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Exploring the Words relating to People and Places in the Correspondence of two British Women Travellers

Abstract

This study focuses on the language used by two British women travellers in their letters – Lady Lucie Duff Gordon in *Letters from Egypt* (1865), Lady Hilda Petrie in *Letters from the Desert* (1942). Lexical keywords are analysed in order to compare and contrast the authors' attitude towards Egyptian people and places, and assess whether and to what extent any shift in point of view can be seen as an expression of the changed socio-historical context and/or it also involves the authors' attitude in their role as women explorers. The article combines quantitative and qualitative analysis of epistolary discourse, with special attention to the presence (vis-à-vis absence of) evaluative language (Hunston and Thomson 2000). The data suggest different ways of looking at Egyptian people and places. Particularly, whereas Duff Gordon seems very interested in the region she has settled in and particularly in its inhabitants, Petrie seems to be predominantly interested in reporting about places seen as archaeological sites.

1. *Introduction*

This article deals with the letters of two women travellers: Lady Lucie Duff Gordon (1821-1869) and Lady Hilda Petrie (1871-1957). Both lived in Egypt for a period of time and, while they had different reasons for living there, both became interested in the region, as shown in their letters home. Duff Gordon settled in Egypt for health reasons; however, in addition to her genuine interest in the people, she also shows a keen interest in archaeological sites, thus anticipating the nascent interest in Egyptian antiquities which would later develop into almost a trend. Petrie joined her husband, Flinders Petrie, the father of scientific archaeology (on this figure see Augenti 2020), supporting him and

providing essential funds for his excavations. However, she herself soon developed a personal interest in conducting archaeological excavations.

People have travelled since time immemorial and for many reasons; accounts of travel or travelogues have thus been produced in various cultural contexts (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2020, 99) and they usually take the form of narrative texts. The journeys presented by the travellers themselves are always subjective, inevitably revealing their specific culture and individual patterns of perception (Del Lungo Camiciotti and Pallotti 2014, Korte 2000). From the eighteenth century, due to the increasing value attached to subjective experience, the description of the travelled world became less important; it is not a coincidence that travel writing was now frequently published in the autobiographical form of the diary, the journal or the letter, forms that are particularly suited to the immediate expression of personal experience (Korte 2000, 53).

In the nineteenth century many more women travelled than in previous periods, for various reasons (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2020, 100): to further a cause, such as missionary work, to find a more suitable climate for health reasons, as was the case of Duff Gordon, or simply to satisfy personal curiosity by visiting 'exotic' lands. In 1862, after a two year stay in South Africa, Duff Gordon went to Egypt where she settled for a longer period and where she eventually died in 1869. She wrote home to her husband Alexander Duff Gordon and her mother Mrs. Sarah Austin from both places. Her letters from South Africa were published in 1921, those from Egypt in 1863 and 1875 by Sarah Austin. While health was the primary reason for her stay in Africa, she shared with other women travellers a genuine curiosity for the places she came to know during her stay. Both correspondences contain vivid descriptions of local manners and customs, and are equally interesting, though information about Egypt was, perhaps, more sought after by British readers at the time. Victorian travel classics in general show a fascination with the Middle East and the world of Islam, so this may be why Duff Gordon's letters from Egypt (*Letters from Egypt*, 1863; *Last Letters from Egypt*, 1875) attracted considerable attention.

Petrie went to Egypt in 1896, accompanying her husband Flinders Petrie, who excavated sites in various parts of the country. She became increasingly interested in archaeology and helped him by copying scenes and inscriptions, drawing, counting and listing them (Drower 2004a). After Flinders' death, she continued this work, thus becoming a fully-fledged archaeologist in her own right. She wrote home numerous letters (*Letters from the Desert.*

The Correspondence of Flinders and Hilda Petrie, 1942, published in Drower 2004b), in which she describes in a relatively factual manner the people encountered and the places visited; her letters effectively constitute a sort of diary of her stay in Egypt.

