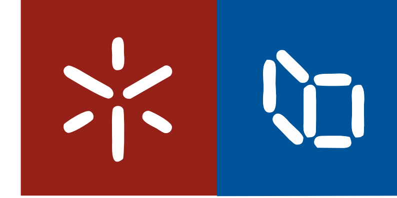

Universidade do Minho
Escola de Letras, Artes e Ciências Humanas

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Late Victorian Poetry and Egyptomania: Mathilde Blind's *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident*

October 2023

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Master's Degree in English Language, Literature and Culture

Work developed under the supervision of
Professor Paula Alexandra Guimarães

October 2023

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Late Victorian Poetry and Egyptomania: Mathilde Blind's *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident*

Abstract

This dissertation explores the enduring cultural phenomenon of Egyptomania and its profound impact on Victorian culture, with a specific focus on its close intersection with literature during the long nineteenth century. Through an interdisciplinary lens that encompasses history, geography, politics, and art, this research illuminates the multifaceted manifestations of Egyptomania and how major writers of the period responded to it. But the central focus of the study is the analysis of Mathilde Blind's (1841–96) poetry on the topic: a set of poems from her last collection *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident* (1895). Besides revealing her versatility in weaving various ideas, connected with the passage of time and the end of civilizations, and Egyptian motifs into her work, the poems also bridge the aesthetics of Egypt with Britain through the critical lens of Decadence. The study underscores that Blind's creative output was inescapably linked to the emergence of modern Egyptomania, further supported by her travels, readings, and experiences along the way. While the scope of the study is restricted, delving into a mere five poems from Blind's collection, it aims to serve as a sample for a broader exploration of Egypt's enduring, yet somewhat unexplored place in the literature of the period, as well as in collective memory.

Keywords: ancient Egypt, Decadence, Egyptomania, Mathilde Blind, poetry, Victorian culture

Poesia Vitoriana Tardia e Egiptomania: *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident* de Mathilde Blind

Resumo

Esta dissertação de mestrado explora o duradouro fenómeno cultural da Egiptomania e o seu profundo impacto na cultura Vitoriana, com um enfoque específico na sua estreita interligação com a literatura durante o chamado 'longo século XIX'. Através de uma abordagem interdisciplinar que abrange a história, a geografia, a política e a arte, esta pesquisa procura clarificar as manifestações multifacetadas da Egiptomania e a forma como os principais escritores do período responderam a esse fenómeno. Mas o objetivo central do estudo é a análise da poesia de Mathilde Blind (1841–96) sobre o tema: um conjunto de poemas da sua última obra, *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident* (1895). Além de revelarem a sua versatilidade na criação de várias ideias, ligadas à passagem do tempo e ao fim das civilizações, e na adoção de motivos egípcios na sua linguagem, os poemas fazem também a ponte entre a estética egípcia e a Grã-Bretanha através da lente crítica do Decadentismo. O estudo sublinha que a produção criativa de Blind está inevitavelmente ligada ao surgimento da moderna Egiptomania, sendo apoiada ainda pelas suas viagens, leituras e experiências ao longo do tempo. Embora o corpus textual que é analisado seja restrito, debruçando-se apenas sobre cinco poemas da coleção de Blind, o mesmo serve sobretudo como amostra significativa para uma exploração mais ampla do lugar duradouro, embora algo inexplorado ainda, do Egito na literatura do período, bem como na memória coletiva em geral.

Palavras-chave: Antigo Egito, cultura Vitoriana, Decadentismo, Egiptomania, Mathilde Blind, poesia

Table of Contents

Direitos de Autor e Condições de Utilização do Trabalho por Terceiros i
Statement of Integrity ii
Abstract iii
Resumo iv
Introduction 1
1. An Overview of Egyptomania in the Victorian Context 3
1.1 Background: the "Renaissance" of Ancient Egypt 3
1.2 Culture: from Magical Education to Cigarettes 6
2. Egyptomania and English Literature 11
3. Women Travelers: Mathilde Blind, "A Bird of Passage" 18
4. *Birds of Passage*: a fin-de-siècle poetry bridging Egypt to Britain 24
5. Conclusion 40
References 42
Works Cited 42
Figures Cited 45
Appendix 48

List of Figures

Figure 1 The Obelisk of Theodosius, Istanbul....48
Figure 2 The Luxor, with its Pyramid, Sphinx, and Obelisk, Las Vegas....49
Figure 3 Brendan Fraser, in front of the hieroglyphic carvings in "The Mummy"....50
Figure 4 Steven Brand and Dwayne Johnson in "The Scorpion King"....51
Figure 5 One of the monsters, "Exodia" in Yu-Gi-Oh!....52
Figure 6 "Tutenstein" series poster....53
Figure 7 Michael Jackson (on the right), in front of the ancient Egyptian king and queen....54
Figure 8 Katy Perry, blending in with the ancient Egyptian deities....55
Figure 9 Splash art for Azir, depicted in "Shurima"....56
Figure 10 The Rosetta Stone, along with a recreated representation of its original appearance....57
Figure 11 An illustration of the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London....58
Figure 12 An illustration of the Egyptian Room at Duchess Street, London....59
Figure 13 Egyptian Revival Mausoleum of the Grandison family in Glasgow's Necropolis....60
Figure 14 "Seventh Plague of Egypt" (1823)....61
Figure 15 "The Finding of Moses" (1885)....62
Figure 16 "The Finding of Moses" (1904)....63
Figure 17 "Pharaoh's Daughter" (1886)....64
Figure 18 "An Egyptian Feast" (1877)....65
Figure 19 "Offerings to Isis" (1866)....66
Figure 20 "Israel in Egypt" (1867)....67
Figure 21 Egyptian Cigarettes Mignon....68
Figure 22 The Freemasons' Hall in Boston, Lincolnshire, the UK....69
Figure 23 The South American weevils and lotus figures adorning the parure....70
Figure 24 An illustration of "mummy pits"....71
Figure 25 The Obelisk of Luxor at the Place de la Concorde, Paris....72
Figure 26 "The Triumph of the Innocents" (The Flight into Egypt) (1883–4)....73
Figure 27 Cleopatra's Needle, London....74
Figure 28 The cover of "Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident" (1895)....75

To the displaced,

whether animate or inanimate

Late Victorian Poetry and Egyptomania: Mathilde Blind's *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident*

Introduction

THOU sign-post of the Desert! Obelisk,
Once fronting in thy monumental pride
Egypt's fierce sun, that blazing far and wide,
…
Now reared beside out Thames so wintry grey,
Where blocks of ice drift with the drifting stream.

—Mathilde Blind, *To the Obelisk During the Great Frost, 1881*

When observed from an urban perspective, Europe and the United States surprisingly resemble a cornucopia "adorned" with plenty of ancient Egyptian-themed landmarks. The landmarks in question have long been regarded as outstanding works of art, thus pleasing to the eye, but also as powerful signs that have been culturally displaced. An example is in the ancient city of Istanbul (formerly Constantinople), where the traces of ancient Egypt can be observed with ease: Sharing the same destiny as its looted siblings in London, New York City, and Rome, the Egyptian obelisk in Sultanahmet Square (Figure 1) leaves its first-time visitors in total confusion and curiosity at first glance, considering its current location. In the same vein, despite being replicas, the pyramid, the obelisk, and the sphinx of the Luxor Hotel in the postmodern city of Las Vegas (Figure 2) take their visitors back in time to ancient Egypt.

Apart from such tangible traces of ancient Egypt as those, the celebrities, and the media have frequently proven to consume a great deal of Egyptian aesthetics, obviously hoping to profit from it. To name a few examples, films like *The Mummy* (1999) (Figure 3) and *The Scorpion King* (2002) (Figure 4), animated series including *Yu-Gi-Oh!* (2000–2006) (Figure 5) and *Tutenstein* (2003–2007) (Figure 6), and music videos such as *Remember the Time* (1992) (Figure 7) and *Dark Horse* (2014) (Figure 8) by world-famous music artists, Michael Jackson, and Katy Perry & Juicy J respectively, prove that the influence of Egyptian motifs has been alive and around for quite some time. Previously, among many others, Frank Sinatra (in 1979), Shakira (in 2007), and Black Eyed Peas (in 2021) opted for Giza Pyramids to hold gigs, as well as Red Hot Chili Peppers (in 2019), whose bassist even publicly shared his overexcitement.[1] Moreover, in the context of video games, ancient Egypt inspired game aesthetics, as

[1] The bassist of Red Hot Chili Peppers, Flea, noted "The pyramids, it's unbelievable, we just jumped at the opportunity... I have always been fascinated by Egypt and that region of the world and I am so excited to go" (DiVita, 2019).

in the case of *League of Legends*, where they created a conceptual civilization named *Shurima*, as well as characters (Figure 9) that are reminiscent of ancient Egypt.

If we now move retrospectively in time, namely to nineteenth-century Britain, we will discover that the Victorians were obsessed with ancient Egypt and that the "exotic" themes about this ancient civilization were considerably prevalent in many fields, especially the arts. This great interest was essentially triggered by the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone, the artifact that stands as the precursor to the birth of modern Egyptomania. In the same historical context, a cosmopolitan Victorian woman of letters, Mathilde Blind (1841–96), was one of her many contemporaries who visited Egypt, before she passed away in 1896, at age fifty-five. During her second, and last visit, this radical New Woman was fascinated by Egypt's rich culture and unique history, elements that are readily observable in her poems centering around Egypt, leading us to a new contribution to the Egyptomania phenomenon. It is in this context that the strong link between Egyptomania and late Victorian poetry will also be explored closely in this dissertation, providing useful evidence from different poets and, especially, from Blind's five poems from her last collection, *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident*, published in 1895. By delving into this larger creative connection, the dissertation seeks to bridge existing gaps in the current literature related to these subjects.

As methodology is regarded, the textual corpus will be analyzed both within the literary and artistic contexts of the *fin-de-siècle* (including aesthetic currents) and the prevalent socio-political environment, of imperialism and colonialism, of the late Victorian era. The data analysis will thus involve the close reading of the poems as primary resources, as well as the analysis of the historical texts, and scholarly articles as secondary resources, through which the important link between the poems and the era will be established.

The major research questions being raised regard the different ways in which the Victorians engaged in the manifestation of the Egyptomania phenomenon, the reasons why the late Victorian Mathilde Blind got herself involved in the "exotic" culture of Egypt, and how her poetry—in conjunction with other contemporary works and concerns—can be read as a sophisticated product of that phenomenon. This research holds substantial significance as modern Egyptomania has been inadequately explored, namely in poetry studies. Moreover, the research explores the literary contributions of a woman writer who has also received limited attention in existing scholarly works, and whose eclectic career represents a major step in women's artistic achievements at this time.

1. An Overview of Egyptomania in the Victorian Context

And Rome, the Mistress of the World,
Amid her diadem
Of Eastern Empires set impearled
The Scarab's mystic gem.

—Mathilde Blind, *The Desert*

Egyptomania, or *Egyptophilia*, originates from the phrase "Egyptian mania," used by Sir John Soane (1753–1837) in his lectures on architecture around the years 1806 and 1809 (Doyle, 2016), signifying the "fascination with ancient Egypt in its many aspects," as shortly defined by Fritze (2016, p. 9). Despite its prevalence in modern popular culture, the phenomenon of Egyptomania has existed for millennia (McKercher & Fazzini, 2010).

As Fritze (2016) cleverly observes, in geographical terms, Egypt can be said to be blessed with a favorable isolation, which may have contributed to its authenticity and uniqueness as a civilization. He further explains that the Mediterranean Sea and the Sinai Peninsula in the north, the Red Sea in the east, the land of Nubia in the south, and an immense desert with scarce water resources in the west made Egypt a relatively inaccessible location for raids and invasions in the Nile Valley. Thus, in retrospect, many ancient societies such as the Greeks and Romans were drawn into curiosity and were interested in Egypt and its arcane culture. To provide a few historical figures, the ancient Greek historian or "The Father of History" as he is referred to by some, Herodotus was describing the funerary practices of ancient Egyptians in his *Histories* (Book II.85–90). Diodorus, as well, expressed his fascination regarding the Egyptian funerary practices in his *Library of History*: "Not least will a man marvel at the peculiarity of the customs of the Egyptians when he learns of their usages with respect to the dead" (as cited in Fritze, 2016, p. 84). By the same token, Roman soldiers are known to have worn scarabs into the battlefield (Haskins, 2016). There were several other societies involved in Egyptomania such as the Hebrews, as evidenced in the Exodus, but since it is a huge topic on its own and less pertinent to my area of research, I will not be focusing on it in this chapter. For the purposes of providing a brief contextualization, the phenomenon of Victorian Egyptomania will be examined in relation to two major aspects: its background and culture.

1.1 Background: the "Renaissance" of Ancient Egypt

Having witnessed numerous earth-shattering scientific revolutions, such as the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin, which reshaped how we view the natural world, the

Victorian era was not devoid of notable historical events. However, on the verge of this novel period, the aftermath of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798–1801) was still lingering, carrying traces along the way that would contribute to the continuous fascination with ancient Egypt.

In May 1798, a fleet of more than 300 ships (Cole, 2007) set sail from the Mediterranean city of Toulon, France, the final destination of which was Alexandria, Egypt. The idea to invade Egypt had already been around for some time and the main objective of the expedition was to challenge British India, thus Britain—France's fierce rival—by wresting Egypt from the hands of the Ottomans. As Napoleon ferociously uttered to the Directors: "The time is coming when we will feel that if we really want to destroy England, we will have to take Egypt" (Lentz, 2018, para. 3).

Following that, Napoleon Bonaparte, aiming to imitate the intentions of Alexander the Great in Asia (Fritze, 2016), landed in Alexandria on 1 July and invaded the city the following day. Reaching Cairo next, the French defeated the Mamelukes on 21 July, at the very well-known Battle of the Pyramids. By the end of the battle, Cairo was already occupied by the French, and consequently, the Ottomans withdrew.

Britain, however, was dedicated to take control over Egypt and ready to counteract. As a result, on 1 August, France and Britain got involved in a naval fight, namely the Battle of the Nile, as a consequence of which the French fleet was eradicated. Consequently, Britain expanded its already-existing power over the Mediterranean while Napoleon and his troops got isolated, making him flee to France followed by his attempts to march on Syria by land. Withdrawing back to Egypt, his abandoned forces surrendered to the British on 30 August 1801.

Although the endeavors of the French attempt to occupy Egypt may seem futile in the short term, the intellectual accomplishments of a group of scholars that escorted Napoleon to Egypt were everlasting, especially in terms of the foundation of Egyptology and the birth of modern Egyptomania (Fritze, 2016).

With that mentioned, the French had not wished to conclude the expedition without understanding Egypt in depth. For that purpose, the Scientific Commission (*Commission des Sciences et des Arts*) led by Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon (1747–1825), composed of 167 savants, including scholars, scientists, antiquaries, archaeologists, engineers, cartographers, and surveyors had already been created by Napoleon to accompany him on the expedition, whose main duty was to gather thorough information about Egypt in both ancient and modern terms. As the commission was escorting an invading army to every corner, they were mapping Egypt and identifying its natural resources on the way as their duty.

The French scholars completed their mission, exploring various aspects of Egypt, including its historical heritage, geography, wildlife, and physical properties. As a result, upon returning to France, Baron Dominique-Vivant Denon published his work in 1802, titled *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* (Travels in Lower and Upper Egypt). Furthermore, the Scientific Commission published their book *Description de l'Egypte* (The Description of Egypt) in installments between the years 1809 and 1829, of which the French government sent copies to other countries. These works subsequently played a significant role in stimulating curiosity toward Egypt (Fritze, 2016).

