340] Wilkinson, *A World Beneath the Sands*, 295-298; Stienne, *Mummified*, 187-191.

museums. Power and influence then maintained those tenacious scholars' public perception as heads of their fields. The public's demand for knowledge and for celebrity elevated the already burgeoning scholarly Egyptomania and facilitated its monetary and social value.

Conclusion

The story of colonizing Egypt is traditionally an academic one. It is the story of archaeology, of history, and of Orientalism. To challenge this narrative is to build upon it. The nineteenth century was a time of nationalist imperialism, Orientalism, and of Egyptology, each used to justify the other. Britain and France fought battles and stole looted artifacts from one another to push forward their own superiority in the West. Egypt did not register to them as its own country and people, rather it was the battleground of Western cultural domination.[341] Britain strived to be superior over other European countries by hosting a larger collection of world history and science than any other country. Britain boasted artifacts from every country they colonized, but it was Egypt that captured the public's fascination. This chapter highlighted this cycle of Egyptomania and influence; however, the featured books, newspapers, journal articles, and imagery are by no means exhaustive. The cycle is also not linear, as Egyptomania occurred in spikes and dips throughout the nineteenth century as it has throughout history. The combined mania of the reading public with that of the producers of literature does not diminish the groundbreaking developments scholars made in Egyptology. Rather it serves to elevate and expound upon these achievements and recognize the vital role the rest of British society played.

If the public had no influence over their government and the work of scholars, funding would have remained competitive and difficult to procure. To say that the public did not or could not influence scholars would be to ignore the increase in novels that featured Egyptian

[341] Booth, *The Long 1890s in Egypt*, 316-317.

mummies or history. When the working and middle classes enjoyed certain genres or tropes the most, authors responded in kind with new stories. Prior to widespread literacy, Egyptology was just one of many fields of scholarship that was conducted by and for the well-educated members of society. In a literate Britain, the public wanted to learn history and participate in popular culture. [342] Scholars adapted from an insulated community to one that enjoyed the participation of a wider audience. The public eye elevated their craft and the resources at their disposal; public Egyptomania facilitated the long-standing Egyptomania of the antiquarians who became seasoned archaeologists.

When the upper classes of British society read new research on Egypt or visited the British Museum, they became so intrigued that they funded expeditions for new research. Most often, a member of the British upper class would extend a certain amount of money to a specific archaeologist they followed.[343] Thus, a member of the consuming public directly became a contributor to future research to come out of Egypt. Many patrons even funded several seasons of excavations, as Budge noted throughout his body of work.[344] Once artifacts entered Britain, benefactors and museums bought them from the archaeologists while they continued their analyses of those artifacts. When artifacts went on display in museums or private collections, novelists became fascinated with them and incorporated Egyptian myths into their writing. Such writing developed into a new subgenre of horror, which forever classified Egyptian mummies as monsters in the night.[345]

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[342] Laurel Brake, "The Serial and the Book," 1-4.
[343] Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 79, 389.
[344] Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*; Budge, *Cleopatra's Needles*; Budge, *The Rosetta Stone*.
[345] "Candour in English Fiction;" Chubb, "Notes of New Books;" "The 'Ghost' Anyone May See at the British Museum;" Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, 294-297.

The cyclical nature of influence is evident in the above process of Egyptomania consumption and production. First, there was research and literacy. Then came funding and demands for more. Guilt and fear manifested into superstition and myth, which in turn developed into horror fiction featuring mummies. Finally, fame and fortune enticed scholars and novelists into producing more of their works, which fed into the general public's demands for more. Just as the cycle of influence created an environment for groundbreaking developments in scholarship, it also fostered nationalist imperialism.[346] Women who felt objectified and silenced used Egyptian women and mummies to elevate themselves as a part of the superior British Empire.[347] Egypt was a pawn in the Western struggle for dominance both culturally and politically. Archaeologists considered Egyptian artifacts to be under the rightful ownership of Britain before they even left Egypt; the perceived inferiority of Egyptians justified the notion that the British must protect their history because Egypt could not do so itself.[348]

