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The Face of the Mummy

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The Face of the Mummy:
The Social Impact of Mummy's and Mummy Unrollings on the Nineteenth Century

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Dr. Youngs/ Hist 4990

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Mummies adorn the exhibits of hundreds of American and European museums alike and their presence in popular culture of our society has been a consistent one for over a hundred years. To the men and women of the twenty-first century, the mummy still represents the mysterious and the ancient. And although we are influenced by the images and concepts of the numerous literary works, plays, paintings, and films that depict the mummy in a state of resurrection, for the modern audience the mummy is ultimately an artifact. The hard science of our time has gone beyond the hope of resurrecting the long dead; Frankestien's monster is an impossibility.

In the nineteenth century, European and American fascination with Egypt and her mummies was at an all time high. Mummies were ground up and taken as medicine and used as pigments in paint. "Mummy cloth" was a fashionable part of female dress advertised in Harpers Bazaar. [1] In the late 1880's and early 1890's, it was a rising fad, for men and especially women, to have their pictures taken posing like a mummy inside an upright Egyptian coffin.[2] The Washington Monument finished in 1884 was modeled after an Egyptian Obelisk, while an actual one replaced the guillotine at the Palace de la Concord in Paris. American and European authors, poets, and painters used mummies as their muses, while all manner of Egyptian antiquities, including mummies, flooded into European and American museums and private collections. Historian John Irwin appropriately uses a quote from an 1832 article in *The Review*, "since the days of the Romans, who plundered Egypt of obelisks...this magnificent kind of robbery never flourished more than at the present moment." [3]

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[1] "New York Fashion," Harpers *Bazaar* 14 February 1880; 13, 7.
[2] "Mummy Pictures," *Central City (Colorado) Weekly Register-Call*, 25 November 1898, Issue 25, col.C.
[3] John T. Irwin, "The Symbol of the Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance," *American Quarterly* 26 (May, 1974): 104.

With the onslaught of Egyptian mania, came the nineteenth century obsession with mummies and the fad of unrolling them in front of intimate and grand audiences alike. Mummies were sold in classifieds, advertised as museum attractions, became subjects of humorous and romantic tales, points of debate in theology, and were even subjects in court cases.[4] Although the viewings and unrollings were limited in their direct impact, the fact that these were the subjects of countless newspaper articles and literary works illustrate that their presence had a remarkable impact on nineteenth century culture. And again leads us to the question; what was it about mummies in the nineteenth century that so fascinated the middle and elite classes?

There are precious few books and articles that focus on the nineteenth century fascination with mummies. One argument connects the fascination with unrollings, and mummies in general, to the human fascination with death. Another connects unrollings to racism of that period, specifically as vehicles to prove white superiority. Arguing that mummy obsessions and unrollings were vehicles of racism limits their impact to the political sphere and human obsession with death transcends all ages. From the spectators at the Gladiatorial games to the audiences at public executions, death has always been a taboo interest. Upon reading the accounts of people who viewed mummies for the first time in the nineteenth century, I was struck with the passion they seemed to have for their long dead brothers and sisters.

The mummy itself was perhaps the best symbol of nineteenth century, one that was representative of the spiritual, the ancient, the scientific, the spectacular, and the romantic. It is this juxtaposition of science, spiritualism, romance and reason that

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[4] Court case, "Inquest on a Mummy," *Christian Observer*, 8 January 1902, p.21, and "Jetsam and Flotsam," *The Central Law Journal*, 4 April 1902, 272.

distinguishes the nineteenth century from other eras. The nineteenth century was distinctive in that it allowed, for a brief moment, science and spiritualism to be united as one. In the age of P.T. Barnum, séances, and cure all elixirs, the spectacle of science was a profitable one; one in which the mummy fit in perfectly. Unlike the rigid and static mummy that the twenty-first century audience regards today, the mummy viewed through the eyes of the nineteenth century man was more pliant, more alive. The mummy, like Frankenstein's Monster, seemed to be within reach to the living. The endless possibilities of science combined with the romanticism of the era created an environment in which the mummy represented hope and knowledge, a vehicle to understand and grapple with the new industrial world of the nineteenth century, and a way to reconnect with the ancient past. The nude female mummy also symbolized the changing gender roles of the period, the female mummy casting off her bandages as the nineteenth century women cast off age-old gender constraints.

Prior to the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in the early nineteenth century, Europeans had limited knowledge of Egypt and its antiquities. Although elite classes of Europeans had had glimpses of Egypt through ancient writings such as Herodotus and Biblical texts, Egypt remained a little known area. During the Middle Ages the Crusades brought Europeans back into contact with Egypt by reopening trade routes. Although the early fascination with mummies can be seen as far back as the sixteenth century when John Sanderson shipped home to England six hundred pounds of "mummy" for medicinal purposes, in 1580 no "mummy craze" had begun. [5]

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[5] Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002), 22.

