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Modern Egyptomania and Early Egyptology: The Case of Mariette's 1867 Egyptian Temple

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Certainly, as an archaeologist, I would be inclined to blame these useless displays that do not do science any good; but if the Museum thus presented appeals to those for whom it is designed, if they come back often and in so doing get inoculated with a taste for the study and, I was going to say, the love of Egyptian antiquities, then I will have achieved my goal. (Mariette 1864, 8)¹

In stating his experience of the dichotomy between decorative displays and scientific accuracy, the French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette located the heart of the dilemma which had pervaded the field of Egyptology since its establishment at the beginning of the nineteenth century: the tension between Egyptology and “Egyptomania.” The term “Egyptology” defines the historical science that studies ancient Egypt, including within it various disciplines such as archaeology, history, or philology, and often held as beginning with Jean-François Champollion’s ground-breaking discovery: the first steps in the decipherment of hieroglyphs in 1822. From this point, Egyptian objects and monuments stopped being mute exotic artefacts and started to become historical testimonies. According to Jean-Marcel Humbert (1994, 22), “Egyptomania,” often defined as a fascination for Egypt (which could rather be termed “Egyptophilia”), is an adaptation of its aesthetics, shapes, themes and symbols by another period, originating in Roman Antiquity. “Egyptomania” became the term that designates ancient Egypt as it appears in the popular cultural imagination. Rather than disappearing after 1822, Egyptomania, encouraged by the rise of Egyptology, spread even more widely.

According to Humbert, four types of Egyptomania developed during the nineteenth century: the pseudo-commercial use of Egyptianising ornamentation to convey notions of solidity and durability in the popular imagination; an Egyptianised aesthetic applied to furniture or architecture; an Egyptianised aesthetic in fine art, a separate category from the second due to its particularly wide cultural impact and interactions with other movements such as Orientalism; and Egyptianising ornamentation or architecture used specifically in the presentation of Egyptian museums and collections, to which he refers as “didactic” Egyptomania (1994, 313-314). The last category is a meeting point between Egyptomania and Egyptology. Both phenomena coexisted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and fostered each other’s success. Egyptomania’s intensity in the nineteenth century varied, peaking at each step of the development of either Egyptology or the relationship between Europe and Egypt: after Napoleon Bonaparte’s Expedition of 1798 and the publication of the *Description de l’Egypte* (1809–1829); in 1822 when Champollion made his discovery; in the 1830s with the arrival of obelisks in European capitals;

at the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869; and in 1922 when Howard Carter opened the tomb of Tutankhamun. The 1867 Paris World Fair, on which this essay focuses, became one of the events that rekindled modern fascination for the land of pharaohs, thanks to the work of Mariette.

Egyptomania and Egyptology are not opposing phenomena, but rather two different yet interacting ways of promoting ancient Egypt. The thin line that separates their methods, their actors and their purposes is not as hermetic as one might think, and can be brought into focus by studying certain aspects of Mariette's work. His participation in constructing the Egyptian Pavilion at the World Fair held in Paris between 1 April and 31 October 1867 provides a particularly nuanced example of the use of Egyptomania for the promotion of Egyptology. On this occasion, he built an Egyptian Temple, which, on the surface, might be interpreted as yet another Egyptomania-inspired entertainment, but which, on closer inspection, reveals itself to be a thorough scientific and didactic attempt at explaining ancient Egyptian architecture throughout the centuries. Studying the publications he wrote on that occasion shows that he blended Orientalist clichés with scientific demonstration, in order to simultaneously appeal to the public and to educate his readership. Comparing this project to other Egyptian displays in the period reveals the porous points on the line between Egyptology and didactic Egyptomania. It thus appears that Egyptology and Egyptomania are not mutually exclusive: their influences are reciprocal. Egyptomania laid the groundwork for Egyptology to be recognised as a successful science, and Egyptology, in return, inspired Egyptomaniac productions, in which Egyptologists themselves participated.

Mariette's Egyptian Temple: Egyptomania Inspiring an Egyptologist

Between 1850 and 1880, Mariette strove to define the field of Egyptian archaeology. Paradoxically, it was his desire to promote Egyptology as a respectable science instead of an Orientalist fantasy that spurred him to draw inspiration from Egyptomania's methods. To appeal to European politicians and the general public, Mariette evoked an Egyptomaniacal agenda as a way to attract his potential audience's attention; he then directed it towards a more scientific discourse. For the 1867 World Fair, he built an Egyptian Temple which conformed, in many ways, to the conventions of other Egyptomania-inspired entertainments. However, the methods and scientific efforts employed for the project reveal its didactic purpose. To better understand that work—comprising the building itself, the exhibition that it hosted as well as the written documents published on this occasion—one needs to examine its global historical context.

At the end of the 1860s, several political and cultural circumstances coincided laying the groundwork for the success met by Egyptomania in Europe. From a geopolitical angle, while the construction of the Suez Canal undertook by Ferdinand de Lesseps was slowly coming to an end, Egyptian archaeology was becoming increasingly formalised through the creation of the Service of Antiquities in 1858, directed by Mariette, its founder. France took pride in the involvement of these two Frenchmen in the progress of science and industry in Egypt. Moreover, the success of Egyptomania seems to have been closely related to Napoleonic mythology (Humbert 1971); it thrived after the 1798 Bonaparte expedition, and encountered another golden age during the reign of his nephew, Napoleon III (1851–1870), so much so that it is hard to tell whether Mariette's

