The Egyptian Enlightenment and Mann, Freud, and Freund

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Recommended Citation

Volume 15 Issue 1 (March 2013) Article 4
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<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss1/4>

Contents of ***CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*** **15.1 (2013)**
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss1/>

Abstract: In her article "The Egyptian Enlightenment and Mann, Freud, and Freund" Rebecca C. Dolgoy discusses various ways in which ancient Egypt is used in three works from the 1930s: Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers*, Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, and Karl Freund's film *The Mummy*. By showing the similarities and differences in how these works use Egypt, Dolgoy develops the concept that memory is the way in which the past is used. Dolgoy follows the structure of a cinematic shot casting: *The Mummy* as the long shot which both sets up the general Egyptomania characteristic of the 1930s and situates Freund's film in post-World War I memory culture, *Moses and Monotheism* as the medium shot because Freud goes to the past in order to dredge specific narrative strains, and Dolgoy focuses on the detail and narrative richness of Mann's *Joseph* tetralogy as the close-up. Mann's take on creating mythological origin stories that both resonate with modern readers and implicate them in the piecing together of these stories in order to create meaning emerges as relevant for contemporary cultural memory studies.

Rebecca C. DOLGOY

The Egyptian Enlightenment and Mann, Freud, and Freund

In the sculpture garden on the second floor of Berlin's Neues Museum is a full length depiction of Akhenaten, the Egyptian sun king, with, what Thomas Mann described as his chicken legs held firmly shut and his arms — which look as if they may have been holding something — missing. His posture is one of offering. It has been suggested that Mann based the physical depiction of Akhenaten in his *Joseph* tetralogy on this statue (see Montserrat 168). Whether Mann did in fact use this statue is not actually that important and the ambiguous quality of this claim actually expresses my fundamental argument: memory is the way in which we use the past in order to make meaning and attain a better understanding of our socio-cultural reality. In the article at hand I focus on the German/Austrian cultural imagination in the 1930s and how the image of Ancient Egypt was received, transformed, and used.

In the article at hand I analyze Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* (1925-1943), Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1937-1938), and Karl Freund's feature film *The Mummy* (1932). These works draw their direct Egyptian genealogy from Amarna: in Mann Akhenaten is Joseph's Pharaoh, in Freud Akhenaten is Moses, and in Freund's film the ancient Egyptian characters come from the 18th dynasty. I argue that in each of these texts the uses Egypt are different although all of them use the past to disclose cultural phenomena in the present, that is, in 1930s. I first situate Egypt in the popular imagination by looking at Freund's film *The Mummy* within the context of post-World War I memory culture. I then move into a discussion on how Freud uses Amarna to create his genealogical narrative. Finally, I look at several mythological aspects of Mann's *Joseph.* The structure and general movement I explore recalls a cinematic zooming in: first we look at Egypt in general in Freund's *The Mummy* (the long/establishing shot), then we zoom in on The Amarna Revolution by exploring Freud's *Moses* (the medium shot), and finally we close in on one face, Mann's Joseph (the close-up). The closest and most specific view, Mann's *Joseph*, is also the most universally resonant and flexible of the three.

The wide-angled shot picks up on the general questions of how and why Egypt figured prominently in the German/Austrian cultural imagination of the 1930s. The contingent reasons are relatively easily dispatched: in 1922 Tutankhamen's nearly intact tomb was discovered by British archaeologist Howard Carter and his backer George Herbert. Hype surrounding curses, mummies, and what was perceived as the ancient Egyptian fascination with death ensued and a period of Egyptomania took hold. However, it is the substantive reasons that are more relevant to me. In *The Mummy* where Imhotep, a 3000-year-old mummy, is awoken by accident and wreaks havoc in order to resurrect his dead lover. Here, not only does the film capitalize on the general Egyptomania of the time, but the film exposes deeper societal undercurrents. Following World War I historian Jay Winter on several key points including his claim that World War I echoed similarly in many of the participating countries — most notably in France, England, and Germany (Winter 1-11) — I contextualize Freund's use of Egypt in *The Mummy* within post-World War I discourse by comparing it to Abel Gance's 1918 film *J'accuse*. I argue that *The Mummy* transforms and vivifies themes and images found in early post-World War I memory discourse and that still lingered in the cultural imaginary in the 1930s: wresting life from the sands of the Egyptian desert parallels waking the dead from the muddy fields of Flanders.

