century (135). But their wide temporal and geographical scope complicates the conclusion Marie-Stéphanie Delmaire reaches in her essay, that American attention to Egypt was high only in the later nineteenth century and largely confined to the Northeast.

The remainder of the contributors find other meanings and complications in relation to Egypt as it was iterated and imbricated in various contexts, including nineteenth-century imperial motivations. Cathie Bryan interprets French Egyptianizing as a sort of a political spin on a “doubtful military outcome” (202). We also learn that in a portion of Australia, Egyptian references might stand for a “cultural affiliation” with Western culture (161), while in another part of the country their significance is their very lack of significance, as obelisks could be used without sacred meaning by a “less sectarian” society (179).

These complexities stem in part from the real contradictions generated by the permutations of Egyptian references. But they also are due to the predominant method of investigation in this book, which most often involves working backward from extant monuments. Yet surely the objects are all part of a broader picture, which involves not just buildings but the complex of forces and beliefs behind them. In startling contrast, the book’s most satisfying essay provides a view focused not so much on product as process. John Hamill and Pierre Mollier, preeminent historians of Freemasonry, discuss the movement’s intersections with ancient Egypt. They make clear that the Egyptian origin of Masonic identity is a myth fabricated by specific individuals in a particular period. Here, then, a corpus of Egyptianate buildings—the Masonic lodges—can be clearly seen in a framework that is not national but cultural; forming part of a living movement, they are judged not for their authenticity but their functionality. Chris Elliott, Katherine Griffis-Greenberg, and Richard Lunn focus on Egyptianizing building in modern London, particularly the Earls Court Homebase and the recently renovated Harrods. As they show, not just the stamp, but quite literally the face of Harrods’s current owner, Mohammed Al Fayed, can be discerned within the Egyptianizing decorative scheme.

The book’s final essay stands out from, and frames, all the others. Beverley Butler discusses the controversies around the modern “Alexandrina,” the Egyptian government’s initiative to create a library comparable to the ancient library of Alexandria. The text throws into relief the contradictions of contemporary Egyptian cultural identity, which is otherwise barely acknowledged. Egyptianizing is a question for Egypt too, not the token of something distinctly different from an indigenous culture—to be variously embraced, deflected, remade, or otherwise managed—but rather a feature of its own past and present. Even more, the Egyptian image on which other nations thrive is shown here to be a relic, largely maintained in a Western framework, with important implications for power and identity in the contemporary world.

All in all, Imbôtet Today is an important achievement. It presents a fascinating array of material essential to understanding the modern architectural incarnations of ancient Egypt, and demonstrates a way to ask new questions of monuments old and new.

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Notes

Robert Irwin
The Alhambra

This is a beautifully bound, badly illustrated, and charming volume that does not seem to know whether it is an architectural history, guide, historiography, or social history written from the point of view of audience reception. While it is full of beguiling stories, it does not present significant new scholarly research. The diminutive size of the volume (it is truly a “pocket book”) and constant references to the present day suggest that it is intended as a guide, and yet it contains only one poor plan of the site and grainy photographs. Because the plan of the Alhambra (reproduced from Oleg Grabar’s 1978 volume on the building) omits the Partal Palace, Generalife, and the complex’s enclosure walls with tower-miradors, the palace appears out of context and in isolation. The same plan is reproduced three times on the endpapers and on pages 12 to 13, but it would have been a far better use of expensive reproduction costs to substitute the complete plan of the complex in one of those locations in the book.

The book is riddled with incorrect assertions, such as its opening line that “the Alhambra is Spain’s best-kept secret” (1). What educated person in Spain or elsewhere has not heard of the Alhambra? Rather than a well-maintained secret, the Alhambra is Spain’s Disneyland, where the visitor goes to experience a pleasing amalgam of romantic imagination (narrated by tour guides and commentaries such as Irwin’s) mixed with enough historical fact to make it educational. Such statements seem offhand and thoughtless, and undermine the authority of the rest of the text, some of which is well researched and accurate. Indeed, they seem calculated to suggest an intimacy with the reader (“our little secret”) that is reinforced by the gossipy stories of anonymous turbaned Arabs, beard-scratching sheikhs, contemporary politicians, poets,
and famous persons who on visiting the site uttered memorable one-liners about its impact or meaning.

