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Mummy Knows Best: Knowledge and the Unknowable in Turn of the Century Mummy Fiction

ABSTRACT

This article argues that the figure of the reanimated mummy, which appeared with increasing frequency in imperialist adventure fiction as the nineteenth century drew to a close, is the quintessential monster of imperial gothic. The sudden interest in a figure that some would describe as a fundamentally flawed monster (perhaps because it is simply too unambiguously dead) at this moment of turn-of-the-century fears of dissolution, degeneration and loss of control signals, I argue here, a profound anxiety about the epistemological underpinnings of the imperial project. In these stories, reanimated mummies move easily out of their stable positions as artefacts or relics and enter into the Western symbolic order as acting subjects (however conditionally) and as terrifying rivals for epistemological supremacy.

KEYWORDS

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(British) in literature
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1. Glover, Daly, Pearce, and Deane have each provided comprehensive histories of mummy fiction in their illuminating work on mummies in the nineteenth century. The reanimated mummy first appears in Jane (Webb) Loudon's *The Mummy!; A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827) and then disappears until its resurrection in Poe's 1845 'Some Words with a Mummy'. It wasn't fully revived, as Daly notes, until the turn of the century, when 'more than a dozen mummy narratives appear [between 1880 and 1914]' (Daly 1999: 85). Daly and Deane argue persuasively that these early stories are focused on commodification and desire. Most feature female mummies with whom/which the protagonist falls hopelessly in love. Only later in the period does the mummy take on 'the form that has since become so familiar' (Deane 2008: 406), that of male competitor. While my focus will be on many of the latter texts, I argue here that the preoccupation with knowledge pervades all of the mummy fictions, whether cast as a gothic romance or as horror story.
2. Thomas Richards explores this concept in his influential *The Imperial Archive*.
3. Susan Pearce and Nicholas Daly have provided provocative and in-depth discussions of mummies in Victorian and Edwardian culture.

In Edgar Allan Poe's 1845 short story, 'Some Words With a Mummy', a group of eminent scientists gathers for the unrolling of an 'unransacked' mummy. As the evening progresses they decide to experiment with galvanism and reanimate the object of their inquiries. Rising from the dining-room table on which he has been placed, the mummy berates the assembled gentlemen 'in very capital Egyptian' (Poe 1977 [1845]: 159) for their 'deplorable condition of ignorance' (Poe 1977 [1845]: 163) of all things scientific, mechanical, metaphysical and Egyptological. The mummy dismisses all of the 'advancements' of the modern age. He assures his audience that every miracle of modern science – from the galvanism that reanimated him to the steam engine – had, in fact, not only been invented and used in pharaonic Egypt, but had been superseded by a better technology. This early representation¹ of an encounter between a reanimated mummy and men of science focuses the horror of the mummy on the dueling epistemologies of the East and West, past and present, the known and the unknowable. The horrific blending of powerful intellect and pure corporeality in representations of *fin de siècle* mummies (most of whom are priests or scientists or the daughters/lovers of priests and scientists) is what makes them, I would argue, the quintessential monster of imperial gothic. Positioned at the intersection of interrelated discourses of imperialism, with its ideological dependence on science and the acquisition of knowledge, its relation to conflicted desire for the Other, power and commodification, and its obsession with history and imperial genealogies, the mummy embodies fantasies of imperial immortality and anxieties about the extent of imperial control. The mummy's presence draws attention to a disturbing gap in the turn-of-the-century knowledge systems that sustained the imperial project.² In this sense, I will argue here that the mummy's monstrosity is located as much in its physical deviance from the natural order of death and decay as it is in the fact that its very presence illuminates the absences in the systems of comprehensive knowledge upon which the imperial project depended.

Monsters figure prominently in imperial gothic fiction. From Haggard's erotically monstrous Ayesha in *She: A History of Adventure* (1887), to Kipling's nightmarishly transformed Fleete in 'The Mark of the Beast' (1890), to Richard Marsh's insect/human hybrid in *The Beetle* (1897), the monstrous body is a signifier of anxieties of imperial destabilization. Critical discussions that have addressed the mummy in this context³ have focused on its complex, layered relation to desire: as commodity, as erotic love object and as the symbol of a desire for conquest. But these arguments have tended to downplay its function as a monster. In his discussion of mummies as objects of erotic desire, Bradley Deane notes that until the turn-of-the-century, most reanimated mummies were women and asks 'why mummy fiction should make its potentially monstrous women so marriageable, why the unfulfilled promise of union should so persistently drive the Victorian fantasies of Egypt?' (Deane 2008: 387). He notes a recurring tendency to 'blur together archeological scholarship and romantic passion' (Deane 2008: 387) in these stories and argues that the desire for the mummy is located in the emerging discourse of Egyptology and the political context that represented the occupation of Egypt in terms of sexual conquest. I would add that the refusal to represent these women as truly monstrous is tied up in a larger impulse that locates the source of anxiety in a horror of 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault 1980b: 81), that is, in scholarship and the intellect. The mummies of desirable women in these stories are almost all connected with lost and powerful knowledge: they are priestesses, sorceresses, and witch-queens. Their power is intimately

connected with their access to types of knowledge that challenge the power of the masculine authorities who attempt to define and categorize them. In this sense, what the eminent Victorian Egyptologists fear and desire is not the reanimated mummy herself, but their relation to the gaps that she reveals in their own systems of knowledge.

In mummy fiction, women (whether reanimated mummies or the daughters of Egyptologists) are the objects of masculine desire, not the agents of intellectual inquiry. The desire to possess the mummy in these cases is articulated through a 'desire to possess the mummy itself in another way – by means of romance,' a process through which 'objects begin to behave as sex-objects' (Daly 1999: 105). The female mummy is located comfortably as object through the multiple virtues of her sex, her race and her commodification. Both Théophile Gautier's and H.D Everett's protagonists, for instance, purchase the mummies with whom they will eventually fall in love and, in every case, the women's bodies are described in lingering, erotic terms before their reanimation, that is, while they are still the 'possession' (Gautier 1910: 4) of the collector.⁴ Only Bram Stoker's Queen Tera is represented in terms that are potentially monstrous. Like H. Rider Haggard's Ayesha⁵, she possesses knowledge of which the scholars in these texts are 'profoundly ignorant' (Stoker 1975: 180), and this serves to construct her as a threat to both England and the empire. Queen Tera is a sorceress who is 'skilled in the science of her time' (Stoker 1975: 179). Even in death, she is described as an 'active intelligence' (Stoker 1975: 181) that revenges the theft of her hand from her tomb by killing all, except Trelawny, who came into contact with it. Her ability to threaten the authority of the western episteme and to act outside of the laws of natural science is justified in the novel because 'she claimed all the privileges of kingship and masculinity. In one place [in her tomb] she is pictured in a man's dress, and wearing the White and Red Crowns' (Stoker 1975: 140). Coded as 'masculine' because of her power and her formidable knowledge, Queen Tera's threat to the British imperial order is represented in much the same terms as those of the male mummies who appear in other *fin de siècle* mummy stories:⁶ she is an adversary.