Beginning in the mid seventeenth century, European elites began traveling to Egypt and upon their return published guidebooks and travelogues. Upon their return home these elites formed historical societies, such as the Egyptian Society established in England in 1741.[6] In these societies the beginnings of the study of Egypt on an amateur and later professional level are seen. In *Whose Pharaoh*, historian Donald Reid chronicles the increase of guidebook publications. In 1830 only one guidebook was published on Egypt, but with each subsequent decade the number of published editions increased. Between 1890-1914, states Reid, eighty-two editions overflowed the "Edwardian and Gilded Age."[7] The guidebooks provided the best and most thorough collection of knowledge on Egypt and her antiquities; so much so that native Egyptian writer Salama Musa learned of the "pharaonic history of his own land" through these books published in Europe.[8]

The increased popularity of travelogues in the nineteenth century greatly influenced the masses in their opinions and fascination with Egypt. In her article, "Mapping the Unknown: Gendered Spaces and the Oriental Other in Travelogues of Egypt by U.S. Women, 1854 1914," Jeanne-Marie Warzeski states that "American tourism to Egypt bloomed at a time when ideology and popular interest in the Bible combined to stimulate curiosity in the region. [These] writings reveal a preoccupation with the Egypt of Antiquity, an imaginary locus where history and myth coalesced." [9] And although, as Warzeski points out, the logues are scientific in their language, yet they

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[6] Ibid., 27.
[7] Ibid., 70.
[8] Ibid., 73.
[9] Jeanne-Marie Warzeski, "Mapping the Unknown: Gendered Spaces and the Oriental in Travelogues of Egypt by U.S. Women, 1854-1914," History *and Anthropology* 13 (2002): 301.

are also romantic. The logues portray Egypt as mysterious and possessing a depth of knowledge lacking, perhaps, in the nineteenth century.

The Europeans cultural and economic exchange with Egypt exploded in the early nineteenth century with the French, and later the British occupation. Imperialism and the advances in transportation and industry began to open Egypt not only to the elite classes, but also to the middle classes of Europe and America. In 1825 a trip from Alexandria to Marseille took a month, but the invention of the steam engine altered the face of travel on land and sea. By 1843 Steamships took only 14 days to reach Alexandria from Southampton.[10] As the "long nineteenth century" progressed, price distinctions in fares to Egypt in regards to race, sex, and class disappeared becoming less and less expensive as the twentieth century approached. Although, as Reid states, no one could bring "travel (to Egypt) within the means of the lower and lower-middle class," Egypt's influence would follow its European and American tourists back to their homes in their writings, acquired artifacts, and their most prized possession: their mummies.

European and American travelers to Egypt desired to obtain mummies as souvenirs as they were, simply, the most "Egyptian." [11] In fact, for many tourists the desire to "hunt" for them on their own was part of their allure. The mummy hunt was a dangerous one, and many perished during the pursuit. W.S Dodd chronicled his mummy hunt in a letter he submitted to *The Independent* in 1889. [12] Although warned of possible impending doom in hiring a Turkish guide to help acquire a mummy, the prize was too great for Dodd. He "abandoned logic and reason" and followed the guide deep into a dark

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[10] Reid, *Whose Pharaoh? 67.*
[11] Heather Pringle, *The Mummy Congress: Science, Obsession, and the Everlasting Dead*, (London: Fourth Press, 2001), 207.
[12] W.S. Dodd, "The Mummy Hunt," New York *The Independent*, 14 February 1889, sec., 41, 26.

cave. Ultimately Dodd was able to avoid death at the hands of his guide or a broken neck from a fall, and obtained the skull of a mummy as his prize. Yet the adventure of hunting for mummies was not for everyone. Those with a less adventurous spirit could still acquire their own mummified Egyptians. As Heather Pringle points out in her book *The Mummy Congress*, "more cautious travelers were content to buy mummies from dealers."[13]

While purchasing the mummy in Egypt was easy, getting them home was another matter. Egypt banned mummy and antiquities exporting in 1835, thus making getting the prized mummies home a lesson in creativity. Travelers would often dismember their mummies to fit them into steamer trunks, hence the prevalence of disembodied hands, feet, and heads that "float around European and American collections to this day." [14] According to Pringle, the mummy was in fact the greatest prize Egypt had to offer, and bestowed upon the owner a sense of accomplishment and respectability. [15] Yet one need not travel to Egypt to buy their very own mummy; mummies could be found for sale back home in the classifieds.[16] Mummies were however an expensive hobby, thus their ownership was limited to the wealthy. In 1882 in England, a "full sized specimen" could go for 60 to 100 pounds, while a baby fetched 10 to 12 pounds.[17]

The economic, political, and social implications of the removal of Egypt's most precious artifacts impact the nation to this very day. For the purposes of this essay, the mummy trade was important in that it brought the mummies back into the travelers'

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[13] Pringle, *The Mummy Congress*, 207.
[14] Ibid., 208.
[15] Ibid., 208.
[16] "Classified Advertisements: Egyptian Antiquities at Boston," Washington D.C. *Daily National Intelligencer*, 24 February 1826, issue 4085, co. F.
[17] "The Mummy Trade," Columbus *(Ohio) Ohio Farmer*, 19 August 1882, issue 62, co.7, p. 106.

native lands. By the close of the nineteenth century mummies could be found in museums, basements, lecture halls, private collections and curiosity shops across America and Europe.

At the same time that travel and exploration of Egypt flourished among Europeans and Americans, the creation and success of the "museum" gave access of Egyptian antiquities, specifically mummies, to an even wider audience. As Reid points out, "until the later nineteenth century, museums and learned societies, more than universities, provided the main institutional support of Egyptology." [18]Although other European museums would exhibit Egyptian collections first, the Louvre, opening its Egyptian collection in 1826, would become the premier museum for Egyptology in Europe and America.[19]

In his book Highbrow Lowbrow, Lawrence Levine makes the important distinction that American and European museums alike went through a "general pattern of development from the general and eclectic to the exclusive and the specific." [20] The modern concept of "the museum" is not the same as the one of the early and mid nineteenth century. As Bluford Adams points out in his book, *Epluribus Barnum*, "a museum visitor in this period was as likely to encounter freaks and mermaids as Indian relics and animal bones."[21] The museum was an eclectic mix of history and fantasy, of both science and spectacle.