The gaze directed by these well-educated women on the visual features of new landscapes and townscapes is not unlike that of the modern informed tourist. Places may be chosen for this gaze because there is anticipation and fantasy that involve living in some sense out of the ordinary, outside everyday experience (Urry 2002). What distinguishes the nineteenth and early twentieth-century women travel writers from modern tourists is their desire to share their experiences with the people at home by writing letters.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the letters written by Duff Gordon and Petrie. This will enable us to concentrate on the words they use to express how they see people and places around them. Letters seem particularly effective for investigating attitudes and changes of perspective expressed by letter writers. It has been argued (Arecchi 2018) that it is not the eyes that see, but the brain that sees, mediated through our memory. Consequently, what these two women travellers send back to England is their identity enriched by their experience with the people and places of Egypt, as a result of the encounter of their memory with the new land (Ditifeci 2020, 116).

Letter writing as dialogic discourse is a genre that may offer an opportunity to investigate, not only the diplomatic and the scientific, but also the private sphere. The *I/You* relationship, which constitutes the foundation of epistolary discourse, is both a form of self-representation and of dialogic interaction. It is a way of speaking to the addressee as if s/he were present (Del Lungo and Dossena 2012, 5). In the case of both Duff Gordon and Petrie the relationship they establish in their letters consists not only of the two classical interactional elements, *I/You*, but is broadened to include a third element: *I/You/New Land*. It is a triangular relationship, which in the case of both women is between the subject (writer), the evaluated object (people and places) and other subjects (family and friends at home) (Ditifeci 2020, 118). Evaluation is what builds a relationship between writer and reader, particularly by assuming shared attitudes, values and reactions. It expresses an attitude towards a person, a place, a situation and is both subjective and located within a societal value-system. (Hunston 1994, 210; Hunston and Thomson 2000, 6; Hunston 2011, 1).

2. *Materials and Method*

The *Letters from Egypt* by Duff Gordon analysed were taken from the Project Gutenberg (PG), while I myself digitalized Margaret Drower's (2004b) *Letters from the Desert. The Correspondence of Flinders and Hilda Petrie*. The two corpora are unequal in length: the *Duff Gordon corpus* is composed of 135,262 tokens, the *Petrie corpus* of 47,511 tokens. As shown in the tables below, there are 1,262 words related to people and 615 words related to places in the Duff Gordon corpus, 149 related to people and 227 related to places in the Petrie corpus.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis were conducted using #Lancsbox v. 6.x (Brezina, Weill and McEnery 2021), a new-generation software package for the analysis of language data and corpora developed at Lancaster University. A corpus-based approach in discourse analysis has been developed by scholars in recent years which has rapidly expanded to study all types of discourse (Lombardo 2009). Academic discourse has represented a privileged domain from the start (Del Lungo Camiciotti and Tognini Bonelli 2004; Hyland and Bondi 2006, among others), and a variety of views and approaches have been developed.

Only rarely has corpus-based analysis been applied to epistolary discourse (Dossena and Fitzmaurice 2006; Dossena and Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2008). However, this methodology can be extremely useful to show the very essence of this type of discourse. In epistolary communication, as in any social interaction, the purpose is not only to convey information; there is also a large number of lexical and grammatical elements whose main function is to adopt interpersonal positions, expressing also an evaluation towards the contents or the addressee. The investigation of evaluation in epistolary discourse seems particularly useful to throw light on the, mostly unconscious, presence of the writer's voice in written discourse, although this factor has not yet received all the attention it deserves.

Evaluation is a cover term for the expression of the speaker's/writer's attitudes, feelings and values. Though subjectively expressed, it reflects not only the value system of the speaker/writer, but also that of their community. It can be linguistically analysed: lexically, grammatically and textually and it has been attributed various labels – stance, modality, affect, appraisal – according to slightly different approaches and methods of analysis. A seminal approach is that devised by Hunston and Sinclair (2000), who identify the grammatical

structures that are involved in evaluation in order to overcome the somewhat fuzzy and difficult to pinpoint concept. They construct a systematic and coherent picture of the evaluative function of language, which in their view is a central act in any given discursive situation.

