
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Learning Vicariously: Tourism, Orientalism and the Making of an Architectural Photography Collection of Egypt

Elvan Cobb

Andrew Dickson White, the first president of Cornell University in the United States, referred to architecture as his 'pet extravagance'. Leveraging his influential position as president, White was instrumental in the establishment of the architecture department in 1871. He also began the department's architectural photography collection with images from his travels around the world as a diplomat, a scholar and a tourist. This architectural photography collection formed the core of the architectural history education at Cornell well into the 20th century. At that time, photographs provided a new and privileged way for students to learn about the architecture of distant places. White's selection of architectural subjects, however, was shaped not through scholarly inquiry, but rather by the nascent tourist industry. This paper examines White's Egyptian collection, acquired during his voyage to Egypt in 1889. His trip to Egypt, in his own words 'marked a new epoch in [his] thinking'. Reflecting an initial encounter with the 'East', White's photography collection both bolstered and challenged the prescribed ways of viewing Egypt and Egyptian architecture, thus having a direct influence on how Cornell students perceived the historic built environment of the 'East'.

Encounters with the 'East'

Now came a new chapter in my life. This journey in the East, especially in Egypt and Greece, marked a new epoch in my thinking. I became more and more impressed with the continuity of historical causes, and realized more and more how easily and naturally have grown the myths and legends which have delayed the unbiased observation of human events and the scientific investigation of natural laws. (White 1905: 433)

After a few months of flurried planning, the first president of Cornell University, Andrew Dickson White,¹ arrived in Alexandria on New Year's Eve prior to 1889, accompanied by his close friend and colleague Willard Fiske.² During their three-month stay, the two academics experienced the country as ordinary tourists, participating in a new and flourishing industry that was imbued with notions of an exoticized East. Therefore, White's encounter with Egypt took place within the dual dynamics of an expanding tourist industry and an equally prominent orientalism. White's collection of architectural photographs from his sojourn in Egypt, selected specifically for the edification of his students back at Cornell and meant as an important addition to his already extensive architectural

photography collection, would be guided by these dual processes in a dialectical manner.

The normative tourist experience of the late 19th century was a highly choreographed affair. The prescribed nature of tourism increased the dependence of tourists on their guidebooks and on their tour operators for opinions about how to perceive and interact with the 'Orient'. However, tourists would often find themselves in more fluid situations that deviated from the ones prescribed by the tourist industry, sometimes leaving them in a state of bewilderment (Gregory 2003: 116; Murdoch 1998: 358). White, like many others, adhered mainly to the prescribed modes of travel during his journey. This can be seen from a juxtaposition of his diaries, his autobiography and the guidebooks he carried.

In a letter White wrote to his travel companion Fiske prior to their trip to Egypt, White indicated that he would be bringing along a Baedeker guidebook, a John Murray guidebook and a timetable for the steamboats operated on the Nile by Thomas Cook & Son (White, 27 November 1888). Murray and Baedeker both prescribed activities for the Anglo-American tourists traveling through Egypt and elsewhere. Murray's guide to Egypt consisted of a series of routes, such as 'Cairo to the Convents of St. Anthony and St. Paul' or 'Cairo to the Fayoum' or 'Luxor (Thebes) to Assouan, the First Cataract, and Philae' (Loftie and Eaton 1880: v–vi). Baedeker, on the other hand, provided possibilities for different modes of interaction with Egypt than Murray's. For example, the 1885 Baedeker guide was organized around specific locations where people would

be likely to stay. For each locale, itineraries were provided, but these were usually more limited in their spatial reach than Murray's. For example, for Cairo, Baedeker advised seeing the following attractions, especially if time was limited: '(a) In the Town. Street Scenes; Ezbekiyeh Garden; Citadel either about sunset, or before 11 a.m.; Tombs of Khalifs and Mamelukes; the mosques of Sultan Hasan, ... Al-Azhar ... (b) In the Environs (by carriage) Pyramids of Gizeh; Heliopolis; Shubra Avenue' (Baedeker 1885: 240). For those with more time on their hands, Baedeker provided more detailed day-by-day itineraries. Jan Palmowski observes that 'both [guidebooks] were full of practical advice, but whereas both guidebooks carried out their agenda to determine "what ought to be seen," Murray went a step further, showing more clearly not just what ought to be seen, but how it should be appreciated' (Palmowski 2002: 108). This is true only to a certain extent, because the Baedeker books of the time also included subjective opinions and judgements both about places as well as people.

