BEYOND THE FAÇADE: MAXIME DU CAMP’S PHOTOGRAPHS OF EGYPT

A Thesis in
Art History
by
Whitney A. Izzo

© 2009 Whitney A. Izzo

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Arts

May 2009
The thesis of Whitney A. Izzo was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Nancy Locke  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Thesis Adviser

Brian Curran  
Associate Professor of Art History

Craig Zabel  
Associate Professor of Art History  
Head of the Department of Art History

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
Abstract

The photographs of Egypt from Maxime Du Camp’s photographic book *Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852) are at once a reminder of the West’s storied, and often sordid, history of colonialism and treatment of the “Other,” and also of France’s very specific imperial relationship with Egypt. From written works and popular media to visual imagery, Du Camp’s images are part of an established Orientalist vocabulary. More importantly, however, Du Camp’s photographs continue to reference France’s language of dominance laid out by Napoleon in his 1798 invasion and scientific expedition into Egypt. Rather than focusing specifically on the physical conquests of colonization—as is commonly the case when examining Western Orientalism—I will discuss Du Camp’s work with an emphasis on its relation to cultural hegemony. Just as relevant as physically occupying and dominating the “Other,” cultural colonization connects Western superiority with controlling and establishing structures of knowledge. In comparing Du Camp’s images with Francis Frith’s photographs of Egypt and Napoleon’s *Description de l’Egypte*, I will demonstrate the relation of Du Camp’s photographs to France’s attempt to present itself as an imperial power. This ultimately exposes the complexities of cultural exchange that underlie the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.
Table of Contents

List of Figures.................................................................................................v-vi

Acknowledgements......................................................................................vii

Introduction ....................................................................................................1

Chapter 1. Representations of Egypt..........................................................12
  Textual Documentation .............................................................................14
  Visual Representation..............................................................................17
    In Service of the State ...........................................................................17
    Science and the Picturesque .................................................................28
    Photography ..........................................................................................31

Chapter 2. Science as Ideology of Imperialism:
  Egyptian Voyages Compared.................................................................39

Chapter 3. Modes of Cultural Superiority:
  Napoleon’s Description de l’Egype and Du Camp’s photographs ..............63

Conclusion....................................................................................................81

Bibliography..................................................................................................83
List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Antoine-Jean Gros, Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa, 1804........ 34

Figure 1.2: Anne-Louis Girodet, Revolt of Cairo, 1810......................................................... 34

Figure 1.3: Léon Cogniet, The Egyptian Expedition under the Orders of Bonaparte, 1834..... 35

Figure 1.4: Detail, Antoine-Jean Gros, Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa, 1804... 35

Figure 1.5: Costumes parisiens, no. 239, an VIII (1799-1800)............................................. 36

Figure 1.6: Vivant Denon, Measuring the Great Sphinx at Giza, 1798.................................... 36

Figure 1.7: Duterte, French scholars measuring the fist of a statue of Ramesses II at Memphis, 1798.......................................................... 37

Figure 1.8: David Roberts, General View of the Island of Philae, Nubia, Nov 14th 1838.......................................................... 37

Figure 1.9: David Roberts, The Hypaethral Temple at Philae called the Bed of Pharaoh........................................................................... 38

Figure 2.1: Maxime Du Camp, Sanctuary on Top of Temple at Dendera, 1850............... 55

Figure 2.2: Maxime Du Camp, Kom Ombo, ruins of the temple of Ombos, 1850........... 55

Figure 2.3: Maxime Du Camp, Thebes, view of the Temple of Khons at Karnak, 1850..... 56

Figure 2.4: Grand Temple D’Isis A Philæ, 1850................................................................. 56

Figure 2.5: Maxime Du Camp, Hémi-Spéos De Séboua, 1850........................................... 57

Figure 2.6: Maxime Du Camp, Temple D’Amada, 1850.................................................... 57

Figure 2.7: Francis Frith, Temple at Koum Ombos, 1858.................................................. 58

Figure 2.8: Francis Frith, The Pyramid of El-Geezah from the Southwest, 1858.............. 58
Figure 2.9: Maxime Du Camp, *Pyramide de Chéops*, 1850..............................59

Figure 2.10: Francis Frith, *The Ramesseum of El-Kurneh, Thebes* (first view), c. 1857.........59

Figure 2.11: David Roberts, *Thebes (Statues of Memnon)*, 1842-49.................................60

Figure 2.12: Francis Frith, *Statues of the Plain, Thebes*, 1858.................................60

Figure 2.13: Maxime Du Camp, *Grand Temple de Denderah*, 1850................................61

Figure 2.14: Francis Frith, *Portico of the Temple of Dendera*, 1857..............................61

Figure 2.15: Maxime Du Camp, *Temple Hypètre*, 1850............................................62

Figure 2.16: Francis Frith, *The Hypaethral Temple, Philae*, 1858..............................62

Figure 3.1: Maxime Du Camp, *Mosquée de Bellal*, 1850.............................................76

Figure 3.2: Maxime Du Camp, *Sculptures de l’Entrée du Speos de Phre*, 1850..........76

Figure 3.3: Maxime Du Camp, *Grand Temple d’Isis, A Philoe, Second Pylone*, 1850.....77

Figure 3.4: Maxime Du Camp, *Medinet-Habou, galleries du Palais*, 1850..................77

Figure 3.5: Francis Frith, *Interior of the Hall of Columns, Karnac*, 1859-60..............78

Figure 3.6: Léon de Joannis’ lithograph, *Lowering of the Obelisk*, 1835.....................78

Figure 3.7: T. Jung, *Erection of the Luxor Obelisk*, lithograph by Kaepplin, 1836.........79

Figure 3.8: Maxime Du Camp, *Palais de Karnak, vue générale des ruines prise au nord*, 1850.................................................................79

Figure 3.9: Maxime Du Camp, *Palais de Karnak, sanctuaire de granit et salle hypostyle*, 1850.................................................................80
Acknowledgements

The initial research for this thesis began in a class on photography in Africa given by visiting instructor Bukky Gbadejesin, and I thank her for bringing these photographs to my attention. This project began to take its form during a seminar under Professor Nancy Locke, and it is to her that I extend my sincerest gratitude. Her encouragement, insightful suggestions, keen editing eye, and overall dedication to being my advisor had a profound impact on the development of my thesis. I am also enormously grateful to Professor Brian Curran for his critical edits and suggestions and his overall enthusiasm and commitment to not only myself but to all the graduate students.

Although not an active advisor on the entirety of this thesis, I would also like to thank Professor Madhuri Desai for providing invaluable commentary on a chapter that was partially formed during her seminar on Asian architecture. Professor Desai's seminar provided essential theoretical and contextual additions to my argument. I would also like to extend my thanks to Linda Briscoe Myers, Assistant Curator of Photography at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, for her diligent help in scanning (and re-scanning) images from Maxime Du Camp's *Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*.

To my friends and family, there are no words to adequately express my thanks for always being there for me. Above all, I want to convey a very heartfelt thanks to my mom and dad for their unwavering love and support over the past 25 years, but particularly these past two years where so much has happened. You are my role models and inspiration, and a daughter could not ask for better parents and friends. A special thanks to Emily, Steph and Kat for being the only ones to visit me, and for establishing our yearly trips! And of course, I have to extend my thanks to Laura and Emily without whom State College would have been a lonely place. And lastly, to JR, the love of my life, thank you for your support and understanding it means more than you know, you are my rock.
Introduction

In one of the major trends of recent historiography, the nineteenth century has been characterized as a period of sweeping imperialism. During this period, many countries in Western Europe set out to colonize lands inhabited by the “Other” in the East. The two major players in the race to colonize were France and Great Britain. The quest for empire and conquest of the “Other” in the nineteenth century continued a trend of Western nation states establishing and maintaining a position of power through territorial expansion. By continuing a tradition of imperial authority, Western countries were able to connect to their colonial past. Achieving control over the representation of the past of the “Other,” and maintaining a tradition of imperial desires, contributed to the West’s construction of itself as a more powerful entity. Beginning in the eighteenth century, the notion of the nation-state was coming into prominence and “the establishment and maintenance of these nation states depended upon determining, codifying, controlling, and representing the past.”¹ Laying a claim to such a past would enable each state to set the tone for its imperial future. Maintaining a state’s status as a powerful authority on the world stage required not just a careful possession of the past, but also a plan to protect the future of the state. A nation must do more than simply maintain itself in order to remain in the hierarchy of power in the West. A country must, as Bernard Cohn has put it, engage in “the process of state building” which, he argues, is intimately and inevitably attached to the rising authority of imperial power.² Great Britain’s emerging imperial power was most powerfully exerted in India. The colonial conquest of India by the British set the tone for conquering the “Other,” where conquests were seen to be in direct proportion to power and authority in the

² Ibid.
West. Not to fall behind the British in expanding their political and cultural horizon, the French looked to Egypt to gain colonial credibility.

In order to explore France’s use of Egypt to maintain their history of imperial power I will be looking at Maxime Du Camp’s photographs of Egypt from 1850. His expedition to Egypt, beginning in 1849, is an exemplary instance of a Western country seeking to promote a tradition of imperial control through imagery. Du Camp’s photographs recall France’s colonial past, but also bring attention to the continual importance of a Western country to maintain their cultural control over the representation of the past of the “Other.”

Egypt has always captivated the attention of Europeans. Since Herodotus in the fifth century B.C.E., “Mediterranean peoples were fascinated by Egyptian manners and customs, and the mysterious, fabled land inspired countless myths.”

Egypt has held a mythical position in the mind of the West as a place to recover a great and monumental ancient past. This interest however, was not passive. Europe’s engagement with Egypt went well beyond an appreciation for its antique past. Exemplified by Alexander’s conquest and the establishment of the city of Alexandria, the West began its persistent goal to obtain military and cultural control of Egypt. France’s political and imperial interests in Egypt peaked under Napoleon Bonaparte during the First Republic. Given its established economic interests in Egypt, France had a considerable commercial stake in maintaining a relationship with Egypt. When Turkish intervention compromised France’s trading interests, the establishment of a presence in Egypt was seen as benefiting both France and Egypt. France’s original desire to conquer and colonize Egypt came

---

4 Anne Godlewska and Edward H. Dahl, The Napoleonic Survey of Egypt: a masterpiece of cartographic compilation and early nineteenth-century fieldwork (Toronto: Winters CollegeYork University, 1988), 2. This book chronicles the mapping of Egypt during the Napoleonic expedition and also looks at the sources used to compile such a cartographic achievement.
out of its territorial losses of the Seven Years’ War.5 Egypt, in addition to its trade resources, was positioned to provide a stronghold for France in providing “dominance, both military and commercial, in the Mediterranean, the Near East and North Africa.”6 As Anne Godlewska has pointed out, France’s colonization of Egypt was intended “to provide the mother country with agricultural goods, minerals, trade, a secure market for manufactured goods, and a sense of cultural superiority.”7 While being presented as a venture to “protect” the interests of Egypt as well as France, Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 was guided by an imperialist desire to expand notions of cultural hegemony.

As much as Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt was proposed as an expedition to ensure Egyptian as well as French interests, it was, at its core, a play for colonial power in rivaling with the British. The British, viewed as the leading power in the accumulation of colonial territories, were vying for control in the Mediterranean. Widely acknowledged as a failure—the French were in fact defeated by the British—Napoleon’s military invasion of Egypt was envisioned as a strategic move “to strike at the British—the only power still at war with France—[and] if France held Egypt, its navy could better challenge British control of the Mediterranean and wreak havoc on Britain’s trade….8 Ultimately, with the British victory at the Battle of the Nile in 1798, France could not claim Egypt as the colony it desired. However, in the minds of the French, Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt was not entirely without success. The general has assembled a scholarly and scientifically-based expedition to accompany the military campaign and categorically document and catalogue the monuments and natural history of Egypt. The

5 Anne Godlewska and Edward H. Dahl, The Napoleonic Survey of Egypt, 2. As Godlewska states, “the conquest of Egypt was to serve as compensation for France’s losses in Canada, Bengal, Senegal, the French West Indies and Louisiana as a result of the Seven Years’ War.”
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
expedition produced what has become one of the seminal and monumental works of the era, the *Description de l’Egypte* (1809-1828). In cultural terms, Napoleon’s invasion and expedition to Egypt “put Paris agog over Egypt and things Egyptian,” and the publication of the *Description* only heightened French (and broader European) interest in Egypt. Despite the French military failure, then, the *Description* helped France maintain an imperial attitude of cultural superiority in its scientific documentation of a prime piece of colonial territory. As Godlewska puts it:

> The true French achievements in Egypt consisted of exploration and scholarship and existed in the realm of print and ideas. The 22-volume *Description de l’Egypte* and in particular the fifty-sheet *Carte topographique de l’Egypte* opened the country to European inquiry, investment, development schemes, and ultimately colonial conquest by the British.  

The *Description* exists as a claim to France’s position as an imperial power. Although France may have lost Egypt as a colony, its Orientalist attitude of superiority is nevertheless evident in the *Description*. It signals to the Western that the West is superior in ideas and intellect. The *Description*, though, was preaching to the converted, as Europeans had already bought into these notions of superiority; which the *Description* merely re-enforced. The *Description* shows that France views the non-western world as not just a place to be physically conquered but also to be culturally conquered and brought back to the West as proof of its imperial authority over the “Other.”

Champollion’s contribution to Egyptology is another instance of intellectual imperialism endorsed by the French. In 1822 Champollion was the first to translate sections of the Rosetta stone, and to bring an understanding of hieroglyphics to a curious western audience.

Champollion was not the first scholar to attempt to decipher hieroglyphics; however, he was able

---

9 Connelly, *Blundering to Glory*, 47.
11 Also, and this complicates things, there is a notion of possessing the legacy of ancient Egypt while “modern” Egypt may be viewed as more backward “conquered” and dominated by the Turks.
to benefit from Napoleon’s ‘opening’ up of Egypt to the West, which exposed Champollion to additional sources and monuments.\textsuperscript{12} If we can view Napoleon’s expedition as an ‘opening’ of Egypt, Champollion’s cracking of the hieroglyphic code made Egypt appear even more like a mystery waiting to be “discovered” and “restored to life” by western intellectuals. The fascination with Egypt as representing something enigmatic negates any sense of Egypt as belonging to a contemporary modern world. An unexplainable Egypt is easily translated to a timeless Egypt, a place to continually situate the unknown. It is an Egypt that lacks a modern placement among the cultural advancement of Europeans. Egypt is a mystery to be solved, not to unlock an ancient past for the Egyptians themselves but to provide a legacy for the West that serves their quest for imperial knowledge. For Europe, Egypt is defined by its ancient monuments, which only European knowledge can explain. This control over the cultural construction of Egypt provided France with considerable colonial power, at least conceptually, in their relation to the country.

