

Giovanni Battista Belzoni's exhibition of the reconstructed tomb of Pharaoh Seti I in 1821

Susan M. Pearce

In October 1817 G. B. Belzoni discovered the painted relief tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings and during the following year produced a careful record of some of the tomb's wall relief paintings. These formed the basis of a reconstruction of two of the most important of the tomb's rooms, together with a scale model of the whole tomb, which was put on exhibition at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London in 1821. Material prepared for the exhibition survives in the collection of the City Museum, Bristol. This article presents an analysis of the history of the exhibit and draws attention to its importance in the creation of the nineteenth- (and twentieth-) century notion of 'Ancient Egypt'.

THE City Museum, Bristol, possesses what survives of the material produced by Giovanni Battista Belzoni, his wife Sarah and (probably) their servant and friend James Curtin, in order to reconstruct and exhibit some of the wall paintings that Belzoni had found in Egypt in the tomb of Pharaoh Seti I, which he had discovered in the Valley of the Kings in October 1817. The collection is of great interest for the link it represents with Belzoni, one of the heroic pioneers of Egyptology. It is also noteworthy for the significant role it has played in the history of taste and spectacle, and in the creation of the nineteenth- (and twentieth-) century notion of 'Ancient Egypt'.¹

The material consists of some 295 separate elements (for list and details, see Appendix 1). Of these, thirty-six pieces are pencil sketches on cartridge paper, of various sizes, some irregularly shaped. The bulk of the material consists of water-colour paintings on cartridge paper, depicting the coloured wall paintings in the tomb at a scale of 1:6. Two sets of paintings are identifiable, distinguished by blue-and-black or yellow-and-black stripes on the Pharaoh's head-dress. The Blue set, numbering 114 pieces, is the more competent and detailed, while the Yellow set (102 pieces) was drawn by a less talented hand and shows signs of haste. In addition the collection contains some fifteen copies of published lithographs, which include a coloured cross-section of the tomb (Fig. 1). There remain twenty-eight pieces, which include nine 'style sheets' used to

expedite the work of producing the finished paintings; the remaining pieces cannot be allotted to any of the groups (and some are not part of the Seti tomb archive).

The collection was originally registered into the Bristol City Museum in July 1900. It was entered in the History Register under 24 December 1929 as No. H 3991 and described as 'Drawings of Wall decorations in the Tomb of Seti I at Thebes (and elsewhere), formerly property of Belzoni, donated by C. E. Wilson (a note says "date on box:- 14-11-1900")'. In August 1934 a detailed list giving the supposed locations of the relief paintings within the tomb was entered in the History Register (nos 4388–551). During the 1960s and 1970s Leslie Grinsell, Keeper of Archaeology at the Museum, relocated some of the material to different tomb chambers, evidently through comparisons with the then chief publication of the tomb paintings prepared by Lefébure. Subsequently, Erik Hornung has published the archive photographs of the tomb taken by Harry Burton, together with supporting information.²

Belzoni's early career is fully documented elsewhere;³ here it is necessary only to say that by October 1817 he was digging in the Valley of the Kings, and there identified a likely spot for a hitherto undiscovered royal tomb. On 17 October the entrance to a rock-cut tomb appeared, and two days later Belzoni entered the tomb to find a sequence of thirteen rooms, almost all covered in

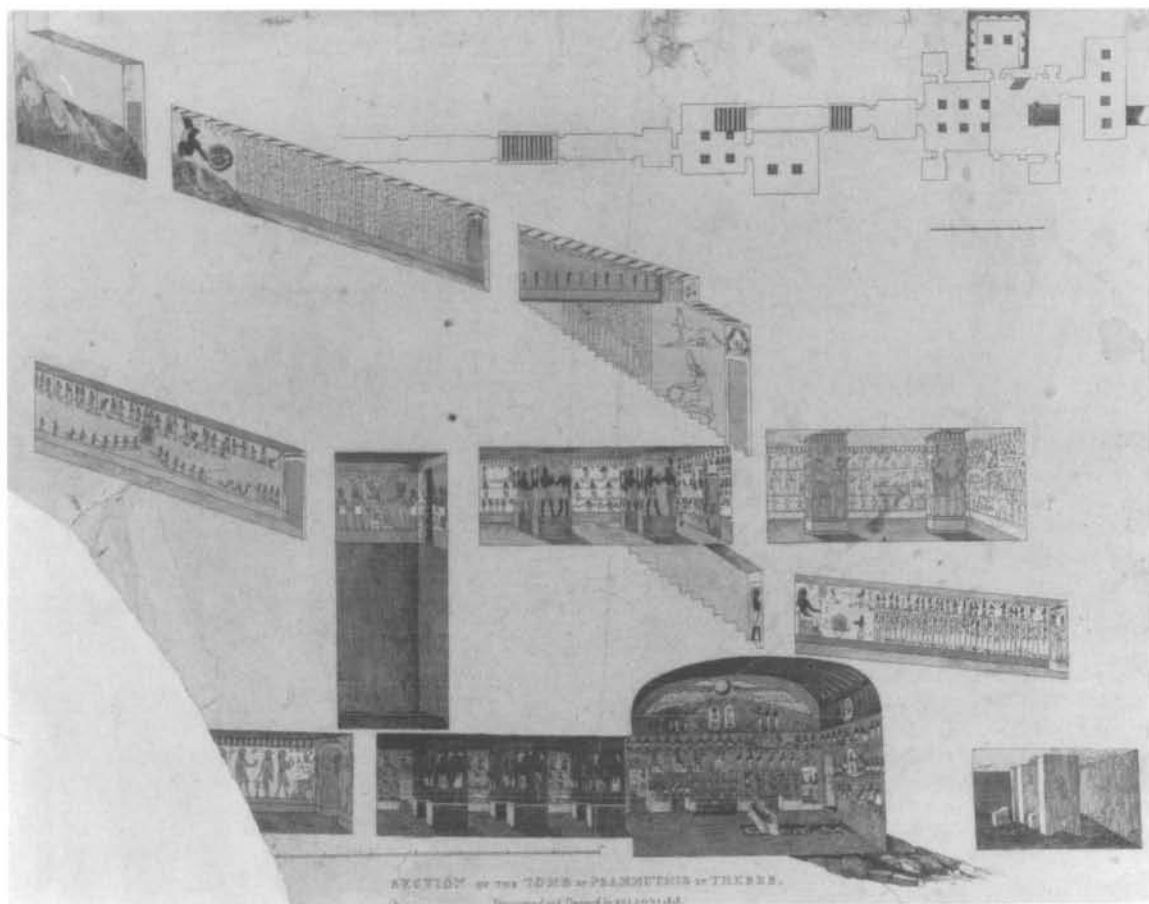


Fig. 1. Plan of the tomb of Seti I, based upon notes and drawings made in 1819 by Belzoni in the tomb, published as a lithograph by Belzoni in 1820 (see note 5). City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol. Photo: Leicester University Central Photographic Unit.

superb wall paintings in painted relief in a state of pristine freshness, showing jewel-like colours of blue, red, black, gold and gleaming white (Fig. 2). The paintings depicted the progress of the Boat of the Sun below the western horizon through the Hours of the Night in the Regions of the Dead, peopled by gigantic serpents and the souls of the dead, to the rebirth of the Sun in the eastern dawn; this is, of course, analogous to the progress of the Pharaoh's soul to eternal life, and is accompanied by images of the Pharaoh in the company of the gods and goddesses, the ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth, and the representation of the starry night sky in the royal burial vault.

Belzoni had found the tomb of Seti I (1294–1279 BC), a pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty. The royal

mummy had been removed in antiquity (and was found in the Royal Cache in 1881), but in the centre of the burial chamber was the king's alabaster sarcophagus, carved in great detail with scenes from the Book of Gates, and a major work of art in its own right. The sarcophagus eventually came into the possession of Sir John Soane, in whose museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, it remains. The tomb (KV17) was the most magnificent of all the painted tombs in the Valley of the Kings; presently (1999) it is closed for restoration.

