UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Humanities

'Do Not Prefer the Son of a Somebody to an Ordinary Man':

Collaborative Archaeology and the Representation of the Egyptian

Past in Museum Displays

by

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ABSTRACT

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'DO NOT PREFER THE SON OF A SOMEBODY TO AN ORDINARY MAN': COLLABORATIVE ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE EGYPTIAN PAST IN MUSEUM DISPLAYS

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Community archaeology requires major conceptual work. Whilst important advances have been made in analysing the methodological principles of the field, much still remains to be articulated on the central epistemological or theoretical basis of the idea of community archaeology. Integral to this particular endeavour is a close examination of just how a 'community' may be involved in the portrayal of the stories revolving around their heritage. I address this through a study focusing upon the manners in which Egyptian heritage has been represented. The topic of presenting the ancient past of Egypt has received little scholarly examination and the portrayal of the heritage of Egypt in distinctly western contexts has barely been reflected upon. This thesis considers how the mode of displaying Egyptian archaeology may be reconceptualised. Primarily drawing its inspiration from a series of conversations with individuals from the city of Quseir on the Red Sea coast of Egypt, alongside findings from both the English and Arabic literary canon, the history of archaeology and of ideas, Egyptology, political thinking and certain anthropological critiques, I seek to question the display of the Egyptian past outside of the country, and ultimately to recommend a possible form for the retelling of this past. This project imagines the potential of the museum of the future as a site that celebrates diversity, and yet also fosters a shared sense of humanity; a stage that uses its collections to challenge the inequalities of the present, whilst stimulating the audiences' imagination, and finally, as a setting that promotes co-existence and, to quote Johannes Fabian, 'coevality' – the sharing of time and space between British audiences and those whose past they view. A theory of 'collaborative archaeology' provides the foundation for this transformation.

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Introduction

Telling the past in Quseir, a city of contrasts

'**Enjoy** lots of hands-on activities. **Visit** the Front Room gallery, showcasing work from our community programme. **Learn** about local cultural diversity in our world in the East End display.'
(Leaflet from V&A Museum of Childhood 2007)

Prediction is difficult at the best of times. But I foresee a decision on the horizon for the museum world. In Britain we live in a world dominated by the media, a world that on the one hand advocates a sharing multiculturalism and a united fight against the tyranny of the despotic rulers of the third world, yet on the other further excludes non-western, particularly Arabic societies, by painting them as fanatical terrorists, a threat to civilisation and to all that the west holds dear (Said 1997). The media representations of these fanatics forget that fanaticism is the language of the dispossessed and the marginalised; to further this gulf either through patronising inclusion programmes or ignorant commentary is only to further this particular problem. Both archaeology and museology have recently become increasingly concerned with the idea of community outreach; as a practice it is seen by many as way to directly involve groups and individuals that have traditionally been excluded from these otherwise sanctioned approaches to the past[1]. Nevertheless in many cases one cannot help but feel that an unthinking, tokenistic attempt to involve the 'community' could actually serve to further undermine the individuals that make up this group. Simplicity is a dangerous thing, by painting all outside of the discipline as 'the community', community archaeology could be criticised for simplifying the complexity of human society, and indeed the complexity of our relationship and interaction with our pasts.

So the decision that I foresee for the museum world is to choose between exhibitions that either passively and safely present a few snippets of information about the pasts of an indefinable 'community' that has somehow been deemed to be safe, or instead to reject this idea and rather strive to become totally dynamic sites of dialogue, challenge and even, if required, subversion - places that use their collections to question, but also to unite different peoples, different histories and crucially, the different stories of the past. Education is therefore still of paramount importance, but an education that does not shy away from complex social issues and problems – conflicts, yes, but resolutions also. Some important moves have already been made in this direction (e.g. Casey 2001; Fienup-Riordan 1998; Karp and Lavine 1995; O'Neill 1993, 1995, papers in Peers and Brown

2003; papers in Sandell 2002a, Sandell 1998, 2002b, 2007, Scottish Museums Council 2000) and in this thesis I therefore seek to build upon these inspirational and groundbreaking works.

The word 'community' is itself similar to the equally difficult to define word 'culture' so central to the anthropological enterprise. In his seminal *Keywords*, Raymond Williams described culture as[2]:

> 'One of the two or three most complicated words in the English language...because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and several distinct and incompatible systems of thought.'
> (Williams 1983: 87)

The use and meaning of the term 'culture' has changed over time, and as Kate Crehan has recently pointed out, it is important to resist picking just one definition as the correct option. Rather like Gramsci and Williams before her she would look to the range and overlap of the meanings of the word (Crehan 2002: 41). Again to quote Williams:

> 'The complex of senses indicates a complex argument about the relations between general human development and a particular way of life, and between the works and practices of art and intelligence.'
> (Williams 1983: 91)

Furthermore, the three basic assumptions that 'cultures' are systematic in one form or another, that they are bounded and that there is a structuring dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'modernity' that Crehan critiques (2002: 42), can equally be applied to the ideas of 'community' as employed in community archaeology.

When I began my undergraduate research five years ago, the start of the process that was to eventually become this PhD thesis, I was what I then believed to be a community archaeologist, yet in many ways I have changed. I realise that I am more a scholar of different archaeological representations – indeed in many respects I have renounced the term 'community archaeology', as it currently exists as rather unworkable, instead advocating 'collaborative' practice in archaeology (for more on the development of community archaeology see papers in Marshall 2002)[3]. I have an interest in the past, and this tends to err on the imaginative side, but I am no representative of academic

archaeology blessed with the power to grant the non-archaeological wishes of those outside of academe's boundaries. I view myself as an individual with a desire to learn more about the representation of history, and many of the most emotive, significant and powerful representations of the Egyptian past, dwell not in European archaeology, but rather are kept alive within the populations of modern Egypt. Those that I represent in the following pages are not subjects of mine whose words I transcribe with the attention to detail of the western anthropological world, but rather to me they are the true masters of representing their own past (see Fabian 1983 for more on coevality in anthropological fieldwork). I learn from these individuals and in doing so I acknowledge that I must therefore take from them in order to create a new archaeological representation.

Community archaeology has come to sometimes seem a rather patronising term to me and to the other members of the collaborative project of which I am a part in Quseir, yet as a practice it grows ever more popular within academic archaeology and museology in the UK (two of the few publications indicative of this growth in Britain are MacNab 2005 and Schadla-Hall 2004, also see http://britarch.net/mailman/listinfo/communityarchaeology). However as it becomes ever more accepted and popular it somewhat undermines itself, failing to ever be that which in many ways as a practice it hopes to become. In order to retell the past in a museum context, to break free of restrictive modes of knowledge construction, I had to renounce much of my disciplinary 'archaeological-ness' (see Wallis 2004 for more on this concept). This reflection is part of the culmination of my research into community archaeology, and this is my warning for the future of the practice – to be aware of its potential to become yet another exploitative, divisive and sanctioned approach to the past. Instead we should concentrate in more depth on the notion of collaboration with marginalised (often non-western) scholars and non-archaeologists. I use the term collaboration here to emphasise more a working in partnership, than an outreach practice. For, despite its positive intentions, in the latter a power imbalance still remains.

Johannes Fabian's essays grouped under the final subsection 'How Anthropology Makes Its Object' in his *Time and the Work of Anthropology* hold a great deal of interest for me. This is for entirely personal reasons: as a scholar of archaeological representation, in my case the representation of modern Egypt within museums of Egyptian archaeology, a question such as this is very pertinent indeed. When Fabian speaks of anthropology as 'a discipline with a negative object' (1991: 193), I think in turn of the museum world. It is to this area, to this insight that I wish to turn my attention and to pose a question; at what point may a museum turn a negative object into a positive one? To clarify: what modes of representation could a museum of Egyptian archaeology use in order to achieve this

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transformation, how, if at all, could a museum turn from a nostalgic, past orientated notion of culture to a dynamic, self reflexive and contemporary view of the societies whose objects and past it represents? Of course this will mean rethinking many current display practices; the only way that I can foresee potential success is through a direct collaboration with those whose past is being represented in the museum. When Fabian highlights the act of 'temporal distancing' in the practice of anthropology (1991: 198) one is once again reminded of the museum environment and the display of ancient Egypt is perhaps the example *par excellence* of this practice. The notion of confrontation and of course coevality are key here – that is to somehow bring the world of modern Egypt into the museum, to confront the visitor through acknowledging the presence of a contemporary, as well as ancient population, to encourage the visitor to 'share time' with this world.

In advocating this proposition, this thesis forwards a study of the past between any groups and individuals with an interest in a particular period or locality of the archaeological record.

> 'I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of Odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling places and the relics and traces of habitation.'
> (Ibn Qutaybah, trans Nicholson 1987: 77)

Ibn Qutaybah's (d.889) highly influential *Kitab al-shi'r wa-al-shu'ara'* (Book of Poetry and Poets, [1964]) provides a suitable starting point for any work that seeks to study and to understand the manner in which the members of an Arabic-speaking, indeed predominantly Islamic majority such as the modern population of Egypt, interact with their past. It suggests that the relics of history, the archaeological record, should be consulted and remembered before entering into any poetic narrative. As a scholar interested in the manner in which the inhabitants from the Upper Egyptian city of Quseir represent their past, I thus follow his lead, and before entering into the text proper of this PhD thesis, I too initially turn to the history, the 'dwelling places' of these people.

Quseir on the Red Sea coast of Egypt, not unlike all urban sites, is a city of contrasts (figures 1 and 2). It is defined by a shifting, organic amalgamation of relationships, some positive, others unavoidably conflictual. Like many Egyptian settlements, Quseir's population has firmly established gender demarcations. A sexual duality exists that segregates whilst also allowing for a fertile exchange between men and women of a

manner in many ways quite alien to a western researcher such as myself. It is a city with a rich past, a past added to and enhanced by a diverse group of inhabitants, with equally diverse social histories. Settlers from Rome, India, the Arabian Peninsular, Upper and Lower Egypt, Sudan and Europe have made their home within the environs covered by the modern city (Peacock and Blue 2006; Whitcombe and Johnson 1979; 1982, see figures 3-7 for archaeological examples). For often vastly differing reasons, nomads, pilgrims, sailors, soldiers, miners, fishermen and more recently, divers and tourists have been all been drawn to this part of the Red Sea. Conflicts, resolutions, unions and friendships have followed each migration. The 'community' of the city has and always will be difficult to pinpoint, indeed when used in relation to Quseir, this alien word represents an incredibly fluid thing. If it exists at all, it was and remains a firmly *cerebral* definition. Those who belong to it do so through complicated processes of self ascription - they personally believe that they are of Quseir, although often they are also just as much of Cairo, Qena, Hurghada, Marsa Alam, the Eastern Desert, Sudan or the Arabian Peninsular. The people of Quseir are religious and yet like anyone else they are also agnostic, albeit perhaps less noticeably to the outsider's eye. They are both a settled and nomadic people; their employment ranges from the successful politician to the professional beggar. Again it is very important when considering Quseir, to remember Jung's critique of the notion of 'community', what he sees as a phrase designed to remove the individual self, a term that is capable of instigating an ignorance of the compositional plurality of a given group of people (Jung 2004 [1957]). Any representation of the history of Quseir should therefore embrace the city's diversity, its 'plurality of culture' (Berlin 2003).

It was into this amalgamation of individuals and social groupings that I entered in September 2002, and it is to these people that I have dedicated the majority of my work for the last five years. However, before introducing the aims and scope of this research, and before entering into my 'doctoral narrative' and my own academic story, I must understand something of the historical context of the society that I entered into. Once my research has been contextualised in this way I will attempt to comment upon how a direct collaboration with some of the people of Quseir has effected my ideas and has made me renounce many of the concepts of community archaeology in favour of what, as I have already mentioned, I would rather think of as an archaeology prefixed with the word 'collaborative' as opposed to the non-descript and catch all 'community'. This brief history will of course be a Eurocentric one but I will attempt to acknowledge who those that have traditionally told the history of Quseir are. Even the most important local historian of the city, Kamal el-Din Hussein Hamam, has been quoted as recognising a Eurocentric bias in his own work (Glazier 2003: Int 3.20). In this thesis I thus raise the

question: is it possible to ever break free of the shackles of a Eurocentric history until one breaks free of an elitist, Eurocentric iconographic tradition? To answer this at the outset - no, it is not and this is where many projects could be in danger of failing, stumbling at their very inception. In turn, the history that I present in the following pages is one that seeks to continue to problematise the homogenising term 'community', questioning exactly who is telling the history of this group of people (see Butler 2001 for more on the construction of Egypt as an 'exile of the imagination'). This is significant, providing the first of my critiques of the practice of community archaeology, which in turn cumulatively forms an overriding critique that is absolutely fundamental to the final outcomes of this doctoral thesis. Firstly, however, I shall offer a brief outline of what this work hopes to achieve.

Intended outcomes of research

The primary outcome of my PhD research is the formulation of a series of recommendations for the redisplay of elements of the collections of Egyptian archaeology outside Egypt, primarily the UK, based on a direct collaboration with individuals from Quseir. More generally speaking, I aim to offer a case study that proposes some flexible guidelines useful for museums in a wider sense to collaborate with marginalised or subaltern groups. My own collaborative process will, of course, be specific to certain groups and people that I have personally communicated with and all interpretation will be drawn from what remain a series of very context specific meetings and localities. An iconographic analysis of historical Arabic and Coptic literature lays the foundation for much of this interpretation, as does an awareness of the relevant methodological advancements in anthropology and ethnographic techniques. The secondary outcome of my research is the rethinking of the role and methodologies of community archaeology as a research paradigm and so-called 'outreach' practices in museology, with the primary outcome functioning in many ways as a detailed case study and a bridge to this epistemological reassessment. This introduction has already voiced a concern with aspects of community archaeology; this thesis seeks to provide an alternative, to lead by example.

I begin by considering the iconographic origins of western museums. In chapters one and two I look at the ways in which museums tell a certain story that unsurprisingly, is one that has been influenced by a particularly western symbolic tradition and set of memories. Chapters three and four then present historical elements of the Arabic and Coptic manners of telling the past[4]. These chapters utilise a dataset based on a large, yet selective literature search in which, influenced by the writing of Edward Said (1978, 1995, 1997), I attempt to look at the representation of the past from both an eastern and a western

viewpoint. Although at first this may appear to present a 'clash of civilisations', I actually aim to achieve the opposite. By looking at both western and eastern iconographic traditions, I aim to familiarise both myself and the reader with two different yet ultimately complementary histories. From here we may then hope to carve a future path for museology, a path that seeks to unite both the 'occident' and the 'orient'. In a manner similar to the Italian Enlightenment scholar, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), I also aim to rehabilitate myth within empirical enquiry in this respect (Jones, A [in press], also see Mali 1992 for more on this particular type of analysis of Vico's work). Together these four chapters provide a firm foundation upon which I build in chapters five to eight, which by focusing upon my fieldwork in Quseir collectively form the central data-led pieces of this thesis. In these chapters I take a number of context specific encounters with individuals from Quseir and study the ways in which the past has been represented in each case. Returning to Fabian's ideas of coevality, I use these sections as a means to allow the reader to share time with my interlocutors in Quseir, encouraging a move away from an orientalist, occidental perspective in doing so. As Fabian notes:

'...coevalness aims at recognising contemporality as the condition for truly dialectical confrontation between persons as well as societies. It militates against false conceptions of dialectics...'
(Fabian 1983: 154)

This process is central to my reconsideration of the idea of the museum in chapter nine. Chapters five to eight, in addition to chapters one to four, present a conceptual foundation upon which I base my recommendations for this retelling of the past.