Large scale Egyptomania justified imperialist ideologies and colonization of Egypt. Public participation in history has also opened avenues of funding for research, fieldwork, and public institutions. Both means of public participation were enmeshed with scholarship to such a degree that to separate them would deny culpability. It was not only the scholars who contributed to imperialism, looting, and Orientalism. The public's influence demanded an increase in information and material evidence. While scholars and novelists capitalized off popular culture, they would not have been able to do so without their consumers. They also would not have been able to meet the demands of their public without the increased funding from that public. Finally, their own insatiable desire for more knowledge, their own

[346] Booth, *The Long 1890s in Egypt*, 1-4.
[347] Burton, *Burdens of History*, 17-19, 37-39.
[348] Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 389.

Egyptomania would likely have been stifled without widespread collaboration. In recognizing the role the public and popular culture plays in scholarship, historians can challenge contemporary and modern ethics surrounding the dehumanization of Egyptians and their mummies.

Conclusion
The New Age of Appropriation: Egyptomania and Orientalism in the Twenty First Century

> The Discovery of a Key to the Hieroglyphics of Egypt is translated into *The Literary Gazette* of this day and illustrated by a Wood Engraving of the Letters and their Signs.[349]
>
> "Ship News," *The Morning Chronicle.*

This brief advertisement in *The Morning Chronicle* in London detailed the presentation of a newly discovered tablet from Rosetta, Egypt. What British readers of this edition of their morning newspaper would not have known, however, was that this tablet, the Rosetta Stone, would become one of the most influential pieces of archeological evidence ever discovered. In the coming century, thousands of articles across dozens of newspapers and research journals would enter the homes of British citizens from the working classes to the elites of society. In the 1820s, Jean-Françios Champollion and Thomas Young deciphered the Rosetta Stone through comparison of the three languages that a scribe had etched into the stone thousands of years prior. Once Champollion and Young deciphered the Rosetta Stone, the British public quickly became enthralled with the flood of news and research about ancient Egypt that ensued. Napoleon's savants discovered the Stone in 1799 but lost it to the British in 1801 after French general Jacques-Françios Menou surrendered. It was during this battle that General Abercromby died and the soldiers who sought to memorialize him discovered the obelisk now known as Cleopatra's Needle.[350] These two discoveries were important cultural catalyst for British imperial expansion into Egypt and archaeology to enter a golden age.

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[349] "Ship News," *Morning Chronicle*, November 16, 1822, *British Library Newspapers.*
[350] H.H. Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks* (New York: H.H. Gorringe, 1882), 96-97.

Despite Britain's initial vandalization of the Rosetta Stone, in which they wrote "Captured in Egypt by the British Army 1801" and "Presented by King George III" on its sides, the Stone has since been allowed to remain unaltered. The Stone's decree and original history is often, if not always, included in studies of the stone or hieroglyphs. Ray, Buchwald, and Josefowicz not only provided the translated decree, but also the original hieroglyphs. Historians transcribe the Demotic script less often as the language is seldom found on any surviving written documents or structures.[351] However, the Rosetta Stone has permanently taken on the newer history of its rediscovery and later translation. Rediscovered artifacts reenter history from the moment archaeologists find them, but the Stone's new history is one of imperialism, theft, appropriation, and public spectacle.