Belzoni immediately began to make a careful record of the tomb relief paintings, assisted by a fellow Italian, Dr Alessandro Ricci.⁴ In the published account of his Egyptian explorations, his *Narrative*, Belzoni says:

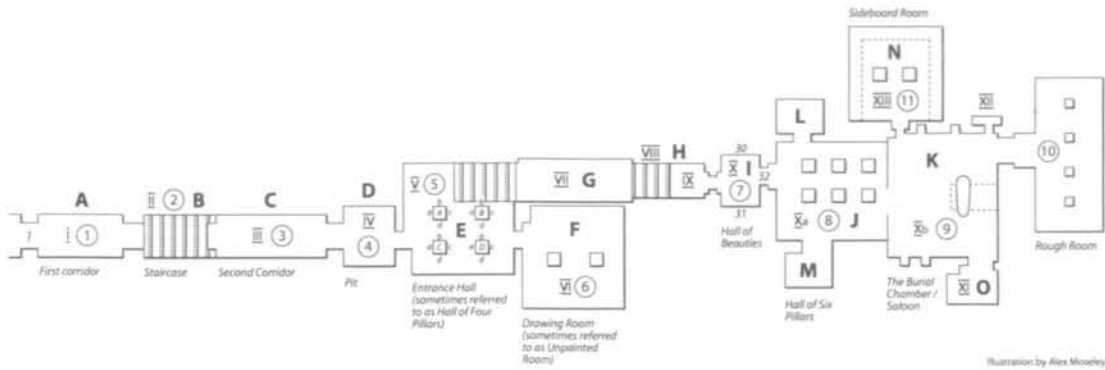


Fig. 2. Plan of tomb, showing sequence of rooms taken from Belzoni's plan. Room numbers according to scheme used by Lefebure are in Roman numerals, and those of the scheme used by Hornung are in upper- and lower-case letters, and uncircled Arabic numerals. Annotation from Hornung is given only as sufficient to allow identification of the scenes figured here; for full details the reader is referred to Hornung's *Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I*. Room numbers used by the Belzonis in the *Descriptions* of 1821 and 1825 are in circled Arabic numerals. It should be noted that there are some probable inconsistencies in the Belzonis' notation. Room names used by the Belzonis are also given. The 1821 exhibition showed full-size reconstructions of the Entrance Hall and the Hall of Beauties; the 1825 exhibition showed these, and also that of the Hall of Six Pillars. Produced by Alex Moseley, University of Leicester.

With the assistance of Mr Ricci, I have made drawings of all the figures, hieroglyphics, emblems, ornaments &c. that are to be seen in this tomb: and by great perseverance I have taken impressions of every thing in wax: to accomplish the work has been a laborious task, that occupied me more than twelve months.⁵

The work of recording continued throughout the summer of 1818. Belzoni seems to have made the tomb plan and the wax impressions himself, and to have copied the hieroglyphics:

The hieroglyphics in this tomb are nearly five hundred, of which I took a faithful copy, with their colours; but they are of four different sizes, from one to six inches, so that I have been obliged to take one of each size, which makes nearly two thousand in all.⁶

However, he was sometimes absent from the site, and much of the copying work needed to record the eighty-two life-sized figures and the 800 or so smaller ones seems to have been carried out by Ricci.

If the *Narrative* can be believed, Belzoni planned to exhibit a reconstruction of the tomb from an early stage:

The drawings show the respective places of the figures, so that if a building were erected exactly on the same plan, and of the same size, the figures might be placed in their situations precisely as in the original and thus produce in Europe a tomb, in every point equal to that of Thebes, which I hope to execute if possible.⁷

Again he says:

Should I be so fortunate, however, as to succeed in erecting an exact model of this tomb in Europe, the beholder will acknowledge the impossibility of doing it justice in a description.⁸

It is not impossible, however, that these were hindsight reflections intended for the London public at the time of publication when plans for the exhibition were proceeding.

By March 1820 the Belzonis had returned to London, and on 31 March *The Times* informed the world that 'The model of the beautiful tomb discovered by Mr Belzoni in Thebes will be erected as soon as a convenient place shall be found for its reception.' This advance publicity was matched by Belzoni's arrangement with John Murray for the publication of his *Narrative*, which duly appeared in December 1820 (with French, Italian and German editions) as a handsome quarto volume of text and a separate folio volume of forty-five coloured plates. Thirty-three of these carry Belzoni's name, seven (of the tomb) Ricci's and four are unsigned. These plates were prepared from the same original records made in the tomb the previous year. Also in 1820 Belzoni met Thomas Pettigrew, a medical man who was subsequently to become a famous examiner of mummies. In that year Belzoni and Pettigrew

collaborated in the unwrapping of a mummy which Belzoni had brought to England: this was a private occasion, but presumably had its share in generating interest.⁹

By a fortunate coincidence, the Egyptian Hall (Fig. 3) in Piccadilly, London, was available for rent, and an architecturally more appropriate setting for the proposed exhibition would have been impossible to find.¹⁰ The original plan suggests that the well-known Egyptian style façade of the Hall gave on to a lobby, with behind it a large room, known as the Great Room, lit by a circular light. Half-way down the Great Room, on the visitor's left, a short corridor led to a second large room, known as The Pantheon, lit by a square light. In 1819 the (apparently) originally plain interior of the Great Room had been redecorated in the Egyptian taste by John Buonarotti Papworth¹¹ and possibly at this time the building was altered also, since an account of the exhibition, published in 1822 as *Description of the Egyptian Tomb Discovered by Giovanni Battista Belzoni* says

clearly that the scale model of the tomb was 'upstairs'.¹² The exhibition consisted of the scale model of the whole tomb, and full-sized reconstructions of the Entrance Hall (Hornung's Room E, see Fig. 2) and the Hall of Beauties (Hornung's Room I, see Fig. 2) in the Great Room, together with some other material. A contemporary print¹³ shows the Hall of Beauties reconstruction, with the display materials mounted on the inside of an enclosed space, and a low ceiling from which hang four lamps: the style of the main displays was obviously intended to convey the mysterious and impressive character of the tomb (Fig. 4). Other models were also displayed, and there were fourteen cases of Egyptian antiquities, including two mummies.¹⁴

The exhibition preview was held on 27 April 1821, and it opened to the general public on the following 1 May. The exhibition was well reviewed by the *Gentleman's Magazine*¹⁵ and *The Times*¹⁶ and seems to have done good business. It closed for a few weeks in the late summer of 1821, opened again in the



Fig. 3. The Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, London from an aquatint published in *Ackermann's Repository of the Arts*, 2nd ser. 8 (1819) p. 153. Author's collection. Photo: Leicester University Central Photographic Unit.