In spite of the insistence on her beauty, Tera's knowledge constructs her as rival. Indeed, mummy fiction is structured around rivalry. Even when the focus in the story is not on the mummy itself as contesting the Egyptologist's power, but on a romance between a European man and the mummy of a woman, romantic encounters lead inevitably to confrontations with powerful masculine figures: H.D Everett's Iras is pursued and claimed by her destructive ancient Egyptian lover; the father of Gautier's Princess challenges the suit of the story's protagonist for his daughter; and Grant Allen's narrator must prove himself to the ghost of Thothmes in order to win the hand of his princess. The mummy is thus a rival in the standard sense of a romantic contest in which two male figures fight over a woman, but more fundamentally, the mummy disturbs the certainties of imperial fictions of racial and cultural ascendancy.

The rivalry encoded in the standard romance plot is expanded and rendered in terms of equally conflicted contestation when the mummies begin to challenge the very epistemologies on which the empire depends. Its physical intrusions into European spaces and its intellectual intrusions into western scientific discourses are articulated in equally horrific terms as fundamentally monstrous and as a sign of the instability of imperialist systems of knowledge. Anxieties about knowledge, and, more importantly, the unknowable, that the mummy embodies can be traced through virtually all of these texts; from the

4. See Deane and Glover.
5. While there are certainly mummies and tombs in *She: A History of Adventure*, and the novel is sometimes read as mummy fiction (something that the recent Broadview edition encourages), Ayesha herself 'is not literally a mummy, but she certainly dresses like one' (Deane 2008: 393).
6. Like Tera, Doyle's Sosra, Boothby's Pharos and Pratt's Ptahmes are all high priests trained 'in all those mystic arts spoken of in your Bible' (Fleiler 1979: 213). Tera's access to arcane knowledge gives her the ability to act against the Egyptologists who are studying her, even before her reanimation.

first novel to feature a reanimated mummy, Jane Loudon's *The Mummy!: A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827) to the beginning of the Great War. Loudon's mummy is more revived aristocrat than shambling monster, but his presence in the technologically advanced twenty-second century foregrounds the text's preoccupation with the role of knowledge in the relation between the past and the future. As in *fin de siècle* works like those by Haggard, Gautier and Everett, the reanimation of the mummy in Loudon's novel is constructed in terms that presuppose its position as object that can be 'compelled', like any object under scientific scrutiny, to reveal its secrets. As they plan to travel to Egypt, Loudon's protagonists vow that they will 'revive their mummies, and force them to reveal the secrets of their prison-house. It was Cheops raised the pyramids from the dust by science, and Cheops, by the force of science, will be compelled to disclose their origin' (Loudon 1994 [1827]: 18). But in spite of the certainty of the scientists in these works, mummies are not objects like other objects. They contain secrets and knowledge in a way that other 'things' do not. Poe's Allamistakeo may begin as the meticulously catalogued object of a scientific gathering in Doctor Ponnnonner's study, but his reanimation exposes the limits of their ability to definitively know *him*. Similarly, in Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1898), the title character taunts the protagonist, 'How slight is your knowledge of me!' (Boothby 1898: 20). Pharos acknowledges Forrester's ability to understand Egyptian art and architecture but insists on the limits of modern scholarly knowledge: they may know *about* him, but they cannot know what he knows. In this sense, the mummy is unlike other objects, because there is no access to *its* knowledge. While its body may be owned, placed on display or dissected, it is ultimately the uncanny of objects: familiar and alien, natural and supremely unnatural.

Susan Pearce has argued that there is a 'powerful complex of dislocating emotions' (Pearce 2002: 54) associated with the mummy and it is that sense of dislocation that makes the mummy uncanny. Freud's conception of the term ('unheimlich' – literally 'un-homely') posits that the canny and the uncanny contain within them their opposites: 'canny' means 'familiar and agreeable' and 'endowed with occult or magical powers' or 'what is concealed and kept out of sight' (Freud 2001: 224–5) in both English and German. The canny is therefore not significantly distanced from the *uncanny*: it is, in some ways, its double: its corollary. As Freud notes, the

uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it through the process of repression ... Many people experience the feeling in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts.

(Freud 2001: 241)

The fascination with the mummy as object, then, lies in the familiarity that overlays its inherently alien nature: it is recognizably human but its preservation makes it unnatural. The reanimated mummy is the 'return of the dead', most often, with vengeance.

Reanimating the mummy demonstrates both a profound knowledge and signals a desire to acquire more. In Arthur Conan Doyle's 'Lot No. 249' (1892) Edward Bellingham 'knows more about [the East] than any man in England' (Fleiler 1979: 82) and his attempts to reanimate a mummy in his rooms at Oxford are, he says 'a wonderful thing' because he can 'command the powers

of good and of evil' (Fleiler 1979: 87). Loudon's protagonists begin their quest for Cheops with a similar 'racking desire [...] to explore [the] mysteries' of the 'ancient inhabitants [who] possessed knowledge and science far beyond even the boasted improvements of modern times' (Loudon 1994 [1827]: 41–2). *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* concludes with a scene that affirms that the mummy's knowledge is always inaccessible. As Cheops necessarily returns to death (a permanent one this time), he admonishes his audience to 'seek not to pry into mysteries designed to be concealed from man; and enjoy the comforts within your reach – for know, that knowledge, above the sphere of man's capacity, produces only wretchedness' (Loudon 1994: 298). Loudon's novel is more of a moral fable than a horror story, but her mummy's warning is replicated in almost all of the later mummy stories. Cheops's insistence on the dangers inherent in the 'racking desire' for knowledge signals the preoccupations with the 'natural' limits of knowledge that will form the basis of the representation of the figure of the mummy in *fin de siècle* mummy fiction.

As Loudon's novel demonstrates, then, the relation between European collectors and Egyptian antiquities – especially mummies – in English fiction was part of an elaborate spectacle of possession and epistemic control from the outset.⁷ As relics and representatives of an earlier imperial power, mummies held a particular fascination in popular culture and in fiction. Indeed, from their earliest representations in western culture, mummies were understood to be 'representatives of arcane wisdom and semi-magical medicine' (Pearce 2002: 56) and the discourse of Egyptology represented ancient Egypt as an example of an imperial power that complemented that of Britain. The excitement generated by Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 created a craze for all things Egyptian that continued in Europe throughout the nineteenth century and resulted in a new iconography and Egyptian aesthetic.⁸ Significantly, this early gesture of modern imperial control over the Orient was in almost equal parts military and scientific. Napoleon's ultimately doomed⁹ invasion involved both the usual number of soldiers required for such an expedition and an army of 2,000 artists, botanists, linguists and historians, all of whom set out to document, collect and know this place that had been coded as mysterious and unknowable. The result was the twenty volume *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1828),¹⁰ a monumental work that contained 837 copper plate engravings and over 3,000 drawings of Egyptian antiquities, geography and culture, as well as detailed descriptions and classifications of the country and its history. By mid-century, tourists were flocking to Egypt to explore the tombs for themselves and to take away bits of the experience. Mummies, as Heather Pringle puts it, became 'the most Egyptian and most desirable of souvenirs' (Pringle 2001: 9). Even when the Egyptian government made the export of ancient artefacts illegal in 1835, the trade and collecting continued. Indeed, it became fashionable for tourists to smuggle mummies, or parts of mummies, out of Egypt and into their homes. Gustave Flaubert, for example, is credited with returning to France with a human foot that he obtained during an expedition to a mummy grotto in 1851. The foot reputedly sat on his desk at Croisset until he died (Flaubert 1996: 206).

