

PHARAONIC OCCULTISM: THE RELATIONSHIP OF ESOTERICISM AND
EGYPTOLOGY, 1875-1930

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this work is to explore the interactions between occultism and scholarly Egyptology from 1875 to 1930. Within this timeframe, numerous esoteric groups formed that centered their ideologies on conceptions of ancient Egyptian knowledge. In order to legitimize their belief systems based on ancient Egyptian wisdom, esotericists attempted to become authoritative figures on Egypt. This process heavily impacted Western intellectualism not only because occult conceptions of Egypt became increasingly popular, but also because esotericists intruded into academia or attempted to overshadow it. In turn, esotericists and Egyptologists both utilized the influx of new information from Egyptological studies to shape their identities, consolidate their ideologies, and maintain authority on the value of ancient Egyptian knowledge.

This thesis follows the Egypt-centered developments of the Freemasons, the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley's A.∴A.∴, the Theosophical Society, the Anthroposophical Society, and the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis to demonstrate that esotericism evolved simultaneously with academia as a body of knowledge. By examining these fraternal occult groups' interactions with Egyptology, it can be better understood how esotericism has affected Western intellectualism, how ideologies form in response to new information, and the effects of becoming an authority on bodies of knowledge (in particular Egyptological knowledge). In turn, embedded in this work is a challenge to those who have downplayed or overlooked the agency of esotericists in shaping the Western intellectual tradition and preserving the legacy of ancient Egypt.

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1
INTRODUCTION

A perplexing characteristic of intellectual tradition in the Western World is the role of occultism in shaping and responding to scholarly Egyptology. Since ancient times, Egypt has been a primary influence for Western conceptions of magic, mysteriousness, and occult wisdom. By the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, study of Egypt was developed into the scholarly field of Egyptology within the academy but simultaneously maintained its status as a dominant base for occultism. The legacy of ancient Egypt, in turn, became a subject which Western esotericists and scholars used to define their own identities and determine the value of ancient knowledge. From this process, esotericists and scholars developed dynamic and influential ideologies which traversed each other's boundaries and occultism and Egyptology endured a complex relationship.

The purpose of this work is to explore the connection of Western esotericism to Egyptology from roughly 1875 through 1930. Within this time span, esotericists formulated belief systems centered on ancient Egypt, and in order to do so, attempted to become authoritative figures on ancient Egyptian knowledge and wisdom. This process heavily impacted Western intellectualism, as Egypt-centered occultism not only became widespread but also drew from and intruded into academic Egyptology. Esoteric reliance on ancient Egypt and occult involvement with Egyptology are important aspects which should not be overlooked. By examining the interactions between occultism and Egyptology, one can better understand how esotericism has affected Western

intellectualism, how ideologies form in response to new influxes of information, and the effects of becoming an authority on bodies of knowledge.

The few Egyptological scholars who have acknowledged the correlation between occultism and Egyptology have typically overlooked the importance of occultism in shaping Egyptological studies and the value in understanding the relationship dynamics of Western fraternal occult organizations and academic Egyptology. In actuality, many scholars have not only overlooked this aspect, but have specifically argued that little to no correlation exists between esotericism and Egyptology at all. For example, Erik Hornung argues that a wedge exists between scholarly Egyptologists and esotericists, as they maintain skepticism of each other and purposely maintain a disassociated relationship.¹ In turn, to Hornung, esotericists' detachment from scholarly Egyptology has resulted in an "imaginary Egypt viewed as the profound source of esoteric lore," which for esotericists is allegedly steeped in fantastical constructs and a "timeless *idea* bearing only a loose relationship to the historical reality."² Though Hornung (an Egyptologist) is open-minded to mending differences with esotericists, Hornung's standpoint maintains that scholarly Egyptology is accurate and legitimate, whereas esotericism is outdated and rooted in fantasy.³ This theme appears throughout many scholarly Egyptological sources: Egyptologists A.A. Barb, Geraldine Pinch, and Charlotte Booth all maintain that esoteric knowledge of ancient Egypt is obsolete, rooted in poor scholarship, and perpetuates fantastical myths about ancient Egypt.⁴

1 Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 2-3.

2 Ibid., 3.

3 Ibid., 2-3.

4 A.A. Barb, "Mystery, Myth, and Magic," in *The Legacy of Egypt*, ed. J.R. Harris (1971; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 168; Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Austin,

Also overlooked by many scholars, the Egyptological distaste for esotericism reveals a broader trend regarding the reception of occultism in academia in general. As Wouter J. Hanegraaf points out, esotericism in academia is still treated as "the other," in which many scholars meet occultism with skepticism, distaste, or purposeful avoidance.⁵ In line with this reasoning, much of the existing Egyptological literature does draw a solid line between esotericism and academia. However, Hanegraaf argues that this process was deliberately initiated by scholars who, especially since the Enlightenment period, have singled out and exiled information from academia that does not fit within the spectrum of rational (scientific) thinking or monotheism, and have thus labeled this rejected information "esotericism."⁶ This standpoint, then, emphasizes that the separation of esotericism and academia is entirely because of the actions, motivations, and agency of scholars, and not esotericists.

The viewpoints of the above scholars reveal problems in the understudied realm of occult and academic relations. In the case of Hornung and the other Egyptologists, esotericists are understood to contribute little to Egyptology, are seen as incapable of doing sufficient research, and supposedly stand in opposition to the progressive science of Egyptology (esotericism is considered outdated and obscure). Hanegraaf, in turn, attributes this attitude to the purposeful expulsion of all esotericism from academia in order to define scholarship specifically as anti-esoteric.⁷ These conclusions by scholars bring forth numerous unaddressed problems. First, each of these authors (Hornung, Barb,

Texas: University of Texas Press, 2006), 175; Charlotte Booth, *The Myth of Ancient Egypt* (The Hill, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Amberley Publishing, 2013), 7.

5 Wouter J. Hanegraaf, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3.

6 Hanegraaf, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 221, 230, 252-254, 369.

7 *Ibid.*, 252-254.

Harris, Pinch, Booth, Hanegraaf) assume that esotericism, upon being rejected from the scholarly community, becomes stagnant, static, or idle. The rhetoric utilized among these authors conveys esotericism as dead-end information in the face of more prominent and organized scholarly circles. Second, the language and reasoning of these authors eliminates the agency of occultists themselves. This disregard for the motives of esotericists places the history of esotericism firmly in the hands of only academics, and not among esoteric groups. Third, none take into consideration how occult organizations have emulated scholarly modes of research and information dispersal in order to maintain direct competition with mainstream academia. Neglecting occult emulation of academic methods blurs whatever impact esoteric organizations may have had on Western intellectualism.

Thus, contrary to the ideas of other scholars, I argue throughout this work that esotericism evolved simultaneously with academia, which becomes most evident when looking at the competitive relationship between scholarly Egyptology and fraternal occult orders from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Contrary to the views of Egyptologists, fraternal occult organizations were not stagnant, and rather, developed alongside academia as an influential body of knowledge that had a large impact on Western intellectualism, in this case within the field of Egyptology. Whether or not the information from esoteric organizations was reliable, a steady flow of information to compete with Egyptological scholarship existed. Furthermore, contrary to Hanegraaf's standpoint, it should be pointed out that scholars were not the only party instrumental to the separation of esotericism and academia. Rather, by looking at occultists' willingness

to compete with Egyptological scholarship and by understanding their success in impacting Egyptology, it becomes clear that the formation of esotericism as a body of intellectual knowledge is in part the doing of esotericists themselves because of their desire to maintain informational authority to compete with academia.

In order to highlight these processes, this work traces numerous occult organizations' interactions with Egyptology and Egyptological knowledge. The first section concentrates on mid-to-late nineteenth century Egyptology and the attempts among Freemasons to confirm Masonic ideals through Egyptological interpretations. The second portion of this work is dedicated to investigating the correlation between the British boom of Egyptology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and how prominent occult organizations (the Golden Dawn and the A.∴A.∴) attempted to maintain an authoritative stance by upholding occult *practice* over scholarly *theory*. The following section looks at the evolution of Theosophy and Anthroposophy from the late nineteenth through the mid twentieth centuries and the attempts of H.P Blavatsky and Rudolf Steiner to compete with Egyptology by updating esotericism with notions of science and religion to appeal to contemporaries. The final section deals with the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis of California from the early to mid twentieth century and demonstrates how the AMORC attempted to fully merge scholarly Egyptology with esotericism and succeeded.

1.1 Contextualizing Esotericism, Egyptology, and Their Interactions

"Western esotericism" must be defined in order to understand its usage throughout

this work. First and foremost, it must be understood what specifically entails "Western" esotericism, as opposed to esotericism by itself. Kennet Granholm, a historian of religion, pinpoints the complex elements that comprise and complicate "the West" in Western esotericism. As Granholm explains, "A view of the West, as well as Europe must take into notion that it is in fact a conscious project, not an expression of 'natural identity or culture.'"⁸ In other words, what comprises the idea of "the West" is of deliberate design and/or self-identification, and really has little to do with incidental common culture or values. According to Granholm, then, Western esotericism entails self-identification among practitioners as Western in order to identify the exotic *otherness* and importance of *foreign* wisdom.⁹ Therefore, building from Granholm's notion of "Western" in "Western esotericism," throughout this work "Western" does not refer to European culture or diffusion of its developments and ideals, but rather, *self-identification* as Western in order to specifically identify foreign or ancient knowledge to revive for contemporaries. In sum, "Western esotericism" is only "Western" because it is identified by the esotericists themselves as a tradition which *becomes* "Western" and not "Eastern."

Antoine Faivre, a historian of religion and author of *Western Esotericism: A Concise History*, defines the term "esotericism" from a scholarly perspective, and thus provides a definition that renders esotericism comprehensible for scholars. According to Faivre, Western esotericism consists of four precise common denominators that contribute to its definition. First, "the idea of universal correspondences," in which all things (religious, spiritual, physical, philosophical, old or new bodies of knowledge) can

8 Kennet Granholm, "Locating the West: Problematizing the *Western* in Western Esotericism and Occultism," in *Occultism in a Global Perspective*, eds. Henrik Bogdan and Gordan Djurdjevic (New York: Routledge, 2014), 32.

9 *Ibid.*, 22-24.

be reconciled or understood as entirely interconnected.¹⁰ Throughout this work, the perpetuation of correspondences and interconnected principles is referred to as "syncretism." Second, Faivre identifies "the idea of living nature" as an essential element of Western esotericism, wherein humans believe nature a living entity which has a continuous history and acts as the intermediary between the physical and divine realm.¹¹ Third, Faivre's definition includes "the role of mediations and of the imagination," which are the tools (rituals, symbols, texts, divination techniques, etc.) utilized to magically access knowledge or different levels of reality.¹² Finally, Faivre argues that Western esotericism consists of "the experience of transmutation," in which the other elements are combined for the sake of experimentation and achieving noticeable results.¹³

To be concise and to sum up this complex definition of Western esotericism for the sake of this work, Western esotericism (mostly referred to as simply "esotericism" in this thesis) should be understood as the following: an idea that is "Western" via self-identification, a philosophical and magical tradition which is inherently syncretic, a current that maintains belief in interconnectivity between physical and divine realms, an ideological system which maintains belief that divine realms can be reached through practical gnosis, and a spiritual system which entails carrying out experimentation to achieve these goals or maintain these beliefs. In turn, the phrase "Western Esoteric Tradition" refers to the longtime established practice and construction of esotericism among self-perceived Westerners. These elements that comprise Western esotericism best

10 Antoine Faivre, *Western Esotericism: A Concise History*, trans. Christine Rhone (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), 12.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

unify the vast array of esotericists discussed throughout this work, and therefore these elements serve as the bases for defining Western esotericism.

For clarification, "occultism" should be also be defined, as "occultism" and "esotericism" are occasionally used interchangeably, though esotericism is in actuality a subset of occultism. In *Occultism in a Global Perspective*, Henrik Bogdan and Gordan Djurdjevic define occultism (which has its etymological roots in the Latin word for "hidden") as "a branch of human activity" that is "an orientation towards hidden aspects of reality, those that are held to be commonly inaccessible to ordinary senses," and do not particularly fit into the realm of religion or science, despite the commonalities it shares with them.¹⁴ In other words, occultism is the human desire to access hidden knowledge or principles, perhaps utilizing the methods of both religion and science in addition to approaches taboo to religion and science. To be succinct, "occultism" is a broader term in which "esotericism," and in particular, "Western esotericism" resides. Thus, occasionally throughout this work, the terms are used interchangeably, but with occultism as a broader and more open-ended term entailing the search for otherwise-hidden gnosis.

Also important is to distinctly define is the idea of "fraternal" occultism. In this case, I build from Faivre's definition of "esotericism" and Bogdan and Djurdjevic's definition of "occultism," but I maintain that "fraternal" occultism is a unique entity created as a result of unified interest in occultism and esotericism. Throughout this work, then, a "fraternal" occult society consists of a specific group of people with uniform interests, goals, principles, and doctrines to follow through esoteric or occult goals. In

¹⁴ Henrik Bogdan and Gordan Djurdjevic, eds., *Occultism in a Global Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1.

this case, each group differs regarding their goals and principles, though crossover regarding beliefs or interests may occur. In addition, a "fraternal" occult group or order typically operates with an element of exclusivity, in which members are uniquely unified by mere affiliation in a secretive and/or hierarchical grouping.

For our purposes, it is worth noting that many philosophical aspects compatible with Western esotericism come from ancient and medieval sources. As Faivre points out, however, *modern* Western esotericism began in Renaissance Europe with the revival of Hermetic studies (knowledge centered around the *Corpus Hermeticum*, an ancient philosophical Greco-Egyptian text allegedly dictated by the Egyptian Thoth or Greek Hermes), Jewish Kabbalah (a Jewish magical system which is intended to systematize and catalog all aspects of reality), and syncretism (correspondences between all of the re-emerging knowledge during the Renaissance).¹⁵ Consequently, the bases of modern Western esotericism which include a pagan source, a Jewish source, and ideas contradictory to much of mainstream religion in Christian-dominated Europe (due to their non-Christian background or preservation by non-Christians such as Muslims), lent to the pattern of secretive study to avoid negative predicaments, such as unwanted attention from authorities or a suspicious mainstream public. Thus, much of what has been included in esotericism has been studied in a secretive manner because of its difference with mainstream cultural ideologies. Though the history of esotericism is too large for the scope of this project and irrelevant to the argument at hand, it should be understood that Western esotericism became consolidated over time with the contributions of prominent esoteric currents such as Greek philosophy, alchemy (a prototypal field of chemistry

¹⁵ Faivre, 35-39.

which for esotericism was utilized to achieve spiritual enlightenment), the birth of initiative groups (exclusivist hierarchical fraternal groups dedicated to achieving some sort of spiritual illumination by progressing through grades), and eighteenth-century German romanticism.¹⁶

By the mid-nineteenth century, which is where the focus of this project begins, Western esotericism had endured many centuries of formation. However, I argue that the latter half of the nineteenth century revamped Western esotericism, as a massive influx of new currents of information were made available to Westerners due to European imperialism. For example, the British rule over India which formally began in 1858 (though informal rule began much earlier) allowed direct access to Indian (ancient or contemporary) spiritual, philosophical, and religious ideologies. In turn, as is the case with the Theosophical Society founded in 1875, Indian knowledge became a substantial part of Western esotericism. The rapid pace at which Europeans raced to interconnect all parts of the world sped up the rate at which new bodies of information could be added into Western esoteric syncretism.

It is here that we should shift our focus to another important aspect of this thesis that arose from European intrusion into other parts of the world: Egyptology. Throughout this thesis, "Egyptology" is defined by its most common definition: scholarly, scientific, and systematic studies of ancient Egypt that formed after Jean-François Champollion translated Egyptian hieroglyphics in 1822.¹⁷ This opportunity was opened to French scholars (such as Champollion) after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, and

¹⁶ Faivre, 25, 49-50, 60-61, 63-67, 69-72.

¹⁷ Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson, *The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (London: The British Museum Press, 1995), 90-91.

European travelers trickled into Egypt to study ancient Egypt thereafter.¹⁸ Egyptology became consolidated as a scientific and academic field of study by scholars throughout the nineteenth century, who dictated the definition of Egyptology in order to stand out from other European intruders (such as looters or freelance travelers).¹⁹ In the same vein as the argument mentioned above, it is imperative to realize that British imperial control of Egypt beginning in 1882 opened the doors for Europeans to access Egyptian knowledge, which in turn had heavy implications on European esotericism. As John David Wortham demonstrates in *The Genesis of British Egyptology, 1549-1906*, "Egyptomania" (mainstream and popular infatuation with Egypt) escalated throughout the nineteenth century, and by the time of the 1880s when Egypt was a British protectorate, the British had established complex Egyptological operations and exploration groups such as the Egypt Exploration Fund which engaged in archaeological endeavors.²⁰ Once again, it is essential for contextualization to note that Britain's imperial interests in Egypt heightened Egyptological knowledge, which in turn had huge effects on Western esotericism.

To clarify, Western esotericism was no stranger to Egyptian ideas prior to British imperialism, whether imagined or not. The period of the British protectorate in Egypt by no means initiated the relationship between Europe and Egypt. Rather, interactions between Europeans and Egyptians began in ancient times, and since ancient times, European mysticism has been fueled by ancient Egyptian ideas. The ancient Greeks

18 Shaw and Nicholson, 91.

19 Ibid.

20 John David Wortham, *The Genesis of British Egyptology, 1549-1906* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 92-93, 106-107.

regarded Egypt as a land of magic and mysticism.²¹ Upon Alexander the Great's seizing of Egypt in 332 BCE, a Greco-Egyptian religion and magical system was born that posited ancient Egyptian mythology and religion into Greek mythology and religion.²² By 30 BCE, the Egyptian relationship with Europe was maintained by the Roman Empire, which diffused ancient Egyptian spiritual elements such as worship of Isis into Europe.²³ This period from 332-30 BCE produced many of the aspects that would later become part of the Western esoteric tradition, such as religious syncretism (in this case the combination of Greek and Egyptian ideas), Hermetism (the *Corpus Hermeticum* dates from this period), and the concept of Egyptian mysteriousness (hidden powers unlocked through secretive Egyptian mysticism).²⁴ Ties to Europe were maintained even through Egypt's Coptic period (the period in which Egypt Christianized), Coptic magical systems diffused into Byzantium, and Coptic Christianity in Egypt reconciled to an extent with ancient Egyptian traditions.²⁵ Medieval distaste for everything pagan eliminated much European access to ancient Egyptian knowledge, but European interest in Egypt remained throughout Europe's medieval period due to Biblical studies and reconciliation of Hermetic ideals with Christianity.²⁶

By the time of the European Renaissance (which, as noted above, also marked the birth of modern Western esotericism), Europeans rediscovered Greek literature on Egypt and experienced a re-emergence of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which captivated European philosophers regarding ancient Egyptian magical knowledge. Therefore, conceptions of

21 Hornung, 19-25.

22 Pinch, 162.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., 162-169.

25 Ibid., 170-171.

26 Hornung, 73-82.

ancient Egypt existed within Western esotericism since the initial formation of *modern* Western esotericism. From the Renaissance on, elements of Egyptian magic and mysticism became primary aspects of the Western esoteric tradition, and included Hermetic magic, hieroglyphic magic, usage of Egyptian symbols, and heavy reconciliation with Christianity (many, such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, argued that Moses' wisdom must have come from the Egyptians, and Giordano Bruno argued that Christianity must have been derived from ancient Egyptian religion).²⁷ Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "Egypt retained its reputation as the source of magic and arcane wisdom," and esoteric groups such as the Rosicrucians and Freemasons adopted Egypt as the source of their esoteric knowledge.²⁸ By the nineteenth century, Egyptian magic, mythology, and history were staples among prominent occultists, as is evident in the influential works of Eliphas Lévi, wherein Lévi attributes all Western syncretic magic traditions to the ancient Egyptians.²⁹

Thus, Egypt has been heavily engrained in the Western Esoteric Tradition since the beginning of esoteric discourse in the European Renaissance, though Egypt had been established as a source of esoteric knowledge since long before the Renaissance. Similarly, European intrusion into Egypt in the later nineteenth century did not *introduce* Europeans to ideas of Egyptian magic and mysticism, but rather, European intrusion in Egypt provided new opportunities and information to build both esoteric and Egyptological bodies of knowledge. This work focuses on the period of history (roughly 1875-1930) in which fraternal Western esoteric groups and scholarly Egyptologists

27 Hornung, 83-91; Pinch, 173.

28 Pinch, 173.

29 Thomas A. Williams, *Eliphas Lévi: Master of Occultism* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1975), 45-46, 79.

consolidated their ideologies utilizing the same subject: ancient Egypt. It is during this time period that both esotericists and Egyptologists attempted to validate themselves and establish their authority on ancient Egyptian matters. Therefore, esotericists and Egyptologists endured complex interactions in which they built from or reacted to each other's ideas and attempts for Egyptological legitimacy to establish their own authority regarding ancient Egyptian knowledge.