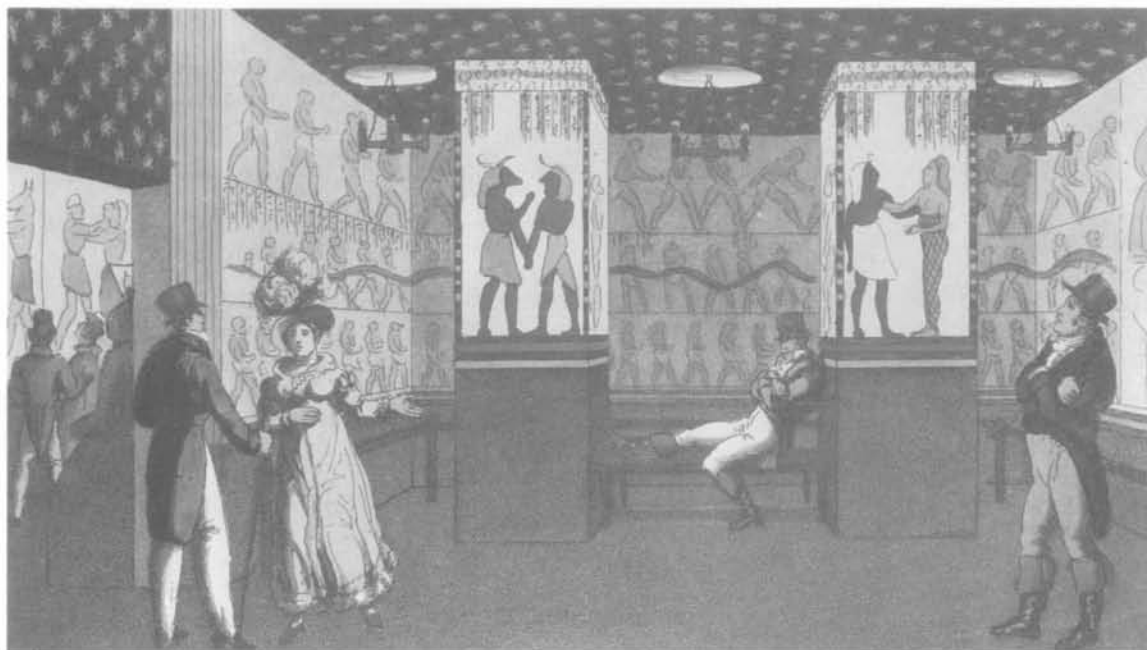


Fig. 4. The 1821 Exhibition of the Tomb at the Egyptian Hall from an aquatint in the Percival Collection, British Library. The engraving shows a view of the reconstruction of the Entrance Hall (Hornung's Room E) but is impressionistic rather than accurate. The three visible sides of the wall show a rough rendition of the depiction of the Fifth Hour of the Night, which in the tomb covers the left side of the wall beside the entrance, the left side wall and the left part of the rear wall. The pillar face visible on the left is most like Hornung's E/Ac showing the King before Anubis; that on the right shows the King before a goddess who could be (or could be a composite of) the Goddess of the West (E/Ad), Isis (Bd), Neith (Dc), Selkis (Bc) or Nephthys (Db). See Hornung, *Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I*, pp. 18, 134–41, pls. 70–7. Photo by kind permission of the British Library, CRACH.1, Tab. 56.

autumn and ran on through the early months of 1822. Belzoni published a further volume of six plates to help maintain public interest, and also prepared a volume depicting the hieroglyphics from the tomb, which he presented to the Duke of Sussex.¹⁷ (The Duke and Belzoni belonged to the same Masonic Lodge.) The exhibition finally closed on 1 April 1822, when the contents were to be disposed of by sale.

We must now turn to the history of the materials used in the tomb reconstruction. When they returned to London in the spring of 1820, Belzoni and his wife Sarah had with them a set of wax models taken directly from the bas-reliefs of the tomb, and a set of pencil drawings marked up with indications of colour; in some cases they may have been marked with appropriate water-colour. Recurrent features on the original, like pectoral ornaments, girdles and armlets were sketched-in only and allotted a number which related to the numbered-up,

coloured, style sheets that had also been prepared (Fig 5). The details of the hieroglyphics seem to have been treated in the same way, and separate records had been made of these, some in wax models, others apparently in separate drawings. Given Belzoni's continual insistence on the accuracy of the reconstruction, there seems no reason to doubt that both the wax models and the pencil drawings were made to a high standard of exactness, and well enough documented to allow an accurate assemblage.¹⁸

In order to produce the Egyptian Hall exhibition materials for the two full-sized room constructions, the wax models taken in the Entrance Hall and the Hall of Beauties were used to produce plaster casts, which were then coloured with reference to the drawings and their associated annotation. Some plaster casts from other rooms in the tomb were also prepared at the same time, although what these were is not clear: they were eventually displayed on

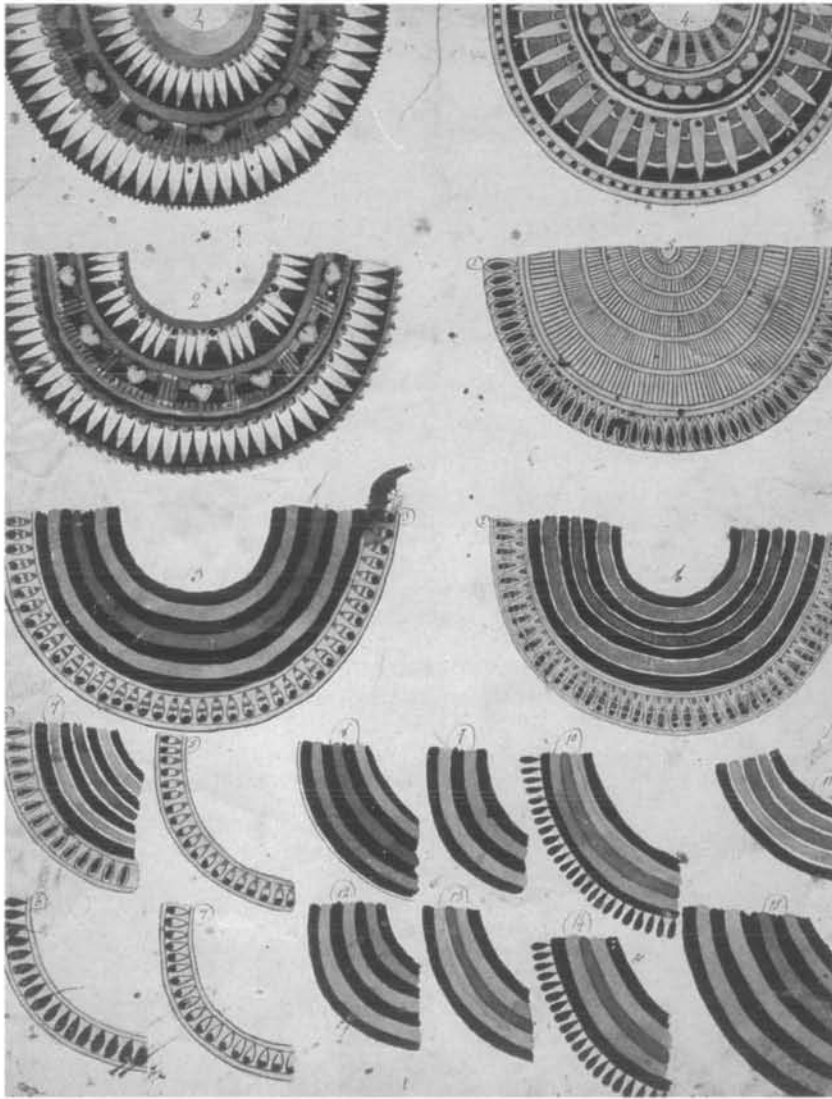


Fig. 5. Water-colour and pencil on cartridge paper, by either Belzoni or Ricci: a 'style sheet', showing numbered varieties of pectoral ornament. City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol. Photo: Leicester University Central Photographic Unit.

the 'wall opposite the model' in the Egyptian Hall upper room.¹⁹

The complete scale model of the tomb seems to have utilized the pencil drawings made in the tomb, since the 1825 *Description* refers to the 'model of the whole tomb of Psammis, [Seti] composed of all the original drawings, taken in the tomb, coloured as the original . . . this matchless piece of drawing has cost the labour of several people for the space of 16 months'.²⁰ The drawings were fully worked up, and stiffened by being stuck on to coarse-weave canvas (Figs. 6–7). In this process the striped head-dress of the Pharaoh was coloured in black and blue,

giving what is now known as the Blue set of scale paintings (Fig. 8). The scale model comprised a wooden frame on to which the individual canvas-backed drawings were secured with small pins or nails: pin-holes with surrounding discoloration are visible on the backs of a number of the Bristol pieces.