The fascination with mummies in popular culture was fuelled by 'mummy unrollings' which, from the 1830s until the late 1850s, were conducted in private homes and sometimes included as entertainment at social events. The invitation for one such unrolling shows a stylized mummy case and reads 'Lord Londesborough At Home Monday 10th June, 1850, 144 Piccadilly, A Mummy from Thebes to be unrolled at half-past Two' (Wisseman 2003: 2). Toward the middle part of the century, unrollings were increasingly conducted as public

7. The European fascination with mummies can be traced as far back as ancient Greek texts and continued through its early scientific and medicinal relation (mummy was often ground up for medicine from as early as the twelfth century and for artists' pigment into the nineteenth) and continues into the twenty-first century.
8. See Hampikian for an in-depth discussion of Egyptomania.
9. The French occupation evacuated in 1801.
10. This work has been fully digitized and is available at <http://descegy.bibalex.org/index1.html>

11. The *New York Times* published an account of 'A Mummy Unrolled' in front of 'a large and distinguished company of Englishmen in ... the botanical theatre of University College, London' on December 18, 1889, and the popular *Gentlemen's Magazine* published a number of reports of public unrollings as part of its project to 'record with diligence and fidelity' the 'stream of knowledge ... [that] every day give opportunities of new observations' (Urban 1844: v).
12. The use of physiognomy and phrenology read the body's surfaces to determine signs of everything from intelligence to criminal tendencies to moral degeneracy. These practices were widely used to reinforce racial hierarchies, which, in turn, could justify imperial interventions.
13. Laura Otis's reading of popular imperialist fiction's preoccupation with the threat to the 'national body' caused by physical weakness, degeneration and contamination (Otis 1999: 100) is useful as an additional layer to my readings of the body in mummy fiction.

spectacles and used to generate interest and support for archaeological projects and exhibitions. Accounts of these events routinely appeared in newspapers and magazines so that an awareness of the process was disseminated far beyond the audiences who were present. Thomas Pettigrew became famous for his public unrollings which, he says in an account of one event, were conducted 'in the presence of the members [of the Royal College of Surgeons] and a large assemblage of distinguished literary and scientific characters, who did me the honour to attend upon the occasion' (Pettigrew 1884: xix).¹¹ Théophile Gautier's description of an unrolling in 1857 infuses the scientific demonstration with a gothic sensibility. As the mummy is unrolled, 'it so happened that a sudden storm ... was lashing the windows with heavy drops of rain that rattled like hail; pale lightnings illumined on the shelves of the cupboards the old yellowed skulls and the grimacing death's-heads of the Anthropological Museum' (Gautier 1901: 302). His macabre description of the audience's 'feverish' curiosity, and the increasing speed with which the scientists turn the mummy, transforms the unrolling into a bizarre dance, the 'waltz of Nes Khons, the daughter of Horus and Rouaa, as she pirouetted in the impatient hands of those who were unwrapping her' (Gautier 1901: 302). Conventions usually associated with gothic fiction mix with popular journalism and scientific inquiry here, and in other reports of unrollings, to position the mummy in the precarious space between these discourses. The slippage between fictional and documentary accounts opens a space for the entry of the mummy into the popular imagination as a signifier of the unsettled relation between scientific inquiry and the imagination. Popular interest in mummy unrollings, and the increasing public familiarity with mummified bodies that they generated, thus effectively transplanted the mummy from the obscurity of its tomb into the 'midst of ... all the machinery of our modern civilization' (Gautier 1901: 307).

In an age that was preoccupied with bodies as spectacles that signified everything from criminal behaviour, psychological disorder, moral standing and racial categorizations¹² the body of the mummy functions as a signifier that mediates between imperial fantasies of control and immortality and *fin de siècle* fears of regression, invasion, atavism and dissolution (Brantlinger 1990: 230). In imperial gothic fiction these fears appear as a series of complex explorations of the ways in which the gap between the known and the unknown can be charted on and through the body. It is the monstrous body in these texts that signals the instability of the points of intersection between the knowable and the unknowable, between science and magic.

Monsters are 'a tacit admission that all knowledge is neither comprehensive in scope nor logical in form' (Richards 1993: 53). Their staggering and horrific instability signals a profound anxiety about gaps in systems of classification and knowledge production and about contamination¹³ and degeneration (physical, cultural, spiritual and epistemic). For Rosi Briadotti 'more than on object, [the monstrous body] is a shifter, a vehicle that constructs a web of interconnected and yet potentially contradictory discourses about his or her embodied self' (Briadotti 1999: 300). Discussing a different set of cultural inscriptions and intersecting systems, Judith Butler argues that bodies 'are synechdochal for the social system *per se* ... [and] any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment' (Butler 1999: 168). Monstrous bodies have a similar discursive function: they expose and enact limits. They are 'best understood as an embodiment of difference, a breaker of category, a resistant Other known only through process and movement, never through dissection table analysis' (Cohen 1996: x). For both

Butler and Cohen, the body (and in Cohen's case the monstrous body) is a strategically shifting, re-active signifier not in culture, but *of* culture. That is to say, they resonate beyond the confines of a single meaning within culture itself to embody a simultaneous series of projections of multiple, layered pre-occupations that haunt and define culture. As figures that embody culture, fictional representations of monstrous bodies explore the limits of modern science's claims to definitively categorize, map and control physical and epistemic spaces in the name of empire.

The simultaneous fascination with and fear of boundaries and constructions of alterity that inform imperial gothic stories is played out through moments of epistemic fracture and loss of control around and through the body of the mummy. The monstrosity of the mummy is articulated on a number of interconnected levels. It is a monster not simply because it is manifestly *not* dead (which is perhaps monstrous enough), but because, as in Poe's story, its reanimation shifts the power *away* from the men of science whose proper object it is. It is a both a physical threat and an intellectual rival. More significantly, perhaps, its existence as speaking, acting subject threatens the basis of western epistemologies. Mummies are the subject of curiosity and scholarly study but these figures repeatedly challenge their status as object when they turn their all-too critical gazes on the men who are studying them. Allamistakeo rises from his unrolling to denounce the gathering of learned men, Boothby's Forrester is repeatedly called a 'fool' by Pharos and the appearance of Loudon's Cheops is often preceded by bursts 'of terrific laughs of derision' (Loudon 1994: 107). The reanimated mummy's mocking laughter challenges these fictional scientists' desire for 'comprehensive erudition which brings all that belongs to the [scholar's] inquiry at once within the circle of light' (Urban 1844: iii). The mummy's monstrosity, then, is located here: in its breaking of the categories upon which the fantasy of comprehensive knowledge depends. The mummy's ability to simultaneously occupy the ostensibly oppositional positions of subject/object, living/dead, artefact/scholar creates a space for exploring anxieties about the imperial project's almost fetishistic preoccupation with archives of knowledge.