Despite France’s loss to British forces, Napoleon’s expedition still claimed imperial credit by, “conducting a military campaign in Egypt that would eventually bring all things Egyptian to the notice of western Europeans and especially the French…a fascination for Egypt spread throughout France, creating a wave of Egyptomania.”\textsuperscript{13} A sense of the growing fascination with Egypt, or Egyptomania, spurred on by Napoleon’s expedition, the \textit{Description}, and Champollion’s decoding of the hieroglyphs, is stressed because it continued in France after Napoleon’s reign and well into the nineteenth century.

Beyond Napoleon and a French interest, British and Italian writers and explorers also developed a curiosity about Egypt. The dominant mode of transcription for the earlier

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{12} Lesley and Roy Adkins, \textit{The Keys of Egypt: The Race to Read the Hieroglyphs} (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), 5.
\item\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
expeditions into Egypt was in the form of travel writing. British and Italian travelers had comparably imperialistic attitudes toward Egypt as France.\textsuperscript{14} All of them were motivated by a desire to expand their frontiers and their knowledge of what was “beyond” the West. However, France’s history with Egypt—failed physical colonization combined with successful cultural hegemony—produces a complex cultural relationship that is rivaled only by the British encounter with Egypt. Cultural authority was achieved because the knowledge constructed in Egypt by the French is what comes to describe and stand for Egypt in the West. After all, the modern Egyptians did not historicize and document themselves for the Europeans; it was the Europeans who catalogued and created a knowledge base of Egypt for themselves, for their own culture to absorb and obtain. The French “discovery” and decipherment of Egypt stood as the definition of Egypt. France’s cultural hegemony over Egypt is particularly evident in the Napoleonic \textit{Description de l’Egypte}, which collected, categorized, and appropriated Egypt as European knowledge the interpretation of the Egyptian landscape.

Even though France had a more complex cultural relationship with Egypt, British explorers also had a powerful interest in Egypt and her resources. As Ralph Pordzik states in his book, \textit{The Wonder of Travel}, “Romantic explorers…went to Africa in order to find the sources of the Nile and thus, in metaphorical terms, the mythic origins of western culture.”\textsuperscript{15} Locating Africa—in particular Egypt—as the site of the beginning of Western civilization created even more competition among European countries to gain imperial territory over what was considered such a sacred place. If western culture is seen as originating in Egypt and if France, itself a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} For an analysis of Italy’s exploration of Egypt see, Robert B. Jackson, \textit{At Empire’s Edge: Exploring Rome’s Egyptian Frontier} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
\textsuperscript{15} Ralph Pordzik, \textit{The Wonder of Travel: Fiction, Tourism and the Social Construction of the Nostalgic} (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 2002), 1. This look at British travel writers in the eighteenth century and at the discourse of travel and travel writing states that British travelers “were motivated above all by the quest for unity and unified experience” (1).
\end{flushright}
western culture, can lay claim to the “uncovering” and intellectual interpretation of this ancient cradle of Western civilization, then France could claim a significant cultural superiority over not only the non-west, but over the rest of the West as well.

Africa was (and probably still is) simultaneously seen as the “Other” and the origin of the West. This paradoxical identification renders the West’s Orientalist and imperialist agenda more complex and independent than a binary system of Western and non-western would suggest. In his edited book, Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit, Steve Clark emphasizes that in discussing issues of empire building, scholars suggest “…resist the reduction of cross-cultural encounter to simple relations of domination and subordination.” While mentalities of superiority and inferiority are integral to the concept of Orientalism and imperialism, they cannot be reduced to those two factors alone. France’s claim/desire for imperial power over Egypt goes beyond notions of superiority in that the effort to colonize Egypt was as much about Egypt itself as it was about competing for power with the British. The imperialist venture in Egypt was not solely about dominating the “Other;” it was also about maintaining and fighting for a position at the top of the western world. Beyond Egypt’s role in the battle for imperial superiority among European countries, it also played a distinctive role in France’s definition as an imperial self. In this thesis, I shall argue that Maxime Du Camp’s photographs of Egypt, amidst travelers, explorers and travel writers, provide a rich reaction against a binary representation of imperialism.

Du Camp’s photographs, taken in Egypt from 1849-1850, present representations of imperialism and Orientalism that move beyond a strict binary mode of representing the inferior as it appears to the superior. His photographs of Egypt reference the twofold Orientalist

---

mentality of France to “discover” the non-west and the “Other.” However, they also speak to the
power-play between growing imperial nations within the Western sphere, and also to the French
nationalistic mentality that sought to promote itself within a growing culture of imperialism in
general. Ultimately, this paper aims to place Du Camp within the larger framework of France’s
construction of an imperial self.

Du Camp’s photographic mission can be seen as being influenced by Napoleon’s
scientific expedition into Egypt (which is ultimately tied to Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt) and
the Description de l’Egypte that was published as a result. Du Camp’s photographs re-introduce
into 1850s Paris the monumentality and imperial glory, of Napoleon’s expedition but in a new
visual medium—photography. The photographs are representative of France’s desire to re-claim
and re-assert its reach as a colonial empire. In this sense, France’s accomplishment as a colonial
power in Egypt is represented by France’s cultural power over Egypt. As stated previously, from
before Napoleon’s Egyptian invasion and expedition in 1798 until well into the mid-nineteenth
century, France had a competitive colonialist relationship with Britain. This relationship can be
seen in both the Description and Du Camp’s photographs, where Egypt is represented in ways
that strengthen French efforts to define, and locate, its colonial power over not only what is
deemed “the Orient” but also other European countries.

Egypt, from Napoleon’s expedition to Du Camp’s, was appropriated to promote the
present and future status of France. Du Camp’s photographs exemplify how Egypt and the Orient
become instrumental to France’s self-definition as an imperial power. Egypt was understood as a
great ancient empire. France not only sought to identify with the monumentality of that empire,
but also, to show its superiority and supremacy over it and, in a sense, inheritors of its power. It
is a desire exacerbated by political and economic instabilities in the middle of the nineteenth
century. By continually referring back to Egypt as a cultural conquest, France uses Egypt to construct an imperial self-image and an imperial history. Instead of being pushed to the periphery as just another “Other” in France’s historical narrative, Egypt is actually of invaluable importance in helping to define France’s Western identity.

By examining Du Camp’s photographs in relation to the *Description*, I will argue that Du Camp’s images represent how Egypt, in 1850s France, provided as a cultural boost via colonialism—a kind of “surrogate” colonization through image—and France’s self-determined authority to document and classify Egypt. Chapter 1 will present an overview of representations of Egypt from the nineteenth century and before. This will set Du Camp’s photographs into a broader context of visual representations. Chapter 2 will focus more pointedly on Du Camp’s photographs. In my analysis of individual images, each will be put into a framework inspired by Mary Louise Pratt’s construction of travel writing. Within this framework, I will address Du Camp’s conception of photography as an “objective” science. In particular, I will look at how his photographs actually go beyond “objective documentation” and speak to a greater imperial mindset of cultural superiority. To further highlight the objective of Du Camp’s photographic mission, his photographs will be compared to Francis Frith’s photographs of Egypt, produced in 1856. Finally, Chapter 3 will return to the larger issues of imperialism and Orientalism. It will examine more closely the links between Napoleon’s *Description* and Du Camp’s photographs, and show how that relationship can help to reveal the multiplicity inherent in ideologies of imperialism. I shall also show how these photographs from 1850s France, by referencing the nation’s own colonial past with the *Description*, re-conceived Egypt to promote its present and future state as a dominant player in Western imperialism.
Du Camp’s photographs have not enjoyed a place in the mainstream of nineteenth-century art historical discourse. Although his work has not been widely analyzed, there are two scholars whose work should be acknowledged: Julia Ballerini and Elizabeth Ann McCauley. Both of these scholars do a thorough job of placing Du Camp’s photographs within its original context. They address the issues of travel photography, contemporary literature, Du Camp’s biography, and the issues raised by the presence of his Nubian servant Hadji Ishmael (it will be suggested in Chapter 2 that the emphasis on Hadji Ishmael has perhaps been made too significant). As a whole, the extant scholarship on Du Camp has focused on his biography, his writing and his photographs. Scholars have, by and large, not considered his work within the larger context of French imperialism and culture of the 1850s. In particular, the relationship of Du Camp’s photographs to the precedent set by Napoleon’s expedition and the Description de l’Égypte has not been adequately explored.

As I will discuss in Chapter 3, the political and social climate of France during the time of Du Camp’s photographic production is crucial to our understanding of their place in the context of French imperialism and its history. In 1850, the Second Republic was still quite

---


18 Du Camp’s trip did produce two works of literature, Le Livre Posthume: mémoires d’un suicidé (1852), a novel that alludes to his personal travels in Egypt, and Le Nil: Egypte et Nubie (1853), which consists of his travel notes, but does not have a strong element of personal narrative. For a sense of Du Camp’s travel notes, as compared to his travel companion Flaubert’s, see Flaubert in Egypt: a sensibility on tour; a narrative drawn from Gustave Flaubert’s travel notes and letters, Translated and edited by Francis Steegmueller (Boston: Little Brown, 1972). Both Ballerini and McCauley discuss Du Camp in relation to his literary production, the placement of Hadji Ishmael within the photographs, his personal and psychological biography and his friendship with Flaubert.
young, and given its short tenure, instability was still the order of the day. President Louis-Napoleon’s coup d’état and declaration of himself as Emperor began the Second Empire in 1852. Crowning himself Napoleon III, the newly-minted “new Napoleon” sought to be resurrect his uncle’s “great Napoleonic tradition…he [Napoleon III] strove to revive the institutions of the First Empire…by stating in Article 1: ‘The imperial dignity is re-established. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte is emperor of the French…’”¹⁹ After a tumultuous Second Republic, the Second Empire hoped to bring back a sense of unity and strength that it saw epitomized in the First Empire. Du Camp’s photographs of Egypt are emblematic of this larger French desire to recall past imperial glory as well as to promote the current empire. His photographs are representative of a complex relationship between France and Egypt, as well as the larger history of imperialism.

Chapter 1
Representations of Egypt

Napoleon’s expedition into Egypt opened up the country to Western documentation and interpretations. Textual and visual representations of Egypt were produced based on the assumption of the supremacy of the European intellect. Given this presumed cultural superiority, the West depicted Egypt according to its own agenda. Images from the West exemplified a spectrum of artistic interests, from textual documentation to romantic and scientific portrayals. These various descriptions served to support the Western idea (or ideal) of Egypt. The documentation of Egypt produced by European artists is not always emblematic of a quest for physical colonization. Capturing Egypt, in both text and image, enabled France to establish a level of cultural control; a power that resonated within Egypt itself, but more important, was acknowledged and appreciated in France. As Bernard Cohn has argued, it is imperial countries’ establishment of cultural authority that ultimately constructs a lasting imperial/colonial relationship between the West and non-West.20

For Cohn, it is the colonial construction of knowledge that shapes the representations of the Non-west. In his book Colonialism and its forms of knowledge, Cohn crafts a framework for colonial regulation based on Western countries’ establishment of control—and therefore supremacy—over various forms of knowledge.21 Although Cohn’s book deals specifically with the British in India, the concept of cultural hegemony proposed by him can be applied to France’s imperial relationship with Egypt. We will come back to Cohn later—in relation to the Description de l'Egypte and Du Camp’s photographs—but his framework echoes throughout the various representational conceptions of Egypt that I will discuss.

20 Cohn, Colonialism and its forms of knowledge.
21 Ibid.
Orientalist French art is a category that includes many forms: literary, cultural, and popular representations. I cannot hope to refer to the entire genre, but I can hope that my examples negotiate the larger framework of Orientalist art and representations of Egypt that relate specifically to the issues being discussed in this paper. I will discuss images of Egypt in relation to three modes of representation: textual documentation, visual representations such as paintings and prints, and photography. In all three areas, Napoleon and his legacy will be a recurring theme. In his book *Orientalism, History, theory and the arts*, John MacKenzie describes various phases of Orientalist art. One phase in particular defined by MacKenzie as “the tradition of topographical and archeological ‘realism’… [and] energetic, vibrant Romanticism,” is of particular interest here. Taking a cue from this phase, I will consider visual representation in two categories: art in the service of the state, and science and the picturesque. I have re-named MacKenzie’s terms in order to suit my focus on Egypt and France’s cultural conquest of it. The placement of Egypt as the focus of the images that I will discuss emphasizes Egypt’s primary role in the imperial conquests of the French. Specifically, the images suggest that Egypt became a cultural colony of France, where France’s imperial presence makes itself felt in representations of Egypt—specifically those made for a Western audience.

---

22 John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism, History, theory and the arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 48-50. MacKenzie, in connecting Orientalists and Orientalism to broader cultural and historical contexts, divides Orientalism in art into five phases. The first phase consists of a more imagined Orient in the eighteenth century from artists who had not been to the Orient; the second phase (which I will focus on) is divided into two parts, “the tradition of topographical and archeological ‘realism’…[and] energetic, vibrant Romanticism.” (50). The third phase focuses on “realism…and alleged ethnographic precision,” (50) and the fourth and fifth phases are characterized by shifts in subject matter.

23 Ibid., 50. MacKenzie uses Dominique Vivant Denon and David Roberts as his examples of artists representing “the tradition of topographical and archeological ‘realism.’” I am using these artists as my examples as well, but my discussions of them in terms of my re-appropriated categories do not come from MacKenzie’s book.

24 In a sense my two categories condense several of MacKenzie phases, and the categories more adequately lay out the nature of the works as they refer to my larger arguments.
TEXTUAL DOCUMENTATION

Textual documents describe and transcribe Egypt for the West. Text-based representations are perhaps the most obvious foundation of knowledge, as they frequently contain key information. The Description de l’Egypte is a primary period source that exemplifies France’s cultural imperialism in relation to Egypt. In its pages, Egypt was recorded and interpreted scientifically in ways comprehensible to the Western observer. Ingrained in cultural imperialism is the inherent belief of the Westerner that the non-West is a discovery waiting to be interpreted. The “Other” exists as something to be known, and is a trophy that can be brought back to the West. This is especially evident in accounts of the French decipherment of the hieroglyphics.