Another meaningful accomplishment of Napoleon's expedition resulted in the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. During July 1799 (vague now), in the process of strengthening their defenses at a fort near the town of Rashid (Rosetta) in the Nile Delta, the French discovered a black stone by accident, inscribed with the same text in three scripts: hieroglyphic, Demotic, and Ancient Greek, from the top to the bottom (Figure 10). This discovery subsequently enabled our understanding of the Egyptian hieroglyphs by making their translation possible, thanks to the efforts of Jean-François Champollion and Thomas Young. The Stone, however, was captured by the British eventually and was presented to the British Museum by George III thanks to the Treaty of Alexandria (1801), along with the other antiquities that had been found by the French. Today, the Stone is still on display in the British Museum and is visited by about six million people every year, making it the most popular museum object across the United Kingdom (Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek, n.d.).

The imperial looting of the colonizers was not only limited to the Rosetta Stone. "Raping the Nile" became a common phenomenon at the time: Tomb robbers, tourists, and archeologists began infesting, thus plundering Egypt. The Turkish poet Ersoy (1873–1936) wrote about the plundered tombs of the kings in *Firavunla Yüz Yüze* (1923). In his poem, he was reflecting on the remains of a king, mentioning only the flesh remaining unrobbed by the looters: "Soyulmadık eti kalmış, bilinmiyor kefeni; / Açıkta, mumyası hâlâ dağılmayan, bedeni" (Ersoy, 2007, p. 438).[2] To summarize how common, and certainly serious, the situation got, here is another quote from 1833, when a French monk uttered: "It would be hardly respectable, on one's return from Egypt, to present oneself in Europe without a mummy in one hand and a crocodile in the other" (Wilford, 1987, para. 8). The looting in question became so widespread that, just like Napoleon who stowed two mummy heads in his bags, travelers would casually pack mummies to take them back home as souvenirs (Pringle, 2001).

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[2] Turkish to English translation is as follows: "Unrobbed only the flesh remains, its shroud is unknown; / Exposed, the mummy of its body, not yet fallen apart."

The most notable instances of looting, however, were actually performed by Western states. In an effort to imitate the Roman Empire and the idea of imperialism (Hassan, 2003), obelisks were *re-erected* in Western capitals such as Paris and London. This way, in London, Britain declared its inheritance as a world power. The city would thus become a *New Rome* (Habachi, 1985). Subsequently, the fervor surrounding such endeavors came to such an intense point that, in 1881 a reporter for the New York Herald wrote:

> It would be absurd for the people of any great city to hope to be happy without an Egyptian Obelisk. Rome has had them this great while and so has Constantinople. Paris has one. London has one. If New York was without one, all those great sites might point the finger of scorn at us and intimate that we could never rise to any real moral grandeur until we had our obelisk. (D'Alton, 1993, p. 11)

Despite the immense knowledge of ancient Egypt brought about by the expedition itself, the books written, and the discoveries made along the way—including the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone—it is important to acknowledge that imperialism was always in the game: exploiting Egypt's resources, or *raping the Nile*, and pilfering prominent artifacts like the Dendera Zodiac, the Bust of Nefertiti, the head of the Younger Memnon, and a myriad of mummies which became the main subjects of the unwrapping events in the West. Apart from such imperialistic outcomes though, on the bright side, Egyptology was born as a discipline, awakening the ancient, yet dormant civilization of Egypt from its slumber, conjuring Egyptomania along the way while unveiling itself on the world stage.

1.2 Culture: from Magical Education to Cigarettes

As Said (1979, p. 2) notes in *Orientalism,* "The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture." I would like to quote a friend here who was telling me about her first time trying to navigate around Rome to support this idea. She was asking for directions around and someone told her that what she was looking for was near the pyramid (of Cestius). Appalled as she was, she replied "There is a pyramid in Rome?"

In the context of Britain, though, following the conclusion of Napoleon's expedition, many Victorians became enthralled with enthusiasm toward Egypt and its mysticism, and Egyptian aesthetics began to be seen in various fields, such as architecture, the arts, and fashion.

Performed at the Lyceum in London, the Ægyptiana show, a moving panorama, was one of the many attractions among Londoners in the early 19th century, pertaining to ancient Egypt (Ziter, 2003). Similarly, on the south side of Piccadilly, the London Museum was under construction, perhaps the most notable Egyptianized building, owned by William Bullock, a traveler and antiquarian. The museum, a work

of art in fact, was Egyptian eclectic in style and was designed by Peter Frederick Robinson. Altick (1978) explains the main features of the building, noting that the key source of inspiration for the museum was initially the great temple of Hat-Hor at Dendera. The central façade of the museum was adorned with a massive cornice supported by the statues of Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris, as well as sphinxes. Beside the door, there were the lotus columns and hieroglyphs embellishing the building. A comical anecdote he shares is that what the hieroglyphs said was, in fact, a complete mystery, since the opening of the museum took place in 1812, which was a decade ahead of the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone. Eventually, there were a great number of Londoners who had a strong dislike regarding the exaggerated foreign style of the building, though, which is why it became known as the Egyptian Hall (Figure 11) subsequently (Altick, 1978).

To provide an example of the attractions at the Egyptian Hall, below is a river trip panorama that took place on 16 July 1849, a Nilotic scenery:

> During the first half of the show, going upstream, the audience saw the west bank of the Nile. When the head of navigation at the second cataract was reached, there was an intermission, after which the return journey passed places of interest on the east bank. Two of the most admired scenes were a tableau of the interior of the Abu Simbel temple, seen by torchlight, and a representation of a sandstorm overtaking a caravan in the Libyan desert. (Altick, 1978, p. 206)

There were many other sites erected in the British Isles that were inspired by ancient Egyptian motifs and imagery. To mention a few more, one crucial example from the early 19th century was the Egyptian Room at Duchess Street (Figure 12), commissioned by Thomas Hope, which was home to several Egyptianizing ornaments. As Curl (2005) explains detailedly, the Egyptian Room was decorated with Canopic figures, chairs adorned with Hathor-cow, a couch whose panels revealed representations of Anubis and Horus, and the feet had panels with a scorpion motif, as well as scarabs. He mentions that in the north of the country, in Glasgow, Scotland, the massive graveyard of the city, Glasgow Necropolis (founded in 1831) received an obelisk with Egyptianizing vaults and hieroglyphs. Many of the tombs that the graveyard still possesses (Figure 13) also include Egyptianizing features. The Egyptian Court, which opened for public exhibition in 1854 at the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, London was another influential example. The court was home to various artifacts such as bas-reliefs, hieroglyphs, deities, columns, pharaohs, statues, and most importantly the Rosetta Stone (Curl, 2005).

Despite the fact that many of such sites, unfortunately, could not manage to survive until today, the obelisk behind the Thames could, for which I would like to introduce Hassan's perspective (2003) on the issue. He refers to the Egyptian obelisks as "skyscrapers" (also Habachi, 1985), reaching a height of over 30 meters, which annotates their importance to old peoples. Thus, they serve as apparent

symbols of strength, grandeur, victory, and prestige. It is known that Roman emperors would re-erect obelisks around Rome in order to display their imperialistic authority over Egypt. Subsequently, especially after Napoleon's campaign to Egypt, there occurred a *colonial rivalry* between nations similar to Roman times, just like an imitation of the past. As such, Britain acquired its obelisk and *re-erected* it in London in 1878. Today, the obelisk, also known as Cleopatra's Needle, stands on the Victoria Embankment, with the hieroglyphic engravings still visible on it.

In terms of paintings, Egyptomania revealed itself in the form of motifs from Egyptian and Biblical sceneries; Moses, the pyramids, the Sphinx, and the desert were some of the omnipresent symbols in artworks. A good compositional example of such elements can be simultaneously seen in the painting *Seventh Plague of Egypt* (1823) by John Martin (Figure 14). There were, in fact, many painters who depicted the finding of Moses in their paintings, such as Frederick Goodall (*The Finding of Moses*, 1885) (Figure 15), Lawrence Alma-Tadema (*The Finding of Moses*, 1904) (Figure 16), and Edwin Longsden Long (*Pharaoh's Daughter*, 1886) (Figure 17), another British painter, who was truly enthralled with Egyptian aesthetics, evident in his work *An Egyptian Feast* (1877) (Figure 18) as well. Edward John Poynter was another figure who used Egyptian imagery in his paintings, as evidenced in his works *Offerings to Isis* (1866) (Figure 19) and *Israel in Egypt* (1867) (Figure 20).

Along with those, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, even tobacco products (evoking decadence), along with perfumes, were designed by using Egyptian imagery with the aim of spreading consumerism (Dobson, 2020), such as the Egyptian Cigarettes Mignon (Figure 21), whose package was embellished with an ancient Egyptian goddess, as well as obelisks, and lotus flowers. Incidentally, Oscar Wilde is also known to have preferred smoking gold-tipped Egyptian cigarettes, for their exotic and luxurious feel (Ford, Keates, & Pulham, 2016).

The fad after Napoleon's expedition to Egypt extended to mummy unwrapping events, which were unusual, yet popular shows then commenced, opening a new era of shows. The unwrapping events were part of nineteenth-century Britain exposing its colonial power by obtaining mummies from the land of the pharaohs through its subjects; namely, soldiers, diplomats, travelers, and collectors. Such events involved the dissection of the body as a form of performance, a spectacle. The French poet Gautier (1811–1872) descriptively recounts his first-hand experience of an unwrapping event, which took place during the Exhibition of 1857:

> The work of unrolling the bandages began; the outer envelope, of stout linen, was ripped open with scissors. A faint, delicate odour of balsam, incense, and other aromatic drugs spread through the room like the odour of an apothecary's shop. The end of the bandage was then sought for, and when found, the mummy was placed upright to allow the operator to move freely

> around her and to roll up the endless band, turned to the yellow colour of écru linen by the palm wine and other preserving liquids.
>
> …
>
> Little by little the body began to show in its sad nudity. The reddish skin of the torso, as the air came in contact with it, assumed a bluish bloom, and there was visible on the side the cut through which had been drawn the entrails, and from which escaped, like the sawdust of a ripped-up doll, the sawdust of aromatic wood mixed with resin in grains that looked like colophony. (Gautier, 2009, paras. 301, 306)

There were many other unwrapping events that occurred in hospitals, homes, theaters, and learned institutions, several of which were carried out by Thomas Pettigrew, who also organized private events for such purposes.

As the traditional values of Christianity were at this time being challenged by revolutionary concepts, such as Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory in his *On the Origin of Species,* toward the end of the nineteenth century, alternative beliefs and practices quickly spawned. These included spiritualism and theosophy. Followed by such trends, in 1882, the Society for Psychical Research was founded, in search of the supernatural through science. In 1887, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in London, the magical order, was on stage, providing magical education to its followers shortly after its foundation, including tarot, astrology, qabalah, and alchemy. To provide a figure, William Butler Yeats, the Irish poet, attributed his literary achievements to the inspiration he got from his involvement in the order: "If I had not made magic my constant study I could not have written a single word of my Blake book, nor would 'The Countess Kathleen' have ever come to exist. The mystical life is the center of all that I do and all that I think and all that I write" (Regardie & Greer, 2015, p. 14). Along with these, Freemasonry had already incorporated ancient Egyptian iconography, which played a major role in sparking public interest in Egyptology through time (Dobson, 2022). The Freemasons' Hall in Boston, Lincolnshire (Figure 22), remains an evocative example of Egyptianizing architecture, which has survived until today.

In the public sphere, perhaps most visibly, fashion and furniture also followed the ancient Egyptian trend in daily life, as Campagnol (2022) explains in detail: Egyptian motifs such as pyramids, sphinxes, ancient Egyptian deities, crocodiles, hieroglyphs, scorpions, lotus flowers and especially scarabs were widely used for ornamental purposes on apparel, accessories, jewelry, and furniture. Further, she elaborates that even an Egyptian color palette appeared, including colors named after the Nile: *Roseau de Nil* and *Eau de Nil* as shades of green. To provide some examples of accessories, the chatelaine was a popular ornament worn around the waist to carry around tools in the Victorian era, which is now considered to be the predecessor of handbags. Alongside chatelaines, belt buckles, as well as pendants, were adorned with ancient Egyptian motifs.

The obsession sharply peaked in that era, as evidenced ultimately by the quirky historical account from 1884, when Lady Castalia Rosalind, Countess Granville received an unconventional present: a collection of dried weevils *(Lamprocyphus augustus)* as a form of gratitude for her husband's achievement in an Anglo-Portuguese trade treaty. Along with the lotus flowers, the insects were used to create the parure (Figure 23) with their aqua-green color, reminiscent of scarabs (Campagnol, 2022). Myriad pieces of furniture were also designed in the ancient Egyptian style, from armchairs to clocks, as more detailedly evidenced in Humbert's *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730–1930* (1994).

All this fad, of course, did not happen in Britain only. Especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, tourism was blooming in the land of the pyramids, with guests from all over Europe, including writers. There were boat tickets available from £20 to Egypt (Withey, 1998), for passengers who wanted to get lost in this mysterious land, which in return, though, resulted in the acquisition of ancient Egyptian relics such as mummies by the tourists. Acquiring a mummy was quite easy, and mummies were available for purchase in hotels and even museums. The Egyptian Museum in Cairo was known for its salesroom, where mummies, as well as other artifacts, could be purchased at one's ease (Wilkin, 1897). The "mummy pits" (Figure 24) were also famous for grabbing a millennia-old souvenir, a mummy, before heading back home, where the social status of a mummy defined its final price.

The serious damage caused to the ancient Egyptian legacy was not only limited to these cases, as travelers also commonly carved their names and initials on the temples and tombs (Baber, 2016). Pyramideering, or pyramid-climbing, which had been previously encouraged to his crew by Napoleon Bonaparte too (Selin, 2017),[3] became a common activity gaining popularity among tourists' itineraries. The tourists could even lunch in the tombs beside mummies and had the luxury of observing the uncovering of discoveries firsthand (Stephens, 1853). On top of all this mess, and disrespect toward history, a great number of mummies, regrettably, were used for futile purposes, such as the production of fertilizer, paper, and other types of products from the mid to late 19th century (Baber, 2016).

[3] "Napoleon amused himself by encouraging his companions to climb a pyramid under the hot Egyptian sun. 'Who will get to the top first?' he asked. The winner was the oldest of the contestants: 53-year-old mathematician Gaspard Monge. Monge had with him a gourd of brandy, from which he offered each of the others a generous sip as they reached the summit" (as cited in Selin, 2017, as cited in Saint-Hilaire, 1901, p. 236).

2. Egyptomania and English Literature

Wrapped in mysterious weeds—
Maiden, thy form hath not yet lost its grace.

—Avon Bard, *The Memphian Mummy*

Along with the drastic shift in the material world due to the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, and Darwin's theory of evolution during the second half of the 19th century, ideas were being reshaped in the intellectual world. The well-established concepts, and traditional values, as well as religion and empire, were some of the prominent topics addressed, explored, and challenged by writers during this period. Apart from such commonly addressed topics, with the Egyptomania trend, many of these writers in the 19th century included themes around Egypt in their works, involving notable names such as Edgar Allan Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In the public sphere, like a moth to a flame, readers were also craving works with the subject matter of ancient Egypt (Dobson, 2020).

Considering the vital role of Egyptomania, the number of works involved, and for convenience's sake, I would like to introduce the term *Egyptianized literature* here*,* to refer to literary works that are characterized by their Egyptian motifs, or themes around Egypt, produced under the influence of modern Egyptomania, which is right after Napoleon's campaign to Egypt in the case of my area of research. Following that, in this chapter of my dissertation, I will delve into Egyptianized literature from the 19th century, to showcase some of its prominent examples. The works selected are based on the writers, who either had a closer relationship with Mathilde Blind as part of her artistic or intellectual circle or who influenced her, as well as some prominent names in the English literary canon.

