


Imperialism and the abject Gothic double: Jane Goodwin Austin's 'After Three Thousand Years'

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Jane Goodwin Austin (1831–1894) published her short story 'After Three Thousand Years' in 1868. Austin's tale is one of the first narratives to deal with a malevolent female mummy and what is known as the mummy's curse. Her story has received limited critical attention unlike a similar story published by Louisa May Alcott in 1869, 'Lost in a Pyramid, or The Mummy's Curse'. This lack of scholarly attention makes Austin's short story more interesting to the researcher than that of Alcott. In my article, I will perform a close reading of 'After Three Thousand Years', examining how the imperialist theme is intertwined with the abject Gothic doubling of the mummy and the female protagonists, which I consider to be central to the plot of Austin's story.

Keywords: Jane Goodwin Austin; mummies; Imperialism; Gothic; female double; uncanny.

Introduction

Jane Goodwin Austin's short story 'After Three Thousand Years' (1868) was written shortly before the mummymania of the period between 1880 and 1914, in which the ambulatory and vengeful male mummy was introduced into popular cultural history. Austin's story, like that of Louisa May Alcott's 'Lost in a Pyramid, or, The Mummy's Curse', deals with a malevolent female mummy who is metonymically and supernaturally associated with a stolen artefact. Alcott's and Austin's stories are briefly referred to in Roger Luckhurst's (2012) book *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* and Jasmine Day's (2006) *The Mummy's Curse: Mummymania in the English-speaking World*. In his 2004 book, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth Century American Egyptomania*, Scott Trafton does a more careful reading of Alcott's story, but makes no mention of Austin. Austin's work, which was very popular when she was alive, has received little to no extensive scholarly attention, with the exception of Kari Holloway Miller's (2015) doctoral thesis "'So Long as the Work is Done": Recovering Jane Goodwin Austin' in which Miller provides an overview of Austin's life and analyses two of Austin's better known novels, but does not engage with Austin's short stories. In this article, I will perform a close reading of Austin's 'After Three Thousand Years', examining how an imperialist theme is intertwined with the abject Gothic doubling of the mummy and the main female protagonist, which I consider to be central to the plot of Austin's story. Whilst Alcott's story 'Lost in a Pyramid' has received more attention than Austin's 'After Three Thousand Years', I consider Austin's story to be better than that of Alcott and to deserve more renown in the genre of mummy literature.

Story of the Mummy

Mummy literature can be considered as starting with *The Mummy! A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century* by Jane Loudon, which appeared in 1827. She introduced an ambulatory mummy, the pharaoh Cheops, awakened through electricity, who comes to London in 2126 to usurp the throne. Cheops judges London society in relation to the time of his own rule and he is described as a cruel-faced fiend. His construction as monstrous and a danger to Western society became the example that most of the later ambulatory male mummies assumed. In 1840, the French author Théophile Gautier wrote *Le Pied de Momie* [*The Mummy's Foot*], followed by *Le Roman de la Momie* [*The Romance of the Mummy*] (Gautier 1858), both of which established the idea of a romance between a male narrator and a female mummy. It is these two themes, the romance and the malevolent curse, that inform most of the mummy stories from the mid-19th century through to around 1914. In the late 19th century, works such as Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), Sir Henry Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and, most notably, Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903) popularised the intertwined theme of the curse and the romance. Stoker's work, although less well known than his most famous work *Dracula*, can be considered a major contribution to what has become known as the trope of the 'curse of the mummy'. The narrative employs the Gothic

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female double, where the awakened female mummy Tera takes over her living female human double, Margaret Trelawny. The double is a recurring trope in Gothic literature where a merging or taking over of one character by another is common. Doubles are seen to partake of 'aspects of each other' so that a stealing of identity occurs (Horner & Zlosnik 2001:84). This theft entraps one of the characters in an alien identity, which is obvious in Tera's usurping of Margaret's body. This form of female doubling is repeated in a 1906 book by George Chetwynd-Griffith *The Mummy and Miss Nitocris: A Phantasy of the Fourth Dimension*, in which the mummy Nitocris merges with her living double Miss Nitocris Marmion, the heroine of the narrative. Chetwynd-Griffith's novel is a rather weak emulation of Stoker's work.