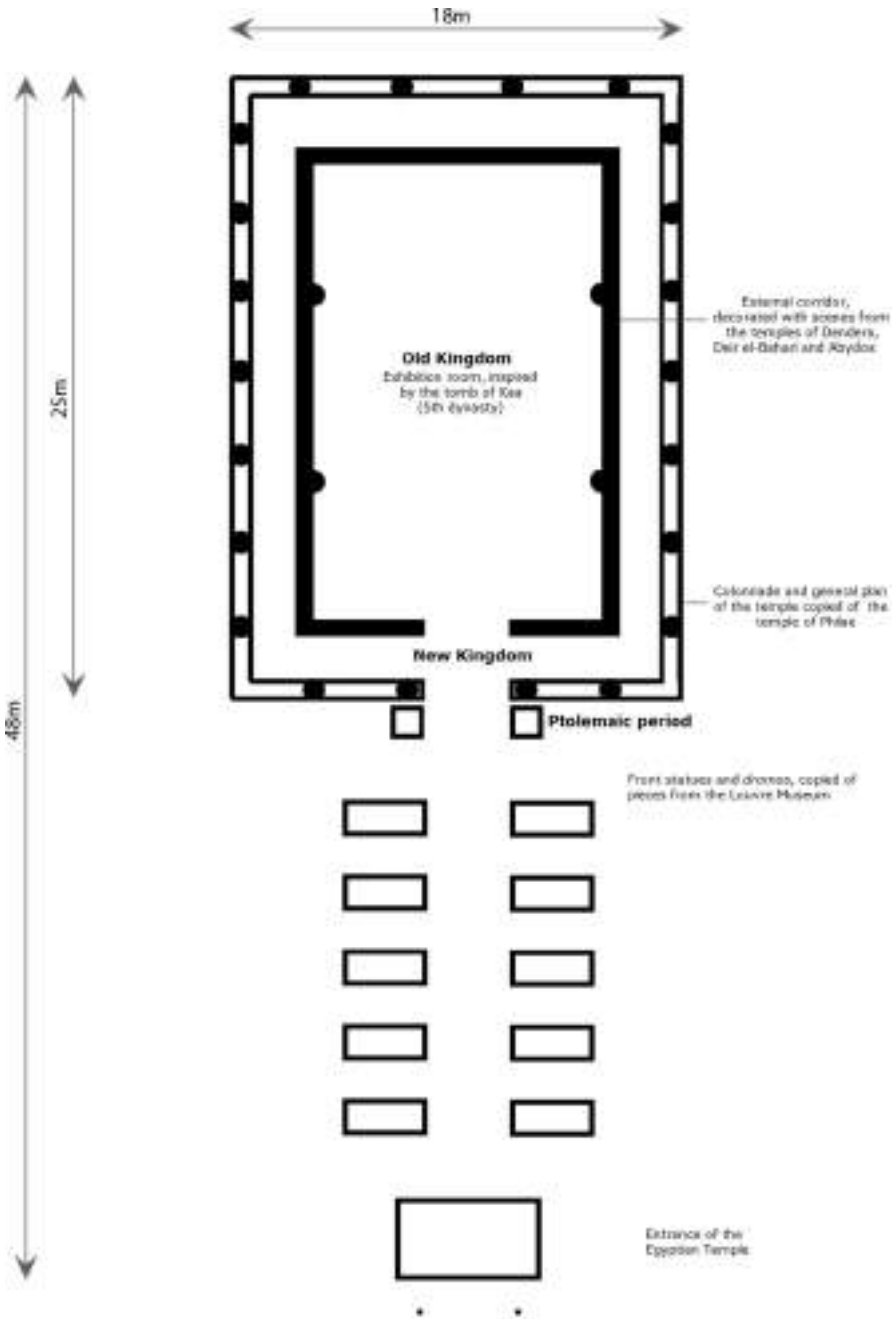
endeavour at the 1867 Paris Exhibition benefited from that trend or was itself one of the major reasons for it.

In this favourable context, Mariette's work echoes two more specific aspects of the cultural context of his time, the first of which being Romanticism. Egyptomania resonated with this artistic movement, both in literature and painting, following the trend among the intelligentsia for Oriental travel. Romanticism could be readily appropriated to promote ancient Egypt as a dream-like and remote civilisation, both geographically and temporally. An example can be found in the *Description du Parc Egyptien* (1867), a booklet written by Mariette to guide the public through his Egyptian Temple. Discussing the surprisingly good preservation of a statue, the Egyptologist sprinkles his text with Romantic anecdotes, appealing to the imagination of his readership: "In 1851, I was fortunate enough to discover an unviolated tomb [...]. When I entered it for the first time, I found, imprinted in the thin layer of sand covering the ground, the footprints of the workers who, 3700 years before, had laid the god down in his tomb" (Mariette 1867b, 42).² As we will later see, such picturesque narratives touched the imaginations of Mariette's contemporaries, including the writer Théophile Gautier.

Emerging from Romanticism, Orientalism also resonates with Mariette's work. The appeal for exoticism and the "other" incarnated in a mysterious Orient simplistically perceived as the opposite of the Occident, proved a fertile ground for him to pique his Parisian readership's interest (see Said 1980). Indeed, although his guide to the Temple relies upon a text that is very similar to his Bulaq Museum guide of 1864, it aims at a slightly different audience, less familiar with Egypt. Several differences can be noticed, including the addition of anecdotes that might appear as ethnological or anthropological, comparing modern Egyptian daily life with the ancient images. Commenting on an Old Kingdom statue of women kneading bread, Mariette writes: "Today in Elephantine and in Nubia, one can still see women wearing the same kind of headdress, in the same position, using the same tools to accomplish the same task" (1867b, 46).³ To appeal to his European public's longing for exoticism, Mariette presents Egypt as a remote and extraordinary civilisation, albeit one which is not entirely out of reach: present-day Egypt provides a unique window into the past.

Bringing the past into the present is one of the aims of Mariette's project. The particular appeal of his Temple was its various parts, each illustrating the architectural style of a period of Egyptian antiquity. The visitor entered what seemed to be, from the exterior, a Ptolemaic temple, then walked through an external corridor decorated with New Kingdom paintings, to finally enter the main room, reproducing an Old Kingdom tomb, in which the main pieces from the Bulaq Museum were displayed. Mimicking the architecture of Egyptian temples, going from the least to the most sacred space from exterior to interior, the visitor's path was a progression from decadent times—the Late Period—to a golden age, the most ancient period in Egypt's then-known history—the Old Kingdom (see Figure 1).

This idea of returning to the perfection of antiquity pervaded nineteenth-century discourse. While progressivism gained momentum with the advancement of industry, the idea that mankind had come to its peak brought intellectuals back to the idea of its remote origins. Ancient Egypt—often perceived as the cradle of civilisation—was highly regarded by the scientific community. Charles Edmond wrote in 1867 that "Egypt at the International Exposition is not only represented by its present, but also by its past.



Scale: 1/200

Figure 1. Reconstituted plan of the Egyptian temple of the 1867 Paris World Fair, imagined by Auguste Mariette, realised by Jacques Drevet. Document by Carole Jarsaillon, 2014.