The present study discusses the writers' presence in their own epistolary discourse in order to assess changes of attitudes towards Egyptian people and places over time. To do so, I adopt the discourse process of argumentative evaluation developed by Hunston and Thomson (2000), as the most fruitful to investigate epistolary discourse. Their approach defines evaluation as the expression of the writer's attitude or emotional reaction to the contents of their text (2000, 39). As they state, this function can be expressed by various grammatical elements conveying a positive or negative connotation. This avenue of research has been updated and extended by Thomson and Alba-Juez (2014), who point out that evaluation is context-dependent and that context is multifarious as it can be linguistic, cognitive, social and socio-cultural (2014, 8); also, that evaluation permeates all linguistic levels, and it is the lexical level which most clearly shows evaluation at work by simply using words and expressions with an evaluative load (2014, 10).

My study analyses the collocations of key words related to the chosen domains of people and places, and also to the time dimension as it shows changes in ways of expressing the writers' attitude towards Egyptian people and places over time, from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The language of evaluation – being context-dependent – also depends heavily on the text type in which it is used; however epistolary discourse can be very varied, depending on the writer's communicative intention. The use of recurrent phrases and grammatical patterns may be due more to stylistic reasons than text type. Accordingly, the present analysis is limited to keywords as revealing of writers' attitudes in any text type.

In corpus linguistics a keyword is a single lexical item statistically characteristic of a text, but it can also identify terms used to discuss a topic and identify the 'aboutness' of text (Scott and Bondi 2010); for the purposes of this study it is this second meaning which is particularly relevant. The identification of the two domains of people and places were considered as particularly important not only because words referring to them are quite frequent, but also because they reflect an important aspect of the two women' letters, rich in information about the exotic places they live in and their social composition made up of indigenous populations, Europeans, Christians and Muslims.

The methodology employed basically follows the corpus-based approach to evaluation devised by Hunston and Thomson (Hunston 1994, 2011; Hunston and Sinclair 2000; Hunston and Thomson 2000; Thomson and Alba-Juez 2014), since it seems particularly suitable to investigate the writers' attitude towards specific entities considered from both a subjective point of view and a societal value-system.

3. *Data Analysis*

The frequency of the top-scoring words related to people and places in the Duff Gordon corpus and in the Petrie corpus is shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Duff Gordon corpus		Petrie corpus	
PEOPLE	1,262	PEOPLE	149
*Arab**	300	*Arab*	59
*English**	225	*Copt**	30
woman, women	215	*woman, women*	26
*Copt**	136	*Egyptian**	19
*Muslim**	135	*English**	10
*Christian**	113	*Christian**	2
*European**	103	*European**	2
*Egyptian**	35	*Muslim**	1

Table 1. Top-scoring words for people.

Duff Gordon corpus		Petrie corpus	
PLACES	615	PLACES	227
Cairo	186	*desert**	120
Luxor	145	*Cairo*	46
Nile	87	*Nile*	19
Keneh	61	*Dendera*	12
Alexandria	55	*Luxor*	10
Thebes	43	*Alexandria*	7
*desert**	37	*Thebes*	7
Dendera	1	*Keneh*	5

Table 2. Top-scoring words for places.

3.1 The Writers' Attitude towards People

3.1.1 Arab*

Firstly, the analysis of *Arab** shows that Duff Gordon's point of view is mostly subjective as the word often collocates with positive adjectives, adverbials and verbs as shown in the examples below. The Arabs are seen in a very positive way (1); they are not considered other or different from Europeans: Duff Gordon interacts with local people as if they were her equals and appreciates their manners (2-3); she explicitly states that she is not afraid of them (2), and that they are endowed with *good blood* (4).

