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Some Words with Poe and Stoker: Changing Mummies in Nineteenth-Century Gothic Literature

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Dedication

This article is dedicated to an old archaeologist
who has recently endured some considerable challenges
with inspirational courage.

Introduction

In his late-Victorian study of the ancient Egyptian Mummy, Ernest A. Wallis Budge writes that 'Mummy is the term which is generally applied to the body of a human being, animal, bird, fish, or reptile, which has been preserved by means of bitumen, spices, gums, or natron'.[1] As his word 'preserved' reminds us, we often assume that a mummy is a fixed and static object – something that was once a living person, animate and changeable, but which is now 'preserved' and unchanging. When he describes 'the oldest mummy in the world', however, Budge's language conjures an impression of prolonged animacy and continued mutability.[2] He explains that 'The lower jaw is wanting, and one of the legs has been dislocated in transport; the features are well preserved, and on the right side of the head is the lock of hair emblematic of youth'.[3] Those 'well preserved' features agree with our usual idea of the inalterable mummy. But the statement 'one of the legs has been dislocated in transport' reveals a degree of physical changefulness. The word 'wanting', meanwhile, hovers between 'lacking' and 'desiring'. And the reference to that 'lock of hair' seems to restore the possibility of change and progression to the mummy; the 'hair' is 'emblematic of youth' and it suggests that the mummy has a life to live, with old age far off in the distance. Despite being 'well preserved', then, this mummy also appears to be altering and wanting and to have the rest of adulthood before him. Such is the necromantic power of Budge's words, the re-animating effect of his linguistic lens.

[1] Budge, Ernest A. Wallis. *The Mummy: Funereal Rites & Customs in Ancient Egypt*. (1893, repr; London: Senate 1995), p.173.
[2] Budge, p.184.
[3] Ibid.

Eleanor Dobson, in her book *Writing the Sphinx*, examines the 'points of overlap between Egyptology and literary culture, exploring literary influences upon purportedly non-fictional Egyptological publications, and resultant complex entanglements of genre'[4]. Thinking along similar lines, I assert that nineteenth-century fiction shares in the descriptive tendency evidenced by Budge, painting the figure of the mummy as if it still has agency and the capacity to alter. Whenever critics have encountered these linguistically rejuvenated mummies, they have read them in two principal ways. Firstly, the changing mummies are read as commodities run wild, objects that ought to be owned and should not be attacking their consumers. Nicholas Daly writes that in mummy stories, 'Exhibits take on a life of their own, and collectors face their own objectification'.[5] He explains that 'The mummy story employs the new relations of subjects and commodities, articulating the connections between the national economy and its less visible imperial extensions, and so providing a sort of narrativized commodity theory'.[6] Building upon Daly's work, Aviva Briefel argues that 'in order to avoid thinking of [mummies] as things created and with creative capacities', 'Victorians seized on the thought of mummies as commodities' and 'managed their ambivalence' 'by emphasizing the mummy as a collectible object'.[7] That is to say, they sought to objectify and make static what they feared to be animate and moving. The second main reading is anticolonial in nature: critics have read the altering mummy as a figure of imperial resistance, a maligned and marginalised Other rejecting their colonial oppressors. Analysing Edgar Allan Poe, Marcia D. Nichols writes that 'By having the silenced Other, in the form of the reanimated mummy, relativise and thus diminish all that his interlocutors have accomplished […] Poe gleefully pokes holes in elite White male privilege'.[8] Karen E. Macfarlane, likewise, argues that the mummy represents 'the disruptive insurrection of subjugated knowledge that corrupts the integrity of the western episteme'.[9] From either critical perspective, the suddenly changing mummy is – to the consuming, imperialist, Victorian eye – a rather unsettling sight.

Throughout this present paper, I hope to illuminate a contrary vision of the fictive mummy. Reading Edgar Allan Poe's 'Some Words with a Mummy' alongside Bram Stoker's

[4]Eleanor Dobson. *Writing the Sphinx*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p.4.
[5]Nicholas Daly. *Modernism, Romance, and The Fin De Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.102.
[6] Daly, p.86.
[7] Briefel, Aviva. 'Hands of Beauty, Hands of Horror: Fear and Egyptian Art at the Fin de Siècle'. *Victorian Studies*, vol. 50, no.2 (2008), pp.263-71, p.264.
[8] Marcia D. Nichols. 'Poe's "Some Words with a Mummy" and Blackface Anatomy'. *Poe Studies*, 48 (2015), pp.2-16, (p.2)
[9] Karen E Macfarlane. 'Mummy Knows Best: Knowledge and the Unknowable in Turn of the Century Mummy Fiction'. *Horror Studies*, 1.1 (2010), 5-24 (p.21).