The British and the French, frequent rivals and both possessing linguistic experts, carried their animosity to the Rosetta Stone. Champollion and Young often disagreed with the other's findings, and they were known to dislike each other.[352] The Stone, like many other artifacts taken as military trophies, was a battlefield for British and French superiority. The question of who was superior, more intelligent, and more powerful was never answered; the two countries fought endless battles of military strength, political success, intellectualism, and culture. Today, the Rosetta Stone sits in a glass case in the British Museum. It is one of their most visited artifacts. Even after 222 years, people from across the world travel to the museum just to see the Stone with their own eyes and fantasize about how the ancient Egyptians must have lived. The Rosetta Stone is no longer a single copy of a decree once plastered across an empire, it now lives as a monument to British intellectual and military superiority over other

[351] Jed Z. Buchwald and Diane Greco Josefowisz, *The Riddle of the Rosetta: How an English Polymath and a French Polyglot Discovered the Meaning of Egyptian Hieroglyphs*, 1st ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 99, 337-340.
[352] Buchwald and Josefowicz, *The Riddle of the Rosetta*, 454-455.

Western nations and the so-called Orient. The Rosetta Stone proved its worth to the British when Young made a breakthrough in 1819 and has continued to do so despite public credit of unlocking the secrets of the mysterious ancient Egyptians going to Champollion, and thus the French.[353] Britain's perceived success in "winning" against the French constituted further importation of ancient Egyptian artifacts.

When the Obelisk of Thothmes III, "Cleopatra's Needle," entered London in 1877, archaeologists had already determined that Egyptian obelisks were largely unimportant historically.[354] Obelisks were political statements of power, a tradition that the Romans and the British carried forwards. The Roman Empire spoliated another of "Cleopatra's Needles" and wrote inscriptions on the very obelisk that the British brought to London. British archaeologists who translated the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the obelisk also translated the more recent Latin.[355] Britain, eager to associate their empire with the imperial strength of the Roman Empire, brought the obelisk to London to commemorate their military successes in Egypt and rival France's own Needle. Removing the obelisk from its home was far from the only slight against the obelisk and Egyptian history. The name "Cleopatra's Needle" was a misnomer that sensationalized the obelisk as a piece of the beautiful and cunning Pharaoh Cleopatra's history that Britain now owned.[356] From the moment General Abercromby's men dedicated the obelisk to his death, it ceased to exist as an *Egyptian* obelisk; even before Britain displaced it, the obelisk was British property that France and the Egyptian government recognized as such.

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[353] Buchwald and Josefowicz, *The Riddle of the Rosetta*, 252.
[354] Curran, Brian, *Obelisk: A History* (Cambridge, Mass: Burndy Library, 2009), 240.
[355] Cooper, *A Short History*, 46-49; Gorringe, *Egyptian Obelisks*, 96-97.
[356] Joyce Tyldesley, *Cleopatra: Last Queen of Egypt* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008), 44-45.

The Anglo-French rivalry proceeded throughout the nineteenth century as a series of battles, collection of trophies, and appropriation of artifacts in futile efforts to prove that one empire was superior to the other. Western countries notably appropriated artifacts from what they called "the Orient" rather than from each other. Britain was a strong colonial power that embroiled imperial might with British nationalism. As a result, the general public supported their empire's imperial expansion and, similarly to the British government and scholars, felt an entitlement to the Orient. The Orientalist mindset claimed that they, the British, were the superior race for their intelligence, modernity, Christianity, and global power. In their eyes, they were a dominant colonial power because they were superior, but they were also superior because of that colonial power. Orientalism was defined by its ambiguity, circular reasoning, and conflicting narratives about native peoples. Britain's inability or refusal to clearly define the boundaries of the Orient allowed it to colonize nearly any country with impunity. Their justifications for Orientalist belief and imperialism relied upon each other. For example: "Oriental" peoples were inferior because they lacked intelligence, and they lacked intelligence because they were inferior. Egypt became victim to British imperialism in part due to British Orientalism and in part due to its rich and mysterious ancient history.