The materials (reconstructions and specimens) in the Egyptian Hall exhibition were due to be sold as soon as possible after 1 April 1822, and the exhibition remained open until that time. Meanwhile, plans were in hand to show a tomb reconstruction in Paris, an exhibition enterprise being managed by James Curtin, an associate of the Belzonis from

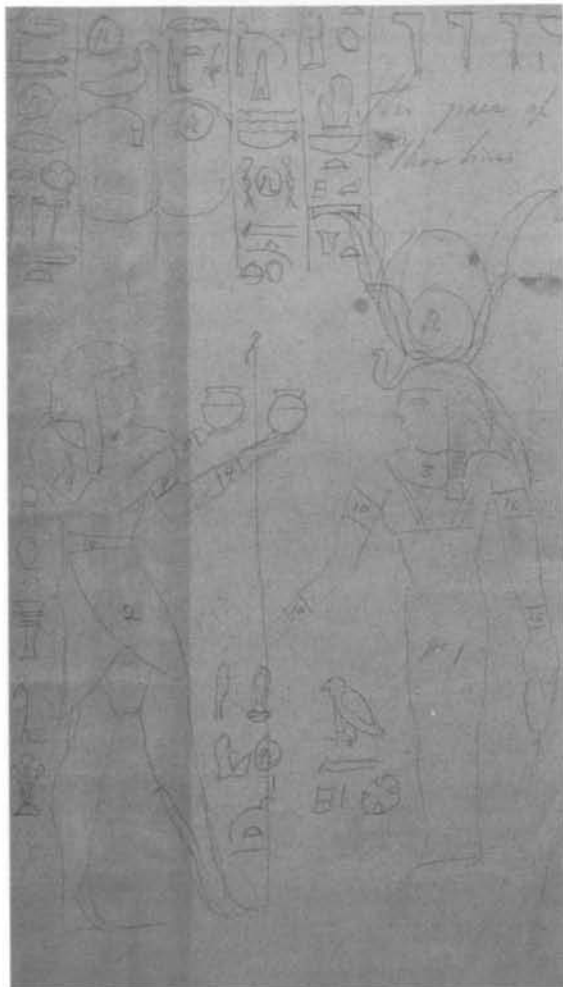


Fig. 6. Pencil on cartridge paper, by either Belzoni or Ricci: one of the original rough drawings made in the tomb showing the King before Isis making offerings to the goddess. The numbers on the armlets, belt, kilt and pectoral ornament refer back to the style sheets. The pencil note (top right) records the number ('three') of lines of hieroglyphs to be added to the finished version. From Belzoni's Room x or Hall of Beauties, Hornung's I 30, see Hornung, *Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I*, p. 194, pl. 130 (original now badly damaged). City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol. (Photo Leicester University Central Photographic Unit.)

their earliest days in Egypt (and, indeed, before). For this exhibition, a second set of coloured plaster casts of (at least) the Entrance Hall and the Hall of Beauties had to be prepared, and a second scale model. This is the most likely context for the creation of the inferior Yellow set of paintings of

the tomb to a 1:6 scale. The exhibition in Paris was not a success, and an effort to sell the exhibition materials evidently was not very successful either.²¹ The fate of the plaster casts on show there remains unknown, but the Yellow set of scale drawings came back to England, probably with Curtin when the exhibition closed.

Belzoni, meanwhile, had become bored with London life, and was making plans for a new expedition to Timbuktu. By October 1823 he had reached the Benin coast and proceeded inland to reach Gwato, but on 3 December 1823 he died there. News of his death did not reach London until May 1824. Sarah was left alone and, ostensibly to support Belzoni's mother and Italian relatives²² but also, presumably, to provide funds for herself, she organized a second English exhibition held in rooms at 28 Leicester Square, which opened in the spring of 1825. James Curtin produced the reconstructions, but it is unclear whether the Leicester Square exhibition used the Blue or the Yellow set of drawings for the tomb model.

Comparison of the 1822 Egyptian Hall *Description* and the 1825 Leicester Square *Description* shows that relatively little from the original exhibition found a buyer, although the full-scale plaster casts representing the two rooms did so.²³ The Leicester Square exhibition ran through the spring and early summer of 1825, but by October it appears that Sarah's finances were in a desperate state and on 18 October 1825 there was an execution for debt in which all her goods were seized.²⁴ Presumably, the antiquities were taken and sold off, together with any surviving plaster casts and perhaps the wax models, but both the Blue and the Yellow sets of the tomb scale model remained in Sarah's possession: it seems that they were not deemed worth taking, or they were overlooked, or they were elsewhere – perhaps in the possession of James Curtin – at the time.

It is probable that both sets were more-or-less still complete at this time. Comparative analysis²⁵ of the surviving paintings in Bristol shows that a substantial proportion of both original sets still survives: for example, the Blue set for the pillars in Rooms E and J is nearly complete and the Yellow set perhaps 75 per cent complete. The surviving material from both sets is distributed across the rooms of the scale model, with every painted room being well represented. Moreover, in many cases almost complete duplicate

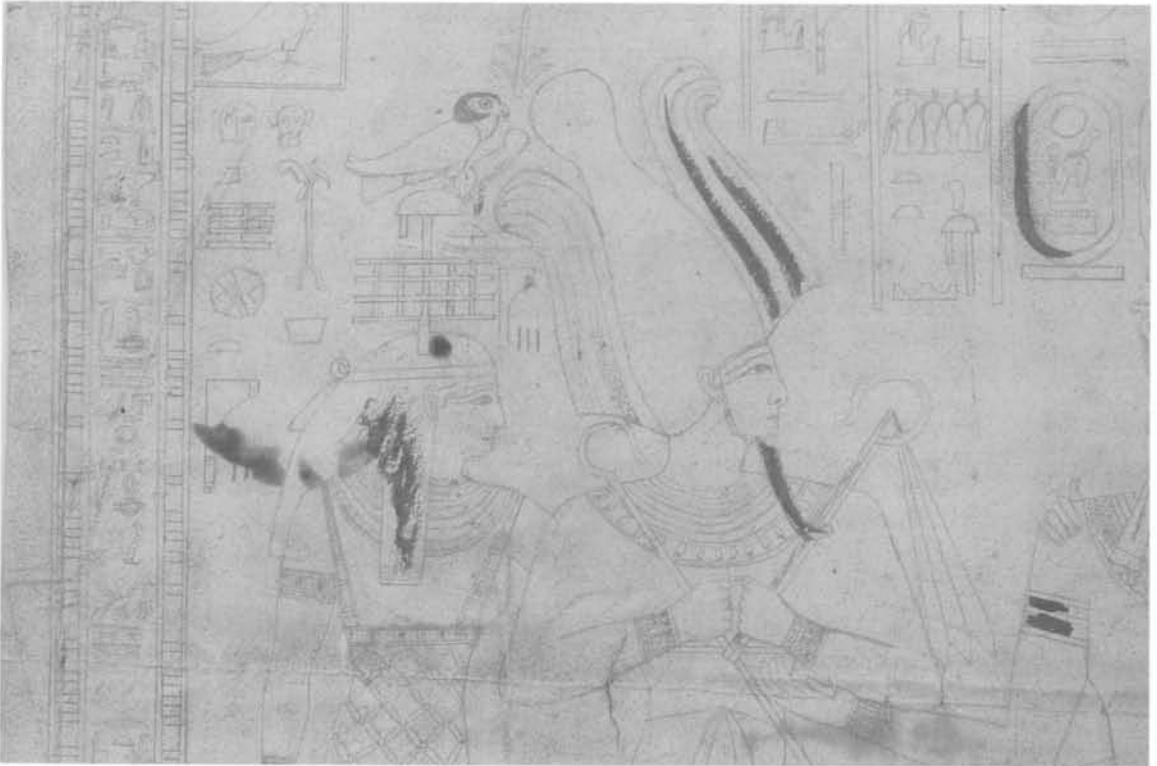


Fig. 7. Pencil on cartridge paper, probably by Belzoni, showing the upper part of a scene representing Osiris and the Goddess of the West; the King, whose arm and shoulder is visible (right) is being conducted before the two gods by Horus (from Belzoni's Entrance Hall, Hornung's E rear wall: see *Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I*, p. 127, pl. 63). This appears to be a finished pencil drawing and a start (or an experiment) has been made with water-colour.

sets of the same wall paintings survive: in Room E, for example, there are duplicate sets of the material for the four pillars and the same is true of the six pillars in Room J, of parts of Room K (Burial Chamber) and of Room N (Sideboard Room). This is best explained by supposing that Sarah retained both essentially complete sets into the 1830s (Fig. 9). During the rest of her life, some pieces may have been given away, and some destroyed by decay or accident.