Both *J'accuse* and *The Mummy* embody the way in which the interwar years mythologized suffering and found meaning in it. This is most clearly expressed when the dead come back to life. The theme of return of the dead, which, according to Winter, was "a return longed for, dreamed of, dreaded, and both physically and symbolically realized in many parts of Europe after the Great War" (18). In *J'accuse*, Jean Diaz, a hallucinatory soldier-poet relates a vision of his dead comrades rising from their graves, returning to their villages, and accusing those at home of not caring enough. The gesture tries desperately to find meaning in sacrifice. Winter's account of the film notes the particularly chilling fact that many of the specters were played by real life soldiers who found themselves back in the trenches within months of filming. Most of them died. Most of the horror depicted in the film (faces distorted by gas attacks, bodies missing limbs, zombie-like trudging towards the camera) was real (Winter 15). The dead and soon to be dead did return and the

accusation resonates loudly. In Freund's *The Mummy*, the dead Imhotep comes back to life and takes the name Ardath Bey. He is motivated by love in that he wants to reanimate the body of his lover, Ankh-es-en-amon, a priestess of Isis, who was ritually sacrificed in her life time, and whose soul was systematically reincarnated in martyred women throughout the ages. Both Imhotep and Ankh-es-en-amon (Helen Grovenor) suffered: she for aforementioned reasons, and he, after being caught while attempting to raise her dead body immediately after her death, was sentenced to being buried alive. Ardath Bey plans on killing Ankh-es-en-amon in order to turn her into a living mummy. Thus in a sense, more sacrifice is needed. However, the pain and sacrifice would only endure for a little while and would, according to Ardath, be worth it — as his suffering was — if the two lovers could be united for eternity. Both the re-animated army in *J'accuse* and the lone mummy return to confront the living in order to settle their unquiet souls. While the image of the walking dead man with bandages trailing and eyes ablaze yet subdued is present in both, a major difference between the two films is that the army of the dead succeeds in their mission to rouse the living from complacency while Imhotep fails in his mission to revive Ankh-es-en-amon. In *J'accuse* the army of the dead returns to the ground when satisfied that the living live responsibly under the weight of sacrifice. Ultimately Imhotep is unsatisfied as Isis intervenes, Ankh-es-en-amon is saved, and he is turned to ash. In Gance's film it was still possible to find meaning and justification in sacrifice but in Freund's film this option is no longer available. Or, no longer needing to justify the ongoing slaughter because by the 1930s the idea of sacrifice was held to be suspect.

Freund's vision of ancient Egypt in the 1930s shows that the threshold between the world of the living and the world of the dead is not one through which the dead may pass. Instead, images pass through this threshold and are transformed. The past may not actually come back to life but instead it illuminates the present and is illuminated by it. What we take from this is the idea that the past (as represented by the dead) may return as after-images. The British excavations in the Egyptian desert, as depicted in *The Mummy*, show the viewer that the past is underfoot and may be revealed if one starts digging. Analogously, beneath every cross in the field in *J'accuse* is a decomposing body that may be symbolically animated if called upon. Both the field of crosses and the Egyptian desert landscape play reveal and conceal with the pieces of the past submerged within. The fields continue to churn up metal and bones and the desert slowly exposes traces of ancient civilizations. In the opening scene of *The Mummy* Egyptologist Sir Joseph Whemple puts together pieces of pottery and says that "much more can be learned by studying broken bits of pottery than from all the sensational finds." It is up to those who dig to put these images together.