Daly (2004:110–111) writes that whilst much of the late 19th century and early 20th century mummy tales concentrate on a male collector or Egyptologist who falls in love with a revitalised female mummy, there are fewer tales that deal with the vengeful ambulatory male mummy, which tends to make his appearance in films. Yet, there are late 19th-century literary evocations of the ambulatory male mummy, which occur in Australian author Guy Boothby's *Pharos the Egyptian* (1899) and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lot No. 240* (1892) and *The Ring of Thoth* (1890). These ambulatory male mummies are depicted as malevolent, violent and evil. In contrast to the love relationship between the male protagonist and the female mummy, or the vengeful ambulatory mummy, the story by Jane Goodwin Austin is a very unpleasant evocation of the curse narrative in which the mummy makes only a brief appearance but remains the malevolent presence within the plot. Austin's story repositions Egypt from a location of 'the sublime' into one of 'sensational horror' (Luckhurst 2012:164). Bulfin (2011:420) argues that mummy curse fiction can be seen to outnumber the romances, but that there is also a significant proportion of these 'ambiguous curse narratives with no suggestion of the female mummy as anything other than hostile and vengeful'. Bulfin (2011:420) goes on to mention tales such as Alcott's 'Lost in a Pyramid' (1869) along with lesser known stories such as 'The Egyptian Amulet' (1881); 'The Curse of Vasartas' (Henry 1889) and 'At the Pyramid of the Sacred Bulls' (Mansford 1896). Again, there is the notable omission of Austin's 1868 story. According to Jasmine Day, scholar Dominic Montserrat considered Alcott's story to be the first example of American curse fiction. However, Day indicates that the 1862 'The Mummy's Soul' by an unknown or anonymous author is one of the first of these American curse stories (Day 2006:loc. 46). She adds that this story might have inspired Alcott's own story or 'even been plagiarized' by Alcott and by implication Austin (Day 2006:46).

Day (2006) provides a brief analysis of the storyline of 'The Mummy's Soul', where the narrator, at the start of story, rhetorically asks if:

[T]he oracles of Egyptian mythology spoke falsely, when they asserted, that the soul, after three thousand years of pilgrimage to other shrines, would reinvest the bodies of the dead with new life? (pp. 46–47)

This seems to presage the possibility that whatever he finds will awaken something 3000 years old (Anon 1862:435). In the tomb in which he finds himself, the narrator unwraps a female mummy who then crumbles to dust from which he picks out a 'stone scarabaeus on whose back was graven many minute hieroglyphics' (Anon 1862:437). He manages to translate these hieroglyphics as 'three thousand years hence a new life' (Anon 1862:437). Along with the scarab, he steals a vase and an insect that on closer inspection is seen to be a fly. When this fly is reawakened in the narrator's house, it kills his wife. The fly then fatally bites the narrator, who tosses it into the fire whereupon the mummy is physically re-invoked and drives the narrator out of his domestic environment (Day 2006:46). Austin's story reveals an obvious awareness of this story through both her title 'After Three Thousand Years', and her use of a similar device involving scarabaei and the curse that it will bring into the Imperial domestic sphere. Whilst Day shows that this 1862 story acted as inspiration for Alcott's story, she only indirectly references the obvious relationship that Austin's story owes to it, when she mentions that the curse is prominent in both the 1862 story, and Alcott's and Austin's stories. However, Austin's and Alcott's stories show how the sacrilege of robbing the mummy results in punishment through curses attached to objects, which reduce the living to virtual or actual corpses. These stories are seen by Day (2006:47) to 'eschew the ... living mummy motif to concentrate upon more sympathetic portrayals of mummies'. Nevertheless, the mummy in Austin's story still evinces an abject and monstrous agency that, as I will show, brings death and malevolence into an Imperial domestic setting, thus allowing for a form of reverse colonisation of space and embodiment.

Imperial gothic and abhorrent bodies

Patrick Brantlinger in his book entitled *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830–1914* posited the notion of an Imperial Gothic. He observed that Egypt was a location for many Gothic narratives that included mummies (Brantlinger 2013:4512). These narratives tend to involve the violence of the colonial encounter with long buried curses and mysterious vengeful objects complexly interwoven with the many years of colonial occupation that Egypt endured (Luckhurst 2012:166). It is this accreted ancient history that leaks into novels and stories of Egypt and mummies that are inflected with Imperial Gothic elements. The terror associated with degeneration and regression into the horror of the bestial is engineered by the 19th century Gothic to create a monster whose embodiment is, according to Luckhurst (2012:loc. 173), 'remarkably mobile, permeable and infinitely interpretable'. Such Gothic monsters negotiate liminal states between animal and human, East and West, or between life and death (Luckhurst 2012:20). The conceptualisation of the Gothic monster, and particularly those that can be located in Imperial Gothic literature, is intrinsic to Austin's short story. MacFarlane (2010:6) suggests that mummies are the 'quintessential monster' of

Imperial Gothic and that the mummy's monstrosity is located in not only its physical deviance or defiance of death and decay, but also in its transgression of the western ideas of classification on which Imperialism rested. Halberstam (1995:21) has indicated that the Gothic is 'a narrative technique ... that transforms the lovely and the beautiful into the abhorrent and frames this transformation within a humanist moral fable'. This transformation of beauty into the abhorrent occurs in Austin's story when an embodiment that is seen as different allows the abject and repulsive transformation to be written onto the body of both the mummy and the main female protagonist in the form of a curse. In the story, the mummy, whether presented as visibly different in shape, pigment or smell, is shown to be a liminal Other because its outside and inside have been conflated, allowing the dead to apparently remain living. Kristeva (1982:4) considers the most extreme form of abjection to be that of death and the corpse. The dead body can be seen to challenge the limits between the body's inside and outside, which is more than true in relation to the body of the mummy. However, where Kristeva is talking about the deliquescence of the body in death, the mummy is more monstrous because degeneration has been evaded through desiccation and resinous unguents, which are sticky, and to a degree disturbing. As abject objects of attraction and desire and simultaneously of repulsion, mummies represent the fear of dissolution, degeneration and alterity, which is very noticeable in the 1862 story, but less overtly present in that of Austin.