The Jewel of Seven Stars, I challenge our current critical consensus by demonstrating how the re-enlivened mummy was really a much less disturbing prospect than its static and unchanging counterpart.[10] While it is certainly possible to read mummies as scary commodities with agency or as threatening figures of antiimperialist resistance, and to therefore assume that writers would seek to freeze them still, this paper analyses how and why Edgar Allan Poe and Bram Stoker use a similar descriptive technique to Ernest Budge and *deliberately* overlay their mummies with a dynamic and reanimating lexis. With Budge's archaeological writing, this technique merely lends his description of the mummy a greater vibrancy, but with the fictions of Poe and Stoker – where there is more scope for alternative imaginings and political suggestions – it arguably aligns their mummies with the ideology of progress and advancement that shaped the nineteenth century.

In *The Triumph of Time*, for instance, Jerome Buckley recounts the 'unprecedented mechanical progress throughout the Victorian era', and then states

> Nor was the progress purely mechanical […] Notable advances were made in sanitation, town planning, public instruction. Religious toleration and liberty steadily increased. Old legal codes were sharply revised and updated. The rights of the individual were guaranteed by law more surely than ever before.[11]

Buckley also observes that for thinkers like Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer, their theories of time and 'evolution' and 'ethics' were all 'progressive not static'.[12] Working in the same thematic space, Sue Zemka claims that

> A belief in progress was so deeply embedded in nineteenth-century Britain that it was one of those beliefs for which there was no outside. Scientific knowledge was advancing; so, too, was technology, capitalism, and culture.[13]

In reality, of course, there was an 'outside' beyond the belief in progress; the *fin de siècle* was marked by fears of decline and degeneration, and Buckley writes that

> By the late-Victorian period the poets […] had made the questioning of progress so familiar a pursuit that not even the most convinced apologists for science could affirm the idea with the original naïve certainty[14]

[10] Edgar Allen Poe, 'Some Words with a Mummy' in *Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Tales*. ed. Julian Symons (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1980) pp.248-262 and Bram Stoker, *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. ed. by Kate Hebblethwaite. (London: Penguin Classics, 2008).
[11] Jerome Hamilton Buckley. *The Triumph of Time. A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress, and Decadence. (*Cambridge, M.A.: The Belknop Press, 1966), pp.36-38.
[12] Buckley, p.48.
[13] Sue Zemka. 'Progress'. *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 46 (2018), 812-816 (pp.812-13).
[14] Buckley, p.52.

But Zemka's hyperbole ('one of those beliefs for which there was no outside') nonetheless captures the sheer magnitude of progressionist ideology, gesturing to all the ways in which that worldview seemed to possess the nineteenth-century mind. Something which is fixed and frozen, then, like a perfectly preserved mummy, is accordingly out-of-step with the prevailing trend, and I assert that Poe and Stoker try to allay their anxiety surrounding changelessness through their fiction, making even mummies – objects that were explicitly intended to postpone decay and to holdback mutability – alter and mutate. Through their linguistic choices and the viewing-panes that they subsequently fire, they both render the impression of restored animation, and so rejoin their mummies to the stream of progress running through the nineteenth century.

Ancient Victorian Mummies

As a recent turn in scholarship has shown, the British Victorians were obsessed with Egyptology. In her books *Writing the Sphinx* and *Victorian Alchemy*,[15] Eleanor Dobson covers this obsession at great length and in detail. With the first of those studies, Dobson writes that the 'Interest in Egypt in Britian ballooned across the nineteenth century due to the influx of Egyptian antiquities in museums […] and Egypt's increased appearance in the newspapers'.[16] She goes on to explain that

> Egypt was the subject of all manner of […] accessible entertainments across the century and beyond: mummy-unrolling demonstrations, panoramas, museum exhibits, public lectures and, eventually, even early film. Egypt made its way into a diverse array of material culture, from fashion and jewellery, to décor and book design; in the latter half of the century, as book covers became more eye-catching and literature itself more readily available, Egypt, its history and iconography were rich pickings for all manner of literary movements and genres, from decadence to detective fiction.[17]