Although one may argue that the cinema, theatre or street café, amongst many other venues, already offers a means of transmitting cultural representations and currently act as arenas of intangible heritage, I see the museum as means to add another dimension to this transmission. In short, museums may use their standing as a source of official knowledge to forward marginalised approaches to this past. Audience expectations of the museum as a 'true' academically sanctioned voice offers a powerful means of addressing existing stereotypes. Although much of my work was carried out in Quseir, I have also built a relationship with the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology in London. This in turn encouraged me to widen my concept of 'source community'. As shall be seen my colleagues in Quseir often saw the Petrie, or indeed any museum in a European metropolis, as a means to present local history on a world stage, and therefore as a powerful medium of subversion. Additionally by encouraging audiences in other countries

to consider new narratives, to share time with my colleagues in Quseir, new knowledge may be transmitted to these societies. Visitor agency would mean that disagreement as well as agreement would occur in these places. I see this as an important aspect of true dialogue. In chapter nine I therefore address the ways in which future museums may act as sites of interaction between different groups of people. Hollywood, soap-operas, and Egyptian film alongside other pop culture mediums may already encourage a transmission of knowledge of sorts, but I argue that where once it forwarded elitist, western narratives, the museum and its collections, by playing to audience expectations of authenticity, may paradoxically use its privileged position in society to add weight to the representations of the past of subaltern groups. I conclude the entire process started here by reconsidering collaboration in archaeology and museology in more depth, offering a path for future work in the field.

However, as I have already stated, the articulation of this critique begins firstly by following another's lead, Ibn Qutaybah's, and so I too now turn to the history of Quseir and elaborate further upon its 'deserted dwelling places'.

The geography of Quseir and Quseir al-Qadim (Old Quseir)

The settlement of al-Quseir lies approximately eight kilometres south of the archaeological site of Quseir al-Qadim (Old Quseir), and around 500 kilometres south of the Suez Canal (figure 1). The coastline is largely dominated by a late Pleistocene coral reef, broken by the sweeping bay of Quseir and the smaller sandy cove or *mersa* that marks the ancient entrance to the port of Quseir al-Qadim (Peacock and Blue 2006: 1). The climate in this area is inhospitable, being one of the driest parts of the world and prone to fierce winds and sandstorms. Quseir embraces the Red Sea, surrounded by the foothills and the mountains of the Eastern Desert. Rain is rare, although when the short lived torrential downpours do visit the region they create vast, temporary rivers known as wadi flushes. A particularly notable occurrence, the largest and most recent of these occurred in 1995 and is often still discussed by the local residents. The surrounding vegetation largely comprises *Zilla spinosa* and, less frequently, Christ's Thorns trees (*Zizyphus spina Christi*) the name of which is indicative of the folk tales of the monastic Coptic Christians living in the area. Inland wadis are dotted amongst the mountains with the small oasis Bir an-Nakhil some fourteen kilometres west of the city being one of the nearest to Quseir and most important areas of the Ababda Bedouin people (figure 8)[5]. Fauna is almost as sparse as flora, and is mainly dominated by insects, reptiles, small birds, and the larger birds that prey upon them. Occasionally, one may see the odd Dorcas gazelle (*Gazelle Dorcas*), Rupell's sand fox (*Vulpes rupelli*) or if very lucky, Ibex (*Capra ibex*). Clean drinking water is

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almost as rare – the majority of Quseir's supply is still transported from the Nile Valley and stored in large vats to the west of settlement. Adel Aiesh, the manager of Quseir Heritage, is proud to note that it was his grandfather that oversaw the installation of the original water storage facilities of the city. Despite the hostility of the environment, many of those who live in Quseir are very attached to the rugged beauty of the surrounding countryside. Indeed, as a young boy from a local primary school told me in December 2003, 'the sky, the mountains and the sea *are* Quseir' (my emphasis). The landscape of Quseir, like the population, can be conflictual and contrasting - the sea offers food and work for the local fishermen, it provides play for the children and tourists, yet it represents an obstacle to the *hajj* pilgrims, a barrier between them and their beloved Mecca and Medina (see figure 10). In turn the desert and the mountains are sacred to the Ababda Bedouin and increasingly to those in the town running their successful safari trips, yet it is also feared by many of the older, poorer people of the city. To them it is an ancient wilderness, the dwelling place of *shaitans, afrites* and *jinn*, therefore an evil, supernatural area and best avoided. Yet, conversely, this barren wilderness is often seen as a holy place of religious retreat and contemplation by Coptic Christians living local to it. It is therefore useful to consider the notion of contested landscape here (see Bender [1998; 2001] for a wider discussion). As Barbara Bender has noted:

> '...the study of landscape is much more than an academic exercise – it *is* about the complexity of people's lives, historical contingency, contestation, motion and change.'
> (Bender 2001: 2)

The study of the landscapes of Quseir is no different.

Deserted dwelling places: Myos Hormos and Quseir al-Qadim[6]
The classical stories of Myos Hormos
The archaeological site of Quseir al-Qadim was first excavated in 1978, 1980 and 1982 by Whitcomb and Johnson (1979, 1982a, 1982b). They concluded that what they then studied was the remains of Leucos Limen (the white harbour), a rather small and insignificant Roman port. Subsequent investigations conducted by the University of Southampton between 1999 and 2003 actually revealed the site to be the much larger and famous port of Myos Hormos, a settlement occupied between the first century BC and the third century AD, that together with its sister port of Berenice, formed one of the most important trading centres between Rome, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, India and the East (Peacock 1993; Peacock 2006: 3, also see figures 6, 7 and 9). The first literary

accounts available outside of the region were by the ancient authors and consequentially much emphasis has been placed upon these accounts by the later scholars of the period (see Cuvigny 2003). The earliest of these discussions of Myos Hormos was by Agathides of Knidos (c. 116BC), this was in turn followed by Diodorus Siculus (3.39.1-2), Strabo (6.2.5) and Pliny (NH 6.33. 168). Other significant and much studied works mentioning the harbour include *The Geography of Ptolemy* and the first century sailor's handbook *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (for more see Cuvigny 2003; Peacock 2006: 3-4). With its origins as an amalgamation of traders, officials, sailors and travellers drawn from many, varied areas of the classical world one can already see the problematic nature of attempting to identify a single defining community of Quseir. Even at this stage the population of the area was highly transient, and was likely to have been made up of a mixture of people from Egypt, India, the Mediterranean, and the Arabian Peninsular (as suggested by evidence found during excavations at the site - see papers in Peacock and Blue 2006, Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 63, on Red Sea trade in general see Lunde and Porter 2004). Crucially the story of Quseir, indeed the first stories of Quseir, are largely told by those who in many ways formed the traditional bastions of much of western literary thought, not necessarily by those who lived and died there. The initial literary telling of the history of Quseir is therefore by those that are comfortable and instantly recognisably to the west and its museum going culture. In this thesis I hope to encourage an alternative telling of the past, a story drawn from the memories and representations of people from Quseir themselves.

The holy port of Quseir al-Qadim

The earliest mention of 'Quseir' appears during the 13th century AD under the Bahri Mamluk sultans (Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 3). A number of medieval Islamic writers have commented on Red Sea travel during this period – the authors Ibn Battutah, Nasir-I Khosraw and Yaqut all talk in some detail about trips to the southerly port of Aidhab - what was then the major port of the area in the medieval period (Garcin 1976 for more). Arabic speaking geographers tended to refer to Quseir as the main port of Qus, the capital of Egypt from the Fatimid period onwards (Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 3). During the 13th and 14th centuries Quseir acted as an important *waqf* port, providing a gateway to Mecca and Medina and was engaged in exporting large quantities of produce to and from the Arabian peninsular and beyond. In reading the writing of the 14th century traveller Qalqashandi, one notices the importance that was placed upon Quseir as a trading centre:

> 'Al-Quseir is on the northern side of Aidhab and some of the ships frequent
> it; it is near to Qus and Aidhab is far from Qus. The merchandise is carried

from Quseir to Qus, then from Qus to the warehouse of al-Karim in the Fustat'

(Qalqashandi 1913: 465)

Reading this excerpt, it is easy to concentrate only upon the role of Quseir as a trade port, yet one should not forget the religious importance of the settlement's link to Mecca and Medina. Turning to some of the actual words of the residents of Quseir al-Qadim and its environs one soon gains an impression of the spiritual significance of the port. As many modern residents remind us, the name 'Quseir' is likely to have come from 'Qusayr' or, in relation to Medina, the 'shortest way'. A piece of linen found at Quseir during the late seventies bears the enigmatic fragment: ' *al-muhamliq filmahu...* (the gazer has two...)' (Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 211). But just who and what is the gazer? An inscription on a finely crafted bowl reads *'wa' l-yumn* (and good fortune) (Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 217). Qur'anic lines engraved upon ostrich shell (figure 5) and other charms have also been discovered at the site (see papers in Peacock and Blue 2006; Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 248). Finally, a rocky outcrop lying to the southwest of the modern road, some 30 kilometres from Quseir, bears a small shrine to the Sheikh Abd el-'Al. The following inscription is written upon an overriding outcrop:

'The poor servant of God almighty, Yusuf Hatim el-Sata, came here. May God return him to his people and may God forgive him and his parents and bring together all Muslims. Amen. Dated in the month of Jamada II, the year 755 (1354 AD)'.

(Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 249, my brackets)

If one looks at the words on the objects of the people who lived in and around Quseir al-Qadim, one cannot help but notice a religious bent to their perception of the port, the surrounding area and of themselves. Many of the examples of writing that have been found can be directly linked to religion. It is not just a major trading site, perhaps the initial conclusion of an archaeological narrative, but was possibly more significant as a *waqf* – a door to the prophet's tomb and thus in many respects a metaphorical gateway to paradise (see figure 11 for an illustration of pilgrims in modern [19th century] Quseir). Though seen as this by many living in the city, modern Quseir has however tended to be told as part of a different, more western orientated story.

The authors of historic and modern Quseir

Assessing the antiquity of Quseir al-Qadim has been rather straightforward; dating the origins of modern Quseir is somewhat more problematic. Nevertheless the local author Hamam, believes that the city may be traced back to Pharaonic times as the port of Thago, and has rather contentiously concluded that a Roman temple also existed in Quseir, as have many individuals from the city (Hamam 2000; Glazier 2003: Int. 8). If we turn to the European authors, one can see further discussion of this local 'ptolemaic' temple in the work of Arthur Weigall, an eminent early 20th century archaeologist of the region (1909: 60-61). Even more recently, Le Quesne noted that during the survey and excavation of the Ottoman citadel dominating the centre of the city, several stones that are built into the fabric of the structure are of an ancient origin (1999: 42). In many ways these 'legitimate', accounts of Quseir rather cautiously suggest and hint at the antiquity of city. They dress their theories in the careful manner that has come to be accepted by archaeologists and upon entering the recently refurbished citadel one can see that a similar type of narrative has been accepted by the American Research Centre's display boards. Other than Hamam, no published text has been written on the history of Quseir by any of the city's residents. Outside of Egypt the most influential commentaries on the settlement have originated from a number of European travellers (see figure 12). C.B. Klunzinger, a German quarantine doctor stationed in Quseir in the late 19th century, has produced the most detailed of these accounts. To him, Quseir began life as an Ottoman fortification, a trade and pilgrimage port founded by the Turkish conqueror Selim III (Klunzinger 1878: 271; figure 11). It was a non-permanent settlement, a place regularly set upon by the nomadic Bedouin brigands that, it would seem to Klunzinger, plagued the area. He states that it was in this rather poor condition that the French found the city in 1798 and subsequently garrisoned it (1798-1801). After a prolonged battle, British forces eventually pushed the French out of Quseir, taking it for themselves in 1801 (see Glazier 2003: 87-121; see figure 13 for an image of what the city would have looked like during this period).

European travel to Africa and the publication of travel accounts based upon personal experiences in Egypt increased during the 19th century. The Scottish explorer James Bruce's rather under-awed view of 18th century Quseir, as 'a small mud walled village, built upon the shore, among hillocks of floating sand' (Bruce 1790: 189), was echoed within the accounts of those who followed him. Gustave Flaubert noted that Quseir is 'permeated by this ghastly odour of soap and rotten eggs' (Flaubert 1850 [1996]: 189) and Klunzinger described his entrance into the Quseir of 1878 in the following manner:

'We descend and make our way towards the confused mass of houses. No
rampart surrounds the town, but the outermost houses form a close barrier,
in which here a regular archway, there an open street, there again a narrow
doorway offers an entrance, or a ruinous building forms a breach which no
one thinks of building up.'
(Klunzinger 1878: 3)

Klunzinger's writing is indicative of a view of Quseir and often of Egypt as a whole, as a
rather shambolic mixture of architecture and ruins that nevertheless remained full of
charm, an impression somewhat removed from the religious, spiritual symbolism of the
Arabic authors. The image of the relaxed Egyptian approach to the restoration of the
remains of their past is still prevalent. For example in a recent copy of the Lonely Planet,
post-phosphate, heritage-tourism-dominated 21st century Quseir's recent history is
summarised in the following manner:

'At one point it was the point of importation for all spices going to Britain
from India. However the opening of the Suez Canal ended all of that, and
the town's decline sped up, with only a brief burst of prosperity as a
phosphate-processing centre in the early decades of the 20th century.'
(Lonely Planet 2002: 494)

The charm of the city is still present in this account though:

'With its long history and sleepy present, Al-Quseir has a charm absent from
Egypt's other Red Sea towns.'
(Lonely Planet 2002: 494)

Again, like their 19th century forebears, Quseir is described as a relaxed, somewhat
disorganised place, nestled amongst the ruins of its history. In many ways this is how the
city appears to an outsider to this day. Upon viewing my old field journal entries it is
apparent that my own thoughts were much the same as this when I first entered Quseir in
2002[7]. Yet, still one notices a lack of Egyptian voices in the telling of this part of Quseir's
history. As in many other so called 'postcolonial' countries, a collaborative archaeology
offers a way of righting this balance; it offers an opportunity to retell the Egyptian past.
This means letting go of far more than has currently been relinquished in many projects.
One cannot simply give 'at least partial control of power of a project to the local
community' as suggested by Marshall (2002: 1). Indeed as we have learnt in Quseir, one

cannot simply enter such a diverse group of people and offer them a museum replete with all the trappings of a traditional western mode of representing the past. Instead one must completely reconsider the ways in which one tells the past of these individuals, retelling the past in the places were it matters most on both a local, yet crucially also on an international stage where this retelling may gain the highest possible exposure. In relation to Egypt, London is one of these places, and so it is here where my work correspondingly finds a potential focus. But first one must look at the practice of community archaeology in yet more detail, problematising it in doing so.

Community or collaborative archaeology? The project at Quseir

As I have mentioned, in recent years the term 'community archaeology' has become increasingly prevalent in the archaeological literature and by the recent glut of conferences and conference sessions increasingly fashionable in the UK (i.e. University College London 2006; Manchester 2006; Theoretical Archaeology Group 2006). Nevertheless as a practice it still remains very difficult to actually define (see contributions to Marshall 2002). For the Project in Quseir, it is an approach to archaeological investigation that prioritises collaboration with local groups in the examination and presentation of the past (Moser *et al* 2002:220). Primarily developed in Australia and the United States in response to political critiques of the discipline by indigenous groups in the 1960s and 70s, community archaeology projects can now be found in variety of different contexts and localities. These range from historical archaeology in the US (e.g. McDavid 1997, 2002), prehistoric archaeology in Australia (e.g. Field *et al* 2000; Clarke 2002), the development of collaborative museums in Mexico (see Ardren 2002) and as mentioned, an increasing number of community outreach projects in the UK (MacNab 2005; Schadla-Hall 2004)[8].