It is this fear of the mutable and unclassifiable body that, MacFarlane (2016:76) argues, informs the focus of the narrative of Imperial Gothic fiction in which 'ways in which the gap between the known and the unknown can be charted on and through a body that moves outside of stable classification' are explored. In mummy fiction, this body becomes both alluring and repellent, and possesses what Butler (1993:168) calls 'unregulated permeability' that 'constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment'. Kristeva (1982:2) considers this embodiment as a state of abjection, where figures such as the mummy act to 'disturb identity, system, order' because they remain liminal and ambiguous figures. It is the fear of how this foreign body might infect, invade and threaten the Empire that is woven into Austin's story, which challenges, to a certain extent, the construction of ideology and stability of representation of imperialist beliefs through the introduction of the curse associated with the mummy. In Austin's story, I will demonstrate that there is a play with the Imperial Gothic narrative that reveals the anxieties that underlie the encounters between the coloniser and the colonised. Egypt, through the figure of the mummy and the curse, is constructed as something unfathomable, mysterious, ancient and exotic as well as something repugnant and dangerous. What is interesting is Austin's play with different doublings with the imperialist discourse being doubled by that of the Egyptian hieroglyphic text, in very similar manner to that of the anonymously written 1862 story. In both stories, the curse is carried into the

domestic world of Imperialism, but Austin employs this doubling of discourse to better affect through her doubling of the female characters.

Disembodied doubling

For Ralph Tymms (1949:15), the double can be seen as 'firmly embedded in magic and in the earliest speculations on the nature of the soul'. This linking of magic or the supernatural to the nature of the soul is central to the curse in both the 1862 story's title and to what transpires in Austin's story. As a supernatural fantasy, 'After Three Thousand Years' exhibits what Rosemary Jackson refers to as 'ambiguous literary effects ... thematic uncertainties and hesitations' and it is the theme of fantasy that Jackson (2009:28) sees as clustered around areas such as good versus evil, ghosts, shadows, doubles and monsters, to name but a few of the motifs cited. The double or *doppelgänger* has been the focus of many works of literature and analysis of the double is now associated with psychoanalysis. This analysis is considered to begin with Rank's work *The Double* (1925), which was taken up by Sigmund Freud in his essay on *The Uncanny* (1919). Other works on the double include Ralph Tymms's *Doubles in Literary Psychology* (1949), C.E. Keppler's *The Literature of the Second Self* (1972), Karl Miller's *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (1985), John Herdman's *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1990), Andrew Webber's *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (1996), Dimitris Vardoulakis's *The Doppelgänger Literature's Philosophy* (2010) and Baryon Tensor Posadas's *Double Vision, Double Fictions: The Doppelgänger in Japanese Film and Literature* (2018), to name but a few. In my article, I am going to adopt both Tymms's idea of the double as a supernatural affinity and Freud's concept of the uncanny. For Freud (1981:219, 220), the uncanny 'arouses dread and horror' and represents that 'class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'. Freud (1981:141) states that the uncanny is an effect caused by the 'familiar and old-established' becoming alienated through a process of repression. This return of the repressed allows the past to invade the present, which can cause constant recurrence or repetition of the same thing (Freud 1981:236). This repetition is central to Freud's (2003:142) concept of the double, where 'the self may ... be duplicated, divided and interchanged' and a 'repetition of the same facial features ... destinies, the same misdeeds ... through successive generations'.

According to Posadas (2018:7), Freud references the *Doppelgänger* as 'an emblematic figure' of the uncanny. Posadas goes on to make the point that the double or *Doppelgänger*, like the Gothic, is a slippery and vague literary motif whose mutability makes it difficult to define. Both motifs are marked by broad characteristics and attempting to consolidate these is a contestable and, probably, impossible endeavour (Posadas 2018:6). This slippery mutability allows for a fluid intertwining of aspects of the Gothic and the uncanny with the motif of the double. I prefer the term 'double' to 'doppelgänger' in this instance because of the supernatural and, ultimately strange, aspect of the

shadowy and embodied or disembodied doubling that occurs in Austin's story. The employment of Freud's and Tymms's approach to the double will allow me to examine how imperialist narrative renders and is rendered familiar or unfamiliar through the nature of the supernatural female doubling in Austin's story.