It had to be so, since it is the cradle of the world” (1867, 10).⁴ In the epistemological context of the period, following the Enlightenment and the concept of the State of Nature—a perfect primitive form of society imagined by philosophers of the late

eighteenth century—ancient Egypt held a special place among ancient civilisations, with its oldest period, the Old Kingdom, considered a kind of ultimate golden age. Mariette insists that “When the Egyptians were carving the two Khephrens, [...] the rest of the world did not have a history yet” (1867b, 27).⁵ These statues of one of the first pharaohs of the Old Kingdom constitute the focal point of the display presented in the Temple. This almost anthropological fascination for the origins of mankind found its concrete application in a specific part of the Egyptian Pavilion dedicated to the Society of Anthropology,⁶ in which a collection of skulls and mummies were kept. These were the subject of extraordinary meetings, oscillating between Egyptological experimentation and Egyptomaniac enthrallment.

Throughout the Exposition Universelle de Paris, the Egyptian Pavilion was not only used to exhibit the Bulaq’s collection and the simulacrum that hosted them, but was also a theatre for private events, including sessions at which mummies were unwrapped. On 27 May, the first such demonstration brought together a select group of the Paris intelligentsia who attended the operation on the mummy of a woman named Neskhonsu performed by Mariette himself. Alexandre Dumas (son of the novelist), Maxime Du Camp, the Goncourt brothers, as well as the writer Théophile Gautier were in attendance. Gautier and the Goncourt brothers related this event in periodicals and memoirs. According to the Goncourt brothers, “people were chatting, laughing, smoking,” while “with a knife examining the armpit, [Du Camp] got something out that was passed on through the group [...] and with a chisel, in the rocky flesh, [he] expelled a little golden plaque” (1888, 129-134, quoted in David 1994, 177-179).⁷ The general atmosphere seems to be the opposite of a scientific experiment, and closer to a social gathering. The experience likely subjected the mummy to unnecessary damage; not only was the assembly smoking, but guests without scientific training, such as Du Camp, actively participated with inappropriate tools. Another took place in June, hosting officials instead of intellectuals: Napoleon III and Ismail-Pacha, viceroy of Egypt, both attended. A third was performed for the Paris Society of Anthropology. Somewhere between science and mystical shows, these performances embody the meeting point of Egyptomania and Egyptology at the time,⁸ both with separate aims, but revolving around common actors and actions.

This appeal for a fantasised exoticism intermingled with Egyptomania throughout the nineteenth century, creating a springboard for Mariette’s popularisation projects. Egyptomania drove him to spread authentic knowledge of ancient Egypt, and in so doing, to fight against clichés and phantasms; but these tropes were also the very means by which he reached an interested public. His aim was, therefore, to turn an existing popular interest into more accurate knowledge.

Despite these Romantic episodes, it was a scientific mission that Mariette undertook in 1867:

If all of these conditions are respected, if everything is properly done, if all the scenes are copied right from the original ones, then, we will have created a true work of art and archaeology; then our temple will be a temple worthy of the World Fair, worthy of Paris, worthy of French science, worthy of you and of me. (Letter from Mariette, Cairo, 27 October 1866, quoted in Wallon 1883, 563)⁹

Construction stretched from 1 August 1886 to 1 May 1867, preceded by thorough scientific groundwork. Mariette and two of his colleagues, Théodule Devéria and Luigi Vassalli,

gathered the requisite documentation on site over the course of a voyage up the Nile. Notes, stampings, photographs and measurements were produced: this was a meticulous enterprise in which the Egyptologists went so far as to scratch samples of ancient pigments—especially Egyptian blue¹⁰—from temple walls in order to use original material, a technique that Mariette termed “archaeological painting” (1867b, vii). Indeed, he considered painting the most important part of the work, so much so that he forbade the workers in Paris to begin before he arrived. Contrary to other similar endeavours, the inscriptions and scenes were originals; painting them was therefore a scientific enterprise, and Mariette did not hesitate to enlist the aid of other Egyptologists including Emile Brugsch. The accuracy of materials was primary for Mariette, who was shocked at a proposal to use granite for the construction when Egyptian temples are usually made of sandstone (Wallon 1883, 520). Mariette had to take a stand on multiple occasions to maintain emphasis on scientific accuracy rather than on the will to please Parisian society. In a letter to Charles Edmond, Mariette related a conversation with a M. Schmitz, who had complained of the building’s inelegance and had offered suggestions:

Please keep your tastes and remarks for yourself, Mr. Schmitz. We are working with ancient Egyptian matters. The ancient Egyptian puts eyes in front-view on a head in profile; he plants ears at the top of the head as if they were plumes of the *Garde Nationale*. Too bad for him. (Letter from Mariette to Charles Edmond, 6 July 1866, quoted in Wallon 1883, 521)¹¹

As for them, Mariette held that they ought to respect these conventions, as odd as they might seem to the modern European eye. Mariette did employ some methods inspired by Egyptomania to reach his public, but as far as historical accuracy goes he did not surrender a single detail to the common taste. To him, popularisation was not to be confused with misinformation.

The Temple had a twofold didactic purpose. Firstly, it not only borrowed the shape and aesthetics of an Egyptian temple, but, as the preparation process showed, was an accurate reproduction of actual monuments; the general plan was that of the west temple of Philae, a *Mammisi* or *kiosque*, a small late period temple whose restricted size was convenient for the project. The external corridor and its Hathoric colonnade reproduced the temple of Dendera, while the scenes flanking the internal door were copied from Deir el-Bahari and the temple of Abydos. Finally, the internal room used for the exhibition was inspired by the tomb of Kaa, a Memphite priest from the Old Kingdom. Far from being a mere setting, it was, as Mariette defined it, “a kind of living study of archaeology” (Mariette, quoted in Wallon 1883, 520),¹² built to educate the novice public as well as to be worthy of scientific analysis by interested scholars (1867b, 13). It was a “scholarly attempt” at “showing what an Egyptian temple looked like at the time of its most perfect condition” (12). Thus, it was also conceived as an educational tool. Mariette copied several temples, choosing examples dating from what he considered the three main architectural periods of Egypt’s history: the Ptolemaic period (323–31 BCE), the New Kingdom (1539–1077 BCE), and the Old Kingdom (2543–2120 BCE). His creation was therefore a synthesis of various Egyptian architectural styles, and in that respect, an educational resource that enabled the visitor to experience a sort of impossible temple, showing not only accurate constructions, but a complete overview of the diversity of ancient Egypt’s history. Mariette justified this choice using his experience as an archaeologist (|Mariette 1867b, 13); temples were usually built across long periods encompassing several reigns. He extended this concept to imagine a temple supposedly built across

several dynasties, the result being simultaneously more pedagogical and more personally satisfying, since according to the standards he had established for this project, no existing temple plan was suitable due to its size or its incomprehensibility for the public.