The Curse of the Mummy Still Walks

The Orientalist mindset created a stereotype that the ancient Egyptians were mystical and armed with a superior knowledge that the modern Egyptians had since lost. The British believed that the ancient Egyptians had possessed magic which they used to protect themselves in death. The "curse of the mummy" that is today popular in the media originated with the "Unlucky Mummy." The image of a cold, golden mask staring at its victims adorns movies, books, video games, and escape rooms. Typically, one imagines the face of Pharaoh Tutankhamun as depicted on his infamous golden mask. However, Tutankhamun's curse

thrived in part due to its predecessor: the Unlucky Mummy. The coffin lid that represented the mummy and its imagined curse still resides in the British Museum today. The story of this curse was less notorious than Tutankhamun's, however, it still appears in blog posts and news articles almost yearly.[357] Thes articles most often write about the myth without explicitly affirming or denying it, although the language of the articles imply that it could be true.


WEIRD MISFORTUNES
BLAMED ON MUMMY

Figure 16: "Weird Misfortunes Blamed on Mummy," print, The New York Times, 1923.

The British turned the priestess into an omen of misfortune to demonize Egyptians, reinforce Orientalist values, and absolve their guilt for appropriating artifacts. If buyers of Egyptian artifacts, especially mummies and funerary objects, died or were injured suddenly and mysteriously, someone blamed the mummy. The priestess was not even safe from blame when the *Titanic* sank, even though her coffin lid had been quietly sitting in its display in the British Museum for decades.[358] Visitors of the British Museum who saw the coffin lid claimed they felt watched, or that her eyes were full of contempt.[359] Perhaps the British felt a sense of guilt, at least subconsciously, for demonizing and objectifying Egyptian women, whether they were

[357] News articles and blog posts about the "Unlucky Mummy" typically give an overly brief and oftentimes incorrect account of the myth and the facts. Articles either do not cite sources or their sources were written by authors without any historical background.
[358] "The UNLUCKY Mummy and the Titanic," *British Museum Antiquities: Further Information*, 1995, archived November, 1996, at the Wayback Machine, https://web.archive.org/web/19991127194221/http://www.british-museum.ac.uk/egyptian/EA/unlucky.html.
[359] Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 32.

mummified or still living. On the other hand, some archaeologists and members of the public believed that mummy curses were the manifestations of the evil and revenge-seeking Egyptians. Wallis Budge publicly denied curses but was rumored to have believed in them; numerous authors plainly stated their belief in curses and refused to purchase or even view mummies that were surrounded by such myths.[360] Guilt, fear, and Orientalism created the environment perfect for occultists and journalists to concoct and disseminate curse stories.

While the myth of the Unlucky Mummer persisted from the 1870s through the 1920s, mummy fiction became a popular genre of horror novels and serialized stories. Famous authors and the lesser-known published dozens of fictional stories in which mummies, most often women, came to life and killed Britons. These novels typically followed male protagonists, often archaeologists or a friend of one, as they became haunted and mesmerized by a sensual and deadly ancient Egyptian woman. When the mummy was brought back to life or shown to come back to life of her own will, she often murdered or injured the protagonists and side characters. Authors depicted these Egyptian women as sexually dominant, which contrasted the image of an "innocent" young British woman, or girl, that often played the protagonist's love interest.[361] In this way Egyptian women were sexually promiscuous, cunning, and manipulative, as often the mummy-come-to-life used her sexuality to enthrall the protagonist. Conversely, British women in these novels were depicted as innocent and chaste, they were youthful where the Egyptian woman was ancient, they were good where the Egyptian woman was evil.[362] Both women were objectified, however, Egyptian women were subject to British fetishization of their culture, bodies, sexuality, and religion.

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[360] H. Rider Haggard, *Smith and the Pharaohs* (Project Gutenberg, 2006); Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, 25-28.
[361] Rider Haggard, *Smith and the Pharaohs*; Jane Webb Loudon, *The Mummy!*, S.l.: Mint Editions, 1827; Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* (OUP, 1903, repr. 1996).
[362] Stoker, *The Jewel*.