The first example of Egyptianized literature I would like to introduce is the famous poem *Ozymandias* (1818) by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), a rebel, who is also considered one of the pioneers of the Romantic movement in literature. Mathilde Blind is known to have spent a significant time having conversations at the British Museum Reading Room with her contemporaries Richard Garnett, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and Michael Rossetti about Shelley. She had already been quite interested in Shelley from a young age, and she published works and gave lectures on Shelley subsequently. Shelley also had an immense influence on Blind's intellectual and spiritual life (Diedrick, 2016).

Following the Egyptomania fad, according to one source (Tyldesley, 2006), Shelley was inspired to write his poem *Ozymandias* during his visit to the Egyptian Room, where the head of the Younger Memnon was on public display. According to the other (Burt & Mikics, 2010), the poem was a product

of a conversation about the new findings in the Near East, in the Christmas season of 1817, when Shelley's friend Horace Smith was staying with him and his wife. Shelley and Smith were reminded of the historian Diodorus Siculus, who describes a statue of Rameses II, or Ozymandias, as referred to in the poem. His description of the statue was that the statue was the largest in Egypt, following the inscription on it: "King of Kings Ozymandias am I. If any want to know how great I am and where I lie, let him outdo me in my work" (p. 126). Extending the conversation, the two wrote sonnets based on the passage, one of which happened to be *Ozymandias*.

In the poem *Ozymandias* (1818) Shelley explores the ephemerality of empires, as well as the inevitable downfall of rulers. His description of the statue clearly communicates that what is left from what was once mighty, even kingship was, in fact, fleeting, as evidenced in the poem with the crumbled body of the statue, in complete isolation:

> I MET a traveler from an antique land
> Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
> Stand in the desert... Near them, on the sand,
> Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
> And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
> ...
> 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
> Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
> Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
> The lone and level sands stretch far away. (Shelley, 1904, p. 356, lines 1–5, 10–14)

The closing line of the poem refers to an Egyptian motif, the desert, where sands endlessly stretch. He cleverly uses this imagery to describe how lonely and meaninglessly life ends, despite the kingship, at one's expiration, referring to the ephemeral nature of life and power.

Another notable name that requires attention is Lord Byron (1788–1824), another Romantic figure, whose radical poems enchanted Mathilde Blind at an early age (Diedrick, 2016). Blind also published works on Byron. In his extensive poem *Don Juan: Canto I* (1819), Byron mentions an ancient Egyptian king: Cheops, parallel to Shelley's *Ozymandias*, whose cruelty reached an extreme point according to Herodotus' historical account:

> Till the death of Rhampsinitus, the priests said, Egypt was excellently governed, and flourished greatly; but after him Cheops succeeded to the throne, and plunged into all manner of wickedness. He closed the temples, and forbade the Egyptians to offer sacrifice, compelling them instead to labour, one and all, in his service. (*Histories* (Book II.124))

Questioning the hopes of a tyrant, a king, through an erotema, Byron reflects in the Egyptianized stanza on the eternal collapse of tyranny through the historical figure King Cheops, of whom not even "a pinch

of dust remains," hinting at decadence. Byron is aware that the mummy of King Cheops was never found, perhaps due to tomb robbers, upon which he adds: his coffin is "rummaged," and his memory faded through time, despite all the grandeur of the largest single building to his time, which he commissioned during his reign, referring to the Great Pyramid at Giza:

> What are the hopes of man? Old Egypt's King
> Cheops erected the first Pyramid
> And largest, thinking it was just the thing
> To keep his memory whole, and mummy hid;
> But somebody or other rummaging,
> Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
> Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
> Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops. (Byron, 1907, p. 1000)

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) is another literary figure that is worth paying attention to, especially to exemplify a writer from across the ocean. A Romantic figure, Poe is known for his success in mystery, horror, and Gothic fiction, exploring the darker side. He is also given credit for creating one of the first ambulatory mummies along with Jane Wells Webb Loudon's mummy in *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* (1827). With Poe's playful name choice, Allamistakeo, the ambulatory mummy, appears in his Egyptianized short story *Some Words with a Mummy* (1845). According to Day (2020), his work is influenced by Galvanism (similar to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*), where the mummy is revived by a Voltaic pile during an experiment, followed by a mummy unwrapping event:

> It was by his advice, accordingly, that we made, upon the spot, a profound incision into the tip of the subject's nose, while the Doctor himself, laying violent hands upon it, pulled it into vehement contact with the wire. Morally and physically—figuratively and literally—was the effect electric. In the first place, the corpse opened its eyes and winked very rapidly for several minutes, as does Mr. Barnes in the pantomime; in the second place, it sneezed; in the third, it sat upon end; in the fourth, it shook its fist in Doctor Ponnonner's face; in the fifth, turning to Messieurs Gliddon and Buckingham, it addressed them, in very capital Egyptian, thus: "I must say, gentlemen, that I am as much surprised as I am mortified at your behavior." (Poe, 1984, p. 810)

It is noteworthy to mention that the work was—obviously—produced under the influence of public lectures and mummy unwrapping events among others, either directly or indirectly, some of which were performed by George Gliddon and James Silk Buckingham, both of whose names are mentioned in the short story (Day, 2020). Poe does not hold himself back from using Egyptian motifs in his work, giving elaborate details as to the attire of his mummy, which demonstrates his already-existing knowledge regarding ancient Egyptian symbols:

> Around the neck thus ensheathed, was a collar of cylindrical glass beads, diverse in color, and so arranged as to form images of deities, of the scarabaeus, etc., with the winged globe. Around the small of the waist was a similar collar or belt. (Poe, 1984, p. 807)

Poe, with a questioning beyond his time, employs criticism in his work as to the ethics of *stripping* and *dissecting* mummies (Day, 2020). As evidenced in his choice of name for his mummy indicating—it was Allamistakeo—his satire questions mummy unwrapping events, in core stemming from imperialism, directly from the very mouth of the animated mummy, who is in fact in shock finding himself in a "wretchedly cold climate," far away from its motherland:

> What am I to think of your standing quietly by and seeing me thus unhandsomely used? What am I to suppose by your permitting Tom, Dick, and Harry to strip me of my coffins, and my clothes, in this wretchedly cold climate? In what light (to come to the point) am I to regard your aiding and abetting that miserable little villain, Doctor Ponnonner, in pulling me by the nose? (Poe, 1984, p. 810)

Apart from Poe's work, *Lot No. 249* (1892) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) by Bram Stoker remain prominent examples of Egyptianized literature centered around mummies.

Another example of Egyptianized literature that I would like to mention is by Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909), a friend of Mathilde Blind, who is also associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement and was a literary figure whom Mathilde Blind truly admired (Diedrick, 2016). He was considered a persona-non-grata of his time due to his daring personality and extraordinary choices in the way of expressing his art, "abnormal" to the societal norms of his time. Swinburne explored themes such as decadence and eroticism in his works, which made him a controversial figure, and a nonconformist at the time. In his poetic work, named after the well-known Egyptian historical female figure, *Cleopatra* (1866), Swinburne explores the concept of the *femme fatale*. His choice of Cleopatra is provocative, considering her being a "female ruler" whose fame has been alive for centuries. In the poem, he depicts Cleopatra in an erotic manner, linking her with the concept of decadence. Noting that Swinburne enjoyed flagellation as a form of vice (Diedrick, 2016), he writes in the poem that the beauty of Cleopatra "stings," and all Egypt "aches," bordering on masochism (Whiteley, 2020). Her nature inclined toward pain, as the *femme fatale*, can also be observed in the opening lines of the poem, particularly in the first two stanzas, where she is depicted as an alluring, yet heartbreaker woman, with a mouth that has a pleasant fragrance and beautiful brows, but "shattering" hearts and "shedding" loves:

> Her mouth is fragrant as a vine,
> A vine with birds in all its boughs;
> Serpent and scarab for a sign
> Between the beauty of her brows

> And the amorous deep lids divine.
> Her great curled hair makes luminous
> Her cheeks, her lifted throat and chin.
> Shall she not have the hearts of us
> To shatter, and the loves therein
> To shed between her fingers thus? (Swinburne, 1866, p. 331, lines 1–10)

Swinburne also incorporates some of the aforementioned (in the previous chapter) ancient Egyptian motifs into the poem, such as scarabs (line 3), hieroglyphs (line 32), and the Pyramids (49). In the poem, we observe that Cleopatra has transformed into a deadly female, as evidenced through the symbols: "serpent," (as if) she is shedding her skin into her new form, and the "scarab," reborn from dung balls. His intriguing use of these two symbols together perhaps refers to the regaining of female power through Cleopatra, who is strong, deadly, and capable of doing much more, deaf to the consensus of society toward the female, addressing an imminent shift in gender norms in a society where women could not be expressive. Cleopatra is also represented as stepping on gods and godlike figures, revolting against "the sacred," "She treads on gods and god-like things / On fate and fear and life and death" (Swinburne, 1866, p. 333, lines 81–82), which touches upon the concept of decadence (Whiteley, 2020), as well as the crisis of faith in the era that was followed by the emergence of the theory of evolution, the *fin de siècle*.

Another name that is to be highlighted is James Thomson (1834–1882), who wrote *A Voice from the Nile* (1881). Thomson was a friend of Mathilde Blind and, like her, a secularist, and a die-hard fan of Shelley. Even his pen name, "Bysshe Vanolis," reveals his fandom, as it is derived from Percy Bysshe Shelley. In his poem, Thomson gives voice to the Nile by speaking from its mouth and employs Egyptian imagery, abundantly touching on both the fauna and flora typical of Egypt:

> I COME from mountains under other stars
> …
> And make this land of Egypt. All is mine:
> The palm-trees and the doves among the palms,
> The corn-fields and the flowers among the corn,
> The patient oxen and the crocodiles,
> The ibis and the heron and the hawk,
> The lotus and the thick papyrus reeds,
> The slant-sailed boats that flit before the wind. (Thomson, 1884, p. 1, lines 1, 6–12)

Thomson's Egyptianized poem is particularly significant because it addresses the concepts of time and change. In the poem, he depicts the Nile as flowing, yet its surroundings in constant change. Considering his atheistic beliefs, he extends this perspective to the topic of religion, offering a subtle pondering where the Nile's continuous flow witnesses the changing nature of religions along its periphery through time. He initially addresses the ancient Egyptian religion, and refers to mummies, as well as

theriocephalous deities: "I see embalming of the bodies dead / And statues of the various-headed gods" (Thomson, 1884, p. 8, lines 170, 173). Then his account as the Nile continues, this time alluding to Christianity, namely to the Virgin Mary and Jesus: "Then I flow forward not a thousand years, / And see again a woman and a babe, / The woman haloed and the babe divine" (lines 179–181). He even challenges the symbolic interpretation of the cross, reminding the reader covertly of the ankh, or the key of "life," which morphed into "death" through time: "And everywhere that symbol of the cross / I knew aforetime in the ancient days, / The emblem then of life, but now of death" (lines 182–184). He concludes the change by reminding the reader of Islam, drawing from Islamic imagery, namely the crescent, cupolas, and minarets: "Then I flow forward some few hundred years, / And see again the crescent, now supreme / On lofty cupolas and minarets" (lines 185–187). And the Nile deduces, "So the men change along my changeless stream, / And change their faiths; but I yield all alike" (lines 189–190). While humans die and are mortal, the Nile continues flowing and is immortal.

The ultimate name I would like to focus on is Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), a prominent figure of decadent literature, as well as of the Aesthetic movement in England, who is also known to have suffered a great deal due to his sexual orientation, in a conservative society where he was often misunderstood, which is the reason why he drew a lot of public attention due to his legal cases as well. Wilde was a contemporary of Mathilde Blind, and it is worth noting that it was at Wilde's request that Blind published her piece titled *Marie Bakst, The Russian Painter* (1888) in *The Woman's World*, a magazine edited by Wilde himself (Diedrick, 2016).

In his extensive poem *The Sphinx* (1894), which took him more than a decade to complete, Wilde interacts with the Sphinx in a romantic way, combining the erotic with decadence, touching upon masochism, similar to Swinburne's *Cleopatra*, but in an implicit way (Whiteley, 2020) with aggression, as evidenced in the lines (Wilde, 2000, p. 541, lines 13–14): "Come forth my lovely languorous Sphinx! and put your head upon my knee! / And let me stroke your throat and see your body spotted like the lynx!" Wilde also uses a language that is reminiscent of Shelley's language in *Ozymandias*, as to the loss of power through time, initiated by the Sphinx itself, through its own decadence (Whiteley, 2020), eventually resulting in the collapse of a great empire, which was the theme also evident in Byron's aforementioned stanza from *Don Juan*, expressing the oblivion (Wilde, 2000, p. 545, lines 115–116): "The god is scattered here and there: deep hidden in the windy sand / I saw his giant granite hand still clenched in impotent despair." As indicated by the poem's evocative name, *The Sphinx*, Wilde's abundant use of Egyptian motifs is apparent throughout the poem. Along with the several Egyptian deities such as Isis and Osiris (line 21) mentioned in the poem, he uses imagery such as the ancient Egyptian city

Heliopolis (line 26), the Nile (lines 42, 74, 85, 140), the Ibis (line 39), the lotus-lillies (line 132) (also appears as nenuphar in line 72), the obelisks (line 19), the Crocodile (line 41), the desert (lines 79, 118), and of course, the Pyramid (line 28), among others.

Such abundance of Egyptian imagery is prevalent in Wilde's other works too, which proves his continued interest toward Egypt, thus involvement in Egyptomania. The Swallow in *The Happy Prince* (1888), having flown from Egypt, gives depictions of Egypt to the Prince several times throughout the story, using Egyptian motifs:

> All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything. (Wilde, 2000, p. 33)

In Wilde's well-known work *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* (1890–91), even Dorian reads about Egypt! Wilde uses very similar motifs such as the Obelisks, Sphinxes, and the ibises, as Dorian is reading, which is especially intriguing since Wilde depicts the Obelisk as "weeping tears of granite," "lonely" and "in exile," "longing to be back" in Egypt, back to its homeland, which hints at a political critique on Wilde's side as to imperialism and its implications:

> He read of the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde that weeps tears of granite in its lonely sunless exile, and longs to be back by the hot lotus-covered Nile, where there are Sphinxes, and rose-red ibises, and white vultures with gilded claws, and crocodiles, with small beryl eyes, that crawl over the green steaming mud. (Wilde, 2000, p. 170)

Wilde here was possibly alluding to Théophile Gautier's poem *L'obélisque de Paris* (1852), where Gautier feels unsettled by the erection of the same obelisk in Paris (Figure 25), in the Place de la Concorde. Gautier also depicts the obelisk as shedding tears of granite, and he is lamenting about Egypt, as he expresses a sense of pity for it: "Sur cette place je m'ennuie, / Obélisque dépareillé / Je te pleure, ô ma vieille Égypte, / Avec des larmes de granit!" (Gautier, 1872, pp. 40, 42, lines 1–2, 71–72).[4]

[4] French to English translation is as follows: "On this square, I feel out of place, / A mismatched obelisk / I weep for you, oh my ancient Egypt, / With tears of granite."

3. Women Travelers: Mathilde Blind, "A Bird of Passage"

> Ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by
> a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction.
>
> —Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

There is no doubt that the Victorian era was a difficult period for women, especially in terms of human rights. Women had limited educational and employment opportunities, as well as restricted legal rights. Another example of the challenges Victorian women faced can be found in the context of omnibuses, which can now be considered predecessors of modern public buses:

> These carriages, however, are very far from perfect. Amongst many other drawbacks, I will mention one: THE LADIES. I maintain that Ladies have no right in Omnibuses at all. They never were intended for them, and at first no Lady had the face to get into an Omnibus. She would as soon have thought of walking into a Divan—or a Billiard-room—or the Athenaeum—or an one of our clubs. Omnibuses, I lay down, were built for men, and by men they ought exclusively to be filled. ("FEMALE 'BUSSES," n.d.)