White's experience of Egypt was highly influenced by the guidebooks he carried. White's stay in Cairo included trips to many of the locations suggested by his guidebook, such as the Ezbekiyeh Gardens, the Citadel, the Mosque of Sultan Hasan, the Great Pyramid and the Sphinx, the Boulak Museum and the Palaces of Gezireh and Shubra. While the last two were not included in the quick itinerary provided by the Baedeker, they were given plenty of room in an auxiliary section which provided detailed overviews for the tourist.

Thomas Cook & Son³ provided another mode of interaction with Egypt that was even more prescriptive than the guidebooks. The company's first package tour in Egypt corresponded with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The following year, Cook was awarded a concession to operate passenger boats on the Nile (Reid 2002: 90–92). These boats offered the perfect opportunity for tourists to see the attractions along the Nile in an affordable and comfortable manner. The steamers were considered more reliable than the traditional *dahabiyahs*, allowing the trip to be completed within a predetermined number of days. Thomas Cook & Son took care of all the necessities for their travelers.

Package tours contributed to the orientalist perceptions about Egypt, especially by providing prescriptive encounters with skewed power dynamics between the local populations and the tourists in which the locals occupied subservient positions. Unlike what might be initially expected, the interaction between these two groups was not a simple relationship of pure power imbalances. While the Europeans and Americans held financial and political privileges, the local familiarity with customs and landscapes ultimately complicated the dynamics of unilateral inequalities. While many foreigners isolated themselves from the Egyptian public to a certain level by choosing the company of fellow travelers, foreigners could not easily separate themselves from Egyptians because of how closely they depended on them. A good example of this is White's travel up the Nile in a steamer, the *Sethi*, operated by Thomas Cook & Son. In passages from his diaries, published

in the *Cornell Magazine*, White describes the company of his travelers on the *Sethi*: 'Our steamer turns out to be a very good one, and the company of twenty-five people very pleasant. Most are English, but there are a few very agreeable Americans'. White also described some of the Egyptians on the boat, including one named 'Fix Pasha' who, 'in his Tarboosh and pointed white beard, is the most valuable man on board – knowing more that is worth knowing than any other man on board, so far as Egypt is concerned, and universally liked and respected' (White 1889: 292). Through these quotes, it is possible to identify a separation between the company of 'twenty-five very pleasant people' and 'Fix Pasha', the useful local with his tarboosh, i.e., a sign marking him as an 'oriental'.

When the boat docked near an attraction, local Egyptians were commissioned to guide the tourists to the site. White describes his encounter with a 'donkey-boy' during his visit to Memphis:

My donkey driver was 'Hassan,' and he proved a very good one; but funniest of all was a little driver seven years old, 'Mohammed Ali' – a clean, bright little Arab, just about the size and build of Andrew Newbury. He was very vigorous and skillful, and ran the whole ten or twelve miles, laughing and singing and urging on his donkey, 'Ginger Pop'. (White in *Cornell Magazine* 1889: 290)

Other episodes that appeared in Cornell publications were not always so humorous. Perhaps one of the main tropes of orientalism is the 'child-like nature' of the 'Orientals':

This morning after breakfast all off again on donkeys for the tombs of Ameni and others, cut in the rocks but very beautifully ornamented. Preparatory to the expedition an embassy of employees of the steamer went ashore with the saddles, etc., to arrange with the natives for donkeys and drivers. Then began a 'circus'. Every three minutes there would come a pause in the universal yelling and screaming, caused by our steamer employees whacking and thrashing the natives with heavy sticks and chasing them off into the desert—the natives scampering and scattering like so many children, and never making the slightest resistance. I saw venerable Arabs in turbans and long robes thus scampering with the rest. (White in *Cornell Magazine* 1889: 290)