Necklaces, corpses and female doubles

'After Three Thousand Years' (1868) concerns the return of Millard Vance from Egypt, who has in his possession an artefact for Marion Harleigh, the woman with whom he is in love. Vance is called 'the latest lion of Eastern travel', who has just returned from exploring the tombs of the Pharaohs (Austin 2019:loc. 241). The comparison between Vance and a lion aggrandises his position as a predator and establishes his conquering Imperial position. He asks Marion whether she remembers, 'the last request you made of me', to which Marion replies 'Perfectly. I asked you to bring me some personal ornament from the mummy of a princess' (Austin 2019:loc. 241). Maliciously watching her, he reminds her that she 'promised to wear it, remember', to which Marion says, 'I promised to wear it, and I am ready to keep my promise' (Austin 2019:loc. 241). The fact that Marion herself demanded that Vance bring this ornament from the 'mummy of a princess' is indicative of her own egoism and sense of imperialist entitlement and she is the direct cause of Vance's defilement of the mummy and her tomb. She considers herself equal to a long-dead princess and is undeterred by the thought of disturbing the dead and the despoliation of the mummy's possessions by Vance. Her willingness to wear the necklace is equally as blasé, as if her being presented with this commanded object is merely her due. This establishes the first foreboding and sinister hint that Marion and the mummy will become linked to one another.

When Vance arrives at Marion's house the following morning, he is greeted by Marion and presents her with a little 'Indian casket', with its obvious reference to Empire, which, when opened, reveals a:

... necklace of golden scarabaei, with diamond eyes and green enamelled wings. Each insect linked to each by a tiny chain, but so loosely as to admit of perfect freedom of movement. The necklace was clasped by a medal of burnish gold deeply graven with certain symbols or characters, not easily to be deciphered even as to form. (Austin 2019:loc. 261)

This object is one of incredible aesthetic beauty, a unique artwork of precious metals and stones, but one that simultaneously seems to bring with it a sense of uncanny malevolence. Stylistically, Austin's colour-filled description of the necklace can be considered 'highly wrought', providing as it does a sense of elaborate and sensual detail (Beam 2010:2). Austin's necklace is markedly similar to the description of the artefacts in the story of 'The Mummy's Soul'. In this story, the narrator takes not only a 'stone scarabaeus' which has engraved on its back 'minute

hieroglyphics', but also another artefact 'an insect of enormous size' (Anon 1862:437). He realises that this is a fly, but it is in his descriptions of the body that similarities and differences between this story and Austin's are visible. The fly's body is described as a 'bright golden colour, encircled at regular distances with bands of green'. However, it is the wings that are the main attraction and he calls them 'sheets of beauty' with 'traceries of golden lines, shadows of deep blackness – gorgeously embellished, where veins of silver hue tinged the edges' (Anon 1862:437–438). But this beauty is abject and monstrous because the object is 'hideously deformed' by an antenna that is blood-red in colour and located in front of the fly's head (Anon 1862:438). The relationship to Austin's story is visible in the use of the scarab and in the vivid colours used to describe the beauty of the fly. The style of this earlier story seems to belong to the sensation fiction of the 1860s in its purple prose, whereas Austin's description of the necklace is more stylistically controlled. The necklace in Austin's story becomes a form of Gothic excess that possesses the qualities, as described by James (1865:593), of 'those most mysterious of mysteries which are at our own doors' where the terror invades the space of the house and is regarded as 'far more terrible'.

In its Gothic excessiveness, the necklace possesses layered detail and aesthetic delight, but simultaneously exhibits what Freud (2003:123) describes as an uncanny 'creeping dread and horror'. The scarabaei establish an atmosphere of Gothic fear and peril, becoming at once a desired and desirable souvenir, yet simultaneously one that seems alien in its non-human sentience and excess. The monster in this story is not the physical body of the mummy, rather it is located in the eerie necklace that belonged to her body. Vance downplays the horror by saying about the scarabaei that 'they will not harm you; they are securely chained', yet with their sparkling 'phosphorescent gleams', the beetles seem to possess a life of their own (Austin 2019:loc. 261). Marion, when she sees it, dangling in Vance's fingers turns 'pale, and slightly shivered' (Austin 2019:loc. 272). It becomes apparent that Vance has removed the ornament 'from the neck of a Pharaonic princess' and indicates that this was as Marion 'desired that it should' be (Austin 2019:loc. 265). Daly (1994:46) indicates that this type of interest in strange and personal relics from Egypt turns the Oriental body into an object associated with commodity desire. The theft of this personal ornament in Austin's story can be considered a form of figurative rape (Day 2006:43). In turn, Said (1979:6) has argued that this form of subjection of the Oriental women by the Western male is indicative of the perceived difference in 'strength between East and West'.