Mariette's didactic purpose went beyond the mere desire to convey an accurate knowledge of Egyptian architecture and art to the wider public. Egyptology was a young science whose practitioners were striving to assert its value in a scientific community that perceived it as frivolous in comparison to classical archaeology (Schnapp 1982, 774). Mariette's aim was to promote the archaeological collections or architecture, and the discipline that unearthed them: Egyptology itself. Mariette presents Egyptology as a valid science in his guide: "in order to educate the reader on the value of our means of investigation, from time to time, I will show them one of these slow processes by which I try to recompose, piece by piece, the history of ancient Egypt" (1867a, 73).¹³ By "showing the reader," he means presenting the information the reader needs and the thought process which leads the Egyptologist to his conclusions. Mariette occasionally admits his lack of data, and in so doing, justifies the need for continuing excavations (19). Finally, the presence of an Egyptologist at a World Fair is, in itself, significant, considering that the very aim of these events was to promote the industries and expertise of each nation. It illustrates a shift in the perception of Egyptology, increasingly regarded as a science, and a significant part of a broader evolution: the disciplines of history and archaeology were increasingly considered emblematic of academic progress and national pride.

While Mariette's intentions for the Egyptian Temple were clear, its reception by visitors was divided between popular perplexity and scientific recognition. Its twofold purpose—conveying accurate knowledge to the common visitors and convincing the scientific community of the validity of the Egyptological science—reflects the distinct communities Mariette addressed. Antoinette Maget defines the International Exposition as both "a place of entertainment and knowledge," and underlines that "between travel-substitutes and amusement parks, their ephemeral aspect makes them popular in a more certain way than museums" (Maget 2009, 206).¹⁴ It was therefore a very specific occasion for the promotion of Egyptology in two circles: the European officials and scientific community,¹⁵ and the middle and upper-middle classes coming out of curiosity.

Among the elites, both political and scientific, the Egyptian Temple was a true success. Mariette was honoured with several awards and titles, such as the Red Eagle of Second Class by the Prussians and the Légion d'Honneur by France. The Sultan of the Ottoman Empire publicly congratulated the Egyptian endeavour, and Ismail-Pacha was promoted to the coveted title of Khedive.¹⁶ Mariette's biographer, Henri Wallon, later testified: "The success was tremendous. [...] There was a unanimous tribute to the merits of he who had skilfully put [this project] together; and he did not lack distinctions nor praises" (1883, 523).¹⁷ The press echoed this same sense of Mariette's success. It paid tribute to the skilful blending of entertainment and scientific accuracy:

His exhibition is not only the most splendid of the Park, it is the most complete and enlightening. Science claimed the lion's share, but the beauty of the external shapes and of the ornamentation were not neglected, so much so that it increased the scientific interest and the quaint charm of the ensemble. (Charton, 1867, 362-366)¹⁸

This review also includes criticisms, however, asserting that although remarkable, the Egyptian Temple is imperfect because of the internal ornamentations, which were

painted but not carved, lacking relief and realism, according to the reporter. Analysing the press response helps to establish an idea of the reception among the general population, a more difficult feat due to the lack of primary sources. The magazine quoted above, *Le Magasin Pittoresque*, was a cultural periodical aimed at a wide upper-middle-class audience, similar to the International Exposition itself. As Marie-Laure Aurenche has shown, Egypt was among the countries that most stirred up the curiosity of the French people since the Bonaparte Campaign and the numerous publications that followed (2003, 47). Ancient Egypt thus had a long-established place in the French popular imagination by the time of the International Exposition; visitors to the Egyptian Temple likely already entertained some interest in this ancient civilisation.

However, this curiosity did not stop ordinary visitors from being puzzled by such an exotic display. The reception among the general public was more mixed than among the elites. The engraving by Honoré Daumier (see [Figure 2](#)) published in the journal *Le Monde illustré* is, in this respect, quite evocative.¹⁹ An average French family, decently although modestly dressed, exhibits surprise, perplexity and what could be interpreted as disgust or disapproval while visiting the Egyptian Temple. The latter is suggested by a painted wall, decorated with half-human creatures flanked with the heads of animals unknown to the Egyptian bestiary or else inappropriate in a religious context: grotesque figures such as pigs, elephants or ducks. The image gives an impression of ridicule and misunderstanding, which is confirmed by the caption with which it was originally published: “At the World Fair – Egyptian section. Really! the ancient Egyptians looked ugly.”²⁰ Previous articles dealing with the Egyptian galleries of the Louvre tend to confirm popular bewilderment towards this kind of art:

Friends groups, families, are seen stopping in silence in front of these sphinxes, these gods and goddesses with animal-shaped heads, [...] these bas-reliefs covered in mysterious signs. As if there were lengthy question marks in the eyes of every visitor. (Charton, quoted in Aurenche 2003, 52).²¹

The contrast between the reception of Egyptian art by the intelligentsia and by the rest of the population is twofold: while one applauded the success of Mariette’s Temple, the other demonstrated more mixed feelings. The bewildered silence of the anonymous visitors in the Louvre galleries contrasts with the chatter and agitation of the mummy unwrapping sessions attended by select guests. Both groups however reacted to the same aspect of Egyptology at the time: the contact with otherness in all its complexity, as opposed to the simplified scope of Orientalism or Egyptomania. Yet, this was neither the first nor only attempt at recreating an Egyptian architectural setting to present Egyptian collections.