After the wide-angled shot of Egypt in the popular imagination, next I zoom in on one particular moment, Amarna. Freud uses Amarna as the setting for his series of essays on Moses and monotheism. These essays function as a genealogical narrative. Similar to the placing of Egypt in Freund's film, Amarna figures in Freud's work for both contingent and substantive reasons. As with Freund's film, it is relatively easy to dispatch the contingent reasons: while the excavation of Amarna started in the late nineteenth century, much of the major finds came to European museums in the early twentieth century (for example, the famous Nefertiti bust came to Berlin in 1912). It is the substantive reasons, however, which offer the more interesting rationale for why Freud chose, and, in a sense, had to choose Amarna as the setting for his Moses essays. Amarna was a revolutionary moment and period of enlightenment in ancient Egypt (Assmann, *Moses* 148). Under Akhenaten, the capital was moved, the religion was changed to what is largely regarded as the first instance of monotheism in world history, the death cults and worship of Osiris were denigrated, and great symbolic and literal emphasis was placed on the sun (Assmann, *Moses* 150-55). Freud wrote that "in an astonishing presentiment of later scientific discovery [Akhenaten] recognized in the energy of solar radiation the source of all life on earth and worshipped it as the symbol of the power of his god" (Freud, The Standard 13, 59). Freud drew upon the concepts of enlightenment and monotheism offered to him by the Amarna period in order to pin down the origins and foundations of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In his three essays Freud undermines and then re-constitutes conceptions of Moses's identity and origin and subsequently the origin of the Jewish people by deposing the prevailing notions about the biblical Moses. According to Freud, Moses was an Egyptian advisor to Akhenaten who managed to lead a group of people who would become the Jewish nation out of Egypt during a turbulent political moment. This Moses is accredited with introducing Akhenaten style

monotheism to the people. Additionally, Freud argued that no idol or representation of the Aten (sun disc) has ever been found or is likely ever to be found. Instead, we have images of the royal family worshipping and many-fingered sunrays. While part of this might have to do with the destruction of images after the resurrection of the old polytheistic religion upon Akhenaten's death, Freud suggested that the idea of an invisible god that could not be represented in idols thus prefiguring the Jewish god and the Jewish religion's traditional ban on images (Freud, *The Standard **13,*** 31-32). Besides Freud's shocking discovery of Moses' Egyptian roots, the most important part of Freud's story is that the original Moses was murdered by his own people and rehabilitated as a great political and spiritual leader in subsequent times. Ultimately, the Moses narrative and the rest of the Exodus story the way it is familiar to us now, is set, told, and written much later. The rehabilitation of Moses gives us a clue to what Freud was actually writing about, namely the return of the repressed and the roots of anti-Semitism: Moses represents the primal father who ultimately must be destroyed (Freud, *The Standard* 13, 89).

Freud's use of Amarna for its substantive characteristics — enlightenment and monotheism — is somewhat problematic. Many of these problems relate to methodology and a lack of correlation between Freud's stated goals and achieved effects. Freud wanted to tell the historical truth (*The Standard 13,* 129), but his text reads as speculative and even somewhat fictitious. In fact, the original idea for his Moses project was to write a historical novel (*The Standard* 13, 175). While not a novel, Freud's *Der Mann Moses* is a work of speculative history that uses both historical research and psychoanalytic methodologies in order to get to the truth about the historical Moses and thus the foundations of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Accordingly, Freud employs a series of techniques developed in his other works. We see an example of this in the final essay's section headings: The Historical Premiss, The Analogy, Application, etc. Here we may note a progression: first Freud digs up historical material in order to establish historical truth, second, he uses an analogy taken from psychoanalytic work (religion as neurosis and the idea of the return of the repressed), and finally he brings these two together and distils his origin story. By claiming to tell the historical truth and actually telling a historical narrative Freud unwillingly and unwittingly creates a myth out of the Egyptian enlightenment.