The tomb that Vance is taken to, he says, was 'perhaps three thousand years' old. The necklace was acquired through the penetration of a tomb, with its obvious sexual overtones, where he opens the sarcophagus and removes 'the innumerable folds of mummy-cloth swathing the occupant by the expeditious means of slitting the whole series from

neck to heel with a sharp knife and turning it back like the covers of a box' (Austin 2019:loc. 313).

This pillaging of the dead is performed in secrecy and the slitting of the mummy cloth from neck to heel is rather like a dissection and rape. As Day argues in relation to Austin's story, Vance's action in removing the wrappings of the mummy and the confiscation of her jewels as wealth wasted on a corpse is in conflict with the 'appropriateness of bedecking a woman's body with gems and can also be seen as a form of taking of virginity' (Day 2006:41). This idea of something perversely sexual about the slitting off of the cloth from the body is implied when Vance describes the mummy's body as being a:

... slight, elegant figure, very dark in color, as mummies nearly always are, but retaining sufficient beauty of outline, both in face and form, to prove to my mind that a rare loveliness of the day gone by lay before me, neither preserved nor quite destroyed. (Austin 2019:loc. 313)

Vance sees the princess as possessing a 'rare loveliness', a 'beauty of outline' with her 'slight, elegant figure' and there is a sense that he is attracted to her, yet, at the same instant, he terms her 'dark in colour' and 'neither preserved nor quite destroyed'. This objectification presents her in an ambivalent manner, where, whilst attracted to her beauty, Vance is aware of, and slightly repelled by, her degeneration and decay. In this description resides what Said (1979:207) terms a 'male powerfantasy' that has sexualised the Orient, through the figure of the mummy, and is indicative of Imperial possession and power. The 'dark colour', whilst an aspect of the unguents used as preservatives, has racial associations, but I would suggest that it also hints at the dark supernatural power that resides within her. The colouration of the mummified princess is mirrored by Marion who is a 'statuesque, brunette beauty' (Austin 2019:loc. 259). In her dark loveliness, the mummy exists between the living and the dead, and, although not monstrous in appearance, remains an unknown and abject embodiment, where her difference occupies a liminal position of object or subject; sentient or non-sentient.

Vance's attitude towards the mummy can be seen as one of acquisitiveness and an expression of power that will later be replaced by guilt and horror. Tomb robbing and removing of an artefact provided for the afterlife of the dead was seen by the Egyptians as preventing the dead from being resurrected, leading the spirits of the dead to thirst for vengeance. In his imperialist indifference to an immoral theft, Vance demeans and desecrates Egyptian practices and beliefs, paving the way for the uncanny return of the past that brings with it retribution. Austin's mummy is not the direct love object, nor is she ever an animate form; she becomes merely an object from which to obtain a valuable token. Along with the necklace, Vance also took a 'small square box' that contained a piece of parchment inscribed with a brief 'hieroglyphic sentence' then left 'my Pharaonic princess to resume her slumber', hoping 'no evil dream connected with her lost

necklace ... marred her rest' (Austin 2019:loc. 323). It is the possessive 'my' that is an indication of his perceived right to the despoliation, and this is compounded by the suitably euphemistic 'lost necklace', rather than an admittance that this object is not rightfully his. There is an overweening sense that Imperial conquest means that he is entitled to anything he desires, so that not only the mummy but also the landscape of Egypt becomes the embodiment of the colonised female Other. There is scant thought that what he has taken can offer any threat to his world, although the hope that the princess has 'no evil dream' connected to the necklace seems to augur some form of dire promise. In Austin's story, the scarab necklace is a dangerous and ambiguous artefact, where the inanimate becomes uncannily and monstrously animate, establishing a type of supernatural demonic scarab incarnation (Bulfin 2011:419). In her description of the exotic Eastern richness of the necklace, Austin's writing epitomises the manner in which Egypt is constructed as the bearer of excess, mystery, opulence and femininity in Imperial Gothic narratives. It becomes the agent of the curse, as it assumes the form of an uncanny Egyptian Other that blurs the division between the ancient world and the modern Imperial one. I would suggest that the necklace represents a metonymic attribute of the mummy that is now carried into the Western domestic space, where it acts as a Gothic vehicle of counter-colonial invasion and attack (Bulfin 2011:425).