Sarah died on 12 January 1870, having spent her long widowhood first in Brussels and then in Jersey. She seems to have been born Sarah Bann, of Irish extraction but living all or most of her early life in Bristol. C. E. Wilson, who presented the surviving tomb materials to the Bristol City Museum in 1900, together with a copy of the *Narrative*, a sketch-book belonging to Belzoni and a memorandum book of Sarah's, may well have had

them from Sarah, possibly directly. He was a schoolmaster in London, perhaps at King Edward's School, but presumably, like Sarah, had Bristol connections.

The Egyptian Revival of the early nineteenth century, with its continued repercussions throughout the twentieth century, has been the focus of recent attention.²⁶ However, this has concentrated upon the replay of monumental ancient Egyptian motifs in architecture and interior design, especially of furniture, rather than upon the impact of Egyptian tombs, preserved bodies and funerary practice, about which considerably less has been written. And yet it was this aspect of the consumption of Pharaonic Egypt that was to dominate first the vogue for mummy unwrapping between c.1821 and 1837,²⁷ then the Ancient Egyptian inspired 'mummy' fiction of the period after c.1855,²⁸ and subsequently the similar productions for the cinema after c.1920 (given, of



Fig. 8. Two of the water-colours (Blue Set) made by the Belzonis in London before April 1821 and used in the scale model of the tomb (Entrance Hall) in the 1821 exhibition (and possibly in subsequent exhibitions). They show the King before the Goddess of the West (left, Horning E Pillar A, side d) and before Anubis (right, Horning E, Pillar A, side c: see *Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I*, pp. 136–7, pls. 72–3); the wear at the corners shows where they were pinned up on display. City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol. Photo: Leicester Central Photographic Unit.

course, an enormous boost by the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb in November 1922).

In this shift in taste, Belzoni's exhibition, and the mummy-unwrapping event which preceded it, were significant. The earlier part of the nineteenth century seems to have perceived a significance in the idea of the 'real' thing and its relationship to 'real' history, especially where antiquities were concerned, which had not been part of the culture of the later eighteenth century (or before) in which ancient objects

acted as decorative or architectural inspiration rather than as a supposed means of access to past realities. Belzoni's Egyptian activities, and the Ancient Egyptian material that he put on display, helped to support this cultural shift, as did his idea of reconstruction of the past as a recreation of that past. But the exhibition of the Egyptian tomb signified more than a positivist assertion of accessibility of the past: its focus was on death presented as mysterious, fascinating and spectacular, and its meaning offered

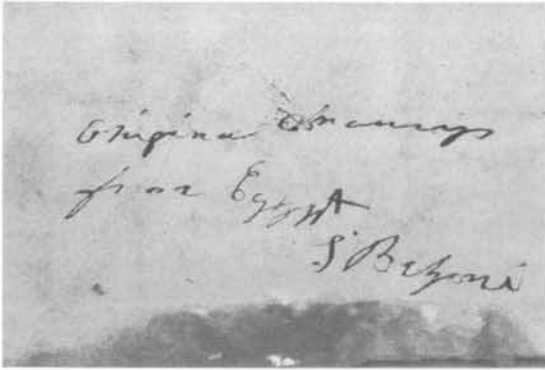


Fig. 9. Note on sheet of cartridge paper attached to the drawings: 'Original drawings from Egypt' signed (probably) S(arah) Belzoni. City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol. Photo: Leicester Central Photographic Unit.

a gothic experience of horror in which individual fragments are dissolved.

The tension between the idea of positivist knowledge possessed by an understanding and sovereign subject individual and the recognition of discursive

emotional experiences produced by external agencies upon an individual as object, was one of the forces behind later nineteenth-century culture, and Belzoni's exhibition marks a significant moment in its development.

Appendix 1

The following list gives brief details of those pieces from the Belzoni Collection relating to the tomb of Seti I which survive in the City Museum, Bristol; each is identified by its museum accession number. In a number of cases, the pieces have been assigned to the Blue or the Yellow set only on the strength of their general style, for not all show the diagnostic pharaonic head-dress; however, some have proved impossible to assign to a set. It should be noted that the list is given here to facilitate analysis of what survives of the material in terms of how it was exhibited, i.e., the relative proportions of Blue and Yellow material and of walls and pillars.

Room A 4388[?] blue, doorway; 4389 a, b, c, d, e, 4390 a, b, 4391 a, b, c, ? blue, corridor; 4393 a, b, c ? blue, ceiling.

Room B 4394, 4395 a, b, 4396 a, b, 4398, 4399 a, b ? blue, 4400 a, b, c, blue, stairs

Room C 4410 a, blue, 4402 a, b, c, 4404 a, b, c yellow, 4429, 4493 a, b, 4499[?] blue, 45322 a, b, c pencil (scraps), walls.

Room D 4405, 4406 ? blue, pit.

Room E 4407 a, b, c, d yellow, 4408 a, b, c, d blue, 4409 a, b, c, d yellow, 4410 b, c, d blue, 4411 lithograph, walls. 4412 a, b, d blue, 4413 b, c yellow, 4414 a, b, c, d blue, 4415 a, b, c yellow, 4416 a, b, c, d blue, 4417 a, b, c yellow, 4418 a, b, c, d blue, 4419 a, b, c, d yellow, 4470 c yellow, pillars; 4496 a, 4496 b lithographs, 4505 ? yellow pillar.

Room F 4420 a blue, 4421 a, b yellow, 4422 blue, 4423 yellow, 4424 blue, 4425 yellow, walls; 4426 a, b,

c, d, ? blue, 4509 pencil, 4510 pencil, 4511 pencil, 4534 a, b pencil, pillars.

Room G 4427, lithograph, 4428 a, b, 4429 b, c yellow, 4494 ? yellow, 4506 pencil, 4507, 4508 pen, walls.

Room H 4430 blue, 4431 yellow, 4432 a, b blue, 4433 a, b, 4435, 4436 a, b, 4437 a, b, c yellow, 4438a, b, c, d blue, 4439 b, 4440 a, b set uncertain, museum register says Ricci 4442, 4497 ? yellow, 4493 set uncertain, museum register says Ricci, 4444, 4445 blue, 4446 a, b yellow, 4447 a, b blue, 4448 a, b yellow, walls.

Room I 4454 d yellow, 4457 a, b, 4458 a, b yellow, burial chamber entrance; 4480 b yellow, 4495 ? lithograph, 4500 ? yellow, pillar; 4515, 4520, 4521, 4522, 4525, 4527, 4530, 4533, 4534 pencil, walls.

Room J 4449 a, b blue, 4450 a, b, c yellow, 4551 a, b blue, 4452 a, b, c yellow, walls; 4453 a, b, c, d blue, 4454 a, b, c yellow, 4455 b, c blue, 4456 a, b, c, 4458 c

yellow, 4459 b, c blue, 4460 a, b, c yellow, 4461 a, b, c, 4463 a, b, c, 4481 a, b, c blue, 4482 a, b yellow, pillars; 4501, 4536 pencil, ? pillars.

Room K 4441 a, b, c ? set, ? pillars; 4465 a, b, ? yellow, 4467, 4468 yellow, 4469, 4470 blue, 4471 a, b, c, d yellow, 4472 a, b, c, 4473 a, b blue, 4474 a, b, c yellow, 4512, 4513 pencil, walls; 4475, 4476 a, b blue, 4477 a, b, c, 4478 a – i yellow, 4516 pencil, 4539 a, b, c, d lithograph, star ceiling.

Room N 4479 blue, 4480 a yellow, 4483 a, b, c blue,

4484 a yellow, 4485 a, b blue, 4486a, b yellow, 4487 a, b, c blue, 4490, 4491 a, b, 4498 set uncertain, 4523 pencil, walls.

Annex O 4518, 4519, 4524 a, b, c pencil ? walls.

Style-sheets 4503 a–i.

Identification uncertain 4502, 4514, 4517, set uncertain, 4226, 4529, 4531, 4534 b, 4535, 4548 pencil, 4550 a, b, e lithograph.

Plan of Seti I tomb 4538 lithograph.