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[18] Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?* 46.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 146.
[21] Bluford Adams, "Barnum's Long Arms: The American Museum," in *Epluribus Barnum* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 76.

In Baltimore in 1814, Rembrandt Peale opened one of the first American museums. The museum boasted in a newspaper advertisement that it was an "elegant rendezvous for taste curiosity and leisure," displaying inside antiquities, mermaids, and the "stupendous skeleton of a mammoth."[22] Following the opening of the Baltimore Museum, the spread of museums, antiquities displays, and private collections opened to the public grew. Here that the mummy was introduced to the public en masse for the first time. Lexington Kentucky opened its Museum of Natural and Antiquarian History in 1817. The same year its proprietor, John D. Clifford, advertised in Washington D.C.'s *Daily National Intelligencer* for specimens. Clifford specifically mentions "mummies and human bones" as desired acquisitions to his museum.[23] In 1823 a "capital" mummy was exhibited at the Medical College in Boston; admittance to view the mummy was for the "moderate sum" of twenty-five cents. [24] The following year, an Egyptian mummy was exhibited at the Assembly Courthouse in Providence.[25] In 1832 Colonel Mendes Cohen "returned from Egypt with six hundred and eighty antiquities to establish the first private collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts in America." [26] In 1829 *The Intelligencer* advertised the exhibition of an Egyptian mummy at the Gadsty's Hotel in Washington D.C., admittance again being twenty-five cents.[27] Twenty-five cents was also the

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[22] Gary Kulik, review of museum exhibit, *Mermaids, Mummies, and Mastodons: the Evolution of the American Museum; the Other Museum: Power and Spirit*, Peale Museum Exhibit, Journal of American History 78 (1991): 255.
[23] "A Museum of Natural and Antiquarian History is Opened in the Town of Lexington Kentucky," *Washington D.C. Daily National Intelligencer*, 9 October 1817, issue 1483, col. B
[24]John Gorham, and James Jackson, "A Capital Mummy," Washington *D.C. Daily National Intelligencer*, 22 May 1823, issue 3230, col. D.
[25] "The Egyptian Mummy, Exhibiting in the Assembly Court-House, Providence," *Providence (Rhode Island) Providence Patriot*, Wednesday the 1st 1824, issue 70, col. C.
[26] John T. Irwin, "The Symbol of Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance," p.104.
[27] "Classifieds: Egyptian Mummy Exhibited at Washington D.C's Gadstys Hotel," Washington D.C. Daily National Intelligencer, 2 February 1829, issue 4994, col. A.

admittance to view mummies exhibited at both the American Museum in New York[28] and one in St.Louis in 1833. [29] In all advertisements the specific mention of mummies and the moderate admittance fee illustrates the draw and availability that these had for the American public.

With the emergence of P.T Barnum in the mid-nineteenth century, the museum became accessible to lower classes. Barnum was instrumental in the joining of "science and showmanship" in American museums. [30] Barnum purchased New York's American Museum in December of 1841 and, as Adams states, helped "bring about a major transformation in the function and cultural stature of the nations proprietary museums."[31] Barnum's success made the museum a popular attraction and one that introduced middle class America to history, science, and the exotic for very little money. Barnum will also participate in the mummy craze, as he purchased and displayed two mummies previously exhibited at the Peale Museum.[32]

On the heels of the increased mummy displays, newspapers and publications across the nation began to publish letters and poems written by readers in response to viewing these mummies. It is here that we first see the emergence of the fascination and, in some cases, obsession with mummies. In these early articles and poems, the scientific is mingled with, and sometimes overshadowed by, the romanticism and even sexualization of the mummy. Although one could argue that the Romantic movement itself added to the flowery language used to describe these encounters, it is clear when

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[28] "Classifieds: American Museum," *New-York Spectator*, 6 May 1833 col. D.
[29] "Classifieds" *St. Louis Commercial Bulletin and Missouri Literary Register*, 5 February 1836, Issue 114, col. E.
[30] Bluford Adams, "Barnum's Long Arms: The American Museum," in *Epluribus Barnum* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 76.
[31] Ibid.
[32] John T. Irwin, "The Symbol of the Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance," 104.

reading these letters and poems that the writers experienced something profound when looking into the face a mummy. For some it is apparent that the mummy was much more than an artifact.

In an 1824 edition of Philadelphia's *The Gazetteer*, the exhibition of a female mummy is advertised followed by a poem written by an anonymous author. The article states, "we have now an opportunity of seeing what we have often heard of, an Egyptian Mummy. It has excited a lively interest in the city and has, in consequence, been numerously visited." The article refers to the mummy as not only an "object of rational curiosity" but also one that excites "reflections" and constitutes "its most powerful interest". And yet it is the poem included in the article that speaks most to the power of the mummy. One stanza ponders the possible acquaintances of the mummy:

> Perchance that very hand, now pinched flat,
> Has hob-2-nob'd with Pharaoh, glass to glass;
> Or dropp'd a halfpenny in Homer's hat,
> Or doff'd thine own to let Queen Dido pass;
> Or held by Solomon's own invitation,
> A Torch at the Great Temple's dedication.[33]

Although the historical references to the mummy's possible acquaintances are varied and not particularly accurate, their inclusion in this poem illustrates the interest of the viewer in the mummy's place in history, and not just the historical facts and dates, but the knowledge and experience the mummy had hidden in its soul. Even more telling is that this poem was taken from a poem originally written and published in England upon viewing a mummy exhibited there in 1821 by a Mr. Belzoni. [34] The poem was reprinted in publications from 1821 to 1824, in cities such as Washington DC, Chillicothe, Ohio,

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[33] "The Mummy," Philadelphia *The Gazetteer*, 5 May 1824,145.
[34] "Address to the Mummy at Belzoni's Exhibition," *Washington D.C. Daily National Intelligencer*, 29 October 1821, Issue 2744, col. D.