Marion questions Vance about what is written on the parchment found in the small square box to which he replies 'hieroglyphics', which are 'not easily deciphered' (Austin 2019:loc. 323). Vance's imperialist interactions with Egypt are not those of an Egyptologist or scientist, but merely of an arrogant 'traveller' and indiscriminate thief of artefacts. Marion reacts to his inability to tell her what the writing means by saying that 'they can be read by modern science', which implies Western mastery over the ancient world's secrets (Austin 2019:loc. 323). Marion is assured by Vance that the parchment is with one of the best scholars to decipher it and she observes that 'it would be horrible for me to have a three-thousand-year-old secret hung like a millstone about my neck' (Austin 2019:loc. 333). Marion equates this allusion to a millstone and a very old secret, with its underlying threat of the return of the past, to the word 'horrible'. Even in the apparent lightness of her comment, she exhibits a sense of disquiet and dislike of the necklace. She goes on to indicate that she will wear it to a party with 'many thanks to the giver' (Austin 2019:loc. 333). However, Vance is quick to correct her, saying that the necklace is 'not a gift' but rather a 'commission', and equates his obtaining of it to that of her sending to Paris for a 'new dress', emphasising that it represents 'a debt' that she owes (Austin 2019:loc. 333). The unintentional doubling of meaning of Marion's thanking the 'giver' and the association of the necklace with a 'debt' is noteworthy because Marion is drawn into an uncanny and intimate relationship with the object that has inspired this sense of beholdenness. Vance offhandedly claims that it is just another commodity, as frivolous as that of obtaining an expensive new dress and as faddish or transient. Although Marion

acknowledges the debt, she warily says 'it may be beyond my means', hinting at the possibility that the price she is going to pay for this necklace will be an exchange demanding something inordinate in return (Austin 2019:loc. 333).

When the hieroglyphics are translated, it is found that the text is a curse that promises a supernatural redress. The curse says: '[s]ee me, beloved of a king. I scorned him for a lesser love, and thus I lie', the translation of the graven symbols on the clasp of the necklace goes further, reading 'The gods who give life, also take it' (Austin 2019:loc. 354, 366). Based on this information, Vance implores Marion not to wear the necklace. She resents his approach because, as Austin indicates, it is felt to be a 'lure and jess' denying her agency and freedom. Her reaction to him is one of antagonism that will lead to her later capricious behaviour (Austin 2019:loc. 344). He now refers to the necklace as 'infernal' and is convinced that it killed the mummy and is 'probably poisoned' (Austin 2019:loc. 366). The use of the word 'infernal' suggests that the necklace has assumed some form of uncanny and diabolical agency that has penetrated Imperial space, much as he penetrated the tomb. His emotion is tinged with fear and disgust, a rather abject response to something he had previously considered desirable, ornamental and a mere trinket. In accordance with Vance's exhortations, Marion hides the necklace in 'the depths of her well-stocked jewel-box', where it becomes merely one trinket among many (Austin 2019:loc. 366). Belonging now to Marion and interred in the depths of her jewellery box, the necklace remains an embodiment of a Gothic and uncanny evil. Re-mummified it retains a malignant promise, seeming to bide its time before obtaining requital. In setting up an indefinable likeness between Marion and the mummy centred on the deadly promise of the necklace, Austin prompts a decided uneasiness in the reader. In similar manner to the mummy, Austin implies that Marion will become a victim through the return of a vengeful past. The supernatural Oriental Other, I suggest, has invaded and become a part of imperialist space, remaining a known but unknown uncanny presence. It is this presence that will transform itself into an active agent of the curse which will finally exact vengeance.

Marion's debt to Vance is paid when she accepts his marriage proposal, but she continuously subjects Vance to her fickleness and pride, as she spurns his advances. The light-hearted 'lion of the East' becomes a man filled with suffering. The tenor of the story shifts from the jewel-bright and playful opening to an atmosphere that becomes more sombre in tone. It is Juliette, Marion's cousin, who comforts Vance throughout Marion's changeable behaviour. Marion seems to reject a marriage that she feels might imperil her world and constrain her own agency. Writing on 19th-century female authors, Beam (2010:5) notes that in their narratives 'marriage is often the antagonist rather than the goal' and it seems that Marion is seeking to escape from a situation that would reduce her sense of identity and agency, limiting her to the domestic sphere and unfulfilled desires. The necklace seems in an uncanny fashion to be guiding and sinisterly manipulating the actions of the characters to achieve its own monstrous

ends. Marion's realisation of her 'hypocrisy, ingratitude, cruelty and uncharitableness' and of her love for Vance comes too late (Austin 2019:loc. 398). Going to him to profess her love, she overhears a discussion between Vance and her cousin Juliette, during which Vance declares his love for Juliette (Austin 2019:loc. 408, 419). At this moment, Marion becomes 'turned to stone', realising that the loss of the 'man that had wooed her' has now led her to her 'doom' (Austin 2019:loc. 408, 419). Even the landscape around her has the abject 'odor of decay' and 'chill unrest', a presage of the horror that is to come (Austin 2019:loc. 419). The use of words such as 'doom', 'odor of decay' and 'chill unrest' establishes an inherently excessive and Gothic feel to the narrative that allows an element of the supernatural and an accompanying promise of death that adds to the disquieting suspense of the plot.