Appendix 2

This and the following two Appendices give the texts of the 1822 *Description of the Egyptian Tomb Discovered by Giovanni Battista Belzoni* (which related to the first exhibition in the Egyptian Hall), the 1822 *Sale Catalogue* and the 1825 *Description of the Egyptian Tomb Discovered by G. Belzoni* (which related to the exhibition in Leicester Square): all have been taken from the Percival Collection of Material relating to Sadler's Wells, 1683–1843 (British Library, CRACH 1, Tab 5b). The two *Descriptions*, particularly, were plumped up by liberal quotations from the text of Belzoni's *Narrative* and other writings. These have been omitted and their presence indicated by dots. It is clear that in parts all these documents, and especially the *Sale Catalogue*, were rapidly put together. This has resulted in some confusions in the text and some odd English, all of which have been retained in this transcription. The original spelling of the proper names has been retained.

It will be noted that the *Description* of the exhibition at the Egyptian Hall which survives in the Percival Collection is dated 1822, although the exhibition opened in May 1821: it is presumably a reprint relating to the second phase of this exhibition in January–March 1822.

Description of the Egyptian Tomb described by Giovanni Battista Belzoni (London, J. Murray, Albermarle St., 1822)

Description of the Models, Newly Introduced.

No. I The porticoes of the temple in the island of Philoe . . . The scale of this model is one foot to fifteen feet.

No. II The ruins of the temple Erments . . . scale one inch two feet and a half.

No. III The great temple of Ysambul . . . one foot to an hundred and twenty feet.

No. IV Is the section of the passages, porticulis and chambers of the pyramid of Shephrenes . . . proportion one foot to one hundred and twenty feet. All in wax.

No. V This model gives an exact view of the pyramid in the reduced proportion of one foot to one hundred and twenty feet.

No. VI The little model is intended to elucidate on the origin of arches.

Situation and Discovery of the Tomb . . .

Explanation of some of the hieroglyphics, the model etc. etc.

It would have been desirable that the model of the whole tomb should have been the first object to present itself to the eye of the spectator, but since the local circumstances are such as to render that arrangement impracticable, it is recommended to begin with the exploration of the furtherest of the two chambers. This was the room in which Mr Belzoni found himself after he had passed through the small aperture in the painted hall, spoken of before; and to this apartment he gave the name of the Entrance Hall . . .

Hall of Beauties Returning to this chamber, where are two statues of granite, with lions' heads, which Mr Belzoni brought from the temple situated behind the two colossi in the plain of Gournou; the chief subjects of the representations on its walls will be found to be . . .

Upstairs

The Model

Without enumerating the various dimensions of the different Halls and Passages of the Tomb, it will be sufficient to observe that the Model is constructed on a scale of one-sixth to the size of the original sepulchre.

No. 1 First Corridor

No. 2 Staircase

No. 3 Second Corridor

No. 4 Pit or Well; the position of the ancient ropes which were found, and the bridge of two beams which was constructed as well as the aperture which was enlarged and forced through the wall, will be observed.

No. 5 The Entrance Hall, this is farthest chamber represented below of its original dimensions.

No. 6 The Room called the Drawing-Room. From this apartment were taken the outlined figures to be seen opposite the cases containing the Egyptian Curiosities. From the Entrance Hall on the left, a large stair case descends into a corridor, and farther on is the other chamber.

No. 7 represented below, called the Hall of Beauties. When standing in the centre of this chamber, the traveller is surrounded by an assembly of Egyptian gods and goddesses.

No. 8 Saloon, in the centre of which is the Sarcophagus of Oriental Alabaster, nine feet five inches long and three feet seven inches wide; its thickness is only two inches; and it is semi-transparent when a light is placed inside. It is minutely sculptured within and without, with several hundred figures.

[mss ink note – now in Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields]

It stands over a staircase, which communicates with a subterranean passage leading downwards 200 feet in length.

On the right of the saloon is a small chamber.

On the left of the saloon is another chamber, No 11 with two square pillars.

On the wall, opposite the model are placed some casts from different parts of the Tomb.

Appendix 3

Cases of Egyptian Curiosities etc.

Nos. 1 and 2 contain female ornaments; the mummy of an ape; the toe of a colossal figure, the head and arm of which are coming to England No. 3 contains different idols; some made of porcelain, others of a hard calcareous stone; and also fragments of the tomb of Psammiss.

No. 4 Various idols of white stone, or of beautiful blue porcelain, from the tomb of Psammiss; different fragments of breccia, with hieroglyphics – found among the temple of Bernice, on the Red Sea.

No. 5 Idols of calcareous stone; scarabei of basalt, and of *verde antico*; one of a square form, used by the Kings of Egypt, and worn as an ornament on their breasts, some fragments of *terra cotta* and lacrymatories.

No. 6 Figures of alabaster; plates of the same substance – supposed to have been used for religious ceremonies; vases and fragments of alabaster, tomb stones from the mummy pits of Gournou.

No. 7 Figures of wood and of bronze; ancient coins; vases containing the bowels of mummies.

No. 8 Wooden idols; stone fragments; a most beautiful head of black basalt, from Sais, fragments of a sarcophagus of terra cotta, from the Oasis of Ammon

No. 9 Wooden boxes which contained idols.

No. 10 Ancient shoes; and ropes made of the leaves of the palm tree, mummies of various animals, quadrupeds and fish; tresses of hair in a state of wonderful preservation.

No. 11 A mummy opened in England a short time ago: it is the most perfect of those I unfolded in Egypt, during 6 year's research; the box in which it was contained, is placed above

No. 12 The mummy of an Egyptian priest, remarkable for the singular position and the binding of the arms

No. 13 A manuscript on papyrus, the largest known – it measures 23 feet.

No. 14 A portion of the original tomb of Psammiss, which had fallen off the wall; the colours of the female figures are considerably faded . . .

Catalogue of the various Articles of Antiquity to be disposed of At the Egyptian Tomb By Auction or by Private Contract The Casts of Bas-Relief, etc; together with all the Collection Part of the Project of Mr Belzoni's Researches in Egypt, Nubia etc. Will be sold after the 1st of April, 1822 (London, Printed by William Clowes, Northumberland Court, 1822)

The Egyptian Tomb will be disposed of, after the first of April 1822.

The proprietor of the Egyptian tomb, Mr Belzoni, takes an early opportunity to acquaint the Amateurs of Antiquities, that all the Casts in Basso Relief which compose the two Chambers of the Tomb, together with the model of the whole excavation of the said tomb, as also the collection of antiquities, Statues, Egyptian Manuscripts, Mummies, the models of the Various temples and Pyramids are to be disposed of at any time after the 1st April 1822 *

As these articles are generally known, the Proprietor does not think it necessary to give further explanation of them. Catalogues may be had by applying at the Egyptian tomb, indicating the various places where these antiquities have been found. The purchasers will receive their respective articles soon after the closing of the exhibition, which, in consequence of the late season of Parliament, will be kept open a few weeks longer after the announced end of February.

The above casts and antiquities may be removed to any part of Europe. An offer for the whole would be preferable, and advantageous to the purchaser.

The Egyptian tomb continues to be open every Day from ten to four, Admittance, One Shilling.

*to be understood that admittance for inspection must be paid as usual

Catalogue etc.

No. 1 The two chambers, a facsimile of 2 of the principal apartments in the tomb of Psammis: including the four pillars, cover a space of 200 feet in length, 2 and 8 feet high in plaster of paris, containing 62 figures in bas relief, about 4 feet 6 inches high; and 181 ditto, 2 feet high – all highly coloured, quite perfect and imitating the original, so that the smallest incorrectness has not been found by the most scrutinising traveller.

2 Various pieces, as above, in plaster of Paris, containing 14 figures large as life and 123 others, small, from 1 foot 8 inches high, covering a space of 68 feet in length, 6 and 8 feet high – and may be transported anywhere, and put up in the same form as the present, or in any other which will suit the apartments of the purchasers; but if the present form is preserved, it will render the whole more interesting, as it will represent the two above apartments, in the tomb of Thebes.

The proprietor, Mr Belzoni, will provide artists who will erect it in any part of the kingdom, if required.

The above work is unique in Europe; . . . and it is to be reflected, that the tomb itself in consequence of the rains which have penetrated into it has been much mutilated since he took the models in wax, and drawings of the same.