Annapolis, Maryland, and Fredericksburg, Virginia. [35] The same poem was yet again published in 1835 in *The Family Magazine* under the "history" section.[36] *The Atkinson's Saturday Evening Post* also published an ode to a female mummy in 1833. The author, who calls himself Avon Bard, refers to the mummy in romantic terms:

> "Wrapped in mysterious weeds-
> Maiden, thy form hath not yet lost its grace,
> Though from that check hath fled life's rosy glow,
> And smiles seem playing on the very face,
> A mother kissed some thousand years ago,
> Although thy lips are bloodless now and cold,
> Time hath not reft thee of thy teeth of pearl,
> And beauty still lingers in the locks of gold,
> Which on they forehead curl." [37]

These poems are exemplary of the close connection between the mummies and nineteenth century Romanticism.

Sexuality also seems to have played into the intrigue of the mummy. In the repressed sexuality of the ninteenth century, a nude and passive female subject, even if she were deceased, gave ultimate power to the male gazer. In 1824 *The Gazetteer* republished an editorial about a mummy. Simply entitled, "The Mummy," this was a reprint of a letter from a "gentlemen of distinct" to his friend in Georgia first published in the *Charleston City Gazette*. In his letter the gentlemen confesses upon viewing the female mummy in Charleston "that of all the natural artificial curiosities I have ever beheld, nothing ever filled my mind with so many profound, striking and extraordinary

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[35] Poe referenced in following papers: *Chillicothe (Ohio) The Supporter and Scioto Gazette*, 14 November 1821, issue: 39 col. A; *Annapolis Maryland Gazette and Political Intelligencer*, 2 May 1822, Issue 18, col.A. ; *Shawnee-town (Illinois) The Illinois Gazette*, 19 May 1822, Issue 49, col.A (this article is a reprint of an article originally published in Fredericksburg VA from the *Fredericksburg Herald*).
[36] "Manufactures, Mummies, and c.," New *York The Family Magazine*, April 1835, sec. 2, p. A229.
[37] "The Memphian Mummy," Philadelphia *Atkinson's Saturday Evening Post*, 2 March 1833, Vol.XVII, whole no. 605, 0_001.

sensations."[38] He goes on to say that little did this mummy think she would be "exposed" some three thousand years later to the "keen gaze of male curiosity, without shrinking modesty, and serve as a spectacle of curious wonder." [39] This sexualized vision of the female mummy is also evident in *The Western Recorder* in 1827. The paper published another editorial written by a male after viewing a female mummy. In it the author exclaims, "behold the virgin is now exposed to the vulgar gaze" of the male."[40] In both cases the mummy is the naked and vulnerable "virgin" exposed to the powerful male. Furthermore both authors point out the exposition of the female mummy to the females of the period, as if to protect the modesty and sexuality of their women. As women began to join the work force in the nineteenth century, age-old gender roles were challenged. The mummy, like the new workingwoman, challenged the gender constraints of the nineteenth century. This new "power" of the female and the mummy was enjoyed and condemned by both authors.

At the same time the mummy made its appearance in exhibitions across Europe and America, a new fad of "unrolling" the mummy in front of an audience swept both countries. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, public dissections of human cadavers were held in amphitheaters and lecture halls. People filled these facilities to capacity to witness the opening of the human body. As Claire Lyu states in her article, "Unswathing the Mummy," "in a vast range of disciplines from medicine and philosophy to art and literature, the desire to know the human body has often coincided, whether

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[38] Originally printed in the *Charleston Gazette*, "The Mummy," Philadelphia *The Gazetteer*, 28 April 1824, 135.
[39] Ibid.
[40] "On Seeing a Mummy, " *Western Recorde*r, 18 September 1827,152.

literally or figuratively, with the desire to open and see its insides." [41]As the availability of Egyptian mummies and the difficulty of obtaining cadavers both increased, the mummy took the cadavers place on the dissection table. But unlike the dissections of corpses in the name of science, these public "dissections" were more about unveiling the mummy and exposing the surface of the body, especially the face.

During the first part of the nineteenth century, the unrollings of mummies acquired from Egypt were held at universal exhibitions in London and Paris in front of small and distinguished audiences.[42] And as mummy openings became more popular in Europe, American papers began to reprint articles describing these events. In 1822 an article was published in *The Journal of Foreign Medical Science and Literature* which chronicled a mummy unrolling that took place on August 29 of the previous year by Sir Archibald Edmonston Bart. Bart held the unrolling in the presence of "several friends, among whom were two medical gentlemen." [43] *The Boston Journal of Philosophy and the Arts* and the *Mississippi State Gazette* reprinted a translated detailed editorial of an opening in Paris, France in 1824. The opening was preformed "in the presence of a great number of persons of distinction" in the museum of a M. Caillard.[44] An opening occurring at the Louvre in 1828, was chronicled by Washington D.C.'s *The Daily National Intelligencer*, while another the same year occurring at Tremont Castle in London was mentioned in the Literary Journal.[45] Two more articles covering openings