Champollion’s “uncovering” of Egyptian texts is a prime example of intellectual imperialism endorsed by the French. Champollion was not the first scholar to attempt to decipher hieroglyphics, but he was able to benefit from Napoleon’s “opening” up of Egypt to the West, which exposed him to more sources of hieroglyphics.25 Ironically, Champollion’s cracking of the hieroglyphic code made Egypt appear even more like a mystery waiting to be “discovered” by Western intellectuals. The fascination with Egypt as representing something mystifying negates any sense of Egypt as belonging to a contemporary modern world. It is an Egypt that lacks a modern placement among the cultural advancements of Europeans. For Europe, Egypt is defined by its ancient mysteries, which only European knowledge can explain.

Despite France’s loss to British forces, Napoleon’s expedition still claims imperial credit by “conducting a military campaign in Egypt that would eventually bring all things Egyptian to the notice of western Europeans and especially the French…a fascination for Egypt spread

throughout France, creating a wave of Egyptomania.” A sense of the growing fascination with Egypt, or Egyptomania, spurred on by Napoleon’s expedition, the *Description*, and Champollion’s decoding of the hieroglyphs, is stressed because it continued in France after Napoleon’s reign, and well into the nineteenth century. Beyond the French interest, British and Italian writers and explorers also exercised their curiosity in Egypt. The dominant mode of transcription for the earlier expeditions into Egypt was in the form of travel writing.

The sense of mystery surrounding Egypt conveyed by Champollion’s decipherment of the hieroglyphics can be seen at the root of the intrigue that encouraged travel writers to explore, document, and describe the “Other.” Steve Clark, in his introduction to, *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, brings attention to the post-colonial study of travel writing which he describes as providing “…an exemplary record of cross-cultural encounters between European and non-European peoples…[and has made] the question of travel inseparable from that of power and desire….” Empire is the common thread throughout the essays in Clark’s book, but he purposely aims to avoid a strict binary reading of the “cross-cultural encounter [in terms of] simple relations of domination and subordination.” For Clark, travel writing responds to more than just a binary discourse of colonialism, i.e. the superior reigning over the inferior. As Clark argues, such writing provides other instances of colonialism such as “bureaucratic instruction, demographic report, geographic mapping, military order, journalistic propaganda—and the journey itself encodes invariable ideological aspects: spiritual pilgrimage,

---

26 Lesley and Roy Adkins, *The Keys of Egypt*.
27 Steve Clark, “Introduction,” 2. In stating that travel writing is an “exemplary record of cross-cultural encounters,” Clark is referring to what he calls travel writing’s “impurity of form.” Because travel writing seemingly depends on an empirical interpretation of dependent events it is problematic fitting into the literary canon. But it also is too rhetorical for such discourses as anthropology, sociology, geography and history, and it is this flexibility of form that intrigues postcolonial scholars to look more critically into travel writing and its relation to power structure of the west and non-west.
28 Ibid., 3.
mercantile prospectus, mercenary campaign, colonial expedition.” Clark, by laying the groundwork for the post-colonial investigation of travel writing’s relation to the discourse of colonialism, seeks to move beyond the simple notion of colonialism based on a set of binary oppositions.

This framework is the one that I will attempt to use to examine Du Camp’s photographs. By placing them in the same context as other representations of Egypt, and in direct conversation with the *Description de l’Égypte*, I will examine his photographs in relation to colonialism. This vision is one that references not only the superiority of the West over the non-West, but also the thornier problem of France’s relationship with Britain and the rest of imperial Europe, and France’s construction of its own cultural history.

Clark acknowledges that his book is heavily concentrated on British travel writing. Citing Said as his justification, he notes: “‘England of course is in an imperial class by itself’” but the main themes apply to travel writing in general. For post-colonialists, the documentation provided by travel writing offers a definition of the “…before, during and after of the imperial voice.” Referencing Edward Said, Clark asserts that no traveler (or ruler) was unaware of those who came before, that “‘Herodotus—historian traveler, inexhaustibly curious chronicler—and Alexander—king, warrior, scientific-conqueror—had been in the Orient before.’” This is not only an established lineage within the European colonial discourse of how it views the Non-West, but there is also a standing tradition regarding how Western colonial countries compete with each other, and define themselves as an imperial nations. The western traveler is someone who is continually detached from the “Other,” and whose consciousness will always remain

---

29 Steve Clark, “Introduction.
30 Ibid., 4.
31 Ibid., 4.
32 Ibid., 6.
within his cultural domain. The textual documentation of Egypt represents it as both a country to dominate, and as a timeless and ancient cultural realm ripe for possession. Visual representations, just as much as written text, encapsulated the domain of cultural imperial conquest.

**VISUAL REPRESENTATION**

Along with textual documentation, visual representation is another form of knowledge and cultural control being produced by the West. The Western audience wanted to know what Egypt looked like, and was not satisfied solely by textual descriptions. With visual representations, Westerners could make more direct comparisons between their particular cultures and Egypt’s. Not only was Egypt being documented in textual forms, but it was also being interpreted via the superior intellectual achievements of Western artists. Imperialist images were depicting a range of Orientalist concerns, from works that were more concerned with depicting the physical ramifications of conquest, to ones that engaged more specifically with the cultural implications of colonialization. Visual representations, like textually-based documents, were supporting France’s own claim to its construction as an imperial power on the world stage.

*In the service of the state*

Works such as Antoine- Jean Gros’ *Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa*, 1804 (Figure 1.1), and Anne Louis Girodet’s *Revolt of Cairo*, 1810 (Figure 1.2) exemplify—well after the French retreat from Egypt—the continued French reference to (and interest in) Napoleon’s Egyptian campaign. These works are prime examples of art that was produced in order to promote the ideology of Napoleon and the French state. *Bonaparte visiting
the Plague Victims of Jaffa, 1804 (Figure 1.1) on the one hand, reflects primarily on Napoleon’s physical—and military—presence in the conquest, while the Revolt of Cairo, 1810 (Figure 1.2) introduces elements of cultural conquest by the French, but both serve to promote the imperial enterprises under Napoleonic France. Where MacKenzie’s wording of “energetic, vibrant Romanticism” appeals to an aesthetic of emotional function, my category of “art in the service of the state” calls attention to the imperialist overtones of the various representations of Egypt. “In the service of the state” encompasses more precisely the culturally superior mindset of the French, and focuses more on the utilitarian function of imperially-centered works.

Although I am slightly revising MacKenzie’s category, his language echoes in my discussions of key images. An Aesthetic of Romanticism does run through the images, especially Girodet’s Revolt of Cairo (Figure 1.2). As Kathleen Stewart Howe has observed regarding the Romantic interest in Egypt, these artists

…sought heightened emotional states elicited by wild feelings of terror, savored in languorous states of passion, or found in reveries of lost glory, the inexorable passage of time, and doomed love. The Egypt of Romantic imagination was a place where melancholic ruins of ancient past brooded over scenes of barbaric Mameluke splendor…. 33

Because the “Other” occupies a space in these images, the West has the freedom to depict the Orient and its people as it sees fit. Yet lest Howe’s language distract us, I would place an immediate emphasis on the imperial character of the works. While both Gros’ Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims (Figure 1.1) and Girodet’s Revolt of Cairo (Figure 1.2) exemplify art that is in the service of the state, Gros’ work is more concerned with presenting a piece of Napoleonic propaganda regarding the military campaign, whereas Girodet’s work, while depicting a battle, has more culturally imperialistic undertones. Alternatively, a work such as

33 Kathleen Stewart Howe, Excursions Along the Nile: The Photographic Discovery of Ancient Egypt (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1993), 19.
Léon Cogniet’s *The Egyptian Expedition under the Orders of Bonaparte*, 1834 (Figure 1.3) essentially perpetuates an image of Napoleon and France’s cultural superiority by emphasizing the scientific expedition as coming out of the military campaign.34

Gros’ *Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims* (Figure 1.1) was required to uphold an imperial image of Napoleon. Even though the work depicts an event outside of Egypt, it recalls Napoleon’s military expedition and France’s interest in the Orient. As Darcy Grigsby explains, *Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims* (Figure 1.1), it was a commission handed down by Napoleon “and overseen by the arts administrator Vivant Denon35, [consequently] Gros’s picture [is] an epic machine assigned the task of retrospectively representing the Egyptian campaign to the French public.”36 The painting depicts Napoleon visiting the French Army who, between the campaigns in Egypt and Syria in 1798 and 1799, had become sick with the bubonic plague.37 Despite Napoleon’s failed military campaign in Egypt, the power of the French presence in the Middle East is still strongly conveyed in this painting, with Gros’ construction of the Islamic architecture of the mosque that served as a makeshift hospital. The French flag valiantly standing in the back center of the painting immediately establishes the French military presence. As such, the painting, because it directly references Napoleon’s military mission to the non-West, can continually be a reminder of the cultural colonialism enacted upon Egypt.

As Grigsby points out, it can seem peculiar at first that an image depicting the French plague victims gives homage to the imperial nation. However, Grigsby draws our attention to the detail of Napoleon reaching out his hand to touch the bare chest of one of the plague victims

---

35 Denon had been a major figure in the scientific expedition of 1798.
37 Ibid., 71.
(Figure 1.4). Grigsby explains that this act of touching what was erroneously thought to be a contagious disease exemplifies the European emphasis on rationality, and that rather than depicting courage it is the wisdom of Napoleon that is captured by Gros; it is the “triumphant demonstration of rational knowledge in face of superstition…” Grigsby further stresses that Napoleon’s sense of reason is not just depicted in touching the non-contagious victim, but also in facing horrible pain and suffering. Gros heroicizes Napoleon as a man who employs his European reason, something seen as not existing in the Orient, to confront the awful scene of death and despair.

In emphasizing the rationality of the French, Gros’ painting deals more with larger themes of Orientalist thought, rather than with the violent history of French invasions in the Middle East. Thomas Crow offers more explanatory insight into this distinction—and the painting’s mission to valorize Napoleon—by addressing the other event that represented Napoleon’s campaign in the Middle East. Crow underscores the intent of the painting to act in the service of the state by drawing attention to the massacre of Turkish troops that coincided with the spread of the plague. As Crow explains, the gruesome death of the Turkish troops was an obvious stain on Napoleon’s’ military campaign, and to counteract that image “Gros substituted [murder] for healing, using the painting to transform the most damaging element of Bonaparte’s reputation from a liability into an asset.” For Crow, the emphasis on Napoleon’s rational response to the plague was less about stressing the reasoned Enlightenment of the French, than it was about shifting the focus away from Napoleon’s faults to his virtues. This was imperative to

---

38 Grigsby, Extremities., 73.
39 Ibid., 73. For further contextual information on this painting, and three others discussed see Grigsby, Extremities.
41 Thomas Crow, Emulation., 244.
do because during campaigns for colonial conquests, a successful and virtuous Napoleon reflected a successful and virtuous France.

David O’Brien, like Grigsby, points to Napoleon’s campaign as containing “the further promise of capturing the French imagination with a scientific and civilizing mission to the East.”42 The civilizing of the “Other” is symbolized by the rational actions taken by Napoleon in interacting with the plague victims. Although Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims (Figure 1.1) touches upon the notion of cultural conquest by presenting Napoleon’s civility and rationality over the “Other,” its content is more focused on presenting military associations rather than ones of cultural colonization. Even as O’Brien stresses the enlightened action of Napoleon, he also acknowledges the more essential message of the work that it is a “blatantly propagandistic [image] of contemporary events….43 Even though Gros’ work clearly acts in the service of the state, it does so with an emphasis on the physical conquest of the Orient and cultural conquest remains a secondary element at most.

On the other hand, even though it depicts a battle scene, Girodet’s, Revolt of Cairo (Figure 1.2), draws on the complexities of the relationship between the French and the Mamelukes. Grigsby’s reading of the Revolt of Cairo, 1810 (Figure 1.2) focuses on the male body; her interpretation is laced with sexual emphasis. Grigsby argues that the painting is “…above all, a studio piece, an extravagant compilation of laborious and loving studio props and men…the painting is absurd, and also inflated, bombastic [and] extreme.”44 This description partially rests in part on the fact that Vivant Denon seemingly gave Girodet free artistic license to construct his image. The painting was commissioned by the government and Denon himself

43 Ibid., 117.
44 Grigsby, Extremities, 155.
remarked that the revolt defied logical representation, and left it in the hands of Girodet with little conceptual guidance.\textsuperscript{45} This lack of direct governmental oversight, however, does not diminish the painting’s service to the state. Although Grigsby focuses primarily on sexuality and the politics of sodomy, those elements are not of concern here; instead, I will focus on the assimilation of Mamelukes into French culture.\textsuperscript{46}

Grigsby’s analysis of the Mamelukes in the picture is of particular relevance.\textsuperscript{47} The Egyptian Mamelukes were admired and feared as fierce opponents. The difference Grigsby offers between their military tactics mirrors the Orientalist dichotomy of the West vs. the Non-west: “…Mamelukes were fiercely independent warriors who hurled themselves without hesitation against their enemies, the French corps were rational, organized, and disciplined…”\textsuperscript{48} Once again, the West is portrayed as rational while the eastern “Other” is presented as wild and untamed. The Mamelukes captivated the imaginations of Napoleon and the French public: as Grigsby states, “For Napoleonic France, they were mesmerizingly beautiful oriental warriors.”\textsuperscript{49} Grigsby offers a fascinating look at Napoleon’s and France’s obsession with Mamelukes; as she continues: “Mamelukes in their very strangeness provided Frenchmen with a model to emulate...[they] had, after all, succeeded in doing what the French inspired to...[they] were foreign soldiers who had dominated Egypt for centuries.”\textsuperscript{50} Crow has contributed a similar interpretation of Girodet’s work. To underscore the aggressive nature of the Mamelukes in

\textsuperscript{45} Grigsby, \textit{Extremities}, 131.
\textsuperscript{46} Grigsby’s interpretation of the painting is very thorough. To read about her specific focus on sexuality (and Girodet’s sexuality) see the rest of the chapter, particularly starting at pg. 124. Grigsby also emphasizes Girodet’s affinity for Gros’ work.
\textsuperscript{47} The Mamelukes were seen as the real “enemy” of the French invasion. Napoleon declared that he was trying to set the Egyptians free from the rule of the Mamelukes. Grigsby also explains the definition of Mameluke as meaning slave and describes the complex social construction of the Mameluke, ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{50} Grigsby, \textit{Extremities}, 112.
Revolt of Cairo, 1810 (Figure 1.2) he compares it to the presentation of the “Other” in Gros’ Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa, 1804 (Figure 1.1).