Women had limited access to omnibuses at the time, which is evidenced in Amy Levy's (1861—1889) *Ballade of an Omnibus* (1889), where she was sharing her pleasure of riding an omnibus, having been longing for her freedom of movement: "I envy not the rich and great, / A wandering minstrel, poor and free, / I am contented with my fate— / An omnibus suffices me" (Levy, 1889, p. 21, lines 5–8). In a society where it was compelling even to get around for women, it must have been even more complicated to travel abroad, especially unless one belonged to the upper class.

However, there were, in fact, several women travelers, including writers, who traveled to Egypt. At the time, the Orient had developed into a "career" (Disraeli), a *topos* that was continuously repeated (Guimarães, 2022), and as part of the Orient, the case of Egypt was the same. Sophia Lane-Poole's (1804–1891) comment in her work (1844, pp. 5–6) evidences both the difficulty of traveling for common women and the career aspect of traveling to Egypt simultaneously:

> The opportunities I might enjoy of obtaining an insight into the mode of life of the higher classes of the ladies in this country, and of seeing many things highly interesting in themselves, and rendered more so by their being accessible only to a lady suggested to him [her brother, whom she was traveling with] *the idea that I might both gratify my own curiosity and collect much information of a novel and interesting nature* [emphasis added], which he proposed I should embody in a series of familiar letters to a friend. To encourage me to attempt this latter object, he placed at my disposal a large collection of his own unpublished notes, that I might extract from them, and insert in my letters whatever I might think fit; and in order that I might record my impressions and observations with less restraint than I should experience if always feeling that I was writing for the press, he promised me that he would select those letters which he should esteem suitable for publication.

Amelia Edwards (1831–1892), a woman writer who incentivized the public to visit Egypt, toured the Nile Valley between 1873–1874, as a result of which she published her work *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (1877). Her work, written with a honed narrative, documented the early history of tourism in Egypt and included the images she painted during her travels (Lanoie, 2013). Again, Sophia Lane Poole's *The Englishwoman in Egypt: Letters from Cairo* (1844), and Florence Nightingale's (1820–1910) *Letters from Egypt: A Journey on the Nile 1849–1850* (1987) were some of the travel accounts regarding Egypt written by women.

The woman writer I will be focusing on, Mathilde Blind, also visited Egypt twice, in 1892 and 1894, and consequently published *Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident* in 1895, which is a work heavily influenced by Blind's observations on Egypt during her travels, as well as the ancient Egyptian myths and beliefs. In relation to these, I will explore Mathilde Blind's enduring engagement with travel and mythology in this chapter, which eventually played a major role in leading her to the land of the Sphinx—Egypt. I will be drawing upon the information I gathered from the sole biography of Mathilde Blind, James Diedrick's *Mathilde Blind: Late-Victorian Culture and the Woman of Letters* (2016), to provide a focused analysis.

Mathilde Blind, a Victorian woman of letters with avant-garde tendencies, born in Mannheim, Germany, in 1841, was of Jewish origin and for some time used the gender-ambiguous pseudonym Claude Lake. She had a tumultuous childhood, losing her biological father at age seven and having to move often due to issues in regard to her family in search of refuge, who first sought it in Belgium, and had to find it in Britain eventually. Her family was radical and got involved in political events: Her mother and stepfather were imprisoned for high treason in 1847 while they were disseminating pamphlets encouraging workers to take part in demonstrations, also known as "bread and potato riots," in Bavaria. Upon their release, her stepfather would participate in the Baden uprising the next year. Her brother, Ferdinand Cohen-Blind, who attempted to assassinate Otto von Bismarck, the Minister-President of Prussia, later committed suicide.

Mathilde Blind was predisposed to move around. As Richard Garnett described her, she was a "traveler, continually on the move from land to land," who "accumulated the impressions derived from many different regions, and many different societies" (Garnett, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 4), which eventually paved the way into her "rooted cosmopolitan" identity. After attending the Ladies' Institute in St John's Wood between 1855 and 1858, Blind was back in mainland Europe, traveling in solitude. In 1860 she took a solitary walking tour, where she walked through the Bernese Oberland, a region near Bern, home to the Alps, lakes, and valleys. As Diedrick (2016) states, Blind's relationship with nature is

quite commonly reflected in her works, at times on a level where it gives her characters physical pleasure, which also plays a role in expressing their feminism, as well as Blind's sexuality in regard to women. Her special relationship with nature might also have reflected on her choice of pseudonym Claude Lake, *Claude* sounding like "cloud" and *Lake*, as it is "lake," evoking pastoral sceneries together, which are reminiscent of Bernese Oberland, or perhaps simply her birthplace Mannheim, in a way to imply her rooted cosmopolitanism covertly. Parallel to this, in 1864, Blind traveled to Wales with her friend Lily Wolfsohn, with whom she enjoyed the nature there. Following her brother's death, in 1866, she embarked on a journey to Austria and Germany, and possibly to the city for a pilgrimage, where her brother had spent his last days before passing away (Diedrick, 2016).

Upon her comeback to London in 1866, Blind acquainted herself with the Shelleyites, thus with a periphery that included significant intellectuals and artists. Richard Garnett was one of them, who gave Blind support and substantial feedback on her works and eventually played a significant role in her development as a woman of letters. She once wrote to Garnett mentioning her depressed mood, she added "If I cannot right myself soon I shall fly somewhere though whether to Scotland, Wales or my darling Devonshire I know not which" (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, pp. 42–43), as the first reference to her restless soul, her wanderlust, evidenced in her letters. At some point, Blind was offered a copy of Garnett's poems by himself titled *Io in Egypt*, where he draws from myths such as that of Io and her tormenter gadfly, as well as mythological creatures such as sirens, and Egyptian imagery, which quite interested her, and she thanked him in a letter saying "I… thoroughly enjoyed the rich eastern atmosphere" (2016, p. 52). Knowing that Blind and her stepfather already shared the same interest in the mythology and folklore of northern Europe,[5] this small gesture of Garnett might have contributed to her curiosity toward Egypt and Egyptian mythology as well. In 1870, Blind delivered a lecture on the Icelandic *Volsunga saga*, which was based on William Morris' version and drew elements from Norse mythology. Diedrick (2016) mentions Blind's appreciation of Morris' revival of such stories, which concealed contemporary social and political implications while embodying a transformative vision of social organization for Morris. This may have contributed to Blind's understanding of aestheticism as a form of escapism through myths.

Diedrick (2016) notes that the period Mathilde Blind spent on this earth was a time when one could not easily avoid engaging with political issues, given the prevalence of wars, imperial matters, and issues regarding the position of women. Blind's awareness of such issues and the reality she could not

[5] Karl Blind published several essays on Teutonic mythology that trace connections among Greek, Vedic, and Eddaic beliefs; see especially "Freia-Holda, the Teutonic Goddess of Love," "Discovery of Odinic Songs in Shetland," and "Wagner's 'Nibelung' and the Siegfried Tale" (Diedrick, 2016, p. 272).

escape became evident in her art at times. Growing as a female aesthete in a widening circle, as well as a freethinker through years, Blind also supported women's suffrage and revealed her critical stance toward such issues, as evidenced in her works such as her controversial poem *The Ascent of Man*, where she would express a futuristic take on Darwinism from a feminist perspective, as Guimarães (2012) discussed. Moreover, as argued by Birch (2013), Blind, in her unconventional position as an unmarried Victorian woman, reshaped the gender roles suggested by Darwin by incorporating imagery of other species, such as birds and spiders, into a more diverse and fluid form in her other works including her novel which she would publish in 1885, *Tarantella*, whose title is, in fact, inspired by a legend.[6]

Following a translation project, Blind traveled to Scotland and the Hebrides in the summer of 1873, which helped her set up the fundamental bases that would shape her career in the upcoming years. She described and expressed her feelings about the Isle of Skye in a letter to Garnett:

> This is a strange place is it not to write from but solitary, silent and sad as it is there is something of congruity between it and me; some subtle unison, which makes me feel less lonely here than I often and often feel in the crowded London streets. (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, pp. 116–117)

Her account could be interpreted as a metaphor for her loneliness, with the "congruity" being the solitude that Blind and the isle shared: the isle surrounded by the sea in solitude, and Blind surrounded by the crowd that she did not relate to as a freethinker and an antitheist, again, in solitude. Blind implicitly informed Garnett of her feelings, and in return, Garnett replied:

> I have had the almost uninterrupted enjoyment of my own company since my return from Wales early this month. I am regularly to the Museum, where there is nothing to do, dine out, and get home too late to call on anybody, even if there were anybody to call upon. (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 117)

According to Diedrick (2016), on the island, Blind only had four books with her, three of which were related to mythology: *Edda*, *the Nibelungenlied*, *the Morte D'Arthur*, and the last one with no surprise, Shelley. As Garnett had suggested Blind, she was collecting ideas to write about during this trip, as a result of which she contemplated the idea of writing *The Prophecy of St. Oran* in Staffa and Iona, the latter she also called "the island of the Dead," having seen the tombs of kings and chieftains, some of which were, as she described "defaced by time" (Diedrick, 2016, p. 120).

Blind's interest was not limited to reading mythological pieces, in a letter, on Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, she commented "I think on the whole the most magnificently written history I have ever read" (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 123). She was

[6] *Tarantella* is the name of a dance performed in southern Italy. According to the southern Italian legend, the only remedy for a woman bitten by a tarantula was "a nightlong frenzy of passionate music and dancing" (Diedrick, 2016, p. 191).

possibly reading it to prepare for her biographical essay *The Old Faith and the New*, and she was also interested in the Arian controversy. In the writing of *The Heather on Fire*, which she published in 1886, Blind would center her work around the brutal evictions that happened during the Highland Clearances that occurred in Scotland.

In an essay Mathilde Blind published in 1881 for *Whitehall Review*, she was writing about Holman Hunt and his painting *The Flight into Egypt* (1883–4) (Figure 26), which depicts the biblical scenery of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, fleeing from the slaughter of the first-born children, caused by King Herod. In her essay, Blind defines Hunt as a "bird of passage" (Blind, 1881b, para. 17), knowing that he is a wanderer, and adds that he appears in England infrequently, and when he does, he contributes to the arts in the country with his works.

Blind had already been suffering from chronic bronchitis, and the cold climate and polluted air of London were no good for her. Besides, Blind's medical condition was affecting her literary productivity negatively. Once she commented about her ongoing novel "I only pray now that my strength may last till I have finished this volume before a fresh collapse" (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 162), which proves her deep passion for writing. For this reason, Blind would visit Bournemouth from time to time, but in 1877, she also traveled to Switzerland alone, seeking some respite. Moreover, in 1878, she spent a month in Matlock Baths in Derbyshire, where there was a spa thought to have healing properties. Her stay proved to be beneficial, ultimately bringing relief to Blind's condition. While she was busy writing the biography of George Eliot in 1882, she was recommended by a doctor to leave London, as she mentioned in a letter to Garnett:

> If I could live in Switzerland in the summer and in Egypt in the winter I should be quite well, but that in this climate there is little chance of my escaping colds, and every cold will bring on these dreadful attacks that are draining me of all strength and energy. (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 179)

In 1884, Blind published *The Tale of Tristram and Iseult* in the *National Review*. According to a note by James Diedrick (n.d.), her essay was dealing with the roots of the Celtic legend Tristram and Iseult, tracing the possible origins of it in Egyptian mythology, as well as its medieval manifestations, which eventually evidences Blind's constant interest in mythical accounts, as well as diverse cultures.

Mathilde Blind would return to Continental Europe in 1891, to Switzerland again. As she was always fascinated by nature, in a letter to Garnett, she wrote about her funicular ride in the mountains, expressing that she felt like Jesus. This also evidences her openness to new experiences:

> I am glad to have had this experience… a new sensation to be borne up and up the steep and almost perpendicular incline almost like a sense of flying while wood and valley, hill and river

> slide away beneath you and you rise higher still and higher 'as if you were going up to heaven' like Jesus Christ himself. (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 226)

The following year, Blind traveled to Egypt for the first time, which would eventually render some relief to her pulmonary condition while inspiring her for her last volume. Her visits would eventually follow as Italy in 1893, Egypt again in 1894, and Italy and Germany in 1896. It is noteworthy to mention that after the emotional void followed by the demise of Ford Madox Brown,[7] who was quite an important figure in Blind's life, Blind was in a continuous search to fill that void. In addition to following her doctor's health advice, these trips may have also provided her with a form of escapism from her uneasiness caused by grief.

Blind, though, was truly eager to wander around and explore Egypt. She went to Egypt by Thomas Cook's steamers, lodging at hotels as a tourist; reading Garnett's *Io in Egypt* and James Thomson's *A Voice from the Nile* along the journey, both of which must have served significantly as fundamental resources during her sojourn. She also requested Max Müller's *Comparative Mythology* from Garnett in a letter, noting "It would be extremely interesting to read it here with the old gods of Egypt confronting me everywhere" (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 242), evidencing once again, Blind's curiosity in mythology. During her visit, going up the Nile Valley, she also visited Luxor, and Aswan, which are very likely to have inspired specifically her poem *The Tombs Of The Kings*, considering the multitude of king tombs in these places. In a letter of 1894 to Garnett, she mentioned that she was intending to "go once more to those tombs and temples that surpass everything one sees elsewhere in grandeur and mystery" (2016, p. 236), which could be considered as a first-hand account of Blind's engagement in Egyptomania.

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[7] Mathilde Blind had a close and enduring, even romantic, relationship with Ford Madox Brown. There were even rumors that Brown had proposed to Blind (Angeli, 1949, pp. 49–50).

4. *Birds of Passage*: a fin-de-siècle poetry bridging Egypt to Britain

This Time which crawleth like a monstrous snake,
Wounded and slow and very venomous.

—James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*

Before commencing the analysis of the selected Egyptianized poems, which will be the main focus of this central chapter, I would like to reflect on *Birds of Passage*, regarding the possible meaning(s) of its title, and the cover design of the book, as well as Mathilde Blind's personal stance toward colonial matters (namely, British imperialism).

Birds of Passage opens with Omar Khayyam's quote: "The Bird of Time has but a little way / To flutter—and the bird is on the wing" (Khayyam, as cited in Blind, 1895, p. iv). Considering the fact that Blind begins the book with such a strong quote from a historical Oriental figure (a Persian poet) evoking the concepts of ephemerality of time, and death, gives us a reasonable clue as to the title of the book. We also know that Blind had left a wreath at Ford Madox Brown's funeral, which included the inscription "Death is the Mercy of Eternity" (Diedrick, 2016, p. 232). Diedrick states that this quote also found a place on Blind's own marble monument upon her death. Such references imply that Blind, toward the end of her life, was preoccupied with death, in a desperate way, considering her deteriorating bodily health stemming from a combination of her pulmonary condition and her loss of a beloved person.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Blind referred to the visual artist Holman Hunt as a "bird of passage," in her essay titled "Mr. Holman Hunt: The Flight Into Egypt" for *Whitehall Review* in 1881. As she expressed, Hunt would only appear in England, where he lacked comfort, "at rare intervals, when about to enrich the art-treasures" (Blind, 1881b, para. 17). Similar to Hunt, Blind had already had a rich career centering around people and settings of various cultural backgrounds, as evidenced by her translations, novels, biographies, and poetry (Diedrick, 2016). Given Blind's ongoing discomfort due to her pulmonary condition in London and the grief caused by the demise of her valued "friend" Ford Madox Brown, it is no surprise that at the later stage of her life, she fully transformed herself into a "bird of passage," through which meaning she produced her final art, and in which climate and geography she sought relief, both mentally and physically.