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[41]Claire Lyu, "Unswathing the Mummy: Body, Knowledge, and Writing in Gautier's *Le Roman de la Momie*," *Nineteenth Century French Studies* 33.3&4 (2005): 308.
[42] Ibid.,309.
[43] " An Account of the Opening of an Egyptian Mummy," *The Journal of Foreign Medical Science and Literature*, April 1822, 2, 6,220.
[44] "An Account of the Opening of Two Mummies Belonging to M. Cailliard," *Boston Journal of Philosophy and the Arts*, May 1824, p.551. "Mummy Unwrapped," *The Mississippi State Gazette*, 17 July 1824, Issue 29, col.C.
[45] "Uncovering a Mummy," *The Literary Journal*, 3 November 1828, 331.

occurring in London in 1830 and 1835 were reprinted in two popular American Newspapers.[46] This trend of American publications covering European openings continued well into the 1840's and 50's.[47] These articles, unlike the odes mentioned earlier, approach the unrolling from a scientific viewpoint. The weight, measurements, and even smell of the mummy are discussed in detail. For these early unrollings, the authors seem to have viewed the mummy less as a spectacle and more as science. Yet the impact of the unrollings was not limited to the direct witnesses, the readers of the reprinted material were also able to participate in these events.

Heather Pringle discusses one of biggest and most widely reported unrollings that occurred in England in 1837. The unrolling was organized and staged by Egyptian antiquities dealer, Giovanni D'Anthanasi. D'Anthanasi correctly surmised that the publicity of an unrolling would help the success of his antiquities sales. He obtained the services of Thomas Pettigrew, an early Egyptologist who had unrolled a mummy the previous year at London Royal Institute.[48] Handbills advertising the unrolling were widely distributed among the public announcing: "The most interesting mummy that has yet been discovered in Egypt will be unrolled at Exeter Hall." [49]The cost of the event was varied depending on the proximity between the stage and the mummy. A place next to the "operating table" cost six shillings, a balcony seat four, and standing room tickets could

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[46] 1830 Unrolling, "Opening of a Mummy," *Washington D.C Daily National Journal*, 18 October 1830, Issue 3034, col.B. 1835 Unrolling, "Opening a Mummy," *Cleveland Daily Cleveland Herald*, 24 August 1835, Issue 72, col.D.

[47] The English unrolling; "Unrolling of an Egyptian Mummy," *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, 21 December 1842, p. 198; The Belfast Unrolling; "Unrolling of an Egyptian Mummy in Ireland," *Scientific American*, 23 November 1850, vol. 6, no. 10, 74.

[48] Reprint of an article published in "London Paper;" "Unpacking of an Egyptian Mummy," *Cincinnati Mirror and Western Gazette of Literature, Science and the Arts*, 17 September 1836, 267.

[49]Heather Pringle, *The Mummy Congress*, 174.

be bought for two shillings.[50] On the evening of the opening, five hundred packed Exeter hall to witness the spectacle. The crowd was a mix of "members of parliament, artists, diplomats, Egyptologists, and antiquarians."[51] The bandages on this mummy were hardened with resin to the extent that Pettigrew was unable to remove them all. As Pringle states, this was embarrassing to Pettigrew as a "serious scientist," but this fiasco hardly deterred others from unrolling mummies. Unrollings became popular in fine homes, museums, curiosity shops, and lecture halls across Europe. Pringle quotes John Taylor, and Egyptologists at the British Museum as saying, "everyone who had a mummy in some far flung place did a similar thing. They unwrapped it with a little audience and a brass band playing a tune."[52] Pringle goes on to say, "an unwrapping mingled the spiritual and the carnal, the morbid and the melancholy... a potent blend." [53] The mummy unrolling craze seems to have died down in Europe by the late 1850's. But the small unrolling would give way in America to a much larger and spectacular affair.

The success of Pettigrew's large-scale unrollings to paying audiences caught the attention of famous Egyptologist George Gliddon. Born in England in 1809, Gliddon moved to America as a child, and then to Alexandria when his father became an Egyptian consul.[54] His early introduction to Egypt seems to have had a huge impact on the young Gliddon. He began at an early age to study Egyptian history and eventually taught himself to read hieroglyphics. Gliddon would later author several books on Egypt and would become something of the premier Egyptologist in America. Furthermore, as Dana

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[50] Ibid.,176.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., 176-177
[53] Ibid.,177.
[54]Encyclopedia Britannica 11th Edition, "George Robbins Gliddon," 24 June 2007, Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia [online entry] available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Gliddon; Internet.

D. Nelson states in her article "The Haunting of White Manhood: Poe, Fraternal Ritual, and Polygenesis," Gliddon was “pivotal in cultivating public museum interest in the “wonders of Egypt.” [55]

Many articles and papers have been written on Gliddon; Heather Pringle even devotes a small section of her book to him. Gliddon is known to have used his unrollings and lectures to further his ideas of European superiority. His “scientific” findings were skewed in an effort to illustrate that the great minds of Egypt were in fact white. Gliddon was quite successful with these lectures and unrollings, most specifically finding success in the South. [56] That Gliddon used his unrollings to further racist ideals, and that this affected ideas of slavery in the United States, is a valid and important political argument. For purposes of this essay, however, the use of this leisure activity to further ideas of racism is not the only important effect of Gliddon's lectures and unrollings. The mummy instilled awe in all who saw it after the bandages came off, whether he or she was revealed to be black or white.