Crow observes that both pictures—through presenting the dichotomy of civility versus barbarism—highlight the priority of displaying “ethnocentric patriotism.” 51 Whereas Gros’ painting presents a relatively powerless and timid “Other,” Girodet’s “characterization of Arab resistance,” 52 according to Crow, “does not reproduce his colleague’s ascription of resignation and passivity to the colonized.” 53 Far from this: Girodet presents Mamelukes as the valiant warriors who were admired so by Napoleon that he integrated them into his own army. In this sense, the Mamelukes occupied a distinct place in the context of French society. 54 Girodet represents the Mamelukes as aggressive, but the French were able to transplant these great warriors into their own military culture. Crow argues that Girodet represents the Mamelukes as already subdued, a presentation that gives credit to France’s superior culture to have the ability to “tame” them. Mamelukes, upon France’s retreat home, were integrated into French culture as tokens or souvenirs of “Otherness.” 55

The Mamelukes represented, to the French, their own cultural supremacy, and presented the French with a winning battle of civility over the Barbarism of non-western peoples. Regarding the integration of Mamelukes into France, Grigsby observes that: “Mamelukes in Paris signaled that the vicious and powerful enemy had been brought home and transformed into domesticated servant, luxuriant ornament, and obedient guard dog.” 56 Painted years after Napoleon’s (and the Mamelukes’) return to France, Girodet’s painting represents a torch that still

51 Crow, Emulation, 259.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Grigsby, Extremities, 112. Napoleon integrated Mamelukes into his army starting in October of 1799.
56 Ibid., 116.
burned brightly in representations of France’s colonial encounter with Egypt. As Grigsby argues, “Mamelukes thus served as an ongoing reminder of empire despite the fact that the Egyptian campaign had been disastrous.”\(^{57}\) Seen from this angle, Girodet may be seen as reflecting the reality that Mamelukes had become an ingrained part of France’s social and imperial self-image.

The inclusion of Mamelukes into French colonial culture was a relationship that Napoleon cultivated in his invasion. Grigsby discusses the impact that the new “Others” had on domestic French life, “Within the circles of women’s high fashion, turbans and vaguely oriental flowing over-gowns and expansive sleeves became all the rage. Paris couture thereby feminized the dress of a virile warrior caste….\(^{58}\) (Figure 1.5). The French took Oriental dress and appropriated it to support a changing of French cultural identity. What Grigsby doesn’t emphasize enough is the fact that the incorporation of Mamelukes into French culture was based entirely on the authority of the French to control the level and degree of influence the Mameluke presence would have. Napoleon and the French had the power to integrate them according to French standards. Although Girodet created his own construction of the revolt, he nevertheless depicted what was a contemporary—and developing—relationship between the French and the Mamelukes in the France of 1810.

Girodet’s work is an extremely stylized and dramatic re-visions of the revolt. As Grigsby points out, “What Girodet gets entirely wrong, or…does not care to reproduce is the actual cast of persons who in fact rebelled in Cairo…Mamelukes were not among the rebels…the urban lower classes of Cairo rose up to overthrow the Frenchmen who had recently replaced the Mamelukes.”\(^{59}\) Placing the Mamelukes within the scene of the revolt gave France a greater sense of victory than was actually achieved by the end of the campaign. Mamelukes were seen as the

\(^{57}\) Grigsby, *Extremities.*, 118.  
\(^{58}\) Ibid.  
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 133-34.
spoils of the colonial campaign, and who better to place within a colonial drama than the eventual souvenirs themselves? Girodet’s painting does not reference Napoleon directly—he isn’t even pictured—but the cultural implications for the French state and his impact on it run deep. The work speaks to the larger cultural interaction between French colonizers and the colonized “Other,” for the Mamelukes are a very recognizable “Other” within French society. Napoleon’s absence does not keep the work from acting as a promotion of the French state. Mamelukes became an integral part of “imperial iconography”\textsuperscript{60} in French constructions of its own rational and colonial power. Both Girodet’s and Gros’ works focus exclusively on Napoleonic military imagery to convey France’s colonialist goals, but perhaps the lasting effects of the imperial campaign are the scientific and cultural ones produced by the scientific expedition.

What is important to take away from Girodet and Gros’ works is the fact that underneath those representations of physical conquest there runs an ideology of cultural hegemony. It is an ideology that, in the end, created an enduring colonial identity for the French nation. Even though Grigsby, O’Brien and Crow recognize both Girodet’s and Gros’ display of the triumph of a French culture, they fail to underscore the direct intent—through the representation of Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt—to colonize Egypt beyond the physical plane. Grigsby and Crow begin to examine the cultural implications in their respective discussions of the Mamelukes, but neither place enough emphasis on France’s mission to establish and maintain cultural control of Egypt in the years after the Egyptian “adventure.” Girodet’s Revolt of Cairo (Figure 1.2) and Gros’ Bonaparte visiting the Plague Victims (Figure 1.1) are more than mere representations of Napoleonic glory. Beyond the representation of Napoleon, the works are embedded in what was destined to become a lasting tradition of French imperialism and

\textsuperscript{60} Grigsby, Extremities, 155.
ideology. It is a tradition that centers not only on a notion of physical dominance, but more importantly on an understanding that France’s culture—its knowledge—surpasses that of its subject peoples.

Cogniet’s *Egyptian Expedition under the Orders of Bonaparte*, 1830 (Figure 1.3) deals with the scientific aspect of Napoleon’s invasion. Cogniet’s work depicts the excavation, documentation and cataloguing of Egypt by the French during the military campaign. Cogniet does not depict a violent encounter, but a much quieter tableau of cultural control and possession. Todd Porterfield’s reading of this work emphasizes its reference to the interest in Egypt that spread across French political regimes, “The July Monarchy addition to the museum [the Musée du Louvre] revealed what had been implicit in the Restoration’s sponsorship of Egyptology: France’s cultural and scientific success came on the wings of military power.”\(^6\)

Despite the military loss, France’s imperial mission did not come to be seen as a complete failure, thanks to the triumphs of the scientific expedition that were inextricably linked to the campaign. Because the cultural conquest and assimilation of Egypt—via the scientific expedition—was a success for France, the military quest for control remains a valid point for displaying colonial power. Cogniet’s painting provides some fundamental evidence for our understanding of the expedition’s effects on domestic French culture.

Rather than juxtaposing the brute military force of the French with the resistance of unruly and untamed “Others,” Cogniet highlights the scholarly knowledge-gathering activities of the French scientific mission. Despite the presence of French military uniforms, they are not the focal point. The scene alludes to Napoleon’s military campaign, but the main emphasis lies elsewhere. Cogniet depicts a moment of uncovering, as evidenced in the raising of the mummy. This single moment defines the cultural motives of the French in Egypt. They are staking a

\(^{6}\) Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire*, 111.
claim to an ancient past that can, when presented back home to the French public, provide a sense of ownership over ancient Egypt. In Cogniet’s work, there begins to be a shift away from the references to military and Napoleonic imagery that dominated the work of Girodet and Gros. Cogniet’s work presents Egypt as a kind of a relic to possess and decipher, giving the French a comfortable an undue sense of ownership over not only ancient Egypt, but its contemporary nation as well. Over twenty years, and two governments later, Cogniet’s work, while it downplays the military expedition of Napoleon, validates the effort for its scientific achievements in Egypt. Where twenty years earlier Girodet and Gros were directly addressing the military might of France, Cogniet is directly speaking to France’s cultural strength. The ability to continue to establish cultural authority over Egypt perpetuated France’s identification as an imperial power.

Porterfield highlights Cogniet’s emphasis on the intellectual Frenchmen sorting through Egypt’s ancient past. Such an accumulation of knowledge speaks not only to France’s cultural superiority, but also to its military superiority. As Porterfield puts it, “Proof of the success of the mission and of France’s possession of ancient Egypt is demonstrated in the depictions of objects like the Dynasty XXII sarcophagus being hoisted to the platform…” Cogniet’s work serves the interest of the French state by promoting the cultural implications of Napoleon’s military campaign. The work also emphasizes Egypt’s role in constructing France’s cultural identification as an imperial power. Porterfield discusses how Napoleon Bonaparte’s presence in Cogniet’s work is subtly references Louis-Philippe’s own contemporary identification with a Napoleonic revival. He goes on to argue that this identification was not unique to the July Monarchy; “The Restoration’s sponsorship of Egyptological projects reveals that when it came

---

63 Ibid., 114.
to building France’s imperial culture, these regimes could carry on the work of their predecessors.” Cogniet’s painting, by focusing on the knowledge-gathering aspect of Napoleon’s expedition, still implies a reference to Napoleon and the military campaign. Cogniet’s work reflects a standard artistic goal of promoting the French state by referencing a colonial military maneuver that ultimately gave the French a strong claim to cultural authority over the Non-west. Even though Cogniet’s composition contains explicit references to the military campaign, its emphasis, unlike Girodet or Gros’ works, is more concerned with establishing a cultural connection to ancient Egypt, and creating intellectual and cultural confidence at home. Although stylistically not as grand or dramatic as works that emphasize Napoleon and military battles, there are other works that have a more direct focus on the scientific quest of the French in Egypt.

**Science and the Picturesque**

By re-phrasing Mackenzie’s category of “the tradition of topographical and archeological ‘realism’” to “Science and the Picturesque,” I am attempting to place a stronger emphasis on France’s claim of cultural superiority via their higher knowledge of science and reasoning. “Science and the Picturesque,” offers a more direct categorization of France’s mission in Egypt. I will juxtapose the scientific quest of French artists such as Vivant Denon, with that of the more picturesque depictions of Great Britain’s David Roberts. Denon and Roberts are conveying two different things: while Denon promotes French nationalism and imperialism, Roberts does not really provide the same sort of argument.

---

64 Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire*, 114.
As we have already seen, Vivant Denon was one of the main artists involved in providing images for Napoleon’s *Description* (and Napoleon would later name him the first director of the Louvre). Denon’s *Measuring the Great Sphinx at Giza*, 1798 (Figure 1.6), from his own book, the *Voyage*, 1802, epitomizes the scientific character of his artistic venture. This image does not present some kind of fantasy, nor does it directly reference the glory of Napoleon and his military campaign. The image represents Egypt as a place that the French can dominate scientifically—and therefore intellectually and culturally—by carefully taking measurements of its most famous antiquities. The measurements being taken by these scientists are gathered to serve a system of knowledge that will be utilized in France, and not in Egypt. Dutertre’s *French scholars measuring the fist of a statue of Ramesses II at Memphis*, 1798 (Figure 1.7), from the *Description*\textsuperscript{66}, presents a similar image.

The scientific emphasis portrayed by these images presents a view of Egypt as something that was being “uncovered” for the first time and was in serious need of cataloguing and “figuring-out.” From the French point of view, the antiquities of Egypt had been left unattended by the modern Egyptians. Egypt’s ancient past was as a mystery to be deciphered by the scholarship and superior knowledge of the European intelligentsia. In this way, the legacy of Egypt’s ancient glory is appropriated for the use of contemporary France, while contemporary Egypt is a much less impressive civilization is to be absorbed into a European context. Colonialization based on knowledge-gathering, creating a discourse of cultural colonization, is evidenced by these images. Denon and Dutertre’s representations of Egypt do not present staggering vista views of monumental architecture. Their works present an Egypt that is being reduced to a system of measurements, to a collection of objects and specimens, which enabled

\textsuperscript{66} The fist sculpture in this drawing is now in the British Museum. Peter Clayton, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt: Artists and Travellers in the 19th Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 82.
the French to classify Egypt according to French forms of knowledge. These representations of Egypt presume an ownership of Egypt’s ancient past based on France’s ability to scientifically document the monuments. Works produced by British artist David Roberts, however, do not focus on scientific documentation or represent a distinctly British presence and interest in Egypt.

Roberts’ pictorial charge of placing architecture in relation to the Egyptian landscape provided imagery for the West that solidified their expectations of the ancient land. Pitting magnificent views of monumental structures against a landscape unfamiliar to the West defined Egypt as a place of awe-inspiring “Otherness.” In Roberts’ images, Egypt was constructed as a place to be endlessly explored and re-explored. Roberts’ *General View of the Island of Philae, Nubia, Nov 14th 1838* (from *Egypt and Nubia*, 1846-50) (Figure 1.8) is a sweeping panorama, one that suggests a culture that is in complete opposition to anything familiar to the modern European. It depicts not only an unknown landscape, but the people in the image also suggest an introduction to the unknown “Other.”

Roberts’ *The Hypaethral Temple at Philae called the Bed of Pharaoh* (from *Egypt and Nubia*, 1846-50) (Figure 1.9) presents a similar scene. A grand picturesque view of Egypt confronts the viewer. The focus is not on specifically capturing the people, nor on specifically documenting the architecture. Roberts aims to place the monuments in conversation with their surroundings, a tactic which provides the Westerner with a view of the Non-west that is open to imperial exploration and possession. Unlike the images by Denon and Dutertre, Roberts’ finished products were not the sketches he made on-site during his travels. Working from Roberts’ drawings, Louis Haghe turned them into lithographs. While artistically engaging, and

---

imbued with a certain topographical realism—to use MacKenzie’s language—Roberts’ images do not reflect, as Denon and Dutertre’s works do, an explicitly scientific approach to Egypt. Denon and Dutertre’s approach to Egypt can be seen as more blatantly involved with a French discourse of cultural control. Roberts’ works speak to a broader and generalized the Western interest in the Non-west. His works are more romantic in their appeal to the Western sensibility of what Egypt (and the Near East) was supposed to be. The emphasis on science presented by Denon and Dutertre, however, in contrast, suggests a larger, more nationalistic, interest by showcasing the activities of an intellectually advanced France. This emphasis on discussing science—and its documentation of fact—in relation to the construction of France as an advanced society also plays a part in the photographic, as we shall now see.68

Photography

Unlike painting, which can create wholly fictional worlds, photography for the most part is representational and confined to the visible world. How can an artist photograph what is there in 1850 and at the same time suggest a timeless Egypt? Maxime Du Camp’s photographs neatly illustrate this paradox. As with the images we have just considered, Du Camp’s photographs are attached both to France and Egypt’s past. Du Camp is photographing the monuments as they stand in 1850, but the Western perception of Egypt has not changed very much since the days of Napoleon’s scientific expedition. Viewing Egypt as a place to engage in scientific study and record data does not necessarily define Egypt as a modern place. Keeping Egypt within the confines originally drawn in Napoleon’s time perpetuates France’s distinctly “scientific” history of imperialism. To present Egypt as anything but timeless would suggest its relevance to modern society, and ultimately its existence as something more than a colonial

68 Photography, in the context of MacKenzie’s phases, would be the next appropriate step for him to discuss in the West’s Oriental representations of the Orient.
possession of the French. Du Camp’s photographs are not meant to bring Egypt into the Western community; they are meant to convey to France its continued ability to establish cultural superiority over Egypt. To continue to promote France’s control, Du Camp captures the ancient monuments as they stand, but evokes a by then well-established history of privileging Egypt as a site for the gathering of information.