This penchant for Egyptology led some in archaeological or scientific directions, some in aesthetic directions, and some in occult directions. While experts such as Budge wrote non-fiction, others turned to fiction and penned an array of supernatural works: 'Mummy stories were particularly quick to pay homage to the advanced wisdom of ancient Egypt, and are especially interested in alchemy's promises of extended life'.[18] We can find this interest in the

[15] Eleanor Dobson. *Victorian Alchemy: Science, Magic and Ancient Egypt*. (London: University College London Press, 2022).
[16] Dobson, *Sphinx*, p.3.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Dobson, *Alchemy*, p.12.

fiction of H. Rider Haggard, Arthur Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker. These writers were studying the Egyptologists and they were reacting to their ideas. Dobson notes that 'the same Egyptological texts that graced the shelves of H. Rider Haggard's and Bram Stoker's libraries were cherished by Oscar Wilde'. [19] Kate Hebblethwaite writes that '[Oscar Wilde's father's book on Egypt] is among a number of texts known to have been owned by Stoker':

> Others included Wallis Budge's *Easy Lessons in Egyptian Hieroglyphics* (1889-1902), *The Mummy* (1893), his translation of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (1895), *Egyptian Magic* (1899), *Egyptian Religion: Egyptian Ideas on the Future Life* (1900) and the nine-volume *History of Egypt* (1902)

There was clearly a swell of all-things ancient Egypt at this time, and it is on that tide that mummies appear in much British literature.[20]

There was a comparable situation in nineteenth-century America, only with perhaps an even more political dimension. In his book *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania*, Scott Trafton begins by 'exploring the relationships between the rise of nineteenth-century racialized science and the rise of American Egyptology', and this promptly leads him to a vast exploration of the links between an intellectual interest in ancient Egypt and the formation of modern America.[21] He finds that the establishment – the government and its various related institutions – would use Egyptological narratives and symbols to construct their identity as leaders, while rights groups would also use Egyptological narratives and symbols to simultaneously challenge the establishment. He writes that 'many in nineteenth-century American culture […] understood the relationship between modern America and ancient Egypt to be one based on close family ties', and then invites the reader to

> Witness some scenes from Washington, D.C.: the Washington monument [a gigantic obelisk] stands forever taller than any other structure in the nation's capital; Egypt and America sit side by side in the main reading room mural of the Library of Congress; and, in the last hours before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, an assembled force of African Americans gathered together in the shadow of the White House and sang an adaptation of the spiritual from which this study [Trafton's book] takes both its impetus and its title: "Go down Moses / Way down in Egypt Land; / Tell old Pharoah. / Let my people go".

[19] Dobson. *Sphinx*, p.5.
[20]Kate Hebblethwaite. 'Introduction' in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Ed. by Kate Hebblethwaite. (London: Penguin Classics, 2008) p. xix. N.B. According to Hebblethwaite, the book by 'Sir William Wilde' is '*Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe, and Along the Shores of the Mediterranean, including a visit to Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, Tyre, Rhodes, Telemessus, Cyprus and Greece*, published in two volumes in 1840'
[21] Scott Trafton. *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), p.xv.

Thus 'throughout American history, the iconography of empire – that of its wielders as well as its resisters – was lavishly drawn from that of ancient Egypt'. This situation influenced American art as much as it influenced American politics, and Trafton cites 'the tales of Edgar Allan Poe' as one place where American literature and Egyptology intersect.[22]

On both sides of the Atlantic, then, Egyptology was clearly shaping fiction and fiction was clearly shaping Egyptology. The 'Egyptomania' from Trafton's title was a real phenomenon and nineteenth-century literature engages with a myriad of Egyptian concepts, objects and icons. There is, for instance, an outdoor party near the end of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, where the narrator finds a

> Region, not of trees and shadow, but of strangest architectural wealth – of altar and of temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphynx; incredible to say, the wonders and symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Villette.[23]