Egyptianising Architecture in Egyptian Museums: A Blurred Line Between Egyptomania and Egyptology

The Egyptian Temple was a unique blend of Egyptomania and Egyptology, but can also be understood as one example of what Humbert (1994, 312) refers to as “didactic Egyptomania”: the idea of matching the content (the Egyptian collection) with its container (an Egyptianising building). This was made possible by a shift in the organisation of International Expositions; 1867 was the first year when instead of being housed within a



Figure 2. “A l’Exposition Universelle—Section Egyptienne. Vrai! Les anciens Egyptiens n’étaient pas beaux. » Engraving by Honoré Daumier, originally published in *Le Monde illustré*, 26 October 1867. Public Domain: Brooklyn Museum Website.

single building the exposition was made up of several independent structures, allowing each participant to demonstrate their architectural achievements to promote their culture and country. The Egyptian Pavilion was divided into three buildings: the Arab Palace and the Okel represented modern Egypt, while the Temple represented ancient

Egypt. These changes to the layout, as well as knowledge of previous Egyptianising architectural projects, likely inspired Mariette, who considered previous attempts as belonging to Egyptomania more than Egyptology:

Unfortunately, the Egyptian style has been quite misunderstood until now. Nine times out of ten, the work of the artists who used it did not manage to do much better than a Cairo street, a compartment of the Sydenham Palace or a German glyptotek. There is something better that can be done, I will attempt at doing it. (Edouard Mariette 1904, quoted in David 1994, 172)²²

This statement reveals Mariette's desire to elevate Egyptomania-inspired entertainment to higher levels of scientific accuracy, and demonstrates something of the national competitiveness related to the specific occasion for which he created the project. The World Expositions, since the London Great Exhibition of 1851, were a symptom of a larger historical phenomenon of the nineteenth century: the rise of the "Nation-States" and the development of a patriotic sentiment among the populations of Europe. The World Expositions had a significant impact on European culture, influencing politics, industry, science and the arts, and were used to facilitate competition between the various nations. They were a showcase for each nation's wealth, development, and modernity (see Aimone and Olmo 1993). Egyptology was significant in these political and national rivalries, from the Bonaparte Expedition to the colonial climate of the twentieth century, including the Anglo-French rivalry to dominate Egypt, especially during the British protectorate between 1882 and 1922 (see Gady 2011; Jarsaillon 2017). In that respect, Mariette's criticism of the British Crystal Palace, or the Munich Glyptotek built in 1814, is tainted by a patriotic discourse dismissing foreign attempts in order to emphasise the originality of his own project. The Temple presented on a global platform such as the Paris World Fair in 1867 was not only a matter of Egyptian pride, but also a French one.

Egyptianising architecture preceding Mariette's Temple mainly consisted of temporary installations intended as entertainment settings. Operating somewhere between show-business and science, the Bullock Museum which opened in 1812 at Piccadilly in London, used Egyptomania to appeal to a wider public. In the nineteenth century, when museum institutions were attempting to establish their place while facing the competition of the entertainment industry, Egyptian displays (collections or architecture) could be used as a compromise between science and sensation (Thomas 2012, 7). The Bullock Museum was therefore decorated with an Egyptianising facade, though windows and fake hieroglyphs hindered the accuracy of the illusion. Nevertheless, these oversights neither prevented the building from becoming popularly known as the Egyptian Hall, nor from hosting Giovanni Battista Belzoni's exhibition of the tomb of Sethi I in the spring of 1821. This exhibition was also intended as an entertainment, featuring a dramatic staging of his discovery.

Another well-known case of nineteenth-century Egyptianising entertainment is the Egyptian Court, created as part of the immersive and theatrical displays at the Crystal Palace after its relocation from Hyde Park to Sydenham in 1854. The two contractors for the Egyptian Court were not scholars, though they were somewhat familiar with ancient Egypt; Owen Jones had worked on the Great Exhibition and published his architectural observations after a voyage to Egypt (Jones 1843; see also Curl 1994, 190). The second contractor, Joseph Bonomi, had participated as an illustrator in two Egyptian

expeditions in 1824 and 1842,²³ and had worked with the Egyptologist John Gardner Wilkinson as well as for the British Museum's Department of Egyptology.²⁴ The principle was much the same as Mariette's Temple; Jones and Bonomi published a description of the Court in 1854, and later, a more elaborate and instructive publication (Wilkinson 1857). Despite these efforts, the Egyptian Court remained "hardly scientific" but "nonetheless evocative," according to Humbert (1994, 312). The guide led the visitor through various rooms, which were inspired by rather than copied from original temples. The hieroglyphs were a mix of original inscriptions and cartouches and invented messages praising, for instance, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.²⁵ Furthermore, the Egyptian Court does not appear to have hosted any original objects.²⁶ It was, rather than a resolutely Egyptological display, a lavishly produced and successful popular entertainment.

Finally, the inclusion of Egyptianising architecture in the Egyptian Pavilion became rather common in the history of World Fairs, including that of 1878, also in Paris and organised by Auguste Mariette, assisted by Gaston Maspero, his successor at the Service of Antiquities. On this occasion, a wooden pavilion inspired by Old Kingdom housing was built, decorated with scenes drawn from the tombs of Saqqara and Beni Hassan. However, after some problems encountered with the loans of pieces from the Bulaq Museum in 1867 (David 1994, 184), no original object was displayed. For this reason, this later project did not garner as much attention as in 1867.

Another type of Egyptianising architecture was that which was integrated into permanent displays in museums showcasing Egyptian artefacts (Humbert 1994, 313). In these cases, the Nilotic settings tended to lean more towards didactic Egyptomania; for the curator of a nineteenth-century Egyptian gallery, this was an attempt to extend the written explanations of ancient Egyptian culture accompanying the artefacts, and to contextualise the objects in order to aid visitors' comprehension (Maget 2009, 189). Its appropriateness was, however, debated by curators and Egyptologists, resulting in varied degrees of application. According to Antoinette Maget (201), these disparities depended upon the culture of each country along with the influence of contemporary intellectuals: France opted for lavishly decorated ceilings highlighting the role of the state in the development of Egyptology, Britain for a sober setting densely packed with showcases, and Prussia for prominent frescos and "outrageously recreated" Nilotic settings. The didactic aim of an Egyptian display for an Egyptian collection raised the issue of the scientific accuracy of the decoration, and also of the possibility of decoration detracting attention from the actual collection (Ziegler 1996, 142). Responses to this dilemma were various. The Egyptian Museum of the Louvre,²⁷ which had opened in 1826, was torn between two visions: its curator Champollion's, and the General Director of the Louvre, M. Forbin's. Champollion was a partisan of the contextualisation of the objects and demanded an Egyptian setting:

I heard that there were plans to decorate these rooms in the Greco-Roman style. I cannot give my consent to this ridiculous arrangement. For the sake of decorum and of common sense, my rooms must be decorated in the Egyptian style. (Letter from Champollion, Italy, 4 October 1826, quoted in Maget 2009, 193)²⁸

This was not granted him: the museum decided to maintain the classical architecture with mock marbles and ionic columns, nevertheless opting for painted ceilings representing Egyptian themes (albeit related to classical archaeology and biblical narratives), and Egyptian motifs for the *voussoirs* and *grisailles* (Ziegler 1996, 144).