Photographs are embodiments of the technology invented and utilized by the Westerner for the purpose of promoting the West’s own sense of cultural advancement. The emergence of photography in the nineteenth century presented the opportunity to capture an object exactly how it existed in the world. For Du Camp, echoing Napoleon’s efforts in the Description, there was now a new, more precise, method for gaining information on Egypt and its monuments.

Derek Gregory in his article, “Emperors of the Gaze,” discusses early photographic practices in Egypt.69 Of the photographers in Egypt he states, “Their work was part of the production of a space of constructed visibility in which ‘ancient’ Egypt was seen by European and American observers as a monumental space, empty, abstracted and largely outside the space of both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ Egypt.”70 Early photographers in Egypt viewed the place in as much the same way that the early scholars from Napoleon’s expedition had—as a land of marvels ready for the taking. For Europeans, Egypt’s landscape existed for the purposes of their own exploration and interpretation. Photography made the European documentation of Egypt seem exact and precise. New audiences could easily be persuaded that the photograph was as good as the actual monument in representing Egypt’s past. According to Gregory, “Photography was inscribed within an ideology of realism that reinforced a distinctive regime of truth [and as]

70 Ibid., 196.
Abigail Solomon-Godeau reminds us, ‘photography was understood to be the agent par excellence for listing, knowing, and possessing, as it were, the things of the world.’”\textsuperscript{71} More than paintings or drawings, photography, with its implications of exact replication, offered the West a series of undeniable and unarguable representations of Egypt.

Paintings and drawings, regardless of how based in historical evidence or on on-site sketching, would always reflect an essence of Western fantasy of the imagined Egypt. Photography, on the other hand, could ostensibly produce an unaltered view of Egypt. The expectation that photography was part science, part art, grew from a view of the new medium as an objective truth-teller. Armed with this new European technology, photographers captured the Egyptian landscape with the same colonialist gusto as they had using previous media. As Gregory asserts, “These photographers effectively reinscribed the imperial gaze of the Description de l’Égypte by according a central place to Egypt as a landscape of enduring tombs and temples….”\textsuperscript{72} Photography, representing a modernization of European technology, added yet another dimension to France’s imperialist aim to culturally colonize Egypt. For photography is an ideological construction all the more powerful for its masquerade as a neutral document.

French representations of Egypt reflect a persistent desire for cultural gains at home. Depictions of past moments of colonial glory allow for the perpetuation of an imperial past. Orientalist methods for depicting the “Other” are, of course, based on notions of supremacy. However, the representations that have been discussed here reveal that there are multiple colonial intentions being conveyed within Orientalist art works. The main ideological message may not always concern the physical conquest of the “Other;” there are also conquests—such as that of the French in Egypt—that privilege a cultural dominance over a control of the physical body.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 206.


Figure 1.6 Vivant Denon, *Measuring the Great Sphinx at Giza*, 1798, from his *Voyage*, 1802. Peter Clayton, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt, Artists and Travellers in the 19th Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 68.
Figure 1.7 Duterte, *French scholars measuring the fist of a statue of Ramesses II at Memphis, 1798*, from the *Description de l’Égypte*. British Museum. Peter Clayton, *The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt, Artists and Travellers in the 19th Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 82-83.

Chapter 2
Science as Ideology of Imperialism:
Egyptian Voyages Compared

In the fall of 1849, Maxime Du Camp left France with his friend Gustave Flaubert on an eighteen-month expedition to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece and Italy. Du Camp’s travels in Egypt are of primary interest for students of visual culture because that is where he took most of his photographs.\(^3\) Often considered the first photographic travel book, Du Camp’s *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852)\(^4\) was published soon after returning to France, and was primarily a showcase for Du Camp’s photographs, as it did not contain any of his written travel notes.\(^5\) The accompanying text, the *texte explicatif*, consists of a series of quotes from Du Camp’s predecessors in Egypt, including Champollion the Younger and Richard Lepsius.\(^6\) By providing “historical context for the monuments as well as detailed descriptions of them—front, back, sides, interior, exterior—[and] lists of measurements and maps of the major sites, indicating the positions of the monuments,”\(^7\) the introduction resonates with Du Camp’s mission of scientific documentation. *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*—and the photographs it contains—reflects a “nineteenth-century empiricist belief”\(^8\) in science, direct observation, and recording of nature.

---

\(^3\) Julia Ballerini, “Rewriting the Nubian Figure in the Photograph: Maxime Du Camp’s ‘cultural hypochondria,’” 30. Of the eighteen months spent traveling Du Camp and Flaubert spent a total of eight months in Egypt—six of them traveling the Nile.


\(^5\) Du Camp did publish two written works related to his travels: *Le Livre posthume: mémoires d’un suicidé* (first published in 1852 and again in 1853); and *Le Nil: Égypte et Nubie* (first published 1853 and again in 1854).

\(^6\) The introductory text’s paragraphs are linked together by briefs sentences written by Du Camp, all avoiding using “I.” See Julia Ballerini, “Rewriting the Nubian Figure,” 37.

\(^7\) Julia Ballerini, “The invisibility of Hadji-Ishmael: Maxine Du Camp’s 1850 photographs of Egypt,” 149.

\(^8\) Ibid.
From 1844 to 1845 Du Camp travelled to Turkey, Greece, and Asia Minor. Although this trip produced a volume of travel writing, *Souvenirs and Landscapes of the Orient* (1848), his trip in 1849 to Egypt was the only time he used photography to document his voyages.\textsuperscript{79} *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* was published as two-volume set containing 125 salt paper albumen prints, spanning from November 1849 to September 1850, a period when he took over 200 photographs in total.\textsuperscript{80} After failed attempts by Du Camp to combat the fading that resulted from his own printing method, he turned the printing of his photographs over to Blanquart-Evrard, whose new albumen process effectively fought the problem of fading.\textsuperscript{81} Because Du Camp was interested in archaeology, literature, and historical facts, he wanted his trip to be effective in its goal of exploring and documenting ancient Egypt.

With the hope of gaining legitimacy to his voyage, Du Camp went to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres to seek guidance about where he should go and what monuments he should target. After receiving a report from the Académie, Du Camp went to the Ministry of Public Instruction to receive “official mission” status from the French government. Du Camp’s “official mission” standing contributed to his declaration that he was seeking to document

\textsuperscript{79} Julia Ballerini, “Rewriting the Nubian Figure,” 31. The title in full is, *Souvenirs et paysages d'Orient: Smyrne, Ephese, Magnesil, Constantinople, Scio*.

\textsuperscript{80} There are 67 prints in the first volume and 58 in the second, the book was published by Gide and Baudry.

\textsuperscript{81} See, Paul E. Chevedden, *The Photographic Heritage of the Middle East: An Exhibition of Early Photographs of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, & Iran, 1849-1893* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1981), 9. When Du Camp returned from his trip he began to make prints from his paper negatives but he could not control the fading. His publishers, probably around the middle of 1851, directed him to Louis Désiré Blanquart-Evrard who had developed the albumen printing process to combat fading. With Du Camp’s prints he also added gold salts to produce a toned effect. Before the book was officially published in 1852 (from which we get most of the reproduced images) there were three pre-published editions, one of which was Du Camp’s personal copy. These are from 1851 and were probably printed before using the Blanquart-Evrard process, and as a result most are quite faded. One copy in the Department of Special Collections, UCLA is a three-volume edition containing 175 prints, most of which have significantly faded.
scientifically, and methodically, the monuments and intricacies of ancient Egypt.\textsuperscript{82} Regarding the trip’s “officially” stated purpose, a letter from the Ministry of Public Instruction states that the goal was “to explore the antiquities, collect the traditions, transcribe inscriptions and sculptures, and study history in the monuments.”\textsuperscript{83} Du Camp’s efforts, on the surface, were focused on observing and recording with precision and scientific objectivity the landscape of ancient Egypt.

Du Camp’s written account of his travels was not published with his photographs; but appeared separately as *Le Nil: Egypte et Nubie* (first published 1853 and again in 1854). Du Camp seems to have presumed—as Julia Ballerini seems to do so as well—that his photographs would stand in for his scientific notes and narration of Egypt.\textsuperscript{84} Du Camp’s photographs provide a point of intersection linking the scientific tradition with the broader ideology of colonizing the “Other.” To facilitate my examination, because the themes of the travel writer are applicable to those of the travel photographer, I will look at the foundation of travel writing laid out by Mary Louise Pratt in her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* One of Pratt’s principal concerns is to examine European travel writing and its subsequent influence on the representations and formulation of the “Other”. Pratt employs two main concepts to describe the motivations of travel writers: the scientific and the sentimental.\textsuperscript{85} The scientific mode stems

\textsuperscript{82} Elizabeth Anne McCauley, “The Photographic Adventure of Maxine Du Camp,” 24-25. The Académie was particularly interested in documenting hieroglyphics and certain details they requested suggested that they were unaware of the limitations of photography, particularly that of the paper negatives that Du Camp would be using.

\textsuperscript{83} McCauley, “The Photographic Adventure of Maxine Du Camp,” 25.

\textsuperscript{84} Julia Ballerini, “Rewriting the Nubian Figure in the Photograph: Maxime Du Camp’s ‘cultural hypochondria,’” 39. For a more in-depth look at the novel and the role of Ishmael in it see the complete article.

\textsuperscript{85} Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Pratt’s book will be the basis for my understanding of travel writing that will resonate throughout this paper. Rather than arguing for its classification as a genre Pratt explores the intricacies of travel writing itself. She gives a language and detailed framework with which to comprehend the contents of travel writing and the driving force for those who engage with it. Through looking at imperialism, colonialism, and the European attitude toward expansion Pratt gives a healthy lineage to travel writing. Her book is filled with considerable detail and complexly
from the eighteenth-century emphasis on classifying and categorizing nature. In this tradition, nature refers to “all regions and ecosystems which were not dominated by ‘Europeans…’”\textsuperscript{86} It is not concerned with describing a personal reaction; rather the focus is directed to documenting and describing exactly what one sees. This definition of science was apparently in Du Camp’s mind as he journeyed into Egypt to report on its monuments.

The sentimental, as Pratt defines it, is not concerned with the documentation and categorization of objective observations; but engages primarily with the notions of sex and slavery.\textsuperscript{87} In the framework of Western authority, sex and slavery are part and parcel of the broader context of colonial dominance over the “Other.” In relation to the analysis of Du Camp’s photographs and imperial France, I am taking Pratt’s concept of the sentimental to define the subjective claim of cultural authority by the West over the Non-west. The seemingly dueling terms of “scientific” and “sentimental” come together under a broader category of motivation for travel that Pratt defines as “anti-conquest.” For Pratt, these two terms exist within a larger framework of the understanding of European supremacy by travel writers.

By “anti-conquest,” Pratt “refer[s] to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony.”\textsuperscript{88} Travel writers engaging in exploration and adventure are conscious of their European authority, but are not seeking to assert it explicitly since it had already been solidly established by precedent. Pratt uses the term “anti-conquest” in relation to the travel writer

\textsuperscript{86} Pratt, \textit{Imperial Eyes.}, 37.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 84. Sentimental travel writing emerges out of Pratt calls survival literature. These are essentially first-person accounts of travel misfortunes such as: being shipwrecked, abandonments, mutinies on ships, etc. Sentimental offers considerably higher levels of emotional involvement and presents the reader with a more engaging narrative than descriptions presented from documentary observations.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 9.
because of his “utopian, innocent vision of European global authority.” The travel writer—from his Western origin—has been thoroughly indoctrinated in the ways of cultural supremacy over the “Other”. For the travel writer, there is no physical engagement in the act of conquest—they are engaging with what has already been conquered.

Pratt describes the travel writer, the “the main protagonist of the anti-conquest,” as the “seeing-man…he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess.” This is an important way to look at the travel writer, because whether engaging in the objective mode of scientific observation, or the subjective vision of superiority, the Western traveler is still thrusting the eyes of the conqueror upon the conquered and displaying what can be defined as “…bourgeois forms of authority….” Pratt’s definition of the modes of travel writing is of fundamental importance to an understanding of Du Camp’s work, because his images—like past French emphases on science in Egypt—demonstrate that objective scientific interpretations of Egypt are in fact displays of France’s subjective claims to cultural authority. Pratt’s two modes intersect in Du Camp’s photographs, since the “objective” interest in documenting Egypt cannot exist without an innate belief in one’s cultural hegemony. Admittedly, “anti-conquest” may not be the best term. Perhaps a better label for Pratt’s concept would be something like “cultural colonization.” Like the ideas suggested by “anti-conquest,” cultural colonization assumes an inherent Western supremacy. Physical power is no longer necessary to claim possession of the Non-west. The cultural position of the “superior” scientific societies of the West provides its own justification for dominance.

Du Camp’s photographs are just one product of France’s history of acting under the assumption that their cultural superiority affords them the right to dissect, describe, and interpret

---

89 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 39.
90 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 9.
91 Ibid., 4.
Egypt. Du Camp—like the travel writers Pratt discusses—is not attempting to establish physical control of Egypt. His photographs represent France’s continued effort to culturally colonize Egypt, which is itself a form of imperial control. Like Napoleon’s scientific expedition to Egypt, colonization can exist outside physically dominating the “Other.” With regard to Du Camp’s photographs, the subjectivity of French supremacy masquerades as scientific motivation. Emphasizing his photographic mission as one of data collection, Du Camp suggests Egypt is already understood as “belonging” to the West. The cultural conquest of Egypt is not solely measured by the reaction of the Egyptians. Rather, imperial success is measured in France, and on the ability for conquests in Egypt to promote French culture and society.