As the mummies of Stoker's Queen Tera and Poe's Count Allamistakeo assert, the exhumation of what Michel Foucault calls 'subjugated knowledges' (Foucault 1980b: 81) signals not so much a glorious resurrection and potential combination of the forces of ancient and modern empires as it does an insurrection (to continue in Foucault's terms) that threatens the basis of European imperial power. Foucault argues that power and knowledge are inextricably connected. He notes that 'between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority, even if they have specific roles that are linked together on the basis of their difference' (Foucault 1980a: 98). For Foucault, the terms 'power' and 'knowledge' are so intimately connected that he uses a hyphen to signal that 'they are not static forms of distribution, they are "matrices of transformations"' (Foucault 1980a: 99). In the context of nineteenth century imperialism, these matrices are manifest in what Thomas Richards has called 'the imperial archive' which was impelled by a fantasy of control that 'hinges on a British monopoly over knowledge' (Richards 1993: 7). Creating the archive is 'a practice that causes a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated ... the archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements' (Foucault 1972: 146). It 'defines at the outset the system of the enunciability of [the statement]'

14. Elleke Boehmer has argued that the British empire was inherently textual, that 'the Empire in its heyday was conceived and maintained by way of text – political treatises, diaries, acts and edicts, administrative records and gazetteers, missionaries' reports, notebooks ... the triple decker novel and the best-selling adventure tale' (Boehmer 2005: 14).
15. Pharaonic Egypt's 'extraordinary scientific proficiency' (Hurley 1993: 196) encouraged a kind of imaginative connection between empires. But as with Leo Vincey's elaborately constructed genealogy in Haggard's *She*, this necessitated creative, often contradictory reconfiguration of Egyptian history in racial terms; a project that Robert Young has called 'the whitening of Egypt' (Young 1995: 126).
16. Imagined genealogies of empire tended to focus on connections with the more recent, and more clearly European, empires like those of Greece and Rome. In spite of this, though, connections with pharaonic Egypt proved to be a potent referent to imperial power in this discourse. As Kelly Hurley notes, 'present day Egypt is a reminder of the west's prehistory' (Hurley: 1993: 196) and David Glover suggests that 'Egypt tended to hold a tantalizingly indeterminate position within the complex of European Orientalisms, an empire that had failed, yet one whose achievements continued to baffle and provoke the scholars and administrators of a later and increasingly insecure imperial age' (Glover 1996: 4).

(Foucault 1972: 145–146). Within the context of empire, as Richards suggests, British explorers, botanists and cartographers (among others) collected information and produced seemingly endless texts about their ever-expanding empire. The accumulation and manipulation of the resulting data sustained, and was sustained by, a belief in 'comprehensive knowledge', a 'sense that knowledge was singular and not plural, complete and not partial, global and not local, that all knowledges would ultimately turn out to be concordant in one great system of knowledge' (Richards 1993: 7). This archive, then, defined and controlled the relation between knowledges; it determined 'what can be said' about imperial holdings and the science that sustained them, and regulated the terms through which the knowledge gleaned from these spaces could be disseminated and articulated. Any threat to this regulation of knowledge and enunciability, such as Allamistakeo's derisive observations, undermines the imagined authority of the archive and of the empire that it represents.

The imperial archive was perpetuated through elaborate networks of accumulated knowledge and 'built around knowledge-producing institutions like the British Museum and the Royal Geographical Society, the India Survey, and the universities: [the facts about empire] were thought of as raw knowledge, knowledge awaiting ordering' (Richards 1993: 4). Richards's implicit connection between raw material and raw knowledge here is significant, because the archive is not simply a repository for knowledge; rather, it manufactures it in its own terms. Like a nineteenth-century factory in which raw materials from the imperial margins were transformed into European commodities, information about empire was drawn into the archive where it was classified and defined in European terms: transformed from a potentially threatening alien episteme to a domestic system of knowledge. The project of assembling the imperial archive assumed that all of the 'alien' knowledges that it collected could be easily assimilated into existing, 'universal' (that is, European) epistemological categories. Local knowledge would thus be made to reinforce beliefs about the metropolis. Assimilated into the 'circle of light' (Urban 1844: iii) they could be made to reinforce, rather than threaten, the authority of imperial epistemic rule.

In spite of the epistemic and political stability that the archive represented, the imperial project's movement into 'new' spaces opened up the disruptive possibility for the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges [which are] ... the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization ... but they are also a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity' (Foucault 1980b: 81–82). The contradictions between the enunciation of singularity and the awareness of multiplicity – knowing, paradoxically, all that there is not to know – is, I would suggest, embodied most effectively in the figure of the mummy: the gothic Other who both contains and is knowledge, 'buried and disguised'.

The elaborate textual machinery¹⁴ generated by the archive produced a coherent imperial identity that was, at least in part, predicated on a carefully constructed genealogy¹⁵ that connected the modern Empire with that of pharaonic Egypt,¹⁶ specifically its science and knowledge. Egypt's glorious imperial past provided a model for both the importance of scientific advancements in the creation of empire and the potential for a catastrophic loss of imperial control. In the mid-century, mummies were simply another object to be plundered. Pulled from their context, they were easily and justifiably

appropriated as a source of modern scientific knowledge.¹⁷ Mummy fiction of the *fin de siècle*, though, returned the mummy to its context: a context of mysterious power and unknowable science. In these works, the mummy does not only represent an uncanny 'defiance of the normal natural laws' (Pearce 2002: 58), but also signifies its imperial and epistemological origins.

The mummy's recurring appearance at this moment of military and ideological rule and domination is the nightmarish embodiment of a discursive desire for an empire that will never die. Unlike the Roman or Greek empires, which conquered, ruled and then died naturally, passing along their texts to their 'rightful' heirs and leaving behind properly material monuments that attest to their passing, the remnants of pharaonic Egypt are startlingly human. Julia Kristeva argues that monuments signify death, but the corpse *is* death (Kristeva 1982: 3). For Kristeva, the corpse insists that we acknowledge the body, that we recognize the certainty of decay. The corpse defers the monumental, which is an immutable or sanitized signification. The mummy, though, is both corpse and immutable monument and as such it is messy and unstable: monstrous.

Whether the mummy is properly a corpse or an artefact/monument is a question that recurs throughout these stories. In H.D Everett's *Iras: A Mystery* (1896), the protagonist's landlady is horrified to discover a mummy case in the protagonist's rooms: 'Are you meaning to tell me, sir, as to how there is a *body* inside of it?' she asks, and protests that Lavenham is 'turning her respectable lodgings into a charnel and dead-house for disreputable heathen corpses' (Everett 1896: 70, original emphasis). But Lavenham insists that 'what was a body three thousand years ago. ... [is] not much in human likeness at time present' (Everett 1896: 70). Later, after he reads a priest's curse on the tablet that was buried with Iras's body, he worries that 'the sarcophagus held no mummy after all, but the body, or what had been the body of a girl who has met [a] horrible fate' (Everett 1896: 81). This potential confusion of the distinction between a mummy and a corpse is only one of a series of anxieties about the study and ownership of the mummified dead that enters into these stories.¹⁸ In every case, the ambiguity that this confusion signals reminds us that the mummy, as Lavenham's landlady has pointed out, is not only a body, but a dead body. The landlady does not distinguish between a corpse and a mummy, but for Lavenham there is a clear distinction. The mummy is the object of scientific inquiry, and he reiterates that he plans to subject it to 'various analyses of the embalming process' (Everett 1896: 75). In this context, then, the 'museumified'¹⁹ mummy is an object, while a 'body' or corpse signifies death, corruption and an awareness of the humanity of the individual that it was.