While the Louvre attempted a blend of classical architecture and Egyptian themes, the Neues Museum of Berlin, decorated between 1841 and 1850, was closer to the 1867 Temple, in that it was designed as an archaeological reconstruction, on the advice of the Egyptologist Karl Richard Lepsius who had just returned from his most important expedition in Egypt (1842–1845). Around a colonnade inspired by the Ramesseum were three thematic rooms—historic, mortuary, and mythological—decorated with starry skies of the New Kingdom tombs and panoramas reconstituting the main ancient monuments: from Giza to Dendera, Karnak, Edfu, Medinet Habu, Philae, the Beni Hassan tombs and Meroe pyramids. Although the attention to scientific accuracy was welcomed and reproduced in Vienna in 1891 (148), it also received criticism from Egyptologists, notably Emmanuel de Rougé, who condemned its overbearing aspect:

You regret the simplicity of your display, Lepsius has fallen into the opposite pitfall. The rooms are covered in paintings of Egyptian style which flicker with so many bright colours that the monuments look like old and ugly rocks in the midst of this multicolour ensemble. (Letter from E. De Rougé to Conrade Leemans, c. 1850, quoted in *L’Egyptologue Conrad Leemans* 1973, 65)²⁹

Various museums in Italy, meanwhile, opted for a middle ground between overwhelming reconstitution and classical architecture, evoking somewhat Romantic Nilotic landscapes. Overlooking scientific rigour, the Museo Gregoriano Egizio, created in the Vatican in 1839, as well as the Museo Egizio in Florence, chose a variety of Egyptianising motifs such as trompe-l’oeil landscapes, temples and pyramids, papyrus-shaped columns, mock alabaster and Egyptianising showcases. At the Museo Gregoriano, as in the Egyptian Court at the Crystal Palace, hieroglyphs were used to spell modern messages, in this case a dedication to the Pope, Gregorio XVI, the museum’s founder. These displays merely aimed at creating an evocative atmosphere, making the visit more attractive and pleasant.

In his own Museum in Bulaq (Cairo), Mariette opted for a similar compromise, displaying the collections amidst Egyptising architectural elements such as papyrus-shaped columns or Egyptian cornices which, contrary to the Paris Temple, did not aspire to anything more than décor (Mariette 1864, 4–11). This custom tended to fade in museums after the nineteenth century, at least in predominant scholarly institutions. In that respect, the Paris Egyptian Temple can be understood as a product of its time in terms of museology as well as in terms of Egyptomania. However, it is unique in terms of its didactic intentions and process of production: accuracy was the primary goal, while most of other similar endeavours envisioned it as secondary to entertainment or to the collections displayed.

A Mutual Emulation: Egyptology Inspiring Egyptomania

If Egyptomania continued to pervade the arts even after the rationalisation of the study of ancient Egypt, it is because Egyptology further inspired writers and artists rather than moderating their fascination. Mariette’s excavations and writings were, for example, a consistent inspiration for the novelist and poet Théophile Gautier. Gautier wrote his first Egyptomaniac work in 1840, inspired by an object that Dominique-Vivant Denon had brought back from Egypt. Entitled *Le Pied de Momie*, or *The Mummy’s Foot*, this novella was a first draft for one of his major works, *Le Roman de la Momie* (1858). The latter relates the story of an archaeologist discovering the mummy of a beautiful young

woman and the papyrus narrating her life. Including a rewriting of the crossing of the Red Sea by the Hebrews, this novel blended biblical and Egyptological references. Gautier gathered his material from Ernest Feydeau's 1856 *Histoire des usages funèbres et des sépultures de peuples anciens*, a text which details the funerary customs of ancient civilisations (Aziza 1996, 555). Even more striking is the inspiration drawn from Mariette's aforementioned anecdote about finding an ancient footprint while entering a tomb, echoed in Gautier's text:

On the thin grey sand covering the ground was very clearly outlined, with the print of the toe, of the four fingers and of the calcaneum, the shape of a human foot; the foot of the last priest or the last friend who had retreated from the tomb, fifteen hundred years before Christ, after having paid the ultimate respects to the deceased. The dust, as eternal as is granite in Egypt, had moulded that footstep and kept it for more than thirty centuries, just as the solidified diluvian muds keep the tracks of the animals that stepped on it.³⁰

Although Mariette's account was printed in 1867, he told this story as early as 1853, when he returned from his first excavation. It was well-known by Paris society, explaining its use by Gautier as early as 1858. It is also noteworthy that in that same prologue of *Le Roman de la Momie*, ten years before witnessing the unwrapping of a female mummy at the Paris World Fair, the novelist imagined much the same scene: in this case, life was to mimic art.

As we have seen, in the case of Mariette in particular, the influence of Egyptology on Egyptomania was sometimes embraced by Egyptologists themselves, though to varying degrees.³¹ Many had Egyptophilic habits, such as Champollion who used to sign his letters with his name written in hieroglyphs, often adding an Egyptian epithet such as *Mayamun*, "loved by Amun" (Dewachter 1996, 429). But Mariette was to go even further in the blending of scholarly Egyptology and popular Egyptomania, playing a major part in the creation of an Egyptian opera. After the success of the 1867 exhibition, Ismail-Pacha understood that European's glamourised vision of his country's ancient past was an asset for the promotion of Egypt's modernity too, all the more when this enthusiasm was sustained by an academic such as Mariette. For the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869, a new opera house was built in Cairo; Ismail-Pacha asked the Director of the Service of Antiquities to invent the scenario of an opera set in ancient Egypt. Mariette wrote the love story of *Aïda*, an Ethiopian princess, and Radames, an Egyptian General. It was sent to Giuseppe Verdi who accepted the project (Budden 1981, 163-164). For Mariette, this was a new way of using the interest whipped up by Egyptomania to convey an accurate representation of ancient Egypt. The participation of such a scholar in this kind of production seems at odds even with current popular opinions as to the activities in which Egyptologists should be engaged, explaining why, even until recently, Mariette's role in *Aïda* has been the subject of controversy (see Humbert 1994, 390-447). Yet, he was qualified for the task as an Egyptologist, and also as a former drawing teacher and writer of short stories (David 1994, 22). Although he remained anonymous for the most part, his correspondence confirms that he designed the costumes, with the help of Jules Marre, as well as the sets (Humbert 1994, 423).