FREEMASONRY AND EGYPTOLOGY

Freemasons have emphasized their ties to ancient Egypt since the late eighteenth century.³⁰ In particular, Egyptian Freemasonry was formulated by the controversial Count Cagliostro of Palermo, Italy, in the late eighteenth century, which initiated a trend of Freemason interest in ancient Egypt thereafter.³¹ In the late eighteenth century, as well as throughout the nineteenth century, ancient Egyptian influences appeared in Freemason rites, rituals, symbolism, architectural motifs, and origin stories. Importantly, as Hornung points out, the emphasis placed on ancient Egyptian origins of Freemasonry in the late eighteenth century came "at a time when the origins of all religions were often being sought in Egypt."³²

As historian David Gange explains, the late nineteenth century experienced a new wave of European, especially British, attempts to confirm religion through studies of Egypt, specifically "Old-Testament-based Christianity."³³ Furthermore, by the late nineteenth century, Egyptology was solidified as an academic field of study, which grounded these viewpoints in scholarship.³⁴ Gange argues that the British utilized the science of Egyptology in the late nineteenth century to validate Christian theology and biblical accounts in order to combat challenges to Christian legitimacy.³⁵ To art historian Christina Riggs, Egyptology as an instrument for validating Western identity extended

30 Hornung, 118.

31 Booth, 250-251.

32 Hornung, 118.

33 David Gange, "Religion and Science in Late Nineteenth-Century British Egyptology," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (December, 2006), 1083.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 1084, 1103.

well beyond Christianity, and Egyptology was also used by Westerners to seize Egyptian heritage and reconfigure it as inherently Western.³⁶ To Riggs, Egyptology and its results (especially in the Cairo Museum) firmly placed Egyptian history in the hands of Europeans, which linked ancient Egypt to European modernity in a manner that conveyed Europe's cultural origins as Egyptian.³⁷

I extend the viewpoints of Gange and Riggs to argue that Freemasons were instrumental in these processes of spiritual validation. Furthermore, Freemasons perpetuated a continuation of ancient Egyptian legacies in Europe and the United States as a means for identity formation. In particular, European and American Freemasons in the late nineteenth century sought to validate their spiritual belief system by using evidence from ancient Egypt and Freemasons utilized Egyptology to assert that Freemasonry had its origins there. In turn, Freemasonry was enabled to evolve and elaborate its own past by utilizing the academic field of Egyptology. At the same time, however, Freemasons attempted to maintain a competitive edge over academia by claiming to hold the answers to mysteries that remained unsolved by Egyptologists. This process had a profound impact on Western intellectualism and the field of Egyptology itself, as Masons decided the balance between what was to be made public for the sake of constructing and maintaining Egyptological authority, and what was to remain secretive Masonic knowledge. Whereas the Masonic claim to Egyptological authority was diffused into wider circles of the public via contributions to Egyptology, Masons sought to preserve the secrets of ancient Egyptian mysteries, symbols, and traditions only for

36 Christina Riggs, "Colonial Visions: Egyptian Antiquities and Contested Histories in the Cairo Museum," *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research* 1 (2013), 68.

37 *Ibid.*, 67-68.

Masons themselves. The Freemason engagement with Egyptology and Masonic conceptions of ancient Egypt set the precedent for future fraternal occult organizations such as the Golden Dawn, the A.∴A.∴, the Theosophical Society, the Anthroposophical Society, and the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis.

In numerous Freemason publications, Masonic practices are said to be direct continuations of ancient Egyptian traditions. A prominent example can be found in an 1884 edition of *Morals and Dogma* published in New York, which has served as the central publication for the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry since its original publication in 1871. In *Morals and Dogma*, Albert Pike includes much information on ancient Egyptian origins of Masonic ideals. Throughout the book, initiates of Freemasonry are taught that monotheist belief in "one God, Supreme and Unapproachable," originated in ancient Egypt, which is important as Freemasons adhere to only one creator god.³⁸ Pike explains that monotheistic adherence to a creator God was passed from the Egyptians to Hebrews, which eventually culminated into Greek philosophy and later Christianity.³⁹ Beyond this aspect, numerous other Freemason traditions are traced to ancient Egypt in *Morals and Dogma*: Freemason symbolism derived from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, the secretive initiation-based schooling of Masonry is based on the model of Egyptian priesthoods, and Masonic cosmology and astrology mirrors Egyptian mythology.⁴⁰

In an 1884 edition of Albert G. Mackey's *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*, another prominent Freemason publication originally published in

38 Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (New York: Masonic Publishing Company, 1874), 369-370.

39 Ibid., 375-380.

40 Ibid., 371-375.

1873 (in the U.S., but was widely republished internationally), Mackey also ties Freemasonry to ancient Egyptian history and tradition. Like Pike with *Morals and Dogma*, Mackey in his encyclopedia insists that Freemasonry mirrors ancient Egyptian "mysteries" and "ceremonies of initiation."⁴¹ In this work, Mackey explains that the various levels of initiation in Freemasonry are derived from the stages of birth, life, death, and regeneration that appear in the mythological accounts of ancient Egyptian gods.⁴² Like the standpoint provided in *Morals and Dogma*, Mackey explains that the ancient Egyptian "system of symbols was disseminated through Greece and Rome and other countries of Europe and Asia, giving origin, through many intermediate steps, to that mysterious association which is now represented by the Institution of Freemasonry."⁴³

Freemasons of the late nineteenth century utilized contemporary Egyptology in order to verify these alleged Masonic connections to ancient Egyptian traditions. To some Freemasons of the late nineteenth century, Egyptology contained the hard archaeological evidence necessary to prove that Freemasonry was a continuation of ancient Egyptian traditions. For example, in an 1887 issue of *The Freemason's Chronicle* (a Freemason news publication), orator Isaac Clements directly cites Egyptological developments to link Freemasonry to ancient Egypt. In particular, Clements refers to the research of distinguished Egyptologist Dr. Samuel Birch to explain the nature of ancient Egypt's hierarchical priesthood which served as the original Masonic order.⁴⁴ Clements highlights

41 Albert Mackey, *An Encyclopædia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, ed. Charles T. McClenachan (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), 242-243.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 242.

44 Isaac Clements, "Whence Masonry Came," *The Freemason's Chronicle: A Weekly Record of Masonic Intelligence*, January 1, 1887, 3.

Birch's Egyptological developments which "show that the priesthood was a powerful body, divided into grades or degrees, with its secret method of initiation, possessing the wisdom of the country and imparting it only to their initiates."⁴⁵ From this evidence, Clements concludes that "the Institution [Freemasonry] was cradled in the ancient Egyptian mysteries."⁴⁶ Additionally, Clements argues that Freemasons continue these traditions and he establishes this link between ancient Egypt and Freemasonry by using Egyptological/scholarly evidence.⁴⁷ In sum, Egyptology served as the tool for Clements to link Masonic tradition to ancient Egypt.

An 1890 issue of *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (a British Freemason journal) provides another substantial example; Freemason T. Hayter Lewis for an article entitled "Masonry and Masons' Marks" utilizes Egyptological studies to validate Masonic traditions. Lewis argues that an Egyptological discovery of Masonic symbols in the Great Pyramid at Giza proves connections with Freemasonry, as Masonic symbols closely resemble those found in the pyramid.⁴⁸ Importantly, in order to further prove that Masonic "marks" or symbols originated in ancient Egypt, Lewis consulted the prominent Egyptologist Flinders Petrie and made use of his Egyptological discoveries.⁴⁹ Using Petrie's discoveries, Lewis argues that prototypical Masonic symbols originated from ancient Egyptian masons (in the literal sense) and quarry masters.⁵⁰ Lewis concludes, "I think that we may assume, as certain as to the above, that most of the characteristic signs

45 Clements, 3.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 2-3.

48 T. Hayter Lewis, "Masonry and Masons' Marks," ed. G.W. Speth, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 3, no. 69 (1890), 69.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid, 69-70.

now called Masons' Marks were originally developed at a very early period in the East [including Egypt], and have been used as distinguishing signs of some kind through the middle ages in Persia, Syria, etc., and thence down to the present time." In a later edit, Lewis updates his theory based on new discoveries by Petrie in order to argue that he believes Masonic symbols to originate in prehistoric (as opposed to pharaonic) Egypt.⁵¹ Like Clements, Lewis looked to Egyptological study (such as the research of Petrie) to explain Masonic history and demonstrate that Masons continued ancient Egyptian traditions.

Here it should be pointed out that the Masonic attempt to validate Freemasonry by citing Egyptological research in the late nineteenth century reveals that Masonic knowledge was dynamic in the face of scholarly research. By backing up their claims with contemporary or cutting-edge Egyptological scholarship, Freemasons were fully able to adapt to the influx of new information. Thus, whether their claims were sound or not, the development of Masonic information was not stagnant and evolved alongside academia. This trend complicates the assumptions of some Egyptologists, such as A.A. Barb, who argues that Freemasons simply "paraded its pretended antiquity."⁵² By attacking only the validity of Masonic knowledge, Barb disregards the Masonic capability of knowledge diffusion and ignores the potential for Freemasonry's impact on Egyptological interpretation. The dynamic adaptability of Freemasonry to Egyptology demonstrates that esotericism can indeed evolve alongside or *because* of academic research.

51 T. Hayter Lewis, 189.

52 Barb, 146.

Despite the usage of Egyptology for finding and maintaining the history of Freemasonry, the rhetoric of Masonic sources depicts Freemasonry in a manner that maintains authority *over* Egyptologists. Within Freemason sources, it is typically understood that Freemasons know the secrets of Egyptian mysteries. In *An Encyclopedia of Masonry*, Mackey explains that Egypt is the "birthplace of the mysteries," and in ancient Egypt "truth was first veiled in allegory, and the dogmas of religion were first imparted under symbolic forms."⁵³ Mackey further claims that Freemasons have maintained the religious "system of symbols" of ancient Egypt and they know the "truth" behind the "mysterious association" of priests in ancient Egypt.⁵⁴ Thus, though Freemasons used Egyptology to prove their link to ancient Egypt, their alleged ancestral connection and continuance of ancient Egyptian tradition portrayed Freemasons as an authority superior to scholarly Egyptologists in ancient Egyptian symbolism and spirituality. In other words, by claiming to be a direct heir to Egyptian mystery traditions, Freemasons could remain competitive with scholars and portray themselves as rival experts in ancient Egyptian knowledge.

The Masonic attempt to stand out as authoritative proprietors of Egyptian knowledge brings forth an important aspect: Freemasons carved out a place in Egyptology that was separate from academia. Whereas scholars would debate about historical or archaeological significance regarding new Egyptian discoveries, Freemasons could maintain that they held the knowledge behind one significant and consistent truth. This gesture demonstrates the *willing* and *purposeful* intent to remain *separate* from

53 Mackey, 242.

54 Ibid.

Egyptologists, though utilizing academic Egyptology to uphold Masonic beliefs was entirely acceptable. This process demonstrates how esotericism was formed in opposition to scholarship in a manner that places agency in the hands of esotericists themselves and not just scholars attempting to exile rejected information. In this case, self-proclaimed Masonic exceptionalism in the realm of Egyptian knowledge and the desire to monopolize that knowledge as a secret reveals the process in which an exclusive esoteric circle was maintained in opposition to academic Egyptological scholarship.

Freemasons made their own contributions to Egyptology and interpretations of archaeological discoveries, which left an impact on the field as a whole. To the Freemasons, scholarly Egyptology was not sufficient when taking into account Masonic knowledge. The saga of Henry H. Gorringer and his acquisition of an ancient Egyptian obelisk for the Freemasons in the United States provides an example of Masonic contributions to Egyptology and competition in the Egyptological field. Gorringer was an American Freemason who volunteered in 1879 to bring an obelisk to the United States (specifically New York City) in order to display a genuine ancient Egyptian obelisk like European countries (Britain, France, Italy) had done.⁵⁵ When Gorringer and his team removed the obelisk from Egypt, Gorringer discovered what he (and others, including a Masonic grand master of an Egyptian Masonic lodge, S.A. Zola) thought to be Masonic symbols and direct evidence for ancient Egyptian Freemasons.⁵⁶

Gorringer compiled the information from his endeavor into a book entitled *Egyptian Obelisks*, which serves as an example of a Masonic contribution to Egyptology.

⁵⁵ Bob Brier, *Egyptomania: Our Three-Thousand Year Obsession with the Land of the Pharaohs* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 112-116.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 124-125.

Importantly, in the book, Gorringer straightforwardly expresses his discord with scholarly Egyptologists.⁵⁷ Specifically, he makes the point that Egyptologists cannot and do not understand hieroglyphic symbolism, despite their insistence that they do.⁵⁸ As explained in *Egyptian Obelisks*, without better understanding of deeper hieroglyphic symbolism (presumably understood by Freemasons), Egyptologists misjudge and misunderstand the more complex meanings embedded within the symbols.⁵⁹ In turn, Gorringer utilizes his archaeological evidence as proof of ancient Freemasonry and Masonic symbolism by comparing ancient Egyptian symbols with contemporary Freemason ones and finding consistencies in the inscriptions with Masonic mythology/principles.⁶⁰ Gorringer, with *Egyptian Obelisks*, accomplishes a number of notable goals: he establishes Masonic authority over academic Egyptologists, makes an original contribution to Egyptology for both Freemasons and a general audience, and emulates the scholarly method of informational publication to elevate Masonic knowledge (without actually revealing Masonic secrets).

Importantly, it becomes clear by looking at Gorringer's *Egyptian Obelisks* that Freemasons impacted the popular perception of Egyptology and Egyptian knowledge. Upon erecting the obelisk in 1880, New York Freemasons banded together in order to carry out a ceremony in celebration of the obelisk's arrival.⁶¹ According to Gorringer, "the number of Freemasons that paraded for the ceremony was nearly nine thousand," and the turnout among the public was "not less than thirty thousand people."⁶² *A New York Times*

⁵⁷ Henry H. Gorringer, *Egyptian Obelisks* (New York: published by the author, 1882), 62.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 18-20,

⁶¹ Ibid., 34.

⁶² Ibid.

article published just after the event in 1880 provides a vastly different estimate that "several thousand members of the order" (Masons) did indeed attend the event, in addition to other spectators who were intermingled with "the 5,000 or 6,000 persons within sight of the foundation" ceremony.⁶³ Perhaps Gorringe's inflation of the numbers was to portray the Freemasons as more influential, but regardless of the discrepancy, it is clear that Gorringe wholly supported Masonic outreach to thousands of people.

During the celebration, C.H. Hall, a Grand Chaplain Freemason, made an address regarding the obelisk which was popularly called "Cleopatra's Needle."⁶⁴ Importantly, Hall acknowledged the vast amount of public interest in the event in which Freemasonry was "so prominently brought before the public in connection with [the] obelisk."⁶⁵ Hall advised caution in tying together ancient Egyptian history with Masonic history, even though he argued that "there can be no question but that in the secret societies of Egypt are to be found some elements now embraced in the principles or symbolism of Masonry in the present."⁶⁶ Regarding the Masonic-Egyptian link, Hall announced, "I am not prepared to state that we should consider that Freemasonry existed in those days."⁶⁷

Hall's reservations compared to Gorringe's insistence reveals a number of important aspects regarding the alleged Egyptian-Masonic connection. First, Gorringe's *Egyptian Obelisks* was published in 1882 whereas Hall's speech was in 1880, and despite this time gap, Gorringe maintains (along with a Freemason

63 "Laying the Corner-Stone: Masons Preparing the Obelisk's Foundation," *New York Times*, October 10, 1880.

64 Gorringe, 34-35.

65 *Ibid.*, 37.

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*

committee) that the symbols on the obelisk are indeed Masonic.⁶⁸ This exposes a tension among Freemasons themselves whether Masons should embrace the increasingly exposed and popular Masonic-Egyptian link, or whether a more reserved caution should be exercised in part to prevent widespread sensationalism. With this in mind, it is clear that Gorringe sought Egyptological authority, and therefore moved forward with publishing the book and the results of Masonic interpretations.

Second, by hosting a massive public spectacle or publishing Masonic Egyptological interpretations, some Freemasons (like Gorringe) were *actively* reaching out to the public to expose their connection to ancient Egypt and render their authority as an Egyptological entity well-known. By fixing the relation between Freemasonry and ancient Egypt in the minds of thousands of spectators or potential readers, some Freemasons asserted their connection to ancient Egyptian knowledge and offered their interpretation of archaeological Egyptology with the obelisk itself as the prime artifact/relic for evidence. With *Egyptian Obelisks* and this massive New York celebration, some Freemasons assumed the role of experts by providing the public with Egyptological exhibition. Thus, some Freemasons by reaching out to the public sacrificed preservation of secretive knowledge for the sake of maintaining Egyptological authority, even though some, like Hall, were more reserved and cautious to intermingle with the public.

Freemasons also set a precedent for later fraternal occult organizations. Other organizations emulated the masonic model of secretiveness, initiation, fraternal brotherhood, and occult rites, thus becoming "paramasonic" or "initatic"

⁶⁸ Gorringe, 19.

societies/organizations.⁶⁹ Most importantly to the subject at hand, many of these paramasonic organizations mimicked Freemasonry in their approach to Egyptian history, knowledge, and Egyptology. Some organizations, such as the Antiquus Mysticus Ordo Rosae Crucis, considered themselves connected to the ancient Egyptian mystery schools, just like the Freemasons.⁷⁰ These organizations will be covered in later chapters. Imperatively, the Masonic interaction with Egyptology and Egyptological knowledge set the precedent for how later organizations would include conceptions of ancient Egypt in their order.

The late nineteenth century was a pivotal moment in which Freemasons tapped into the field of Egyptology to validate their past, their ideals, and their origins. The efforts on behalf of Freemasons to assert dominance in the Egyptological field demonstrates that their esoteric body of knowledge was dynamic, adaptable, and competitive with the academic Egyptologists. By merging together Egyptological development with Masonic tradition, Freemasons exercised their authority in the field of Egyptology but had to maintain a balance between public disclosure and an esoteric/secretive identity. This agenda carried out by Freemasons was not without effect, as it left an impact on Egyptology, the public understanding of esotericism and ancient Egypt, and other occult organizations that carried out similar agendas. Nineteenth-century Masonic Egyptology set into motion a trend of Egyptian esotericism that would become a prominent feature of many other occult groups founded at the end of the nineteenth century, such as the Golden Dawn.

⁶⁹ Faivre, 84-86, 100-102.

⁷⁰ Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers: With Complete History of the Rosicrucian Order*, 2nd ed. (San José, California: Rosicrucian Press, 1932), 19-21.

To some contemporary Egyptologists, the very end of the nineteenth century marked a time in which Egyptology became a truly "professional" academic field, worthy of "respectability" for its entry into a golden age of contributions to academia that extended into the twentieth century.⁷¹ At the same time, occultism in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century experienced consolidation, refinement, growth, and increased popularity.⁷² The reality that Egyptology and occultism both experienced a boom in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in Britain, is no coincidence. Enabled by British colonial political/economic interests in Egypt, access to ancient Egyptian knowledge was imperative to the preservation of both Egyptology as a field and esotericism, as esoteric groups "were strongly influenced by Egyptology."⁷³ With Britain at the forefront of Egyptology and esoteric movements, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exemplify a moment in which both saw much consolidation and identity refinement. This process saw crossover between esotericists and academics, as occultists included more Egyptological knowledge in their agendas, and Egyptologists had to react to occultism.

Christopher I. Lehrich in *The Occult Mind: Magic in Theory and Practice* attributes this Western esoteric attraction to Egypt to "nostalgic visions" of ancient Egypt that were easily reconcilable with other aspects of Western esotericism popular during the

71 Shaw and Nicholson, 91.

72 Bogdan and Djurdjevic, 3-5.

73 Ibid., 4.

nineteenth century (ancient Judaism, Tarot, lost continents, ancient secrets).⁷⁴ This esoteric outlook that could quickly contribute to syncretic occult systems resulted in "magical nostalgias" or conceptions of "utopian pasts" that rendered ancient Egypt "alien."⁷⁵ To Lehigh, the role of the Western Egyptologists/archaeologists differs from occultists because Egyptologists/archaeologists contextualize ancient Egypt and connect it to the rest of the human experience, whereas occultists preserve Egypt as an alien and magical "land of wonders."⁷⁶ This distinction between Egyptologists and occultists maintains that the two were indeed very separate, with no acknowledgement of one another and a disconnected world-view. From this stance, Egyptologists are realists, whereas occultists are wistful syncretists.