An examination of this passage demonstrates White's readiness to use the common stereotypes about Egyptians. First of all, he does not seem to be disturbed in the least about the 'thrashing' that the 'natives' are receiving. Perhaps by identifying their 'child-like' nature, White is able to justify such a treatment. Of course, his attitude was not atypical for the period and thus, one must ask, how were these stereotypes and attitudes transmitted? Among the books White was carrying during his trip is at least one source for such stereotypes. The Baedeker guide, under a section entitled 'Intercourse with Orientals', clearly conveys similar clichés:

While much caution and firmness are desirable in dealing with the people, it need hardly be added that the traveler should avoid being too exacting or suspicious. He should bear in mind that many of the natives with whom he is in contact are mere children, whose waywardness should excite compassion rather than anger. (Baedeker 1885: 27)

Other tropes of orientalism are also transmitted through the guidebooks. The myth of the 'Arabian Nights' was another popular way to exoticize the 'Orient' (Ahmed 2005: 156–57). According to the guidebook published by Thomas Cook & Son, 'Cairo ... is still the city of Arabian Nights, and all who are well up in those veracious chronicles will find themselves perpetually localizing the scenes and individualizing the characters of which Scheherazade chattered so well and to such good purpose' (Cook 1888: 93). As exciting and mysterious as this Arabian Nights reference was, both the guidebooks and visitors to Egypt had to face the 'modernity' of the country and in some way make sense of the existence of an Egypt with railroads, post offices, wide avenues and other such amenities (Fig. 1).

We see the use of the normative 19th-century conceptualizations in White's own writing as he was trying to resolve the modernized Egypt with the exoticized one he was expecting:

Nor was it only the life of old Egypt which interested me: the scenes in modern Eastern life also gave a needed change in my environment. At Cairo, in the bazaar, in contact with the daily life, which seemed like a chapter out of the 'Arabian Nights,' and also in the modern part of the city, in contact with the newer life of Egypt, among English and Egyptian functionaries, there was constant stimulus to fruitful trains of thought. (White 1905: 435–36)

Perhaps the longest-lasting trope of orientalism, available since Aeschylus, was the decadent oriental despot.



Figure 1: Dam over the Nile. Albumen Print. Gift of Andrew Dickson White. Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #1–2–3635. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

The decadence of Egyptian rulers is a recurring theme in White's writing. White visited one of the main attractions in Cairo, the Palace of Gezireh, which was one of the residences of the Khediveal family (Fig. 2). White saw in this palace a setting 'in which the oriental luxury seems to have been carried to the highest point but ... had been abandoned + all was evidently going to decay' (Diary of A.D. White, Friday 22, 1889). It is not surprising to find such passages in White's writing, considering that his John Murray guidebook of 1880 included similar remarks: 'His uncle Said Pasha, Muhammed Ali's third son, succeeded [to the throne] and under him Egypt again entered on the path to reform. But, unfortunately the finances of the country were not equal to supporting the extravagance of an Oriental potentate' (Loftie and Eaton 1880: 45). More significantly, White actually met an 'oriental despot' in Egypt, an encounter that challenged his preconceived ideas about such a figurehead. Here is an account of White's meeting with the khedive of Egypt, Tewfiq Pasha:

On the evening of that day I went to dine with the Khedive, and, entering the reception rooms, found a large assemblage, and was welcomed by a kindly little man with a pleasant face, and in the plainest of uniforms, who, as I supposed, was the prime minister, Riaz Pasha. His greeting was cordial, and we were soon in close conversation, I giving him especially the impressions made upon me by the school [that I had visited earlier], and making suggestions. He entered very heartily into it all, and detained me long. I wondering constantly where the Khedive might be. Presently, the great doors having been flung open and dinner announced, each gentlemen hastened to the lady assigned to him, and all marched out together, my thoughts being, 'This is the Oriental way of entertaining strangers; we shall, no doubt, find the sovereign on his throne at the table.' But, to my amazement, the



Figure 2: Park and Palace of Gezireh by Pascal Sebah. Albumen Print. Gift of Andrew Dickson White. Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #15–5–3090. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

first place at the table was taken by the unassuming little man with whom I had been talking so freely. (White 1905: 435–36)

White had been conditioned to expect the ruler of Egypt to be flaunting his luxury and exuding decadence. He was not expecting the khedive to be so cordial, socializing with his guests without giving any indication of his status. While he was expecting to find an 'other', White ended up meeting an actual person whom he came to like, challenging the pre-established notions of the 'oriental despot'.