Egyptian jewellery featured centrally in Arthur Conan Doyle's short story 'The Ring of Thoth', while H.G. Wells's Time Traveller finds a statue of a 'White Sphinx' even in the distant future.[24] Out of all the ancient Egyptian features and devices in Victorian literature, though, it is the mummies that take centre stage in this paper. That is because mummies represent the place of extreme tension between the changeable and the unchanging; they are human bodies, entities that we know to be mutable and transforming and transformational, but they are also static objects which were meant to impede alteration for as long as possible. They thus lie *or* walk in the borderland between progress and intransigence; they are multifaceted signifiers for a confluence of Victorian fears and impulses, situated between the desire for stasis and the reactive terror prompted by unmoving forms. As Karen Macfarlane, developing the thoughts of Jeremy Cohen and Judith Butler, argues: '[monsters like the mummy] resonate beyond the confines of a single meaning within culture' and 'embody […] multiple, layered preoccupations that haunt and define culture'.[25] In this essay, I argue that these reanimated meta-symbols provoke a consistent reaction from nineteenth-century writers. Wherever mummies are mentioned, authors do all they can to help them move – to preserve, paradoxically, their capacity for change, and to keep the mummies and themselves on the path of progress.

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[22] Trafton, pp.2-6.
[23] Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*. Ed. by Herbet Rosengarten and Margaret Smith. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.453.
[24] 'The Ring of Thoth' in Arthur Conan Doyle, *Gothic Tales*. Ed. by Darryl Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press (2018) pp.150-165. and H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*. Ed. by Patrick Parrinder (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), p.43.
[25] Macfarlane, p.11.

Forever Changing History

At the beginning of Poe's 'Some Words With A Mummy', the narrator is invited to an mummy-unrolling, and the mummy is framed (initially) as an unchanged object from the past: 'The treasure had been deposited in the Museum precisely in the same condition in which Captain Sabretash had found it' and 'the coffin had not been disturbed'. As the story carries on, however, the narrator's language makes the mummy appear animate and mutable. He writes that on

> Approaching the table, I saw on it a large box, or case, nearly seven feet long, and perhaps three feet wide, by two feet and a half deep. It was oblong – not coffin-shaped. The material was at first supposed to be the wood of the sycamore (*platanus*), but, upon cutting into it, we found it to be pasteboard, or more properly *papier mâché*, composed of papyrus. It was thicky ornamented with paintings, representing funeral scenes, and other mournful subjects, interspersed among which, in every variety of position, were certain series of hieroglyphical characters intended, no doubt, for the name of the departed.[26]

Throughout that string of sentences, the narrator's words are always wobbling – teetering between certainty and doubt, one vision and another. He says it is a 'large box, *or* case' and that it is '*perhaps* three feet wide' (my emphasis). But which is it? We know it is '*nearly* seven feet long', and we know that it is '*not* coffin-shaped' (my emphasis), yet the imprecision of 'perhaps three feet wide' shakes the other quantitative measure ('seven feet long'), and the negation 'not coffin-shaped' sounds rather dubious, given that it is an oblong 'box' or 'case' with a body in it. Then their original supposition about the material – 'was at first supposed to be the wood of the sycamore' – is swiftly rejected by the facts, and 'we found it to be pasteboard, or more properly *papier mâché*'. As the sentences twist and bend at every new conjunction ('but', 'or'), and as they hesitate and flutter with the hypotheticals ('supposed', 'perhaps'), they adjust our perception of the object: what was initially something simple, static and 'not disturbed' looks to be changeable, plastic, and in a whirl of flux. And the discovery of the *papier mâché* only intensifies this more dynamic vision: *papier mâché* can be used for writing and painting (for those infamously ambiguous communicative media), and he explains that the not-coffin-coffin was 'Thickly ornamented with paintings' that were 'representing funeral scenes, and other mournful subjects'. The 'funeral scenes' are relatively fixed and sure, but the generic 'other mournful subjects' return us to the cloudy uncertainty of 'or' and

[26] Poe, p.249.

'perhaps', and this undermines the last interpretation: 'intended, *no doubt,* for the name of the departed' (my emphasis). There is, in fact, much cause for 'doubt'. Things – or *the* thing – is not what it once seemed. Through the lens of the narrator's hazy language, the mummy looks to be constantly changing.