Though Gordan Djurdjevic's focus is on Indian spirituality in Western esotericism, Djurdjevic believes fantasized syncretism to be the basis of the entirety of Western esotericism. In *India and the Occult: The Influence of South Asian Spirituality on Modern Western Occultism*, Djurdjevic argues that "analogical or correlative thinking" forms the foundation of Western occultism, in an "attempt to organize the comprehension of reality on the basis of perceived similarity or correspondence between what ordinarily appears as an unrelated plurality of phenomena."⁷⁷ In other words, Western occultism revolves around a process of syncretism in which the end result of an esoteric agenda consists of multiple spiritual systems in agreement. To Djurdjevic, this open-minded understanding of the world is what allowed Western occultists to easily integrate Indian

74 Christopher I. Lehigh, *The Occult Mind: Magic in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), 3.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., 3-4.

77 Gordan Djurdjevic, *India and the Occult: The Influence of South Asian Spirituality on Modern Western Occultism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 8.

spiritual systems into the Western Esoteric Tradition, but not without the result of transforming Indian spirituality to adapt to Western culture via "imaginary" values (fantasized, romantic, or incorrect conceptions) or Western cultural limitations.⁷⁸

Djurdjevic's viewpoint lines up with that of Leirich; Western esotericism is built on syncretic formulas that become steeped in imaginary and nostalgic fantasy.

Though Western esotericism is no doubt inherently syncretic as Leirich and Djurdjevic point out, the two authors overlook a major aspect that should not be ignored: the sources where esotericists receive their information so as to integrate ideas into occult ideologies and contribute to syncretic bodies of knowledge. The scenarios that Leirich and Djurdjevic present make it seem as if esotericism is built from isolated daydreaming and fantasy reconciled with preconceived Western cultural values/motifs. Both Leirich and Djurdjevic neglect the channels from which esotericists receive knowledge. Furthermore, the methods that are utilized by esotericists to process information to integrate into syncretic belief systems are obscured by overlooking this element.

Throughout this chapter, I argue in contrast to Leirich that late nineteenth and early twentieth-century British esoteric groups (in particular the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the A.·.A.·.) and Egyptologists were not separate entities that were isolated from one another. Rather, Egyptologists were the *sources* of knowledge that were utilized by esotericists in order to build esoteric and syncretic belief systems. This process meant that esotericists became actively involved *with* or *in* Egyptology in order to find the information necessary to construct esoteric doctrines. By utilizing a combination of Egyptological information and a philosophy of ancient Egyptian

⁷⁸ Djurdjevic, *India and the Occult*, 9-10.

revivalism, esotericists attempted to claim ultimate authority over ancient Egyptian religion and magic. With esoteric involvement in Egyptology, scholarly Egyptologists had to respond to esotericism, typically adversely, which in turn led to refinement of academic Egyptology as a whole in order to consolidate authority on behalf of Egyptologists. As esotericism evolved simultaneously with Egyptology, divisive lines became more consolidated as members within both camps attempted to assert their authority on ancient Egyptian knowledge, while at the same time reacting to one another to do so.

The race for authority among fraternal esoteric orders and academic Egyptologists reveal a number of important patterns. First, esoteric groups did not adhere to dormant or stagnant bodies of information because it is evident that they were willing to tap into or build upon contemporary Egyptology in order to mature or expand syncretic ideologies. Second, British occult organizations flourished at the same time as Egyptology, but in a time when both were competing to determine the practicality and usefulness of Egyptological information. Third, the gesture of reaching out for sources of information in order to refine esoteric currents demonstrates that esotericists were *actively* defining *themselves*, and thus had utmost agency in the formation and characterization of esotericism itself. Finally, this process shows that Egyptologists sought to differentiate themselves from esotericists to assert their own authority.

3.1 The Golden Dawn and Egyptology

Of particular interest in this chapter is the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a

fraternal occult organization founded in 1887 by Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, William Wynn Westcott, and William Robert Woodman, in London. As Bogdan and Djurdjevic identify, the Golden Dawn was greatly influenced by ancient Egypt.⁷⁹ The Golden Dawn emphasized rites, rituals, prayers, and beliefs that were all steered by their understanding of ancient Egyptian knowledge, history, and mythology. In *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, Henrik Bogdan explains that Mathers shrouded the Golden Dawn's ritual system in Egyptian symbolism, which was "very much in vogue during the last decades of the nineteenth century," and was triggered because he was "a great admirer of Egyptology."⁸⁰ In actuality, being an "admirer" of Egyptology is an understatement, because rather, Egyptology was a solid basis for the Golden Dawn's esoteric doctrine.

Arthur Edward Waite, a member of the Golden Dawn until internal troubles drove him out around 1900, revealed a number of Golden Dawn secrets in *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross* (originally published 1924). In his book, Waite explains that the ideological basis for the Golden Dawn centered around some manuscripts (referred to as "ciphers") that were allegedly discovered and deciphered anonymously by a Golden Dawn leader around the time of the Golden Dawn's creation.⁸¹ According to Waite, the Golden Dawn maintained that the ciphers "bore the water-mark of 1809," but as Waite confesses, must have been from around 1888 because they included language, theories,

79 Bogdan and Djurdjevic, 4.

80 Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 139.

81 Arthur Edward Waite, *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross: Being Records of the House of the Holy Spirit in Its Inward and Outward History* (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, Inc., 1961), 582-583.

and ideas only devised in the late nineteenth century.⁸² Most important to the subject at hand, the ciphers allegedly contained ancient Egyptian knowledge that served as the basis for the Golden Dawn's Egyptian rituals. Waite explains that the ciphers "refer to the Egyptian Ritual of the Dead," and make reference to an "Egyptian Funerary Ritual," which reveal that the ciphers must have been post-1809, as Egyptological material on these subjects and translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics did not exist as of 1809.⁸³ Waite then concludes that "the ciphers are *post* 1880."⁸⁴

By looking at Golden Dawn teachings and rites as revealed by ex-Golden Dawn member Israel Regardie, it seems evident that Waite's assertions hold ground. Regardie, too, explains that the Golden Dawn was founded around a number of important manuscripts (only in this case, Regardie thinks the manuscripts of Masonic origin and attributes the discovery to Robert Wentworth Little and the decipherment to MacGregor Mathers).⁸⁵ In the ceremonies and rituals of the Golden Dawn that Regardie reveals, the "Egyptian Ritual of the Dead" within the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* is referred to on numerous occasions as the basis for some Golden Dawn ritual ceremonies. For example, in one "neophyte ceremony" performed by the Golden Dawn, initiates were to perform a ritual based on the 125th chapter of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, which emulated the "weighing of the Soul" ceremony in the "Hall of Maat," just as the ancient Egyptian plates describe.⁸⁶

The idea of an "Egyptian book of the dead" is entirely an Egyptological construct.

82 Waite, 583-584.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., 584.

85 Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*, eds. Carl Llewellyn Weschcke and Cris Monnastre, 6th ed. (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1989), 17.

86 Ibid., 114-115.

In actuality, the concept of an Egyptian "book of the dead" (German *Todtenbuch*) was first implemented by nineteenth-century German Egyptologist, Karl Lepsius in *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter*, published in 1842.⁸⁷ According to Lepsius, the texts in *The Book of the Dead* were originally touched upon by Jean François Champollion in his book *Rituel Funéraire*, which established the idea of ancient Egyptian "death cults" (*Todtenkultus*) using a "ritual book," (*Ritualbuch*) thus resulting in a ritual of the dead. Lepsius argued that a *rituel funéraire* (funerary ritual) did not quite encapsulate the true essence of the texts because Egyptians thought the funerary ritual only the beginning of a long process in which the dead would journey through the afterlife and interact with the Egyptian gods.⁸⁸ Lepsius therefore renamed Champollion's collection of manuscripts *The Book of the Dead* (or *Todtenbuch*) because the texts went far beyond funerary rites.⁸⁹ Thus, with Lepsius, the idea of a "book of the dead" was born in 1842, or at the earliest 1822 with Champollion's translations, which favors Waite's skepticism of the ciphers being from 1809.

Furthermore, E.A. Wallis Budge points out an aspect behind the concept of an "Egyptian book of the dead" in his English translations of various papyri which he culminated under the title *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* (1895):

"the title of *The Book of the Dead* has been usually given by Egyptologists to the Theban and Saïte Recensions [two particular sets of ancient Egyptian papyri], but in this Introduction the term is intended to include the general body of religious texts which deal with the welfare of the dead and their new life in the world beyond the grave, and which are known to have existed and to have been in use among the

87 Karl Richard Lepsius, *Das Todtenbuch der Ägypter nach dem Hieroglyphischen Papyrus in Turin* (Leipzig: Bei Georg Wigand, 1842), 3-4.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

Egyptians from about 4000 B.C. to the early centuries of the Christian era."⁹⁰

As Budge explains, there was never a centralized ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. Rather, the title is merely an Egyptological construct to designate any and all texts that pertain to the ancient Egyptian understanding of death. Prior to Budge's contributions in the 1890s, two papyri recensions were generally bundled together under the title *The Book of the Dead*, but Budge's mission was to include new texts. Importantly, the new text that Budge sought to include within the generalized *Book of the Dead* was *The Papyrus of Ani*, a series of Papyri which were discovered by British Egyptologists in a tomb in Thebes and then brought to the British Museum in London in 1888.⁹¹

All of these Egyptological processes reveal a number of elements to consider regarding the Golden Dawn's ancient Egyptian-influenced principles. First, the Golden Dawn's emphasis placed on rituals from *The Book of the Dead* can only have originated from Egyptological sources, as the concept of *The Book of the Dead* was entirely organized and invented by Egyptologists. Second, the *Papyrus of Ani* arrived in the British museum in 1888 just when the Golden Dawn had been officially founded. This aspect renders Waite's assertion that the ciphers are post-1880 entirely believable, as the *Papyrus of Ani* was most likely a major source of inspiration for the order's concept of *The Book of the Dead*.

As a *New York Times* article from 1888 reveals, the *Papyrus of Ani* became popularly referred to as *The Book of the Dead*.⁹² As is the case in this article, many

90 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead* (1895; repr., New York: Gramercy Books, 1999), 3.

91 *Ibid.*, 217.

92 "The Book of the Dead," *New York Times*, June 17, 1888.

people, including the Golden Dawn themselves, thought the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* a central ancient Egyptian text about the dead, or as an ancient Egyptian holy book, equivalent to an ancient Egyptian Holy Bible. This is evident in the esoteric group's usage of *The Papyrus of Ani*, which is simply referred to as *The Book of the Dead*. Specifically, the Golden Dawn repeatedly referred to "chapter 125" of *The Book of the Dead* as a basis for ritual, when in actuality, "chapter 125" was an organizational designation set by Egyptologists in order to properly catalog that particular section of *The Papyrus of Ani*. Thus, by looking at the Golden Dawn's usage of a concept of *The Book of the Dead*, it becomes clear that the fraternal group constructed esoterica entirely from Egyptological interpretations, translations, and designations of ancient Egyptian material.

Though it is evident that the Golden Dawn utilized Egyptological sources to formulate their esoteric doctrines, one particular action on behalf of the Golden Dawn stands out that should be interpreted: the desire of the Golden Dawn to attribute their central manuscript, or the "Cipher Manuscript," to 1809 or earlier. As Alex Owen demonstrates in *The Place of Enchantment*, the Golden Dawn claimed that the material of their "Cipher Manuscript" revealed Masonic, Rosicrucian, and most importantly, ancient Egyptian secrets.⁹³ In turn, the Golden Dawn's formation around a manuscript that supposedly contained ancient Egyptian information *prior* to the formation of Egyptology (1822 with Champollion's translation of hieroglyphics) was a strategy to maintain authority *over* Egyptologists. Whereas Egyptologists were making new developments, the insistence and proof (the manuscript itself) that the Golden Dawn had access to

⁹³ Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 68, 75.

ancient Egyptian knowledge all along could maintain legitimacy if challenges arose.

Another strategy on behalf of those in the Golden Dawn to maintain legitimacy regarding their ancient Egyptian knowledge was to accept Egyptologists into their ranks. According to the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* edited by Wouter J Hanegraaf, the Golden Dawn maintained functionality because of the "professional class" and "literary and artistic *avant garde* of the 1890s" who contributed to the popularity and capabilities of the order.⁹⁴ With this in mind, the Golden Dawn accepted prestigious people that had experience with Egyptology or alleged ancient Egyptian knowledge whose works and/or efforts could maximize the Golden Dawn's legitimacy.

One example is Marcus Worsley Blackden, who was an initiate of the Golden Dawn in the late 1890s and was a professional Egyptologist.⁹⁵ Blackden would have been a distinguished addition to the ranks of the Golden Dawn, as he had Egyptological experience working with the Egypt Exploration Fund (a prestigious archaeological and exploration group) and major Egyptologists such as Flinders Petrie (and the later-famous Howard Carter, though neither were particularly impressed by Blackden's behavior).⁹⁶ By having an official Egyptologist as part of the order, the Golden Dawn symbolically confirmed their legitimacy. As with Blackden, the inclusion and high-ranking status of a genuine and professional Egyptologist without skepticism of Golden Dawn traditions projected a message to others that the Egyptian knowledge of the order was confirmed, logical, and authentic.

94 Wouter J. Hanegraaf, Antoine Faivre, Roelf van den Broek, Jean-Pierre Brach, eds., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2006), 548.

95 Ibid., 548.

96 T.G.H. James, *Howard Carter: The Path to Tutankhamun* (1992; repr., New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2006), 33-39.

As mentioned previously, Leirich and Djurdjevic both place a heavy emphasis on the syncretic tendencies of occult systems in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain. I argue that syncretism within the occult doctrine of the Golden Dawn provided more than just convenience and easy reconciliation of ideas. Rather, syncretism was yet another strategy in which the Golden Dawn could assert authority. If ancient Egyptian ideas could be extracted from Egyptological sources and correspond with other integrated esoteric currents (Kabbalah, the Tarot, Rosicrucianism, esoteric Christianity), the Golden Dawn could assert that it held the key to a universal truth behind esoteric currents. By highlighting alleged correspondences in seemingly-disconnected ideals, the Golden Dawn could amalgamate ideas and offer a new, centralized esoteric reality with an aura of validity and expertise. Though it appears time and again throughout Golden Dawn symbolism and ritual, some examples include "The Bornless Ritual for the Invocation of Higher Genius," or the Golden Dawn's reformed Enochian Magic system (a magic system originally formulated by John Dee in the sixteenth century). Specifically, these instructions for magic or ritual combine ancient Egyptian magic (divination of gods, pyramid magic, sphinx magic) with Judaic magical systems (Kabbalah), Greek philosophy (elemental magic and mythology), Christianity (angelic divination, also devised by John Dee), and nature worship.⁹⁷ Syncretism was thus not simply a convenient world-view, but rather, adapted ideas to the British mindset and cultural values, which would render the Golden Dawn more credible in the eyes of other contemporaries.

The Golden Dawn also set a precedent for other Egypt-oriented orders to follow regarding the maintenance of legitimacy: upholding the importance of

⁹⁷ Regardie, 442-446, 659-668.

practice/practicality (the purpose of the magician) *over* mere theory (the purpose of an academic). In other words, the Golden Dawn insisted that its ancient Egyptian magical techniques were indeed usable and functional, which would make the Golden Dawn an authority on the subject, as they allegedly had the knowledge to effectively perform ancient Egyptian magic. The Golden Dawn thought their experimentations with Egyptian magic of the "Occult Sciences," which could yield measurable results.⁹⁸ In turn, by claiming characteristics of expertise, practical usage, and measurable esoteric science, the Golden Dawn could one-up scholars who only could theorize or speculate on ancient Egyptian magic. As with the example of *The Book of the Dead*, the Golden Dawn believed itself to know the true nature of the ritual's divine principles, as did the ancient Egyptian priests before them.⁹⁹ Egyptologists, on the other hand, without having actually *practiced* Egyptian magic, were limited only to speculative interpretation, and thus unable to achieve knowledgeability about ancient Egyptian divine magic. This aspect, for some, could render the Golden Dawn an authority of Egyptian magic over Egyptologists.

These measures taken by the Golden Dawn to assert authoritative expertise with ancient Egyptian knowledge demonstrate an active effort to define their own identity as esotericists. Though the Golden Dawn utilized Egyptological concepts such as the designated material for an "Egyptian book of the dead," the fraternal group steered Egyptological information in other intellectual trajectories, perhaps different from the purposes intended by academic Egyptologists. In other words, despite using Egyptology as a means to define themselves, the Golden Dawn's interpretations of what Egyptology

98 Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, 140-141.

99 R.G. Torrens, *The Inner Teachings of the Golden Dawn* (London: Neville Spearman, 1969), 52-54.

meant and/or entailed could differ vastly from Egyptologists and bolster their own self-defined principles or beliefs. The effort to assert authority over Egyptologists required unique identity-building that differentiated the Golden Dawn's initiates from typical Egyptologists. At the same time, this position could become more secure with the inclusion of Egyptologists and expansion of Egyptological information to fit the Golden Dawn's needs. By using Egyptology combined with esoteric syncretism and defined occult science, the Golden Dawn could carve out its own identity, and contribute to what actively defines occultism or esotericism. Thus, despite crossover and increased interactions between the Golden Dawn and Egyptological sources, the fraternal order still contributed to the definition of esotericism and the occult.

3.2 Crowley, Thelema, the A.∴A.∴, and Their Egyptological Implications

Around the turn of the century, the Golden Dawn suffered internal leadership problems, became a fractured movement, and triggered the creation of off-shoot British esoteric orders.¹⁰⁰ Though numerous orders formed as splinters of the Golden Dawn, most important to this work are the actions and achievements of the famous occultist Aleister Crowley and the formation of his occult order in 1909, the A.∴A.∴ (the order's official name, the meaning of the acronym is still disputed and some potential possibilities include "Astrum Argentinum" or "Argenteum Astrum," which means "Silver Star"¹⁰¹). By looking at Aleister Crowley, the formation of his religion (Thelema), and the A.∴A.∴, it becomes clear that Crowley and the A.∴A.∴ followed the same path as the Golden Dawn

¹⁰⁰Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 548-550.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 282.

regarding Egyptology and esoteric ancient Egyptian knowledge, however, Crowley amplified and intensified these trends.

Crowley was initiated as a member of the Golden Dawn in 1898, rose fast in its ranks, and by 1900, was at the forefront of the internal struggles for leadership within the Golden Dawn.¹⁰² Crowley left the Golden Dawn (unwillingly) in 1900, and as Caroline Tully notes in "Walk Like an Egyptian: Egypt as Authority in Aleister Crowley's Reception of *The Book of the Law*," Crowley immediately began forming his own ideological systems based on Egypt in order to "bypass" the "authority" of other Golden Dawn occultists such as MacGregor Mathers or Florence Farr (a Golden Dawn initiate who wrote many works on ancient Egyptian magic).¹⁰³ Tully also argues that "Along with the Egyptian aspects of the Golden Dawn rituals, Crowley must have also been aware of the performative uses made of Egyptian antiquities within museums by both Mathers and Farr to enhance their spiritual status. He would have understood that Egypt was both a source and a sanctioning authority of magical power, and that one of the ways this could be obtained was through Egyptian antiquities in museums."¹⁰⁴ According to Tully, Crowley utilized Egyptology and ancient Egyptian sources of knowledge to steer the direction of his esoteric ideologies, but did so primarily for the purpose of remaining competitive with other esotericists that claimed Egyptological knowledge.¹⁰⁵

As Tully has effectively demonstrated, Crowley turned to Egyptological sources in order to carry out his agenda of establishing occult authority. Tully, and perhaps other

102Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 281-282.

103C.J. Tully, "Walk Like an Egyptian: Egypt as Authority in Aleister Crowley's Reception of the Book of the Law," *The Pomegranate: International Journal of Pagan Studies* 12, no. 1 (2010), 35.

104Ibid., 35-36.

105Ibid., 35-38.

scholars, have most likely noticed this correlation because Crowley's entanglement with Egyptology is most clear in his own accounts which straightforwardly admit the connection to ancient Egypt. From Tully's standpoint, Crowley's interest in Egypt is a means to remain competitive with other occultists. I, however, argue that Crowley and the A.∴A.∴'s actions extend beyond the esoteric realm, and in turn, were purposefully intended to have broader implications and a more universal impact, which included academia and scholarly Egyptology. In other words, not only did he utilize Egyptology to assert his authority in hidden occult circles, but Crowley also used it to establish his authority in intellectual circles outside of secretive occult groups. This gesture to reach outside of secretive esoteric groups and into mainstream intellectualism in part allowed him to rise as an extremely well-known figure in occultism and heavily impact Western intellectualism, philosophy, and syncretism. Crowley's agenda of remaining the ultimate authority on ancient Egyptian knowledge should be understood as a more refined version of the Golden Dawn's, in which he was ultimately more successful.