In *Once We Played*, it is highly likely that Mathilde Blind was reminiscing about Ford Madox Brown. In the poem, the two lovers are separated by death. While Brown is depicted lying beneath the earth, Blind finds herself isolated in a sunlit land, reminiscent of Egypt: "Once we played at love together / Of us two who loved in fun, / One lies low beneath the clover, / One lives lonely in the sun" (Blind,

1895, pp. 124–125, lines 1, 18–20). She also hints at her joy of traveling to the south in *Internal Firesides*, whose title possibly refers to the perpetual flames that kept blazing in her heart—her grief—during her travels. In the poem, she explores duality, as she vividly depicts two contrasting images: escaping the "winter-locked Europe" where she experienced grief and journeying toward the "palm-fringed Nile" in Egypt. In Egypt, as a tourist, she enjoys observing camels and palms, which are iconic symbols of the country:

> Blue heaven that was glooms blackening o'er the bare
> Tree skeletons, to ruthless tempest bowed.
> ...
> Nay, let the outer world be winter-locked;
> Beside the hearth of glowing memories
> I warm my life. Once more our boat is rocked.
> As on a cradle by the palm-fringed Nile;
> And, sharp-cut silhouettes, in single file,
> Lank camels lounge against transparent skies. (Blind, 1895, p. 71, lines 7–8, 9–14)

The exotic destination of Egypt was thus the perfect setting for Blind to produce her decadent art. In the 6 June issue of the *Examiner*, she wrote "Nothing certainly so attunes the mind to a vivid sympathy with races and nations removed from us by the intervening distances of space or time," and she added:

> The songs and stories of a people, revealing as they do those profounder human emotions, which, like bright eyes through a mask, startle us by shining with a clear light through the customary wraps and trappings of nationality. [Through these stories and songs] *we are daily realizing a more vital imaginative unity with peoples alien from ours, the fancy becoming naturalized* [emphasis added]. (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 129)

Blind suggests in this intrinsically anti-colonial statement that despite national differences, people are all the same, seeming to appeal to a common humanity. This is a major belief or philosophy, also shared by other (humanitarian) philosophers, as well as writers such as George Eliot, at this time. In line with her statements, Blind skillfully wove together the "songs" she heard in various geographies including Egypt, much like a swallow, creating a beautiful harmony that combined both mythological elements and her travel experiences, in accordance with her cosmopolitan identity. The final product encompassing all of the aforementioned flourishes in her "mature" work: *Birds of Passage*, where Blind explores "the Other" as it settles in the European mind, namely the Orient, as suggested by Said (1979).

Apart from her identity as a versatile female aesthete, it is noticeable that Blind had shown a critical stance toward colonialism at times, as evidenced in a letter to Garnett regarding the Aswan dam project threatening the island Philæ, home to temples and monuments. In her letter expressing her concern, she wrote:

> I am just sending off an article on Philæ for the Fortnightly Review. I suppose you would not mind correcting the press for me in case the Editor sends you a proof. The idea of the submersion of this lovely island has preoccupied me a good deal. (Blind, as cited in Fletcher, 2005, p. 445)

Blind's attitude toward such issues is also palpable in her works such as *The Heather on Fire*, and *To the Obelisk During the Great Frost, 1881*. In the latter, she addresses the displaced ancient Egyptian obelisk in London, also known as Cleopatra's needle (Figure 27), using apostrophe, touching upon its mislocation, akin to Gautier's *L'obélisque de Paris* (1852): "Now reared beside our Thames so wintry gray, / Is this the sun which fired thine orient day?" (Blind, 1881a, p. 113, lines 9, 14). Considering that Blind stayed in hotels as a tourist, and very likely witnessed all that had been previously discussed in relation to the imperial havoc that was wrought in Egypt along the journey, *Birds of Passage,* signals a colonial critique at times, as in the poem *The Beautiful Beeshareen Boy*, in addition to its aesthetic elements, as Fletcher (2005) argues. However, he also observes that her division of the book title into two "polarities," namely "Songs of the Orient" and "Songs of the Occident," is dependent on the Eurocentric imperialist ideology.

In regard to the choice of visual elements in the cover of *Birds of Passage* (Figure 28), it should be pointed out that they are all evocative of Egypt, being consequently a part of Egyptomania. With the swallows, migratory birds that also fly through Egypt, evidenced in the "Prelude" of the book, the literal "birds of passage" are depicted in a flock in the upper right corner of the book cover. The lower part of the right corner is divided by the hieroglyph of water, the zigzag symbol, which appears three times on the cover. This possibly refers to Blind's voyage through the Nile, taking into account that she had stayed in Egypt for three months (Diedrick, 2016, p. 236) during her second trip. Including another significant symbol, the lower part of the right corner accompanies a winged scarab, which is illustrated at the bottom corners of the cover as well. Noting that scarabs were used as amulets in ancient times, they might have been chosen as the ancient protectors of Blind's book, despite Blind's persistent antireligious tendencies, which is somewhat quirky. On the other hand, the opposite corner accompanies the sacred lotus flowers, which also appear at the bottom part of the cover. These flowers are known to shut their petals at eventide and submerge beneath the water, which makes them unreachable by hand (Lurker, 1982). The lotus plant on the far left in the cover, however, is portrayed as being grasped by the stem while the rest of its flowers are depicted both as opened and closed, reminiscent of the previous information. This type of imagery being used may allude to the "Western hand," exploiting Egypt's resources via colonization, hinting at a critique.

In his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), Albert Camus touches on the absurdity of life, drawing from the myth of Sisyphus. According to the myth, as he describes, Sisyphus commits several crimes,

including chaining Death. In line with that, he is punished by the gods with the tedious task of rolling a stone up a hill incessantly, in the underworld. Every time he climbs up the hill carrying the stone with all his effort, the stone rolls back, and he eventually becomes the "futile laborer of the underworld," within a loop (Camus, 1991). Camus' take from the myth is that Sisyphus' situation cursing him is inevitable, yet he offers a hopeful perspective where Sisyphus is happy, embracing the absurdity of his life and finding happiness within the situation itself.

In contrast to Camus' optimism regarding the inescapable human condition, Blind's poem *Scarabæus Sisyphus* takes a pessimistic side. As Fletcher (2005) notes, Blind cleverly anthropomorphizes the sacred beetle, or *Scarabæus sacer*, by adopting it as *Scarabæus Sisyphus* for her poem title, merging evocative motifs both from Greek and Egyptian mythologies. As Blind explains in *Birds of Passage* (1895, p. 146), the sacred beetles were considered "the emblem of the principle of life," and were related to self-creation, since they were thought to arise from a ball of dung,[8] without the need for a female. *Scarabæus Sisyphus* is indeed an Egyptianized sonnet, the octave of which expresses a sense of pity for the scarab, while the sestet gives rise to a questioning, and consequently, introspection on Blind's side.

The opening lines of the sonnet begin with Blind's extended observation of the insect, as she writes, that she watches the scarab "an hour in vain," while it is "toiling up the hill" trying to push the dung ball patiently but with effort: "I've watched thee, Scarab! Yea, an hour in vain / I've watched thee, slowly toiling up the hill, / Pushing thy lump of mud before thee still / With patience infinite and stubborn strain" (Blind, 1895, p. 66, lines 1–4). Blind is aware that the scarab's efforts are in vain, yet it perseveres climbing up with the dung ball. In the following lines of the octave she warns the scarab about its immediate future: "Strive as thou mayst, spare neither time nor pain, / To screen thy burden from all chance of ill; / Push, push, with all a beetle's force of will, / Thy ball, alas! rolls ever down again" (lines 5–8). The fate of the scarab as Blind depicted is identical to that of Sisyphus: They both strive to reach the summit, but neither can make it to the top. Thus, she asks the scarab, questioning its creation at the beginning of the sestet: "Toil without end! And why? That after thee / Dim hosts of groping Scarabs too shall climb / This self-same height?" (lines 9–11). Blind implies that, after the endless "toiling," a loop again, will result in the suffering of the offspring as well, as she prefers to call them "the dim hosts," possibly referring to the eggs or the larvae inside of the dung ball, where there is a lack of light.

[8] Dung balls are important for the scarab's life cycle since they are where the eggs are stored, and larvae develop as they consume the necessary nutrients found in the balls.

And Blind touches upon the myth of Sisyphus to finalize the poem with introspection, feeling that humanity is “doomed,” with the duty of rolling up “Life’s Stone:” “Accursèd progeny / Of Sisyphus, what antenatal crime / Has doomed us too to roll incessantly / Life's Stone, recoiling from the Alps of time?” (Blind, 1895, p. 66, lines 11–14). The fact that she uses the metaphor “Life’s Stone” is intriguing, considering its resemblance to the dung ball, in the case of scarabs. In line with that, as she questions the broader meaning of creation, similar to Camus, Blind could also be challenging the societal imposition that designates women as the sole bearers of life, or children, in the case of humans. Consequently, “life,” in this sense, may refer to the bearing of children. She employs this critique in a deeply contemplative and perhaps even desperate manner.

The year 1893 was hosting a new world fair,[9] following the tradition that had begun with London’s Great Exposition of 1851, this time in Chicago. The World's Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, was organized to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Colombus’ voyage to the New World, America. The concessions organizing the attractions of the fair represented various cultural backgrounds.[10] Cairo Street, one of the concessions taking part, was listed first by gross revenue and even surpassed the Ferris wheel, which was the first of its kind ever made (Bolotin & Laing 2017). Alongside the belly dancers and other performers featured at Cairo Street at the time, there was a young boy belonging to the Beeshareens tribe who had allegedly drifted to the Chicago World’s Fair, and then to Marseille, possibly as part of an exhibit for Cairo Street as well, as per Mathilde Blind's own account:

> The Beeshareens are a wandering desert tribe of Upper Egypt, reminding one of our Gypsies. Many of them are remarkably handsome, more particularly in childhood. The grace of their movements and charm of manner must strike all travellers on the Nile. The children haunt the shore where boats land, and set up an incessant cry for “backsheesh," and there are few who can resist the winning smiles with which they sweeten their importunities. *Conspicuous among the crowd was a lovely boy of sixteen, who attracted the attention of artists and photographers* two or three winters ago. *He had the elegant proportions of a Tanagra statuette* [emphasis added], and was so constantly asked to sit for his portrait that he must have thought that that was the end and aim of all tourists. Finally, *he was carried off to the World's Fair with other curiosities of Egypt* [emphasis added]. When the Beeshareens returned to Assouan he was not amongst them, and rumour says that he got as far as Marseilles, where he utterly vanished. This tribe dress their profuse black hair in quite an extraordinary fashion. It is worn in countless little plaits, with a high, fuzzy bunch in the centre. I have heard it said that they wear it thus in memory of their descent from one of the lost tribes of Israel. (Blind, 1895, pp. 145–146)

In her Egyptianized poem, titled *The Beautiful Beeshareen Boy*, Blind describes that boy, who tragically becomes a paradigmatic subject of colonization, with great interest. In relation to her marked

[9] The world fairs have been held mainly with the purpose of commemorating historical events, as well as entertainment and education.
[10] The most popular concessions included German Village, Old Vienna, Turkish Village, and the Moorish Palace.

humanistic perspective, Blind had once expressed/recognized her cosmopolitanism, noting: “Nothing in the world is indifferent to me. I am something of a cosmopolitan, and a love of humanity unites me to everything that breathes. A Caribbean interests me; the fate of a Kaffir goes to my heart” (Blind, as cited in Diedrick, 2016, p. 197). Concerning specifically the “fate” of the “exotic” Beeshareen boy, her tone of delivering the poem is not “indifferent” either, thus but rather critical instead, considering above all her stance in regard to colonial matters, as discussed earlier.

The poem in question is composed of two parts, and the first part includes Blind’s detailed description of the boy she encounters, as well as his physical attributes, alluding greatly to his beauty, which she even emphasizes in the title of the poem, *The “Beautiful” Beeshareen Boy*.

> Beautiful, black-eyed boy,
> O lithe-limbed Beeshareen!
> ...
> Thy lovely limbs are bare;
> Only a rag, in haste.
> Draped with a princely air.
> Girdles thy slender waist.
> And gaudy beads and charms,
> Dangling from neck and arms,
> ...
> Eyes starlike in a face
> Sweet as a Nubian night!
> Better than Felt or Fez,
> High on thy forehead set,
> Countless in lock and tress,
> Waved a wild mane of jet. (Blind, 1895, pp. 40–42, lines 1–2, 17–22, 39–44)

Her description of the boy emphasizes the beauty Blind finds in the simple, yet ethnic aura he has, native to Egypt, which is clearly “exotic” for Blind, seeing him in “only a rag” while adorned with “beads and charms.” This type of look was certainly unusual to the “Western eye,” and evoked fascination on the side of Blind. As she adds, “Kings well might envy thee / Thou shouldst have been a prince” (Blind, 1895, p. 43, lines 45, 51), Blind is astonished by his dazzling beauty, and she emulates him as a royal figure, even to a point where it might evoke jealousy in kings. But he belongs to the desert, as she explains the origins of the boy, highlighting that his native home is the desert: “Bred in the desert, where / Only to breathe and be / Alive in living air / Is finest ecstasy; / Where just to ride or rove, / With sun or stars above” (pp. 40–41, lines 9–14).

Upon Blind’s farewell from the boat to the Beeshareen boy, “Our sail swells to the blast, / Our boat speeds far and fast, / Farewell! And to the last / Smile, waving friendly hands” (Blind, 1895, p. 44, lines 61–64), the second part of the poem interjects with a melancholic tone, in contrast with the first

part. In the second part, Blind initially expresses her concern about the fate of the boy, whose location is unknown, and she is curious to know, hence asks "Forlorn sits Assouan; / Where is her boy, her pride?— / Now in the lamplit Khan, / Now by the riverside / Or where the Soudanese, / Under mimosa trees, / Chaunt mournful melodies, / We've sought him far and wide" (pp. 44–45, lines 73–80). In the lines, she portrays a melancholic atmosphere where "Assouan" is left alone with the absence of the boy, similarly, "the Soudanese" are lamenting for the same reason. Blind mentions several places where she searched for him, but all in all, she is unable to locate his place.

However, this search yields some partial results in the following lines, where the Beeshareen boy, or the "desert-nurtured Child" as Blind refers to, happens to have been carried away to the West: "How dared they carry thee / Far from thy native Wild, / Across the Western Sea?" (Blind, 1895, p. 45, lines 82–84). He is not the only one to have been carried away, though. As Blinds mentions in the next lines, there are the very many Egyptianized goods beside him, even including mummies, perhaps as an allusion to Egyptomania: "Packed off, poor boy, at last, / With many a plaster cast / Of plinth and pillar vast, / And waxen mummies piled!" (lines 85–88). Blind, then, reveals the exact location of the beautiful boy, which happens to be Chicago, where the World's Fair of 1893 took place: "*Ah! just like other ware. / For a lump sum or so* [emphasis added] / Shipped to the World's great Fair— / The big Chicago Show!" (lines 89–92) The Egyptianized goods being displayed at the show are elaborated detailedly, ranging from mere objects to animals: "With mythic beasts and things, / Beetles and bulls with wings, / And imitation Sphinx, / Ranged row on curious row!" (p. 46, lines 93–96). Blind emphasizes the profound curiosity directed toward the Egyptian-style items on display (in the 96th line), once again alluding to Egyptomania.

The next lines follow with the lament of Blind, knowing that the "desert's joy" was wrenched away from his homeland. She is aware that the boy was meant to have stayed in Egypt, instead of being displayed like an object in Porkopolis—Chicago. Referring to Chicago's unusual inherited name for surpassing Cincinnati in pork production (Hand, 2016) specifically: "Porkopolis," or the "city of pigs," Blind hints at a critique in regard to the fair, or perhaps even extending it to the US: "Beautiful, black-eyed boy; / Ah me! how strange it is / That thou, the desert's joy, / Whom heavenly winds would kiss / *With Ching and Chang-hwa ware, / Blue pots and bronzes rare, / Shouldst now be over there / Shown at Porkopolis* [emphasis added]" (Blind, 1895, p. 46, lines 97–104).