The anxiety that these stories demonstrate about the potential blurring of the lines between death, deterioration, artefact and corpse reflects the mummy's symbolic position in imperial discourse; its importance in the iconography of possession and accumulation upon which the current empire is predicated and its connection to its imperial history. It is this latter point (the notion that the mummy symbolizes its imperial history) that makes it so uncanny as a symbol of imperial control. Instead of dying, the empire that the mummy signifies is in a slow, artificial, endless suspension: a decay that is not decay. When the mummy, that embodiment of history, is not properly dead, then the past of pharaonic Egypt similarly refuses to die and its heir – in this case the British empire – is merely a usurper. The mummy, then, represents an empire with a horrific longevity that negates its fully fleshed out heroic past and replaces it with a sinewy, monstrous shadow of its former self. In

17. See Pearce 2002: 62.

18. This will be addressed at greater length later in this article.

19. Baudrillard uses this term to denote the stabilizing effect when an otherwise unstable object enters knowledge-producing institutions. They become, he says, 'frozen, cryogenized, sterilized, protected to death' (Baudrillard 1996: 8).

20. Kristeva's notion of the object is useful in making this distinction: the dismembered body of the mummy is, like the corpse, 'seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection ... it is something rejected from which one does not part' (Kristeva 1982: 4).

these fictions, the mummy evokes less a return of the repressed than a spectre of imperial demise – or the potential horror of unnatural imperial longevity.

The monstrosity of the mummies, in these terms, is a complex fabric of anxieties about knowledge, history, and the possibility of degenerating bodies and of degenerating empires. The mummy's presence in a modern symbolic order (rather than, as Baudrillard asserts, when they were safely, secretly buried) whether as pure object, object of desire, as commodity, or as disturbingly mobile subject, signifies the cultural abjection²⁰ of what went before: 'our culture dreams, behind this defunct power that it tries to annex, of an order that would have had nothing to do with it, and it dreams of it because it exterminated it by exhuming it *as its own past*' (Baudrillard 1996: 10, emphasis added). If pharaonic Egypt 'represented greatness so permanent, so exempt from the usual standards of historical development, that it could ... properly be regarded with a feeling of awe' (Deane 2008: 395), then taking it on as a model for modern imperial greatness also means taking on the potential for its monstrous suspended animation. When they encounter the kings of the Egyptian empires, the protagonists in Théophile Gautier's, Grant Allen's and Haggard's stories are confronted with figures who deride them in these terms: for their physical inadequacies, for the frailty of both their bodies and of their cultures. The King in Gautier's 'The Mummy's Foot' (1910) insists that 'we must give our daughters husbands who will last well' (Gautier 1910: 10) and compares the narrator's corruptibility unfavourably with his own vigour and strength (Gautier 1910: 11). Gautier's Egyptian court is made up of ghosts, but the assemblage into which Allen's protagonist stumbles when he is lost in a pyramid is unquestionably corporeal: they are mummies who 'once every thousand years ... wake up for twenty-four hours, recover [their] flesh and blood, and banquet once more upon the mummied dishes and other good things laid by for [them] in the Pyramid' (Allen 1880: 7). Their physical longevity, we are told, is not the result of magic, but of science. This connection with science and the emphasis on the physical reanimation of these figures foregrounds their corporeality and the potential for monstrous longevity.

The monster is pure corporeality and when that monster is over 4,000 years old, the emphasis on the body takes on another layer of uncanny signification: one that 'leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (Freud 2001: 220). Butler articulates a provocative connection between history, culture and the body when she notes that 'history [is] a relentless writing instrument and the body [is] the medium that must be destroyed and transfigured in order for culture to emerge' (Butler 1999: 166). While Butler is addressing Foucault's need to 'maintain the body prior to its cultural inscription' (Butler 1999: 166), that is, suggesting that the body exists outside of or before being invested with cultural meaning, the body *is* cultural inscription in mummy fiction. That is, the body of the mummy enacts the *process* through which culture inscribes meaning on bodies: its instability and inherent textuality (as object to be read and interpreted) both consolidates and resists the terms through which the body signifies in culture. Through its unstable corporeality and textuality it exposes the contradictions that riddle narratives that sustain an increasingly insecure empire. But it also draws attention to the tensions and gaps the empire's claims of, and desire for, comprehensive knowledge.

In the case of the mummy, the body that is history that Butler theorizes is not only or simply a text, it represents a body that is testimony; a testimony that potentially destabilizes the authority of the modern historian and disrupts the mummy's position as object. In this sense, reanimated mummies in works

such as Conan Doyle's 'Lot No. 249', Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* and Ambrose Pratt's *The Living Mummy* (1910), embody a relation to the past that unambiguously threatens both the ways in which the imperial narrative of ownership and authority works and the scientific discourses on which it depends. As Jean Baudrillard has argued, 'Ramses does not signify anything for us, only the mummy is of an inestimable worth' (Baudrillard 1996: 9–10). That is, its value lies in its position as an object or a text that can be read and interpreted in Eurocentric terms, not in its own terms or in the subject that it was. In 'Lot No. 249' the mummy cannot signify, at least initially, outside of the codes of 'museumified' classification; the mummy in Bellingham's rooms is nameless: 'the outer sarcophagus with the inscription is missing. Lot 249 is all the title he has now. You see it printed on his case. That was his number in the auction at which I picked him up' (Fleiler 1979: 85). Baudrillard argues that the mummy dies not when the physical body finally deteriorates, the victim of 'both science and worms' (Baudrillard 1996: 10), but rather when it is 'transplanted from a slow order of the symbolic, [where it was] master over putrefaction and death, to an order of history, science and museums, our order' (Baudrillard 1996: 10). For Baudrillard, 'our order' is that of the late twentieth century 'which no longer masters anything' (Baudrillard 1996: 10) but at the *fin de siècle*, the imperial project still struggled to attain mastery over everything.

The tension between the need to configure cultural meaning in the mummy's indeterminate body and the desire to destroy it is played out in these fictions through the physical and scientific competition between the protagonists and the reanimated mummies. Whether ghosts conjured by the possession of stray body parts or reanimated mummies (or both), these works insist that the physical and the scientific are inseparable. The man of action is, inevitably, also a man of science just as the monster is equal parts unnatural body and formidable intellect. The mummy signifies the anxiety about the potential failure of that attempt at mastery. It signals the haunting: an all too physical presence of the unknowable and indecipherable at the heart of Europe's repositories of knowledge. The British Museum, Oxford University, and the Cairo Museum, among other institutions that sustained the imperial archive, appear frequently and prominently in these stories. Contests between modern Egyptologists and (re)animated²¹ ancient Egyptians, especially those that reinforce the inadequacy of European knowledge, most often take place in museums or in assemblies of learned men. The heroes are inevitably 'in the very first rank of scientific observers' (Fleiler 1979: 202) and possess 'rare knowledge' (Stoker 1975: 88). The European characters' credentials are the scientific corollary of the genealogies that are inscribed on the tombs of the Pharaohs that they unearth.²² In *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*, for example, a stranger bursts into the Trelawny house and introduces himself:

My name is Eugene Corbeck. I am a Master of Arts and Doctor of Laws and Master of Surgery of Cambridge; Doctor of Letters of Oxford; Doctor of Science and Doctor of Languages of London University; Doctor of Philosophy of Berlin; Doctor of Oriental Languages of Paris. I have some other degrees, honorary and otherwise, but I need not trouble you with them.