Although Freud combs through various historical sources on Amarna, his certainty in the validity of his narrative mirrors that of biblical authority. To compare: Mann also wrote a Moses transformation in his work *The Tables of the Law* (1944) in which he offers his readers a humanized rendition of the Moses myth. In this story, Moses was a man with a complicated birth story, the plagues had natural causes (where the angel of death was a covert night squad led by Joshua), the Red Sea had several muddy crossings, and Moses wrote the Decalogue on the tablets after inventing a language and teaching himself to write. According to Käte Hamburger, Mann wrote his Moses in partial response to Freud's *Der Mann Moses* (70-77), which, according to Assmann, was partially intended as response/reaction to Mann's *Joseph* (*Moses* 147). While a lawgiver and thus a founding figure in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Mann's Moses, like Freud's, is not a primal father. Instead, he is a great man whose great deeds were historically contingent and had lasting resonance. However, unlike with Freud's Moses, this resonance is symbolic rather than historical. Mann is not interested in the historical Moses, he is interested in the humanized one. Freud's Moses is meant to be a historical find although he reads as something that has been constructed.

In the enlightenment mythology of his *Moses* texts, Freud uses the past with blinders: he goes to a particular past (Amarna) in order to find or dig up a particular narrative (the origin of monotheism). Even *The Mummy* explores the multiple ways in which the past might be used by exhibiting the reasons why various characters might be searching in the past and what exactly they are trying to find. The various characters in the film have very different motivations for the archaeological exploits ranging from: glory/treasure hunting (Ralph, the student), the increase of knowledge/the name of science (Sir Whemple), spiritual understanding (Dr. Muller). The key difference between the archeologists in *The Mummy* and Freud is that they classify their findings after they have been unearthed and the psychoanalyst deploys his toolkit of methodologies and archetypes at the beginning of the search. The examination of Freud began by zooming in on the Amarna Revolution after a long shot of Ancient Egypt in general. As is often the case, sometimes the medium shot shows the viewer less about a particular scene than the long shot that establishes it and the close-up that gives it life.

Whereas a long shot is expansive, a medium shot is selective; much is left out of a medium shot. Whereas a close-up allows for great detail and nuance, a medium shot is still somewhat blunt. Freud's *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* is like a medium shot in that it selectivity shows us less about the present it tries to expose and the past it uses in its attempts to reveal.

Mann's project takes the stories of Biblical Joseph and sets them in Amarna; however, both Egypt and Joseph are useful to Mann only insofar as they serve as fitting media for the communication of larger themes of his project, which, according to Wolf-Daniel Hartwich is the "universality of primeval myth" (163). In fact, one of Mann's stated and oft-cited goals was to save mythology from National Socialism, to use good myth to fight bad myth: "a captured gun is turned around and directed against the enemy. In this book, the myth has been taken out of Fascist hands and humanized down to the last recess of its language" (Mann, *The Theme* 21). Bad myth in this case is the linear, normative, monolithic propaganda coming out of Alfred Rosenberg's *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* and good myth is the ambiguous, fluid, and open transformation that encourages further transformation. Amarna is used in Mann's text largely for contingent reasons. Nowhere in Mann's writing on these novels did he specifically state what drew him to Amarna or why his Joseph needed to be set in Amarna. Instead, Mann wrote about a strange conflation of happenstance and memory. He came upon his ancestral family Bible in München, was leafing through the Joseph story, remembered Goethe's claim that the Joseph story seemed to long for fleshing out in his autobiographical *From My Life: Poetry and Truth*, and felt sufficiently mature to write a treatment of the story (see Mann, *The Theme* 21; *Essays 1938-1945* 185).

The importance of contingency in Mann's use of Egypt does not eclipse the substantive reason for which Mann, like Freud, chose Amarna. Amarna is portrayed as the literal and figurative cradle of "Western culture" as, according to Assmann, "there was always the image of Egypt as the past both of Israel and of Greece and thus of Europe" (*Moses* 9). Mann, like Freud, goes to ancient Egypt to dig in the literal and metaphorical past in order to expose certain socio-political undercurrents of the socio-political reality of the Weimar Republic and Rooseveltian U.S. (see Cunningham 243-45). However, unlike Freud's searching in the past in order to find one particular thread, Mann comes back from his metaphorical archaeological expedition with findings out of which he makes a series of stories and exhibits the diversity and plurality of the ancient myths.