However, the boy, with all his beauty, evidently vanished forever, leaving the Nile, thus his homeland, all alone. The final two stanzas of the poem clearly indicate that Blind is in a state of nostalgic

grief, critically lamenting the touristic fate of a pure Egyptian native. She expresses her longing for the beautiful boy in hopelessness, as he—probably like his own legendary country—is no longer attainable:

> Gone like a lovely dream,
> Child of the starry smile;
> Gone from the glowing stream
> Glassing its greenest isle!
> We've sought, but sought in vain;
> Thou wilt not come again,
> Never for bliss or pain,
> Home to thy orphaned Nile. (Blind, 1895, pp. 46–47, lines 105–112)

During her visit to Egypt as a tourist, Mathilde Blind's observations about the country in her poems reveal a unique perspective. With her "European eye," she not only experienced the "exotic" beauty of Egypt but also embarked on a journey back in time amidst the ruins where pharaohs once dwelled, and the temples adorned with depictions of gods. She keenly observed the geographical features, the rich fauna and flora Egypt offered, and navigated a land where Arabic was the predominant language. In her poem "Welcome to Egypt," Blind captures a moment when an Arab warmly greets her with the words "Nehârak Saîd! Lo, this happy day" (Blind, 1895, p. 11, line 12). This line exemplifies her ability to showcase diversity in an appealing way. Considering her personal background and interests, it is evident that Blind could be described as a xenophile. Her profound curiosity for different cultures, extensive travels, and engagement with individuals from various backgrounds demonstrate her genuine appreciation for the unfamiliar and her openness to the diversity she found in other parts of the world.

In her Egyptianized poem, titled *The Desert*, Blind explores the Sahara Desert, which is an indispensable geographical component of Egypt, very distinct from Europe, along with the Nile River. In her writing, she initially adopts an aesthetic tone while depicting the natural beauty of the desert, which encompasses a limited range of elements due to its harsh nature, both animate and inanimate. Her primary observation highlights the desert's immensity, drawing a comparison to the boundless expanse of the sea, thus reminding us of Percy Bysshe Shelley's lines alluding to the desert in *Ozymandias*: "Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away" (Shelley, 1904, p. 356). The only difference is Blind's reference to "stability:" "UNCIRCUMSCRIBED, unmeasured, vast, / Eternal as the Sea; / What lacks the tidal sea thou hast— / Profound stability" (Blind, 1895, p. 61, lines 1–4). Thus, the desert is stable, naturally lacking motion, as Blind speaks to it, "Calm as the Sphinx upon thy sands / Thou art—nay, calm as death" (lines 7–8). In the lines, Blind's identification of the desert extends to a comparison with "death," as if it is a form of art. Even the fauna she describes appears to be not only limited in number but also stationary, as she realizes:

> The desert foxes hide in holes,
> The jackal seeks his lair;
> ...
> Only some vulture far away,
> ...
> Flaps down on lazy wing to prey
> On what has lately died.
> No palm tree lifts a lonely shade,
> No dove is on the wing. (Blind, 1895, pp. 61–62, lines 9–10, 13, 15–18)

And Blind draws her conclusion about the desert: "It seems a land which Nature made / Without a living thing" (Blind, 1895, p. 62, lines 19–20). It is not surprising that the desert seems lifeless for Blind. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she was accustomed to visiting places around Europe, where lush vegetation, along with grasslands, forests, and wetlands prevail. Hence, on the one hand, her poem could be credited for her engaged pursuit of the foreign and unusual. On the other hand, it clearly alludes to the concept of death, both in relation to the barrenness of a landscape, and the ephemerality of human life, as in *Ozymandias*.

As Blind continues her poem, she neither finds humans nor any traces of human presence in the first place: "No trace of footsteps to be seen, / No tent, no smoking roof" (Blind, 1895, p. 63, lines 29–30). She, then, encounters a humanlike statue in the middle of the desert, reminiscent of Shelley's traveler, once again, thus, of *Ozymandias*: "But yon, mid tumbled hillocks prone, / Some human form I scan— / A human form, indeed, but stone: / A cold, colossal Man!" (lines 33–36). Considering her fandom for Shelley, which shaped her life in many ways, in her lines, Blind was perhaps emulating Shelley's traveler, while wandering around the boundless desert. The lines of the poem regarding the statue: "Ages ago have dropped to rest, / And left him passive, prone. / Forgotten on earth's barren breast, / Half statue and half stone" (p. 64, lines 45–48) are in accordance with Shelley's lines about the concept of ephemerality: "Nothing beside remains. Round the decay" (Shelley, 1904, p. 356).

Transcending the concept of the ephemerality of humans, Blind alludes in the following lines to the oblivion of the greatest empires. She very likely refers to the demise of the Library of Alexandria, which remains a controversial topic, especially regarding the exact role of the Roman Empire. She writes, "And Rome, the Mistress of the World, / Amid her diadem / Of Eastern Empires set impearled / The Scarab's mystic gem" (Blind, 1895, p. 64, lines 53–56). Blind, however, presents the conflict metaphorically, stating that the Roman Empire "set impearled the Scarab's mystic gem"—ancient Egypt—by destroying one of antiquity's most significant repositories of knowledge, the Library of Alexandria. As a consequence, our understanding of this ancient civilization has been profoundly constrained, and this

limitation endures to the present day. This could certainly be read as her personal critique of global imperialism.

To conclude her poem, employing repetition, Blind writes about the desert once again touching on its immense size, “Uncircumscribed, unmeasured, vast, / Eternal as the Sea” (Blind, 1895, p. 65, lines 69–70). However, she now realizes that the desert served as a means of time travel. The “Colossus” she encountered while wandering was not just a relic of the past; it acted as a portal, transporting her back in time and imparting valuable lessons for the future: “The present here becomes the past, / For all futurity” (lines 71–72). In this way, the desert bridged the past, the present, and the future, and eventually, it was not as “stable” as she initially considered it to be in the very first stanza.

During her three-month sojourn in Egypt, Mathilde Blind, on the one hand, immersed herself in a land adorned with ancient Egyptian ruins, thus with the motifs from the ancient Egyptian religion. On the other hand, it is crucial to note that Egypt has had a major Muslim community, and her sojourn obviously coincided with the month of Ramadan in Egypt, which is considered holy in the Islamic tradition. This month is especially associated with spiritual reflection, devotion, and fasting, as well as communal worship for Muslims. In this culturally “exotic” environment, Blind must have witnessed the practices of the local population firsthand. An example of such practices, the act of fasting during Ramadan, which extends from sunrise to sunset, would have been particularly visible in the daily life of the Muslims in Egypt. The call to prayer echoing around would have signaled the breaking of the fast at sunset, a moment also known as *iftar*, one of the most remarkable features of Ramadan.

In the midst of such a cultural ambiance, it would have been difficult for one to escape thinking about religion. Thus, Blind, with her complex blend of antitheistic thoughts, cultural interests, and decadent aesthetics, may have found herself contemplating the meaning of religion. Hence, it is very likely that her experiences and observations during Ramadan in Egypt contributed to the creation of her poem *The Moon Of Ramadân*, which serves as a unique blend of these diverse influences. This poetic concoction, inspired by the intersection of Blind’s spirituality, and her decadent leaning aesthetics, appears to be a product of the time she spent in this vibrant, and spiritually charged ambiance.

Furthermore, considering the prominent role of the Sun in the Islamic tradition, where its position in the sky determines the timing of religious practices such as prayers and fasting, it would not be a surprise to mention that the Moon is another celestial body holding significant importance in Islam. As an example, Muhammad splits the Moon in two, to defy the law of nature as a miracle, serving as evidence to prove his prophethood. Additionally, some scholarly debates even extend to Allah being a pagan lunar deity in origin. In relation to these, Blind’s Egyptianized poem *The Moon Of Ramadân*, with

its repeated refrain “The Moon of Ramadân,” may be alluding to Allah through the symbolism of the Moon, referring to the god who has the “all-seeing-eye.” The refrain appears at the end of every stanza and follows the reader through the poem.

Blind opens her poem *The Moon Of Ramadân* on a boat, with the lines “The sunset melts upon the Nile, The stony desert glows” (Blind, 1895, p. 34, lines 1–2), offering abundant imagery in relation to Egypt’s two prominent geographical components: the Nile and the desert. And she continues her depiction in a vivid manner, touching upon the calmness of the luminous scenery she has been enjoying, possibly during the iftar time: “Vistas of endless temples gleam / On either topaz shore; / And swimming over groves of Palm, / A crescent weak and wan, / There steals into the perfect calm” (pp. 34–35, lines 11–15). The calmness being enjoyed is not limited to Blind, though, Ramadan seems to be bringing peace to the animal realm as well, as Blind describes it employing rich imagery drawing from Egyptian fauna:

> All nature seems to bask in peace
> And hush her lowest sigh;
> Above the river's golden fleece
> The happy Halcyons fly.
> And lost in some old lotos dream,
> The pensive Pelican
> Sees mirrored in the mazy stream
> The Moon of Ramadân. (Blind, 1895, p. 35, lines 17–24)

As she continues appreciating the serenity in nature, she notices a vague figure: “Black outlined on the golden air, / A turbaned Silhouette” (Blind, 1895, p. 35, lines 25–26), which appears to be the mueddin reading the call to prayer: “The Mueddin invites to prayer / From many a Minaret. / Our dusky boatmen hear the call, / And prostrate, man on man, / They bow, adoring, one and all, / The Moon of Ramadân” (pp. 35–36, lines 27–32). All this imagery is evidence that Islam was commonly practiced in Egypt. Right at this point, Blind begins pondering, in regard to the ancient Egyptian religion, which she was certainly aware of. She draws a comparison concerning time and its fleeting nature, which caused an irreversible shift in terms of religious beliefs in Egypt. As a consequence; “the priests” in Luxor making sacrifices to gods, specifically “the highest god of Thebes” or the king of the gods: Amon in this case, morphed into “the Moslem” hailing Allah:

> Where Luxor's rose-flushed columns shine
> Above the river's brim,
> The priests with incense once, and wine,
> Made sacrifice to Him,
> The highest god of Thebes, and head
> Of all the heavenly clan;

> But now the Moslem hails instead
> The Moon of Ramadân. (Blind, 1895, p. 36, lines 33–40)

As Blind continues reminiscing, she remembers the ancient Egyptian ruins she visited, which served as temples dedicated to various gods back in time: "The gods have come, the gods have gone" (Blind, 1895, p. 36, line 41). She implies that the religious change was drastic, in the lines hinting at the oblivion of the ancient religion, mentioning "Amon's Sun," perhaps alluding to Amon-Ra, as the fusion of two ancient deities Amon and Ra, or the "sun god," as opposed to the "moon god," Allah: "Though Amon's Sun has waned before / The Moon of Ramadân" (lines 47–48).

Blind, then alludes to an ancient Egyptian deity, the goddess-queen Isis, who, according to the myth, resurrected King Osiris. Isis could be regarded as the embodiment of the throne, and her name possibly meant "seat," or "throne," which was written with a sign parallel to the cow's horns and sun-disc she is depicted with (Lurker, 1982). In line with this information, Blind depicts Isis' royal quality, with the sacred disk she wears on her head beautifully: "And Isis, Queen, whose sacred disk's / Horned splendour crowned her brow" (Blind, 1895, p. 37, lines 57–58). Yet, the goddess's influence has diminished, as Blind follows the fate of Isis in the next lines: "And white-robed priests who served her shrine / Have turned Mahommedan, / And worship Him who wears for sign / The Moon of Ramadân" (lines 61–64). Blind once again touches upon the transient nature of time here, and the drastic, settled shift in religion. This time, the "white-robed priests" serving the cult of Isis morph into "Mahommedan"—Muslims, worshiping Allah.

Blind does not forget to pay a tribute to James Thomson either, whose *A Voice From The Nile* she was reading during her sojourn in Egypt. Her lines "The gods may come, the gods may go. / And royal realms change hands; / But the most ancient Nile will flow" (Blind, 1895, p. 38, lines 73–75) are parallel to Thomson's poem impersonating the Nile, which was mentioned in Chapter 2 earlier, in the sense that both poems explore the religious shift in Egypt; and while humans through time switch religions, what remains unchanged or unchangeable in the end, and is thus "immortal," is the Nile. This type of conclusion from both writers is not a coincidence though, considering their shared interest in Percy Bysshe Shelley and his ideas beyond his aesthetics must have influenced Blind and Thomson in many ways while constructing their identity as freethinkers, as well as in the construction of their poems.

The ancient Egyptians held primary beliefs regarding the afterlife, evident in "mummification," the artificial preservation of the deceased body, and the concept of an ethereal place for the deceased known as "the underworld" or "the Duat." In line with this information, ancient Egyptians could be considered as being obsessed with death. Even Herodotus expressed his astonishment regarding their

unusual funerary practices, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 1. Egypt is abundant in royal tombs, and in these tombs, the pharaohs were laid with their earthly belongings beside them. Moreover, ancient Egyptians are known to have mummified not only humans but also various animals and preserved the organs of the deceased in canopic jars. The Pyramids, built to endure time, served as burial sites for pharaohs, and the Great Pyramid of Giza stands today as the only World Wonder of the Ancient World that has survived. The Book of the Dead is another example of the ancient Egyptian obsession with death, an ancient guide composed of a collection of magical spells to help the deceased navigate the afterlife among the manifold challenges they would face in the Duat.

As Masarwah (2015) notes, myth is a useful device for poets to express themselves and write about their experiences. In this context, much like the ancient Egyptians, Blind was deeply intrigued by the concept of death as discussed earlier in this chapter. The theme of death is a part of her decadent aesthetics. Accordingly, the Egyptianized poem *The Tombs of the Kings*, which Blind wrote as part of her collection revolves around the interplay between the theme of death and, considering her radical identity, Blind's critique of power structures using the pharaohs, whose tombs she visited in Egypt. Drawing inspiration from Egyptian mythology, a subject of her preexisting interest, Blind skillfully evokes the concept of "death" for the pharaohs by incorporating motifs from the very religion they believed in. Her extensive poem, written in heroic couplets, can be likened to a form of satire.

Blind was aware of the concept of mummification. In the first lines of the poem, to refer to this practice, including the earthly, ephemeral luxury the pharaohs possessed, Blind uses related imagery. She depicts the kings as "wrapped in linen fold on fold," alluding to their mummies and having "crowns of dusky gold" in their coffins, where they had been lying for centuries. In line 5, she extends the concept of luxury to their coffins, which are described as "gilded," alluding to gold:

> Where the mummied Kings of Egypt, wrapped in linen fold on fold,
> Couched for ages in their coffins, crowned with crowns of dusky gold,
> ...
> Grisly in their gilded coffins, mocking masks of skin and bone,
> Yet remain in change unchanging, balking Nature of her own. (Blind, 1895, p. 14, lines 1–2, 5–6)

However, the kings are insistent on resisting death in their tombs, as they are "balking Nature," which is obviously against human nature. In her poem, Blind gives voice to the kings, speaking from their mouths. She mentions that they reject death through mummification, in the sense that their deceased bodies endure time:

> "No! Death shall not dare come near us, nor Corruption shall not lay
> Hands upon our sacred bodies, incorruptible as day.

> Let us put a bit and bridle, and rein in Time's headlong course;
> Let us ride him through the ages as a master rides his horse.
> On the changing earth unchanging let us bide till Time shall end,
> Till, reborn in blest Osiris, mortal with Immortal blend." (Blind, 1895, pp. 16–17, lines 19–24)

In the last line, Blind refers to the ancient Egyptian belief, that the deceased kings are believed to be "reborn in Osiris," who symbolizes the embodiment of resurrection as a king in the netherworld (Lurker, 1982). Blind implies that when their time is over in the world of the living, the kings will be embalmed and remain unchanged, for which they have been biding. Next, their mortal souls will be blended with immortality and blessed with being part of Osiris, through which they will be able to keep reigning in the underworld, yet as being "dead" in the world of the living.