To remain relevant in the modern world, archaeology has a responsibility to those outside of, and to the discipline itself, to ensure that the questions it asks and the pasts that it constructs are reflective of the ideas of as many individuals as possible. Granted, as an approach to archaeological practice, community archaeology is in many respects designed to do just this, but it is nevertheless important to stress that collaboration in archaeology is not simply an ethical issue. Rather, this approach is founded upon the belief that incorporating non-archaeological interpretations of the past actually result in far better archaeological research. As such the members of the project at Quseir have not sought the passive process of simply informing others about what is being done by archaeologists, but rather we have striven to encourage true working partnerships with local groups. As we have stated elsewhere:

'...investigations should be conducted in a manner that is beneficial to all parties; whether those benefits are intellectual, economic, social or political.'
(Glazier and Jones 2007: 2)

Furthermore, collaboration as I have already stated, provides a manner for transforming archaeology:

'Collaboration in archaeological practices is about rehabilitating fiction within non fiction, realigning centre and periphery; it is about being prepared to study the myths, the fictions people live by and seeking to include them within empirical enquiry, even if it means that this enquiry is irrevocably changed in doing so.'
(Jones, A in press: 16)

A 'collaborative archaeology' therefore differs from 'public' or 'outreach archaeology' (e.g. Edwards-Ingram 1997; Franklin 1997; Gibb 1997; McManamon 2000). Public and outreach archaeology can view archaeologists as the major protagonists, educating an uninformed, non-archaeological audience. Within 'public' or 'outreach' archaeology, the archaeologist is often still in a position of complete authority, thus reinforcing an unequal power relationship between the discipline and local groups, supported by two centuries of archaeological practice in Egypt (Glazier and Jones 2007). Bill Sillar has recently begun to discuss the issues surrounding the definition of 'indigenous' communities and correspondingly the need for frameworks to guide archaeologists working within contexts alongside these groups (2005). However it is notable that once again this discussion is authored and indeed a whole edition of the journal *Public Archaeology* devoted to 'Indigenous Archaeology' (Sillar and Fforde 2005) is introduced rather ironically still lacking specific editorial input from members of 'indigenous' groups and remains written in language comfortable to western, English-speaking academic archaeologists (see Abu-Lughod 1993; Fabian 1983; 1991 for alternative possibilities).

A collaborative archaeology approach, as I see it, is not simply concerned with simplifying excavation results for non-archaeologists or 'indigenous' groups (what/whoever they may be). Rather, local people should play an active role in archaeological investigations and indeed any representation of the past from the very outset. This need for archaeological research inspired by the local population is highlighted by many in Quseir:

'First, the intense interest has to be from us, we have to focus, we have to make it, we have to start it. The second thing which is good is that you are giving us good assistance, good help. The initiative has to be focused from here though, from ourselves.'
(Glazier 2003: Int3.4)

The emphasis on collaboration in the research process closely mirrors the concept of 'stewardship' currently favoured in archaeological circles (Zimmerman 1995). Archaeologists are amongst these stewards of the past, but our role is not necessarily *primary* in all cases (McGuire 1997:84).

Carman goes further than this, using the rise of 'community archaeology' to critique the entrenched 'specialist' and to argue for a co-ownership of archaeological heritage, a situation whereby the past and heritage sites are actually open to all. To him heritage should and indeed *could* belong to quite literally everyone with an interest in it (2005). Carman's challenge is vital – could archaeology really act as tool through which the less privileged members of modern society could gain a voice?

It is simple to self-righteously call for a collaborative practice in archaeology yet it is difficult to actually achieve it. For this reason, the Project at Quseir has developed a methodological framework for undertaking this type of investigation. Based upon research in Quseir itself, the project has identified a number of different components that are suggested might form the basis of a collaborative approach, including communication, employment and training, interviews, analysis of oral history and public presentation. As the thinking behind these components has been outlined elsewhere I shall not repeat them here (see Moser *et al* 2002; Glazier 2003; 2005). The project at Quseir began in 1999, growing out of the excavations carried out by the University of Southampton at Quseir al-Qadim during the same year. From the outset the members worked alongside a local NGO, *The Quseir Heritage Preservation Society*. In the wake of a growing tourist market, the chairman of Quseir Heritage Farid Mansour, and the manager, Adel Aiesh were keen to promote the preservation of the city's heritage and, aided by Peder Wallenberg's Carpe Vitam trust had already begun a programme of purchasing and renovating historic buildings in the city. The American Research Centre's restoration of the Ottoman fort in the centre of Quseir started in 1998 was in turn associated with this programme. To quote Moser *et al* 2002:

'When work began in February 1999, the principal aims of the Community Archaeology Project were to discuss the nature of our proposed project with community representatives, to acquire feedback from as many people as possible concerning the creation of a community museum, to produce educational resources based on the site, to obtain people's views on their heritage and compile a video record of the excavation as it progressed.'
(Moser *et al* 2002: 227)

Working as part of this project, in 2003 Darren Glazier produced a detailed study of the relationship between local groups and the archaeology of the region, focusing on such themes as the history of the city, folklore traditions, economics, and the impact of tourism. This period of research in turn provided a foundation for my own analysis, started by my first period of fieldwork in September 2002.

However, prior to continuing in my study, the conceptual theory behind collaboration in archaeological practice needs to be addressed in more detail, I must firstly outline my own viewpoint regarding community archaeology. Indeed, it is this often differing viewpoint to the discipline that has shaped this very PhD research project and has led me to totally reconsider 'community archaeology', and in many ways to refute many aspects of its current applications.

The first point to arise is that as an archaeologist I do not enter into a group of people with the aim of giving selflessly to this so called 'community'. To begin with, the notion of community in Quseir is, as I have already discussed, problematic. Within such a diverse and complicated set of social and gender relations I could never hope to give anything of value to everyone, because a homogenous 'everyone' simply does not exist (for more on the problems of defining community, see Sen 2002). I do not work specifically as a kind of archaeological outreach officer, neither do I in anyway attempt to educate a given group of people – this is a patronising position. By following a collaborative archaeological approach I choose to disseminate and to make available my knowledge and the research that I conduct within and in collaboration with the people with whom I work. If my sole aim was to give to these individuals, I merely reaffirm my status as a giver, i.e. as someone situated in a position of power. For me a collaborative practice in archaeology is most useful as a way in which to forge new, engaged, ethical, humane and inspired research questions. It is a way to challenge traditional, dominant representations of history and it is a tool to deconstruct and to reword the dominant narratives about the past[9].

Secondly, at no point do I ever make a claim that I do not gain from the people with whom I conduct my research. I realise that in advocating collaboration, I take from the person that I collaborate with, as they in turn take from me. For instance, when working with colleagues from the local bazaar-shops of Quseir, I fully realise that I am appropriating their knowledge of certain storytelling traditions, whilst to them, as a foreign researcher who needs their help, I in turn act to legitimise their higher status in the society of the city, but more crucially to reassert that bazaar shop owner's status within the micro-politics of the local businessmen. Community archaeology is conscious of the needs of non-archaeologists, but it is wrong to present it as ethically superior to other strands of the discipline; it can never detach itself from an academic context without first articulating and foregrounding this detachment. As already stated, the groups of individuals that make up the population of Quseir are diverse and can be conflictual - as an alien to these complex series of relationships I acknowledge that my presence will have an effect, possibly increasing tension between certain groups, perhaps strengthening bonds in other situations.

Finally, much of my research is strictly about *unlearning* a great deal of what, as an archaeologist I have already learned. The focus of this, my specialist learning, is archaeological representation and therefore I choose to collaborate with non-archaeologists in order to re-examine this knowledge. The people of Quseir have been the trigger for this reassessment and so it is to them that I turn once more.

Quseir and the reassessment of a museum of Egyptian archaeology
A European view of Egypt

As we have seen Quseir has been the focus of many 'western' authors from the classics to more recent, European travel accounts and guides. If we look to Egypt as a whole we see a literary emphasis placed upon it as the cradle of civilisation, a biblical country and an ancient land. During the nineteenth century large numbers of European travellers flocked to the East. Egypt was a particularly popular destination, a country full of history; a landscape intimately linked to both the Old and the New Testament, a place of magicians, mummies and awe inspiring monuments (see figure 12). Giovanni Belzoni, James Bruce, Champollion, Vivant Denon, Edward Lane, Amelia Edwards, C.B. Klunzinger, Pierre Loti, Flinders Petrie, Gustave Flaubert, Gardiner Wilkinson, R. Talbot Kelly, Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon are just a few of the most well known characters to have fallen in love with Egypt and with Egyptian history in the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries (see Champion 2003; Fahim 2001; papers in Fortenberry 2007; Pick 1991; Irwin 2006; Reid 2002; Said 1978; papers in Starkey and El Daly 2000; papers

in Starkey and Starkey 2001)[10]. Central to their depictions of what was then (and continues to be) the predominantly Muslim population of the country was an inherent curiosity regarding Islamic religious practices, especially the following of the teaching of Muhammad as presented in the Qur'an. In *The Manner and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, Edward Lane was particularly enraptured by a *Hajj* (pilgrimage) procession in Cairo (see figure 14 for modern iconography of the *hajj*):

> 'Towards the end of "Safar" [the second month], the caravan of Egyptian pilgrims, returning from Mekkeh [sic] arrives at Cairo: hence this month is vulgarly called "Nezlett el-Hagg" (the Alighting of the Pilgrims) An officer called a "Shaweesh el-Hagg" arrives about four or five days before the caravan, having pushed on with two Arabs…He and his two companions exclaim as they pass along to the passengers in the way, "Blessing on the Prophet !" or, "Bless the Prophet!"…'
> (Lane 1833-5: 399-401, my brackets)

Earlier in this labyrinthine book, Lane devotes an entire chapter to the religion (and law) of the Muslims of 19th century Egypt (the fascination with Islamic religious practices is also clearly evidenced in images by traveller-artists such as Talbot Kelly, see figure 15). A concentration on the superstition seemingly inherent in Islamic faith is strongly emphasised in this discussion:

> 'It is further necessary that the Muslim should believe in the existence of angels and of good and evil genii; the evil genii being devils, whose chief is Iblees [Satan].'
> (Lane 1833-5: 54, my brackets)

C.B Klunzinger makes a similar observation in his *Upper Egypt: Its Products and Peoples*:

> 'A Moslim is never heard whistling a tune or anything else, especially at night, since the spirits are attracted by whistling. The respect with which the people regard the ginns is evidenced by the exclamation, in universal use, "with permission, ye blessed ones," when a person enters any room or pours out any water.'
> (Klunzinger 1878: 390)

Even Coptic Christians could be seen as somewhat mysterious, elusive and magical characters:

> 'So great is the aversion with which, like their illustrious ancestors, they regard all persons who are not of their own race, and so reluctant are they to admit such persons to any familiar discourse with them, that I had almost despaired of gaining an insight into their religious, moral and social state.'
> (Lane 1833-5: 489)

18th, 19th and early 20th century travellers found Egyptian superstition curious; they noted that religious faith, storytelling and metaphor were embodied in Islamic and even Coptic culture; in this it acted as an opposite, something to contrast against one's own beliefs and practices (see Said 1978). Often little to no emphasis was placed upon Egyptians as historians; generally they were portrayed instead as pious, yet occasionally irksome individuals; fond of a good tale, yet otherwise largely ignorant of the heritage of Egypt[11]. The Islamic and Coptic populations of Egypt were frequently described residing alongside the remains of the country's magnificent heritage, yet remaining rather distracted, nonplussed, even detached from their nation's past (though as demonstrated in the quotation above, out of the two groups, Copts were often more closely linked to ancient Egypt). Apparently these individuals were far more *economically*, than *historically* minded. Amelia Edwards comments upon this phenomenon when visiting Luxor in her Egyptian romp *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*:

> 'And now there is a rush of donkeys and donkey-boys, beggars, guides, and antiquities dealers, to the shore – the children scream for backshish; the dealers exhibiting strings of imitation scarabs; the donkey boys vociferating the names and praises of their beasts; all are alike in regarding us as their lawful prey.'
> (Edwards 1877:135)

For any non-Egyptian who has visited a large Egyptian town this description will perhaps be rather resonant, despite being written over one hundred years ago. However, an apparent lack of an indigenous interest in history is misleading[12], Edward Lane addressed something interesting when he described the 'public recitations of romances' as performed by travelling poets, specifically the romance of 'Aboo-Zeyd' (1833-5: 359-67, see figure 16)[13]. Here we have the clearest example of one of the most significant manners in which some elements of the population of Egypt in the 19th century animated their past

- through poetry and music, what an archaeologist would possibly label as literature or perhaps as 'folklore'[14]. An interest in history was firmly established in these places, the travellers, like me and scores of other visitors to Egypt have perhaps just not been looking in the right areas. Privileged, western travellers have their own cultural modes of understanding the past and their own storylines for portraying history - they even have their own iconic history as visitors to Egypt[15]. As we shall see, in the Bible and even to some degree in the emerging museums of the 18th and 19th centuries, Egypt was portrayed as the country of the Pharaohs, of magic, superstition, colossal architecture and monumental tombs, not necessarily the land of Muslim, Egyptian history and its historians (see Moser 2006, also see figure 17). For these stories we must turn elsewhere[16].

Rethinking the telling of the Egyptian past?

In April 2005 whilst sitting in a classroom in an Egyptian primary school on the southern outskirts of Quseir, an experience began to change the ways in which I perceived the concept of a museum of Egyptian heritage and subsequently began to make me rethink this entire research project. A small group of Ababda Bedouin pupils were enacting a folk performance driven by percussive hand clapping, drumming, dancing and chanting, what my colleagues Lamya Nasser el Nemr and Eman Attia Mustapha called *semsemia* or *tabbalah* (for more on Egyptian folk poetry and ballads see Cachia 1989; Lane 1836: 352-90; Hanna 1967, also see figure 18). A group of ten to eleven year old boys, led by one individual with another playing the lute-like *semsemia* itself, performed for nearly one hour. The performance was broken into several smaller pieces or episodes, each containing slightly different dance movements. At one point two members of the group picked up a pair of broken sticks and began striking them in the air. Soon afterwards one of the performers slung a discarded dress over his head and danced in front of the others[17].

When questioned about the object of the dance, Lamya and Eman seemed as confused as I was. The old dialect of the song was proving difficult to understand, though they both recognised this story as the *'Billal'*[18]. They knew the performance from school break-times, during which the Ababda children regularly formed a circle and began to dance and sing, yet the content itself remained something of a mystery. I was later informed over coffee with a colleague of mine, Amer Abdo Muhammed - a bazaar shop owner with a vast knowledge of Ababda folklore and poetry, that the sticks were probably indicative of swords, whilst the dress over the boy's head marked him as the heroine or love interest. The *Billal*, he said, may be a shortened term for the *Banu Hilal* epic, from which he believed the dance took its name[19]. Regardless of its title, he was positive that what I had been watching was actually a performance of Bedouin history.

Central to the aims of the Project has been the creation of a heritage centre in the modern city, a place where archaeological objects from the excavations of Quseir al-Qadim might be presented alongside displays based on the oral history of the local phosphate factory or the flourishing fishing industry of the 20th century. It was envisaged that such a heritage centre would function as a site for residents to interact with and also to actively participate in constructing their past (Moser *et al* 2002; Moser and Peacock 2001). Yet on that particular day in the classroom, I was introduced to an existing heritage centre, a 'museum without walls', and a far more literal 'memory theatre' than any academic analysis of this term has currently allowed for (see Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 91-2; Pearce 1999:vi; Yates 1966). The potential of the museum as an institution was brought strikingly to the fore as it was through that performance in that school that I was forced to recognise that a museum does not necessarily require archaeological objects to exist, nor even a physical display space. In this respect the performance moved beyond Hooper-Greenhill's 'post-museum' (2000). Even though she states that only once 'the museum is understood as a form of cultural politics, the post-museum will develop its identity' (2000: 162), I feel that in that classroom a different form of museum already existed – perhaps we do not need to place all of our trust in professional museology and wait patiently for the emergence of a 'post-museum'? As a scholar of archaeological representation I was forcefully reminded on that day that heritage can be constructed and consumed in the form of a performative narrative, set up in an improvised space with improvised materials and at an improvised time.

In response to the presence of archaeological folktales within the city, and to the epic poetry of the Ababda descendants living there, I have therefore been encouraged to begin to look at European museum displays of Egyptian archaeology in a completely different manner. Indeed, I have begun to consider whether museums of Egyptian heritage could actually use Egyptian epics or more literary, dramatic or performative modes of representation as an alternative narrative in the exhibition. Not simply through the inclusion of 'quaint' local tales, nor by simply incorporating performances, but by using Egyptian approaches to structure the content or message of the display and therefore as the driving force behind the choice of artefacts, the very flow of the exhibition and even the architecture of the display space. In Europe we are used to seeing traditional, scientific, chronological and thematic museum displays; exhibitionary structures and ideologies that have their origins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Anderson 1991; Bennett 1995, 2004; Crane 2000; Coombes 1988; Findlen 1989, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Jenkins 1992; Moser 2003; 2006). This thesis proposes that we allow room for other,

alternative structures of understanding and constructing knowledge in the museum environment. Not as outreach, but as another organisational framework that underlies future proposals for the display of Egyptian archaeological heritage in Egypt, and yet crucially in the UK as well.