As any attempt to make sense or meaning must start at the beginning, perhaps one of the greatest expressions of mythology is the origin story (see Assmann, *Thomas Mann* 16, 18-19). In the next couple of paragraphs I will seek to better understand the journey towards beginnings that Mann plots in his tetralogy. In the "Prelude" he explores several potential trajectories which might lead us to the end point of the journey, which is, of course, the origin. These attempts include telling the Biblical story (¶1-2), textual transmission (¶3) traditional mythology (¶3-4), anthropological speculation (¶4), botany (¶4), the development of symbolic language (¶4), scientific estimation of the earth's age (¶5), an in-depth treatment of the idea, possibility, and symbolism of the Great (¶5), a similar treatment of the Great Tower (¶6), an attempt to locate Paradise (¶7), and finally a philosophical/theological attempt to trace the origin of the soul (¶8). He then rejects all of these routes because ultimately, there is no *sui generis*, no first cause. Even a primal father has a father, that "nothing is first, comes of itself, or is its own cause, but rather everything has been engendered and points backward, deeper into the first foundations, the depths and abysses of the well of the past" (Mann, *Joseph* 10). Thus we see that the search for an origin is doomed to yield no definitive results because there is actually nothing to find, no first principle.

For Mann, "origin" may be considered an analytic tool: depending on what one is hoping to achieve and what one hopes to uncover, one may return to different origins. Mann's notion of origin as analytic is actually quite relevant to contemporary cultural memory studies as it challenges Aleida Assmann's classification of memories and remembering into binary categories such as canon and archive, active and passive (Assmann, "Canon" 97-108). Assmann emphasizes a presumed intrinsic value of the memory itself while Mann's origin as analytic suggests that the value and characterization of a memory varies depending on what is being asked of particular historical material. Different stories may be made of similar material arranged in varying manners. Even if the journey to fixed origins is impossible, a particular tradition, community and culture may and perhaps must have an origin story of sorts. Along similar lines, historical truth as a permanent concept is also challenged. Mann clearly

states that he is not interested in proving that something happened. Instead, his Joseph project offers a glimpse at how something could have happened "is not a discussion of the 'how' as worthy and important in life as the transmission of the 'that'? Yes, is not life fist truly fulfilled in the 'how'?" (Mann, *Joseph* 815). Mann's distinction between writing that and writing how something happened comes as he is about to begin one of the most fascinating sections of the tetralogy, the literary rehabilitation of Potiphar's nameless wife and her (in)famous invitation. Mann gives us a portrait of Potiphar's wife, named (Mut-em-enet), humanized, and vivacious. The truth about Potiphar's wife, that is to say, what happened, barely registers in comparison to the story that Mann tells about her, that is to say, the account of how someone could have arrived at her mental and emotional state. The kernel of the story is the biblical myth but Mann's version resonates with us because it draws upon literary tradition and contemporary sensitivities. Furthermore, crucial to Mann's idea of knowing how is the knowing how something could have happened. In his *The Theme of the Joseph Novels* address, Mann relates the story of how his copyist believed his text to be a true version of the biblical events: "'Now we know at last how all this actually happened' [to which Mann responds] 'The exactness, the realism are fictional, they are play and artful illusion, they are realization and visualization forcibly brought about by all the means of language, psychology, presentation and, in addition, critical comment; and humor, despite all human seriousness, is their soul'" (6).