Du Camp’s images of Egypt unquestionably appeal to the colonial mentality of the French. As we shall see in his photographs, science alone—with its connotations of objectivity—does not dominate the veneer of his work. Du Camp’s scientific photographic expedition ultimately serves more to define France’s identity as an imperial power, than it does to define Egypt. In this sense, Du Camp is referring to something beyond what is initially seen in the image. It is not purely, as Du Camp suggests, about measuring the scale of the buildings and documenting exactly the appearance of the monuments. He is evoking a long history of French colonial involvement in Egypt. Images that mirror the attitude of the West almost inevitably center on issues of the intriguing body of the “Other.” “Otherness,” as a freely gazed upon image on the open market of imperialist culture, is becoming commonplace by the 1850s, and would have well been a part of Du Camp’s visual vocabulary.

“Feelings” of sex and slavery directed to the “Other” (as defined by Pratt)—as part of the definition of the subjective view of Western authority—are present in Du Camp’s photographs. Scattered throughout the photographs is the figure of Hadji Ishmael, a barely-clothed Nubian
sailor from Du Camp’s ship, who we see in *Sanctuary on Top of Temple at Dendera* (1850) (Figure 2.1). Positioning Ishmael in this close-up, frontal nature preserves the vision of the “Other” as one who is constantly native, and inseparably part of the ancient landscape. With his use of Ishmael as a location marker to represent scale, Du Camp introduces some elements of perspective. This utilization of Ishmael as a kind of human unit of measurement is evident in *Kom Ombo, Temple of Ombos* (1850) (Figure 2.2) and *Thebes, view of the Temple of Khons at Karnak* (1850) (Figure 2.3). Regarding Ishmael’s presence, Du Camp reports, “I sent him climbing up onto the ruins which I wanted to photograph and in this way I was always able to include a uniform scale of proportions.” But Du Camp’s employment of Ishmael as a scientific tool to provide accurate impressions of scale also problematizes the objectivity of Du Camp’s mission. Indeed, the presence of Ishmael in the photographs is where the claim to impartiality in Du Camp’s project begins to intersect with his bias as a superior Westerner.

By continuing the trend of cultural colonization, Du Camp engaged in previously established notions of Eurocentrism. The use of Ishmael as a tool for objectivity is compromised by his Western mentality regarding the body of the “Other.” Nudity of the “Other,” with its implied exoticism, provokes the subjectivity of dominance. The exposed, and easily possessed, body of the “Other” is supposed to elicit an emotional response of power and authority. As he was consistently photographed in a loin cloth and white wrap on his head, Ishmael’s near nudity is always on display, as we see in *Sanctuary on Top of Temple at Dendera* (1850) (Figure 2.1) and in *Grand Temple D’Isis A Philae* (1850) (Figure 2.4). Although Ishmael is mentioned explicitly and by name in one of Du Camp’s written works from his travels, there is no mention of him in the captions of the photographs. And since Du Camp personally wrote the captions for

---

93 *Le Nil: Egypte et Nubie* Du Camp, in a brief mention of Ishmael, calls him “‘a very handsome Nubian.’” Ballerini, “Rewriting the Nubian Figure in the Photograph: Maxime Du Camp’s ‘cultural hypochondria,’” 43.
the photographic book, it seems to be quite intentional that Ishmael has not been named. His presence, while providing the intended sense of scale, simultaneously disrupts Du Camp’s quest for archeological and documentary exactitude, because the body, so put on display, captures the sentiment of the Frenchman contemplating what has already been dominated. The invisible “Other,” who exists solely as something to be controlled and beheld by the European viewer, is represented by the recurring presence of Ishmael’s body.

Furthermore, as Ballerini notices, “What is striking about Ishmael’s presence…with rare exception, he is alone and deliberately ‘framed’ by Du Camp, repeatedly a picture within a picture, his presence re-constructed according to different scenarios.” Ishmael’s body, as the singular human presence, creates an inter-connected relationship between him and the architecture, as opposed to including him in an interaction with a group of people. Taking Ballerini’s observation about Ishmael’s function as a “picture within a picture” a step further, he is also presented as a structure within a structure. Du Camp is not situating Ishmael as an observer of the monuments; he is not placed on the same plane as Du Camp as beholder of the gaze. Ishmael, rather than being placed externally within the monuments, is being placed within them—an object to be viewed. By being repeatedly placed within the monuments, he is presented as an extension of the ancient Egyptian structure, which suggests timelessness and the continual existence of the primitive “Other.” As Ballerini describes, part of the Western appeal in a body and presentation like Ishmael’s is that his body is emblematic of the opposite personality of the sophisticated, controlled, modernizing European.

---

94 Paul E. Chevedden, *The Photographic Heritage of the Middle East: An Exhibition of Early Photographs of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece, & Iran, 1849-1893*, 9. The captions are all hand written by Du Camp and the title page from volume 1 states: “Au grand artist Bida,” and it is signed, “l’humble Photographe, Maxime Du Camp.” As Chevedden explains, curator of photography at the Bibliothèque Nationale identified the person to whom Du Camp presents this book to as Alexandre Biba a pupil of Eugène Delacroix and an Orientalist painter.

95 Ibid.
Although Ishmael’s presence is central to Du Camp’s visual language—and provides a valid “entry point” for an analysis of his photographs—focusing too singly on this figure limits our ability to recognize Du Camp’s work as part of the larger repertoire of French images of imperialism. When we consider the entirety of the published photographs, Ishmael is not so frequent a focus as one could be led to believe. Indeed, Ishmael’s body is sometimes so small in relation to Du Camp’s compositions that he can easily be missed by a more casual viewer. Moreover, Ishmael is not the only body Du Camp used to establish a sense of scale. In Hémi-Spéos De Séboua (1850) (Figure 2.5) and Temple D’Amada (1850) (Figure 2.6), Du Camp has employed another, fully-clothed man, who continues to suggest “Otherness” by virtue of his non-western dress, but is not sexualized and exoticized in the same way as Ishmael. Because Du Camp did not label the figures in his photographs, it cannot be determined exactly who this figure is, however it could be Sassetti, Du Camp’s Italian manservant. Even though Sassetti is used for the same purpose as Ishmael, it is Ishmael that is presented as exotic and semi-nude. But whoever the figure may be, Du Camp’s works should be considered beyond his sporadic use of Ishmael. Expanding the colonialist intentions of Du Camp’s work beyond the sentiments of sex and slavery helps to situate his photographs more accurately into the longer and more complex lineage of French colonial imagery.

By aiming to scientifically capture images of the monuments of Egypt, Du Camp continued and enhanced the established French tradition of representing Egypt as a way to enhance the appearance of colonial power abroad. Du Camp’s emphasis on science is representative of a much larger ideological issue at hand in imperial France. Indeed, here as in other cases, science as an impartial and objective accumulation of data provides little more than a façade for France’s larger colonial project in Egypt. Underneath the pretense of science is the

96 Julia Ballerini, “‘La Maison démolie’: Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850,” 122.
ideological construction of cultural supremacy. My comparison of Du Camp’s work with Francis Frith’s photographs of Egypt will establish parallel but separate intentions, and will highlight France’s use of Egypt as imperial cultural territory.

Du Camp was not alone in acting on embedded notions of Orientalism. In the late 1850’s, photographer and writer Francis Frith traveled a similar route as Du Camp. The differences between Du Camp and Frith’s work may seem minor, as suggested by a comparison of Du Camp’s Kom Ombo, Temple of Ombos (1850) (Figure 2.2) and Frith’s, Temple at Koum Ombos, 1858 (Figure 2.7), but it is important to understand how their photographs diverge once we get past the simplicity implied by the monument-to-monument checklist. From the 1850s to the 1860s, Frith traveled several times to Egypt, Syria and Palestine, where he devoted himself to photographing and writing. In 1858-59, he published his most well-known work, Egypt and Palestine Photographed and Described, in two volumes.97 A crucial difference between Du Camp and Frith emerges in their contrasting approaches to publication. Du Camp’s photographic book was published without elaborate descriptions. Frith’s book, however, included his own reflections and commentary that included historical references. Each of Frith’s photographs is accompanied by a descriptive page in which he discusses how he shot the scene, how many times modified his position, and how he placed his staff in the shots.

Frith’s book was concerned with the presentation of his travels and description of his physical journey: “central to his thinking then was the figure of the gentleman-traveler, and the notion of the gentleman’s grand tour.”98 As seen in Frith’s The Pyramid of El-Geezah from the


Southwest, 1858 (Figure 2.8), he included members of his staff in the composition, but more importantly he also included his mode of transportation—a mule. As Carol Armstrong suggests, this inclusion seeks to emphasize his movement throughout Egypt and his actions as a traveler. 99 Du Camp’s photographs do not provide a comparable sense of movement and mobility. There is a timelessness and sense of detachment in Du Camp’s view of the pyramid in Pyramide de Chéops, 1850 (Figure 2.9), compared to Frith’s image of pyramids. Aside from his occasional use of figures for scale, there is no sign in Du Camp’s photographs of his physical journey through Egypt. For Du Camp, the emphasis is not on his personal experience of travel. But many of Frith’s photographs, such as in The Ramesseum of El-Kurneh, Thebes (first view), c. 1857 (Figure 2.10), the photographer takes pains to reveal details of his travel experience. Doing this communicates to the viewer a feeling that they too can experience these historical sites, almost as if they had been there themselves. In this sense, Frith’s images could never be mistaken for Du Camp’s. The presence of the guides, the camels, the woman on the horse, all work to dislodge a sense of timelessness in Egypt. These elements in Frith’s photographs provide Egypt with an identity as a real place in the present. Frith is not engaging in the same paradox as Du Camp (capturing it in the present yet maintaining a sense of distance and timelessness). Frith is not establishing Egypt as a place beyond time; he is constructing it as a destination for exotic travel, which provides an opportunity to behold ancient monuments.

Although both Du Camp and Frith act on notions of cultural colonization—in terms of an assumed notion of Western superiority—Du Camp’s sense of cultural conquest is much more explicitly linked to France’s history of imperial interest in Egypt. Frith, on the other hand, does not so evidently connect with Britain’s imperial experience in his photographs.

99Carol Armstrong, Scenes in a Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book, 1843-1875, 299.
Frith’s photographic work has its reference in Victorian sensibilities, with an emphasis on religion. As Douglas R. Nickel states of Frith’s work,

At work throughout Frith’s publishing projects is an attempt to establish the photograph as a transparent window onto the phenomenal world it frames…The ideological efficacy of a popular and seemingly transparent medium lay, for Frith, in the beneficial and incontrovertible moral influence it could have upon a wide audience.\footnote{100}

Relating art to morality, Frith’s work sought to place the viewer in a visual context with biblically historical sites. For as Nickel suggests, Frith’s devotion as a Quaker was met, in the 1850s, with “a crisis of religious faith…[and] the internal dissent suffered by Protestantism over the status of the Bible as history; and the general social movement toward secularization that took the name positivism.”\footnote{101} Frith used photography—with an undertone of religious ideology—to present a truthful and objective view of the monuments of Egypt that would infuse the works with a more honest sense of the landscape, and thereby instill in his audience a higher moral character.\footnote{102} Nickel further suggests that in his work, Frith’s work, that he used photography’s supposed transparency “to transport his audience to biblical sites and thereby engender an awareness of their actuality…[and] the texts he assigned to the photographs and the publications that encompass them both were manipulated to generate the proper conditions for pious response.”\footnote{103} Frith’s photographs are not centered on preserving (and continuing) Britain’s imperial connection with Egypt. His photographs were published with the intent that they would engage the viewer in imaginative but fundamentally “truthful” travels to faraway lands. By

\footnote{100} Nickel, Francis Frith in Egypt and Palestine, 18. \footnote{101} Ibid. \footnote{102} Frith was influenced by John Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelite’s and various other Victorian thinkers, See Douglas R. Nickel, Francis Frith in Egypt and Palestine, 9-19. \footnote{103} Ibid, 18.
doing so, they supply the public with a clearer perspective on its own religious and moral character.

Nickel also points to the influence that David Roberts had on Frith’s work. Regarding this connection, Nickel observes that, “*Egypt and Palestine* and Frith’s later albums were quite consciously modeled upon a highly popular series of lithographed views made from drawings by David Roberts, published between 1842 and 1849.”¹⁰⁴ Roberts’ goal had been to capture Egypt’s architectural sites from several vantage points in order to achieve a thorough visual presentation. John Ruskin described Roberts’ intent “…to give true portraiture of scenes of historical and religious interest.”¹⁰⁵ Frith’s direct reference to Roberts is evident in not only his style (capturing multiple perspectives) but also in his layout—combining descriptive text alongside the images. Nickel goes so far as to argue, “that Frith and his publisher wanted *Egypt and Palestine* to be a photographic reworking of the Roberts project is readily apparent.”¹⁰⁶ This argument is supported by a comparison of Roberts’ *Thebes (Statues of Memnon)*, 1842-49 (Figure 2.11) to Frith’s *Statues of the Plain, Thebes*, 1858 (Figure 2.12), which shows that there was even a replication of specific sites.

However, more than Roberts, Frith sought to present the trip as his specific journey. He wanted to capture the monuments objectively for the public, but he also took pains to present *his* presence there, his distinct journey documenting the sites. Du Camp’s photographs, by contrast, reveal nothing about the artist’s actual travel experience. Frith, with his desire to uphold his Victorian and religious ideals, employed the camera as a way to engage the viewer in a new medium in which to contemplate faith. In his photographic ventures Frith was, as Nickel puts it, “…steadfast in his spiritual convictions, [he] used photography to mobilize a rearguard action

¹⁰⁴ Nickel, *Francis Frith in Egypt and Palestine.*, 85.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 86.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
against the force of infidelity. He deployed the medium’s presumed transparency…to transport
his audience to biblical sites and thereby engender an awareness of their actuality.”107 As
opposed to the construction of a governmental, or societal, lineage of imperial cultural control
(as Du Camp seems to do), Frith is continuing an artistic heritage that privileged, through its
reflections on religion, an interaction among architecture, nature, and the moral self.

Frith’s inclusion of multiple viewpoints enabled him to present as complete a
representation of the monuments as possible. By doing so, he gave the public a heightened sense
of being there. Comparing Du Camp’s Grand Temple de Denderah, 1850 (Figure 2.13) to
Frith’s Portico of the Temple of Dendera, 1857 (Figure 2.14), the viewer can appreciate the
straightforward, almost impersonal nature of Du Camp’s image. The sweeping angle from
which we view the structure invites the viewer into the image, as opposed to Du Camp’s flat
confrontation with the site. Frith’s casual positioning of the figures also allows the viewer to
participate imaginatively in the travel experience of the photographer. Frith wanted to convey
the feeling of being there but that was not Du Camp’s mission.