In some circles the use of the archaeological or ethnographic object as a museum artefact is being called into question (see for example Lionnet 2001; Meskell 2004). Whilst the European 'collector' has been established for centuries, it is clear that in many other contexts – Egypt being one – the artefacts often take a more secondary role, secondary to the story itself and to the characters within the tale[20]. As Timothy Mitchell (1998) has noted, the object driven world of Europe has itself been seen as something of a curiosity by visiting Egyptian scholars. Indeed to the 19th century Egyptian novelist, Ali Mubarak, Parisian society was notable because of the local desire to simply stop and stare at old objects (1882:816)[21]. As we have learnt in Quseir, the telling of history is in many cases actually more important than the object(s) of the history itself[22]. This has the potential to challenge the way in which we perceive our own museological representations, encouraging us to consider other ways of representing the past of Egypt, ways that allow us to be more performative and poetic in our representation of Egyptian heritage.

It is here that this thesis finds its specific focus – if the object is somehow linked to a narrative, at times even secondary to it, what impact does this have on future museum displays (on the relationship between memory and the object; Jones 2007)? Indeed are museums in themselves actually a kind of representational device influenced by a specific and elitist set of western icons, representational conventions and memories (Moser 2006)? If they are then surely we must also seek to unlearn these manners of 'telling the past' and to instead spend a great deal of time attempting to understand Egyptian manners of animating history, trying somehow to integrate these icons and narratives into museums of Egyptian heritage, again not as simple 'outreach' but instead as an alternative museological storyline? Advances have been made in this area but nevertheless much still remains to be articulated (see Ardren 2002; papers in Peers and Brown 2003).

Would western visitors to museums of Egyptian archaeology ever be able to respond positively to narratives that were drawn from another tradition, even a modern Egyptian tradition? This is where my research has found its focus – if one firstly accepts the slightly contentious point that museums tell stories of sorts even when their main aim is teaching and education; then would it ever really be possible to encourage collections to incorporate and to tell *other* stories, narratives that the majority of its western visitors would have never

heard – the stories from Egypt herself? This is the question that has driven the research behind this thesis and so having introduced and problematised the idea of community archaeology, discussed the historical context of Quseir and finally considered and challenged the idea of a museum of Egyptian heritage, I now turn to my first major data set, and begin to detail and to articulate my response to the main questions that I have set myself in this introduction.

[1] See Merriman (1991) for more on sanctioned versus non-sanctioned approaches to the past.

[2] Also see Williams (1980) for a wider discussion of 'culture'.

[3] This is not to say that I do not recognise the worth of community archaeology projects as a whole, Traci Ardren's work in Mexico (2002) and Carol McDavid's (1997; 2002) ongoing research on slavery sites in the US are particularly good examples, though interestingly both authors rarely refer to themselves as 'community archaeologists' as such.

[4] The reader will notice that I do not focus in great depth upon afrocentric views of Egypt. Due to limitations of space I have had to make this decision, a decision formed mainly upon discussions with individuals in Quseir during which the afrocentric view has been raised in a positive manner, but rarely dwelt upon in any real detail (for more on afrocentric viewpoints regarding Egypt see Asante 1988; Bernal 1991; Carruthers and Harris 1997; papers in O'Connor and Reid 2003; Montserrat 2003: 116-23).

[5] Bir an-Nakhil bears the shrine/grave of the Bedouin sheikh Abu Rayaat (c. late 18th/early 19th century) (Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 325, see figure 8).

[6] See papers in Lunde and Porter (2004) for a wider discussion on Red Sea travel and trade during this period.

[7] 'Notice near-ruined buildings... lots of greens and yellows on the walls...cafés and coffee-houses everywhere...notice the regular and loud calling to prayer (5 times a day?)' (Personal Journal Entry: 21/09/02)

[8] For more information on the community archaeology and collaborative practice in Australia see Moser (1995); Vinnicombe (1995); Pardoe (1990, 1991). On indigenous critiques of archaeology in the US see Vine Deloria Jr (1969), contributions to Swidler *et al* (1997). On community archaeology more generally see Marshall (2002); Moser *et al* (2002); Glazier (2003).

[9] In this I am much influenced by the writing of Althusser (1977) and Butler (1990; 1993).

[10] As also seen in the BBC's recent series of programmes (*Egypt* [2005]).

[11] A depiction still extremely common in the modern world (see MacDonald and Shaw 2000; MacDonald 2004.).

[12] See Okasha el Daly (2005) for more.

[13] To be discussed in the next chapter.

[14] See papers in Gazin Schwartz and Holtorf (1999) for more on the relationship between archaeology and folklore.

[15] Often based on biblical imagery (albeit possibly subconsciously).

[16] Again I remain mindful that, as Irwin has recently pointed out, the Orientalist movement did attempt to paint a positive picture of the East, indeed in many respects the relationship between Orient and Occident is far more complicated than Said has given it credit for (Irwin 2006).

[17] The original performance was taped using a small Dictaphone left on a table in the classroom. It is acknowledged that the recording, as well as the presence of three foreign researchers would have affected the performance, perhaps making it significantly different to a recitation performed in front of an Islamic Ababda audience.

[18] This represents an area of conflict within the 'community' of Quseir, Ababda children are often misunderstood by teachers, like Lamya and Eman that received their training in the teaching colleges of Cairo.

[19] This famous epic of the Banu Hilal tribe focuses upon the many adventures of the heroic slave, Abu Zayd, probably based around the time of the group's eleventh century migration into Egypt (To be discussed below, see Ayoub 1984; Hourani 1991: 103-4; Lane 1836: 359-67; Slymovics 1987, for more on Bedouin society and poetry as whole see Alwaya 1977; Bailey, 1972, 2002; Lord 1960; Sowayan 1985; Tregenza 2004).

[20] On the history of European collecting see Arnold (2005); Pearce (1995); Pomian (1990); Shelton (2001a, 2001b).

[21] See Baudrillard (1996) for more on the relationship between collecting and western capitalist consumerism.

[22] This idea is also supported by the vast number of *Hajj* paintings on the walls of peoples' houses in Quseir. In these, small snatches from the relevant *Surahs* of the Qur'an, information on who went on the trip, how they got there and with whom they travelled are written alongside images of the *Hajjis* themselves. Whereas in Europe a traveller may bring back a selection of objects or souvenirs to signify an important journey, in Quseir it would appear that the status of the pilgrim or traveller is as often revealed through the actual *telling* of the journey in highly stylised calligraphy and imagery painted on the outside walls of their house (see below, for more on role of Quseir as a *Hajj* port see Klunzinger 1878: 272; Glazier 2003; for an introduction to the *Hajj* itself see Crone 1987; Findley 1989; Peters 1994).
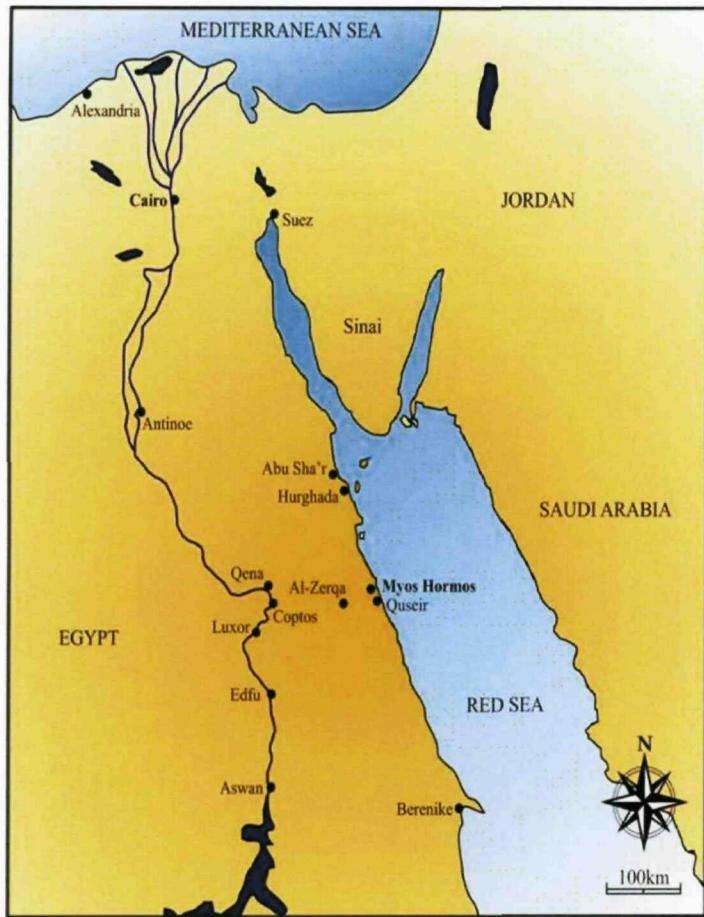
Figures 1 and 2. Left: Map of Egypt showing Quseir and Myos Hormos (Quseir al-Qadim),(created by Julian Whitewright). **Below**: Back street of modern Quseir.
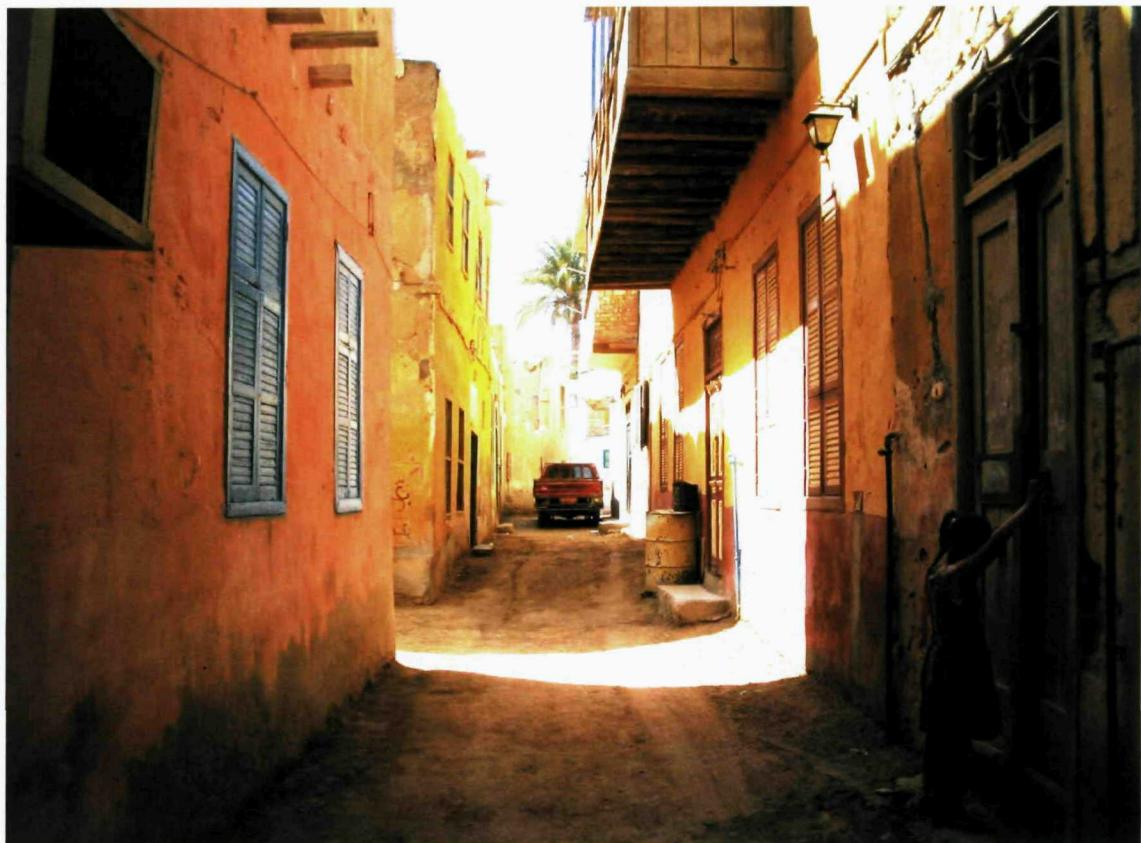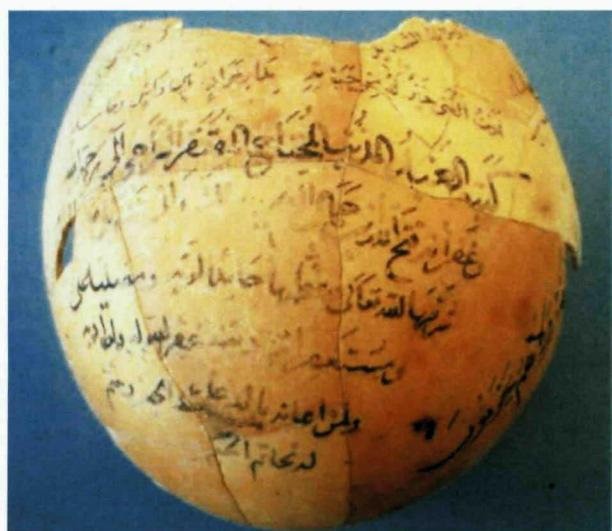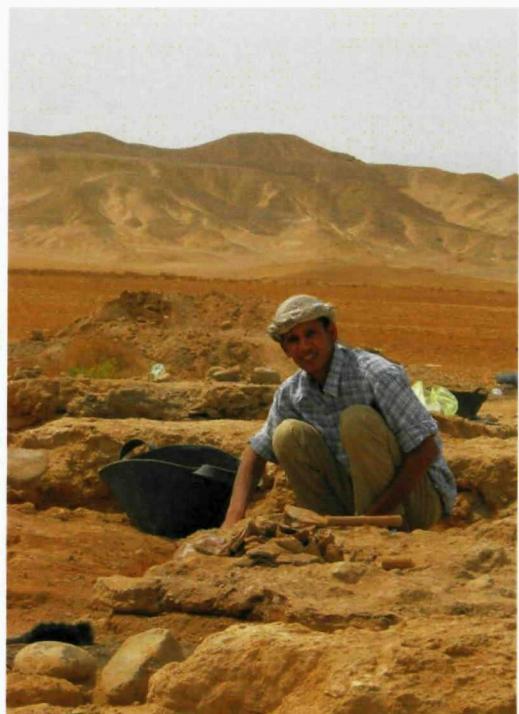
Figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Moving left to right, from top left: Mamluk coin horde, excavator, Ostrich egg inscribed with lines from the Qur'an, mummified cat, and Roman amphorae.
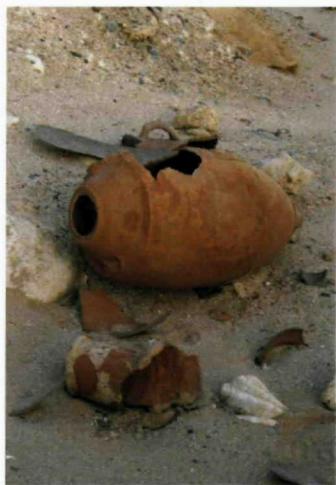
Figures 8, 9, and 10. Above: Bir an-Nakhil (from Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 314). **Left:** Roman amphora at Quseir al-Qadim. **Below:** The port of Quseir showing the old pontoon and loading crane.

Figures 11 and 12. Right: *Fellah Pilgrims*, C.B. Klunzinger, 1878. **Left:** *Traveller's Boat at Ibrim*, Francis Frith, 1857.