(Stoker 1975: 88)

Corbeck's seemingly all-encompassing intellectual genealogy here is echoed in that of Queen Tera, the powerful sorceress who Trelawny will eventually

21. The figures that appear in museums are not always reanimated mummies: they are also ghosts (Haggard 'Smith') and nearly immortal scientists (Doyle 'Ring').
22. Boothby's *Pharos* repeatedly refers to his genealogy and gives an extended account of his history in ancient Egypt (Boothby 1898: 75–6) and almost all of the mummies in these stories (with the notable exception of the mummy in 'Lot No. 249') are described with at least a truncated list of their ancestors and their status.

23. The code of hieroglyphics and other ancient Egyptian symbolic systems were first deciphered in 1822, but Stoker makes a point of stating that this is a newly acquired ability.

reanimate. Tera is introduced as having an all-encompassing relation to systems of authority and power: 'Tera, Queen of the Egypts, daughter of Antef, Monarch of the North and South. Daughter of the Sun, Queen of the Diadems' (Stoker 1975: 137).

The connection between power and knowledge is reinforced here through the facility with which the Egyptologists in these stories read the inscriptions on the tombs, stelae and sarcophagi that they encounter. This ability is a symbol of their recently acquired²³ knowledge and presumed mastery of ancient texts. Corbeck notes that

the signs which had baffled Van Huyn [an earlier explorer] and those of his time – and later, were no secrets to us. The host of scholars who have given their brains and their lives to this work, had wrested open the mysterious prison-house of Egyptian language. On the hewn face of the rocky cliff we, who had learned the secrets, could read what the Theban priesthood had had there inscribed nearly fifty centuries before.

(Stoker 1975: 135)

Stoker's terms here foreground the importance of the Egyptologists' 'new' knowledge that allows them to conquer the secrets of the ancient empire. This, Corbeck insists, is also physical work; 'wresting open' mysteries and giving one's 'brain' is described in terms that equate with giving one's life. The conquest of the epistemic blank spaces of empire is no less brutal than the physical one. In 'The Ring of Thoth', though, Vansittart Smith's 'contemptible' knowledge of pharaonic Egypt is revealed to him in the Louvre as Sosra, an immortal priest from the Pharaoh's court, overturns assumptions about the importance of the kind of inscriptions that Stoker's Corbeck is so proud of defeating: 'The whole keystone of our old life in Egypt was not the inscriptions or monuments of which you make so much, but was our hermetic philosophy and mystic knowledge of which you say little or nothing' (Doyle 1890: 211). Sosra's decisive dismissal of the value of the information inscribed on ancient monuments in favour of the more intangible 'mystic knowledge' and philosophy that the Egyptians *themselves* knew, and that the modern scholars do not, suggests that access to a comprehensive knowledge of pharaonic Egypt continues to be inaccessible: locked in the 'prison-house' of the mummies' consciousnesses. Egyptian epistemologies are thus available only in fragments, reconstructed – incorrectly as Sosra points out – within the alien context of modern knowledge-producing institutions.

The fragmentary, elusive nature of the modern scientist's access to ancient knowledge is reflected in the indecipherability of that other, often fragmented, text: the body of the mummy. The inherent textuality of the mummy and the instability of that textuality is a central concern in mummy fiction. As Sosra notes, the modern Egyptologist has only incomplete access to the knowledge that the mummy and its artefacts represent. In mummy stories, this partial knowledge is often reflected through an emphasis on fragmented texts and dismembered bodies; the unexpected appearance of hands and feet that litter these stories 'disturb[s] identity, system [and] order' (Kristeva 1982: 4). Taken from their context – the body – these body parts are abject, ambiguous and indeterminate artefacts which symbolize the decontextualization and alienation of the 'museumified' mummy. While mummies are inevitably recognized and named through the texts that surround them, they are most often encountered in these stories through the textuality of their dismembered bodies.

In H. Rider Haggard's 'Smith and the Pharaohs' (1912–1913), for example, everything associated with Queen Ma-Mee is fragmented. Smith's first encounter is with a plaster cast of the head of her statue in the British Museum. He is informed that 'nobody knows' who she is but that 'perhaps one day the rest of the statue may be found, and then we shall learn – that is, if it is inscribed ... Probably she was a queen ... you can see her rank for yourself from the broken *uræus*' (Haggard 1989: 140). When he goes to Egypt and finds her unfinished tomb, Smith stumbles upon a mummified hand amid 'other objects that had been torn from the body of the queen' (Haggard 1989: 150). The collection of objects is also 'incomplete. For instance, there was but one of the great gold ceremonial earrings ... and the most beautiful of the necklaces had been torn in two – half of it was missing' (Haggard 1989: 150). The texts, artefacts, treasures and even the tomb of Haggard's Queen are in pieces: torn apart by time, violence or ancient crime. But Smith, like other Egyptologists in these stories, sets out to reassemble the fragmented histories that are written along with or on the dismembered bodies that he encounters.

The consistent representation of mummies as fragmented and dismembered allows for a narrative displacement of the potential for the mummy's subjectivity by insisting on their position as objects. The description of the mummied foot of the Princess Hermonthis for sale in a Paris bric-a-brac shop in Théophile Gautier's 'The Mummy's Foot' (1910) mediates provocatively between artistic appreciation for an object and erotic desire for a body:

I caught sight of a charming foot, which I at first took for a fragment of some antique Venus. It had those beautiful ruddy and tawny tints that lend to Florentine bronze that warm living look so much preferable to the gray-green aspect of the common bronzes ... satiny gleams played over its rounded forms, doubtless polished by the amorous kisses of twenty centuries.

(Gautier 1910: 3–4)

Gautier's protagonist congratulates himself that he 'possesses a piece of the Princess Hermonthis, daughter of Pharaoh' (Gautier 1910: 3) and, as with Smith, his discovery leads him to an assignation with the ghost of the Princess herself. Haggard and Gautier's emphasis on ghostly encounters defers any clear connection between the fragmented objects at the centre of their stories and the corporeality of the mummy: the hands and feet signify objects to be bartered and possessed, not the horror of disinterred, dismembered bodies.

The cavalier attitude towards the integrity of the mummified body appears in an exaggerated form in Haggard's *She*, in which Holly figures as another keen collector. When he is shown 'a beautifully shaped and almost white woman's foot, looking as fresh and firm as though it had been placed [in the tomb] yesterday' (Haggard 1989: 112), he looks at it 'with feelings which [he] cannot describe' and promptly 'hide[s] it way in [his] traveling bag' (Haggard 1989: 113). But Holly's potentially horrific appropriation of the mummy's foot is quickly overshadowed by the Amahaggard's use of mummified arms as torches and of full bodies as lamps. This transformation of the mummy from object or artefact to a sort of horrific fossil fuel replicates Mark Twain's 1869 description of the Egyptian railway which, he says, is 'like any other railway [except] that the fuel they use for the locomotive is composed of mummies three thousand years old, purchased by the ton or by the graveyard for that purpose' (Twain 1954: 337).²⁴

24. Twain's claim is a comic gesture. Mummy has been used in many things, from painter's pigment to paper (at least the linens), but there is no evidence they were ever used as fuel.

The use and/or abuse of the bodies of the mummified dead in these works articulates one of the central anxieties about their abjection and introduces another parallel narrative of more complex anxieties about the science of archaeology and its gothic double, grave robbery. In Haggard's 'Smith and the Pharaohs' a young Egyptian ghost brings the matter of the 'violation of our sepulchres' (Haggard 2001: 168) before the assembly of Kings. He argues that

the mortal bodies of many who are gathered here tonight lie in this place to be stared at and mocked by the curious. I myself am one of them, jawless, broken, hideous to behold ... The ornaments that were ours are stole away and sold to the greedy; our sacred writings and our symbols are their jest. Soon there will not be one holy grave in Egypt that remains undefiled.