Photography as Representation of Egyptian Architecture

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said reminds us that 'strictly speaking, Orientalism is a field of learned study' (Said 1994: 49). In his roles as university president, scholar, writer and diplomat, a comprehensive picture emerges of White as a contributor to the academic orientalist discourse Said observed. However, as the narrative of his travels in Egypt suggests, the origins of White's own orientalism were colored both by mass produced tourist literature and his own personal touristic experiences. In other words, the orientalist discourse in academia was not a closed system with influences from outside the university setting and thus, its practices and processes were more intertwined and complex. In addition, White's impact on the orientalist discourse went beyond his writings to a new 'modern' medium: photography. An investigation of White's use of visual culture as it relates to his interests in pedagogy and architecture provides an alternate look at his experience in Egypt and at how an orientalist ideology was reflected through visual means to the Cornell community, especially to architecture students (Cobb 2011).

Architecture was White's passion, his 'pet extravagance' (Engst 2006). He was influential in the creation of an architecture department at Cornell, one of the earliest of its kind in the United States (Woods 1999: 68). Understanding the importance of providing an encyclopedic collection of world architecture to Cornell students, White established what is now known as the A.D. White Architectural Photography Collection with photographs he bought during his travels around the world. These photographs not only became teaching tools for architecture students but were also made available to the entire Cornell community.

The year White traveled to Egypt coincided with the debut of the personal Kodak camera that would eventually alter tourist encounters with places. White's son, Frederick, sent him an advertisement for a Kodak in a letter written prior to White's trip to Egypt:

I enclose adv. of Kodak camera. It is about the size of a brick and makes circular photos 2 ½ in. diam. A good thing for you to take on your eastern trip ... It struck me that you might be very anxious to have one and if you want it I will send one by express. (White 18 December 1888)

Despite his son's generous offer, White undertook his trip without a personal camera, continuing to depend on the availability of commercial photographs (Fig. 3) (Perez 1988).



Figure 3: Advertisement of Kodak Camera. Andrew Dickson White Papers, #1–2–2. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

White bought hundreds of photographs in Egypt that were eventually seen by many architecture students and the Cornell community at large. Given their impact, it is worthwhile to understand his process of selecting these photographs. As argued earlier, the guidebooks played a significant role in disseminating an orientalist discourse. They were also influential in guiding the consumption patterns of tourists. The guidebooks influenced which sites were visited more often than others. If a site was visited more often, logically more of its photographs could also be sold. Guidebooks also promoted certain photography studios, such as Pascal Sebah's. Located in Cairo's tourist district of Ezbekiyeh, Sebah's establishment was known for its quality photographs of landscapes and architecture. Therefore, perhaps it is not surprising that many of the photographs White purchased in Egypt were authored by Sebah: 'Among the numerous photographs of Egyptian landscapes and temples the best are those by Sebah of Constantinople, which may be purchased at his depot, adjoining the French consulate in the Ezbekiyeh, or at Kauffmann's' (Baedeker 1885: 235).

White's selection of Egyptian photographs was undoubtedly influenced by his own touristic experiences. After all, he would have wanted his students to experience what he himself had appreciated. White's purchase of photographs of the Giza Pyramids seems like an obvious choice (Fig. 4).

Perhaps not so obvious are a number of photographs depicting the Park and Palace of Gezireh, to which the Baedeker's guide allotted several pages of text as well as plans (Baedeker 1885: 328–29). In addition, the Mosque of Al-Azhar, the Mosque of Muhammed Ali, and EdFou (an ancient Egyptian city with a temple to the god Horus) are all represented in the photographs White purchased, choices that may not be as obvious as the pyramids. However, all of these places occupy several pages in the



Figure 4: Giza. Pyramids of Khafre and Menkaure by Pascal Sebah, ca. 1865–89. Albumen Print. Gift of Andrew Dickson White. Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #15–5–3090. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