No. 3 Two seated statues of giants, large as life. They represent females with lion's heads [from Carnac] Two of the like, discovered by the proprietor, Mr Belzoni, along with these, are now in the British Museum.

No. 4 One ditto, larger than life

No. 5 Two standing statues of grey granite with lions' heads [in temple at back of 2 Colossi at Thebes]

Galleries, above stairs

The model of the whole of the tomb of Psammis, composed of all the original drawings, taken in the tomb, coloured as the original, and so minutely and exactly executed that it may be considered as useful to the learned as if they were in the original tomb itself; this matchless piece of drawing has cost the labour of several people for the space of 16 months; it may be moved to any part of the kingdom or of Europe, with the greatest facility, as it is in wooden frames and the drawing is stuck on canvas. The model is taken in the proportion of one-sixth part of the original.

A course of the historic facts offerings etc. in basso relievo etc. taken from one of the galleries in the tomb; it is composed of figures 18 inches high, coloured as the original, it covers a space of 55 feet in length, and two and a half in height; it may easily be removed to any private gallery in the country. Another course of

the same, basso relievo, not coloured, to show the sculptures more plainly . . . composed of 24 figures from 14 to 24 inches high and covers a space of 18 feet in length, and two and a half in height.

Two female busts of granite, with lion's heads large as life from Carnac.

A kneeling figure in grey stone from temple of Ybsambul.

The drawings of 16 figures, large as life, in transparent paper, traced over the original drawing to the outline chamber of the tomb, with others of a smaller size; they cover a space of 44 feet in length by 8 feet in height. This tracing gives a perfect idea of the manner in which the Egyptians prepared their walls for their scriptures.

A small figure of Baccante.

A collection of about 500 different hieroglyphics in bas relief plaster of paris, taken from the models in wax by Mr Belzoni. They are all that could be found in the tomb of Psammis, and will give a clear and correct idea of that laborious task. This work has not yet been put before the public but will be ready for inspection in April. The hieroglyphics are from one to six inches in length.

A cover from the king's sarcophagus (Valley of Kings).

Glass-cases of antiquities

Case 1

- 1 set of enamelled work, from mummy head, Thebes
- 2 various figures of baked earth, enamelled scarabei etc., also from Thebes
- 3 a large ape, discovered in a sepulchre in Thebes

Case No 2

- 1 set of enamelled work, from mummy head
- 2 fragments of tomb of Psammis
- 3 Colossal toe, from the Colossus discovered among the ruins of Carnac, the head of which is now in the British Museum – red granite

Case No 3

- 1 20 small idols, Thebes
- 2 2 tomb stones, Eleithias
- 3 2 pieces of alabaster from cover of Psammis sarcophagus now in British Museum
- 4 About a dozen small idols, blue glaze, from Valley of Kings
- 5 4 vases, with covers as for, baboon, ape, human
- 6 drawing on stone, Eleithias

7 fragments of granite sarcophagus from

Shephrenes pyramid

8 tomb stone, Thebes

9 Fragments of Psammis' tomb, limestone, coloured

10 Greek inscription on stone, El. Calapsha, Nubia

11 Crocodile skin shield

12 writing fragment stone, Valley of Kings

Case No 4

1 seven idols, mummy pits, Thebes

2 3 idols from under Psammis' sarcophagus blue glazed

3 9 idols, a perfume vase, and other fragments

4 tablet, stone, unscribed, Berenice

5 fragments including part of thumb of Colossus of Young Memnon

6 fragments of inscriptions, Thebes

Case No 5

1 stone figure inscribed, Thebes, 6 ditto

2 scarab 3 scarabs – 2

4 scarab

5 3 scarabs

6 8 scarabs

7 20 scarabs

8 glass work over baked clay

9 eyes, part of a basalt cup

10 fragments

11 rings

12 various tear bottles etc

13 a 'tiphon' and fragments

14 Greek writing on fragments of pottery, Elephani

15 Impressions on clay baked

Case No 6

1 2 idols, Carnac

2 2 idols

3 2 plates, with basin

4 Various alabaster vases

5 2 tablets inscribed from Eleithios

Case No 7

1 wooden idols

2 bronze fragments, Valley of Kings

3 160 medals, various

4 4 vases with covers as human heads for containing bowels of mummy

Case No 8

1 12 wooden idols

2 head of black basalt

3 6 papyri

- 4 2 heads in pottery for Ammon
 Case No 9
 1 5 wooden cases containing idols, mummy pits in Gournou
 2 4 wooden tablets
 3 wooden fox, 50 idols, all wood, one of the chambers of Psammis' tomb
 Case No 10
 1 wooden head, palm leaf baskets, part of the tomb rope
 2 plaited hair, Gournou
 3 mummied cats, foxes, crocodiles, fish
 Case No 11
 The most perfect mummy known in Europe; it is entire in all its limbs and the hair visible on its head; it was brought to England with great care, and was

unfolded by Mr Belzoni before various celebrated physicians . . . found in tomb of Memnon . . . case well preserved.

Case No 12
 A mummy in its case, yet unfolded. By the singularity of its folding, it is supposed to be an Egyptian priest, its arms and legs being separately folded some painting chequered red and white.

Case No 13
 The large papyrus

Case No 14
 Two fragments of basso relievo from tomb

Models
 [Nos 1-4 as previously listed in the 1822 Description]

Appendix 4

Description of the Egyptian Tomb discovered by G Belzoni (London, printed by W. Clowes, Northumberland Court, 1825)

The model. Room No. 1 on the right of the stairs.

It is desirable that the Model of the Tomb should be the first object that presents itself to the eye of the spectator.

Description of the Egyptian Tomb

The Model

Room No. 1 on the right of the stairs

The Model

It will be sufficient to observe that the model is constructed on a scale of one-sixth of the size of the original sepulchre.

No 1 First corridor

No 2 Staircase

No 3 Second corridor

No 4 Pit or well

No 5 The Entrance Hall. This is the furthest chamber represented below of its original dimensions

No 6 Outlined or Drawing room

No 7 The first chamber represented below, called the Hall of Beauties

No 8 The Hall of Six Pillars. This splendid apartment has been selected for exhibition in addition to the two former which were erected in

Piccadilly, on account of the brilliancy of the colours, and the novelty of the subjects represented. (Note: presumably, therefore, finished painted plaster casts for this room either already existed or were specially prepared by Sarah and/or James Curtin).

No 9 The Saloons, in centre of which was the sarcophagus

No 10 Small chamber cut from rock roughly

No 11 Small chamber with 2 square pillars

On account of the smallness of the chamber it has been found necessary to divide the model into 3 parts. The visitor will, however, be guided by the numbers. On the sides of the entrance to the tomb are two standing statues with grey granite lions heads, mutilated in arms and feet from Temple at back of 2 Colossi, Thebes

The Tomb

[the usual description from *Narrative* follows]

Some explanation of the Basso-relieues and hieroglyphs in the Hall of Beauties [from the works of Champollion].

Farther on in the Great Hall of Six Pillars . . . A more particular description of this chamber, from M Champollion, is in preparation, and will shortly be published. In this room are 2 sitting statues of granite, large as life, representing females with lion heads from Carnac . . . (for sale)

Entrance Hall

Description of the Models

In the first room above stairs (will be disposed of)

Address for correspondence

Professor Susan Pearce, Dean of Arts, Faculty of Arts Office, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH

Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the kind assistance given to me in the preparation to this paper by Sue Giles and her colleagues at City Museum, Bristol, and by the British Library and the Public Record Office. I am indebted to Peter Clayton for his valuable comments. I am grateful to Colin Trodd of the Leicester University Central Photographic Unit, who took the photographs. I also wish to record my debt to the late Leslie Grinsell.