Vance receives a letter from Marion the next morning, which brings with it a further uncanny 'numb and chill' along with a sense of 'horrible, indefinite foreboding' (Austin 2019:loc. 431). This sets up the promise of something disastrous having occurred. In this letter, Marion writes: 'Your friend did not interpret the hieroglyph aright'. This is my reading: 'Behold me, who fancied myself the beloved of a king among men. He scorned me for a lesser love, and thus I lie.' (Austin 2019:loc. 431) The note from Marion replicates that of the parchment found with the mummy, except that in her hurt pride, hers becomes a letter that aims to curse through guilt. The use of the words 'fancied myself' and 'a king among men' ensures that the participants in this modern tragedy are less regal and the death is in some manner made mundane. The wording of the note that was found with the mummified princess 'See me, the Beloved of a King, I scorned him for a lesser love, and thus I lie' is ambiguous. This message would appear not to have been written by her, but could be an epitaph for her, so that her death, whilst possibly a suicide, might also have been murder or execution for the betrayal of a king. Vance had mentioned that the mummy was not richly decorated which he found strange for a woman of higher class. Instead he notes that: 'there was absolutely no ornament ... with the exception of the necklace' (Austin 2019:loc. 319). The mummy's scorning of a king has led to her punishment and death by means of the necklace. Marion, on the other hand, indicts Vance as having scorned her, but it is her own proud scorning of him that has, to a certain measure, caused the tragedy. In their similar spurning of men, both women reap the cursed rewards for their act of agency. Both the mummy and Marion behave as figures of mystery and fickleness and in this behaviour lies the reason for their deaths. According to Stott (1992:30), the femme fatale during Imperialism was a sign or figure 'found at the intersection of Western racial, sexual and imperial anxieties'. It is these sexual, racial and imperial anxieties that seem to inflect the doubling of Marion and the Oriental Otherness of the mummy so that the border between selves seems to be crossed between the dead and the living so that they 'occupy two categories at once' (Hurley 1996:40). Whilst the tone, implications and span in time of the notes differ, it is in the

similarity that an uncanny and monstrous doubling can be seen. Through the agency of the necklace, the mummy seems to have ensured a stranger form of doubling, where the mummy has become the spiritual double or shadow of the living Marion in an interplay between colonial identity and Oriental difference (Posadas 2018:1). Through this supernatural affinity, they become linked as doubles, with Marion suffering a ghastly fate similar to that of the mummy (Tymms 1949:17). Freud (2003:142–143) indicates that the double that once having been a ‘harbinger of immortality ... becomes the uncanny harbinger of death’ and an ‘object of terror’. The mummy it seems has Gothically stolen the identity of Marion through the magical or occult nature of the necklace. The mummy passes into her living double as Marion becomes the embodiment of a monstrous alterity. I would argue that the necklace is the instrument of the disquieting Gothic atmosphere that is established in the story, as it quietly waits for an opportunity to enact a monstrous and uncanny metempsychosis.

When Vance finds Marion, he stands ‘beside the bed where lay his mistress, royal in death’ as she lies ‘magnificent in silk and lace and embroidery of oriental pearls’. She wears no adornment, only ‘a necklace of golden scarabaei about the throat’. This dress is like the ceremonies associated with the mummy and the description of Marion’s bridal gown with its ‘oriental pearls’ and ‘silk and lace’ twines together the Egyptian orient with that of the West and, I suggest, further establishes the doubling of Marion and the mummy. The antagonist has been marriage and Marion, in seeking to escape it, has wed her own death. Vance sees Marion as his ‘mistress’, not his wife, who is ‘royal in death’ (Austin 2019:loc. 440). It is as though the royal mummy has become one with Marion’s body in a monstrous usurpation in which the ancient past invades and claims the corpse of the present. Marriage and revenge become inextricably intertwined, establishing a shadowy and dark Gothic doubling where identity and borders seem to dissolve. Austin structures a parallel between the mummy and Marion as both are violated by the same man – the mummy through Vance’s penetration of the tomb and her dead body and Marion through the promise of marriage. Both women have died because of men and this repetition further establishes their double relationship. Looking at the necklace, Vance sees that it has undergone a ‘strange transformation’ and the beetles appear to have ‘suddenly assumed life, and the power attributed to them by the men who worshipped them as gods’ (Austin 2019:loc. 450). They have transformed into something uncanny and horrifying as they stand ‘erect upon myriad legs hitherto folded unobserved beneath their bodies with open wings, and upraised antennae, with their diamond eyes flashing and glittering in the first ray of the rising sun’ (Austin 2019:loc. 450). These creatures appear so fearful and so unearthly that Vance is filled with a sense of Gothic terror in response to this dark Oriental artefact that has become fearsome, deadly and demonic. It resides beyond the boundaries of the empire being both supernatural and terrifying in what Trafton (2004:17) sees as a situation that is

‘saturated by the confrontation’ between Imperial modernism and ancient primitiveness. It is this confrontation that he identifies as central to Imperial American Gothic where the Imperial is mirrored back through images of reverse colonisation (Trafton 2004:17).