Crowley travelled throughout the world from 1902 to 1906, gaining experience in foreign spiritual systems such as "the practice of yoga and Buddhist doctrines" during his trip to India.¹⁰⁶ Importantly, he travelled to Cairo in 1904 with his wife, Rose Kelly. According to the official A.∴A.∴ account of Crowley's visit to Cairo, he and Kelly allegedly engaged in a ritual that "inspired" Kelly into a state of spiritual clairvoyance and she told Crowley that the Egyptian god Horus was attempting to contact him because he was a prophet for a new "Aeon of Horus."¹⁰⁷ Also according to the account, Crowley

¹⁰⁶Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 282.

¹⁰⁷Tully, 37; Aleister Crowley, "The Temple of Solomon the King (*Continued*)," eds. Mary D'Este Sturges and Victor B. Neuburg, *The Equinox* 1, no. 7 (March 1912), 365.

was impressed by this bout of spiritual intuition, as he thought Kelly unknowledgeable regarding Egyptian mythology or most other forms of the "subtle correspondences" of esotericism.¹⁰⁸ Allegedly after confirming Kelly's clairvoyance via ritual, Crowley set out to the Cairo Museum in order to verify and confirm the prophetic revelation.¹⁰⁹ The A.·A.·. account describes the visit to the museum: "A glass case stood in the distance, too far off for its contents to be recognized. But W. [Kelly] recognized it! 'There,' she cried, 'There he is!' Fra P. [Crowley] advanced to the case. There was the image of Horus in the form of Ra Hoor Khuit [a manifestation of the God Horus] painted upon a wooden stéle of the 26th dynasty-- *and the exhibit bore the number 666!*"¹¹⁰

The number 666 on the exhibit caught Crowley's attention, because he thought himself to be unravelling the prophecy of Thelema as the Great Beast described in Revelation (whose number is 666, according to Revelation 13:1-18).¹¹¹ The number 666 on the exhibit, as well as the consistencies on the stele with Kelly's revelations, confirmed his belief that Horus was indeed trying to contact him from a spiritual realm.¹¹² The following month (April 8-10, 1904), after approaching Egyptologists for the translation of the stele, Crowley and Kelly allegedly engaged in another ritual. In this divination, a spiritual entity named Aiwass, who was apparently "the minister of Hoor-paar-kraat" (another manifestation of Horus), contacted Crowley.¹¹³ In Crowley's own account, Aiwass reached out to him in order to grant him instructions to bring about the new Aeon of Horus. Crowley thought the new Aeon to be what "replaces the religious

108Crowley, "The Temple of Solomon the King (*Continued*)," 366-368.

109Ibid., 368.

110Ibid.

111Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 286.

112Crowley, "The Temple of Solomon the King (*Continued*)," 368.

113Tully, 40.

and moral sanctions of the past, which have everywhere broken down."¹¹⁴ The dictations of Aiwass were compiled into *The Book of the Law*, which announces the new law for mankind, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Love is the law, love under will. There is no law beyond do what thou wilt."¹¹⁵ *The Book of the Law*, which was to serve as the text for the new universal religion for humanity called Thelema, consisted of a slew of ancient Egyptian themes: a pantheon of Egyptian gods, Egyptian artifacts (the stele Crowley and Kelly discovered in the museum), and ancient Egyptian mythology (Horus ascending as king over Osiris).¹¹⁶

It is in this context and on the authority of Thelema and *The Book of the Law* that Crowley developed his own syncretic magical system and founded his own magical order in 1909, the A.∴A.∴. Bogdan and Djurdjevic consider the A.∴A.∴. to be a "Thelemic reconstruction and development of the Golden Dawn," which was fueled by "elements of both Western and Eastern esotericism with the primary ideological anchor in the religious philosophy of Thelema."¹¹⁷ Notably, Crowley's A.∴A.∴. and the Egyptian symbolism in Thelema refined strategies already used by the Golden Dawn to assert Egyptological authority and legitimacy regarding the usage of ancient Egyptian knowledge. Not only did this pattern allow Crowley to establish supremacy over other occultists, but it also allowed him to convey himself and his order as influential carriers of ancient Egyptian and/or Egyptological knowledge. Crowley and the A.∴A.∴. perfected and carried out four major strategies to establish control of Egyptological or ancient Egyptian knowledge.

114Aleister Crowley, *The Book of the Law: Liber Al vel Legis* (San Francisco, California: Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC, 2006), 70.

115Ibid., 13.

116Ibid., 25-66.

117Bogdan and Djurdjevic, 4.

First, the element of prophecy, divination, and spiritual communication was a huge strategy that Crowley utilized to establish himself as an authority. The Golden Dawn's central ideology stemmed from a manuscript that could possibly be debunked or trivialized, or the content/author of the manuscript could be questioned. In contrast, Crowley inaugurated his religion and fraternal order based on alleged direct communication with the Egyptian gods themselves. Whereas the Golden Dawn's "Cipher Manuscript" contained ancient Egyptian information, Crowley claimed to have received the secrets of Egyptian spirituality from the *source* of Egyptian spirituality: the Egyptian gods. His connection to the gods would have huge implications for establishing Egyptological authority; not only would it grant him a competitive edge over other occultists, but it would do the same for Egyptologists, as well. Crowley's reliance on divination of the Egyptian gods would allow him to strategically bypass any and all human interpretation of ancient Egypt, thus rendering all Egyptological *or* esoteric perceptions irrelevant. This strategy allowed Crowley and the A.∴A.∴ to overcome the existing knowledge of both Egyptologists and esotericists.

Second, like the Golden Dawn, Crowley made extensive use of Egyptology and reached out to Egyptologists to bolster the legitimacy of his spiritual systems and the A.∴A.∴. In this case, however, his effort seems to be rooted in validation of information, rather than prestige. Not only did Crowley clearly utilize Egyptological outlets, like the collection in the Cairo Museum and the Egyptologists maintaining the museum (Émile Brugsch and George Émile Jules Daressy), but he also actively reached out to Egyptologists to include them in his spiritual movement. One example stands out as

exceptionally notable: the relationship Crowley attempted to establish with British Egyptologist Battiscombe Gunn. Though Gunn in his youth already had an interest in the occult, was involved in the Theosophical Society, and had relationships with previous Golden Dawn members such as Arthur Waite and Florence Farr, Gunn was "well on the way to becoming an accomplished Egyptologist."¹¹⁸ These aspects made Gunn stand out as a unique individual for Crowley to build relations with, as Gunn could help bridge the gap between the esoteric and academic. Evidently, Gunn was a source of correspondence for Crowley and the A.∴A.∴, as Gunn helped the organization with Egyptological (and other, such as Hebrew Kabbalistic) information, such as a new translation of the Stele of Revealing (the stele found in the Cairo museum) in 1912.¹¹⁹

Crowley, to render Thelema and the A.∴A.∴'s Egyptian aspects more reliable, looked to Egyptologists for confirmation of his esoteric ideals. Similar to the Golden Dawn, Egyptology acted as a pillar of support for the movement, in which the end result was to transcend the simplicity of Egyptology. In turn, Egyptology was merely a tool for additional validation. In the unique case with Gunn, however, Egyptological verification was not enough and maintenance of an Egyptologist as a follower would have further bolstered the legitimacy of Crowley and the A.∴A.∴. In sum, Crowley's relationships with Egyptologists was twofold: to validate esoterica and bolster legitimacy. This gesture is a more refined tactic borrowed from the Golden Dawn.

Yet another strategy inherited from the Golden Dawn was the usage of syncretism for validation and universality, only Crowley intensified the effort. In 1909, the same year

¹¹⁸Steve Vinson and Janet Gunn, "Studies in Esoteric Syntax: The Enigmatic Friendship of Aleister Crowley and Battiscombe Gunn," in *Histories of Egyptology: Interdisciplinary Measures*, ed. William Carruthers (New York: Routledge, 2015), 96-102.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 103.

that the A.∴A.∴ was founded, Crowley published "777" (in his journal *The Equinox*), now republished as *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley*. Using Kabbalistic mysticism as the basis for all esotericism, Crowley sought to "systematise alike the data of mysticism and the results of comparative religion" in order to produce one universal amalgamation of all esoteric ideals.¹²⁰ Of the many spiritual systems included, ancient Egyptian religion/mythology does make an appearance and is presented with all other spiritual and/or Kabbalistic equivalents.¹²¹ Importantly, Crowley makes the straightforward call that the point of the work is in order to establish occult validity: "The sceptic will applaud our labours, for that the very catholicity of the symbols denies them any objective validity, since, in so many contradictions, something must be false: while the mystic will rejoice equally that the self-same catholicity all-embracing proves that very validity, since after all something must be true."¹²²

As is evident with Crowley's intense effort with *777* to reconcile all ideas, and is exemplified in the above quote, his objective was to establish validity with the usage of syncretism and through the reconciliation of ideas. The publication of a solidly organized syncretic system was a gesture to birth a new universalist spiritual system that was easily adoptable by contemporaries, which Crowley himself admitted that he strove to establish.¹²³ Just as the Golden Dawn had done before, Crowley's syncretic system implied that behind all spiritual systems lies a universal truth, which he and the A.∴A.∴ held the key to. The apparent knowledge of a single, powerful, spiritual principle behind

120Aleister Crowley, *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings of Aleister Crowley*, ed. Israel Regardie (York Beach, Maine: Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC, 1973), ix.

121Ibid., 6.

122Ibid., ix.

123Ibid., ix-xi.

all things could and should be regarded as a gesture to establish both authority and legitimacy in opposition to critics.

Crowley and the A.∴A.∴ utilized a fourth tactic that was not a recycled Golden Dawn tactic, and importantly, allowed the A.∴A.∴ to emulate academia: widespread publication in the form of a journal. From 1909-1913, and then again in 1919, *The Equinox* operated as the "official organ of his [Crowley's] order."¹²⁴ The journal's purpose was to offer official publications of Crowley's own works, as well as the works of others in the A.∴A.∴.¹²⁵ In contrast to the secretive Golden Dawn, the first issue of *The Equinox* announces that the A.∴A.∴ offers its publications to readers "without miracle or mystery," and with honest transparency, clarification, exposure (though coincidentally a lot of the authors are left unlisted for many of the writings in the first issue and Crowley himself uses multiple aliases throughout the life of the publication), and with "the method of science -- [but] the aim of religion."¹²⁶ This is an important departure from the Golden Dawn's secretive nature. Publication without secrecy and with allegedly scientific viewpoints is an important means to challenging and engaging other informational publications. By presenting *The Equinox* as a scholarly or academic journal (though it was not actually peer-reviewed, it was only presented as such), Crowley and the A.∴A.∴ were enabled to challenge scholars in the same manner that scholars challenge each other. Important to the subject at hand, Crowley and the A.∴A.∴ used *The Equinox* to declare Egyptological expertise and established that authority based on experience in Egypt, knowledge in Egyptian language and magic, Egyptological study in museums (like the

¹²⁴Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 282.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Aleister Crowley, "Editorial," *The Equinox* 1, no. 1 (1909), 1-2.

Louvre), "'revelation' through the Egyptian plane," and knowledge of "Egyptian hymn and ritual."¹²⁷ Thus, by utilizing a journal that emulates scholarly publication and by claiming Egyptian knowledge, Crowley and the A.∴A.∴ challenged intellectual circles and asserted Egyptological authority.

Through Crowley's tedious perfection and alteration of Golden Dawn tactics to assert authority in the intellectual realm (both among esotericists and scholars), he and the A.∴A.∴ were ultimately more successful. Like the Golden Dawn, Crowley and the A.∴A.∴ established themselves as scientific practitioners rather than mere theorists. Not only did Crowley achieve worldwide fame and followers who still persist to this day, but he maintained his stance until the end of his life. His shining example is *The Book of Thoth*, which he published in 1941 that served as the ultimate amalgamation of the above elements: the book establishes its legitimacy by using the alleged Egyptian prophecy of Thelema and *The Book of the Law*, utilizes Egyptological information throughout the work, reworks Crowley's syncretic spiritual system into a comprehensive Tarot deck, and serves as an official A.∴A.∴ publication to be read by a widespread audience.¹²⁸ The long-term maintenance of these strategies for establishing Egyptological, and in general, intellectual authority consolidated the A.∴A.∴'s belief system as unique within even the esoteric realm, wherein Crowley's followers are referred to as "Thelemites." Crowley's strategic methods to carve out his own religious movement demonstrate his desire to contribute to the definitive attributes of esotericism, which saw long term success.

127Aleister Crowley, "The Temple of Solomon the King," *The Equinox* 1, no. 1 (1909), 144, 158; Aleister Crowley, "John St. John: The Record of the Magical Retirement of G.H. Frater O.∴M.∴," *The Equinox* 1, no. 1 (1909), 41, 65, 87.

128Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Thoth (Egyptian Tarot)* (1944; repr., San Francisco, California: Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC, 2007).

3.3 Reclaiming Egyptian Magic among Scholarly Egyptologists

By looking at Egyptological sources from the span of 1880 through about 1915 (the same timespan in which British esotericism was becoming more refined and popular), it is evident that scholarly British Egyptologists fought equally hard to claim their position as the experts of Egyptian religion and magic. As John David Wortham explains, 1880 marks the time in which "modern Egyptian archaeology" began, but in addition, also was when archaeology was utilized to confirm "religious dogmatism" of British Christianity.¹²⁹ Some Egyptologists were more interested in Egyptology as a "scientific discipline," especially after the systemization of a scientific approach was designed by Flinders Petrie throughout the 1880s and 1890s.¹³⁰

As David Gange points out, however, the lines between religiously-driven and scientifically-driven Egyptology were typically blurred, overshadowed by religious tradition, and elements of both religion and precursory science were integrated into late nineteenth-century British Egyptology.¹³¹ In other words, as Gange argues, science and Christianity were intertwined in British society and this was reflected in their handling of Egyptology.¹³² In turn, whether British Egyptologists were motivated by religion, science, or the typical combination of both, British Egyptologists sought to claim authority over Egyptian religion, mythology, and magic which operated in opposition to esoteric claims over Egyptian knowledge. Whereas esotericists relied on magic-in-practice to demonstrate their knowledge of ancient Egyptian magic, scholarly Egyptologists relied

¹²⁹Wortham, 107, 112.

¹³⁰Ibid., 113-126.

¹³¹Gange, 1084.

¹³²Ibid.

on the formulation of theory based on evidence, whether that evidence was scientific or religious in nature. Egyptologists of this variety and esotericists both believed themselves to be agents keeping ancient Egyptian knowledge alive, but whereas the esoteric method consisted of magical/practical revival, Egyptological authority rested on notions of British modernity and formation of theory through a rationalized interpretive lens which discounted the value of Egyptian magic.

Because this concept of British "modernity" at the end of the nineteenth century served as a basis for Egyptologists to establish Egyptological authority, it is first necessary to define it. As historian Simon Gunn explains in *History and Cultural Theory*, European modernity was defined after the eighteenth century by contrasting contemporary "knowledge" and "achievements" with the ancient world.¹³³ Modernity, to Europeans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, denoted that society may have "equal[ed] or surpass[ed]" the ancients.¹³⁴ For nineteenth century Britons, the knowledge and achievements which constituted modernity revolved around Protestant Christian knowledge and scientific breakthroughs. This viewpoint was in alignment with the definition of modernity by Max Weber in the early twentieth century, who "identified modernity with the break-up of the unified world-view provided by Christian religion, undermined first by the Protestant Reformation and subsequently by the philosophical rationalism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment."¹³⁵ According to Weber, modernity arises from bodies of knowledge that allow for rational thinking, in particular Protestant ethics because they focus on shaping the earthly plane (as opposed to focusing on the

¹³³Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory* (Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 110.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid.

spiritual realm) which leads to rational and practical processes such as capitalism and science which fuel modernity.¹³⁶ In keeping with this trend, knowledge and achievements generated from Protestant Christianity and scientific rationalism to surpass the ancient world compiled the definition of modernity for many Britons engaged in Egyptology at the end of the nineteenth century.

Many late nineteenth-century British Egyptologists gauged Britain's modern status by comparing religious and scientific achievements with those of ancient Egypt. Modernity was understood by British Egyptologists such as Amelia Edwards, Flinders Petrie, and E.A. Wallis Budge to be a result of Protestantism and science, even though they may have favored one category more so than the other. These Egyptologists defined British modernity and alleged ancient Egyptian primitivism by comparing the knowledge and accomplishments of the ancient Egyptians with those of Victorian Britain. A result of this process was that ancient Egyptian magic was rendered a primary target because it was the antithesis to modern British ideas of religion and science.

Amelia Edwards was regarded during her time as the "first woman Egyptologist," though her status as an official Egyptologist is today disputed by historians such as John Wortham who describes her more so as a "dedicated amateur Egyptologist with some literary talent and remarkable powers of persuasion."¹³⁷ Regardless of her contemporary status as a genuine Egyptologist, Edwards had a huge impact on Egyptology as a field and as a subject of popular culture. She was one of the founders of the Egypt Exploration Fund (which Golden Dawn member Marcus Worsley Blackden was involved with), an

¹³⁶Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, ed. Anthony Giddens (New York: Routledge, 1992), xxxvii, 123-125.

¹³⁷Wortham, 109.

organization that funded excavations in Egypt.¹³⁸ Edwards was a "popularizer of Egyptology" in both Britain and the United States, and was especially interested in Egyptology to confirm scripture and biblical accounts.¹³⁹ She became a leading figure in Egyptology by propping up Egypt's past on biblical scripture, and sought to strengthen Christianity via Egyptological evidence.¹⁴⁰ In Edwards' *Egypt and Its Monuments: Pharaohs, Fellahs, and Explorers*, published in 1891, she argues that regardless of the complexity of different religious "schools" and the "Egyptian pantheon," Egyptians were in actuality prototypal monotheists as evident in their worship of Ra.¹⁴¹ In addition, Edwards draws from the 125th chapter of *The Book of the Dead* (as did the Golden Dawn) to demonstrate that Egyptians held belief in afterlife immortality achieved through lifetime moral action.¹⁴² Despite these and more praises for Egyptian achievements, Edwards makes sure to distance herself and Victorian Britain's modernity from the Egyptians by describing Egyptian religion and magic as juvenile:

"It [*The Book of the Dead*] gives the measure of their [the ancient Egyptians] standard of morality. The teachers who established that standard, and the people who endeavored faithfully to live up to it, may have had very childish and fantastic notions on many points; they may in one place have put gold rings in the ears of their sacred crocodiles ; they may have shaved their eyebrows when their cats died ; but as regards uprightness, charity, justice and mercy, they would not, I think have much to learn from us, if they were living to this day beside the pleasant waters of the Nile."¹⁴³

138Wortham, 106-107.

139Ibid., 106-109; Gange, 1086-1087.

140Gange, 1087.

141Amelia B. Edwards, *Egypt and Its Monuments: Pharaohs, Fellahs, and Explorers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), 228-231.

142Ibid., 232-233.

143Ibid., 233.

By looking at the actions and literature of Edwards, a number of patterns stand out that should be noted. First, she established her authority as an Egyptologist by attaching ancient Egypt and Egyptology to scripture, which could have bolstered her legitimacy among many in Christian Victorian Britain. Second, in Edwards' analyses of ancient Egypt in *Egypt and Its Monuments*, she paints the ancient Egyptians as prototypical Christians, with monotheistic beliefs in one god and a belief in an afterlife rewarded to moral people, which made ancient Egyptians relatable to contemporary British people. Third, Edwards utilizes the same popularized ancient Egyptian sources as did esoteric groups (especially *The Book of the Dead*) to argue that Egyptian magic, practice, and ritual is juvenile and ridiculous, which consciously or not, discredits esotericists who attempted to revive ancient Egyptian magic and practices in occult groups.

This sequence demonstrates that Edwards acknowledges that Egyptians were perhaps the prototypical British Christians of ancient times, but she maintains her separation from them by expressing the superiority of British modernity. This move in itself, in addition to the usage of scripture for legitimacy, establishes authority based on modernist prestige. Importantly, the emphasis on Christian sentiments and British modernity both operate in direct opposition to esoteric groups who had differing goals of reviving Egyptian pagan sentiments or revitalizing ancient Egyptian knowledge for modern society. It is clear that by using elements of British modernity such as Christianity, Edwards completely discounts the value of Egyptian magic and ritual.