This emerging impression of the mummy's unexpected animacy – its indeterminable, relentlessly moving nature – is reinforced by the reader's knowledge of the narrator. 'Some Words With A Mummy' is told from a first-person perspective, and as if that formal decision does not introduce enough subjective shakiness, Poe's narrator tells us that he is both drunk and overfed. He states that he has had a copious amount of 'Welsh rabbit' and 'five' other items – 'the five', he is later 'willing to admit', 'has reference to bottles of Brown stout, without which, in the way of condiment, Welsh rabbit is to be eschewed'.[27] As Nichols summarises it, 'the narrator has just gone to bed after a "light supper" of four or five pounds of Welsh rabbit and nearly a six-pack of brown stout', and it is only then that 'he receives a call [a note] from his friend Doctor Ponnonner'.[28] It is unsurprising, then, that the world we see through this narrator's eyes is a blurry place of backwards-turning clauses and quibbled qualifications – a wonderland of slurry hiccupped *ors* and *perhapses*. Crucially, too, the narrator writes 'the memoranda' (the story we are reading) after only a brief nap and while still undoubtedly recovering from last night's debauch: 'Upon getting home I found it past four o'clock […] I have been up since seven'.[29] It is thus not simply the language that makes the static seem to move, but the type of voice uttering that language. In linguistic and in perspectival ways, Poe's story – and everything inside of it, including the mummy – is therefore bound to move and float and sway.

After the ways in which the language and the framing only *appear* to change and reanimate the mummy, the plot then shows it literally happening. In a typically post-Frankensteinian fashion, the men decide to galvanize the mummy:

> The application of electricity to a Mummy three or four thousand years old at least, was an idea, if not very sage, still sufficiently original, and we all caught it at once. About one tenth in earnest and nine tenths in jest, we arranged a battery in the Doctor's study.[30]

When the mummy is brought truly back to life, he reflexively kicks 'Doctor Ponnonner' and this 'had the effect of discharging that gentleman, like an arrow from a catapult, through a

[27] Poe, p.248.
[28] Nichols, p.6.
[29] Poe, p.262.
[30] Poe, p.251.

window into the street below'.[31] Given that the mummy inadvertently propels Doctor Ponnonner 'through a window', we might wonder if Poe presents him as a terrifying adversary, there to intimidate the scientists trying to revive him. As we heard earlier, Nichols reads the story in that vein, exploring how 'the ritual falls apart when the Other – upon whose silencing the science depends – talks back'.[32] She writes that the mummy 'doesn't merely assume a defensive posture; he actually strikes his dissector and eventually prevents further violations of his body'.[33] He is thus a figure of antiimperialist resistance, and we could also impose the economic reading onto the story – seeing the Doctor-kicking mummy as a commodity with agency, striking back against the collectors.

But the story checks these readings in a significant number of ways. Firstly, we should bear in mind that the characters *choose* to reanimate the mummy, and so if they are afraid of a commodity gaining agency, then they have an unusual way of dealing with that fear. Indeed, they seem determined to fuel their own nightmares. Secondly, the mummy's speech does not disrupt the science in the way that Nichols argues. Rather, it develops it, for by regaining the capacity to change and speak and move, the mummy can amend the modern understanding of the world, thereby drawing science towards truth. When, for example, the mummy explains that his own people had discovered the techniques for extending and restoring life, he tells us the reason why they pursued it, and it is precisely to correct the errors of the future. He remarks that '"It occurred to our philosophers that a laudable curiosity might be gratified, and, at the same time, the interests of science much advanced"':

> Resuming existence [… a philosopher] would invariably find his great work converted into a species of haphazard notebook – that is to say, into a kind of literary arena for the conflicting guesses, riddles, and personal squabbles of whole herds of exasperated commentators. These guesses, etc., which passed under the name of annotations or emendations, were found so completely to have enveloped, distorted, and overwhelmed the text, that the author had to go about with a lantern to discover his own book […] After re-writing it throughout, it was regarded as the bounden duty of the historian to set himself to work, immediately, in correcting from his own private knowledge and experience, the traditions of the day concerning the epoch at which he had originally lived. Now this process of re-scription and personal rectification, pursued by various individual sages, from time to time, had the effect of preventing our history from degenerating into absolute fable. [34]

This story therefore imagines the mummy as a force for beneficial change, altering textual errors and amending our beliefs about an author's 'epoch'. Poe constructs a dialectical and

[31] Poe, p.252.
[32] Nichols, p.3.
[33] Nichols, p.9.
[34] Poe, p.257-8.