Figure 13: The port of Quseir c.1800. Unprovenanced engraving given to the author by Amer Abdo Muhammad.
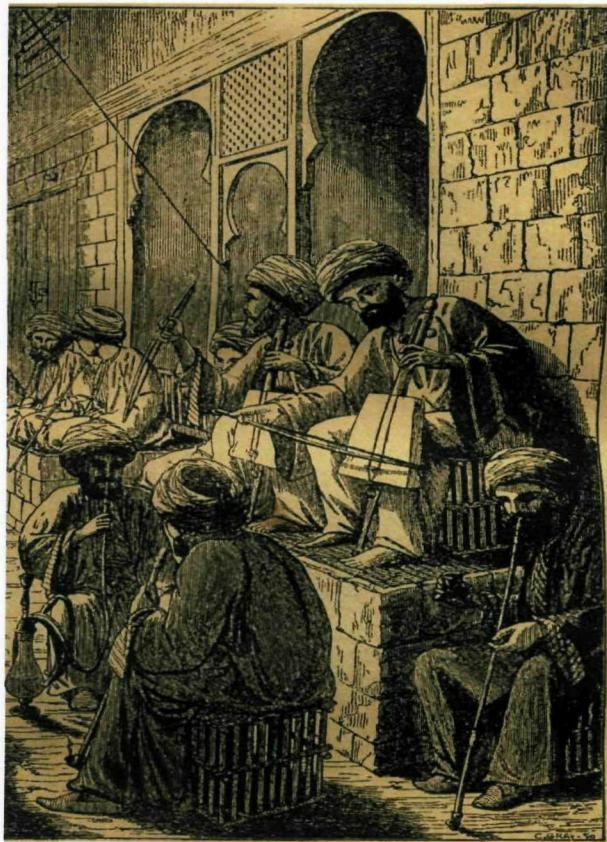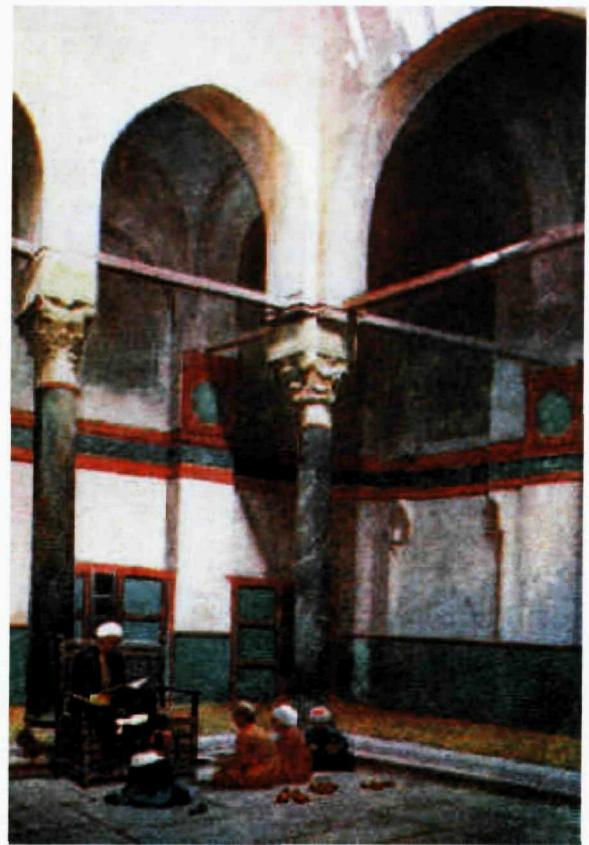
Figures 14, 15 and 16. Clockwise from top left: *Hajj* painting in Quseir, depicting the *hajjis* and their modes of transport to Mecca; 19th /20th century views of Islamic Egypt: *Sebeel of the Mosque of the Sultan Kelaun* from Talbot Kelly (1912: 55). An alternative telling of the past? *A Sha'er, with his accompanying Violinist,* from Lane (1836: 359).

Figures 17 and 18. Above: A European view of Egypt? *ANNO DOMINI* by Edwin Long (1883). **Left:** A performance of Ababda Bedouin history, Quseir, 2005.

Chapter One

Telling our past? Literary icons and the rise of the museum in Britain

Hundreds of visitors enter the British Museum's ancient Egyptian sculpture galleries every day (figures 19 and 20). The first sight to greet them is the Rosetta stone, standing majestically within its glass cabinet and more than likely enshrined within a group of excited people. If one continues to walk in a straight line via the Stone, you travel between great Assyrian sentinels figure 21). Blocking your path into Smirke's popular yet politically fiery Parthenon galleries is a lone figure; a bronze statue of a youth[1]. When wandering past his eyes meet yours. Turning to your left you notice an imposing statue of Dionysos, God of wine and the chosen patron of many writers and artists (figure 22); together they seemingly act as a final encounter prior to arriving at the Marbles themselves. Bathed in white sunlight, the architecture of the Parthenon gallery appears to aspire to heaven itself (figure 23). For a moment let us imagine this same route, this path from the ancient Egyptian sculpture galleries to the Parthenon Marbles, only in a different manner. Let us overlay that great 14th century spiritual autobiography of Dante Alighieri *The Divine Comedy* upon this same site. Using both Sisson's (1993) blank verse translation and David Higgins' plan of the poem we may observe some rather interesting similarities (1993: 28-33). Firstly we see that the story begins within a dark, primeval forest. Described in *terza rima*[2] stanzas, Dante wanders lost and surrounded by wild animals (for more on the links between the forest and the concept of primitiveness and human prehistory see Moser 1998):

> 'Half way along the road we have to go,
> I found myself obscured in a great forest,
> Bewildered, and I knew I had lost the way
>
> It is hard to say just what the forest was like,
> How wild and rough it was, how overpowering;
> Even to remember it makes me afraid.'
> (Dante *Inferno* 1993: 47)

Leopard, lion and she-wolf stalk Dante as he struggles towards a hill within a desert. They frequently block his path and eye him hungrily. Afraid, he heads back for the lower slopes, there meeting Virgil, his guide:

> 'While I rushed headlong to the lower slopes
> Before my eyes a man offered himself,

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One who, for long silence seemed to be hoarse.'
(Dante *Inferno* 1993: 48)

Virgil offers help to lead Dante on his long journey through hell and Purgatory, but not to heaven itself describing that he is a rebel in God's eyes:

'The course I think will be best for you

Is to follow me, and I will act as your guide,

And show a way out of here, by a place in eternity.'
(Dante *Inferno* 1993: 50)

To which Dante happily agrees:

'Lead me now as you have promised to do,

So that I come to see St Peter's Gate...'
(Dante *Inferno* 1993: 51)

I am not going to state that the galleries deliberately ape *The Divine Comedy*, and that all visitors are encouraged to feel somewhat like 21st century Dante Alighieri's, but I do wish to draw attention to the ways in which a subconscious, epic structure appears to fit with the layout of the museum. The primeval forest and the Egyptian sculpture galleries seem uncannily similar both act to overpower the senses and to dwarf the onlooker. The primeval forest has strange, exotic animals prowling in it; the sculpture gallery has unusual beasts and animalistic Egyptian gods. Even the stone obelisks add to the feeling of being amongst the enormous boughs of trees. As Dante begins his journey out of the forest, he metaphorically mimics the evolutionary climb from the ancient Egyptian to the Greek civilisations as espoused in the Museums layout (on the 'chain of art' see Winckelmann 1764; Jenkins 1992; Moser 2006). There he meets Virgil; the visitor encounters a bronze Grecian youth and a vision of the poetic patron Dionysos; Dante travels to St Peters, the visitor; to the Parthenon rooms. Like an epic poem, the narrative within the museum exists not only on a national but also on a *supranational* scale. Hegel's hierarchy of art styles underpins this narrative (1835-8 [1998]). The visitor moves from a primitive search for the artistic idea to the more refined, classical search for beauty, finally arriving in a gallery dedicated to the celebration of the romantic vision of unity expressed by the Marbles themselves.

Forgetting viewing the British Museum in isolation for a moment, one could argue that at its basis the museum as an *institution* tells us a good story, a tale specific to a privileged western upbringing. It uses objects; it structures them in a manner giving them meaning that in turn

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forms a narrative (see Arnold 2005; Crane 2000; Moser 2006). On the surface it would appear that it is a scientific, didactic and 'true' picture of history. Yet, this narrative can nevertheless be viewed in light of a study of history and poetic heritage influenced in part by Giambattista Vico's *New Science* (1722[1948]) and this is what is intended in the next two chapters[3].

The argument is this: from the seventeenth to the close of the nineteenth century, literature and the museum can be studied alongside one another as ways in which the past has been kept alive in western culture. It may be seen that in one form or another, many of the most popular icons used in the poetry and prose of these periods actually crossed into the museum environment. When I say 'crossed into' I mean that these establishments grew in light of the humanist and scientific developments of the time, but they also grew in light of a particular literary history and the then contemporary developments in this literature, this shared collective memory (Malleuve 1999). Understandably these 'developments' were largely peculiar to Europe, and as such have led museums as we know them to often tell elite privileging, western stories, even when concentrating on non-western artefacts. Indeed, through the evocation of classical myth, the focus on the ruins of the ancient landscape and the concentration upon the romantic heroes and heroines of times past, the modern museum in Britain learnt and borrowed a great deal from Romanticism, or more specifically from the elite and the gentry[4].

This chapter begins by outlining the context through which history has been understood. It is a selected view of the past in classical and then later in English literature up to the Renaissance, before finally focusing on the seventeenth century. Chapter two then turns to the Restoration and the eighteenth century. Finally I close the analysis of these preliminary chapters by comparing the representation of history by the museum with that of Romanticism, considering the question of whether museums themselves ever follow a romantic storyline. Through the first of these sections I address the initial thrust of my argument, in that I present the most utilised ways of 'telling the past' comparing these with contemporary developments in museology. I turn to the second aspect of it in the final section in which I argue that the modern museum in Britain continues to offer an epic, heroic, biblical and truly romantic as well as scientific narrative. Unsurprisingly, this often uniquely elitist, European storyline is noticeably different to that which another, in our case Muslim/Upper Egyptian/Red Sea society would use to tell and to remember the past.

The 'literary' past

From the oft cited first 'epics' of the European world, Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad,* history has remained a popular focus for literature. Particular tropes have been repeated time and again as have particular storylines. From ancient Egypt through to today's 'postmodern' world, the past

has demanded a poetic treatment, a rumination common in just about every aspect of ancient and modern literature. It remains somewhat unsurprising therefore that similar modes of communicating the past would influence European museums, especially when the first of these collections grew out of an environment in which the collector occupied a position within a scholarly, often aristocratic society; a society dominated by the Bible, the writings of the classical world and the literature of their contemporaries (see Arnold 2005; Impey and MacGregor 1985; MacGregor 1983; Pomian 1990; Shelton 1994 for more). Before addressing the impact of these narratives upon the museum though, it is important to first have some idea of the most significant ways in which history was represented in the period prior to the Renaissance.

The classical epic

In his translation of the Greek myths, Robert Graves rightly suggested that western society cannot be properly understood without a thorough knowledge of classical myth (1960 [1992]: 1). Indeed, as shall soon become clear, one of the major modes of portraying historical events is the epic, a poetic form prototyped by *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, yet some elements are also present in a shorter form within ancient Egyptian writing[5]. The epic essentially seeks to relate heroic events on a grand scale; it is very long and the action it depicts acts on the national and frequently the supranational stage. To Aristotle the epic is second only to the tragedy, although in later writing the two poetic types merged somewhat (Aristotle 1996: 9). Myth played a central role in the evocation of the past within these early accounts.

Turning to *The Odyssey*, from the start it sets the scene for the truly epic poem that follows; notably beginning by invoking the Muse and introducing the hero upon which it focuses, Odysseus; a man intimately linked with the historical sacking of Troy (heroic sculpture is often an integral part of museum display, i.e. see figure 24):

> 'The man, O Muse inform, that many a way
> Wound with his wisdom to his wished stay;
> That wandered wondrous far, when he the town
> Of sacred Troy had sack'd and shivered down...'

The heroic poem of unknown date and authorship, *Beowulf*, represents the oldest English epic; Milton's, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* are probably the most significant later examples. Historical events are frequently the foci of these early poems; an almost nostalgic remembrance of things past and of the grand tales of the heroes of these times.

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Several key Anglo Saxon texts survive, most notably Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and within it what is probably the earliest extant Old English poem, *Caedmon's Hymn*. Importantly the hymn tells of the Creation, and as such the origins of humankind (see Abrams and Greenblatt *et al* 2000:23-4). However as *Beowulf* is significantly longer and more intact than *Caedmon's Hymn* it is to this that our attention shall be turned (Homer 2002: 13). *Beowulf* would have to be the most likely of any poem to really establish the 'historical' epic within Anglo Saxon Britain and crucially for the purposes of this chapter, the poem provided for its first audiences, as well as its later ones, a good story about their ancestors (see Alexander 2003; Baker 2000; Bradley 1982; Davis 1966; Mitchell and Robinson 1998; Robinson 1985, 1993; Whitelock 1958). It does not take a large leap of the imagination to draw parallels between this and the drive behind aspects of the museum.

The poem itself speaks of a heroic age, similar to that described by classical authors such as Hesiod (see Moser 1998: 22-26; Hesiod 1972: 156-66). It deals with the life and death cycle of the main character in an expansive, epic range and scope; the heroic generation is born it then blooms, flourishes and finally it dies. The poem begins with arrival of the hero of Scyld and the corresponding foundation of the Scylding dynasty. It ends with Beowulf's death and the near imminent destruction of the Geatish people. Beowulf's main sanctuary, Heorot the great hall of Hrothgar, acts in many respects like a microcosm of Creation:

> '...there was the music of the harp,
>
> the clear song of the poet, perfect in his telling
>
> of the remote first making of man's race.
>
> He told how long ago, the Lord formed the Earth,
>
> a plain bright to look on locked in ocean,
>
> exulting established the sun and the moon
>
> as lights to illuminate the land dwellers...'
>
> (Alexander 2003: 6)

At this point in the story, we notice a theme that becomes very prevalent in later writings; a focus on the biblical past (albeit through the medium of the epic). This emphasis appears again in the tale when Beowulf's fearsome foe, the monster *Grendel* is described:

> '*Grendel* they called this cruel spirit,
>
> the fell and fen his fastness was,
>
> the march his haunt. This unhappy being
>
> had long lived in the land of monsters

since the Creator cast them out

as kindred of Cain. For that killing of Abel

the eternal Lord took vengeance.'

(Alexander 2003: 6)

The evil presence of the story, Grendel, finds his routes in biblical history. He comes from the spawn of Cain, cursed by God as a punishment for the murder of Abel. In this respect the poem is directly casting the roots of its characters back to the Old Testament, again something noticeable in later works and, as we shall also see, a tradition that the museum in Britain (and indeed in Europe as a whole) borrows from in its remembrances of the past. Finally the description of Beowulf's burial merits closer inspection, for shortly before passing away Beowulf orders a tomb to be built to commemorate himself:

'Bid men of battle build me a tomb

fair after fire, on the foreland by the sea

that shall stand as a reminder of me to my people,

towering high above Hronesness

so that ocean travellers shall afterwards name it

Beowulf's barrow, bending in the distance

Their masted ships through the mists upon the sea.'

(Alexander 2003: 100)

It would seem that the tomb has become, like Beowulf, a marker of the heroic age; a reminder of the ancestors and of their amazing exploits[6].

Early medieval histories

Moving forward to the twelfth century, authors writing in Latin, Anglo-Norman French and Middle English, created a legendary history of Britain for their Norman overlords. These histories were set in a remote past like the majority of the examples discussed, and each began with a foundation myth modelled on Virgil's *Aenied*, ending with the conquest of the Anglo Saxons; a clearly progressive narrative of a structure not unlike the evolutionary and nationalistic storylines familiar to modern museum visitors (see Anderson 1991; Bennett 1995, 2005). The main architect of these was Geoffrey of Monmouth. His *History of the Kings of Britain* offers what is perhaps the earliest recognisable tale of the mythical King Arthur, and through his discription of the Britons' foundation by Brutus, the great grandson of Aeneas, one of the earliest discussions of Britain's Roman past[7]:

'Brutus, where the sun sets beyond the kingdoms of Gaul,

Is an isle in the ocean, closed all around by the sea.

Once on a time giants lived on that isle in the ocean,

but now it stands empty and ready to receive your people.'