For this very reason, Irwin is at his best when he discusses the Alhambra's history after 1492, when the Nasrid sultans were defeated and sent into exile, and the palace became the occasional royal residence of Isabel and Ferdinand and their successors. From this moment onward, the historical reception of the Alhambra is the focus, and the stories Irwin recounts are increasingly romantic tales of lost splendor, ruin, and decadence with, not surprisingly, orientalist overtones. The author's treatment of the nineteenth century is interesting, because as a historian he is sensitive to the fact that the history of the distant past—in the Iberian case, the rule of the Nasrids, Castle-Aragon, and the Hapsburgs— is filtered through the more immediate past. Hence, much of what we know about the Alhambra today was delivered via architects and gentleman-scholars such as Richard Ford, Jules Goury, Washington Irving, and Owen Jones. In some cases, these writers recorded parts of the Alhambra that have since disappeared either through deliberate removal (the wooden vaulting of the Partal Palace is today housed in Berlin), disaster (such as the fire that ravaged the Generalife in 1958), or lamentable decisions made by past conservation architects. Irwin observes with true insight that in the modern age, the tourists themselves become part of the ongoing history of the Alhambra (67).

However, in some places, the bias toward historical reception leads to some overgeneralizations. For example, he asserts that many visitors find the Alhambra's architecture to be "the most beautiful in the world" (15). But this was not always so. The Alhambra was disdained by modernists in the mid-twentieth century because the exuberant ornament hid the structural logic of the architecture. The dazzling muqarnas domes in the Hall of the Two Sisters and Hall of the Abencerrajes can only be regarded as a tour de force if one is willing to forego a rational understanding of spatial volume, because the domes appear not to the intellect but to the senses, not to comprehension but raw perception. Similarly, one cringes when Irwin writes that the "history of medieval Spain is, more than anything else, the struggle for supremacy in that peninsula between the Muslims and the Christians" (16). Although his bibliography indicates that he has read the more nuanced explanations offered by Jerrilynn Dodds, Thomas Glick, Maria Menocal, Raymond Scheindlin, and myself (to name only those authors writing in English), he nonetheless ignores the immense evidence of convivencia and mudéjar communities and represents Spain as a thoroughly bipolar entity, which it was not. The question of acculturation and the nationalist and politicized debates that have been waged among scholars over convivencia and literary genres such as muwashshabat poetry is not addressed by Irwin, probably because to do so would depart from the book's chatty format and because it might bore the nonscholarly audience.

The book rambles from one topic and historical period to another. It is more the type of thing that one reads on the plane en route to Granada, whetting one's appetite with, well, historical gossip. Yet, despite my criticisms, I think the book will appeal to a general educated audience for its wit and its deft ability to weave together archaeology, social history, and historiography from the nineteenth century to the present in a lively, if slightly coy, way.

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Baroque Rome

Tracy L. Ehrlich
Landscape and Identity in Early Modern Rome: Villa Culture at Frascati in the Borghese Era

Only the most comprehensive studies on Roman villas—whether ancient or early modern—grapple with the full range of complex issues necessary to understand the buildings beyond their architectural form as cultural and even religious artifacts. Revealing great scholarly dexterity, Tracy L. Ehrlich has produced one such examination of the Villa Mondragone in Landscape and Identity in Early Modern Rome: Villa Culture at Frascati in the Borghese Era. From the 1540s to the 1620s, when Frascati was the villeggiatura favored by popes, the Villa Mondragone was constructed as a modern and sustainable landscape in the vein of Tusculum; this book reconstructs it in agricultural, aristocratic, and religious terms. Cardinal Scipione Borghese, the villa's patron and Pope Paul V's nephew, "encouraged visitors to engage with and participate in this landscape not with their bodies but with their minds" (242). Ehrlich invites us to do the same, to visit this place intellectually, and in so doing transports the reader to the heyday of Frascati.

Landscape and Identity in Early Modern Rome is magnificently descriptive and astutely synthesized, and its four parts (organized in nine chapters) are tailored to benefit the whole. The book is accompanied by a less essential glossary and partial chronology of early modern popes. The book deals with the specifics of renovating and expanding the Villa Mondragone, while attending to larger issues of the papacy, villeggiatura, agriculture; to intellectual and cultural activity; and, perhaps most significant, to the contemporary understanding of classical antiquity.

Part one, "The Roman Setting," provides a strong foundation for under-