Notes and references

- 1 This article forms part of a wider study into the significance of exotic material culture in early nineteenth-century Britain. See S. Pearce, 'Material history as cultural transition: À La Ronde, Exmouth, Devon, England', in *Material History Review* (Fall 1999), pp. 26–34, 'Bodies in exile: Egyptian mummies in earlier Victorian culture', in *Exile. Studies in European Cultural Transition* (London, forthcoming).
- 2 E. Lefebvre, *Memoires publiés par les membres de la Mission Archéologique du Caire 1882–1884*, II, *Les Hypogées royales de Thèbes, Part 1. Le tombeau de Seti I* (Paris, 1886), Eric Hornung, *The Tomb of Pharaoh Seti I* (Zürich, 1991). See also B. Porter and R. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs and Paintings*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1972).
- 3 Most substantially by S. Mayes, *The Great Belzoni* (London, 1959). See also P. Clayton, 'A pioneer Egyptologist: Giovanni Battista Belzoni, 1778–1823', in Paul and Janet Starkey (eds), *Travellers in Egypt* (London, 1998), pp. 41–50.
- 4 Alessandro Ricci (d. 1832) kept a diary, which apparently remains in Cairo, largely unpublished, some of his writings were published by Angelo Sammarco as *Alessandro Ricci e il Giornale dei Viaggi*, vol. II (Cairo, 1930) but these throw no light on his relationship with Belzoni. See W. Dawson and E. Uphill, *Who was Who in Egyptology* (London, 1972), p. 248.

[list of 4 non-tomb models as in previous Description]

No VII the papyrus (to be sold)

No X A very fine mummy in case, with a second ditto, both beautifully covered in hieroglyphics (for sale).

Letter to Mrs Belzoni from John Houston, giving news of Belzoni's death, dated Dec 23rd 1823, Schooner *Providence* off Benin Bar [text follows]

Letter to Messrs Briggs Brothers & Co, London from William Sell giving account of Belzoni's death dated Jan 20th 1824, Brig *Castor* of Liverpool off Benin Bar [text follows]

- 5 G. B. Belzoni, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Tombs and Excavations in Egypt and Nubia, and of Another Journey to the Coast of the Red Sea in search of the ancient Berenice, and another to the Oasis of Jupiter Ammon* (London, 1820), p. 371.
- 6 Belzoni, op. cit. (note 5), p. 272.
- 7 Belzoni, op. cit. (note 5), p. 371.
- 8 Belzoni, op. cit. (note 5), p. 381.
- 9 W. Dawson, 'Pettigrew's demonstrations upon mummies: A chapter in the history of Egyptology', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 20 (1934), p. 170.
- 10 The Egyptian Hall (originally) 22 Piccadilly, was opened by William Bullock in 1812 to house his London museum. The architect of the façade was P. F. Robinson (1776–1856), who incorporated a number of broadly Egyptizing motifs, above the door stood large statues of Osiris and Isis by Sebastian Gahagan. Bullock sold up his collection in 1819 and thereafter the Hall was available for hire as an exhibition space until it was demolished in 1905. See *Survey of London* XXX (London, 1960), pp. 266–70 and pl. 44, H. Honour, 'Curiosities of the Egyptian Hall', *Country Life* 115 (1954), pp. 38–9, N. Pevsner and S. Lang, 'The Egyptian Revival', *Architectural Review* 119 (1956), pp. 712, 243–54; J. Curle, *Egyptomania. The Egyptian Revival: a recurring theme in the history of taste* (Manchester, 1994).
- 11 Architectural plans for the façade and ground floor of the Egyptian Hall survive in the Public Record Office (CUES 6 115). The floor plan is as described although it is possible that this was modified when the building was erected. The façade differs from that of the building as it is recorded in the well-known aquatint published by Rudolf Ackermann in his *Repository of the Arts*, 2nd ser. 8 (1819), p. 153: the figures are much less prominent, the roof-line is lower and topped with a small truncated pyramid on a base fronted by a figure, and the whole is generally more refined in detail. An aquatint of Bullock's display in the Pantheon was published in *Ackermann's Repository of the Arts*, 2nd ser. 7 (1819), p. 155. This shows a plain room with a central exhibition feature displaying large exotic animals and replica trees in a 'natural' style, and other cased displays around the walls. In September 1819 Ackermann published a print of what seems to be the

- Great Room modified by John Buonarroti Papworth as an Egyptianesque interior, with Hathor-headed, lotus-embellished columns, a battered end wall design and much Egyptian style ornament. See *Survey of London* (op cit, note 10), pp 226–70, and Curle, op cit. (note 10), pp 158–9
- 12 For this, and all following references to the 1822 and 1826 exhibition descriptions, see Appendix 2. One or both of the two principal rooms at the Egyptian Hall had a gallery, either originally or at some point before Belzoni's exhibition opened the *Catalogue of the Roman Exhibition*, a further attraction installed by Bullock in 1816 (British Library, 7807 222 25), says that on the ground floor were apartments 170 feet long and upstairs a gallery measuring 60 by 27 feet. During its lifetime the Hall went through a number of re-fits and the rooms were capable of various sub-divisions so that several exhibitions could run at once.
- 13 The Percival Collection of material relating to Sadler's Wells (1683–1848), vol XIV, p 262 (British Library) contains a coloured lithograph captioned 'Mr Belzoni's Exhibition of an Ancient Egyptian Tomb', published by Thomas Kelly, 17 Paternoster Row, 1 December 1821 (see Fig 4). The lithograph shows the paintings in the same colour-ranges as those that survive from the scale model, the ceiling is shown as dark blue powdered with paler blue stars, the three visible lamps each have four candles and hang from what seem to be metal circular ceiling-protectors.
- 14 *Description of the Egyptian Tomb Discovered by Giovanni Battista Belzoni* (1822). For this and other references to the 1822 *Description* and 1825 *Description of the Egyptian Tomb Discovered by G. Belzoni* see Appendices 2 and 4.
- 15 *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1821, pp 447–50.
- 16 *The Times*, 30 April 1821.
- 17 *Six new plates illustrative of the researches and operations of G. Belzoni in Egypt and Nubia* (London, 1822), *Hieroglyphics found in the Tomb of Psammis discovered by G. Belzoni copied from the originals in the said tomb and presented by the author to his Royal Highness Augustus Frederick Duke of Sussex* (London, 1822).
- 18 *Catalogue of the various Articles of Antiquity to be disposed of at the Egyptian Tomb by Auction or Private Contract. The Casts of Bas-Relief, etc., together with all the Collection Part of the Project of Mr Belzoni's Researches in Egypt, Nubia etc., Will be Sold after the 1st April 1822*. For this and other references to the 1822 *Catalogue* see Appendix 3.
- 19 *Description* (1822), op. cit (note 14).
- 20 *Description* (1825), op. cit (note 14).
- 21 *The Times*, 26 April 1824.
- 22 *The Times*, 11 December 1824.
- 23 Mayes, op. cit (note 2), p 275 gives some details of the prices fetched: the plaster-of-Paris coloured reliefs £490, two imperfect lion-headed Sekhmet statues £380, and another, perfect, £300, the wax model of the Second Pyramid 34 guineas, that of the temple of Isis at Philae £28, and that of Abu Simbel £24. Peter Clayton kindly tells me that these prices derive from a second copy of the sale catalogue held at the British Library. The bust of Sekhmet now adorning the main entrance of Sotheby's in New Bond Street is usually considered to be a remnant of the sale, see Mayes op. cit (note 2), p 275.
- 24 Benjamin Haydon, a friend of the Belzoni, wrote in his journal for 18 October 1825 'Called on Mrs Belzoni – found her full of energy and misery. An execution on Belzoni's property, – his models, casts and all seized'. See *Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, ed. Wilard Bissell Pople (Cambridge, Mass., 1960–3).
- 25 See Appendix 1.
- 26 See particularly Curle, op. cit (note 10), Richard G. Carrott, *The Egyptian Revival: Its sources, monuments and meaning 1808–1854* (Berkeley, 1978), and references cited there. A publication of the Musée du Louvre, *L'Égyptomanie à l'épreuve de l'archéologie* (Paris, 1996), comprising papers arising from a conference in 1994, takes a broader view embracing music, cinema, theatre and strip cartoon.
- 27 See Dawson, op. cit (note 9) and Pearce, op. cit. (note 1).
- 28 See N. Daly, 'That obscure object of desire: Victorian commodity culture and fictions of the mummy', *Novel, a Forum on Fiction* 28, no. 1 (1994), pp 24–51.