(Geoffrey, trans. David, in Abrams and Greenblatt *et al* 2000: 117)

Somewhat like Aeneas' foundation of Rome, Diana advises Brutus to seek to establish a new Troy in Britain (thus giving the island its name). How often does one see schoolchildren walking through the classically inspired architecture of the British or Ashmolean Museums for example, observing sculpture and other Roman and Greek objects? Albeit scientifically 'tweaked' to be a more 'reliable' foundation myth, it is apparent that as Graves noted, the classical past is nonetheless still important to the learning of British (especially English) heritage nearly a thousand years after it dominated Geoffrey's original histories. Nevertheless one should remain mindful that this resurgence was as much a result of fashionable 19th century classicism and therefore was not necessarily derived from an unbroken, linear iconographic heritage dating back to Geoffrey and beyond.

The Bible

The Bible is perhaps the single most important milestone upon which so many of the historical representations in the modern western world have found their source;[8]. Ranging from the Dead Sea scrolls through to the King James edition of 1611 and the New Jerusalem of the 1960's; this theological milestone has had a profound impact on the investigation and portrayal of the past[9]. It is within the Bible that we see the introduction of many of the key themes explored in history and in turn in museums (see Moser 1998: 39-65 for more on the role of the Bible in the representation of human ancestry, also see Assman 1997 on the relationship between western monotheism and ancient Egypt; see figure 25 for an example of a biblical icon in the British Museum). Indeed it was through *Genesis* that the most pervasive discussion of the origins of the world was created.

The medieval paradigm of history envisaged the world as being of a recent, supernatural origin[10] and it was thought unlikely that it would last much beyond another few thousand years. Humanity was created by God in the Garden of Eden, located in the Near East and was generally seen as being in a fairly advanced stage of decay in the medieval period (see Harris 1968; Slotkin 1965: 36-7; Trigger 1989: 31-35). As noted previously, biblical elements were already clearly evidenced within Anglo Saxon poetry; when the distant past was discussed it was often evoked in the form of the Old Testament, particularly The Creation and the tale of Cain and Abel (in the case of *Beowulf*). However, the Bible is even more directly addressed in a unique manuscript in

the Bodleian library (MS Junius XI). This document attributed to some point between 650 and 1000AD contains (amongst other stories) the tales of Exodus and Daniel, retold in standard heroic, epic form (not unlike that used in *Beowulf*, see Burroughs Irving 1953; Hunt 1893; Lucas 1977; Tolkein 1981). In this we see some of the oldest English interpretations of the Bible, and crucially the oldest English interpretations of one of the most popular of all the ancient peoples; the Egyptians, embodied in the figure of the wicked Pharaoh and focusing on his conflicts with Moses and the Israelites. In this story was born one of the most lasting interpretations of Egyptian heritage ever seen, the despotic, magical pagan nation, so fascinated with the dead that they erected huge pyramid-like sepulchres to remember them. They also created great treasure cities:

> 'Therefore they (the Egyptians) did set over them (the Israelites) taskmasters to
> afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pi-thom
> and Ra-am-ses.'
> (2, Exodus 1:11, my brackets)

In 1380 John Wycliffe began the first English translation of the Bible. This was followed in 1525 by William Tynedale's and perhaps the most famous British edition emerged in 1611 under James I (see Worth 2000). It is not my concern to discuss religious reflections on the past, but nonetheless it can be seen that biblical representations are evoked time and again. In turn it may be argued that, (especially in the case of Egypt), biblical portrayals were reflected in the analysis of the ancients by early scholars, in turn crossing into their first collections. As the chapter progresses, I will return to the Bible's representation of the past. In terms of popularity only the classics come close to it within the pantheon of writers to be discussed next. Crucially a more scientific approach to the human antiquity grew, yet the Bible continued to exert a strong iconographic and interpretative hold, nevertheless.

The seventeenth century: the rise of the museum

To recap on the argument so far; the classics brought the epic form and with it a concentration on 'heroic' characters and legendary exploits to the representation of the past. The era in focus was brought to life by memorable people and the memorable events surrounding them, as opposed to an intimate discussion of the period as a whole. In turn the Bible provided a creation and termination myth for humankind, in a progressive, third person narrative. Like the classics, it focused on the great men (primarily) and women of history and their correspondingly great actions. It was through these people that past times were evoked and remembered. The Bible also brought to the masses' attention civilisations such as the ancient Egyptians (embodied by Pharaoh, and to some degree Moses) and in doing so introduced some of the most pervasive and popular *icons of these peoples*[11]. *The classics, but perhaps more so the Bible, were in turn*

mediated through Anglo Saxon poetry, in which creation myths were mixed into the epic format and new characters, such as Beowulf, were added. After the Norman conquest of 1066, the Bible and increasingly the classical authors provided the main sources for understanding the past and the central components for the stories of history. Once more heroes such as Arthur and Brutus were introduced and legendary histories focusing on their marvellous tales were produced. These suitably flattered the Norman monarchy whilst somewhat 'forgetting' the Anglo Saxon past. Alongside these, new English translations of the Bible increased in circulation whilst popular Middle Age 'mystery' plays brought familiar religious stories of the past to life (and yet also mimicked and thus 'remembered' Greek and Roman drama). In turn a gradual rise in interest of the classical world became increasingly noticeable (see Schnapp 1996).

The sixteenth century context

In the hundred or so years immediately preceding the onset of the seventeenth century, the world of the scholar was a rapidly changing one. In the mid-fifteenth century society had been revolutionised by the creation of William Caxton's printing press, books were now easier to mass produce leading to a rise in their potential readership[12]. The 1500s witnessed a growth in expeditions to the New World and in turn an increase in travel literature (see Hulton 1977, 1978, 1984, 1985; Hulton and Quinn 1964; Moser 1998: 66-85). Through new works such as Amerigo Vespucci's *New World and far Voyages* (1504) and later Thomas Harlot's *A Brief and True Report of Virginia* (1588), the reader was introduced to an expanding world, and in turn a whole host of new plants, animals and peoples[13]. The voyages to the New World themselves influenced the early images of ancient Britons in the costume books of Lucas De Heere, and inspired those of Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues and John White (for reproductions of these images and further discussion see Moser 1998: 66-71, also see Cust 1894; Yates 1959)[14] [15].

Contemporary with a rise in travel literature came a growth in explicitly political works such as Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532) and Baldessare Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1528). In these the ambitious world of the aristocrat was brought to the fore and to some degree unmasked, giving an impression of the fashion of the times for the dissection of the workings of the royal court (see Payne and Hunter 2002 for more). Alongside the popularity of the epic and possibly inspired by a scholarly emphasis on classical works such as Aristotle's *Poetics,* the tragedy also increasingly exerted its literary grip. This is clearly observable by the emergence of Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc,* the first English blank verse example of the tragic form (1565; Gassner 1987: 403-454 for reproduction).

All of the above united to form a particular iconographic context at the turn of the 16th century. Expanding worlds led, like the epic, to an increased concentration on the supranational; in turn

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the tragedy as an English poetic and dramatic form began to rise in popularity. Bacon, Copernicus, Machiavelli and Castiglione brought with them a focus on science and politics (see Vickers 1996). Meanwhile Tynedale's translation of the Bible emerged in 1525; accompanied by the later introduction of *The Book of Common Prayer* in 1549. Christopher Marlowe's eastern historical epic *Tamburlaine the Great* began to be performed around 1587 to 1590. William Shakespeare emerged as a key playwright, bringing with him a particularly historically-orientated viewpoint inspired by the Miracle play and Everyman heritage, and the Globe Theatre itself opened in 1599. English myth, Ackroyd notes, had a significant impact upon the historical writing of Shakespeare:

> 'When Shakespeare reached towards the remote past, too, he re-created the English myths
> of Lear and Cymbeline which had previously lingered in the pages of old romances...In
> the simplicity of King Lear, in its pure and unattenuated beat of doom, it is possible to
> glimpse the outlines of the medieval morality plays in which the individual man upon the
> earth, or Everyman, submits himself to the divine will.'
> (Ackroyd 2004: 225).

Additionally Edmund Spenser's great epic *The Faerie Queen* (1589-96) acted as an elegy to Queen Elizabeth I, through the evocation of the classical myths and stories of King Arthur. Spenser himself discusses the merits of historical fiction in the introductory letter to his great work:

> 'I conceived (the poem) shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured
> with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read...'
> (Spenser 1611: ii, my brackets)

The birth of the museum

With the rise of *humanism* and possibly in light of what Spenser called the delight in 'historicall fiction', the sixteenth century saw the emergence on the continent of the early collections that have become known as *Wunderkammern* or 'cabinets of curiosities' (see MacGregor and Impey 1985; Mauries 2002; Pomian 1990, also see figure 26). The sixteenth century scholar, Francis Bacon gave a succinct outline for one of these early museums in his *Gesta Grayorum* of 1594:

> 'First, the collecting of a most perfect and general library, wherein whosoever the
> wit of man hath heretofore committed to books of worth...may be contributory
> to your wisdom. Next, a spacious, wonderful garden wherein whatsoever plant the
> sun of divers climate, or the earth out of divers moulds either wild or by the
> culture of man brought forth may be...set and cherished: this garden to be built

about with rooms to stable in all rare beasts and so to cage in all rare birds…And so you have in small compass a model of the universal nature made private. The third a goodly huge cabinet, wherein whatsoever the hand of man by exquisite art or engine has made rare in stuff, form or motion…whatsoever Nature has wrought in things that want life and may be kept; shall be sorted and included.'
(Francis Bacon, *Gesta Grayorum* 1594)

The cabinet of curiosity first began to appear in Italy with the fifteenth century Medici collection in Florence being one of the most significant examples (e.g. Alsop 1982; Alexander 1979: 20; Hooper Greenhill 1992; Moser 2006: 11-32). By the late 1500s these 'proto-museums' had become commonplace across Europe. Although varied, the early exhibitions were linked by their attempts to produce a model or story of universal nature and thus to replicate God's 'great macrocosm' (see Impey and Macgregor 1985; Hooper Greenhill 1992 and Pomian 1990). Some significant examples included: the *kunstkammer* ('art cabinet') by Franz Franken the Younger (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 80-3), the collection of Rudolf II at Prague (Fucikova 1985), the sixteenth and seventeenth century Italian collections of Ulisse Aldrovandi and Antonio Giganti (Laurencich-Minelli 1985), Ferrane Imperato's cabinet in Naples (Olmi 1985), the *studiolo* of Archduke Ferdinand II at Schloss Ambras and Francesco Calceolari's cabinet in Verona (Olmi 1985, see figure 26) (see Impey and MacGregor 1985; Mauries 2002; Moser 2006; Schulz 1994 for more). The seventeenth century *Ark* of the two John Tradescants remains the most studied British example of the period (see MacGregor 1983; Pearce 1999). The spirit of collecting firmly permeated the social circles of the English aristocracy; Charles I, the Earl of Arundel and the Duke of Buckingham all competitively imported Greek and Roman art into the country during the seventeenth century (see Impey and MacGregor 1985, for more on collecting see Pomian 1990).

The cabinets grew in light of the advances of science and humanism, but they also retained a fascination for the tales of the Bible (it will be remembered they sought to mimic God's universe[16]), the epic format and in turn a penchant for the 'heroic' figures of the past[17]. Additionally, the seventeenth century saw the inclusion of a focus on the tragic, the increasing use of the object 'as emblem' and the introduction of the conceit, exemplified by John Donne and the perhaps (mis-named) 'metaphysical poets' of the period.

Epic, tragedy and the Garden of Eden

Whilst Frances Bacon concentrated on the natural sciences his contemporary Robert Burton instead turned his attention towards the inner self. His treatise *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) analysed in minute detail the Jacobean malady 'melancholy', which, according to the *humor theory*

of the time, was caused by an excess of black bile. Scholars, philosophers and artists were particularly vulnerable as evidenced in an early case study:

> 'Democritus, as he is described by Hippocrates and Laertius, was a little wearish old man, very melancholy by nature, averse from company in his latter days and much given to solitariness, a famous philosopher in his age *coaevus*[18] with Socrates, wholly addicted to his studies...'
>
> (Burton 1621 in Abrams and Greenblatt 2000: 1563.)

A focus on the melancholy as defined by Burton was also present in works such as John Donne's *An Anatomy of the World* (1611) and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (c.1667). The Jacobean and Stuart fascination with the melancholic and tragic was in turn carried into their reflections upon the past. In *An Anatomy of the World* Donne evoked the importance of remembering the ancestors through the use of the tomb (as discussed earlier in regards to *Beowulf*):

> 'Death bars reward and shame: when the envy's gone,
>
> And gain, 'tis safe to give the dead their own.
>
> As then the wise Egyptians[19] wont to lay
>
> More on their tombs than houses: these of clay,
>
> But those of brass or marble were: so we
>
> Give more unto thy ghost, than unto thee.'
>
> (Donne 1996: 26-30)

Tombs became increasingly prevalent icons when reflecting upon the past. To Donne it seemed more important for society to honour the resting place, the impressive, expansive memorial monument than it did to honour the person whom it remembered[20]. The skull and the relic from the burial also became key emblems when musing upon times past. This melancholic and tragic air, this malady that seemed to surround the scholars themselves, became integral to the image of members of a learned and artistic society, in turn growing into somewhat of an art form in the Romantic period. Furthermore where once the epic remembered the past as a heroic creation myth, it now became tinged with a hint of tragedy; Donne's *Progress of the Soul* and more so, Milton's *Paradise Lost* demonstrated this.

Set in heaven, hell, primordial chaos and the earth itself, Milton's great epic *Paradise Lost* is essentially about the human condition, and crucially the ultimate cause of human woe, the eating of the forbidden fruit of Eden and Adam and Eve's corresponding fall from grace:

'This first book presupposes, first in brief, the whole subject, man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed: then touches on the prime cause of his fall, the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent.'
(Milton 2003: I, 1-4)

In the introduction to the second edition of 1674 the measure of the poem is stated as 'English heroic verse without rhyme, similar to that employed by Homer and Virgil' (2003: ii, 1-2). The classical epic in this case was still the pre-eminent form for the discussion of the past. The tragic, the 'melancholy' discussed previously emerges most potently at the end of the poem, when Adam and Eve are ejected from Eden and humankind's greatest punishment is meted out. However *Paradise Lost* is also a tale intimately linked to the political and scientific questions at stake in the English revolution, it asks its readers to make difficult decisions and to rethink certain key contemporary topics[21]. Crucially, although ultimately tragic, it also reveals an underlying theme of the times; the possibility of replicating the Garden of Eden through the study of natural history and the collecting of botanical specimens (as evidenced in Edwards 2000, on the English garden in general see Coffin 1994)[22]. Through his detailed discussions of the natural world, Milton demonstrated the ways in which the arts, like the early museums, were re-reading the world in the 17th century. The epic format still dealt with heroic protagonists, in this case embodied by the characters of Adam, Eve, Satan, Beelzebub and Abdiel, yet it also turned its eye towards a detailed description of the natural world as created by God. Here, as Webster notes in the *Great Instauration* (1975) one notices the impact of the Puritan Revolution and Baconianism upon the growth of science during the 17th century:

'Out of the ground up rose
As from his lair the wild beast where he wons
In forest wild, in thicket, in brake, or den;
Among the trees in pairs they rose, they walked:
The cattle in fields and meadows green:
Those rare and solitary, these in flocks
Pasturing at once, and in broad herds unsprung.
The grassy clods now calved, now half appeared
The tawny lion, pawing to get free
His hinder parts, then springs as broke from bonds
And rampant shakes his brinded mane; the ounce,
The libbard, and the tiger, as the mole
Rising, the crumbled earth above them threw
In hillocks; the swift stag from underground

Bore up his branching head: scarce from his mould

Behemoth biggest born of the earth upheaved

His vastness: fleeced the flocks and bleating rose,

As plants: ambiguous between sea and land

The river horse and scaly crocodile.'