(Haggard 2001: 169)

Similarly, in *The Jewel of the Seven Stars* Trelawny describes his party of excavators as 'grave robbers' (Stoke 1975: 146) and the plot of Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* is structured around a nightmare of retribution for a similar crime. The mysterious Pharos, who is ultimately revealed to be a magician from the Pharaoh's court, tracks down his sarcophagus in the rooms of the protagonist and confronts him:

'Thy father, was it, wretched man', he cried, shaking his skeleton fist at me, while his body trembled like a leaf under the whirlwind of his passion, 'Who stole this body from its resting place? Thy father, was it, who broke the seals the gods had placed upon the tombs of those who were their servants? If that be so, then may the punishment decreed against those guilty of the sin of sacrilege be visited on thee and for thine evermore.' Then turning to the mummy, he continued, 'Oh, mighty Egypt! Hast thou fallen so far from thy high estate that even the bodies of thy kings and priests may ... be ravished from thee to be gaped at in alien lands?'

(Boothby 1898: 56)

Pharos's accusations strategically evoke anxieties about the exhumation and study of the ancient dead. By conflating the titillation of public display with the crimes of sacrilege and grave robbing, Pharos here articulates the complexity of the threat that is posed by the disinterred mummy in mummy stories. He insists that the mummy is 'a body' stolen from a grave, not an artefact to be collected and studied. His testimony – the voice of the mummy itself – draws together western religious discourses of sin and an ancient curse to be 'visited upon thee and thine'. Accusations of theft, dismemberment, and spectacle become tropes in these texts and combine to make the tensions generated through the rivalry between the two symbolic orders all the more horrific. The mummy's forced removal from the 'slow symbolic order' of burial and history into the modern order of scientific inquiry effectively challenges any easy opposition between western science and the 'barbarism', criminality and superstition of past civilizations.

The focus on scientific examination and collection in these stories positions the mummy unambiguously as artefact and text in the imperial archive. While more conventional texts, like papyri and hieroglyphics, figure prominently in these stories, it is the less conventional text – the body of the mummy – that is the point at which the horror is introduced; even when that body is 'not

like death at all' (Stoker 1975: 245) but life-like and (generally) beautiful, it represents the absences and instability of western epistemologies. The collector's desire to catalogue, define and control the mummy's body is a scientific gesture that focuses on the process of adding to the layers of texts that already bolster and enclose the mummified body. Egyptian tombs are famously textual: sarcophagi and mummy cases are covered with inscriptions and hieroglyphics; books, papyri, stelae, engraved pottery and other forms of textual material are buried with and around the mummified corpse; and the walls of burial chambers are covered with histories of the dead and invocations for their souls. This proliferation of textual material in mummy stories²⁵ emphasizes the importance of gaining access to knowledge of the 'true' nature of the mummy and mirrors the British empire's own obsession with textuality.

Everett's *Iras: A Mystery* is perhaps the work that is the most obsessed with texts, documents and the importance of documentation. While the mummy in 'Lot No. 249' is a nameless commodity and his story (presumably written on the papyrus) is never revealed, Iras is represented through layers of texts that should consolidate her position in Lavenham's story. She appears first in Jack Skipton's letters and telegrams from Alexandria which document the discovery and transportation of her decorated mummy case. Later, Lavenham unwraps her mummy and reveals inscriptions at every level and the tablet he finds in the *cartonage* 'would make the eyes of an Egyptologist glisten' (Everett 1896: 79). In spite of these layers of texts, Iras's body functions as a fundamentally unstable signifier for the desire to know and control the Other.

Unlike other mummy stories, Everett's novel constantly draws the reality of Iras's reanimation into question. Lavenham has been physically and mentally incapacitated by his work in Egypt. He was 'laid aside with sunstroke and fever' while working 'with hands as well as the brain, uncovering temple sites, opening tombs, deciphering hieroglyphics, driving fellaheen, and building theories like the rest' (Everett 1896: 3). After his return to England, he sees the figure of a tall Egyptian that other characters assume is a hallucination. Later, when trying to piece together evidence to prove that Iras had been awakened and lived, he laments that 'they would have me believe it was all a fever-vision; that there were no sweet words and looks and vows – no wife, nothing but delusion and a corpse' (Everett 1896: 100). To substantiate his account of reanimation, love and loss, Lavenham produces documents – legal papers, testimonials, hotel registers, tablets and ancient inscriptions – all of which he uses in an attempt to position Iras as a stable text and to locate her in an authoritative narrative.

The texts that surround Iras in Britain are, like the texts that surrounded her in her tomb (Everett 1896: 69), lost, fragmented or inconclusive. Ultimately, Iras disappears – both textually and physically – in spite of this endless inscription. On their declaration of marriage, for example, Lavenham's 'signature and those of the witnesses remained plain to read in all the ordinary blackness of ink [but], that of Iras was faded so as to be barely legible' (Everett 1896: 272). Only Lavenham insists that Iras was ever more than the 'dried up corpse' (Everett 1896: 235) that his friends find him with at the end of the story. Whether Iras did live or whether she was a 'persistent hallucination' (Everett 1896: 218) is never resolved but Lavenham asserts textual authority as the novel concludes: his will stipulates that he be buried next to Iras's interred mummy in a Scottish graveyard and that 'a white cross [be set up] over us, writing upon it, plain for all to read, the names of Ralph Lavenham and Iras Lavenham, his wife' (Everett 1896: 280).

25. Stoker's Trelawny and Corbeck meticulously catalogue and itemize the 'drawings and writings on the walls, ceiling and floor' (Stoker 1975: 142) of Queen Tera's tomb. The plot of Conan Doyle's 'Lot No. 249' is dependent on a roll of papyrus that Bellingham protects so fiercely.

While not all are as tantalizingly unstable as Iras, the mummies in these works consistently refuse to act as stable texts. They are indeterminate 'shadows' (Haggard 2001: 160), and 'dark, crouching figures ... [only] dimly visible' (Fleiler 1979: 103) that even the scientific certainty of the protagonists find difficult to categorize. The ways in which the mummy can undermine the certainty of modern scientific texts are played out in the contrast between the indeterminate figure of the mummy and comprehensive knowledge. The image of the body and/as text appears provocatively in 'Lot No. 249'. Early in the story, an anatomy textbook represents the human body in decidedly imperialistic terms. The book is 'adorned with great, colored maps of that strange, internal kingdom of which we are at once the hapless and helpless monarchs' (Fleiler 1979: 79). The human body is the object of inquiry and ownership: entirely knowable, mapped out like the empire so that there are no 'empty spaces'. It is 'plundered' for its riches by the medical students in the story and used to further the archive of the individual student's knowledge. Conan Doyle's protagonist declares that he is an expert on human anatomy and fellow students come to his rooms to borrow specimens like a skull and the 'little bones of the ear' (Fleiler 1979: 78). The trade in anatomical and archaeological specimens in this story effectively articulates parallels between the commodification of objects and the pursuit of knowledge. Yet the certainty of the anatomical maps with which Conan Doyle grounds this story is decisively undercut by the unknown, uncharted anatomy of a reanimated mummy. Stretched out on Bellingham's table, the mummy is described as a grotesque conflation of patient, document and artefact: 'The gaunt ribs, with their parchment-like covering, were exposed, and the sunken, leaden-hued abdomen, with the long slit where the embalmer had left his mark; but the lower limbs were wrapped round with coarse, yellow bandages' (Doyle 1892: 84). Parchment, incisions, bandages, Smith's 'expert eye' all create the connection between text, patient and mummy. The story ends with the destruction of the mummy; this is described as a nightmarish inversion of the medical discussions that surround it in the story: in a 'brutish' combination of dismemberment and dissection (Doyle 1892: 111).