(1) When I call my crew black, don't think of negroes. They are *elegantly-shaped* **Arabs** *and all gentlemen in manners*, and the black is transparent, with amber reflects under it in the sunshine; a negro looks blue beside them. [PG19]

(2) Well, below the cataract I stopped for a religious fête, and went to a holy tomb with the darweesh, *so extraordinarily handsome and graceful* – the true feingemacht noble Bedaween type. He took care of me through the crowd, who never had seen a Frank woman before and crowded fearfully, and pushed the true believers unmercifully to make way for me. *He was particularly pleased at my not being afraid of* **Arabs**; I laughed, and asked if he was afraid of us. [PG1215]

(3) If you know anyone coming here and wanting a good servant and dragoman, recommend my dear Omar Abou el-Haláweh of Alexandria. He has been *my friend and companion*, as well as my cook and general servant, now for six months, and we are very sad at our approaching separation. I am to spend a day in his house with his young wife at Alexandria, and to eat his bread. He sadly wants to go with me to Europe and to see my children. Sally, I think, is *almost as fond of the* **Arabs** *as I am, and very popular*. [PG1247]

(4) [...] *good* **Arab** *blood*. [PG1256]

While Petrie is not entirely insensible to the charm of the Arab way of life (examples 5-6), she mostly refers to Arabs in a non-evaluative way. In addition, words referring to them often collocate with a collective noun as shown in examples (7-9), which may show that she does not see them as individuals, but rather as an undifferentiated mass of people, about whom she expresses neither positive nor negative evaluation.

(5) And then we pottered about the native quarter until dark, and lived in *the Arabian Nights – the colour and glow and richness of it are inexpressible.* [...] *I shall never forget* the narrow **Arab** alleys of tiny shops *full of gorgeous stuffs*, and scarlet slippers and red

and orange dates and pomegranates and pottery and *the gorgeous natives* at their work, or squatting idly everywhere *in picturesque confusion*, old men chanting their wares, *looking like prophets*, women in black, veiled – then towering up above them a white minaret, and over all the Egyptian sky. [DT119]

(6) It was *so* dim and *mysterious, and so like something in the Arabian Nights*; and *4 pictur-esque* **Arabs** – *Oh! their draperies and colours!* disposed themselves round us, all the time, *full of pious exclamations*. [DT134]

(7) [...] the crowds of **Arabs**. [DT62]

(8) [...] groups of **Arabs**. [DT162]

(9) [...] by **Arab** people. [DT789]

3.1.2 *Copt**

Where *Copt** refers to people, we can observe in the data a different outlook between Duff Gordon and Petrie. Though Duff Gordon seems to consider the Copts as less distinguished than the Arabs (9), on the whole, she looks at this people in a subjective and involved way. Accordingly, the node often collocates with positive adjectives, adverbials and verbs, as shown in examples (10-12), where she considers the Copts to be kind and gentlemanly. She has friendly relations with them (12) and is eager to please them, in contrast to the conventional British superior attitude towards them (13).

(9) The **Copts** are evidently the ancient Egyptians. The slightly aquiline nose and long eye are the very same as the profiles of the tombs and temples, and also like the very earli-est Byzantine pictures; du reste, the face is handsome, but generally sallow and rather inclined to puffiness, *and the figure wants the grace of the Arabs. Nor has any* **Copt** *the thoroughbred, distingué look of the meanest man or woman of good Arab blood*. [PG126]

(10) [...] *the kindness of the* **Copts**. [PG127]

(11) [...] a *gentlemanly young* **Copt** [...]. [PG128].

(12) All the English stay here and 'make Christmas,' as Omar calls it, but *I shall go on and do my devotions with the* **Copts** *at Esneh or Edfou*. I found that their seeming disin-clination to let one attend their service arose from an idea that we English would not recognise them as Christians. [PG129]

(13) My **Coptic** friend has just called in to say that his brother expects me at Kenneh. I find nothing but *civility and a desire to please*. [PG130]

Petrie's point of view, on the other hand, is mostly neutral: her references to Copts are always in a factual context (10) and the word often collocates with-

out any evaluation as can be seen in examples (11-12). It may be noted that she is very observant of the social composition of the local population (13) and she seems to be on good terms with all of them.