The superintendent of the Cairo opera house, Draneht Bey, arranged for the sets and costumes to be made in Paris, both because of the reputation of its workshops, and because Mariette could not leave France due to the Franco-Prussian war between 1869 and 1871. The Egyptologist aimed at the same accuracy and spectacular aspect as in 1867, and encountered little difficulty with the sets, since the process was similar to his

previous endeavour with the Egyptian Temple, though he did have some disagreements with Verdi because of his insistence on historical rigour. The last act took place in an underground chamber, which did not match the architectural customs of ancient Egypt, concerning Mariette: “The last scene of *Aida* and this bloody underground imagined by Verdi keep me up at night,” he complained (Letter from Mariette to Draneht Bey, 2 September 1871, quoted in Viale Ferrero 1996, 533-550).³² The costumes however, were the main source of worry: he had designed architectural decor for the 1867 Exhibition, but this was an aesthetic challenge that he had not faced before. Two issues were raised by this aspect of the opera: the first being the real-life adaptation of the symbolic and conventional representations of Egyptian art. The stiffness of such an iconography turned out to be an obstacle for the stage:

A granite king can be very handsome with its huge crown on its head, but as soon as it has to be dressed, in the flesh, to walk or to sing, it becomes embarrassing and one can fear [...] ridicule. (Letter from Mariette to Draneht Bey, 15 July 1870, quoted in David 1994, 210)³³

Mariette also feared that the actors would refuse to shave their then-fashionable goatees (Humbert 1994, 424). His thirst for historical accuracy can be summed up in his own words: “The affair is serious, for we cannot create caricatures and yet we have to remain as close as possible to the Egyptians” (Letter from Mariette to Draneht Bey, Paris, 8 August 1870, quoted in Humbert 1994, 424).³⁴ Humbert notes that the results, despite Mariette’s efforts, remained close to nineteenth-century theatrical fantasy, characterised by an abundance of adornments (424).

Due to the delay to the production of costumes and sets because of France’s political and military situation, it was not *Aida* but *Rigoletto* that inaugurated the Cairo Opera House on 1 September 1869. The Egyptian opera was performed in the same venue in Cairo two years later, on 24 December 1871. Mariette’s devotion to historical accuracy was specific to this version, and was only reproduced for the 1881 Paris opera-house representation, this time created with the help of his successor Gaston Maspero, as was the second International Exposition in 1878. Different approaches were chosen for later stagings (Humbert 2003, 53). Egyptology continued to influence this Egyptian opera, however. In the 1927 production at Metropolitan Opera House, the character of Amneris wore a crown which was a replica of the one from Nefertiti’s bust, discovered fifteen years earlier by Bochart, and in the 1976 production at the same theatre in New York, the guards wore Tutankhamun masks, at the very time when the famous exhibition was travelling the world (55). Yet current Egyptologists’ view on *Aida* remains intransigent: the opera is a work of Egyptomania, first and foremost.

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Some Egyptologists reject Egyptomania, finding its displays incongruous, almost as sacrilegious. It would be forgetting that these adaptations [...] participated in [Egyptology’s] acknowledgement; which redounded on Egyptian archaeology and on Egyptologists themselves, contributing in-so-doing in ranking this science among the most popular. (Humbert 1994, 26)³⁵

Humbert’s quote summarises the intermingled movements which this essay has addressed. It is a relation of mutual emulation that seems to have interwoven Egyptology and Egyptomania, rather than a chronological or academic opposition. Although their

actors and methods were often different, they were in constant contact, so much so that in some cases as in the world of museums—at the crossroads between entertainment and science—it is sometimes hard to differentiate the two. Mariette’s endeavours are evocative of this entanglement; because of the relative novelty of his discipline during the second half of the nineteenth century, he worked towards a twofold aim: popularising his science to raise awareness and funds for Egyptology, while correcting fantasist and erroneous visions of Egypt spread by Romanticism and Orientalism. Whether using Egyptomania’s agenda to reach a public that he sought to educate or taking part in Egyptomania’s production to contribute scientific accuracy, Mariette understood that science and entertainment were complementary. In return, his work inspired artists who participated in Egyptomania, making him famous both among Egyptologists and Egyptophiles. In that respect, his work was somewhat modern: in 2000 a study was carried out among Egyptian museums’ visitors, showing that “Western museums with ancient Egyptian collections do not have to work hard to make their collection popular. [...] The challenge is to exploit the subject’s popularity while questioning some of the assumptions on which that popularity is based” (McDonald 2003, 87-100). More than a century ago, Auguste Mariette was already tackling this challenge on the global stage.

Notes

1. “Il est certain que, comme archéologue, je serais assez disposé à blâmer ces inutiles étalages qui ne profitent en rien à la science; mais si le Musée ainsi arrangé plaît à ceux auxquels il est destiné, s’ils y reviennent souvent et en y revenant s’inoculent, sans le savoir, le goût de l’étude et, j’allais presque dire, l’amour des antiquités de l’Égypte, mon but sera atteint.” All translations are my own.
2. “En 1851, j’eus la bonne fortune de découvrir [une] tombe inviolée [...]. Quand j’y entrai pour la première fois, je trouvai, marquée sur la couche mince de sable dont le sol était couvert, l’empreinte des pieds des ouvriers, qui 3700 ans auparavant, avaient couché le dieu dans sa tombe.”
3. “On rencontre encore aujourd’hui à Éléphantine et en Nubie des femmes qui, la tête ornée de la même coiffure, prennent la même pose et se servent des mêmes ustensiles pour accomplir la même opération.”
4. “L’Égypte est représentée à l’Exposition universelle de 1867 non seulement dans son présent, mais encore dans son passé. Il devait en être ainsi, puisqu’elle est le berceau du monde.”
5. “Quand les Égyptiens sculptaient les deux Khéphren [...], le reste du monde n’avait pas encore d’Histoire.”
6. This was located in one of the two modern buildings, the *Okel*. Over 500 skulls were displayed (Mariette 1867b, 99).
7. “On causait, on riait, on fumait.” “D’un canif qui fouille l’aisselle, il fait sortir quelque chose qu’on se passe [...]. Et avec un ciseau, dans le pierreux de la chair, Du Camp fait sauter une petite plaque en or.”
8. This kind of event had already been organised in 1830 by a professor of anatomy at the Charing Cross Hospital in London, Thomas Pettigrew (see Aziza 1996, 551-584).
9. “Si toutes ces conditions sont observées, si tout est conforme à la règle, si tous les tableaux sont de vrais originaux pris sur nature, alors nous aurons fait une véritable œuvre d’art et d’archéologie; alors notre temple sera un temple digne de l’Exposition, digne de Paris, digne de la science française, digne de vous et de moi.”
10. See letter from Mariette, 6 September 1866, quoted in Wallon 1883, 522.
11. “Mettez, monsieur Schmitz, votre bon goût dans votre poche. Nous faisons de l’égyptien antique. L’Égyptien antique met des yeux de face sur des têtes de profil; il plante les oreilles sur le haut du crâne comme un plumet de garde national. Tant pis pour l’égyptien antique.”