The significance of texts as the source of both medical and magical knowledge in these stories grants the mummies' 'subjugated knowledges' and, at least temporarily, the same status as the prodigious knowledge of the protagonists. Insisting that 'there is nothing of mystery or magic in the matter' of the mummy's knowledge and that both immortality and reanimation were 'simply a chemical discovery, which may well be made again' (Fleiler 1979: 214), is both reassuring and nightmarish. Discoveries that can be 'made again' suggest both a familiar empirical basis for the mummy's revival as well as an unsettling sense of the absences that riddle the British imperial archive.

When the texts in these stories are read accurately and the mummies reanimated to reveal their secrets, both the body and the knowledge contained in the texts with which they are associated are treated as equally horrific and monstrous: both are 'unnatural' in the terms of imperialist comprehensive knowledge. In almost every case, the character that is able to '[wrest] open the mysterious prison-house of Egyptian language' (Stoker 1975: 135) becomes obsessed with the power that his knowledge has granted him. In Pratt's *The Living Mummy*, Dr. Belleville exults that 'a power has been placed at my disposal which puts me on a level with the immortal gods of ancient Greece' (Pratt 1910: 236). It becomes the role of the hero, in these cases, to restore a more natural order, (represented as a stable, unified body of knowledge) by destroying the ancient texts, the mummy, or both. The mummy of Pratt's

Ptahmes promises to help Pinsent defeat Belleville if he agrees 'to destroy certain papyri and an ivory stele ... and to burn [his] mummified remains' (Pratt 1910: 242). These texts are powerful: they hold the key to Ptahmes's reanimation and Belleville was using them to compel the mummy to murder his adversaries. In 'Lot No. 249' the mummy is similarly used to attack and terrorize characters that threaten Bellingham's experiments. Its rampage is ultimately resolved when Smith forces Bellingham to destroy the mummy and all of his papers. Significantly, it is the papers that Bellingham fights for: 'You don't know what you do' he cries '[That roll of papyrus] is unique, it contains wisdom which is nowhere else to be found ... I'll share the knowledge with you. I'll teach you all that is in it' (Fleiler 1979: 111). Smith refuses because 'you'll find that your filthy Egyptian tricks won't answer in England' (Fleiler 1979: 102) and both the mummy and the papyrus are consigned to the fire. As Cheops warns in Loudon's novel, the 'racking desire' for knowledge that drives these characters opens a space for the disruptive insurrection of subjugated knowledges that corrupts the integrity of the western episteme.

The presence of this Other archive introduces the possibility that it, like the mummies that wander through these stories, will somehow refuse to stay in its place and that the result will be a monstrous science, a hybrid 'which joins what nature has severed and severs what nature has joined, making unlawful matches and divorces of things' (Rajan 1999: 148), a kind of epistemic miscegenation that threatens the integrity of the imperial body/archive. The monster with which the protagonists in these stories grapple, then, is not always or simply the reanimated mummy. The contest is not a physical one but an intellectual one: a contest between epistemologies that cannot be resolved through compromise or combination. In the few cases that attempt to blend the competing systems, they are doomed to catastrophic failure. In *The Jewel of the Seven Stars*, Trelawny attempts to reconcile ancient and modern sciences by drawing 'light rays and radium' into his assertion that 'we may find that Astrology [has] a scientific basis' of which 'we are profoundly ignorant' (Stoker 1975: 180). Delving into the realms of Egyptian knowledge through his investigation of Queen Tera's body and possessions, he ultimately describes his 'grand experiment', as an event that will bring two scientific systems together:

For good or ill we must here stand by our chances, and abide by results. If we are successful we shall be able to let in on the world of modern science such a flood of light from the Old World as will change every condition of thought and experiment and practice. If we fail, then even the knowledge of our attempt will die with us.

(Stoker 1975: 206)

The apparent ascendancy of subjugated knowledge that the reanimation signals is consistently undercut by the frequent intrusion of explanations supplied by western science:

the mummy, when laid on the raised portion ... of the sarcophagus ... would lie head to the West, and feet to the East, thus receiving the natural earth currents. I gather [Trelawny says] that the force to be used has something to do with magnetism or electricity, or both. It may be, of course, that some other force, such ... as that emanating from radium, is to be employed.

(Stoker 1975: 226)

26. I think that it's important to note that even if Queen Tera *did* somehow blend with Margaret Trelawny, her knowledge and power did not. She has been assimilated into idealized Victorian womanhood: her formidable power, her extensive knowledge and her masculinity have all been removed and replaced by Margaret's 'dreamy' and 'loving' characterization.

Ultimately, Trelawny's explanations prove to be inadequate. Whether an attempt at a conjuring trick or epistemological blending, the resulting hybrid knowledge is doomed: in the first edition of the novel (1903) Queen Tera is reanimated at the cost of everyone's, but Ross's, lives. The second edition (1912) ends on a more optimistic, if ambiguous, note. Queen Tera's body may have disintegrated into 'a ridge of impalpable dust' (Stoker 1975: 253) and her spirit may have migrated into Margaret Trelawny's body. If that is the case, then Tera has been decisively divested of her scientific power and has become an idealized wife who 'may have found the happiness she sought.' (Stoker 1975: 254) Indeed, Margaret transforms Tera's desire for power into a desire for love and 'womanly' happiness. As Stoker's two versions of his conclusion illustrate, the contest between western and eastern epistemologies that are played out in these encounters with the mummy result in death for one or the other²⁶ because the alternative – a hybrid epistemology – is too monstrous to contemplate.

The paradoxical position of the mummy, as Baudrillard suggests, is that its entry into the western symbolic order begins the process of its inevitable destruction. But in mummy fiction, the fear of the mummy is located in those tantalizingly horrific moments when it seems as if they will *not* be destroyed. The tension between the desire for the body of the mummy and the fear of what the mummy knows shapes the ways in which this figure circulates as monstrous in *fin de siècle* imperialist fiction. Reanimated mummies move easily out of their stable positions as artefacts or relics and enter into the western symbolic order as acting subjects (however conditionally) and as terrifying rivals. As Dana Nelson notes, western 'science depends on the silence of the mummy, it should [therefore] not surprise us that when the mummy speaks, it speaks to refute, indeed to devastate, the anticipated pleasures of science's rational vantage' (Nelson 1997: 530). The mummy may be firmly under glass, decisively categorized, meticulously studied and under firm control, but it is fundamentally unknown and unknowable. It is a constant reminder of the blank spaces in the imperial archive; the fact that the objects of British imperial knowledge are, terrifyingly, possessed of their own knowledge which demonstrates, as Brantlinger points out, 'that Western rationality may be subverted by the very superstitions it rejects' (Brantlinger 1990: 227).

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