Mann's ability to convince the reader simultaneously of the mythological reality of his texts and his ability to remind us that these are merely stories is a key to understanding the nature of the entire project. Mann both distances the reader from the stories and draws them into the secret by using several techniques such as changing spellings of names, inventing/adapting details such as Potiphar being a eunuch, speaking directly to the reader, and passing in and out of text in his ironic tones. This voice speaks to the reader discussing the strange situation in which they find themselves, knowing what is going to happen and still feeling empathy and experiencing suspense (Mann, *Joseph* 1144). The reader becomes implicated and complicit in the story. Mann's implication of the reader takes place from the very first notes of the "Prelude." The "Prelude" starts by a "Descent into Hell": this is not an unusual move for a text of epic proportions. Unlike traditional epics or even musical preludes, Mann's "Prelude" is not so much a hint at what is to come so much as it is an exposition of a state of affairs already in progress, that which we already experience and perhaps know but might not necessarily notice or contemplate. Thus the reader is not, strictly speaking, invited to accompany the author and characters on a journey, but the reader, already fully aware of the story's trajectory is asked to remember something they already know (Mann, *Joseph* 38-39). Mann helps the reader by slowing the descent into hell and creating a series of viewing platforms 3000 years down where the characters and the land are recognizable to us. They are recognizable both because we know the stories and because the events and characters have contemporary resonance. The reliance on familiar stories and the forging of a new kind of mythology by a process of transformation, in other words, the dual process of waking up images and stories and making them new permits for both the assumption of these memories and the process of making something cultural or universal resonate as personally meaningful for the individual.

Unlike Freud's origin narrative where enlightenment expressed a kind of mythology, in Mann's origin narrative, myth becomes a means of enlightenment. By his telling how something may have happened rather than that something happened, and implicating the readers in the storytelling, Mann's use of Amarna connects the readers to their past. Different parts of our horizons of meaning become activated according to varying interpretive necessities as the reader tries to make sense of the origin narrative and connect themselves to it. Mann takes Joseph, storyteller *par excellence* who collapses time, as his Virgil of sorts. Joseph is best characterized as a great mediator: first, he is the mediating link between Israel and Egypt, a layered character — he dresses as an Egyptian, but has a complex and shifting inner nature. He learns languages and history in order to try to understand various cultural phenomena. Second, he mediates between the earth and the sun: he is often linked with the moon (Hatfield 118-19). When we first see Joseph he is by the well communing with the moon, which, as Charlotte Nolte points out, is an androgynous symbol of mediation: "female in relation to the sun (passive, receiving) and male in relation to the earth (active, fertilizing)" (40). Third, he sits poised between pre-history and history: although he has a destiny, it is earthly. He is blessed from above and from below, from heaven and from the deep (Mann, *Joseph* 1230, 1427,

1477). He is blessed and is a blessing to others. This characteristic is not unique to Joseph. For example, his father Jacob was a blessing to his father-in-law Laban in terms of cattle fertility and general accumulation of wealth; he calls his time with Potiphar his "Laban period" (Mann, *Joseph* 676). However, Joseph and Jacob are markedly different types of characters. Jacob's worldly exploits are driven by an innate spirituality while Joseph's are driven by a sense of worldliness. Finally, Joseph may be seen as a pre-cursor to Christ. He mediates a relationship to god and general authority. Hatfield suggests that as the mediator between Pharaoh and the people (the Egyptians) Joseph represents "the spirit's mediation between God and Matter" (Hatfield 118). In sum, Joseph mediates between the ancient and unknowable origin and a recorded history of unbroken continuity: time, as it is familiar to us, seems to start here, with him.

Mann's depiction of Joseph both confirms and challenges contemporary cultural memory studies thinkers. Mann's Joseph appears to fit with Alison Landsberg's idea of memory as being prosthetic or a cultural identity that comprises a past that does not directly belong to the individual who is remembering (1-24). For example, his complex nature and ability to comport himself according to his shifting situations challenges the very notion that something is innate and the rest is prosthetic. We may read his assumption of the Egyptian language and customs as a kind of prosthetic. He most certainly uses the language as a tool and knows how to use the aesthetic standards of the time and place to complement his natural beauty, for example, when he is to appear before Akhenaten he insists on having a haircut and new clothes (Mann, *Joseph* 1117). However, thought in this manner, the very idea of prosthetic identity is problematic because Mann's *Joseph* forces the reader to question the idea of the innate. Joseph might be born within a particular cultural and religious heritage, a genealogy, and with his mother's eyes but it is his constant appropriation and transformation of this heritage via storytelling indicates that he knows how to incorporate new languages and subtleties in order to achieve personal and political goals that defines his character. Instead of having a core body with prosthetic appendages, in the way Landsberg would have us believe, Mann's Joseph is more Frankenstein-like in that he is a working and dynamic totality of our experiences, there is no core that is prior to the assemblage of parts. Joseph is a son, brother, slave, husband, Osarsiph, and many other things not the least of which is the litany of titles Akhenaten bestows upon him.