12. “Une étude en quelque sorte vivante d’archéologie.”
13. “Dans l’intention d’édifier le lecteur sur la valeur de nos moyens d’investigation, nous le faisons assister de temps en temps à l’une de ces lentes opérations par lesquelles nous essayons de recomposer pièce à pièce l’histoire de l’Égypte ancienne.”
14. “Lieu du divertissement et du savoir, [...] entre substitut de voyages et parc d’attractions, leur caractère éphémère les rend populaires de façon bien plus certaine que ne le sont les musées.”
15. The promotion of Egyptology as a science was also aimed at men of power, both Egyptians and Europeans, since they were potential funders of excavations and publications.
16. Although Mariette was French, he was working for the Egyptian government, as the head of the Service of Antiquities that he founded in 1858.
17. “Le succès fut immense. [...] Il n’y eut qu’une voix sur le mérite de celui qui l’avait si habilement mis au jour; et les distinctions ne lui manquèrent pas plus que les louanges.”
18. “Son exposition n’est pas seulement la plus somptueuse du Parc, c’est la plus complète et la plus instructive. On a fait à la science la part du lion, mais on n’a rien négligé pour que la beauté des formes extérieures et de la décoration accrût l’intérêt scientifique de tout le charme du pittoresque.”
19. Issue of the 26 October 1867.
20. “A l’Exposition Universelle—Section Égyptienne. Vraii les anciens Égyptiens n’étaient pas beaux.” Caption of the engraving by Honoré Daumier, originally published in *Le Monde illustré*, 26 October 1867.
21. “On voit les groupes d’amis, les familles s’arrêter en silence devant ces sphinx, ces dieux et ces déesses à tête d’animaux, [...] ces bas-reliefs couverts de signes mystérieux. Il y a de longs points d’interrogation, pour ainsi dire, dans tous les regards.”
22. “On a malheureusement peu compris jusqu’à ce jour le style égyptien. Neuf fois sur dix, les œuvres des artistes qui y ont eu recours, ne se sont guère élevées au-dessus d’un passage du Caire, d’un compartiment du Sydenham Palace ou d’une salle glyptothèque allemande. Il y a quelque chose de mieux à faire et c’est ce que j’essaierai.”
23. In 1824, alongside with Robert Hay, and in 1842 with the Lepsius Expedition.
24. He illustrated Gardner’s *Manners and Customs of Ancient Egyptians*.
25. Stephanie Moser (2012, 101) explains that the cartouches on the pillars of the Hypostyle Court were actual pharaohs’ names, but from various periods, with no historical logic. The aim was to show maximum variety to the public. The efforts and precision put into the copy of the hieroglyphs themselves was, however, considerable (181).
26. It did however host plaster casts of objects from major collections, mostly from the British Museum, but also the Louvre and Turin (Moser 2012, 97). In some photographs, mummies in wooden coffins are also visible, as in Ossian 2007 (68), with the caption: “undated stereographic view of the Outer Court of the Crystal Palace Egyptian Court, with mummies on display. Other photos show the space with rows of benches in place.” Their provenance is neither stated in this article nor in Moser 2012.
27. Then called the Musée Charles X.
28. “Il paraît qu’on se propose de tapisser ces salles de marbres et de décorations à la romaine ou à la grecque. Je ne puis consentir à ce ridicule arrangement. Il faut, pour obéir aux convenances et au bon sens, que mes salles soient décorées à l’égyptienne.”
29. “Vous regrettez la trop grande simplicité de vos salles, Lepsius est tombé dans l’excès contraire. Les salles sont couvertes de peintures en style égyptien qui papillotent de tant de couleurs vives que les monuments ont l’air de vieilles pierres fort laides au milieu de toute cette bigarrure.”
30. “Sur la fine poudre grise qui sablait le sol se dessinait très nettement, avec l’empreinte de l’orteil, des quatre doigts et du calcanéum, la forme d’un pied humain; le pied du dernier prêtre ou du dernier ami qui s’était retiré, quinze cents ans avant Jésus-Christ, après avoir rendu au mort les honneurs suprêmes. La poussière, aussi éternelle en Égypte que le granit, avait moulé ce pas et le gardait depuis plus de trente siècles, comme les boues diluviennes durcies conservent la trace des pieds d’animaux qui la pétrirent.” (Gautier 1858, 34).

31. Some Egyptologists wrote novels with ancient Egyptian content, such as Georg Ebers, a German Egyptologist who turned towards historical fictions mid-way through his career, publishing, for example, *Eine ägyptische Königstochter* (*An Egyptian Princess*) in 1864.
32. “Le dénouement d’Aïda et ce grand diable de souterrain imaginé par Verdi m’empêchent de dormir.”
33. “Un roi peut être très beau en granit avec une énorme couronne sur la tête, mais dès qu’il s’agit de l’habiller en chair et en os et de le faire marcher, et de le faire chanter, cela devient embarrassant et il faut craindre de [...] faire rire.”
34. “L’affaire est grave, car il ne faut pas tomber dans la caricature, et d’un autre côté, il nous faut rester aussi égyptien que possible.”
35. “Quelques rares égyptologues rejettent l’égyptomanie, trouvant ce genre de décors incongrus, presque sacrilèges. C’est oublier que ces adaptations [...] ont participé à sa reconnaissance; celle-ci, rejaillissant sur l’archéologie égyptienne et sur les égyptologues eux-mêmes, a contribué à placer cette science au rang des plus populaires.”

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