Another notable British Egyptologist who was prominent at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century was Flinders Petrie. Unlike Edwards,

who sought especially to tie Egyptology to Christianity, Petrie is more well-known for defining Egyptology as a systematic and scientific discipline with rules, regulations, records, professionalism and layered archaeological theory.¹⁴⁴ Despite his fame for his scientific approach to Egyptology, his earlier work in the 1880s was with the Egypt Exploration Fund and Edwards to confirm biblical narratives in Egypt.¹⁴⁵ Later, however, Petrie was more conscious and careful to impose modern viewpoints on the study of ancient Egyptians, and made it clear: "We must beware of reading our modern ideas into the ancient views," as he stated in his 1906 book, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*.¹⁴⁶

In the first paragraph of *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, Petrie provides another disclaimer that it is impossible to understand the ancient Egyptian gods at the same level as did the ancient Egyptians, and therefore "If then we use the word god for such conceptions, it must always be with the reservation that the word has now a very different meaning from what it had to ancient minds."¹⁴⁷ Despite disclaimers such as these and though he consciously attempted to steer clear of modernist bias, some parallels with Edwards exist within Petrie's viewpoints. As does Edwards, Petrie believes Egypt to be the land of prototypal monotheism, only in this case, he argues that Egyptian polytheism arose from the unification of multiple monotheistic tribes.¹⁴⁸ In other words, Petrie believes that all gods in ancient Egypt could actually be traced to the same monotheistic god, but there were merely different interpretations of that same god due to different

144Wortham, 113-119; Shaw and Nicholson, 91-92.

145Gange, 1089.

146William Matthew Flinders Petrie, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., Ltd., 1906), 29.

147Petrie, 1-2.

148Ibid., 4-6.

tribal ideologies and the intrusion of animism.¹⁴⁹

In *The Religion of Ancient Egypt*, Petrie also addresses *The Book of the Dead*. He argues that the idea of a "book of the dead" consists of a confusing morass of Greek translated texts which maintained "hold on the imagination as containing mystic powers of compelling the unseen," combined with erratic Egyptian texts that have been jumbled due to Egyptological intrusion, ancient inconsistencies, and a "piling of explanations" for ancient Egyptian ritual.¹⁵⁰ Petrie, unlike other Egyptologists, argues that *The Book of the Dead* (which he straightforwardly says was invented by "modern writers") is not useful for Egyptologists nor does it contain some sort of comprehensible magical uniformity.¹⁵¹ Though he admits that *The Book of the Dead* is an Egyptological construct, Petrie maintains that "a critical understanding" of the content "is almost hopeless" because it is so inconsistent and has had so many revisions over time.¹⁵²

Though Petrie openly acknowledges the danger of bias and takes a seemingly more scientific approach than a religious approach, his viewpoints are still based on a similar model to that of Edwards. First, in this case, his authority is based on scholarly usage of primary sources such as ancient Egyptian artifacts, writings, and inscriptions. At a time when scholarly social science was strengthening, this aspect would have bolstered his legitimacy among scholars, especially. Thus, like Edwards, Petrie utilized contemporary aspects of British culture (science and scholarship) that would have established authority. Second, Petrie maintains (like Edwards) that Egypt is the home of monotheism, only he utilizes scholarly theory (the unification of tribes) rather than

149Petrie, 4-6.

150Ibid., 76-78.

151Ibid., 76.

152Ibid., 77-78.

scripture to describe this phenomenon. In this case, he still established a monotheistic connection between contemporary Christian Europeans and ancient Egyptians, as did Edwards. Third, Petrie's disclaimers to avoid understanding Egyptian religion as would an ancient Egyptian establishes a solid separation between ancient Egyptian primitivism and British modernity fueled by rationalism. This process renders Petrie as a modernized and reasonable observer gazing at ancient Egypt from the outside, parallel to Edwards. Finally, Petrie's attempt to discredit the coherency, consistency, and reliability of ancient Egyptian texts (in this case those compiled into *The Book of the Dead*) overrides all who hold magical value in ancient Egyptian sacred texts. Like Edwards, this trivializes the usefulness of sacred texts for esotericists and undermines their occult usage, thus challenging esoteric groups which attempted religious revival using ancient texts such as those included in *The Book of the Dead*. Also like Edwards, Petrie's viewpoint combines elements of British modernity, in his case primarily science, to discount magic.

Another British Egyptologist worth mentioning who today remains as one of the most widely-cited and popular scholars on the subject is E.A. Wallis Budge. His contributions to Egyptology include a wide array of Egyptological literature which include many works on ancient Egyptian religion, mythology, and magic. As evident in Budge's works, he was very much in the same camp as Edwards and Petrie. Like Petrie, Budge at first glance takes a more scientific than religious approach, but upon further investigation, intertwines all elements of British modernism (including both Christianity and science) to establish authority and formulate theory. In his book on Egyptian mysticism and ritual entitled *Egyptian Magic* (1899), Budge sums up his viewpoint on

Egyptian religion and magic:

"When we consider the lofty spiritual character of the greater part of the Egyptian religion, and remember its great antiquity, it is hard to understand why the Egyptians carefully preserved in their writings and ceremonies so much which savoured of gross and childish superstition, and which must have been the product their predynastic or prehistoric ancestors, even during the period of their greatest intellectual enlightenment. But the fact remains that they did believe in One God Who was almighty, and eternal, and invisible, Who created the heavens, and the earth, and all beings and things therein ; and in the resurrection of the body in a changed and glorified form, which would live to all eternity in the company of the spirits and souls of the righteous in a kingdom ruled by a being who was of divine origin, but who had lived upon the earth, and had suffered a cruel death at the hands of his enemies, and had risen from the dead, and had become the God and king of the world which is beyond the grave; and that, although they believed all these things and proclaimed their belief with almost passionate earnestness, they seem never to have freed themselves from a hankering after amulets and talismans, and magical names, and words of power, and seem to have trusted in these to save their souls and bodies, both living and dead, with something of the same confidence which they placed in the death and resurrection of Osiris."¹⁵³

As is evident in *Egyptian Magic*, Budge's viewpoints and stance were on point with his contemporaries. Like others of his time, Budge understood monotheism as an invention or innovation of the Egyptians. In this case, however, he finds even more similarities between ancient Egyptian mythology and Christianity, as he draws parallels between Egyptian and Christian ideals of God, heaven, and messianic figures. As with other British Egyptologists, Budge *directly* upholds ancient Egyptians as the earliest prototypical Christians, which confirms a relation between ancient Egyptians and modernized British Christians. Despite his empathetic connection to ancient Egyptians, Budge also makes sure to draw the line between ancient Egyptian primitivism and the enlightened superiority of modern Britain by directly chastising ancient Egyptian

153E.A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Magic* (1899; repr., New York: University Books, 1958), xiii-xiv.

superstitions which he deems juvenile, unsophisticated, and irrational. Like Edwards and Petrie, Budge's effort to position himself *above* the ideas of ancient Egyptians asserts authority based on modernized scientific-religious principles and discredits any ancient Egyptian magical practices, systems, rites, or rituals. In turn, Budge's condemnation of the usage of Egyptian superstitious magical practices openly opposed esotericists, whose goal it was to *revive* Egyptian magical practices.

Also like his contemporaries, Budge sought to combat amateur usage of *The Book of the Dead*, and compiled in 1895 what he wanted to be known as *The Book of the Dead*. In his version of *The Book of the Dead* (which, as mentioned previously, was in actuality a translation of *The Papyrus of Ani*) Budge admits that "the title 'Book of the Dead' is somewhat unsatisfactory and misleading, for the texts neither form a connected work nor belong to one period ; they are miscellaneous in character, and tell us nothing about the lives and works the dead with whom they are buried."¹⁵⁴ Similar to Petrie's argument of 1906, Budge undermines the generalized idea of a "book of the dead," which discredits all of those who claim to find some sort of usage in a comprehensive *Book of the Dead*. What is unique in Budge's case, however, is that he dubbed his translation of *The Papyrus of Ani* the official *Book of the Dead*, which in turn positioned himself as the ultimate authority on what should and should not be considered *The Book of the Dead*. Thus, any esoteric dependence on previous notions of *The Book of the Dead* was hindered with this move on behalf of Budge.

Edwards, Petrie, and Budge deemed ancient Egyptian magic superstitious, archaic, primitive, juvenile, and inherently incompatible with modernity. In turn, this

¹⁵⁴Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, x.

position was hostile to the esoteric groups that operated at the same time, such as the Golden Dawn and the A.∴A.∴ that thought Egyptian magic practical, usable, and achievable in the modern world. In the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, British modernism which consisted of an emphasis on Christianity and scientific discipline was upheld among scholars, archaeologists, and explorers to maintain Egyptological authority and legitimacy. Scholarship and Christianity were combined to render ancient Egyptian magic entirely irrational, which by proxy pitted Egyptologists against British esoteric groups who believed in the pragmatic functionality of ancient Egyptian magic.

The position of British Egyptologists in response to esotericism reveals an important contradiction to Christopher Leirich. As mentioned previously, Christopher Leirich argues that Egyptologists are realists who attempt to contextualize ancient Egypt to mold it into contemporary reality, whereas the esotericists maintain distance from ancient Egypt as an imaginary, fantastical and utopian land of magic.¹⁵⁵ In actuality, judging by the *intentions* and *actions* of both Egyptologists and esotericists during the time period, this notion is actually *reversed*. British Egyptologists maintained distance from ancient Egypt by clinging to concepts of modernity (including Christianity and science) to alienate ancient Egypt from contemporary Britain whereas esotericists sought to practice ancient Egyptian magic in order to tie ancient Egyptian ideas to contemporary reality. Regardless of their outcomes, this demonstrates that in actuality, Egyptologists and esotericists were no more or less romantic than one another.

Another pattern worth mentioning is the esoteric tendency to rely on Egyptology,

¹⁵⁵Leirich, 3-4.

but the Egyptological desire to repel magic as superstition. In both cases, it demonstrates that esotericists and Egyptologists were aware of, and even motivated by, one another's existence. Whereas esotericists relied on Egyptology to bolster their occult agenda, Egyptologists in a parallel manner relied on the misinformation of esoteric circles (as evident in the case of *The Book of the Dead*) to consolidate their field. Thus, as a reaction to one another, each raced to establish legitimacy and authority. Though the way each group valued the other was perhaps unbalanced, the existence of each prompted competition over how the legacy of ancient Egypt was to be used. In addition, this process resulted in rivalry between esotericists and Egyptologists over who should determine the practicality of ancient Egyptian knowledge.

This competitive relationship between esotericists and Egyptologists undermines Hanegraaf's theory on the formation of esotericism. Hanegraaf argues that during the European Enlightenment, intellectualism experienced a "gradual shift from a dominantly theological to an Enlightenment [scientific] perspective," and in turn superstition changed from a religious error to a scientific one.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, as Hanegraaf explains, both prominent religion and rationalist science could band together in order to combat "'superstition,' 'magic,' or 'the occult.'"¹⁵⁷ To Hanegraaf, then, esotericism only exists as a body of knowledge because it is the "waste-basket category" of knowledge that is rejected from religion, science, or the combination of the two.¹⁵⁸ In other words, esotericism as a classification only exists because it is the intellectual material incompatible with mainstream religion and the rationality of science.

¹⁵⁶Hanegraaf, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 230.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 221-222, 230, 252-254.

At first glance, the alliance of religion and science among the above Egyptologists to establish authority for resisting esotericism seems to confirm Hanegraaf's viewpoint. The binding of Christianity and cutting-edge archaeological science do indeed position the Egyptologists in direct opposition to the esotericists. However, Hanegraaf's viewpoint erases the agency of the esotericists themselves and discredits esotericists in the formation of esotericism as a body of knowledge. As I demonstrated with the above accounts of the Golden Dawn and the A.·.A.·., these groups did much to establish their own authority *above* scholars and impact intellectualism *regardless* of scholarly backlash. This process demonstrates that esotericists were not simply exiled from Egyptology and *became* esotericists. Rather, the Golden Dawn and the A.·.A.·. willingly maintained their own positions as exclusive ideological groups purposefully outside intellectualism dominated by Christianity or scientific naturalism because the two were insufficient as ideological bases. In the case of esotericism and Egyptology, not only did esotericists purposefully seek to be unique autonomous entities *using* Egyptology, but they also actively flaunted their authority by competing *with* Egyptologists and claiming Egyptological authority themselves. Thus, I argue in response to Hanegraaf that by the late nineteenth century, esotericism was *not* the end result of rejected information from mainstream ideologies, but rather, was the result of information *purposely designed to counter* mainstream ideologies.

Marco Pasi makes a good case for this process in *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics*, in which Pasi describes Crowley's distaste for British modernity. As Pasi explains, Crowley openly rejected "bourgeois values, which [were] naturally

connected to his anti-Christian views."¹⁵⁹ Pasi explains that Crowley held open contempt for Britain, modernity, colonialism, industrialization, British Christianity, and in general, the values and morals of Victorian/Edwardian society.¹⁶⁰ In turn, as Pasi argues, Crowley naturally turned to movements poised in opposition of typified British societal norms, in our case "exotic forms of spirituality."¹⁶¹ Pasi also demonstrates that *The Book of the Law* can be interpreted with this in mind, as "elements can be seen clearly enough in the text: the anti-Christian attitude, the advocacy of sexual freedom, [and] the elitist views."¹⁶² In turn, as Pasi has adeptly demonstrated, the esoteric career of Crowley and the formation of the A.∴A.∴ is not the result of exile from mainstream morals and values as Hanegraaf maintains. Rather, the esoteric discourse of the time was created and then fueled by the opposite: a rebellious desire to purposely attack mainstream morals and values.

Numerous more examples shine through when looking at the relationship between esotericism and Egyptology in Britain from 1880-1915. Esotericists were anxious for Egyptological information on which they relied, but the esotericists extracted only what they needed to bolster their own authority and agenda. The esotericists rejected the concepts of modernity embedded into Egyptological sources in favor of Egyptian revivalism, but utilized the Egyptological material to fit their needs. As a reaction to esoteric superstition, Egyptologists attempted to undermine the value of Egyptian magic, which entailed refinement of Egyptology itself and authority based on modernized rationalism. Once again, it was the existence of both esotericism and Egyptology that

159Marco Pasi, *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics* (Durham, UK: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2014), 37.

160Ibid., 36-40.

161Ibid., 37.

162Ibid., 47.

propelled each forward, regardless of the divisive lines they made, or at times, the crossover they experienced.

As Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah points out in *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality*, anthropology in the nineteenth century was refined as a scientific field, and simultaneously, theorists in the field of anthropology debated to discern the "demarcations between magic, science, and religion."¹⁶³ In particular, Tambiah points to Edward Tylor as one of the outstanding theorists of the late nineteenth century who attempted to explain the societal roles of magic, religion, and science in society.¹⁶⁴ Tambiah highlights Tylor's multi-volume work *Primitive Culture* as a significant source which "separated in space magic from religion," and established that magic and the occult were "*survivals* from a barbarous past."¹⁶⁵ According to Tambiah, Tylor also "asserted that magic was based on a general human intellectual propensity, namely the principle of 'association of ideas'" or magic fueled by correspondences.¹⁶⁶ Tylor thought that the three categories were part of a hierarchy in which animistic magic led to religion, which could later evolve into scientific discourse.¹⁶⁷ From this point of view, science is the point in the social evolutionary hierarchy that dissolves the usage and belief in magic and rationality is triumphant.¹⁶⁸ Tylor, like some of his contemporaries (such as those discussed earlier like Edwards, Petrie, and Budge) was partial to Victorian norms and thought religion and science reconcilable and magic useless.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 42.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 45.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 48-50.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 50-51.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

This nineteenth-century anthropologist's perspective grants insight into a viewpoint that became fixed as the definition of "modern" in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Science and religion stabilized as mainstream modern ideologies among Europeans, whereas magic was rendered obsolete and anti-modern. It is substantial to note the evolutionary aspect of Tylor's theory, that magic can lead to religion, and religion can lead to science which pushes society to its highest form of existence. From his point of view, then, the marriage of religion and science encapsulates a modern society at the highest stages of evolution, which cannot be done without evolving beyond the need for superstitious magic. It is also important to note, that Tylor devised this definition of modernity under the authority of being a scholar, or officially, an anthropologist.

To Wouter J. Hanegraaf, it is the process of the expulsion of magic (regarded as pagan by Christians and regarded as nonsense by scientists, or a combination of both) that resulted in the formation and existence of esotericism.¹⁷⁰ To Hanegraaf, the exile of magic from the magic-religion-science equation was in order to shape religious/scientific identity with magic as the contrast of what *not* to be.¹⁷¹ What he ignores, however, is how some esoteric groups actively adapted to the prominence of religion and science for legitimacy, authority, and engagement with scholars. What has not been placed under proper examination is how esoteric groups reacted to this process as it was playing out in the late nineteenth century, and how esoteric groups handled the religio-scientific alliance after its strengthening as a mainstream ideology in the early twentieth century. If

¹⁷⁰Hanegraaf, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 221-222.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

nineteenth-century scholars (such as Tylor) deemed it the age of religio-scientific prominence and magic as an obsolete or primitive concept, how did esotericists defend themselves?

Throughout this chapter, I argue that the Theosophical Society founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and the Anthroposophical Society founded by Rudolf Steiner were both esoteric movements that sought to realign esotericism into acceptable specifications of religion and science rather than magic in order to preserve and extend their influence. In order to carry out this task, both societies utilized Egyptology. In a time where magic as a term and concept was becoming increasingly outdated and considered anti-modern, Blavatsky and Steiner both attempted to render esotericism fully compatible with religion and science to mold it to fit modern standards. With anthropologists like Tylor at the forefront of defining Western modernity, both Blavatsky and Steiner defended esotericism by referring to anthropology, particularly Egyptology, to defend their viewpoints and knowledge base.

Blavatsky and Steiner relied on Egyptology, a subset of anthropology, for two primary reasons. First, Egyptology was a cutting-edge anthropological field which could be used to define what was "ancient" in order to better define what was "modern." Second, Egyptology was a field within anthropology for the purpose of understanding ancient knowledge, and unlike some Egyptologists or anthropologists who rejected the value of ancient wisdom, Blavatsky and Steiner sought to revitalize it for practical use. With their usage of Egyptology the two were able to link ancient knowledge to modern social science to dynamically build a unique esoteric identity, contribute to Western

intellectualism, and compete with scholars to define aspects such as science and religion.

The Theosophical Society was formed in 1875 by Blavatsky, but among the first members of the society were members of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor who centered themselves on ancient Egyptian teachings. Blavatsky's intent, however, was to create the Theosophical Society based on her "experience in spiritualist mediumship" and for "acquiring both practical and theoretical knowledge of the Western and non-Western esoteric currents."¹⁷² In other words, the Theosophical Society was intended to be the most up-to-date form of esotericism that included all available Western and non-Western correspondences and popular currents such as spiritualism. One of the primary goals of the Theosophical Society upon its foundation was to demonstrate "that the spiritual realm was scientifically verifiable and that its inhabitants -- spirits -- were in communication with the physical realm."¹⁷³ Though Blavatsky with the creation of the Theosophical Society sought to integrate all spiritual and scientific developments into the knowledge base of the society, a major aspect was especially utilized as a tool to do so: Egyptology.

One of Blavatsky's earliest works for the Theosophical Society was *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, originally published in New York in 1877. *Isis Unveiled* was released in two volumes, the first being *The "Infallibility" of Modern Science*, in which Blavatsky attempts to reconcile esotericism with scientific developments. In the other volume, *The "Infallibility" of Religion*, she looks at the limits of contemporary religion to demonstrate that esoteric wisdom is more valuable than widely thought. In the preface of the first volume,

¹⁷²Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1115.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 1114.