(Milton 2003: VII.456-74)

In Robert Hubert's catalogue of 1664 we see the following entries[23]:

'A strange horne of a *Virginia Deere*

A strange horne of a *German Raine Deere*

    *   *   *

A Male and Female *Barbarouses* heads, either of them as big as a Swines head; it is a

strange beast of the Deserts of *East India...*

A strange tusk of a great *Boar...*'

(Hubert cited in Edwards 2000: 115)

The Tradescants' catalogue in turn has (amongst sundry other strange creatures) an 'Alegator or Crocodile, from Aegypt', a 'Lions head and teeth' and a 'Tygers head' (Tradescant 1656: 5-6). Clearly cross over points are observable here; we see the presence in the 17th century collections of the defining feature of the Renaissance epic poem, *maraviglia*, 'the marvellous', of which Tasso argued in his *Discourses on the Heroic Poem* as specifically having the 'purpose of moving the mind to wonder' (Tasso 1973: 21).   These collections were in many ways a kind of three dimensional epic, they too were aware of the tragic, the melancholy remembrance of The Fall, yet like Milton, they pointed to a way back. For the cabinets this redemption was instigated by having an extensive number of specimens from the natural world.   By replicating the Garden of Eden through these vast collections the owners metaphorically reclaimed it for humankind; in doing so they began to encourage an epistemological extending of the life span of a world that was but recently seen as being in its last throws of existence (see Edwards 2000: 154-203; Trigger 1989: 55)[24].

Heroes, villains and 'man'

Some argue that *Paradise Lost* portrayed Satan as the first romantic character in literary history (e.g. Leonard 2003). Whether this is the case remains open to debate, however one can say with a degree of certainty that throughout the 16th, and more so the 17th century, alongside the continued popularity of Christian and classical idols there was a growing emphasis on the more unsavoury characters of history (see Woudhuysen 1992 for examples of this, figures 27 and 28

show examples of heroic or grand characters of the past in museum display – frequently in the form of classical/ancient gods and goddesses). The importance of the iconic historical figure in literature has been highlighted time and again in this chapter, and it will be remembered that in many respects these people came to embody the period in question. Biblical figures like Pharaoh, Herod and Satan, and the Anglo Saxon Grendel demonstrated that the historical 'anti-hero' or opponent was a key element to the invocation of past events. Through the 1500s and 1600s these characters came to be portrayed in ever more complex ways. Milton's Satan is in many respects a more romantic than evil persona, a fallen angel, a disobedient questioner of God's rule, rather than simply an evil and malicious devil. Shakespeare also demonstrated a fascination with the nature of 'good' and 'bad' characters, although his interest was perhaps better described as one which centred upon the relationship between 'high' and 'low', rather than good and evil. As Samuel Johnson noted:

> 'Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination.'
> (Cited in Ackroyd 2004: 226).

To a certain extent this also applies to the manner in which museums tended to, and often still look at the characters of the past. If one considers the exhibitionary and media-related focus on individuals such as Henry VIII, Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan and more recently the infamous Ottoman ruler 'Selim the Grim'[25] it will be seen that these complex, slightly villainous, sometimes grotesque characters of history still exert their grip on the modern imagination.

In a more general sense, specific characters of times past in their *entirety* continued to exert a strong iconographic hold, as evidenced in Donne's *Epigrams*:

> *Hero and Leander*
> Both robbed of air, we both lie in one ground,
> Both whom one fire had burnt, one water drowned'

> *Pyramus and Thisbe*
> Two, by themselves, each other, love and fear
> Slain, cruel friends, by parting have joined here.'

'Mercurius Gallo-Belgicus

Like Aesop's fellow-slaves, O Mercury,

Which could do all things, thy faith is; and I

Like Aesop's self, which nothing; I confess

I should have more faith, if thou hadst less;

Thy credit lost thy credit: 'tis sin to do,

In this case, as thou wouldst be done unto,

To believe all: change thy name: thou art like

Mercury in stealing, but liest like a Greek'

(Donne 1996: 149, 152)

The first poem, *Hero and Leander*, the classical tale of two lovers derives from the Alexandrian poet Musaeus (c. fifth century C.E.) and was also the subject of an erotic poem by Christopher Marlowe written in 1580's/90's (published 1598). These erotic tales or *epyllia* were in vogue in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Shakespeare's contribution to the genre was his early 1590's composition, *Venus and Adonis*. In this and the other examples above, classical personages were remembered in short emblematic epigrams. If we turn once more to the Tradescant catalogue we also see famous characters of history being remembered in similarly bite-sized pieces. They functioned somewhat like Donne's short epigrams, only in the *Ark's* case the epigram was replaced with the emblematic object[26]. For instance under the title *A Variety of Rarities*, there is 'an orange gathered from a tree that grew over *Zebulons* tombe' a 'piece of stone of Saint *John Baptists* Tombe' and a 'piece of the stone of *Sarrige-Castle* where *Hellen of Greece* was born' (1656: 43).

Interestingly, considering the nature and context of this thesis, Donne adds another persona to his list, a character intimately tied to this study; the Antiquary[27]:

'Antiquary

If in his study he hath so much care

To hang all old strange things let his wife beware.'

(Donne 1996: 151)

Stories, poems and plays needed characters to drive the plot. It remains unsurprising therefore that the seventeenth century saw the continuing dominance of the heroic or villainous persona within contemporary reflections upon the past. The rise of the antiquary saw a new character added; an intermediary between the dead of the past and living of the present, yet also a somewhat comic figure[28].

The century in turn increasingly saw the literary focus broadening to 'man' as an emblem upon which to muse:

> 'For Man is ev'rything,
>
> And more: He is a tree, yet bears
>
> more fruit;
>
> A beast, yet is, or should be more:'
>
> (Herbert cited in Gardner 1985: 130)

In this extract from *Man* by George Herbert (1593-1633), the turn toward humankind as a subject worthy of study indicates the rise of a humanist questioning of the nature of one's origins and creation[29]. 'Man' was fast becoming the ultimate character worthy of scholarly consideration in the period; the well known people of times past became almost a series of historical case studies. Early private collections amassed objects contemporary with these familiar historical personas and through these 'emblems' made their consideration and thus the musing upon 'man' as a symbolic entity easier.

Emblems and witty conceits

'Wit' was a central part of learned society in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Perhaps best exemplified in John Lyly's, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1580) and later, Abraham Cowley's *Ode: Of Wit* (1633 [see Cowley 1915 for reproduction]) the ability to ladle out moral wisdom through simile, metaphor, conceit and punning became a popular facet of Elizabethan, and later, Jacobean and Stuart writing. Elaborate displays of wit worked best when the pun or metaphor was known only by an enlightened few, much as it still functions today. Often this practice was demonstrated by a writer musing upon a key 'emblem' or subject. The group of poets, often misleadingly termed the 'metaphysical poets', the core of which comprised John Donne, Henry Vaughan, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Robert Southwell, Richard Crashaw, and to some extent John Milton, brought the use of the emblem and 'witty conceit' to the fore and in many ways perfected its practice in their works. I argue that this idea of focusing upon an emblematic object was also central to the workings of the museum collections of the time (see figures 29 and 30). Many objects gained their meaning through being a) emblematic of a wider theme, and b) representing an idea appreciated by members of a certain social and scholarly group who in turn maintained a particular shared knowledge amongst themselves[30].

An emblematic view of the natural world as derived from Pliny was common in the philosophy of the period, but was gradually becoming outdated in seventeenth century writing (see Edwards 1999: 5-10). However the use of the emblem was in some ways reinvigorated by the emphasis on

it as an image upon which to train the mind and to meditate upon (see Skulsky 1992; Sloane 1981). Objects or 'relics' became popular icons upon which to muse. In the case of Donne, the relic acted as a symbol through which the cold antiquarian exhumation of burial goods is compared with the love that the two buried ancestors shared (1633; for more on Donne see papers in Carey 1990):

> 'A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,
>
>   Will he not let us alone,
>
> And think that there a loving couple lies,
>
> Who thought that this device (the relic) might be some way
>
> To make their souls, at the last busy day,
>
> Meet at this grave, and make a little stay?'
>
> (Donne 1996: 76 my brackets)

Donne, much like the antiquary, broods on the relic but for him it acts as an emblem for eternal love. In *A Jet Ring Set* (1633) a ring functions in the same manner; Donne wonders what the object would say if it could speak:

> ' Thou art not so black, as my heart,
>
> Nor as brittle, as her heart, thou art;
>
> What would thou say? Shall both our properties by thee be
>
>   spoke,
>
> Nothing more endless, nothing sooner broke?'
>
> (Donne 1996: 61-62)

George Herbert's *The Pearl, The Flower, The Altar, The Pulley* and *The Collar* (1633) and Henry Vaughan's *The World* (1650) are other good examples of the use of emblems as metaphors for wider philosophical contemplation (see Bennett 1963; Gardner 1985; Tuve 1947; White 1936). In this one can draw a parallel with the museums use of the visible object as a link to the invisible world from which it came (Pomian 1990: 7-44; figures 29 and 30). The 17th century museographer Emanuele Tesauro claimed that all natural objects contained their own specific allusions to ideas and that; 'if nature speaks through such metaphors, then the encyclopaedic collection, which is the sum of all possible metaphors logically becomes the great metaphor of the world' (cited in Shelton 1994: 184). In this the cabinets were functioning almost as grand houses of emblems, sites in which objects could be studied and thought about, places that acted as a three dimensional version of a mid seventeenth century poetic meditation (again, see figures 29 and 30 for examples). Wit played a role in this meditation and thus the collection and display

of certain objects would have functioned like a literary conceit. This is perhaps the reason why the Royalist Tradescants displayed the following items under the subheading *Garments, Vestures, Habits, Ornaments*:

> '*Edward the Confessors* knit gloves.
> *Anne of Bullens* (sic) silk knit gloves
> *Henry 8*. hawking-glove…'
> (1657: 49)

At first glance these curios appear to be little more than relics linked to significant historical characters. Yet if they are considered instead as emblems, perhaps they signify more. Do they in fact read as a witty symbol of the Tradescant's loyalty to their recently executed monarch? This declaration would have been significantly dangerous when made (as it was) during Oliver Cromwell's rule as Lord Protector. In thinking for a moment about the artefacts themselves it will be seen that the relics are all the gloves of former kings and queens of Britain. Do they therefore act as emblems that prompted memories of the hands of these individuals; the same hands that would have been given in favour to be kissed by a loyal subject? Albeit gloves and shoes were particularly in vogue within Renaissance collections, but perhaps the inclusion of specific pieces actually signified something more personal than merely a desire to keep up with the fashions of the day[31].

So by the close of the seventeenth century, the early collections that had emerged across Europe demonstrated a concerted effort to understand the world and its history. This understanding, this presentation of knowledge as pointed out by Moser, actually constructed ideas about the past and the characters that peopled it (2006). The arts and the early museums did influence one another; whether it was a through an increasingly emblematic (and sometimes witty) reflection upon relics, the epic portrayal of historical characters, (albeit tinged with a tragic air) or just the continuing dominance of biblical themes, the cabinets of curiosities had elements in common with both the form and the focus of the literary milestones of the period. As Susan Crane (2000) and Andrew Jones (2007) have suggested the power of memory in the museum and in the object plays an important role and it may be argued that religious, literary and poetic memories are also key to the interaction between object and observer, albeit a shared memory requiring a certain privileged knowledge as a prerequisite.

This is highlighted further in one of the most important and influential 'museological' documents of the times, the treatise of the physician Samuel Quiccheberg, *Inscritpiones vel tituli theatre amplissimi…* (1565; see Schulz 1994 for more). Arranged as a set of instructions for the ideal

collection, this piece of encyclopaedic writing recommends several classes and sub-classes of objects for the collector. Throughout this chapter one of my main arguments has been that the use of biblical icons was indicative of one of the main cross over points with the museum. Quiccheberg's treatise adds to this, he clearly states that the first collections were already described in the Old Testament; as such implying that good Christians should in turn have good museums. To him these initial exemplary examples were the collection of King Hezeki'ah (2 Kings 20: 12-21) and the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings: 5-6) (see Schulz 1994: 179). Could one ask for a clearer example of the links between the emergence of the museum in Europe and the theological/artistic culture of the time? As seen the collections of the seventeenth century told stories, they told epic stories, they told tragic stories, they told heroic stories, they even told semi-scientific stories, but most significantly they still told biblical stories. As Charles Webster notes, the advancement of learning and correspondingly heightened focus upon the natural world became a theoretical tenet central to the Puritan doctrine of the 17th century (1975). Furthermore, non-western cultures when collected or observed were in turn slotted into these western tales. In John Greaves' *Pyramidographia*, the ancient Egyptians and their pyramids were thus easily explainable:

'It is the opinion of modern writers that the Aegyptian pyramids were erected by the Israelites under Pharaoh.'
(Greaves 1646: 1)

A European such as Greaves was deemed able to analyse the pyramids better than the Egyptians themselves. This was because somewhat akin to their despotic, magical forefathers described in the Old Testament, the Arab population of Egypt were seen in an ornamental fashion to be better alchemists than they were historians (to some degree this was also similar to the manner in which many European scholars regarded local antiquarians):

'The Arabians' whole excellencies I judge to have been in the speculative sciences, and not in the histories and occurrences of ancient times...'
(Greaves 1646: 6)

By the end of the seventeenth century, the museum and the literary/artistic world had developed in similar ways and they remembered the past in correspondingly similar ways. The cabinets emerged in a certain context, they told stories specific to this elite, educated context, and as such they looked, and indeed museums continued to look, to remember the history of other peoples in light of this shared storyline. In turn they continued to re-use familiar icons, whether these were indicated by a focus on the heroic, tragic and epic as established by the classics, a biblical

influence or simply the concentration on emblematic objects and relics. These icons were in turn added too, becoming increasingly scientific, archaeological and yet also 'romantic' as the centuries passed. As they did so they became even further removed from many of the representations of the people whose heritage they presented in their displays. In this practice Egypt was just one of many examples, albeit a particular cogent one.

[1] At the time of writing. This figure has since been replaced with *Lely's Venus:* a statue of Aphrodite (Spring 2006). As with any display at the British Museum, artefacts are regularly moved around, but the overall feel of this processional route nevertheless remains the same and the statue of Dionysos is still in place.

[2] Three line stanzas.

[3] Ken Arnold's recent research (2005) has been particularly influential in encouraging me to look toward the idea of a narrative approach to the museum.

[4] See Hines (2004) for more on the relationship between literature and archaeology.

[5] Although it should be noted that ancient Egyptian poetry does not reach the length of a classical epic.

[6] See Trigger for more on the iconic role of the ancient tomb in later English literature (1989: 65).

[7] In itself a descendent of Bede.

[8] *Everyman* and *Miracle* plays of the early medieval period also provided a source of history, albeit often (excluding Robin Hood) of a distinctly religious falvour (see Cawley 2003; Gassner 1987). Within these spectacles people would have had a colourful and memorable meeting with religious history, whether it was through *mumming* groups[8], vagrant performers or local village play makers. In larger centres there would have been summer festivals lasting several days and divided into craft associations or guilds, each of whom would lay on a dramatization of aspects or 'cycles' of scenes from biblical history (for an introduction to the period see Alcock 1983; papers in Hinton 1983). Alongside these there would have been classic Latin comedies as well as their vernacular imitations (see Gassner 1987: 1). It is not my concern to analyse these plays nor the period in which they were produced; however in looking at the types of plays being staged in just two of the major middle age centres; York (Museum MS. Add 35290) and Towneley (Huntingdon Library MS. HM 1.) an interesting observation can be made In the York cycles there were forty eight plays dealing with biblical episodes ranging from *The Creation* and *The Fall of Lucifer* through to the Judgement, whilst in the Towneley there were thirty two including such popular stories as *The Flight, The Ascension* and even *The Hanging of Judas* (Cawley 2003: 254-56 for the full list). In these two areas alone there existed nearly one hundred plays, all of which dealt with the past and an essentially biblical past at that. One could assume that within these earlier dramatizations, the large flocks of visitors watching them would have been attending a very popular portrayal of history from which the modern museum or heritage park has apparently derived certain elements, namely in the realm of museum theatre, renactment and interpretation (on performance in the museum see Ashmore, Bailey and Flint 2002, 2004; Gillam 2006; Hughes 1998; Pearson and Shanks 2001; Tilden 1957).

[9] I quote from the 1996 reprint of the *King James*, and the 1990 reprint of the *New Jerusalem.*

[10] Even up until the seventeenth century the earth was thought to have been divinely created around 4000 B.C. Trigger 1989: 31). Archbishop James Ussher in particular, set this date rather precisely at 4004 B.C. (see Harris 1968: 86).