Another site captured by Du Camp, Frith and Roberts was the Hypaethral Temple at
Philae. Du Camp’s Temple Hypètre, 1850 (Figure 2.15) depicts a desolate place. Abandoned by
the modern Egyptians, the monument appears as a scientific specimen, one that will owe its
preservation to French knowledge. Alternatively, Frith’s The Hypaethral Temple, Philae, 1858
(Figure 2.16) provides a more contextualized portrayal of the site. Frith’s proximity to the
temple, and the angle at which he captures it, conveys that he wants the viewer to be actively
engaged in his experience of viewing this structure. Frith’s image and Roberts’ The Hypaethral
Temple at Philae called the Bed of Pharaoh, 1846-50 (Figure 1.9) present more inviting and
active scenes. Where Roberts places Egyptians within his scene, Du Camp provides a more

107 Nickel, Francis Frith in Egypt and Palestine, 18.
“uninhabited” image. Looking closely, Du Camp has again placed one of his servants for scale, but he is so small that his presence does not have the same effect as the figures in Frith’s or Roberts’. Du Camp’s angle is also quite different from Roberts’. Standing slightly off to the side, Du Camp still employs his use of frontality to capture the monument. Du Camp does not intend to create an artistically, eye-pleasing image, but rather to document the monument with as much precision as possible. To put it another way Frith and Roberts’ works do not have the same scientific emphasis as Du Camp. Du Camp wanted his mission to be sanctioned by the government, and serve the government’s international and domestic interests, Frith and Roberts were serving artistic interests, and worked in recognizable artistic traditions. Frith and Roberts’ images do not suggest the same undertones of imperial control as Du Camp’s. They do not convey the same straightforward appeal to a superiority of knowledge that Du Camp’s photographs contain.

Nickel notes a change in Frith’s approach after his first trip: although his intention is still to bring the viewer into the image, he now endeavors to satisfy the Western public’s desire for a timeless “Otherness” that remains untouched by modern civilization. Instead of featuring Westerners interacting with the Egyptian site, he “posed natives—hired guides, crew members, and attendants—whose inclusion had the effect of constituting a more seamless, less-Westernized Oriental milieu…[a] timeless East, ostensibly untrammeled by the modern world.”108 In so doing, Frith provides a picturesque fantasy of Egypt that would continue to captivate a Western audience. Although he was responding to the inherent Western fascination with the “Other” and the non-west, his images are not informed by the same imperialistic intent as Du Camp’s. More than the figures in Du Camp’s images, Frith’s posed guides and crew members suggest an active, inhabited landscape, one that pulsates with the presence of Frith and

108 Nickel, Francis Frith in Egypt and Palestine., 68.
his crew. Frith’s images read more like a personal account of a travel expedition. As opposed to Du Camp’s methodical documentation of ancient sites that would perpetuate, for the French, their claim to cultural control over Egypt by presenting the monuments and landscape as something more directly possessable by the camera. Even though Nickel proposes that the images evoke timelessness, the inclusion of multiple aides and guides are continual evidence of Frith’s personal journey. The contingencies of Frith’s baggage and retinue do not evoke timelessness, but rather an evolving landscape in which Frith can relate art to nature and moral certainties associated with his specific religious intentions.

Where Frith is bringing the sites of Egypt to the public, Du Camp is surveying and acting—on behalf of the French government—as purveyor and controller of Egypt’s past. In establishing control of Egypt’s past through science, France sets itself up for continued imperial cultural hegemony in the future. Both Frith and Roberts explored the splendor of nature as it encompassed Egyptian architecture, and provided a complete view to the public. But Frith and Roberts’ creative mission was not to document, systematically and scientifically, the landscape of ancient Egypt. They were not using the premise of science to establish a sense of cultural ownership. Frith’s photographs were produced in response to a Victorian sensibility, even if one that also participated in a broader notion of Western superiority. Du Camp, on the other hand, was appealing to a more specifically French history—a history in which exercising a knowledge of science was a tool to establish a subjective claim to cultural authority—an instrument that used a scientific emphasis on Egypt to promote itself as an imperial nation.


Figure 2.4 Maxime Du Camp, *Grand Temple D’Isis A Philae*, 1850, Plate 73 from *Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852).
Figure 2.5 Maxime Du Camp, Hémi-Spéos De Séboua, 1850, Plate 97 from Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie (1852).

Figure 2.6 Maxime Du Camp, Temple D’Amada, 1850, Plate 99 from Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie (1852).

(Figure 2.9) Maxime Du Camp, *Pyramide de Chéops*, 1850, Plate 9, from *Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852).


(Figure 2.13) Maxime Du Camp, *Grand Temple de Denderah*, 1850, Plate 16 from *Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852).

(Figure 2.15) Maxime Du Camp, *Temple Hypêtre*, 1850. Plate 78 from *Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1852).

Chapter 3
Modes of Cultural Superiority:
Napoleon’s Description de l’Egypte and Du Camp’s photographs

The French relationship with Egypt is deeply rooted in Napoleon Bonaparte’s arrival in 1798. The French army began by capturing Alexandria, then moved on to Cairo. In addition to its military pursuits, the Commission des Sciences et des Arts, which was part of the larger Scientific Brigade, had the goal of spreading science throughout Egypt. It wanted to study and document the natural, industrial, and historical conditions of Egypt using text, images, and maps. The Description de l’Egypte provided the French public with the first precise descriptions of the ancient Egyptian monuments. It also contained illustrative explanations of the racial and physical environment of Egypt. The Description de l’Egypte has, for the most part, been viewed as a “scientific” and essentially truthful document not often exposed to a critical eye. But Anne Godlewska, in her article, “Map, Text, and Image. The Mentality of Enlightened Conquerors: A New Look at the Description de l’Egypte,” argues that while the Description does indeed provide a far-reaching and extensive represent Egypt, “it does so...through a screen of purpose and perception, which, if not understood, warps the image, making it dangerous for uncritical use.”

Godlewska’s article investigates, mostly through the Description’s use of topography, France’s systematic representation and reorientation of Egypt, a process which created a relationship between the extensiveness of the French empire and the monumentality of

---

109 At this point Napoleon is still just a general, it is not until 1804 that he becomes emperor Napoleon I. And the choice to invade Egypt was in large part due to the competitive struggle for European domination between Great Britain and France.


111 Ibid.

ancient Egypt. The effort to establish cultural control—by means of scientific documentation—of a great ancient empire fueled France’s identity as a colonial power.

Nicholas Dirks suggests in the introduction to Bernard Cohn’s book *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge*, “it has not been sufficiently recognized that colonialism was itself a cultural project of control. Colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was produced by it; in certain important ways, knowledge was what colonialism was all about.”113 Even though France’s military failed to secure Egypt as a colony, they were able to establish a kind of cultural ownership through knowledge. As Cohn observes regarding the British in India, Westerners “entered a new world that they tried to comprehend using their own forms of knowing and thinking. There was widespread agreement that this society…could be known and represented as a series of facts.”114 Napoleon’s scientific expedition into Egypt, like Britain going to India, illustrates Cohn’s point that Western forms of knowledge were applied to the concept of the foreign “Other.” People labeled as “Other” were understood to be “mysterious” and in need of “figuring out” through the rational application of thought that could be provided by the culturally-superior West.

The products of Britain’s cultural authority over India shaped what Cohn calls, using Edward Said, the Orientalist discourse.115 This discourse was formed out of the texts and various other forms of knowledge produced by the Europeans to convert “Indian forms of knowledge into European objects.”116 France’s cultural hegemony over Egypt plays into the broader Orientalist discourse by taking ancient Egyptian forms of knowledge (the hieroglyphs) and objects (the monuments) and turning them into legible forms of European knowledge. For Cohn,

---

113 Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge*, ix.
114 Ibid., 4.
115 Ibid., 20.
116 Ibid.
the workings of the Orientalist discourse, and Europe’s desire to exert cultural control over the “Other,” is centered on the idea of the Non-west’s “double lack of history”. As Cohn describes it, “since it has no documents, dateable records, chronicles, the kinds of materials out of which the West constructed a history of itself, the British were called upon to provide India with a history. In a second sense India has no history as it has not progressed.” Cohn’s account of the British address of India and its “double lack” is applicable to France’s view of Egypt, and possibly to the whole of the Western/Non-western colonial relationship. Europe sees documentation—either textually or visually—as a necessity for both chronicling and understanding history. The non-West can be viewed as timeless and unchanging because it has not progressed into the modern era, and therefore remains in a state that can only be explained and documented by the West. The categorization and documentation of Egypt by the French is intended for French (and Western) consumption and is used to promote a sense of imperial power. Representations of the “Other,” such as Napoleon’s Description and Du Camp’s photographs, bring attention to a perspective of cultural interaction that Edward Said described in terms of the Orientalist discourse.

Per Said, the cultural impact of imperialism on the West’s own culture and society needs to be brought into the discussion of colonialism. Said asks, “Who in India or Algeria today can confidently separate out the British or French component of the past from the present actualities,” and more importantly for this paper, he asks, “and who in Britain or France can draw a clear circle around British London or French Paris that would exclude the impact of India and Algeria upon those two imperial cities?” Egypt can easily be substituted for Algeria in

---

117 Cohn, Colonialism and its forms of knowledge., 93.
118 Ibid.
Said’s question. We cannot exclude the impact of Egypt on the imperial development of France. The colonial ventures of France were not exclusive to imposing Western culture on the “Other.” Colonialism is not a one-way street with the colonizers effecting the colonized; it also impacts the imperial culture itself, and plays a role among the Western countries vying for control.

Imperialism has become such a given in the history of European countries that the impact of it on the West’s own development tends to be ignored. The following quote from Said is lengthy, but it underscores the argument being made here regarding the relationship between Napoleon’s Description, Du Camp’s photographs, and their relation to 1850s France. As Said observes about the Description:

…historians have not so readily read the development of French culture and history in terms of Napoleon’s Egyptian expedition….Yet what later scholars and critics say about the European texts literally made possible by the Description’s consolidation of the conquest of the Orient is also, interestingly, a somewhat attenuated and highly implicit function of that earlier contest. To write today about Nerval or Flaubert, whose work depended so massively upon the Orient, is to work in territory originally charted by the French imperial victory, to follow in its steps, and to extend them into 150 years of European experience….The imperial conquest was not a one-time tearing of the veil, but a continually repeated, institutionalized presence in French life….“[121]

For so long the emphasis has been on how imperialist and colonialist countries, like France, shaped the colonized countries. As Said points out, French culture and history was just as much impacted and shaped by imperialism and its products as were the colonized countries. Although France’s relationship with Egypt is based on a notion of cultural superiority and Western constructions of knowledge, imperialism cannot be simplified to a strict reading of the superior versus the inferior. France’s history of colonialism has not only shaped the cultures of the colonized, but also has permeated its own cultural history. Cohn’s emphasis on Western forms

[121] Cohn, Colonialism and its forms of knowledge., 35.
of representation and knowledge, and Said’s on the reciprocity of the relationship of dominance, will echo through the following discussion of Napoleon’s *Description de l’Égypte*, Du Camp’s photographs, and 1850s France.

Napoleon’s *Description* provided an imperialist vehicle for the French to establish the beginnings of a cultural conquest of Egypt. For Godlewska, mapping in the *Description* was a crucial way for France to exert its colonial drive for possession of Egypt, since this mapping “during the Napoleonic conquest of the country was inextricably tied to imperial conquest….”

Godlewska describes the overarching theme of the *Description* as the construction of a mythical Egypt. Even more prevalent is the identity asserted between ancient Egypt and modern France. As Godlewska states,

This conception of a somehow eternally ancient Egyptian population is an oft-repeated construction in the *Description*. Without question, however, the most important myth perpetrated in the *Description* is the identification of ancient Egypt with modern France.¹²⁴

In the *Description*, the construction of a timeless ancient Egypt provided an imperial France with something it could continue to possess in the future, in interpretations and documentation. Creating identification between the two would continually provide France with an appearance, at least, of colonial control over Egypt’s ancient past. The creation of a connection to ancient Egypt and France’s colonial history would provide France a sense of monumental continuity.

Du Camp’s images secured France’s future in continually referencing its imperial might.

Du Camp’s presentation of Egypt in his photographs reflects the myth construction discussed by Godlewska. In the 1850s, his images re-connect a rapidly changing France with ancient Egypt, and evoke past colonial greatness. For Godlewska, the mythical construction of

¹²² Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge.*, 6.
¹²³ Ibid., 8.
¹²⁴ Ibid., 9.
Egypt was seen through the physical presence of the monuments and “the fantasy itself was that the only true Egypt was ancient Egypt; that it was still imbued with meaning and worth far greater than anything the present inhabitants could bring to the country.”\textsuperscript{125} The changing and modernizing climate of France during the time of Du Camp’s trip speaks to his desire to have his photographs echo the imperial relationship cultivated in the early years of the empire in the \textit{Description}.

In the visual tradition of representing Egypt, Du Camp’s photographs offer a return to science. Du Camp wanted his photographic mission to be an objective, scientific documentation of Egyptian monuments. Du Camp’s expedition, like Napoleon’s, was focused on noting with precision and scientific objectivity the landscape of ancient Egypt. The emphasis on science reinforces the culturally imperialist mentality of the French. Their imperial attitude went beyond physical colonization and centered on cultural colonization that sought to encourage France’s own declaration of cultural development and superiority. On September 7, 1849 Léon de Laborde, “…a judge on the commission appointed by the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres” said of Du Camp’s photographic mission that “it is no longer a matter of charming our eyes with the attractive effects of light in the camera, but of copying faithfully and with results the subjects belonging to science.”\textsuperscript{126} Du Camp’s photographs such as \textit{Mosquée de Bellal}, 1850 (Figure 3.1), do not depict scientists actually measuring like Denon’s images (Figure 1.6), but the stark composition and frontal positioning of the camera stress his mission to document and chronicle ancient Egypt systematically and without reference to his personal journey.

\textsuperscript{125} Cohn, \textit{Colonialism and its forms of knowledge.}, 18.
As previously mentioned, Du Camp sometimes enlisted the help of one of his servants to stand in the photograph, and in *Sculptures de l'Entrée du Speos de Phre*, 1850 (Figure 3.2), one of is being used to provide a sense of scale and proportion. The use of the “Other” in this way shows an appeal not only to the knowledge and rationality of the European, but also to the Westerner’s interest in the image of the “Other” as a presence within the Orient.\(^{127}\) Du Camp could have used Flaubert to pose for scale, but chose to use his servants (mostly native, non-French) instead. But the statue cut into the rock and the reliefs on both sides are ultimately Du Camp’s focus. With attention also paid to legibility of hieroglyphics, Du Camp was aiming to capture the mysterious aspect of Egyptian monuments that could be documented and deciphered by way of European technology and knowledge.