mutually transformative discussion between history and the present, where current ideas and past ideas modulate each other; the story is called 'Some Words With A Mummy', as opposed to the more monologic 'Words From' or 'Words To', and the 'With' stresses the dialogic and mutually edifying nature of the conversation; the men learn about the ancient mummy's past and he learns about their modern-day foolishness, stating '"that I am as much surprised as I am mortified, at your behaviour"'.[35] In the end, the narrator is so impressed by his conversation with the mummy, that 'as soon […] as I shave and swallow a cup of coffee, I shall just step over to Ponnonner's and get embalmed for a couple of hundred years'. Like the mummy, the narrator wants to be transformed from a changing to an unchanging and back to a changing entity, passing through these modes of being, so that he can discover 'who will be [the] President in 2045'.[36] With this tale, then, literary mummies are not presented solely as fearful commodities or resistant political forces: they are also welcomed as ever-changing figures – figures that are positively adapting and advancing the ideas of the present. Thus, Poe's story appears to prefer movement over fixity, and – through the narrator's eyes – the reanimated mummy is depicted as a beneficial agent, driving scientific progress in the nineteenth century.

The Moving Jewel of Seven Stars

The Jewel of Seven Stars is less known and widely read than Bram Stoker's *Dracula*,[37] but as Nicholas Daly points out, it made a significant contribution to the literary Egyptological revival at the *fin de siècle*: 'Between 1880 and 1914 […] more than a dozen mummy narratives appear, including Conan Doyle's 'The Ring of Thoth' (1890) and 'Lot No. 249' (1892), H. Rider Haggard's 'Smith and the Pharaohs' (1913), and Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903)'.[38] The latter concerns an antiquarian called Mr Trelawny who, with the help of his daughter and her new fiancé (Malcom Ross), attempts to resurrect a mummy called Queen Tera. As this attempt at resurrection is unfolding in the plot, though, Stoker matches Poe's short story and (at the level of narration) uses an array of descriptive techniques to convey an impression of continued animation, suiting his mummy to the dominant ideology of progress. This text, too, is apparently more afraid of things standing still, than it is of things getting up and moving.

[35] Poe, p.252.
[36] Poe, p.262.
[37] Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Ed. Maurice Hindle. London: Penguin Classics (2003; 1897).
[38] Daly, p.85.

One main event sparks the plot to Stoker's novel: Mr Trelawny is cast into a kind of trance, into an unmoving and unchanging state of perpetual slumber. A messenger exclaims that '"He couldn't be waked nohow"' and, for the remainder of the opening act, waking Mr Trelawny is the primary goal.[39] This catalysing plot point establishes a precedent: the reader is made aware that conditions of stasis are to be cured or else avoided, and the narrator obeys this precedent whenever he has cause to describe a mummified object. Upon his first encounter with the mummy's hand, for example, Ross describes it like so:

> A woman's hand, fine and long, with slim tapering fingers and nearly as perfect as when it was given to the embalmer thousands of years before. In the embalming it had lost nothing of its beautiful shape; even the wrist seemed to maintain its pliability as the gentle curve lay on the cushion. The skin was of a rich creamy or old ivory colour; a dusky fair skin which suggested heat, but heat in shadow. The great peculiarity of it, as a hand, was that it had in all seven fingers, there being two middle and two index fingers. The upper end of the wrist was jagged, as though it had been broken off, and was stained with a red-brown stain.[40]

The phrasing, there, is vital (in every sense of the word). The mummy's wrist 'seemed to maintain its pliability' and can, as 'pliability' implies, still articulate. And just as the wrist is flexible, so is the narrator's apprehension of the hand: the hand looked '*as though* it had been broken off' (my emphasis), yet we cannot know for sure. There are plainly lacunae in the account – points of possibility, questions still to be answered, and the 'hand' is not an embodiment of fixity and stasis. Rather, the mummy's 'hand' is simultaneously surrounded by – and itself entails – the promise of plot advancement and development. The 'hand' is an automatic synecdoche pointing to an absent body and, to know more about it, the reader must wait and progress through the novel, until at last the mummy as a whole is revealed.