As Blind continues the lines of her poem, she alludes to a voyage, which is destined for kings, from death until the netherworld:

> And Fate left the haughty rulers to work out their monstrous doom;
> And, embalmed with myrrh and ointments, they were carried to the tomb;
> ...
> Through the Vale of Desolation, where no beast or bird draws breath,
> To the Coffin-Hills of Tuat—the Metropolis of Death. (Blind, 1895, pp. 17–18, lines 27–28, 33–34)

In a tone mocking the kings, referring to them as "haughty rulers" who have to "work out their monstrous doom"—death first; Blind touches upon mummification once again in line 28, where the body is "embalmed with myrrh and ointments," hinting at their insatiable desire of becoming immortal. In the following lines, she illustrates the netherworld, or Duat, which she calls "the Metropolis of Death." Her depiction of this place is putting it as a "vale," full of "desolation," perhaps referring to the possible state of mind in the world of the dead, where no creature can breathe and obviously, where there is no sign of life, or happiness, a place even a pharaoh would not wish to reign.

Although snakes were considered to be the symbols of renewal in the ancient Egyptian religion, with their ability to shed skin, in the case of the chaos serpent Apophis (Apep), it was the opposite. It is possible to see how this evil snake was perceived in the following Egyptian proverb: "One should welcome the uraeus[11] and spit on Apophis" (Pinch, 2002, p. 199). According to the ancient belief, as Pinch explains, the twelve gates of the underworld were each protected by a serpent guardian. And Blind, warning the kings of their painful immediate future after death, uses this mythical motif, referring to the netherworld, where the "dread fate" is awaiting, in the form of a snake: "Down—down—down into the

[11] "The uraeus was a symbol of kingship and was, therefore, worn by the royal gods Horus and Seth" (Lurker, 1982, p. 125).

darkness, where, on either hand, dread Fate, / In the semblance of a serpent, watches by the dolorous gate" (Blind, 1895, p. 18, lines 35–36).

As Blind continues her lines, she maintains her satirical tone, asking the pharaohs about the decline of once-great cities they built, which are not as glamorous anymore, decayed and could not withstand time, in comparison to their bodies that were mummified, which is reminiscent of decadence and ephemerality:

> Where is Memphis? Like a Mirage, melted into empty air:
> But these royal gems yet sparkle richly on their raven hair.
> Where is Thebes in all her glory, with her gates of beaten gold?
> Where Syenê, or that marvel, Heliopolis of old?
> Where is Edfu? Where Abydos? Where those pillared towns of yore
> Whose auroral temples glittered by the Nile's thickpeopled shore?
> Gone as evanescent cloudlands, Alplike in the afterglow;
> But these Kings hold fast their bodies of four thousand years ago. (Blind, 1895, p. 20, lines 47–54)

As evidenced so far, Blind's lines in the poem touch upon the netherworld often, drawing elements from this belief, and warning the pharaohs. As noted by Lurker (1982), the ibis-headed god Thoth is depicted as recording the verdict following the weighing of an individual's heart against the feather of Truth in the Hall of Judgment. This judgment determines whether one will experience the joys of the netherworld or face a painful end, including the heart being devoured by a demon: "While Thoth holds the trembling balance, weighs the heart and seals its fate" (Blind, 1895, p. 21, line 58). Considering her line, Blind is hinting that the pharaohs may not have the easiest time while trying to reach immortality in the netherworld, for which they bide. Obviously, it is a dure process involving challenges based on their beliefs.

In her conclusion, Blind reflects on the futility of her warnings, recognizing that the kings, despite the wealth and splendor they previously possessed, are now in a pitiful state of existence. She is aware that the once-mighty pharaohs faded into the shadows of history in their gilded coffins. As she puts it in lines 81 and 82, even a sliver of sunshine would be enough to crumble their decayed bodies, despite all their efforts to bide through time. And she asks in irony, "Have they conquered?"—become immortal? What happened is, in fact, the exact opposite, despite Blind's continuous efforts. They reigned their whole lives, built once-magnificent cities, but eventually faded into the shadows of history, locked in their fancy tombs now, sleeping into eternity, as all mortals do one day, an apt conclusion parallel to Shelley's and Lord Byron's works regarding kings, mentioned earlier in Chapter 2:

> Still these mummied Kings of Egypt, wrapped in linen, fold on fold,
> Bide through ages in their coffins, crowned with crowns of dusky gold.

Had the sun once brushed them lightly, or a breath of air, they must
Instantaneously have crumbled into evanescent dust.
...
Have they conquered? Oh the pity of those Kings within their tombs.
Locked in stony isolation in those petrifying glooms! (Blind, 1895, p. 24, lines 79–82, 85–86)

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we were able to see that Egyptomania is a phenomenon deeply rooted in history, permeating various fields from architecture to literature, transcending physical boundaries, and enduring in many cultures as a living phenomenon. In this exploration, literature emerges as a particularly illuminating lens through which we can better comprehend Egyptomania. The ubiquity and various manifestations of Egyptomania provide an abundance of evidence, as is to be seen in this dissertation, especially thanks to Mathilde Blind's sophisticated work.

Notably, it is crucial to acknowledge that Blind's work would not have been at all possible without the emergence of the Egyptomania phenomenon. The ticket Blind purchased for Thomas Cook's steamers, a central element of nineteenth-century tourism sparked by Egyptomania, underscores the huge cultural influence of this phenomenon. Essentially, Blind was able to create her artistic work by drawing inspiration from the places she visited, the books she read along the way, and her experiences and reflections during her sojourn.

Flying away from the material world, yet leaving a mark there with her works available for reading, Mathilde Blind, with her final collection, her "mature" work, *Birds of Passage*, becomes immortal in the human memory. Thus, her comment about the painter Holman Hunt "enriching the art-treasures" with the "fresh work of his genius" (Blind, 1881b, para. 17) holds true to her own legacy as a cosmopolitan artist.

Mathilde Blind's poetry showcases her versatility in exploring a myriad of themes within the context of Egyptian aesthetics, creating a unique amalgam of images and symbols, an aesthetics that bridges Egypt to Britain through the philosophical lens of Decadence. But she also combines this artistic skill with a subtle critical view of her own time, one of growing mass tourism and consumption, where the Eastern Other is exploited within the imperial and colonial contexts.

Admittedly, this study focused on just a single poet and on specific poems, thus limiting the scope within the broader canvas of Egyptomania. I am therefore aware that there remains ample room for future research as to Egypt's enduring place in our collective memory and its influence on literature. This is because Egyptomania has become deeply embedded in Western culture, shaping our perceptions, art, and even daily life. From literature to music, from dance to iconic brands, the echoes of Egyptomania continue to resonate.

Therefore, should you find yourself vibing to "Walk Like an Egyptian" for an 80s party or deciding to buy a Camel brand cigarette thinking its package looks exotic, it is worth recognizing that Egyptomania

remains a vibrant and enduring testament to the timeless allure of ancient Egypt within our contemporary world. You, too, are interacting with this cultural phenomenon, as Mathilde Blind did.

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Appendix

Figure 1

The Obelisk of Theodosius, Istanbul

From Hieroglyphs on the Obelisk of Theodosius [Photograph], by Serhat Engül, 2021, Istanbul Clues (https://istanbulclues.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Obelisk-Of-Theodosios-In-Hippodrome-Of-Istanbul.jpg).

Figure 2

The Luxor, with its Pyramid, Sphinx, and Obelisk, Las Vegas

From ON-STRIP Luxor Hotel and Casino [Photograph], Las Vegas (https://www.visitlasvegas.com/listing/luxor-hotel-and-casino/34557/).

Figure 3

Brendan Fraser, in front of the hieroglyphic carvings in "The Mummy"

From Brendan Fraser in *The Mummy* (1999) [Screenshot], by Universal Studios, 1999, IMDb (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120616/mediaviewer/rm2497756672?ref_=ext_shr_lnk).

Figure 4

Steven Brand and Dwayne Johnson in "The Scorpion King"

Note. The columns are reminiscent of ancient Egyptian architecture. From Steven Brand and Dwayne Johnson in *The Scorpion King* (2002) [Screenshot], by Universal Studios, IMDb (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0277296/mediaviewer/rm1550683136?ref_=ext_shr_lnk).

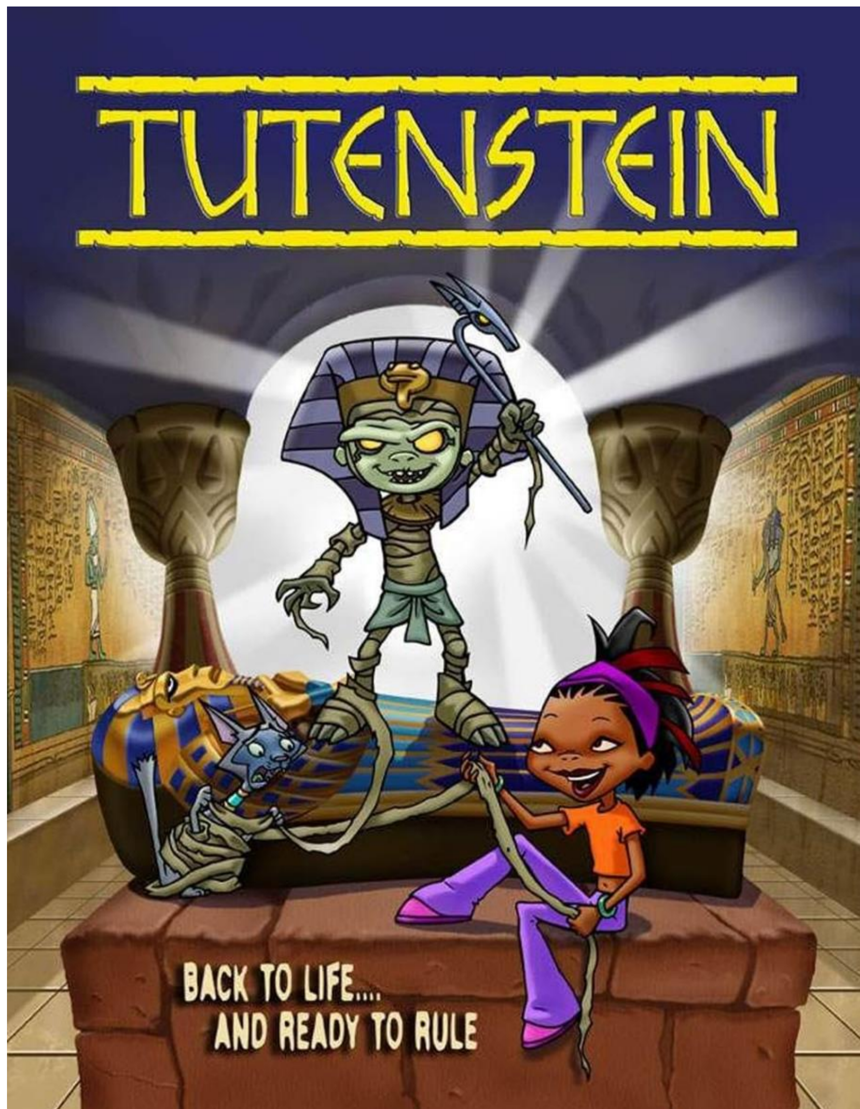
Figure 5

One of the monsters, "Exodia" in Yu-Gi-Oh!

Note. Exodia is illustrated with Osirian facial features, as well as the *ankh* on its chest. From *Yu-Gi-Oh!* (2000) [Screenshot], IMDb (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0249327/mediaviewer/rm480495360?ref_=ext_shr_lnk).

Figure 6

"Tutenstein" series poster



Note. Tutenstein is a portmanteau of “Tutankhamun” and “Frankenstein,” telling the story of an ambulatory mummy. From *Tutenstein* (2003) [Screenshot], IMDb (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0386986/mediaviewer/rm871687424/?ref_=ext_shr_lnk).

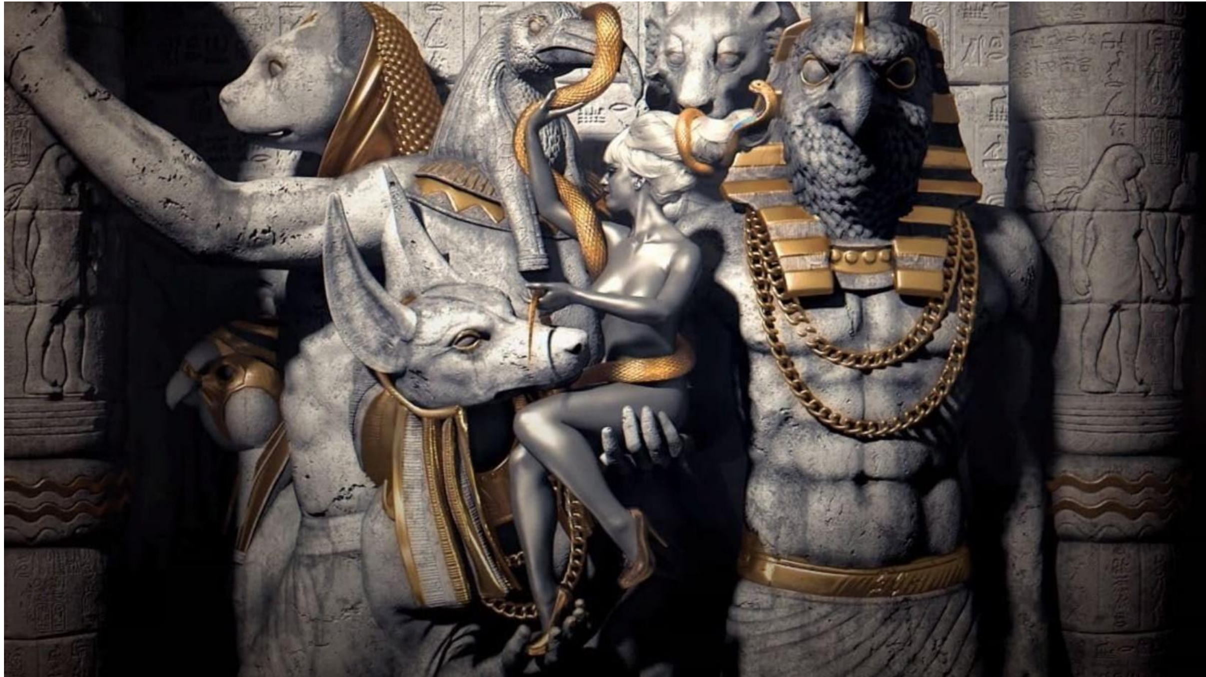
Figure 7

Michael Jackson (on the right), in front of the ancient Egyptian king and queen

From Eddie Murphy, Michael Jackson, and Iman in Michael Jackson: *Remember the Time* (1992), [Screenshot], IMDb (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3329648/mediaviewer/rm3952384769?ref_=ext_shr_lnk).

Figure 8

Katy Perry, blending in with the ancient Egyptian deities



From Katy Perry Feat. Juicy J: *Dark Horse* (2014), [Screenshot], IMDb (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3998324/mediaviewer/rm992436736/).

Figure 9

Splash art for Azir, depicted in "Shurima"

Note. Shurima, in its design and culture, draws inspiration from ancient Egypt, and Azir, as a character, is reminiscent of the Sun God Ra. From Azir Original Skin [Screenshot], League of Legends Wiki, Riot Games Inc. (https://leagueoflegends.fandom.com/wiki/Azir/LoL?file=Azir_OriginalSkin.jpg).

Figure 10

The Rosetta Stone, along with a recreated representation of its original appearance

From The Rosetta Stone and a reconstruction of how it would have originally looked [Illustration], by Claire Thorne, The British Museum
(https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/everything-you-ever-wanted-know-about-rosetta-stone).