(10) [...] a **Copt** brought over a donkey for me. [DT 275]

(11) We have 80 men and boys from **Coptos**, all living in huts just behind our house. [DT 386]

(12) [...] all the natural caves and all the rock-cut Egyptian tombs had been used by Coptic hermits and monastics. [DT 474]

(13) The loss and recovery of Amina's goat gave me plenty to talk about, both with the old 'Arab sheykh, and the **Coptic** people; when we say 'Arab here (rather a nasal a) we mean Bedawin, either wandering, or settled into a village, and they are as distinct from the ordinary villagers, fellahin, these latter are from the **Copts**. Our own men are upper class fellahin, cultivators of the soil. One of them who has an 'Arab mother' is called "the Bedawy". And among the locals we have mostly fellahin, and just a few Copts. They all three seem to know and like each other in this district, and they are all very polite to us. [DT475]

3.1.3 *Muslim**

*Muslim** is particularly significant in showing differences in the two women' way of looking at such a culturally laden word. Although the words *Arab* and *Copt* are quite frequent (59 and 30 occurrences respectively), there is only 1 occurrence of *Muslim* in the Petrie corpus, referring to a place (14). She does not seem to be interested in comparing the culture and the way of life of the inhabitants of Egypt with that of the Europeans (*Christian*: 2 hits; *European*: 2 hits):

(14) Behnesa is an entirely **Muslim** place, and has some fine scraps of ruined architecture of mosques about it. [DT875]

In Duff Gordon's letters, on the contrary, *Muslim** recurs frequently. There are 135 occurrences in her corpus, all referring to people. As can be seen in examples (15-17), her attitude towards the religious feelings of the Egyptians is positive. She notes that they are a pious people full of tender emotions, and she respects their habits:

(15) On Friday I proclaimed a halt in the afternoon at a village at prayer-time for the *pious* **Muslims** to go to the mosque. [PG1106-8]

(16) **Muslim** piety is so unlike what Europeans think it is, *so full of tender emotions, so much more sentimental than we imagine – and it is wonderfully strong.* [PG1925-6]

(17) She is a *pious* **Muslimeh**. [PG2252-3]

3.1.4 *Christian**

*Christian** shows the writers' different attitudes towards people and religion. In Duff Gordon's letters the word, used both as noun and adjective, occurs 113 times and it is usually in a positive evaluative context, as in examples (18-20). In addition, she seems to consider *Christians* and Muslims on the same level (21).

(18) A **Christian** Englishwoman could be *companionable, tender, beneficently motherly* with them. [PG59-61]

(19) [...] to practice true **Christian** *kindness* [...]. [PG416]

(20) Most of my patients are **Christians** and *some are very nice people indeed*. [PG5516-17]

(21) Among gods, Amun Ra, the sun-god and serpent-killer, calls himself Mar Girgis (St. George), and is worshipped by **Christians** and Muslims in the same churches. [PG5520-21]

The Petrie corpus returns only 2 occurrences of *Christians*, the first of which is in an explicatory note. The second (22) is simply a matter-of-fact designation without any evaluative element.

(22) Today we could not have church, not tomorrow, because **Christians** in this country belong to a different church. [DT722]

3.1.5 *European**

*European** recurs 105 times in the Duff Gordon corpus. The Europeans are mostly compared to the local population groups, whom she considers more favourably than she does the Europeans, as can be seen in examples (23-25). In example (23) Europeans are even held responsible for uncivilised behaviour towards the Copts, and in example (25) the Arabs are considered gentlemen as opposed to the vulgar Europeans living in Egypt (25). On the whole, she seems to sympathise more with Muslims than with Europeans (16). The collocations

of this word usually reveal how the Europeans have a colonial attitude towards the natives, which she does not share.