When the entire body is finally described, the narrator's efforts at reanimation-through-description are the same. In fact, the narrator appears to be yet more impelled to create an impression of persistent changeability. He writes that

> It was not like death at all […]. There was nothing of that horrible shrinkage which death seems to effect in a moment. There was none of the wrinkled toughness which seems to be a leading characteristic of most mummies. There was not the shrunken attenuation of a body dried in the sand, as I had seen before in museums. All the pores of the body seemed to have been preserved in some wonderful way. The flesh was full and round, as *in* a living person; and the *skin* was as smooth as *satin* [my emphasis].[41]

[39] Stoker, p.10.
[40] Stoker, p.94.
[41] Stoker, p.235-6.

This mummy is thus presented as an extant entity: it does not have a 'dried' texture and it is adjectivally 'full' and 'round': it is compared to a 'living person' and 'it was not like death at all'. Even Stoker's quiet poeticism, at the end of the passage, where 'in' and 'skin' and 'satin' share a common phoneme and rhyme the line internally, serves to support the possibility of changefulness: the 'in' sound from the preposition is not set in place, but moves along the line, fusing new nominal connections. The narrator's language, therefore, and the way that he perceives the mummy, force the reader to see it as a lively creature. Instead of consigning it to objecthood and thingness, Stoker's whole description is infused with vivacity, itself a moving substance.

That perception of the static and the fixed as a moving, changing something is reflected in the jewels which are placed on the mummy. Stoker writes about a 'girdle of jewels' wrapped around the body, and the narrator states that 'it shone and glowed with all the forms and phases and colours of the sky'. Similarly, he notes that 'The buckle was a great yellow stone, round of outline, deep and curved […] It shone and glowed, as though a veritable sun lay within'.[42] In both cases – and the two items are paired by the repeated verbal phrase, 'shone and glowed' – the narrator joins the frozen jewels to energy and movement. One set of jewels glow with all the 'phases' of the sky and are thus somehow moving through time – moving like the stages of the day and the seasons of the year. The other stone on the buckle glows 'as though a veritable sun lay within' – as though the archetypal spark of all the animation on the planet lies inside of it, the heat and light that mythically gives energy to everything. By wrapping the mummy in jewels like those, Stoker adorns it with changing objects and encourages the reader to see a likeness between the ever-flickering jewels and the body they surround.

Jewels, however, in Stoker's novel, do more than cast a nearby sense of liveliness. They are also linked overtly (through linguistic patterning and through the story) to the idea of reanimation, especially as it concerns Margaret Trelawny and Queen Tera. The name Margaret, for example, is derived from 'Margarite' and it means *pearl*, and so she could be read a living jewel at the heart of the novel.[43] This is only a half-formed hint in the 1903 edition, for Margaret dies at the end, and thus the join between her jewel-named character and the restoration of Queen Tera is quite limited. But then as David Glover writes,

> when *The Jewel of Seven Stars* was republished in 1912, one of its more speculative chapters (16) was deleted and a "happy ending" was substituted in which all of the

[42] Stoker, p.234.
[43] Margarite, n.¹, sense 1.a. *Oxford English Dictionary Online.* doi.org/10.1093/OED/8364654813.

> characters survive with the sole exception of Queen Tera, who through a kind of metempsychosis merges with the personality of Margaret Trelawny.[44]

In her introduction to the novel, Hebblethwaite explains that 'authorial endorsement' of the re-written ending 'remains uncertain', for Stoker was ill when it was added, and she asserts that the second ending 'seems wholly misaligned with the narrative's intent'. I am unconvinced that it is 'wholly misaligned', though, because the co-existence of Margaret and Queen Tera is very much in line with the reanimation that Trelawny and the narrator appear to be pursuing all along. As even Hebblethwaite, despite her scepticism about the revised ending, ingeniously points out: 'the reversal of the last four letters of Marg*aret* [tera] yield[s] the Queen's name'.[45] Given these already intricate connections between the mummy and Margaret, I suspect that either Stoker or a daring editor realised that the 1903 ending broke the unity of the novel, and decided to strengthen the reanimation plotline, allowing Margaret to survive the events with Queen Tera as a yet-living part of her new identity. With this altered ending, the mummy and the woman could then become the moving jewel of seven stars together.