Blavatsky makes the declaration that Theosophists "believe in no Magic which transcends the scope and capacity of the human mind, nor in 'miracle,' whether divine or diabolical, if such imply a transgression of the laws of nature instituted from all eternity."¹⁷⁴ This straightforward call on the first page of the book's preface directly roots the teachings of the Theosophical Society in observable science (the "laws of nature") and religion ("instituted from all eternity"), and discounts irrational and unprovable magic or mysticism ("Magic which transcends the scope and capacity of the human mind" or "miracle"). Blavatsky then in turn proclaims that simple Christianity and the extent of science are insufficient, as they diminish the value and knowledge that comes from ancient and/or foreign wisdom.¹⁷⁵ In turn, she offers a plan "for the recognition of the Hermetic philosophy, the anciently universal Wisdom-Religion, as the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology."¹⁷⁶

Blavatsky for *Isis Unveiled* looked to Egyptology (though among many other concepts and fields) as an essential tool to carry out this goal. The fourteenth chapter of *Isis Unveiled's* first volume, entitled "Egyptian Wisdom," utilizes a combination of contemporary Egyptology and ancient Egyptian knowledge to demonstrate that the ancient Egyptians mastered civilization by pairing religion and science. Blavatsky cites numerous prominent Egyptologists (Jean François Champollion, John Gardner Wilkinson, Charles Piazzi Smith, and more) who praise the ancient Egyptians for their scientific prowess as evident in ancient Egyptian engineering, architecture, mining,

¹⁷⁴Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, vol. 1, 6th ed. (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1892), v.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., vi-viii.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., vii.

mathematics, astronomy, and art.¹⁷⁷ She explains that the feats of the Egyptians are still a mystery despite modern scientific developments, and furthermore, many of the contemporary discoveries could oftentimes be already existent in the ancient past.¹⁷⁸ To explain how the Egyptians were capable of such feats, she argues that the ancient Egyptians "so skilled in natural philosophy" were also "proportionately skilled in psychology and spiritual philosophy."¹⁷⁹ According to Blavatsky, "the temple was the nursery of the highest civilization, and it alone possessed that higher knowledge of magic which was in itself the quintessence of natural philosophy."¹⁸⁰

From the Theosophical Society's point of view, science was developed and protected by ancient Egyptian religion and its accompanying clerical system, which in turn perpetuated knowledge of science that *overrode* magic. Therefore, to Blavatsky, ancient Egyptian science and religion operated in a manner which reinforced each other, and "magic" or the "occult powers" were but the study of the combined two in tandem, as demonstrated by the Greek accounts.¹⁸¹ A number of examples are listed as proof, including the Egyptian training of Greek philosophers who improved the Egyptian tradition of merging scientific philosophy with spirituality, ancient Egyptian astronomical breakthroughs that merged observable science with mythology, and the endurance of ancient Egyptian craftsmanship (pottery, fabrics, glass, metallurgy, mummy-making, color-dying, etc.) which was carried out because of staunch devotion to Egyptian religion.¹⁸²

177Blavatsky, 515-524

178Ibid., 525-526.

179Ibid., 531.

180Ibid.

181Ibid., 531-532.

182Ibid., 532-543.

Blavatsky's viewpoints in *Isis Unveiled* have a large number of implications for esotericism and place the Theosophical Society in a unique position. It is clear by looking at the evidence in *Isis Unveiled* that Blavatsky, like other esotericists, sought to trace the history of esotericism back to ancient Egypt. What sets her aside, however, is that she argues that the ancient Egyptians did not have some sort of inconceivable magic system to build their civilization, and rather, the greatness of ancient Egyptian civilization was built upon advanced science assisted by religious dedication. For Blavatsky, then, the goal of esotericism and the Theosophical Society is to tap into the advanced science and religion of ancient Egypt (as well as others) which transcend the limitations of contemporary science and religion. From this viewpoint, ancient Egypt was the prototype of an advanced civilization that utilized the perfect balance of science and religion to achieve its status as a heightened and illumined culture, which Blavatsky hoped to revive through the Theosophical Society's teachings.

With this argument, Blavatsky eliminates magic as an esoteric concept and roots esotericism in a long history of science and religion that extends in part from the ancient Egyptians. In the nineteenth century when magic was becoming more widely regarded as irrational or illogical as is the viewpoint of Edward Tylor, Blavatsky sought to eliminate the stereotype of esotericism being rooted only in irrational magic. By linking esotericism and the Theosophical Society to science and religion, she rendered Theosophy an intellectual movement that was more acceptable, conforming, and accommodating to mainstream standards in nineteenth-century Western society. This process would have made Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society much more credible and legitimate among

contemporaries, as it tied esotericism to concepts easy for nineteenth-century Westerners to understand and defend. With science and religion at the forefront of defining nineteenth-century modernity, Blavatsky utilized these two concepts to construct Theosophy into an esoteric yet modern movement. The Theosophical movement became one of the largest, if not *the* largest esoteric movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁸³ Arguably, this was due to its easy reconciliation with perceived modernity sustained by Western values during the nineteenth century.

Another important condition of *Isis Unveiled* involves the usage of Egyptology as proof for Blavatsky's arguments. With anthropologists like Tylor at the forefront of eliminating magic in favor of science and religion, it is important to note that by using Egyptology, Blavatsky also became involved in anthropology and used it for evidence. Her usage of Egyptology is an attempt to establish anthropological authority and defend against scholarly criticism. Egyptology in the late nineteenth century was consolidated as a prominent field in anthropology and the social sciences.¹⁸⁴ In turn, Blavatsky used Egyptological analysis and cited Egyptologists to defend Theosophy against skeptical scholars because it was the leading edge of the anthropological field. In sum, she used cutting-edge scholarship and research to defend against anthropologists; she used their own strategy against them and in the Theosophical Society's favor.

This conscious effort on behalf of Blavatsky to adapt esotericism to late nineteenth-century values and devise a defense against scholars reveals a number of significant elements to consider. First, Blavatsky sought to modernize esotericism, yet

183Faivre, 100-101.

184Shaw and Nicholson, 90-91.

link modernity to ancient knowledge, which thus preserves the emphasis on esoteric gnosis but grants esotericism the dynamism it needs to adapt to change and challenge. Second, the adoption of the religio-scientific model by the Theosophical Society indicates that esotericism was not formed by what was exiled from religion and science, as Hanegraaf asserts. Rather, the Theosophical Society fully adopted science and religion in place of untenable magic and mysticism, which demonstrates that esotericism could form even *within* the religion and science categories *without* reliance on alleged "magic." Third, Blavatsky differentiated the esoteric identity of the Theosophical Society from other occult groups by demonstrating that science and religion are at the heart of the Theosophical Society's teachings, yet mainstream religion and science was too limiting. This process actually successfully bolstered the society's authority and credibility among contemporaries, as evident in the widespread popularity the movement garnered internationally (the society and its later splinters all heavily affected occultism, religion, literature, and multiculturalism throughout Europe, the U.S., and Asia¹⁸⁵). Furthermore, this development in Theosophy was an outward challenge to scholars, whom Blavatsky openly sought to compete with.¹⁸⁶ These strategies combined placed Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society in a position to develop their own identity as esotericists and consolidate scientific and religious authority, especially by using Egyptology to do so.

The Theosophical Society experienced internal schisms throughout the 1880s due to philosophical differences between leaders over the importance of Christian versus Eastern Theosophical principles.¹⁸⁷ Ultimately, it was the death of Blavatsky in 1891 that

¹⁸⁵Robert S. Ellwood, *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 97-98.

¹⁸⁶Blavatsky, viii.

¹⁸⁷Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1119.

especially fractured and splintered the organization.¹⁸⁸ Her successor, Annie Besant, greatly changed the focus of the Theosophical Society and moved the emphasis of the organization toward reconciliation of Catholicism and East Indian traditions (likely to ease existing tensions), which was carried out with "the almost total exclusion of the writings of H.P. Blavatsky."¹⁸⁹ Among those who thought the Theosophical Society was at fault for abandoning Blavatsky's writings was the leader of the German sect of the Theosophical Society, Rudolf Steiner.¹⁹⁰ By 1913, Steiner and the German Theosophists broke from the Theosophical Society, and founded the Anthroposophical Society, which "resulted in a 'Back to Blavatsky' movement."¹⁹¹ With Steiner at the head of the movement, the Anthroposophical Society sought to extend the tenets of Blavatsky's Theosophy and update them for the twentieth century. Just as Blavatsky had done before, Steiner led a movement that was based on modernist values for authority and legitimacy and also used Egyptology as a primary means to do so.

In 1908, Steiner hosted a number of lectures in Leipzig to German members of the Theosophical Society on spirituality and ancient Egypt, which was then published as *Aegyptische Mythen und Mysterien*, or *Egyptian Myths and Mysteries*. Whereas Blavatsky sought to highlight the ancient Egyptian usage of science and religion for their great achievements, Steiner throughout his lectures more seamlessly *blends* science and religion together to contextualize esotericism, spirituality, reincarnation and their links to ancient Egypt. To Steiner, the ancient Egyptians were reincarnated from an ancient lost city of Atlantis, and those of the contemporary world were reincarnated ancient Egyptians

¹⁸⁸Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1119.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 1120-1121.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 1121.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

(along with others, such as Indians).¹⁹² Therefore, esoteric and spiritual clairvoyance stems from an ancient link to Atlantis, and then prominently Egypt.¹⁹³ To prove this theory, Steiner utilizes many of the prominent scientific theories of his day and taps into mainstream Western Christian principles, but merges them together in order to offer an explanation of ancient Egyptian knowledge.

These theories of Steiner's are typically complex and amalgamate a wide number of ideas to prove a point. For example, in his second lecture, Steiner combines Darwinian and Freudian theories (in particular Charles Darwin's evolution, George Darwin's fission theory regarding the moon's origins coming from earth during a primeval split from earth, and Sigmund Freud's theory of multiple levels of consciousness), and Judeo-Christianity (in particular the idea of angels and a creator God, Yahweh or Jehovah) to explain the origins of Egyptian mythology.¹⁹⁴ Specifically, he argues that evolution on earth was fueled by the separation of planetary celestial bodies from earth, which also separated humankind (at this time a spiritual entity) from angels and Yahweh/Jehovah who had already achieved the highest levels of evolution.¹⁹⁵ The next step in humankind's evolution was to develop a physical form, that according to Steiner, progressed in Atlantis where humankind developed a physical body but still held the highest spiritual abilities and existence (the ability to control the "ego" in Freudian terms).¹⁹⁶

Steiner then argues that the destruction of Atlantis disrupted humankind's spiritual prowess, and then mankind was forced to evolve somewhat isolated from the gods and

192Rudolf Steiner, *Egyptian Myths and Mysteries* (Spring Valley, New York: Anthroposophic Press, INC., 1971) PDF version, 5, 10.

193Ibid., 5, 10, 67-68, 87.

194Ibid., 10-16.

195Ibid., 10-15.

196Ibid., 14-15.

spirituality.¹⁹⁷ This process is encapsulated in Egyptian mythology, as Egypt was a civilization that was built around the memory of Atlantean spirituality and reincarnation.¹⁹⁸ Additionally, the ancient Egyptians (among a line of other prominent civilizations) knew to reestablish their link to Atlantean spirituality, which resulted in ancient Egyptian knowledge, mythological symbols, and explains mythological syncretism (as all gods are symbols for the ancient pre-Atlantean beings and Atlantean beings).¹⁹⁹ Steiner makes the outward call that it is up to contemporary esotericists to delve into ancient Egyptian knowledge because it provides access to the memory of Atlantean wisdom and spirituality.²⁰⁰

More of Steiner's religio-scientific viewpoints on Egypt can be found in his final lecture in the series. In the lecture, it is revealed that technological evolution is the result of a gradual and evolutionary departure from spirituality and toward "conquering the physical plane."²⁰¹ He argues that Christ was the most recent "powerful impulse of all human evolution," because Jesus was the ultimate reminder that humankind still held "the possibility of again raising itself above the level of the physical plane."²⁰² To Steiner, Jesus Christ was merely a late reactionist to remind humankind that they could return to a state of being grounded entirely in spirituality fueled by the "memories of ancient human conditions" (pre-Atlantean and Atlantean spirituality) which was epitomized by the ancient Egyptians.²⁰³ The lecture includes a criticism of Egyptologists for thinking

197Steiner, 15.

198Ibid., 16.

199Ibid., 17.

200Ibid., 17-18.

201Ibid., 82-83.

202Ibid., 83-84.

203Ibid., 84.

ancient Egyptians primitive for their magical beliefs when in actuality "what was taught in the great [Egyptian] mysteries was also practical" because of their advanced psychological ability to control and overlap "egos" in a networked cloud of spiritual auras.²⁰⁴ Accordingly, it is among the reincarnated Egyptians of contemporary times that "fruits appear in the inclinations and ideas of modern times, which have their causes in the Egyptian world."²⁰⁵ One of these ideas is Darwinistic evolution, which Steiner argues "is a coarser materialistic version of what Egyptians portrayed as their gods in animal form."²⁰⁶ In addition, Steiner believes science perpetuates spiritual enlightenment, but equally, religion contains scientific wisdom and is rooted in "spiritual scientific teachings" which "should be introduced into everything, into the everyday life."²⁰⁷ Steiner concludes his lecture by arguing that occultists need to hold out despite their being the minority, because success is imminent just as it was with the earliest Christians who were a minority but ultimately successful.²⁰⁸

Though at first glance Steiner's viewpoints appear complex, intricate, and complicated, they do reveal a number of patterns in the Anthroposophical train of thought. Steiner, like Blavatsky, sought to utilize religion and science to reinforce esoteric claims. Furthermore, he wanted to establish more credibility among contemporaries who were more likely to be partial to Christianity and science over mysticism and magic. This task was carried out by merging together numerous concepts that would have been well-known in the early twentieth century, such as Darwinistic evolution (both Social

204Steiner, 86.

205Ibid., 87-88.

206Ibid., 88.

207Ibid., 89.

208Ibid., 89-90

Darwinism and Biological Darwinism), Freudian psychology, contemporary astronomical theories (Fission Theory), and Christianity (God, angels, Christ). This massive effort on behalf of Steiner to include and/or explain contemporary science and mainstream Western religion (Christianity) places Steiner in a position to have scientific and religious authority. The feat also rendered Anthroposophy a movement compatible with modernity. Thus, like Blavatsky, Steiner built his Anthroposophical teachings around a syncretic system which included as many up-to-date theories and concepts as possible. This syncretic system was designed to make Anthroposophy comprehensible to contemporary observers and audiences who were more comfortable with Christianity and scientific principles than cryptic mysticism.

Like Blavatsky, Steiner largely eliminated irrational or mystical magic as an esoteric construct and instead placed Anthroposophy firmly in the religio-scientific realm. In this case, perhaps going beyond Blavatsky, his viewpoints root everything in historical narrative which explains the evolution of religion and upholds that everything can be fully measurable through scientific investigation. For example, Steiner does not leave the existence of God/Yahweh/Jehovah or angels to mysterious or unfathomable circumstances, and rather, attempts to explain their existence as a plausible and logical sequence intertwined with human history. In turn, it is with this exact line of reasoning that Steiner *directly* links ancient Egypt to Anthroposophy. To Steiner, contemporary esotericists are naturally connected to Egypt via scientific evolution (Egypt was a major stepping stone in the evolution from an ancient civilization, Atlantis, which is why occultists need look to Egypt for answers) and contemporary Christianity (Christianity

can provide a link between contemporary occultists and ancient Egyptian knowledge). By providing this explanation, Steiner attempted to remove the mysterious or enigmatic elements of ancient Egypt and realign ancient Egyptian history with contemporary esotericism. To Steiner, therefore, esotericists retained the memory of ancient Egyptian spirituality, but preservation of this memory was aided via illumined science and religion, in particular Christianity.

Also in using this strategy, Steiner generated a straightforward defense from disbelieving scholars or those who would criticize. The Anthropological Society allegedly knew the true historical narrative of mankind, which was traced to prehistoric Atlantis. Using this concept as a basis for argument, Steiner depicts skeptical scholars and/or Egyptologists in a negative light, because they do not understand the context of ancient Egyptian culture as a perpetuation of Atlantean spiritual principles. In other words, he thinks disbelieving scholars/Egyptologists are ignorant, because they overlook Egypt's Atlantean roots that can be confirmed via religion and science. One particular example includes his reference to pharaohs being revered as gods, a concept which scholars think ridiculous and "particularly comical."²⁰⁹ Steiner's view, in contrast, is that the phenomenon of pharaoh-veneration can be explained as the following: pharaohs held a higher state of spiritual consciousness due to linkage in etheric spiritual networks and their initiation into "Egyptian mystery-teachings" rooted in the memory of Atlantean principles.²¹⁰ In addition, Steiner argues, proof of this process can be found in contemporary science and religion, which are merely perpetuations of this same, but

²⁰⁹Steiner, 86.

²¹⁰Ibid., 86-88.

older, process.²¹¹ Concepts such as this place the Anthroposophical Society in a position to trump the opinions of scholars, anthropologists, or Egyptologists, as Steiner makes it clear that they all overlook important historical details.

In turn, whereas Blavatsky attempted to adapt esotericism to late nineteenth-century values, Steiner grounded Anthroposophy in early twentieth-century values, but anchored those values into an elaborate narrative regarding ancient civilizations (especially Atlantis). So like Blavatsky, only perhaps more explicit, he updated esotericism for the twentieth century. More so than Blavatsky, he established a link between contemporary esotericism and ancient knowledge on the basis that all knowledge is a perpetuation of ancient Atlantean, and then Egyptian, knowledge. In the Anthroposophical Society's favor, this explanation of the perpetuation of knowledge renders esotericism dynamic in the face of criticism and societal change.

Also similar to the Theosophical Society, Steiner's grand narrative of the ancient Egyptians ties in as many scientific and religious references as possible. This operation demonstrates that he sought to preserve esotericism within the religio-scientific realm and avoid unfathomable and unmeasurable magic and/or mysticism. Steiner's gesture, like Blavatsky's, demonstrates that Anthroposophic esotericism was not formed in exile from religion and science, but rather, was developed *as* religion and science. The utilization of science and religion within Anthroposophy bolstered authority and constructed a defense against potential challenges. Emulating Blavatsky before him, Steiner maintained that the justification, contextualization, and true knowledge which perpetuated these developments in contemporary esotericism derived from ancient Egyptian knowledge.

²¹¹Steiner, 88-89.

Thus, both Blavatsky and Steiner conformed to the popular sentiments of their time, largely put in place by anthropologists such as Edward Tylor, to maintain and extend their legitimacy and authority. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, magic as a mystical and enchanting subject was becoming largely unpopular and oftentimes regarded as superstition. Thus, Blavatsky and Steiner both attempted to expunge superstition from esotericism, and maintain that value could still be found in esotericism as it was fully compatible, and a genuine part of, natural science and widespread Christianity. In order to carry out this process, the two looked for validation in ancient Egypt, where each found ancient Egyptian evidence for their line of reasoning and viewpoints.

As touched upon before, Egyptology was indeed in itself part of the movement for modernism, as Egyptology was at that time a cutting-edge scholarly field. Therefore, the inclusion of Egyptology by Blavatsky and Steiner in their knowledge bases was yet another major action to modernize esotericism. Egyptology did serve a twofold purpose, however, as it did not only modernize esotericism but also helped enable Theosophists and Anthroposophists to establish a link between ancient forms of spirituality to their modern ones. Egyptology, then, survived the Theosophical and Anthroposophical Society's modernist revisions whereas unfathomable and superstitious magic did not.

At first glance, this could perhaps put anthropologists or Egyptologists and Theosophic/Anthroposophic esotericists in agreement with one another, but in actuality, new tensions arise. These tensions stem from the usage of ancient Egypt in the service of modernism. If ancient Egypt was to help define the modern world, *how* it was to define

the modern world still differed between esotericists and Egyptologists. In the camp of Egyptologists or anthropologists like Amelia Edwards, Flinders Petrie, E.A. Wallis Budge, or Edward Tylor, the ancients were largely irrational. For these scholars, the irrationality of the ancients was used to gauge how far society had evolved beyond the primitive tendencies of the ancients. Egyptology or anthropology, then, pushed a pro-modern agenda by using the ancients as examples of a society at lower stages of evolution or progress.

Among Steiner and Blavatsky, it is clear that ancient Egypt still aided modernist outlooks, but the concept is largely the opposite. For the Theosophical Society and the Anthroposophical Society, ancient Egypt was an example of what *to be* in the modern world. Whereas some Egyptologists looked to Egypt as a primitive society to feed pro-modern elitism, Blavatsky and Steiner looked to the civilization as an era of perfection. This golden-age civilization, which has since regressed, was one that could be restored with the rising potential of the modern era. This disconnect between the Theosophists/Anthroposophists and Egyptologists/anthropologists moves the debate from being centered on the usage of magic, and rather, entwines the groups in a new debate regarding the value of studying ancient Egypt. In turn, the battle over Egyptological authority was enabled to continue.