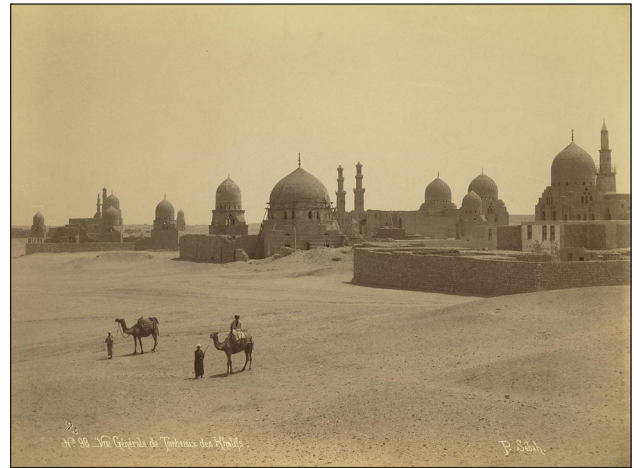


Figure 5: Tombs of the Khalifs by Pascal Sebah, ca. 1865–89. Albumen Print. Gift of Andrew Dickson White. Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #15–5–3090. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

guidebooks of the time, many of them illustrated with plans. Images of places among White's photographs not included in the guidebooks are few. While there are several street scenes without exact identifiers, the 'Arab street experience' was also part and parcel of the guidebook literature and their existence can be easily understood.

Ethnographic images carry the most overtly exoticized messages. However, White sent back few ethnographic images from Egypt. When local people are included within the selected photographs, they are almost always juxtaposed with an architectural landmark, such as an image by Pascal Sebah depicting the Tombs of the Khalifs (Fig. 5).

Two figures with their camels are included, posing in front of the Tombs. The photograph has a timeless quality, hinting that modern progress has not yet arrived in Egypt. However, a majority of the photographs depict architectural imagery and are completely devoid of humans (Fig. 6).

The avoidance of ethnographic imagery might be a result of White's goal in making these images useful first and foremost to architecture students. It is also conceivable that White wanted his selection of Egyptian photographs to be not too different from the photographs he collected from other parts of the world.⁴ His words, published in a Cornell periodical, comparing and equating the Islamic architecture with the Gothic (Fig. 7), corroborate this supposition:

Next to the human beings, the architecture interests me most. I never dreamed that it could be so really beautiful in material and style. Some of the entrances to mosques which I saw this morning, and especially one or two minarets, almost equalled [sp] anything in Gothic art in richness of material and beauty of form and detail; and that, for me, is saying a great deal. (White in *Cornell Magazine* 1889: 289)



Figure 6: Obelisk of Heliopolis in Cairo. Albumen Print. Gift of Andrew Dickson White. Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photographs, #1–2–3635. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

To understand the origins of the depiction of Egyptian architecture in a telescoping, monumentalizing way, as White's selection does, one must go back to the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 and to his project documenting Egypt that resulted in the multi-volume *Description de l'Égypte*. One of the most noteworthy contributions of the *Description* is the drawings and etchings of Egyptian architecture. These plates, categorized as 'ancient' or 'modern', display architecture without people. People, on the other hand, are documented in their 'oriental' way in separate plates. While occasional exoticized Arabs are included with some 'modern' architecture, they are usually not placed



Figure 7: Group of Minarets by Pascal Sebah, ca. 1865–89. Albumen Print. Gift of Andrew Dickson White. Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #15–5–3090. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

prominently in the images produced by the *Description*. The minimization of humans is especially true for the section covering Egyptian antiquities, the section that really caught the attention of the European imagination. By making these images of architecture available for the 'western' eye, the *Description* allowed for the visual appropriation of Egypt and its architecture (Gregory 2003: 196). Through the images, it was possible to create a sense of presence in Egypt for Europeans who had never set foot in that land. Creating a familiarity, and providing the knowledge for that familiarity, was the first step in a popular entitlement of being there (Gregory 2001; Gregory 2003; Schwartz and Ryan 2003). Unlike the etchings contained within the *Description*, photography could provide much more accurate and therefore more satisfactory results for the positivist-minded Europeans, who were perhaps overlooking the subjective aspects of photography. On July 3, 1839, François Arago,⁵ a leading astronomer and secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, commented on Daguerre's invention:

While these pictures are exhibited to you, everyone will imagine the extraordinary advantages which could have been derived from so exact and rapid a means of reproduction during the expedition to Egypt: everybody will realize that had we had photography in 1798 we would possess today faithful pictorial records of that which the learned world is forever deprived of by the greed of the Arabs and the vandalism of certain travelers. (Arago 1839 quoted in Trachtenberg 1980:17)

White may have been interested in acquiring knowledge in a manner similar to the *Description de l'Égypte*. His

familiarity with French history also placed him in a position to have direct knowledge of the *Description*. In fact, a copy of *Description de l'Égypte* is held in the collections of the Cornell archives. White was appropriating Egyptian architecture for the creation of a knowledge base at Cornell. While his was not an attitude specific to Egypt, nonetheless the similarities to the *Description* are noteworthy, as is his conscious choice to perform this act through photography (Commission des Sciences et Arts d'Égypte 1809–1822).

White had been collecting photographs throughout his earlier travels, too. By the time White went to Egypt, the number of photographs in the collection had already reached the thousands. However, for White's purposes, collecting photographs was not enough to ensure their usefulness. Their accessibility to students was also crucial. White had made arrangements to reserve space in McGraw Hall, one of the oldest and most prominent buildings on campus, as an exhibition space for the photographs he had collected for Cornell University. In a letter he wrote from Florence on 17 May 1886 to Cornell's second president, Charles Kendall Adams, White expressed his desire to make the photographs available to students:

I send you ... about 300 photographs ... of important public buildings in England, France and Italy. The same to be held as a gift to the University for the purposes of the department of architecture and the general instruction of the students, under the agreement already made that the entire collection shall be preserved in the galleries reserved for that purpose. (A.D. White Project)

In a later letter, he asked that the photographs be

put instantly into the cases ... I have a natural wish that all students and the friends of the University shall see in these an 'outward & visible sign' of my state of 'inward & spiritual grace', which is a continual devotion to the University which time & distance & nominal separation only make stronger ... I wish the returning students to see those empty cases filled with these beautiful new things. (A.D. White Project)

White's actions of collecting, along with his words above, dialectically perpetuate a canon. The production of architectural history canons is an important act and its processes have tended to be left unexplored until recent years (Arnold 2002; Guven 2006; Handy 2010). In this instance, however, one can trace how an architectural canon was expanded and introduced to the students of one of the oldest and most well-regarded institutions of architectural teaching in the United States. The collection and exhibition of architectural photographs involved judgments about what needed to be seen by the Cornell community. While White undoubtedly was informed about the selections of Egyptian architecture popularized by the *Description*, his touristic experiences led to an extension of this canon, and the emphasis on architectural history teaching furthered the implications of his selections.



Figure 8: Public display of photographs on the top level, McGraw Hall by George S. Bliss. 1885. Albumen Print. Archives Photograph Collection, #13–6–2497. Courtesy of Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

White's emphasis on including the Egyptian photographs in his collection, and in the canon he was consolidating, is also clear in his writings. In a letter he sent to President Adams, which was published in the *Cornell Era*,⁶ White acknowledged that the photographs he sent from Egypt were a significant part of this expanding collection (**Fig. 8**):

I have also sent to the University a collection of about one hundred and forty photographs to illustrate Ancient and Modern Egyptian Art (especially architecture) and Life; and with these a collection of the more recent and valuable books upon Egypt, which will, I trust form a useful supplement to the noble works on that subject which the University already possesses. (White 18 March 1889)

Through his selection, White managed to collect a representative, but subjective, sample of Egyptian architectural photographs: his selection of images became what generations of Cornellians would see as representative of Egyptian architecture.