Mann's Joseph thus poses a challenge to Landsberg in that there is no essential I am, I am what I do and what I say, and where I do it. הינה/*hineni* is the Hebrew expression for "here I am." In the expression *hineni*, "I" am cannot be separated from "I am here." Unlike God's name, the present tense of the verb to be, there is a "hereness" to Joseph's presence. Humans, even mythologically inclined ones cannot be without being "here." Joseph seems to revel in announcing his presence in this manner. We see this from the very first moments of the tetralogy when Jacob calls him in the very beginning of the first book. He answers "here I am." It is the first time he speaks in the tetralogy (*Joseph* 50). This reprised at several other points in the novels, however, a notable incident occurs with Mai-Sachme, the prison warden. When asked if is Potiphar's ex-steward, Joseph responds with the words "I am he": "he could have replied with a 'so you have said,' or 'my lord knows the truth' … the 'I' itself played an alarming role, for in connection with the 'he' it raised a vague suspicion implying more than merely the household position one was asked to confirm … In short, I am he was an old, familiar phrase … the formula for announcing oneself" (Mann, *Joseph* 1065-66). Mann claims that this "I" is slightly anachronistic, but very strong. Joseph's *hineni* is a collection of fragmented experiences linked together by his narrative prowess into a meaningful and mutable story. The instinct to link these fragments and the supremacy of the storyteller (Joseph) over the mythic protagonist (Abraham) are the reasons why Mann's Joseph may be considered the symbolic spiritual primal father of contemporary cultural memory studies. Mann's Joseph character represents a piecemeal coherence, a wholeness made of fragments. Like a modern literary hero, Joseph who does not know and cannot find the details of his beginnings, makes them up. He does not make them out of nothing. He receives the images and uses his storytelling tools to transform them into digestible, comprehensible, and relevant stories. When there are only traces, as with so many cultures lost to the sands, the mud, or the fires, the only way in which to find both the that and the how is to make stories.

While all three authors of the works I discuss here use Egypt as the setting for their stories and turn to the past in order to better understand the present, Mann's *Joseph* — the work that looks at Egypt through the tight frame of close-up — actually has the most universal resonance. In Mann's

Joseph origins appear mutable and mediators are ephemeral and historically contingent: the pieces of the story are in constant transformation. While for Freud, the Egyptian Enlightenment functions as a fixed setting, for Mann enlightenment itself is a relative and mutable term that denotes revelation in the present. Both Mann's *Joseph* and Freund's *The Mummy* remind the reader that the past is present and that enlightenment is when present and past illuminate one another. Meaning can no longer be found and the past is never illuminated in its entirety; however, everything may be illuminated at various points in time, not by a divine light but by the way in which we encounter and use it. The transition from finding meaning to making meaning, or from knowing that something happened to knowing how something could have happened, ultimately pushes us to conceptualize the ways in which a cultural work mediates and facilitates the making of meaning. All of the works I discuss in this paper tell stories about the importance of storytelling or at the very least, of transmission of the past. For example, the storyteller figure (Joseph, the poet/soldier Jean Diaz in *J'accuse*) becomes an *Ersatz* for the author and a symbol of the vital importance of storytelling. It is through storytelling that the dead may literally (in the case of *The Mummy* and *J'accuse*) or metaphorically come back to life transformed into literary archetypes (*Joseph* and *Moses*). Eternity, or at least an approximation of eternity is experienced not in the underworld but in the after-world of images. The afterimage of the Egyptian Enlightenment, the way in which Egypt was used by Mann, Freud, and Freund in the 1930s, as well as the way in which I use them makes us aware of the multiple ways in which it can be used and transformed.

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