AMORC AS THE CHAMPION OF EGYPTOLOGICAL ESOTERICISM

Though Egyptology as a scholarly field steadily grew throughout the 1900s and the 1910s, it came to an apex with Howard Carter's discovery of Pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.²¹² The discovery of the tomb sparked "the first great 'media event' in the history of Egyptology, capturing the imagination of subsequent generations of scholars."²¹³ The famed discovery triggered a whole new interest within the public regarding Egyptology, which resulted in widespread mania over all things ancient Egyptian. The ancient civilization and its pharaohs became the subjects of pop-culture via press, tourism, songs, themed goods, novels, movies, and more.²¹⁴ Whereas Egyptology had been rising since the mid-nineteenth century as an important field, it became even more important after the discovery of Tutankhamun when a public eager for more treasures fueled further Egyptological development and inquiry. As Egyptologists Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson point out, the discovery of the tomb "distinctly overshadowed" all other developments in the field, and has outweighed all discoveries in the discipline ever since.²¹⁵

Comparatively and not by coincidence, esotericism experienced a parallel pattern in the early twentieth century. Interest in esotericism became more prominent throughout the 1900s and 1910s, fueled by widespread public interest in the occult, particularly regarding popular conceptions of astrology, Tarot, alchemy, and Theosophy.²¹⁶ By the

212Shaw and Nicholson, 92.

213Ibid.

214Brier, 167-177.

215Shaw and Nicholson, 92.

216Faivre, 89.

1920s, esotericism experienced a popular boom of interest and involvement on behalf of the public. One of the groups at the forefront of this change was the Antiquus Mysticus Ordo Rosae Crucis (Ancient Mystical Order of the Rose Cross, or AMORC), founded in 1915 in the United States by Harvey Spencer Lewis. Antoine Faivre argues that "Quantitatively, it is, after the Theosophical Society, the second most important movement in the history of Western esotericism proper."²¹⁷ The AMORC experienced widespread popularity in the United States, in which it housed a "much larger" and more considerable "popular audience" than other esoteric societies.²¹⁸ The order grew so rapidly, that it had a few hundred thousand enrolled members by the time of Lewis' death in 1939, and the organization continues to have hundreds of thousands of members today.²¹⁹ As historian of religion Robert S. Ellwood reveals, the AMORC housed a wide variety and population of members, achieved "acceptance in America," and "has played a special role in shaping the culture of modern America."²²⁰ The popularity of the AMORC brings forth an important question: how did the AMORC achieve mainstream success as an esoteric organization?

Throughout this chapter, I argue that the AMORC saw heightened popularity because the organization achieved success in establishing itself as a legitimate and authoritative Egyptological entity. I also argue that this success as an Egyptological authority was gained primarily by amalgamating the strategies of other esoteric groups. Additionally, the order did this in conjunction with the timing of mainstream

Egyptological popularity. The AMORC actually prevailed in doing what other fraternal

217Faivre, 100.

218Ellwood, 112.

219Faivre, 100; Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1020.

220Ellwood, 112.

esoteric groups sought to accomplish and became an authority on ancient Egyptian knowledge and spirituality. The organization obtained this status by combining the tactics put in place by other esoteric groups. Like the Freemasons, the AMORC sought to validate its history and belief system by using Egyptological discoveries and artifacts. Similar to the Golden Dawn and the A.·.A.·., the AMORC merged their spiritual practices with Egyptology, became involved in Egyptology to construct esoteric doctrines, integrated Egyptologists among their numbers, upheld syncretic values for universality, and openly engaged with intellectual circles via publications. Like the Theosophical Society and Anthroposophical Society, the AMORC refined itself as a group steeped in modern principles, including the usage of contemporary Egyptology, measurable science, and mainstream religion. Supplementary to these strategies, the timing of advancing the AMORC alongside the public's widespread infatuation with all things ancient Egyptian helped reinforce the AMORC's popularity.

Required first is the contextualization of the AMORC as a Rosicrucian movement. Rosicrucianism is an esoteric current that has its roots in Germany in the seventeenth century.²²¹ From the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century, Rosicrucianism remained primarily a literary movement which embedded Hermetic and alchemical philosophy into books and volumes.²²² Throughout the eighteenth century, esoteric groups organized as Rosicrucian societies or orders in Western Europe (particularly Germany), which competed for the claim to being the true Rosicrucian order.²²³ By the nineteenth century, numerous Rosicrucian organizations formed throughout Europe and the United

221 Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1009.

222 *Ibid.*, 1014.

223 *Ibid.*, 1014-1017.

States. Many of these societies merged with Freemasonry or were extremely influenced by it, and thus based their fraternal model on Masonic designs.²²⁴ In turn, it was during the nineteenth century that Rosicrucian groups became paramasonic fraternal organizations. By the twentieth century, Rosicrucian groups "broadly exceeded the boundaries of paramasonry" by growing to vastly international proportions.²²⁵ The AMORC was one of these fraternal orders and was founded in New York in 1915 by Harvey Spencer Lewis. The order was at first a mobile organization and was established first in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, then moved to San Francisco, California, then to Tampa, Florida.²²⁶ By 1927, Lewis moved the organization's headquarters to San José, California.²²⁷ One of the prominent features of the AMORC since its inception is its deep attachment to and integration with Egyptology.

5.1 AMORC's Usage of History and Artifacts for Esoteric and Egyptological Legitimacy

To become a successful organization, the AMORC established its legitimacy by tying itself to ancient Egyptian history and artifacts. Lewis as the head of the organization went through great lengths to provide members with the history of the order, which was directly tied to ancient pharaohs. Furthermore, the order collected ancient artifacts related to its history as validation and confirmation of the AMORC's history. By undertaking these tasks, the AMORC established itself as not just as an esoteric group, but also as an Egyptological authority and educational institution. The success that the AMORC enjoyed in establishing its legitimacy as an esoteric and Egyptological source was in part

²²⁴Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1018.

²²⁵Faivre, 100; Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1018.

²²⁶Hanegraaf et al., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1019.

²²⁷Ibid.

fueled by recycled methods of the Freemasons, only the AMORC greatly improved upon these aspects and garnered much more prominent success.

As mentioned previously, other organizations claimed to be the legitimate successor to the earliest forms of Rosicrucianism from the seventeenth century. In the case of the AMORC, however, Lewis went far beyond seventeenth-century Rosicrucianism for the order's origins. Rather, he considered the AMORC to be a legitimate successor to an initiatory order established in ancient Egypt.²²⁸ In *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers: With a Complete History of the Order*, Lewis attributes Rosicrucianism as preserved by the AMORC to ancient mystery schools founded in ancient Egypt. These ancient schools were founded around 1500 BCE by Pharaoh Thutmose III who allegedly "organized the present physical form of the secret Brotherhood and outlined many of its rules and regulations."²²⁹ Lewis argues that Thutmose organized many of the principles that appear in contemporary Rosicrucianism, such as "establishing a secret school of philosophy," organizing a "Supreme Council" to steer spiritual operations, and fraternalism.²³⁰ With Thutmose III as a central figure in the development of Rosicrucian knowledge, his model was continued in later Rosicrucian circles of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries.²³¹ Accordingly, the AMORC revered this ancient connection: Thutmose's cartouche remained as one of the primary seals and symbols of the order.²³²

Another ancient Egyptian figure important to the AMORC's historical narrative is

228Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 19-21.

229Ibid., 20-22.

230Ibid., 22-24.

231Ibid., 24-26.

232Ibid., 27-28.

Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (crowned in 1367 BCE), typically known by his later self-implemented name, Akhenaten. According to Lewis, "He was the last Great Master in the family of the founders and the one to whom we owe the really wonderful philosophies and writings used so universally throughout the world."²³³ As part of AMORC principles, it is important that Akhenaten "came to the inspiration of overthrowing the worship of idols and substituting the religion and worship of one God," because it initiated the beginning of monotheism.²³⁴ Subsequently, the culture built around Akhenaten's monotheistic revolution "outlined the initiations and forms of service used" in the order.²³⁵ According to the account in *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, it was Akhenaten who designed the symbol of the rose and cross to designate those who were the temple's initiatory students in his capital city of Amarna.²³⁶ Lewis asserts that Akhenaten created the "wonderful system of symbols used at this day, to express every phase and meaning of the Rosicrucian sciences, arts, and philosophies, and while some of these have become known to the uninitiated through the researches of Egyptologists, many remain secret and all are understandable only to the initiated."²³⁷ In sum, whereas Thutmose III was the one who devised ancient initiatory fraternalism, Akhenaten was the champion of this system and formulated the system of Rosicrucianism that the AMORC sought to carry on.

Citing pharaohs as the original founders of Rosicrucianism and claiming the AMORC as the legitimate successor to these pharaohs carries significant connotations for

²³³Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 29.

²³⁴Ibid., 31-34.

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶Ibid., 34-35.

²³⁷Ibid., 35.

the order. By very specifically referring to Thutmose III and Akhenaten as the instigators of the Rosicrucian ideas that the AMORC sought to continue, Lewis was establishing the order's legitimacy through history. As noted above, it was purportedly only initiates of the order who were enabled to understand the true potential of ancient Egyptian knowledge. Accordingly, because most Egyptologists were not initiates of the order, their knowledge was still limited and not of relevance. This line of reasoning was clearly put in place to establish Egyptological authority over ancient Egyptian knowledge and to root that authority in historical ties or a long line of experience. By being connected to two historical ancient Egyptian figures, the AMORC was positioned to uphold tradition in opposition to academic Egyptology, thus constructing a defensive means to protect their claim to legitimacy and Egyptological prowess.

In conjunction with these claims connecting the AMORC to ancient Pharaohs, Lewis and the AMORC engaged in a process to collect ancient Egyptian artifacts. The first artifact that Lewis acquired was a small statuette of Sekhmet (a lion-headed goddess), but over time the organization amassed a collection of Egyptian artifacts via donations and AMORC-supported expeditions and excavations.²³⁸ Through the 1920s and 1930s, the collection grew into a museum which kept expanding until a new entire building for the museum was dedicated in the 1960s.²³⁹ Importantly, many of these artifacts in the collection were directly related to the AMORC's historical narrative regarding its ancient Egyptian origins. For example, in one case, an artifact was acquired of a scarab which was inscribed with the name of Thutmose III, and as Lewis explains,

²³⁸Lisa Schwappach-Shirriff, *Treasures of the Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum: A Catalogue* (San José, California: Supreme Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, 2015) Amazon Kindle edition, location 227.

²³⁹Ibid.

"The Order here is to be congratulated on having in its possession one of the *oldest*, if not the most *sacred*, of all mystic jewels, one which has never been used by others than the Masters in Egypt; for it means virtually the passing of the Master's Spirit from Egypt to America, as was planned by the founders centuries ago."²⁴⁰ In other words, the artifact provides substantial *physical evidence* of the AMORC's connection to ancient Egypt.

This is but one example, as the AMORC collected numerous artifacts in direct relation to their alleged historical origins. Many of the pieces accumulated were related to eighteenth-dynasty pharaohs who the AMORC regarded as the original founders of the order (such as Thutmose III and Akhenaten). Artifacts of this variety that directly relate to the organization's narrative can still be seen in their Egyptian museum today. Some examples include a ring of Akhenaten, a relief of Akhenaten making offerings to the Aten (sun god), other various Akhenaten-related fragments, among many more of eighteenth-dynasty significance.²⁴¹ These artifacts, which as Egyptologist and historian Erik Hornung explains, are in actuality "genuinely important" and are of great significance.²⁴² Therefore, not only did the artifacts influence esoteric discourse, but the artifacts were actually important in the field of Egyptology, as well.

The usage of artifacts by the AMORC for physical evidence of its connection to ancient Egypt had significant and symbolic implications. The collection allowed the order to have physical proof of its historical ties to ancient Egypt, thus strengthening the legitimacy of its claims. The collection was tied to the organization's belief system, acting as evidence for an enduring connection to Egyptian civilization. In addition, the creation

²⁴⁰Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 27.

²⁴¹Schwappach-Shirriff, location 1412-1556.

²⁴²Hornung, 112.

of Egyptological exhibits, the cataloging of ancient artifacts, and ownership of important pieces rendered the order an educational and/or Egyptological organization. By having, displaying, and educating the public on artifacts, the AMORC became an authority on ancient Egypt and became actively involved *in* Egyptology. Thus, the AMORC greatly bolstered its authority as both an esoteric *and* scholarly organization which revolved entirely around Egyptology and ancient Egyptian knowledge.

Lewis openly criticizes Egyptologists in *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers* for their lack of understanding regarding Egyptian artifacts and symbols. To Lewis, this is because academic Egyptologists are "uninitiated" and therefore the real information "remain[s] secret."²⁴³ This demonstrates that Lewis thought only a combination of esotericism and Egyptological study could reveal the truth behind the artifacts. This is clearly a gesture to overshadow mainstream Egyptologists and render the AMORC a unique entity fully capable of understanding, interpreting, and legitimizing ancient Egyptian knowledge and artifacts.

The AMORC's alleged historical connection to ancient Egypt and its collection of artifacts reveal a number of important things regarding the order's success as an esoteric movement. Like the Freemasons before them, the AMORC greatly bolstered its authority within the realm of Egyptian knowledge by attaching itself to ancient Egyptian history. Also like the Freemasons, the order used ancient artifacts as physical evidence to legitimize its claims. Compared to the Masonic strategy, however, the AMORC upheld a more concise and uniform design. Compared to Masons who generally referred to ancient Egypt as the homeland of mysticism, the AMORC pinpointed specific historical figures

²⁴³Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 35.

(in particular the eighteenth-dynasty pharaohs) as the forefathers of the Rosicrucian movement. This specificity granted the order more explicit references to cite and thus a more credible origin story without the hindrance of speculation. Thus, more so than the Masons, the AMORC stayed consistent regarding its origin story, thus contributing to its success.

Furthermore, the AMORC improved and perfected the Masonic design of depending on artifacts for legitimacy. Whereas the Freemasons struggled with their secretive tendencies and toiled over the endeavor of revealing their Egyptian roots and artifact-centered proof to the public, the AMORC expressed an openness about their Egyptian traditions and artifacts. Instead of using one artifact such as an obelisk to supplement their origin story, the order had a collection of relevant pieces related to their ancient Egyptian roots. In addition, the organization by the late 1920s institutionalized the collection into a museum which allowed public visits to the museum. Thus, the creation of a museum portrayed the AMORC to the public as an educational entity. This identity as an educational institution aided in erasing potential speculation or skepticism. With more physical proof of its origin story, transparency regarding its connection to Egypt, and establishment as a credible educational institution, the order was enabled to better guarantee its prosperity.

5.2 AMORC's Maintenance of Authority and Self-Preservation through Egyptology

History and artifacts are two means by which the AMORC established its authority as both an esoteric and Egyptological organization. Maintaining that authority,

however, was a different matter for the organization. In order to preserve its credibility, position of Egyptological expertise, and aura of esoteric mastery, the AMORC had numerous features that kept it secure. The organization included Egyptology in its spiritual system, adopted modern archaeological feats into its doctrines, strove for involvement with Egyptologists, maintained an all-encompassing syncretic system of values, and upheld the value of mystic practicality over irrelevant theory. Through these methods, which were largely fueled by Egyptology, the AMORC was able to maintain its authority on the value of ancient Egyptian knowledge.

Ancient Egyptian concepts were integrated into the AMORC's spiritual practices. Once again, a particular example resides with studies on Thutmose III. In the *Rosicrucian Manual*, a book prepared for initiates of the order, members are informed in the section "Attaining Psychic Illumination" that Thutmose III is one of the "Master Minds" or "Master Personalities" in an assembly of twelve who has been repeatedly reincarnated on Earth.²⁴⁴ Thutmose III (also referred to in his different incarnations as Kut-Hu-Mi, "the *Illuminator*," Kroomata, or Kichinjirgha) is regarded as a master on the cosmic plane and at the top of the esoteric hierarchy (with the AMORC as the next step down on that hierarchy, just below the masters).²⁴⁵ Members are also instructed that true esoteric initiation takes place when a psychic connection is made to Thutmose (or other masters).²⁴⁶ Once this connection is made, Thutmose has the ability to affect the consciousness of the initiate, thus illuminating the student both consciously and

²⁴⁴Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Manual*, 5th ed. (San José, California: Rosicrucian Press, 1932), 137.

²⁴⁵Ibid., 138.

²⁴⁶Ibid.

subconsciously.²⁴⁷ Lewis explains, "the student, who attains membership in the Great White Brotherhood [AMORC], after due preparation and real worthiness, first discovers this by becoming conscious of having passed through a series of events constituting a true *Initiation*."²⁴⁸ In other words, initiation and enlightenment happen upon becoming one with a greater etheric consciousness, with Thutmose III as one these potential outlets.

This makes for an important dynamic within the AMORC to maintain Egyptological authority. With Thutmose as an active spiritual outlet for members of the order, Thutmose was not only a historical connection but a connection existing and enduring in the present. Thus, members were not only illumined because of their historical ties, but because of their spiritual ties to the same source. This grants additional merit to the AMORC's claims that members are the purveyors of ancient Egyptian knowledge and continue the ancient traditions. Furthermore, the present spiritual connection to Thutmose III implies that Egyptological theory on ancient Egyptian knowledge is limited as Egyptologists are unable to interact with ancient pharaohs. The AMORC, in contrast, has the means to ancient Egyptian illumination direct from an ancient Egyptian *conscious* source, in this case Thutmose III.

Despite that the AMORC was not shy from calling out the limitations of Egyptologists, it is evident that the order must have relied on contemporary Egyptology in order to maintain its legitimacy. Examples are present once again with the two pharaohs revered among members, Thutmose III and Akhenaten. Thutmose's tomb was discovered in 1898 (though his mummy was elsewhere and discovered in 1881), but

²⁴⁷Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Manual*, 138.
²⁴⁸Ibid.

many breakthroughs on Thutmose III came later, such as in 1916 when a tomb was discovered for Thutmose's harem girls.²⁴⁹ The Egyptologist who discovered Thutmose's tomb, Victor Loret, served as the chair of Egyptology at the University of Lyon from 1886 until 1929, and was a teacher to many subsequent generations of Egyptologists.²⁵⁰ Similarly, Akhenaten's city of Tel el Amarna went through heavy excavations throughout the 1880s (in part by Flinders Petrie), but new excavations continued to uncover information regarding Akhenaten in the expeditions funded by the AMORC in the 1920s. Thus, it is clear that the order's alleged historical roots in ancient Egypt directly corresponded with contemporary Egyptological breakthroughs that had been developing in chronological proxy to the AMORC's foundation in 1915 and consolidation in the 1920s. Interest and emphasis on Thutmose III and Akhenaten were newer developments in Egyptology, and therefore their inclusion in esotericism was also a newer (and at least more frequent) addition to esotericism. From this evidence, it seems that the organization's origin story could not have been so refined without newer Egyptology and the contemporary developments on Thutmose and Akhenaten.

The reliance on contemporary Egyptological developments set the AMORC aside from other esotericist groups and worked favorably for the order. Other esoteric or Rosicrucian groups, such as the International School of the Rosy Cross in Germany, traced Egyptian magic to Hermes Trismegistus, the mysterious author of the *Corpus Hermeticum*.²⁵¹ Hermes Trismegistus, even since ancient times, has been subject to

249Peter A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt* (1994, repr., New York: Thames & Hudson Inc., 2006), 111.

250Patrizia Piacentini, "'Wonderful Things' on Paper: the Egyptologist Victor Loret in the Valley of the Kings," *Apollo* 158, no. 497 (July 2003), 1, Gale Academic OneFile.

251Hornung, 114.

debates about his true identity and status as a god or man.²⁵² In turn, Hermes' murky background has framed him sometimes a mythical being, or sometimes a man of unknown origin. The AMORC, in contrast, used contemporary Egyptology to pinpoint their Egyptian forefathers and eliminate ambiguity. Whereas Hermes Trismegistus as a figure is shrouded in cryptic mystery, the two alleged founders of Rosicrucianism, Thutmose III and Akhenaten, are verifiable historical figures with leftover physical evidence. In turn, the AMORC positioned itself to have a more reliable and real-life ancestry, which directly corresponds with Egyptological developments just prior to and after the order's foundation.

Another way the AMORC maintained credibility was to reach out to scholarly Egyptologists to bolster Egyptological authority and help verify or supplement the order's traditions. As mentioned previously, Lewis and the AMORC supported excavation work in Akhenaten's capital city in the 1920s, and in particular, funded the Egypt Exploration Society.²⁵³ The Egypt Exploration Society, which was originally the Egypt Exploration Fund founded by Amelia Edwards, was by this time a prominent Egyptological organization that had included major scholars such as Flinders Petrie. Because the AMORC funded the Egypt Exploration Society's excavations, the order received some of the artifacts excavated from the site.²⁵⁴ In another instance, the AMORC recruited Belgian Egyptologist Jean Capart (who was of prominence) to oversee the artifacts in the organization's collection.²⁵⁵

In these cases, intermingling with Egyptologists and including them in the order's

²⁵²Hornung, 6, 53.

²⁵³Schwappach-Shirriff, Location 227.

²⁵⁴Ibid.