Gliddon had two large and widely reported unrollings in the United Sates. Lectures in Boston were advertised and discussed as far away as Mississippi. [57] The first occurred at the Tremont Temple in Boston in 1850. Gliddon was not content to just lecture and unroll the mummy. Taking cues from great showmen like P.T. Barnum, Gliddon infused his unrollings with music and spectacle. Gliddon commissioned an artist to create a scroll that depicted the glories of Egypt. The scroll would be "unrolled," much like the mummy, to reveal the Nile, the Pyramids of Egypt, the port of Alexandria, and

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[55] Dana Nelson, “The Haunting of White Manhood: Poe, Fraternal Ritual, and Polygenesis,” *American Literature*, 69, no.3, (1997): 530.
[56] Heather Pringle, *The Mummy Congress*, p. 178-181.
[57] Reprint of article published in Boston Medical Journal: “Crania of Egypt,” Natchez *(Mississippi) Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Daily Gazette*, 14 March 1843, Issue 61, col.B

other Egyptian wonders.[58] The movement of the scroll was intended to give the audience the feeling of sailing on a ship progressing up the Nile. Gliddon also hired a pianist to play "what passed for oriental music."[59] As reported in *The Christian Register*, the event was the "joining of science and fashion." [60] The unrolling and lecture was advertised in *The Boston Daily Atlas* on April 8th as a "grand moving transparent panorama of the Nile." The cost of the show was the popular amount of twenty-five cents, the equivalent of the meager amount $5.21 today. [61] Two thousand people packed the Tremont Temple to witness the mummy's emergence into modern society. Pringle reports that the audience held several distinguished guests such as Henry Longfellow to, anatomists and author, Oliver Wendell Holmes.[62] The small, scientific, European unrollings had been eclipsed by the grand and spectacular unrollings in the United States.

The unrolling itself was somewhat of a disaster for Gliddon. He had proclaimed in previous lectures that the mummy was that of an Egyptian priestess, determined from hieroglyphics found on the coffin. But as Gliddon unrolled the mummy he discovered that his mummy was infact male and had quite a "generous penis." The audience responded to Gliddon's mistake by bursting into laughter.[63] The unrolling, Gilddon's embarrassment, and subsequent explanations of the mistake were published in several papers from Mississippi to Wisconsin.[64] Wounded and embarrassed, Gliddon took his

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[58]Heather Pringle, *The Mummy Congress*, 182.
[59] Ibid.
[60] "General Intelligence," Christian Register, 8 June 1850, p.91.
[61] "Classifieds," Boston *Daily Atlas*, 8 April 1850, Issue 237, col.A.
[62] Pringle, *The Mummy Congress*,183
[63] Ibid.
[64] Gliddon's unrolling published in these papers/ illustrates the national draw this unrolling had. "Opening of an Egyptian Mummy," *Christian Observer*, 22 June 1850, p.100. "Opening a Mummy," *Saturday Evening Post*, 15 June 1850, Vol.XXIX, no.1507, p.0_002. "Opening of the Mummy," *Chillicothe (Ohio) Scioto Gazette*, 10 June 1850, Issue 161, col.A. "Proposed Opening of a Mummy 3200 Years Old," *Natchez (Mississippi) Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Gazette*, 5 June 1850, Issue 35, col.E. "Opening

show to the South, where his views on race were most appreciated. Gliddon unwrapped a mummy in New Orleans in Lyceum Hall months later to a large audience and this one was glitch free. [65] Gliddon's unrollings brought in larger audiences and massive media attention, thus creating even more publicity and interest in mummies.

One of the most interesting, and perhaps most reflective of the "mummy craze", was an unrolling that occurred in London in 1852 and chronicled in *The Scientific American*. This unrolling was one that unveiled the mummified remains of an English Bishop who died in the fifteenth century and was discovered in the "east wall of St. Stephen's Crypt." The unveiling was performed by the now expert unroller, Dr. Pettigrew. Those who witnessed the spectacle "remarked that the face was disclosed in a most remarkable state of preservation." After he was unrolled, the bishop was placed "as nearly as possible in the spot where he was found."[66] Again the American article chronicles an event that occurred in London. Furthermore the unknown author's opening lines of "the unrolling of mummies has become a kind of mania," speaks volumes to the popularity of these events.[67] The desire to see the face of the long dead had transcended the need for that face to be Egyptian or exotic. The history of the unswathed Bishop was not particularly exciting his identity known. Nor was there any need to determine his race, body type, or station in life. No dissection was done on the body to further the study of human anatomy. The body was unrolled, exposed, gazed upon, and then returned to where it was found. And although this particular instance can be used to illustrate the

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of the Mummy," Hudson (Ohio) The Ohio Observer, 26 June 1850, Issue 24, col.D. "The Unrolling of the Mummy," *Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Milwaukee Sentinel and Gazette*, 13 June 1850, Issue 355, col.D.
[65] Heather Pringle, *The Mummy Congress*,184.
[66] "Unrolling the Mummy of a Bishop," *Scientific American*, 20 March 1852, vol. VII, no.27, 216.
[67] Ibid.

human fascination with death, it also lends credence the close connection between science and spectacle in the Victorian era.

As the mummy craze continued, the impact of these events began to be reflected in the literature and art of the period. From 1845 to the early twentieth century novels, plays, art, operas, architecture, and film began to reflect this new Egyptian influence. In 1845 Edgar Allan Poe, inspired by the recent mummy unrollings, wrote "Some Words with a Mummy." In the tale an unnamed narrator joins his friend Dr. Ponnonner, the very real George Gliddon, and several others to unveil the mummy at the witching hours between 11 and 2 a.m., where, jokingly, electricity is applied to the mummy and to the bewilderment of the group is revived. After rousing the mummy, the scientists discuss and debate the supremacy of the modern world over Egypt. The mummy, however, manages to win several rounds by dismissing modern advancements such as democracy and railroad transportation. Ultimately, the mummy looses the debate out when he is unable to discount the invention of throat loganzes. [68]

Nelson discusses, in her previously mentioned article, Poe's story in regards to its reflection of racist ideals in the nineteenth century.[69] Again, the emergence of racism in connection with George Gliddon is discussed, and the power of the mummy is limited to its role in the political history of that time. Certainly, if Poe had just wanted to discuss racism any number of subjects could have been chosen. It is the mysterious aspect of the mummy that appealed to Poe's romantic ideals as a writer. The mummy's undoing through his failure to discount throat lozenges is clearly a humorous addition to the tale,

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[68] Edgar Allen Poe, "Some Words with a Mummy," from the *American Review*, 1845, [online text] available at http;//www.pambytes.com/poe/stories/mummy.html.