In the twenty-first century, mummy fiction is still present in the horror genre. The tradition of mummies as horrifying and evil persists due to the myths of curses and hauntings, although its sensationalism has lessened. Mummy fiction is less common than it was at its height and remains only a facet of a large and diverse genre. After the 1930s mummy movies, very few such movies followed until the 1990s. Stephen Sommers' 1999 film *The Mummy* was both a remake of the 1932 film by the same title and the first breakthrough mummy fiction in decades. The movie glamorized archaeology as adventurous, dangerous, and filled with treasure-hunting. After *The Mummy*'s success, more films and novels in the genre followed and have continued to appear, although without much sensationalism. The continued presence of mummies in horror fiction suggests that ancient Egyptians remain malicious towards anyone who views, purchases, or encounters any aspect of ancient Egypt. Mummies are both objectified as museum displays and two-dimensional subjects of fiction and personified as souls who care about how their body has been treated after their death. The West still considers Egyptian artifacts, including mummies, property of Western knowledge while acknowledging the agency they possess to resent being owned.

The New Imperialists

Scholars, activists, and foreign governments have long criticized Western nations, including Britain and the US, for their failure to truly decolonize or repatriate stolen artifacts. The British Museum's official statements on "contested objects" include:

> Some ways in which objects entered the British Museum are no longer current or acceptable, though others remain familiar. Objects continue to be collected to ensure the collection remains relevant and representative today and into the future…The British Museum acknowledges the difficult histories of some of its collections, including the contested means by which some collections have been acquired such as through military action and its consequences. [363]

[363] "Collecting Histories," The British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/collecting-histories.

While several specific objects are named and their history analyzed under these statements, there is no record of the official number of contested objects or entire collections. These statements do little to assuage the anger of foreign nations who wish to see their history repatriated. Repatriation of these artifacts would not only begin to repair or establish positive international relationships, but it would also acknowledge the agency of previously colonized peoples. The British Museum is perhaps the most famous example of an institution that fails to accurately acknowledge and accept that previous practices were unethical by current standards. Historians are often reluctant to transfer current ethical standards onto past events, with good reason, however, repatriation is a display of respect and decolonization. For as long as the British Museum, other institutions, and governments refuse to repatriate artifacts, imperialism continues to subjugate and prevent native peoples from acting upon their agency.

Many scholars and institutions are reluctant to admit wrongdoing either in their career, industry, or history. Decolonization is, in effect, an admittance of guilt that the British Museum and Western nations refuse to act upon. Pledges to decolonize have not led to actions, most notably actions that foreign governments have explicitly requested.[364] The actions of nineteenth-century archaeologists are not left in the past as scholars continue to support them through inaction. Additionally, historians do not engage with the public often or at all about contentious subjects, including decolonization and surviving Orientalism. Public historians most often work in their own countries preserving structures, maintaining archives, and curating accurate but digestible exhibits. These are important actions; however, the subjects most often relate to local or national history and exclude "difficult" history. Historians, like many other academics, research and publish out of passion, one which the public are either not given access to or

[364] "Collecting Histories," The British Museum.

unable to gain it on their own. Publication databases and books are inaccessible due to subscription costs and lack of inclusivity in non-academic libraries and bookstores. Scholarly publications are increasingly difficult to access without paid subscriptions, which has left students and the public of all ages and backgrounds without access to reliable, comprehensive history. Even when a member of the public accesses and reads a scholarly source, they are often written exclusively for academics.

Public historians continue to explore new avenues of sharing historical knowledge with the public. While publishers continue to restrict journals so strictly that historians are often unable to access sources and rarely see royalties of any significance, new means of sharing knowledge must be explored. Museums, both physical and digital, can provide a public space for learning across all ages, albeit with entry fees. Librarians have been able to collect numerous academic sources and have both created and hosted free public activities despite limited budgets. Preservationists advocate for historic buildings to be saved, oftentimes repurposed into museums dedicated to sharing accurate histories of the local area or carefully updated and adapted into new spaces. For example, many historic buildings are refurbished and sold as commercial or residential properties with a written account of the building's history attached digitally or physically.[365] Recently, public historians and librarians have experimented with digital escape rooms. Physical escape rooms are a popular activity across numerous ages and most often follow a themed story. Digital escape rooms provide a free version of physical escape rooms and are more accessible through sharing and public access. Public historians who have created digital escape rooms focus on creating immersive experiences that are ultimately educational while still enjoyable.