In *Grand Temple d’Isis, à Philae, Second Pylone*, 1850 (Figure 3.3), Du Camp again uses his servant to represent scale. His servant, seated in a small opening in into the wall of the pylon, becomes part of the ancient past associated with the architecture. The reliefs on the monument are the real focus of the image. Du Camp has cropped his composition to include only the face of the structure. The viewer is disoriented as to what and where the monument is in a larger context, but that was not the purpose on this photograph. The goal was to capture the intricate reliefs carved into the face of the pylon so that upon return to France they could be studied and interpreted. A broad, less detailed view of these reliefs would not have fulfilled Du Camp’s goal of scientific documentation. Du Camp’s photographs are unconcerned with capturing modern Egyptians interacting with their landscape; they are not about depicting a modern, contemporary Egypt.

\(^{127}\) To see further discussion on the body of Hadji Ishmael see Ballerini, “The in visibility of Hadji-Ishmael: Maxine Du Camp’s 1850 photographs of Egypt,” and “Rewriting the Nubian Figure in the Photograph: Maxime Du Camp’s ‘cultural hypochondria.’” While the presence of Ishmael is a relevant aspect of Du Camp’s photographs, in the context of the entire photographic book
For France, from 1798 to 1850, Egypt was continually viewed as a place to gain knowledge, and to interpret it according to standards and principles of the West. Photography renders a moment or an object timeless. Unlike writing, painting, or drawing, photography is seen as objectively capturing the real. Photography, being a sign of France’s technological and artistic modernization, introduced a new way to collect information on Egypt. Like the Description, Du Camp’s photographs act on the assumption that Egypt’s ancient past has gone unnoticed and un-chronicled by the Egyptians themselves. Rather than placing Egypt’s ancient past within Egypt’s present, they view it as something “lost,” something “mysterious” to be recovered by the superior knowledge of the Frenchmen. After failing to establish a physical colony in Egypt, France retrieved Egypt’s ancient past and brought that “discovered” knowledge back to France. Both the Description and Du Camp’s photographs—by presenting Egypt as a science to be studied and catalogued—would, make use of techniques associated with the topographical or archeological survey to perpetuate a message of possession.

For Cohn, the colonial mission contains a plethora of investigative modalities, one of which is the survey modality. Cohn defines the survey modality as consisting of an array of activities, “…to look over or examine something; to measure land for the purpose of establishing boundaries; to inspect; and to supervise or keep a watch over persons or place…For the British in India in the late eighteenth century, it also meant a form of exploration of the natural and social landscape.” Cohn further defines the process by describing its specific practices, “…from the mapping of India…to the recording of architectural sites of historic significance…In the context of colonial India, the concept of the ‘survey’ came to convey any systematic and official

---

128 Cohn, Colonialism and its forms of knowledge, 5. Cohn defines investigative modality as including, “the definition of a body of information that is needed, the procedures by which appropriate knowledge is gathered, its ordering and classification, and then how it is transformed into usable forms such as published reports, statistical returns, histories, gazetteers, legal codes, and encyclopedias.”

129 Ibid., 7.
investigation of the natural and social features of the Indian empire.”

Cohn applies his survey modality to describe the British in India, but it is equally applicable to the French experience in Egypt. The survey modality is a way to establish a hierarchy of Western knowledge in the effort to culturally colonize the non-West. Both Napoleon’s Description and Du Camp’s photographs engage these survey practices. The Description and Du Camp’s photographic mission are part of a tradition of cultural colonization, a phenomenon that can last long after the military expeditions have failed. Although Napoleon “lost” Egypt in a physical sense, his successes in documenting Egypt, and capturing its land and monuments, gave a lasting reminder to the French of their cultural superiority not only in Egypt, but in relation to the rest of the West.

After much turmoil within France, the Second Empire hoped to bring back a sense of unity and strength that it saw epitomized in the First Empire. As Julia Ballerini explains, “the French bourgeoisie…were uncertain about the direction—or even the continuation—of French civilization as they had known it.”

Shelley Rice underscores this notion by referring to the sadness of the Paris, by which she means, in quoting Walter Benjamin, that it was “sadness about what was and lack of hope for what is to come.”

Du Camp’s photographs attempt to reconcile the sadness of the city with a promise of greatness that is associated France’s colonial part. They appeal to the sentiment of the bewildered Parisian in presenting him with images of an eternal and monumental ancient Egypt that conjures France’s past imperial spirit. The photographs represent not the ideals of the physical conquest, but the domestic cultural confidence that comes with being reminded of one’s own cultural dominance over ancient civilizations.

\[130\] Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge*, 7.
\[131\] Julia Ballerini, “‘La Maison démolie’: Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850,” 110.
Napoleon III wanted to return to the glory of the First Empire, and his re-establishment of festivities and celebrations sought to build a strong sense of nation. As Sudhir Hazareesingh states, “the festivities of the Second Empire…offered a potent mixture of historical mythmaking, ideological creativity, and festive innovation.”133 The newly established patriotism of Napoleon’s Second Empire had its roots in France’s First Empire and as the first magistrate of the commune stated at celebrations “‘the sense of elation was general, and the enthusiasm of the celebrations demonstrated that everyone was happy and proud to be French under the glorious Empire of Napoleon III.’”134 Du Camp’s photographs of Egypt are emblematic of this larger French desire to reference past imperial glory in order to promote the current empire.

Du Camp’s photograph, *Medinet-Habou, galeries du Palais*, 1850 (Figure 3.4), clearly echoes Napoleon’s intentions in the *Description*, and would certainly remind the French of Napoleon’s cultural accomplishments. Du Camp posed a man, possibly Flaubert, not in order to give a sense of scale, or to enable the viewer to image Egypt as a physical place to visit (like Frith does) but rather to stand in as a position of colonial authority. With one leg raised and planted on a stone, the man investigates the hieroglyphs and reliefs carved into the pillars. This image embodies the idea of the culturally-superior Frenchmen surveying the ancient ruins of Egypt and acquiring knowledge to bring back to France. Comparatively, Frith’s *Interior of the Hall of Columns, Karnac*, 1859-60 (Figure 3.5) is a similarly structured image, yet it does not evoke a feeling of imperial presence. There is a guide positioned in the frame, but the man positioned to inspect the inscriptions is absent, as is the sense of imperial superiority. France’s cultural hegemony of Egypt has continued to help define France’s imperial and cultural history.

---

134 Ibid., 57. Hazareesingh continues to discuss in his book patriotism in nineteenth-century France and the sense of national pride of the time.
France’s history of social and political disruption found a commonality in its colonial dominance of Egypt. The Place de la Concorde in Paris served as a reminder of “…the extreme impermanence and instability of modern governments and their most meaningful and public monuments…at the Place, sculpture’s authoritative tradition had come crashing down, along with the monarchy and the Revolution.”\(^{135}\) The obelisk that stands there now was imported by the July Monarchy and was meant to “…obliterate the history of the site…,”\(^{136}\) and not evoke memory of France’s revolutionary past, but rather their glorious colonial past. In 1829, during the Restoration, it was Champollion who negotiated with the Pasha of Egypt for the obelisk. After the July Revolution, the July Monarchy did not disrupt the plans for bringing the obelisk to Paris, “thus the obelisk was a product of work done by each post-Revolutionary government, on this they could agree.”\(^{137}\) Champollion lobbied for the choice of Luxor obelisk (whose inscriptions he had helped to decipher its meaning) because of its connection to Ramses the Great, “whose achievements Champollion had established in his scholarly work. They read like a wish list of French imperial ambitions…Champollion declared him, ‘the most celebrated of Pharaohs, conqueror of African and a portion of Asia.’”\(^{138}\) Throughout France’s various regimes, Egypt had provided a constant mark of France’s cultural hegemony, and its imperial stance on the world stage.

Egypt, and France’s cultural colonization of it, became the central focus of France’s imperialist discourse. As Todd Porterfield succinctly states, “this strategy of cultivating the imperialist discourse in order to avoid the dialectic revolution and counterrevolution began with


\(^{136}\) Ibid., 24.

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 23-24.

\(^{138}\) Ibid., 31.
the Egyptian campaign of 1798 and was elaborated by the subsequent regimes….”

Despite France’s loss in Egypt, there was still a tradition of cultural colonization that could be nurtured and sustained to represent France’s identification as a major imperialist power. Throughout France’s turbulent history during and after the Revolution, establishing a sense of national unity proved difficult. Egypt was used as a unifying factor because it glorified the superiority of French culture; as Porterfield asserts, “national identity based on an imperial culture and project was continually pursued as a basis for stability and harmony….”

France’s “rescuing” of the Luxor column from “…the ravaging effects of contemporary Egypt…” would restore “…the splendor of Pharaonic Egypt…not in Egypt, but in the midst of modern Paris.” France’s possession of the Luxor obelisk continues the tradition, of which Du Camp’s photographs engage in, of viewing Egypt’s ancient past having been forgotten by contemporary Egyptians. The French are much better culturally and intellectually equipped to care for and possess the ancient past of Egypt. Apropos of Léon de Joannis’ lithograph showing the *Lowering of the Obelisk* (1835) (Figure 3.6), Porterfield asserts that, “…contemporary Egyptians are associated with the ruin of the temple. They stand idly. They gesture and gape at France’s stupendous achievement.”

The raising of the obelisk in Paris sought to showcase the glory of French engineering. (Figure 3.7) Du Camp’s photographs depicting obelisks (Figure 3.8 and Figure 3.9) once again echo France’s continual association with its colonial past. This tradition of obelisk possession echoed the importation of these objects by the Ancient Romans. This desire to emulate Rome further highlights the French desire to construct a very imperial image.

---

139 Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire.*, 33.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid., 36.
142 Ibid., 38.
Du Camp’s photographs belong to the tradition of establishing France’s own identity and national unity as an imperial power. Louis-Philippe, on acknowledging the importance of uniting around the cultural imperialism of Egypt, “…came to recognize that the Algerian conquest would utilize the vaunted memories of the Egyptian campaign and give France a global role and popularity….”¹⁴⁴ The cultural colonization of Egypt provided a boost for France’s own self-image as a colonial power, and allowed them to have confidence to continue to pursue other imperial conquests and compete alongside Britain for colonial authority.

The photographs are an integral part of a long history within French culture of imperially conquering the non-West. Du Camp’s photographs maintain an historic French sensibility of using science to declare cultural superiority over the “Other.” In this sense, Du Camp’s photographs are part of a greater colonial language; they are part of a framework in which France has continually engaged with Egypt in order to promote itself among the Western fight for imperial control. Since France did not physically colonize Egypt, Napoleon’s Description and Du Camp’s photographs illustrate that cultural control was not only achieved but it was just as significant to imperial development as physical control.

¹⁴⁴ Porterfield, The Allure of Empire., 40.
(Figure 3.1) Maxime Du Camp, *Mosquée de Bellal*, 1850, Plate 83 from *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*.

(Figure 3.2) Maxime Du Camp, *Sculptures de l’Entrée du Speos de Phré*, 1850, Plate 105 from *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*.
(Figure 3.3) Maxime Du Camp, *Grand Temple d’Isis, à Philae, Second Pylone*, 1850, Plate 74 from *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*.

(Figure 3.4) Maxime Du Camp, *Medinet-Habou, galeries du Palais*, 1850, Plate 52 from *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine, et Syrie*. 


(Figure 3.8) Maxime Du Camp, *Palais de Karnak, vue générale des ruines prise au nord*, 1850, Plate 32 from *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine, et Syrie*. 
(Figure 3.9) Maxime Du Camp, *Palais de Karnak, sanctuaire de granit et salle hypostyle*, 1850, Plate 43 from *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie.*
Conclusion

Beyond the façade of Du Camp’s photographs acting on an appeal to science as objective measure of fact, lays the subjective claim of superior knowledge and France’s control of Egypt’s ancient culture. Through defining, and continually possessing, Egypt’s ancient past, France inhibits the development of modern Egypt to control the construction of its own past. In doing so, France can perpetuate imperial notions of cultural control. Physical control, being harder to constantly maintain and develop, does not, in the end, create a lasting impression of Western colonial authority. Ultimately, it is the cultural influence of colonial control that supersedes physical dominance in creating a legacy of imperial might. Recognizing the weight that notions of cultural hegemony had on the construction of a Western imperial identity creates an atmosphere for realizing the potential for cultural exchange that inevitably follows colonial invasion.

Egypt’s role as being a cultural boost to France demands that the colonial relationship between nations needs to proceed beyond not only a colonialist reading of standard binary vocabulary (i.e. West and non-west), but also a post-colonial context. Although focusing on the impact of imperialism on the development of a Western culture may at first seem to revert back to a Eurocentric narrative, it actually illuminates and expands the heterogeneity of the colonial endeavor. To include within colonialism’s discourse the acknowledgement of its impact on the cultural development of the Western imperial country itself, emphasizes the complex interplay between colonizer, colonized, and the larger Western power-play for dominance.

Observing the cultural connections between imperial countries themselves—due to mutual attempts to colonize—and also between the Western colonizers and the colonized exposes imperialism as an entity perhaps more accurately described as legacy building. In that, Western countries find themselves faced with ancient civilizations whose legacies of power
tempt the West to claim inheritance to that cultural greatness. The effectiveness of using colonial authority to promote and establish a legacy of dominance and superiority is directly proportional to a country’s cultural imperial effort. Those efforts to re-appropriate and declare an ownership of heritage rely upon a country’s ability to establish cultural control whereby producing lasting effects and claims to superiority.

To continue to study colonialism and imperialism—and work produced by it—as not recognizing the interconnectedness between cultural colonialism and cultural development of the imperial nation is to miss the whole point of the quest for imperial control. Du Camp’s photographs, existing within a lineage of colonialism and constructions of imperial knowledge, restructure how we look at the history of cultural development in the West. His photographs, in conversation with the Description and the larger framework of French imperialism, make evident the vital role of Egypt in constructing France’s cultural definition of an imperial self.
Bibliography


--- “Rewriting the Nubian Figure in the Photograph: Maxime Du Camp’s ‘cultural hypochondria,’” in *Colonialist Photograph: Imag(in)ing race and place*. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, eds. London: Routledge, 2002.


---*The Egyptian Revival: ancient Egypt as the inspiration for design motifs in the west.* Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.