[69] Nelsons argument can be founding her article: theme is Polygenesis and Masculinity in Poe's Tale, Dana Nelson, "The Haunting of White Manhood: Poe, Fraternal Ritual, and Polygenesis," 516-546.

but the story itself is quite serious. Poe uses the mummy as a tool to discuss and condemn modern society. The mummy's dismissal of the "great" advances of western civilization, such as the railroads, high fashion, democracy, and science is one seemingly shared by Poe himself. By the end of the story the narrator himself has decided to be embalmed and wake again in two hundred years. As he is "heartily sick of this life and of the nineteenth century in general. I am convinced that everything is going wrong." [70]

Poe's tale seems to sum up one possible effect the mummy could have on its audience: its ability to jump start the imagination and perhaps deliver its viewer, even for a brief moment, away from the gritty industrial life of the nineteenth century. Nan Ellin, in her article "Thresholds of Fear," discusses the modern meanings of cities. She states, "fear has never been absent from the human experience and town building has always contended with the need for protection. From being relatively safe, the city-especially over the last one hundred years has become associated more with danger than with safety." [71] Ellin goes on to say that one-way of dealing with fear is escapism, or "flights into fantasy worlds." [72] For the nineteenth century man and woman, the face of the mummy was quite a fantastic thing to behold.

Many historians have argued that the entire leisure movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was a reaction against the modern city. The need to escape to rejuvenate oneself helped bring about the rise in sports, theater, and other leisure activities. Newspaper articles of the nineteenth century discuss at length the filth and

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[70] Ibid.,14.
[71] Nan Ellin, "Thresholds of Fear: Embracing the Urban Shadow," Urban Studies, vol.38, Nos.5-6, (2001), 869.
[72] Ibid., 873.

poor condition of the city.[73] The city seemed to come with more "cares and troubles" than the rural areas of the country.[74] Gazing into the face of a mummy seems at least to some extent to have been a small escape from the fast paced nineteenth century life. The mummy symbolized the past, the mysterious, and the simple. And in the age of rapid industry and science, the ability to escape ones cares and worries was quite necessary.

We have seen that the mummy offered an escape for some, but for others the mummy represented knowledge, and not just scientific knowledge but spiritual knowledge as well. The writings of Theophile Gautier perhaps best represent the mummy as a romantic figure, a figure that is also a guardian of knowledge. Gautier wrote a series of widely published stories in the late 1830's and early 1840's about Egypt. Claire Lyu also discusses these in her previously mentioned article. Gautier's last installment "Le Roman de la Momie", written in 1857, was a "sexually charged" tale of the unwrapping of a female mummy. Like Poe's mummy, secrets are revealed. Most importantly for Lyu, Gautier's tale is a search for knowledge, furthermore one that creates desire in the eyes of those that look upon the mummy.[75] This sexualization of the mummy is an extension of possessing the mummy, and in turn possessing its vast and ancient knowledge. In Gautier's tale, "the pure search for knowledge coincides with the search for the body" and its "profound interior." [76]

Gautier's stories were charged with Romanticism, and thus had a large impact on the way in which his readers viewed Egypt and her mummies. Egypt was romantic,

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[73] "Life in New York," *Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 6 March 1866, Issue.54, col.F.
[74] "The Advantages of a Country Life…," *Philadelphia Mechanic's Free Press*, 3 October 1829, Issue 91, col.B.
[75] Claire Lyu, "Unswathing the Mummy: Body, Knowledge, and Writing in Gautier's *Le Roman de la Momie*," 3.
[76] Ibid.

mysterious, and sexy and therefore so were mummies. A contemporary review of Gautier's tale, "One of Cleopatra's Nights, " illustrates the mingling of Egypt with nineteenth century Romanticism. The tale is "overpowering in its word-painting," and furthermore, "page after page would unfold strange natron odors as of mummies newly unwound, and reveal fantastic landscapes lit by murky sunshine. The theme of a splendid word-improvisation in which painted metaphors and vivid similes are thrown off in showers… the reader, like another Tarpeia, is buried under golden armlets " [77]

As the nineteenth century progressed tales of mummies became commonplace in magazines, newspapers, plays and art. These first literary publications all repeat the themes and ideas of Poe and Gautier's tales. Some of which actually end in the romantic union of the mummy and its human love interest. The popularity of the mummy in nineteenth century literature illustrates its connection to the romantic. And further shows that the mummy was not viewed as an artifact, but as something more than science. Perhaps even still able to impart its ancient wisdom on those that gazed upon it.[78]

Lastly, the mummy was symbolic of the nineteenth century struggle to come to terms with the scientific and the spiritual. In his book, The *Village Enlightenment in America*, Craig James Hazen discusses this very issue. Although Hazen applies this to the Spiritualist movement, this movement can be closely tied to the viewing and unrolling of mummies. Science swept through the nineteenth century like wildfire. Inventors, botanists, historians, archeologist, and chemists were commonplace. The Enlightenment

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[77] "One of Cleopatra's Nights," *The Critic: a Weekly Review of Literature and the Arts*, 28 February 1891,106.