[365] Historic buildings sometimes have a plaque installed on or near the building detailing a brief history of the building, associated people, or local events.

Dozens of escape room businesses feature a "curse of the mummy" scenario in which players must escape before they fall victim to a vengeful Egyptian mummy. To contribute to the expansion of public history and to challenge harmful stereotypes about ancient Egyptians, I have created a digital escape room. The escape room accompanies this thesis and builds off my research. The scenario players are introduced to is as follows: a player is visiting the British Museum and becomes locked in overnight. They become increasingly afraid as they wander through the confusing hallways. The player feels as though they are being watched and, as a result, stops looking for an exit and begins looking for the source of the stares: the Unlucky Mummy. The player locates the coffin lid and becomes fearful of it because of its eyes, which to them seem hateful. They run away initially but return once finding the clues to "break the curse," which in this escape room is a pamphlet that translates the hieroglyphics on the coffin lid. Upon realizing the hieroglyphics are religious and harmless, the player reads a nearby plaque that explains the story of the Priestess of Amen-Ra. The escape room ends with the player sympathizing with the priestess and realizing that her eyes were not hateful; they now appear sad. A security guard finds the player and escorts them out, ending the game as a success.

The goal of the escape room is to provide a realistic scenario in which someone becomes afraid of the mummy because of the information they have previously heard. By the end of the game, the fear simulated throughout should dissipate as the player learns about the real histories of Egyptian artifacts. My hope is that, at the end of the game, players will have learned about several artifacts in the British Museum, most especially the Priestess of Amen-Ra. I built the escape room for middle and high-school aged children, in part because most museums write their labels and websites with eighth-grade vocabulary. Eighth-grade vocabulary is considered

ideal in the museum industry because the widest audience of adults and children would be able to understand this level of vocabulary. The escape room is housed on Genial.ly, a website dedicated to interactive presentations and virtual games. The website's free version gives access to almost every feature on the website, in part because it is advertised as a useful resource for teachers. The completed version of my escape room will always be free and available. I hope to give it to a library or museum interested in including interactive or digital materials, but for now it is freely accessible on Genial.ly. The escape room relies on my research for this thesis, the British Museum's own information about artifacts and collections, and the layout of the British Museum. For the core story, my research is written in the aforementioned eighth-grade level. Artifacts and history that were not relevant to my research but provide an immersive and educational experience for players are sourced from and cite the British Museum's website. I based the layout of the rooms on the British Museum's layout, although some rooms were rearranged or excluded for simplicity. Ultimately, the goal of creating a digital escape room is to contribute to public outreach and enjoyable educational experiences and to begin to deconstruct the centuries-old myth of the curse of the mummy.

An appeal of public history is to engage with the public and create a dialogue between scholars and the public. The nineteenth-century British public were engaged with scholars and actively pursuant of scholarly knowledge. While imperialist and Orientalist actions of the nineteenth century are unacceptable by current ethical standards, archaeologists maintained a dialogue with the public that historians today struggle to create. The British public could access scholarly publications with relative ease and were able to comprehend them. Perhaps accessibility like that of the nineteenth century would encourage the public to become more active in learning history. Public history is reliant upon public engagement, and traditional

history is reliant on funding and passionate individuals. By investing in public engagement, historians can encourage active participation with critical knowledge, which in turn could create new funding opportunities or inspire children and young adults to enter the field of history. Importantly, historians who engage with the public must maintain academic research standards while translating traditional academic language as needed. In doing so, historians could collaborate with the public on contentious issues such as decolonization and the lasting damage of imperialism and Orientalism.

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