The Collection in Action

The history of architecture has always been an important component of architectural education at Cornell and would have necessitated teaching aids in the form of drawings and models, as well as photographs. Multiple volumes of the *Cornell Register* indicate that a five-semester curriculum of architectural history was taught at Cornell by Charles Babcock, the first professor of Cornell's newly established architecture department.⁷

Despite the shortcomings of photography due to the reduction of a three-dimensional lived space to two dimensions, photographs have often been used as a substitute for the built environment and as a stand-in for architecture that is re-created on the screen (Borden 2007: 58–59). Maxime Du Camp's photographs of Egyptian architecture set an important benchmark in the use of photography as a representation of architecture. In 1852, the major French publication *Encyclopédie d'architecture* opined that one could not 'seriously study antique architecture without possessing photographic images of the masterpieces that remain from that period' (quoted in Levine 2012: 309). Photography had

quickly become the mainstream method of studying architecture while surpassing earlier modes of representation.

As the importance of photography was well established in the study of architecture, it is not surprising that White, in his desire to furnish the students at his university with the best resources, personally supplied architectural photographs from Egypt and the many other places he visited. The 1888–89 *Register*, published the same year White and Fiske traveled to Egypt, describes the methods used to teach architectural history:

The lectures are illustrated by photographs, engravings, drawings, casts and models, of which the supply for the use of the department is very large. A lantern of the most approved pattern for the purpose of throwing architectural views upon a screen before the class is in constant readiness for the use of the lecturer. (*Cornell Register* 1888–89: 76)

It is clear that the photographic collection was perceived as a necessity for architectural education. Lantern slides, which since the mid-1850s had extended the function of photography, were also used to project images of architecture, allowing the photographs to be consumed in a new manner. The 1887–88 *Register* included a description of the materials available for the study of architecture:

The architectural collection contains over two thousand photographic prints, the most of which are of large size; several hundred drawings; and about two hundred models in stone and wood. These are all designed to illustrate the constructive forms and peculiarities of the different styles of architecture. These, as well as the White Architectural Library – containing over one thousand volumes – are all freely accessible to the student of architecture. (*Cornell Register* 1887–88: 38)

A later *Register* from 1899–1900 emphasizes that architecture students were expected to take advantage of these resources as they worked not only for their studies in history, but also for their design classes: 'the students have free and unhampered access to books, plates and photographs, and are encouraged and urged to use the best of the material for direct reference in the drafting rooms' (*Cornell Register* 1899–1900: 269).

The centrality of the architectural collection, with its emphasis on photography, set the precedent for learning architectural history at Cornell. Through its availability to students via displays and lectures, White's selection of architectural subjects became part and parcel of architectural education – and his canon.

The collection's existence influenced many other Cornellians to collect photographs during their own travels to distant places. William Herbert Schuchardt may be one of the best examples of White's ability to instill a lasting interest in Egyptian architecture through his photography collection. Schuchardt graduated from Cornell's architecture department in 1895. He would have studied with the photographs White had just brought back from

Egypt. Following his graduation from Cornell, Schuchardt spent a year traveling. Along the way, he purchased dozens of photographs depicting Egyptian architecture. He briefly returned to Cornell to teach in 1926, and offered the first course in city planning in 1928 (Koyl 1955: 492). He donated his photographs to the university and thus increased White's collection on Egypt.

Like Schuchardt, Cornellians would continue to travel to Egypt and, more significantly, continue to purchase and bring back commercially produced photographs, even after the use of personal cameras increased. Some prime examples include a 1902 Bonfils album with more than 200 Egyptian scenes and a 1914 photograph of the Temple Complex at Luxor, from unknown donors (**Fig. 9**). Because many Cornellians contributed to the expansion of the architectural photography collection by following in White's footsteps, their acquisition of photographs became a way to share their touristic experiences in an academic setting. In this way, the architectural photography collection at Cornell became a communal affair.