Trying to snatch the necklace off Marion’s throat, Vance feels that he is in the ‘presence of the fiend’, but finds with a ‘strange, new thrill of horror’ that he cannot pull it off. He notes that each beetle’s leg ends in a ‘minute claw’ and these claws are ‘fastened deep in the flesh’ of Marion’s neck as though to hold its still warm ‘prey’ beneath its ‘deadly grasp’ poisoning her to death (Austin 2019:loc. 450). This violation of the throat through penetration is, I argue, like a rape where the claws and legs act as penile projections that ‘reverse the sacrilege of the violators’ of the mummy herself (Day 2006:30). The beetles now inhabit the interior of Marion’s body, not only through their sadistic carnal assault, but also through the introduction of poison into her flesh, so that the horrifying thing is now a part of her. There is a rather grotesque and monstrous eroticism held in the manner in which this revenge occurs, which can be considered a form of thanatophilic conquest and appropriation. When Vance manages to pull the necklace off, he sees a ‘livid band’ encircling Marion’s throat which is made up of ‘innumerable points or dots’. This description mirrors that of the 1862 story where the narrator sees ‘red dots’ on the ceiling left by the antenna of the fly that the narrator says are a ‘revelation of the cause of my wife’s suffering; and were proofs of the injection into her veins of subtle poison’ (Anon 1892:441). In Austin’s story, the red dots, like a line slitting the throat, act to silence the agency of the female voice. Walker-King (2000:viii) indicates that ‘a fictional double’ aims ‘to mask individuality and mute the voice of personal agency’ and although ‘this double is created and maintained most often by forces beyond ourselves ... [we] bear its markers on our bodies’. The necklace, though separate from her body, has become the conduit that allows the mummy to supernaturally become the soul or phantom double of Marion. The obvious repetition of the past, in which the mummy would have suffered the same form of death by means of the necklace, is now transferred to the body of her living double. The breaching of the integument of Marion’s skin constitutes the site of her pollution and contamination by the monstrous Eastern Other that renders her body perilous. This invasion of Marion’s body results in an uncanny dissolving of the boundaries that distinguish the living from the dead, resulting in an ‘indefinable familiarity’ between the female mummy and Marion. This likeness represents a form of disgusting doubling that Hurley (1996:42) terms an ‘amorphous version of the self that is the non-self’. The limits of categorisation between the living and the dead, animate and inanimate, by means of the curse have shifted the power from the coloniser to the colonised and the ancient past has uncannily returned into the present and exacted revenge on the dominance of Western Imperialism. Luckhurst (2012:loc. 206) states that the curse ‘exquisitely couples love with death in an exemplary decadent manner’, yet this decadence is one

that is imbued with a reversal of the imperialist body as the racial Other invades, and the supernatural East colonises the Western body. Vance, who is not punished with such a drastic comeuppance as Marion, is left with the necklace of scarabaei that he hides in the Indian casket in a further effort to repress the past. Yet, the necklace, whilst not being 'excited by contact with warm human flesh', and thus quiescent (Austin 2019: loc. 482), remains powerfully venomous and, for Vance, a dangerous symbol of Eastern vengeance and uncanny horror.

Conclusion

Austin mirrors the love story of the present with that of the past so that they become intertwined. In contrast to the past, the tragedy of the present is brought about through theft, sacrilege and disregard for the beliefs and power of an ancient empire. The stolen uncanny inanimate or animate necklace is the harbinger of a repressed evil returned from an ancient past that ensures a supernatural repetition of events in the echoed deaths of the mummy and Marion. Pykett (2012:228) comments that the 'invasion of otherworldly representatives of ancient civilizations' is driven by a wish to 'colonize empire' through 'reincarnation and demonic possession'. In 'After Three Thousand Years', this reverse colonisation, I have suggested, is located in the doubling of the mummy and the living female character Marion Harleigh, in what can be considered a form of spiritual doubling or supernatural metempsychosis. In Austin's story, the mummy as double is an evil presence that transgresses corporeal borders allowing the dead to possess the living so as to become an agent of disruptive terror. Yet, at the same time, Austin shows the sympathies at play between Marion and the mummy as both are women and have equally been cursed through masculine sense of entitlement and ownership. Nevertheless, there remains a horror in the retribution exacted against Marion who has become a liminal figure because the question remains as to whether she now exists between a state of the living and the dead. The mysterious disappearance of the 'livid band' on Marion's neck, which leaves it sensually 'smooth and white', has revealed the supernatural nature of the curse. The reader is left to wonder whether Marion's body has not become the vessel allowing the princess to assume a newer physical manifestation, thereby prolonging her longevity for another 3000 years. The re-animation and re-incarnation of something immortal, whether in the flesh or as an object associated with that flesh, remains, in this story, part of a belief that '[t]he gods who give life also take it' and against this any imperialistic glory, whether Egyptian or Western, crumples.

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I declare that I am the sole author of this research work.

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