[78] Two tales I came across of mummies the first a thriller of sorts by Ivan Tourgueneff, "The Living Mummy," *Scribner's Monthly*, August 1876, vol. XII, no.4, p.563. the second purely romantic by Virginia Ballen, "The Mummy," Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly, December 1894, vol.XXXVIII, no.6, 0_013. Play found was "The Maid and the Mummy" reviewed in "The Season's Opening Plays," *Town and Country*, 13 August 1904, 26. Art review of the art of Alma Tadema particularly his painting "The Mummy" reviewed in "Fine Arts," The *Independent*, 4 September 1879,9 .

had opened the doors for science in all manners, and created a century that both embraced and struggled with these new discoveries. With these rapid advances and discoveries, possibilities seemed endless. As Hazen quotes, "to invoke the name of science was to appeal to utility, certainty, optimism, and progress."[79] He goes on to quote an 1837 newspaper as saying, "the world is on the threshold of discoveries in science...discovery after discovery follow each other in such rapid succession, that we are prepared to believe almost everything."[80] Hazen particularly focuses on the "Baconian" scientific methodology, which relied heavily on the observation of the senses to prove a scientific theory. A scientist's sensory perceptions, instincts, and observations were valid in producing scientific theory. For Hazen he uses this to argue that "American science in the Baconian mode" was perfectly fit to aid in the growth in Spiritualist movement of the mid to late 1800's. [81]

Hazen focuses on the scientist and spiritualist Robert Hare. Hare had been a "legitimate" and successful scientist particularly interested in electricity and chemistry. As Hare grew older he became fascinated with Spiritualism. Hare, in an effort to discount this movement, applied the Baconian methods of observation to disprove the mediums. But, in his effort to discount them, he became a steadfast believer and supporter for the remainder of his life. Hare's support of Spiritualism gave the movement legitimacy in its growing number of followers, and thus, communing with the dead became a scientific certainty for many. Furthermore, Hare believed that the spirits themselves were "living

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[79] Craig James Hazen, *The Village Enlightenment: Popular Religion and Science in 19th Century America*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 200), 12.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.,69.

repositories of advanced knowledge." [82] The spirit was, for Hare, another form of matter and one that could be detected with science, particularly electricity. Thus this matter, the spirit world, was not out of reach of humanity. And when the spirit was contacted, great knowledge could be bestowed upon the living.

The rise in Spiritualism directly coincides with the emergence of mummy unrollings and viewing. By 1850 newspapers across the country reported regularly on Spiritualism, and séances had become widely attended spectacles. [83] PT Barnum displayed mummy displays along side the famous mediums the Fox sisters. The Stuyvesant in New York held both mummy exhibitions and lectures on Spiritualism. [84] Electricity rouses Poe's mummy and is a tool to detect the dead for Spiritualists. Best illustrating the connection between Spiritualism and mummies is the response of one author upon witnessing Gliddon's unrolling in Boston. The author refers to her unrolling as a "rising," a resurrection, and goes on to state, "in her bosom the secrets of all the arts are sciences are hidden."[85] In yet another paper years earlier, an author refers to a mummy viewed at the Academy of Fine Arts. In it he refers to the mummy as "immortal" an "imperishable type of evanescence."[86] In both cases the mummy exists in the present, the soul seemingly within reach of the living. The world of the mummy was intertwined with the world of Spiritualism. Again Spiritualism itself was a movement borne out of the search for answers, and communing with the dead was the ultimate way of obtaining the secrets the life. Much like the odes written upon viewing the faces of mummies, the

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[82] Ibid., 91.
[83] Ibid.,77.
[84] Mummies at the Stuyvesant Institute, "Egyptian Antiquities," The Independent, 17 February 1853,26. Lectures on Spiritualism at Stuyvesant, "Spiritualism in New York," *The New York Herald*, 22 March 1857, col.A.
[85] "Opening of a Mummy," *Bangor Maine Bangor Daily Whig & Courier*, 7 June 1850, Issue 289, col.F.
[86] "Mummy," *The National Advocate*, 15 October 1823, col. A.

audiences of both desired answers and wisdom from the dead. It seems no coincidence that the similarities between the Spiritualists and their belief of the dead are in-line with ancient Egyptian concept of resurrection.

As the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, the mummy slowly fades from center-stage. The unrollings became less frequent as archeology and museums alike become more “professional.” Although Egyptian architecture and general interests continued well into the 1950's, the mummy's portrayal in literature and culture shifted. This mummy was a far cry from the romanticized bearer of knowledge. Instead, it was one that brought death and curses with it. This is most evident in the mummy's portrayal in several Hollywood films of the early to mid 1900's. It is interesting to note that this shift coincides not only with the details of Howard Carter's dig that unleashed the "curse of King Tut" popularized in publications, film, and literature, but with the decline of Spiritualism and the endless possibilities of science. The Utopian view of science had shifted to one that was more limited in scope. The equations and hard science of Einstein and that era had no room for the fantastic and the intangible. Thus the mummy becomes simply a dead body, the vague possibility of imparting wisdom no longer believed by its audience.

For the nineteenth century man and woman, the mummy represented Egypt and her mysteries. For some the mummy was an escape from the rapid changes and urbanization of the nineteenth century, for others the mummy bestowed sexual power upon its audience, and for yet others the mummy was a possible source of knowledge. In all cases the mummy existed as both artifact and spectacle. This spectacle of science was distinctive to the nineteenth century, and the mummy represented both perfectly.

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