However, photographs of Egyptian architecture — bought, brought and displayed — would also acquire meaning through larger processes of intellectual production (Barthes 1981; Benjamin 1999). White's photographs and writings were not the only discourse that the Cornell community was receiving on the 'Orient'. The discourse on orientalism was a pervasive one. While White's contribution to an overall discourse was small, at Cornell it was significant. His travels were followed with great interest, his writings published in Cornell periodicals, and his photographs were displayed in one of the most prominent buildings on campus. Therefore, the photographs must be examined within a larger context. In that sense, the students and faculty at Cornell read the photographs according to their preconceived notions, without the benefit of experiencing the everyday realities of Egypt. While meaning, as Elizabeth Edwards states,



Figure 9: Temple Complex at Luxor by Kofler, 1914. Gelatin Silver Print. Unknown Donor. Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #15-5-3090. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

may theoretically be open-ended, it is also historically and culturally determined. From the moment of its creation the photograph will 'mean' something, reflecting the photographer's intention. While this meaning may remain with it, or may be recoverable through historical research, it becomes stratified beneath other meanings attributed to the image. (Edwards E. 1992: 12)

While this essay has not focused on the agencies of photographers, the reception of Egyptian photographs was very much intertwined with the pervasive orientalist views of the time. Thus, the larger dynamics of orientalism caused the photographs of Egypt to acquire meanings beyond the original intent of the collector.

Even the photographs devoid of ethnographic content, which constitute most of the Egyptian collection at Cornell, were interpreted within that dynamic (Behdad and Gartlan 2013). In other words, when a student saw photographs of pharaonic monuments in a ruined state, they might easily have assumed that Egypt's days of glory were long past, and they may not have known about the ongoing modernization projects. They could look at the photographs of the pyramids and admire their magnificence and geometric perfection but also consider them mysterious. They might also think that the modern Egyptians could not have possibly built them. They might view the architectural monuments from different periods and only see fallen empires. And beyond anything else, they might consider these as a sign of 'eastern' inferiority.

While these may seem only speculations, a poem published in the *Cornell Magazine* by former student Herbert Eugene Millholen, and addressed to White himself, demonstrates that White's collection influenced the students' perception of Egypt. After his graduation from Cornell in 1889, Millholen would become the city editor for the *New York Evening Post* and later an editor at the Associated Press, an influential position from which he could further disseminate the fruits of his academic education, including his orientalist views of Egypt and Egyptian architecture (Associated Press 1904: 19):

TO A. D. W. IN EGYPT.

The Nile winds slowly through the desert sands,
 By ruined palaces where greatness lies
 O'erthrown. The pyramids mount to the skies,
 Nor hint their secrets, while the Sphinx still stands,
 The riddle of the ages, —from her hands
 The gliding centuries fall, and her dim eyes,
 Beat by the drifting sands, have seen the rise
 And fall of empires through these selfsame lands.
 Within the shadow by the centuries cast.
 The new world's learning meets the vanished old.
 Her gods are dead and Isis sleepeth fast,
 Her arts are lost, her glory long since told,
 Yet live for him the records of her past,
 To whom the scroll of history is unrolled.
 (Millholen in *Cornell Magazine* 1889: 295)

Notes

- ¹ Andrew Dickson White (b. 1832) was the first president of Cornell University. He served in this post from 1866 to 1885.
- ² Willard Fiske (b. 1831) was the first librarian of Cornell University, starting in 1868, and was also instrumental in the development of many of Cornell's collections. While this essay does not deal with Willard Fiske's interactions with Egypt, this was Fiske's third and final trip to Egypt. As a polyglot interested in languages, among other things, Fiske took a great interest in the modernization efforts of the country as well as in its languages. For general information on Willard Fiske, see <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/collector/> and Stevens (2005).
- ³ Thomas Cook & Son was a British company that offered the first package tours in the 1840s. They were instrumental in the establishment of middle class tourism during the second half of the 19th century. For more, see Reid (2002) and Hamilton (2013).
- ⁴ The Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photography Collection includes approximately 13,000 photographs, including later additions by other donors. More detailed information on the scope of the collection, as well as its highlights, can be found at <http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/adw/history/adwscope.htm>.
- ⁵ François Arago (1786–1853) was a French astronomer and mathematician. For a transcription of Arago's speech, see Trachtenberg (1980).
- ⁶ The *Cornell Era* was the weekly, student-edited newspaper of Cornell University.
- ⁷ Under Charles Babcock's tutelage, from the early years of the architecture program through the 1890s, history of architecture courses were organized as follows: Egyptian, Greek and Roman Architecture; Byzantine and Romanesque Architecture; Gothic Architecture; Renaissance Architecture; Modern Architecture.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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