²⁵⁵Hornung, 112.

operations served to increase Egyptological credibility. The AMORC's support of Egyptologists produced positive consequences. First, the funding of the Egypt Exploration Society allowed the order to acquire ancient artifacts related to the order's belief system. Second, the inclusion of prominent Egyptologists granted additional validation, verification, and Egyptological prestige to the order. Third, the involvement with distinguished Egyptologists helped maintain the AMORC's appearance as a legitimate Egyptological organization. All of these elements combined only preserved the Egyptological authority that the order sought to maintain.

With Egyptological credibility in place, the AMORC upheld esoteric means to ground its validity, as well. Like other esoteric organizations, the order sought to ground truth in syncretism and universality, only its syncretic system was even more broad and all-encompassing. Furthermore, the organization utilized syncretism as a tool to grant greater member accessibility. Whereas other organizations pinpointed certain principles to be reconcilable with their belief systems, the AMORC left syncretism open to its initiates' interpretations. Regarding reconcilable correspondences, Lewis explains, "The teachings [of the AMORC] are inclusive enough to contain all that is good and practical and based upon Truth as presented in the teachings of all the other metaphysical schools of India, Egypt, Persia, and other lands."²⁵⁶ In addition, Lewis voices his support for ideological inclusivity and argues, "Not being bound by any creed or dogmas, or limited by any traditions of antiquity, the Rosicrucian Order can logically and rightfully add to its teachings and modify them continuously in keeping with the evolving consciousness and

²⁵⁶Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 284.

requirement of all men and women."²⁵⁷

This approach to syncretism made the AMORC reconcilable with as many ideas as possible and extremely accessible to anyone interested in enrolling as a member. Just as other esotericists did in the past (like the Golden Dawn and the A.·.A.·.), the AMORC consolidated esoteric authority by maintaining that there was a universal truth behind all correspondences. In addition, the order expanded upon the concept and was straightforwardly more inclusive regarding existing belief systems. The organization maintained that its purpose was not to override belief systems, but to expand the knowledge and potential of its members. This policy of inclusivity in part allowed the organization to grow to huge international proportions.²⁵⁸ Arguably, the inclusion and unification of an international body of people under one universal message is yet another method to maintain self-preservation. It is important to note, however, that this universal message allegedly began in ancient Egypt, thus making ancient Egyptians and the AMORC as the instigating unifiers of syncretic correspondences.

In addition to syncretic sentiments, the AMORC advocated useful practice of their knowledge over counterproductive rhetorical theory. Practicality and applied usage of esoteric knowledge are recurring themes of the AMORC's teachings. In *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, members are told that the ultimate purpose of the order is to diffuse knowledge which is actually useful for members and humankind as a whole: "But all knowledge of the metaphysical, occult, psychological, mystical, natural, spiritual, and mental laws as pertains to man's being, man's development, and man's mastership of the

²⁵⁷Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 285-286.

²⁵⁸Faivre, 100-101.

conditions around him, are included in the course so far as they are of *practical value* and enable him to actually *do things* in this material world for his own betterment and the betterment of others."²⁵⁹ In other words, the purpose of esoteric knowledge is for the sake of pragmatically making the world a better place for practitioners and the world.

It is necessary to acknowledge that the AMORC positioned itself to determine what is "practical and based upon Truth," and did so regarding "the teachings of... Egypt."²⁶⁰ This stance implied that the order knew what was best for humankind and confirmation for this line of reasoning was reinforced in ancient Egyptian wisdom. As was the case with previous esoteric groups, emphasis on practicality was yet another method to cultivate an atmosphere of Egyptological expertise. Whereas Egyptologists were stuck theorizing over the significance of ancient knowledge, the AMORC claimed to know the point and purpose of ancient knowledge. This allowed the order to move beyond the simple quarrels of Egyptologists and make Egyptian knowledge useful for members. This process, in turn, could lend even further to the organization's soundness.

Another method of maintaining authority was through extensive publishing, notably via books and journals. Lewis himself was a motivated author who wrote numerous books on esotericism, Rosicrucianism, and spiritual principles. Additionally, he and the AMORC launched a digest for intellectual collaboration called *The Mystic Triangle*. The digest was for members of the order and was run from 1925 until 1929, and later became known as the *Rosicrucian Digest*. This publication allowed the AMORC to diffuse information and exchange knowledge, which allowed the organization to stay

²⁵⁹Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 284.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*

competitive in intellectual circles, engage with potential challenges to Rosicrucian viewpoints, and widen the scope of the order's perspectives.

Importantly, the journal was used to display the order's Egyptological aptitude. In all nine of 1929's issues of *The Mystic Triangle*, Lewis and other AMORC authors log a group expedition to Egypt, in which they tie spiritual revelations to their experiences in ancient Egyptian sites or museums. In one instance, for example, the group ventured to Luxor to carry out an initiation ceremony in an eighteenth-dynasty temple.²⁶¹ Because Luxor was the cultural center of the eighteenth dynasty, it was an important destination for AMORC members, who published the results of their mystic experiences in *The Mystic Triangle*. In an account by a member listed as the "Trip Secretary," Lewis (referred to by his title, Emperor) is presented as an adept of Egyptian magic and "so familiar with ancient Egyptian history."²⁶² Consequently, a news source was disseminated that advertised Lewis as an expert of ancient Egyptian knowledge and the order as a means to achieving an ancient form of enlightenment. Thus, *The Mystic Triangle* provided a means to exhibit the Egyptological worth of the order and its members.

The AMORC maintained its Egyptological and esoteric authority by recycling many of the means that were used by the Golden Dawn and the A.∴A.∴. The order referred to contemporary connections to Egyptian spiritual entities (such as Thutmose), adopted newer Egyptology to shape its esoteric belief system, interacted with Egyptologists for validation, upheld syncretic tendencies for easy accessibility,

²⁶¹The Trip Secretary, "Report of the Egyptian Tour," *The Mystic Triangle* 7, no. 7 (August 1929), 112-115.

²⁶²Ibid., 113-114

emphasized practicality over theory, and displayed Egyptological aptitude via publishing outlets. All of these strategies had been developed among members of the Golden Dawn and the A.∴A.∴ prior to the AMORC. The AMORC's success, however, was from all of these strategies working in tandem with one another.

For example, with the case of Thutmose III as a central figure to the AMORC's doctrine, the organization did not take an approach of Egyptian *revival*, but rather, Egyptian *continuance*. Crowley in the A.∴A.∴ thought himself to be fulfilling a prophecy and was contacted by a spiritual entity to *revive* or *restore* ancient Egyptian knowledge. The AMORC, in contrast, claimed to be *continuing* what they had always been doing, as evident in their spiritual and historical connection to their ancient Egyptian founder, Thutmose III. An aspect such as this one lends further merit to the claim of Egyptological expertise because it implies that the order has had much experience and practice in handling ancient wisdom. Therefore, the order preserved its Egyptological and esoteric legitimacy via reused strategies, but honed in on a much more uniform and effective system to do so.

5.3 Rendering the AMORC a Modern Movement

Antoine Faivre thinks the AMORC successful because it was "open to the outer world and modernity." I expand upon this statement to argue that the AMORC's leanings toward modernity as defined by religion and science ensured its success. Other esoteric groups, such as the Theosophical Society and the Anthroposophical Society, went through great lengths to ensure that their esoteric principles were updated for contemporaries.

Managing a status as a current movement meant renouncing concepts like magic that were incompatible with the common understanding of modernity. Like the Theosophical Society and the Anthroposophical Society, the AMORC made sure to be agreeable with modern sentiments in order to portray itself as a most up-to-date, rational, and reliable organization. As had been done by others before, the AMORC ensured its harmony with both religion and science (as they were still inherently modern concepts), and left little room for unfathomable or unexplainable occult phenomena. Ironically, at the heart of the organization's drive for modernity was Egyptology, as ancient Egypt served as the prototypical example of how to achieve an advanced or modern status.

Science (of all kinds) was extremely important in the AMORC and was used to validate the order's esoteric concepts. Lewis maintained that any spiritual beliefs were compatible with the order's teachings as long as they were practical and beneficial for humankind.²⁶³ Similarly, Lewis makes the same argument regarding the use and practicality of science. According to the account in *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, Rosicrucians have always been at the forefront of science or have made scientific advancements long before they catch on in the mainstream.²⁶⁴ Lewis does warn that scientific methods can be limiting due to the pattern of "constantly retracting and correcting statements made."²⁶⁵ However, at the same time, Lewis explains that "Rosicrucians have made most of the important contributions to scientific knowledge because of their unique methods of securing information, and their freedom from doctrinal limitations, which permits them to accept new knowledge that is proven true

²⁶³Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 284.

²⁶⁴Ibid., 288-289.

²⁶⁵Ibid., 289.

regardless of its uniqueness or astounding nature."²⁶⁶ Just like with esoteric principles, science boils down to whatever can be useful or practical for Rosicrucians, thus making much of science reconcilable with the AMORC.

Lewis regards mainstream religion, in particular monotheistic traditions, in the same manner. He strongly asserts that the AMORC does not embrace any one religion over the other.²⁶⁷ Regarding Abrahamic monotheism, Lewis explains that "there is nothing in the real teachings of the Rosicrucians which would make a devout Christian unhappy in his orthodoxy, nor is there anything in the teachings which would make the Jew or the Mohammedan unhappy."²⁶⁸ Rosicrucianism to Lewis "can be completely studied, assimilated, and put into practical application without in any way interfering with the religious beliefs of everyone."²⁶⁹ Once again, for Lewis, religion and esotericism are fully compatible as long as the two interact in a manner that is considered practical and beneficial for the initiate, the order, and humankind.

It is important to note that in the 1920s when the AMORC was rapidly developing, there existed tension between religion and science in American society. For example, the Scopes trial of 1925 was a climax of media-generated controversy between advocates of Darwin's biological theory of evolution and supporters of biblical literalism. Many Americans at the height of the 1920s controversy found themselves neutral or in favor of compromise regarding a mixture of science and religion.²⁷⁰ Lewis and the AMORC openly embraced this compromise, as it seemed that an agreement of the two

²⁶⁶Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 290.

²⁶⁷Ibid., 234.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

²⁶⁹Ibid.

²⁷⁰Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 119.

was the way to build a more advanced society. In *A Thousand Years of Yesterdays: A Strange Story of Mystic Revelations*, a novel published in 1920 to metaphorically explain his spiritual beliefs, Lewis explains in the introduction, "Yesterday the idea commonly prevailed that Religion and Science were antagonistic. Today they are thought to be essentially dissociated. Tomorrow they will be known to be one."²⁷¹ As it is explained in the introduction, religion and science are not just reconcilable with each other but are one in the same, as they are both a "matter of *inspiration* and *revelation*" and reveal truths.²⁷² It is evident in this account that in order to move forth into the modern age, a unification of science and religion must ensue. Furthermore, it creates a dynamic within the AMORC that any spiritual revelation can be proven with science, and vice versa. This process grounded the order in rationality (as opposed to unmeasurable superstition), which thus catered to the entire spectrum of modern Americans be they on the religious side, scientific side, or in the middle.

At first glance, these open-minded approaches to both science and religion may seem somewhat detached from the Egyptological standpoints of the AMORC. However, this is not at all the case, as the AMORC was greatly inspired by ancient Egyptian religion and science. Ancient Egyptian scientific feats and religious revelations stood as the bases and prototypes for the AMORC to emulate in modern society. Regarding scientific breakthroughs, Lewis explains that Egypt was the original source of knowledge and it was among ancient Egyptian elite initiatory groups that "the doctrines and principles of science were taught."²⁷³ Regarding religion, it was in Egypt that Akhenaten

²⁷¹Harvey Spencer Lewis, *A Thousand Years of Yesterdays: A Strange Story of Mystic Revelations* (San Francisco, California: The College Press, 1920), 9.

²⁷²Ibid.

²⁷³Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 20.

implemented the "worship of one God, a supreme deity, whose spirit was in Heaven and whose physical manifestation was the Sun-- the *Symbol of Life*."²⁷⁴

The respect for religion and science, the unification of the two to characterize modernity, and the Egyptian inspirations for the two expose numerous crucial aspects about the AMORC. First, the all-inclusive aspect of the order regarding religion and science catered to widespread ideals of modernity and allowed for greater accessibility for potential or existing members. The inclusion of everyone regardless of ideological stance better ensured the success of the order, as exclusivity was erased and more members were enabled to join. This aspect also would have retained more members, as existing belief systems did not have to interfere with the concepts taught in the order. Second, Lewis wanted the merging of religion and science to be a primary element of the modern age. As had been done by esotericists before, this aspect married religion and science to expunge irrational superstition from the order, thus adjusting the organization to fit with the common sentiments of contemporary Americans. Third, the model for utilizing religion and science to usher a golden age was ancient Egypt, which was regarded as the source of valuable scientific and/or religious revelations. Thus, the AMORC's concept of modernity and its ultimate goal to continue ancient Egyptian traditions were connected.

All of these elements were ways which the AMORC defined its own idea of modernity, but directed that definition in a manner to ensure success. Like the Theosophical Society and Anthroposophical Society had done previously, the AMORC catered to the modernized sentiments of contemporaries (in this case the American

²⁷⁴Harvey Spencer Lewis, *Rosicrucian Questions and Answers*, 31.

public) to safeguard itself. Furthermore, also like the Theosophists and Anthroposophists, the AMORC linked together modernity with ancient Egyptian developments, and the ancient knowledge and principles served as the models for what should be at the helm of the present. Perhaps more improved than previous esoteric orders, the organization's open-mindedness regarding elements of modernity worked as a defense mechanism for self-preservation. The open call for inclusivity, fairness, and anti-prejudice also worked as great outreach for potential members and as a means to retain existing members. With open-minded, tolerant, and receptive ideals at the forefront of AMORC's policy of esoteric, scientific, and religious inclusion, the organization was able to charge forth as an extremely influential esoteric organization. At the heart of this, however, was a close Rosicrucian reliance on Egyptian history, knowledge, and study. In sum, the AMORC's popularity and success was in part due to the order's role as the extremely accessible link for its initiates to an ancient history, which was made available to everyone.

Also worth mentioning is the timing of the AMORC's foundation and development in conjunction with Egyptological developments. King Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered by Howard Carter in 1922, which began a boom of mainstream public interest in Egypt and Egyptology.²⁷⁵ It is important to point out that Tutankhamun was an eighteenth-dynasty pharaoh, and the order did much to found its origins in eighteenth-dynasty Egypt. Also worth pointing out is that Akhenaten, a pharaoh so heavily emphasized in the AMORC's belief system, was potentially Pharaoh Tutankhamun's father (Tutankhamun's original name was Tutankhaten).²⁷⁶ With the mainstream so

275Brier, 167-177.

276Shaw and Nicholson, 21.

heavily invested in Tutankhamun and the order with alleged historical roots and spiritual revelations from Tutankhamun's family, the teachings of the organization would undoubtedly interest outsiders, thus fueling its popularity.

The AMORC gained widespread recognition and was able to establish its authority on ancient Egyptian knowledge and Egyptology only by recycling methods that had been used by other esoteric groups in the past (or perhaps as contemporaries). However, it was by fully combining these methods of creating legitimacy, maintaining authority, and allowing for adaptability that the AMORC was enabled to become a popular movement substantial enough to attract hundreds of thousands of members. Whereas other esoteric groups prior to the order had developed methods of creating and holding onto Egyptological authority, it was the AMORC that fused the methods together and had a much more refined outline of its history, principles, and values. The success that the order has enjoyed still remains evident today. According to the AMORC itself, the order has since grown to huge international proportions, publishes a variety of books, maintains its elaborate system of mailing monographic instructions to members, and partakes in world conventions.²⁷⁷

The success of the AMORC reveals something about Wouter J. Hanegraaf's standpoint in *Esotericism and the Academy*. Hanegraaf argues that modernization is the process that created the esoteric, as esotericism served as an example of anti-modern to better define the scientific rationality of modernism.²⁷⁸ As he explains it, "the new science and post-Enlightenment society define themselves as 'modern' by way of contrast with

²⁷⁷Christian Rebisse, *Rosicrucian History and Mysteries* (San José, California: Grand Lodge of the English Language Jurisdiction, AMORC, Inc., 2005), 195-197.

²⁷⁸Hanegraaf, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 254.

any appeal to the authority of 'ancient wisdom.'"²⁷⁹ In turn, it is the identity of the modern that shapes the identity of the esoteric, because esotericism functions as the model of what not to be in the modern world.²⁸⁰ I argue that the success of the AMORC as an esoteric fraternal order overturns this generalization. It is clear that the AMORC went through great lengths to establish its own Egyptological and esoteric authority, maintain that authority separate from the academy (or even overshadow it), and grant itself the adaptable dynamism necessary to adjust to widespread perceptions of modernity. This process demonstrates the *active willingness* on behalf of an esoteric group to reconcile with perceptions of modernity and shape its own identity on *its own accord*. The massive member base in the AMORC (then and now) is evidence that the efforts to shape its own identity are indeed successful, and the order is not just an underground body of information rejected from the academy. Rather, the AMORC is successful because it *purposely* included knowledge from the academy, and went far beyond it.

²⁷⁹Hanegraaf, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 254.

²⁸⁰*Ibid.*

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CONCLUSION

Upon looking at the Egyptian elements central to fraternal esoteric orders from 1875-1930, it becomes clear that Egyptology has been a central element to the foundation, development, and perpetuation of esotericism. However, at the same time, Egyptology has been greatly affected by esotericism, as well. Though Egyptologists have made various attempts to distance themselves from esotericism, esoteric groups have continuously made attempts to integrate themselves into the field since 1875. At first glance, it seems that esotericism remains occult or hidden due to its exile from academia or Egyptology, but in actuality, this is not the case. Rather, esotericists deliberately remain esoteric because they purposely attempt to go beyond the limits of academic scholarship. However, it is important to note that in order to go beyond the limits of scholarship, esotericists have built upon existing academic knowledge. The esoteric usage of scholarly information entails becoming involved with it, using it, and applying it to their own principles. This, in turn, initiates a cycle in which esotericism has evolved alongside academic breakthroughs and esotericism has been wholly adaptable to new scholarship. Once again, this process becomes most clear when looking at advances in Egyptology in conjunction with esoteric groups greatly influenced by ancient Egypt.

This pattern reveals two important aspects regarding Western esotericism. First, esotericism in the face of academia, or Egyptology in particular, was not a static or conservative viewpoint that outwardly rejected scholarly knowledge. Rather, esoteric groups greatly utilized scholarly knowledge and went through great efforts to include that

scholarly knowledge in esoteric history, doctrines, or practices. This entailed an engagement with scholars, and from this open engagement a sense of competition between esotericists and scholars arose, especially over control of the meaning and usage of Egyptological studies. Second, the esoteric engagement with scholarship and the esoteric attempts to overcome the limitations of scholarship show that esoteric groups were active in defining themselves and their own belief system. In turn, then, it was the agency of esotericists themselves that actively defined *what they wanted* as esoteric. These two progressions show the evolutionary potential of esotericism, even if dealing with ancient concepts, such as ancient Egyptian knowledge.

From 1875 to 1930, Egyptology underwent rapid development and changes, and synchronously, so did esotericism. This is evident by looking at the groups noted throughout this thesis. As new monuments and sites were found in Egypt, the Freemasons updated their history to fit that narrative. As British Egyptology uncovered numerous artifacts, translated information, and housed accessible information in museums, British occult groups (such as the Golden Dawn or the A.∴A.∴) formed their esoteric practices and spiritual rituals around this new information. The Theosophical Society and the Anthroposophical Society updated esotericism to fit into the widespread paradigm of modernist scientific thought and popular religious currents but maintained esoteric ties to ancient Egypt. By the first half of the twentieth century, the Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis moved forward to become a prominent esoteric organization and did so by merging Egyptology with esotericism.

Significantly, these are but a few of the groups that claimed Egyptological

authority and were built around an understanding of ancient Egypt. Furthermore, though the scope of this project is the late nineteenth century through about 1930, it should also be acknowledged that this process has not stopped and Egyptology continues to be a central part of what moves esotericism forward. Not only do fraternal groups still exist today such as the AMORC, but Egyptological esotericism can be found in New Age movements, on widespread internet theories and conspiracies, and in esoteric circles centered around extraterrestrial theories.²⁸¹ Because the correlation of the occult and Egyptology persists, it is clear that the interactions of esotericism and Egyptology have had a heavy impact on Western intellectualism. Though these more recent occult developments may differ from past esoteric fraternal orders, these current movements can be better contextualized and understood by looking to the past developments of esoteric and Egyptological crossover.

²⁸¹Hornung, 182-183, 193; Pinch, 177.

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