> At the close of the 1912 edition, for example, the narrator describes how
>
> In the autumn Margaret and I were married. On the occasion she wore the mummy robe and zone and the jewel which Queen Tera had worn in her hair. On her breast, set in a ring of gold made like a twisted lotus stalk, she wore the strange Jewel of Seven Stars which held words to command the Gods of all the worlds. At the marriage the sunlight streaming through the chancel windows fell on it, and it seemed to glow like a living thing. [46]

There we see the final intertangling of Margaret and Queen Tera. Wearing the same costume, a 'robe', and the same 'strange Jewel', the past Queen and the present lady are inwoven. It may be Malcom and Margaret who are getting married legally, but it is this subtle union of Margaret and Queen Tera that really seems to 'glow like a living thing'. Stoker's use of a simile, there, bears a neat rhetorical resemblance to the pairing of one person and another. And the phonetic and graphical likeness of 'words' and 'worlds' has much the same effect, with two different terms almost folding into one. Both periods of history and their representative figures are so entwined with the 'twisted lotus' ring, and the novel's persistent efforts to present the mummy as an ever-moving entity are resolved and rendered constant through this metaphysical matrimony.

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[44] David Glover. *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), p.173.
[45] Kate Hebblethwaite. 'Introduction' in *The Jewel of Seven Stars*. Ed. by Kate Hebblethwaite. (London: Penguin Classics, 2008)
[46] Stoker, p250.

But does Stoker celebrate the mummy's continued animation, in the way that Poe's story seemed to, with the narrator rushing off to try and mummify himself? After all, a number of people are killed by the mummy in Stoker's novel – and even more are destroyed in the 1903 ending! Hence, in one reading of the novel, Carol A. Senf avers that although 'Stoker usually suggests that science and technology are useful' and 'is thus allied with other nineteenth-century progressionists who argue that human beings are moving toward a better, more civilized and more comprehensible future', his late novel '*Jewel* reveals little evidence of that future'.[47] While I agree with Senf's styling of Bram Stoker as a nineteenth-century progressionist, I would opine that *Jewel* is more optimistic than Senf insists, and say that it continues to align the figure of the mummy with progression and the making of a better future. For, despite everything which happens in the plot, Mr Trelawny pronounces this:

> "Imagine what it will be for the world of thought – the true world of human progress – the veritable road to the stars, the *itur ad astra* of the Ancients – if there can come back to us out of the unknown past one who can yield to us the lore stored in the great Library of Alexandria, and lost in its consuming flames. Not only history can be set right, and the teaching of science made veritable from their beginnings; but we can be placed on the road to the knowledge of lost arts, lost learning, lost sciences, so that our feet may tread on the indicated path to their ultimate and complete restoration". [48]

Like Poe's earlier characters, Trelawny still views the moving mummy as another source of beneficial change. Rather than seeing it as a detrimental challenge to his power as a consumer or a colonialist, Trelawny celebrates and looks forward to the way that the mummy will correct the misguided steps of 'science' and 'learning', and so set his modern tread on the 'path' of progress. Karen Macfarlane argues that the mummies and the protagonists are involved in an epistemological contest, with the mummy's knowledge fighting for 'supremacy'.[49] But instead of fearing the mummies as lively commodities or resistant imperial subjects or competing sources of knowledge, Stoker's Trelawny arguably views them as colleagues and teachers and advisors, helpfully correcting 'our feet'. Thus, Poe and Stoker show that mummy stories are not exclusively concerned with warring knowledge systems; they also seem to hope for some kind of mutually enlightening synergy, with the protagonists and the alleged monster *sharing* knowledge over centuries.

Conclusion

[47] Carol A. Senf *Bram Stoker*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), p.103.
[48] Stoker, p.220.
[49] Macfarlane, p.5.

Poe's story and Stoker's novel indicate that authors, writing in Britain and America at both the start and the end of the nineteenth century, were ultimately more afraid of stasis than there were of alteration. Many critics have seen the mummies in these texts as dangerous commodities, railing against the new consumer class of the Victorian era. They have also seen them as threatening entities with too much political agency, resisting the power and control of their colonial possessors. But through close-readings of key moments in these texts, I have attempted to display how Poe and Stoker are also inclined to encourage and to welcome the reanimation of what could be frozen objects. This reanimation process allows them to align their mummies with the ideology of progress that was thriving in the nineteenth century, replacing what could be a symbol of fixity and sameness with a symbol of advancement and the finding of lost knowledge. And maybe it should come as no surprise that Poe and Stoker took that line; they would have each been aware that one day – bound up in the pages of their works, lexically embalmed by their own fictions – they too would be figurative mummies, speaking to us from across the void of time.

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