(23) *The Copts are far more close and reserved and backward than the Arabs*, and they have been so repudiated by **Europeans** that they are *doubly shy of us*. [PG2086-88]

(24) The **European** ideas and customs have *extinguished the Arab altogether*. [PG2157-8]

(25) All the **Europeans** here are *traders*, and only speak the *vulgarest language*, and *don't care to know Arab gentlemen*. [PG4356-58]

Petrie, in contrast, shows little interest in non-European people and she does not compare them in any way. There are just 2 factual occurrences of *European** (26-27):

(26) And on the strangeness of a tablecloth, and butter and **European** bread. [DT261]

(27) We were innocent of collars, ties, or stockings, but met no **Europeans**, so they were not expected of us. [DT471]

3.2 *Attitude towards Places*

When referring to places, once again Duff Gordon's attitude is different from that of Petrie.

3.2.1 *Luxor*

Duff Gordon mentions *Luxor* 132 times, mostly in connection with people living there, who are considered to be very hospitable and even as close friends (28-30).

(28) On the last three days *all strangers were entertained with bread and cooked meat at the expense of the* **Luxor** *people*. [PG3767-69]

(29) I said Wallahy, *the people of* **Luxor** *are my brothers!* [PG6593-94]

(30) *I am on visiting terms* with all the 'county families' resident in **Luxor** already. [PG7493-94]

The Petrie corpus returns 11 occurrences, which again do not involve evaluation. She simply mentions places in a matter-of-fact way.

(31) She has now left us for seeing **Luxor** before she returns to England. [DT493]

(32) [...] and finally reached **Luxor** at night (13 hours) and slept at a small Swiss locanda opposite the station. [DT665]

(33) I paid two visits to **Luxor** temple. [DT665]

3.2.2 *Desert*

Duff Gordon's letters contain 37 occurrences of *desert*. As can be seen in examples (34-36), this landscape feature of Egypt does not evoke any sort of evaluation from her. She seems to be more interested in inhabited places (as in example 36):

(34) The Sheykh-el-Arab... has invited me out into the **desert** to the black tents [...] [PG4207-9]

(35) Thebes is bad in the height of summer on account of its expanse of **desert**, and sand and dust. [PG6510-11]

(36) In the **desert** the Bishareen and Abab'deh suffered more than the people at Cairo. [PG8969-70]

Petrie, in contrast, seems impressed by this landscape feature (37) and mostly describes its aspect in an objective way (38-39) paying attention to its changing aspect (40). Presumably, she travelled in the desert frequently to visit archaeological excavations. The occurrences in her letters amount to 133 hits.

(37) At various parts of the day we potter about the desert: it is much diversified by mounds and early tombs. [...] *The* **desert** *is certainly the most glorious place*. [DT44]

(38) [...] then lies a *vast extent* of stony sandy **desert** in all directions. [DT69]

(39) We are Yz miles on to this, with **desert** all round therefore, which swells here and there into little mounds of Roman ruins. [DT69]

(40) The face of the entire **desert** is altered during the month that I was stowed away in the huts! When I took to my bed after the New Year, there was the great extent of tunnel-mounds, long since worked-out, near the huts, and 1/z mile of undisturbed Gebel between these and the three great princes' mastabas (Mena, Adu I and II). But now that I get about again at the end of January, I find more than 1/2 mile square of desert all raked up into mounds and pit-holes in a confusing jumble of every variety of tomb, and ranging in date all through (dyn) VI-VII, XI, XII, XVIII, XIX, Persian and Ptolemaic. [DT142]

3.2.3 *Nile*

The very frequent word *Nile* has also been considered. Again, the point of view of Duff Gordon is mostly subjective as the word often collocates with positive adjectives, adverbials and verbs as in example (41) where the river is described as powerful and extremely beautiful, or in example (42) where Duff Gordon agrees with the ancient Egyptians' deification the river, as she finds it very impressive:

(41) *The **Nile** is pouring down gloriously*. [PG549]
(42) *No wonder the Egyptians worshipped the **Nile**: there is nothing like it*. [PG550]

Petrie's point of view is mostly objective, as the word often collocates with non-evaluative words. She does not refer to any impression the river might have given her.