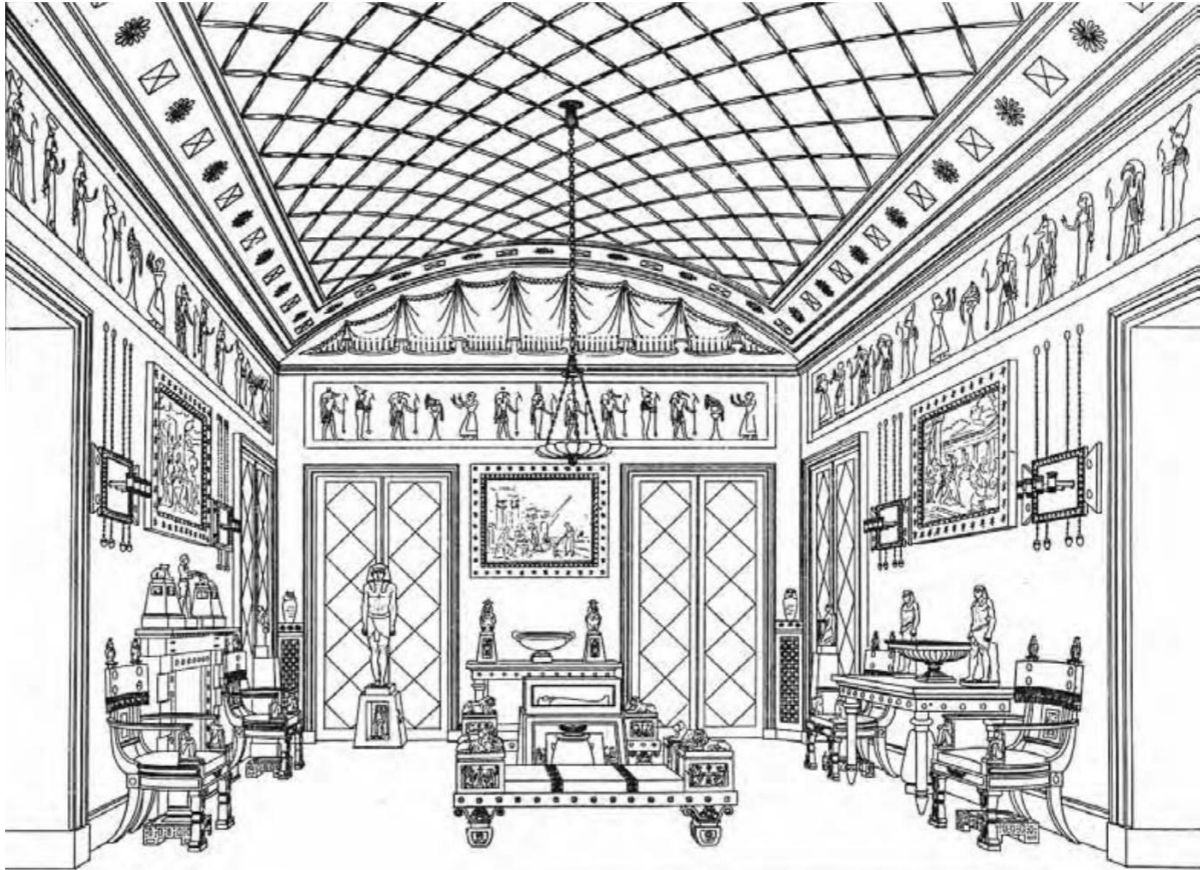
Figure 11

An illustration of the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London

Note. “The Egyptian Hall at 170–173 Piccadilly, London, built to designs of Peter Robinson in 1811–12 for William Bullock. From a print by Ackermann of 1815 (GLCL).” (Curl, 2005, p. 261).

Figure 12

An illustration of the Egyptian Room at Duchess Street, London



Note. “Thomas Hope’s ‘Egyptian Room’, or ‘Little Canopus’, of 1799–1804, in his house in Duchess Street, London. From HOPE (1807), plate VIII.” (Curl, 2005, p. 209).

Figure 13

Egyptian Revival Mausoleum of the Grandison family in Glasgow's Necropolis

From Necropolis in Glasgow, Scotland, Egyptian Revival Mausoleum [Photograph], 2019, Teaching with Themes (https://i0.wp.com/teachingwiththemes.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/glasgow.jpg?ssl=1).

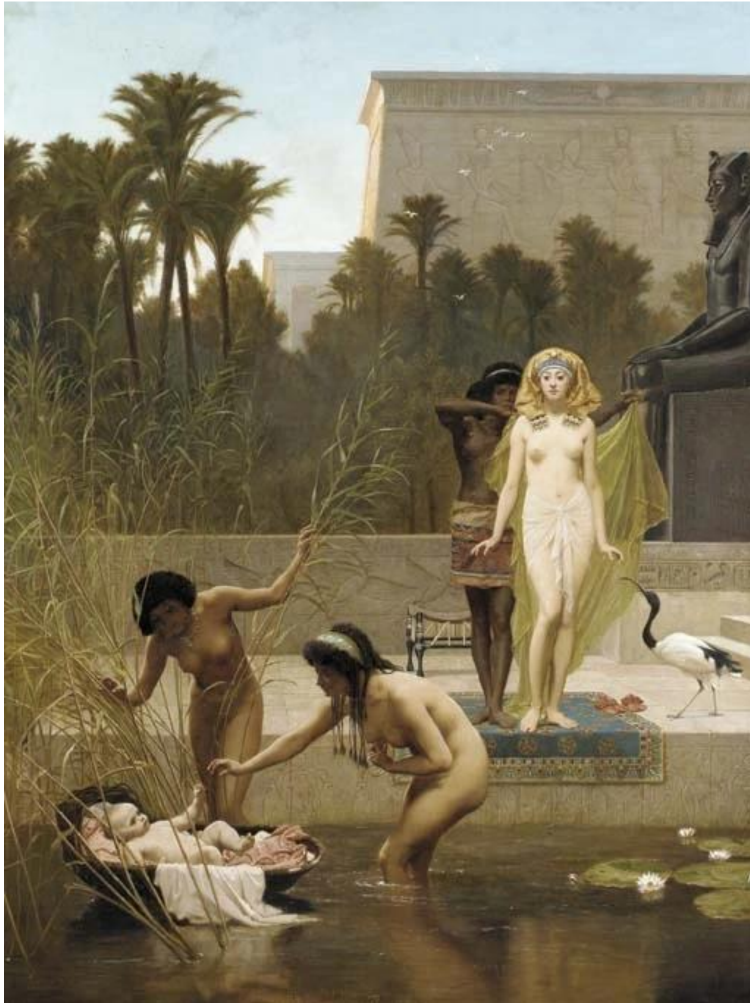
Figure 14

"Seventh Plague of Egypt" (1823)

Note. "In the Bible, Moses calls down ten plagues before the pharaoh is persuaded to free the enslaved Israelites. This work, one of Martin's grandest paintings, depicts the seventh: 'And Moses stretched forward his rod toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire rained down onto the earth.'" From Seventh Plague of Egypt [Oil on canvas], by John Martin, 1823, MFA Boston (https://collections.mfa.org/objects/33665/seventh-plague-of-egypt).

Figure 15

"The Finding of Moses" (1885)



Note. This work depicts the finding of Moses by the Pharaoh's daughter and her handmaidens. From The Finding of Moses [Oil on canvas], by Frederick Goodall, 1885, Auckland Art Gallery via MutualArt (https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/The-Finding-of-Moses/8BEBEC1AFD775831).

Figure 16

"The Finding of Moses" (1904)

Note. This work depicts the Pharaoh's daughter, carried by the servants, along with Moses. From The Finding of Moses [Oil on canvas], by Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1904, Belvedere Museum via Artsy (https://www.artsy.net/artwork/lawrence-alma-tadema-the-finding-of-moses).

Figure 17

"Pharaoh's Daughter" (1886)

Note. This work depicts the Pharaoh's daughter, with her servants and Moses. From Pharaoh's Daughter [Oil on canvas], by Edwin Long, 1886, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery via Art UK (https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/pharaohs-daughter-188751).

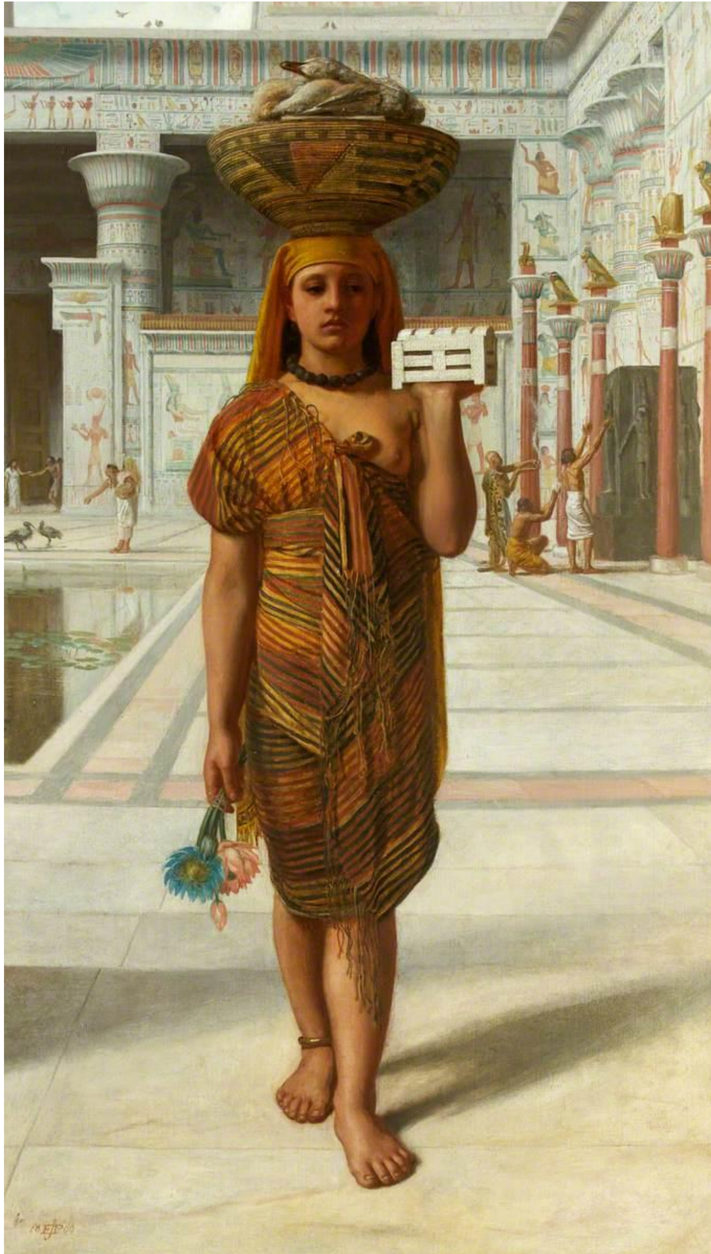
Figure 18

"An Egyptian Feast" (1877)

Note. This work depicts an Egyptian feast where the duality of life and death is represented. The Egyptians are shown enjoying the feast around the room, while on the right, the servants are seen dragging a corpse. From An Egyptian Feast [Oil on canvas], by Edwin Long, 1877, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery via Art UK
(https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/an-egyptian-feast-23353).

Figure 19

"Offerings to Isis" (1866)



Note. This work depicts an Egyptian woman who is prepared to make offerings to the goddess Isis. From Offerings to Isis [Oil on canvas], by Edward John Poynter, 1866, Newport Museum and Art Gallery via Art UK
(https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/offerings-to-isis-155967).

Figure 20

"Israel in Egypt" (1867)

Note. This work depicts the Israelite slaves carrying the Egyptian artifacts while being lashed with a whip. From Israel in Egypt [Oil on canvas], by Edward John Poynter, 1867, Guildhall Art Gallery via Art UK (https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/israel-in-egypt-51225).

Figure 21

Egyptian Cigarettes Mignon

From Cigarette Box, "Egyptian Cigarettes Mignon" [Photograph], by Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn Museum (https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/164779).

Figure 22

The Freemasons' Hall in Boston, Lincolnshire, the UK

Note. This building was inspired by the Temple of Dendur. From Masonic Lodge [Photograph], by Richard Croft, 2006, Geograph Britain and Ireland (https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/136737).

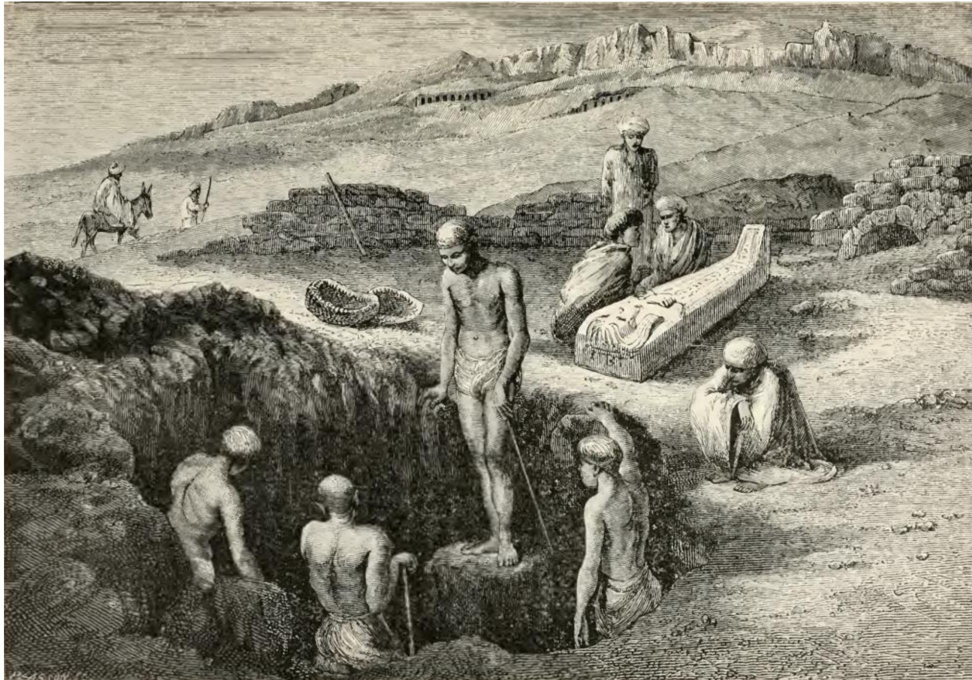
Figure 23

The South American weevils and lotus figures adorning the parure

From British Museum Collection [Photograph of parure created by Phillips Brothers], 1884–1885, The British Museum
(https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1613331822).

Figure 24

An illustration of "mummy pits"



From "DIGGING FOR MUMMIES." (Edwards, 1891, p. 413).

Figure 25

The Obelisk of Luxor at the Place de la Concorde, Paris

From Paris: Luxor Obelisk [Photograph], Encyclopædia Britannica (https://www.britannica.com/place/Place-de-la-Concorde#/media/1/131252/200507).

Figure 26

"The Triumph of the Innocents" (The Flight into Egypt) (1883–4)

Note. This work illustrates the flight of Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus to Egypt, escaping from King Herod's order to kill all the firstborn boys, known as the "innocents," in Bethlehem. The Holy Family is encircled by the spirits of the children who were slain by Herod. From The Triumph of the Innocents [Oil on canvas], by William Holman Hunt, 1883–4, Tate (https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hunt-the-triumph-of-the-innocents-n03334).

Figure 27

Cleopatra's Needle, London

From Cleopatra's Needle: London's Fascinating 3500-Year-Old Structure [Photograph], The Bumper Crew
(https://www.thebumpercrew.com/cleopatras-needle-london/).

Figure 28

The cover of "Birds of Passage: Songs of the Orient and Occident" (1895)

From *Birds of passage: songs of the orient and occident* (1895) [Screenshot], Internet Archive (https://archive.org/details/birdsofpassageso00blinrich/mode/2up).