(43) [...] after crossing the **Nile** with a sailing boat. [DT869]
(44) [...] and send out men to the **Nile**. [DT767]

3.2.4 *Cairo*

Cairo shows a similar difference between the two women. Duff Gordon mostly mentions Cairo in a factual way, however her point of view may also express a subjective attitude towards the city as the word sometimes collocates with positive adjectives, adverbials and verbs. She is fairly vigorous in describing her impression of the city by using emphatic words and expressions which at times seem to anticipate the language of tourism promotion. In example (45) she notes the picturesque beauty of the city, which according to her is beyond description, and in example (46) she expresses her increasing love of the more characteristic aspects of the city. Overall, she shows an enthusiastic attitude towards the city.

(45) *No words can describe the picturesque beauty of **Cairo***. [PG1738-39]
(46) *The more I see the back-slums of **Cairo**, the more in love I am with it*. [PG2057]

Petrie's point of view is overwhelmingly neutral, as can be seen in examples (47-48), where she only mentions Cairo as a geographical location from which she departed (47), or at which she arrived (48):

(47) We were off from **Cairo**. [DT46]
(48) We arrived in **Cairo**. [DT536]

4. *Concluding Remarks*

A first result is that, despite the difference in length of the two corpora, the data point to a basic overall difference: the predominance of words relating to people seems to show that Duff Gordon is more interested in people than in places, while the higher number of words relating to places seems to indicate Petrie's predominant interest in sites. These data could be due to the different situation of the two women: Petrie is first of all an archaeologist, though she is also an observer of the social and natural configuration of Egypt, while Duff Gordon's high people data may be due to her keen interest in the new social environment in which she finds herself. In fact, she shows the same interest in and positive attitude towards local populations she felt while she was in South Africa which is evident in her letters from that country (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2020).

This first result is supported by the analysis of the chosen domains. The contexts they are embedded in shows that the two women express quite different attitudes to people and places of Egypt. In our data, the collocations of the analysed words show that the lexis used to mention people and places is more subjective in the nineteenth century and becomes more objective and 'scientific' at the beginning of the twentieth century. In fact, the words used by Duff Gordon to describe Egyptian people and places show a sympathetic and involved attitude towards both of them, while those used by Petrie reveal a much more objective stance.

In short, the analysis of the two corpora has shed light on the attitudes of the two women travellers towards Egyptian people and places and on the fact that there are differences in how they perceive them. This difference of perspective is partly due to the evolution of the historical context and its related change in women travellers' status, but also the two women's personal situations and points of view need to be taken into consideration. Despite the fact that Duff Gordon was in Egypt for health reasons, she is predominantly interested in the inhabitants and their way of life, though she also seems to anticipate what Petrie will develop later: a keen interest in Egyptian archaeological sites, a feel-

ing of responsibility for their preservation, and the awareness of its urgency: *The days of the beauty of Cairo are numbered. The mosques are falling to decay* (PG 210), she writes. Petrie, on the other hand, is more attracted by places seen as archaeologically important and the natural context surrounding them.

The analysis of some key words has shown how the letters of two British women travellers to Egypt reveal their perceptions of the Egyptian people and their interest in archaeological sites. Considering these women as representatives, in different times, of ways of experiencing the social and natural new environment, two changes over time in attitudes towards the two domains of people and places were observed: firstly, the colonial outlook of Europeans towards Egypt evolves from an emotional way of looking at people and places to a more detached one; secondly, a subjective way of looking at places develops into a more objective and scientific one.

As a final point, it can be observed that the analysis of the letters by the two British women travellers suggests an area of interest for further research with more data in order to describe the ways in which writers' identities are realised and shaped in different historical and cultural contexts by the expression of evaluative language.

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