[11] See Assman (1997).

[12] Interestingly for our purposes, the first book published by Caxton was Mallory's *Morte D'Arthur* (c.1485).

[13] Prehistoric stone tools thus became seen as human, rather than natural or mythological artefacts (Trigger 1989: 67-70, also see Swann 2001).

[14] Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues accompanied the French expedition of Laudonniere to Florida in 1564 and John White joined Sir Walter Raleigh's trip to Virginia in 1585, Both were published in Theodore de Bry's *America* (1590) (see Piggott 1975, 1976, 1989; Smiles 1994 for more on the relationship between early ethnographic imagery and the rise of archaeological reconstructions).

[15] Thomas More's *Utopia* (1551) demonstrated the impact of these expeditions on humanist literature. In his book he imagined a perfect society modelled on the principles espoused in Plato's *Republic;* significantly it existed, so he claimed, on a small island in the vicinity of the Americas (see Turner 2003). Thus in a manner similar to that evidenced in the ethnographically inspired reconstructions of Le Moyne de Morgues and White, More's *Utopia* also sought to unite the New World with the past; to him it contained a mythical island where the greatest achievements of the classical world still held sway, a noticeably Renaissance site in which the words and thoughts of Plato were revived:

> 'NOPLACIA was once my name,
>
> That is, a place where no one goes.
>
> Plato's *Republic* now I claim
>
> To match, or beat at its own game.'
>
> (More 2003: 6)

[16] In the case of the *Ark*, this fascination was explicitly brought to the fore through the use of a famous biblical artefact as the source for the collections title (also a witty aside by which the Tradescants cemented their reputation as collectors by comparing themselves to Noah).

[17] The idea of renaissance 'self-fashioning' being of significance here; in order to fashion the self, one would need a selection of historical 'idols' upon which to base the self (see Greenblatt 1980 for more on this concept).

[18] Contemporary.

[19] Note the biblical icon of the 'Egyptians as builders of tombs' coming to the fore here.

[20] As often appears to be the case in many museums as well.

[21] Undoubtedly the theme of Regicide, the doing away with one's monarch was influential here. Satan's questioning of God's rule can be clearly paralleled with parliaments break from the monarch in the 1640's.

[22] This demonstrates that although questioning God's power, seeking to copy it if you like, biblical themes and stories were still paradoxically important to this questioning.

[23] The collection itself was purchased by the Royal Society in 1666 (Edwards 2000: 115).

[24] This is observable in the anagrammatic poems at the beginning of the Tradescants catalogue of 1657. In these the *Ark* is clearly compared with the Garden of Eden (1656: A4).

[25] In the Royal Academy's *Turks* (2005) for instance.

[26] It will be recalled that the catalogue does however still contain epigrams dedicated to the two Tradescants though.

[27] Probably in light of the emergence of people such as John Aubrey.

[28] On the rise of the antiquary/early archaeologist see Schnapp (1996).

[29] Donne's *Anatomy of the World* and *Progress of the Soul* (c.1611, 1612) and Vaughan's *Man* (c.1640) also indicate this phenomenon (see Gardner 1985).

[30] Anyone who has walked around new exhibitions in the Royal Academy, British Museum or indeed any art gallery or museum, will be all too aware that this is very much still the case. In the modern sense this is marked by a particular object or painting occasionally prompting a loud laugh from an individual in an otherwise silent room.

[31] Remembering that both the Tradescants had personal links to Charles I and thus had strong ties to the monarchy.
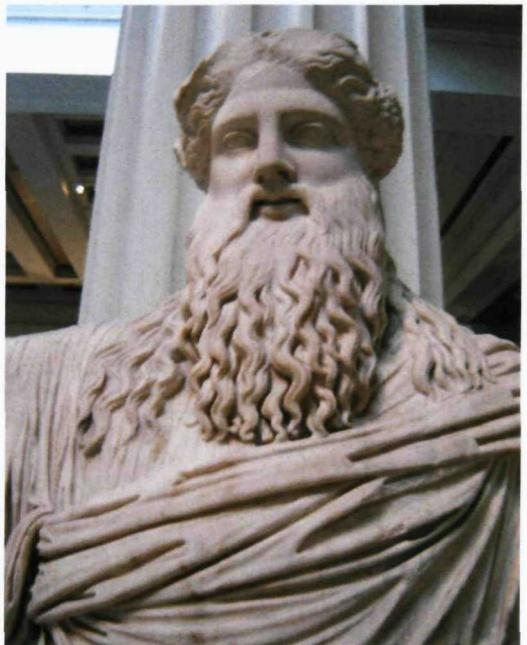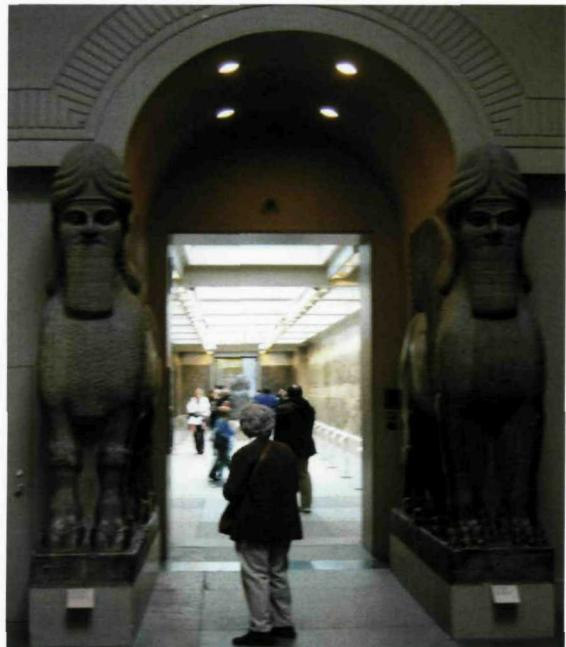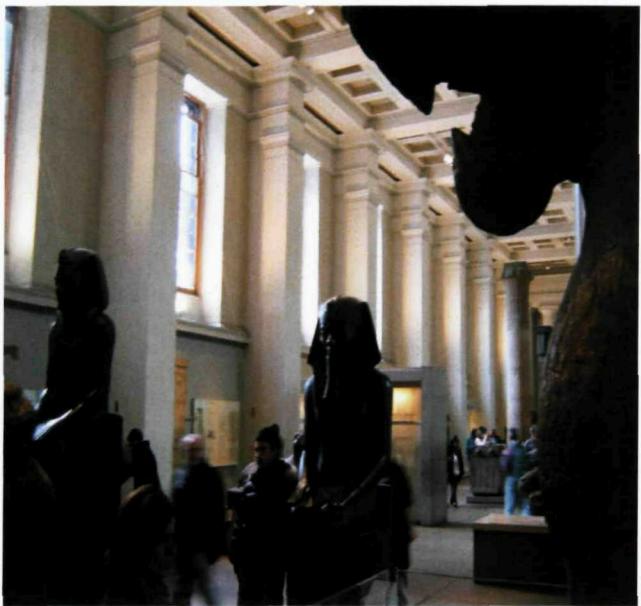
Figures 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23. Moving left to right from top left: Two views from the Egyptian Sculpture Galleries; Assyrian sculptures; Statue of Dionysos (Roman, AD 40-60); The Parthenon Marbles (all British Museum)
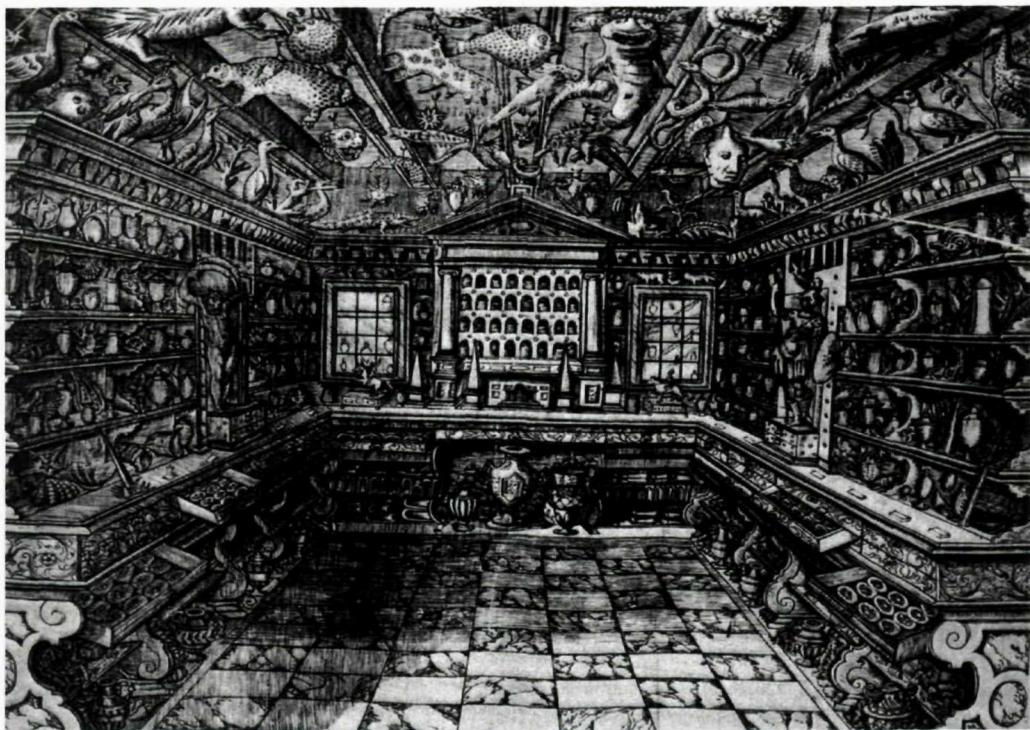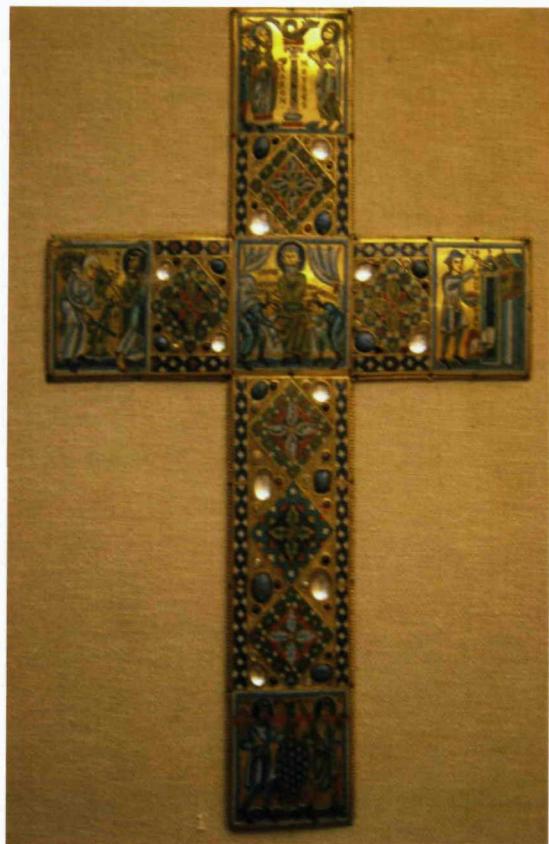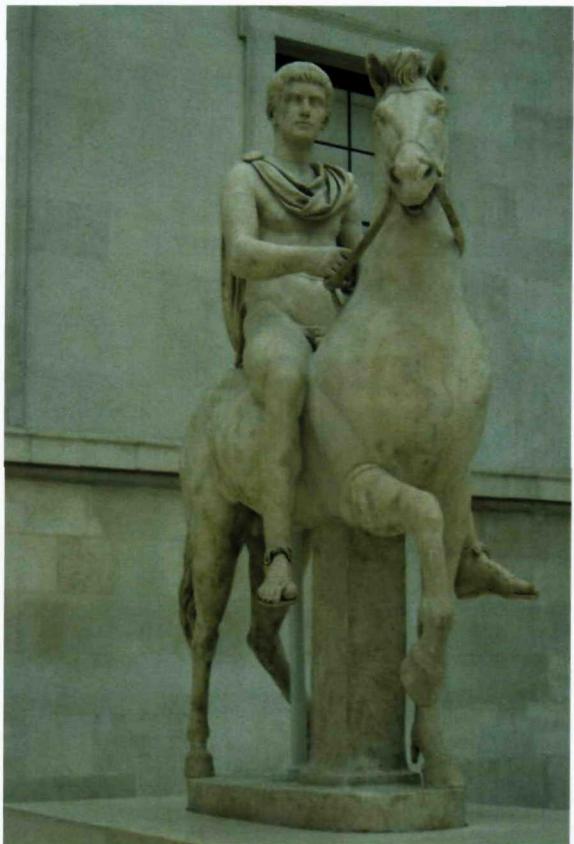
Figures 24, 25 and 26. Clockwise from top left: Statue of youth on horseback (Roman, 1st century AD, British Museum); enamel cross (France or Belgium, c.12th century, British Museum); the museum of Francesco Calceolari in Verona, from Ceruti and Chiocco 1622, (cited in Olmi 1985: 3). It is likely that the Tradescant collection (the forerunner to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford) would have looked similar to this example.
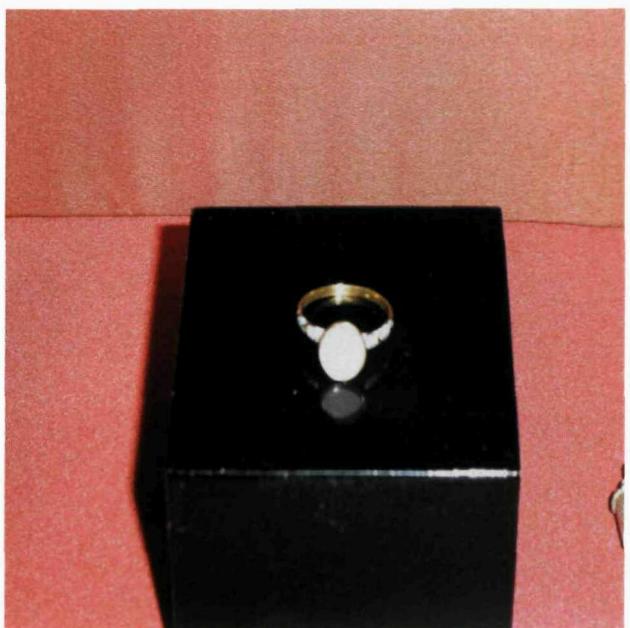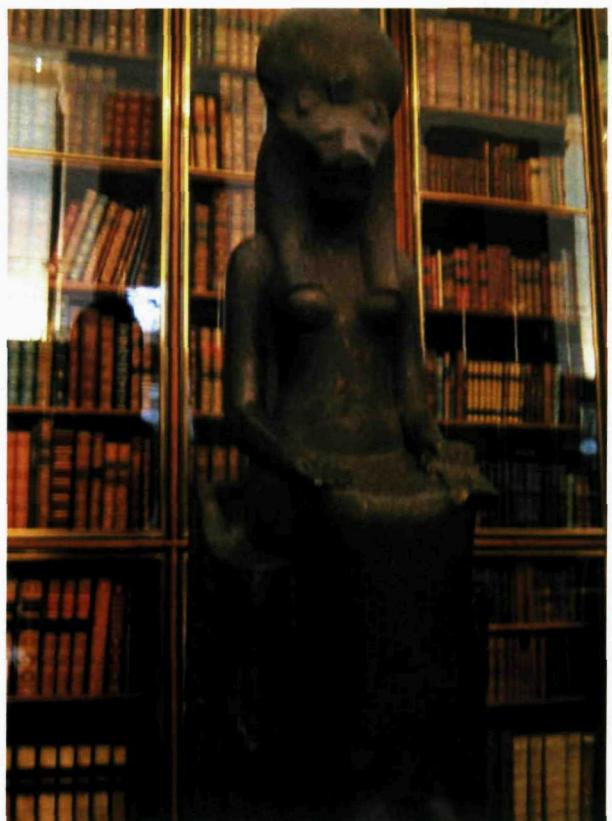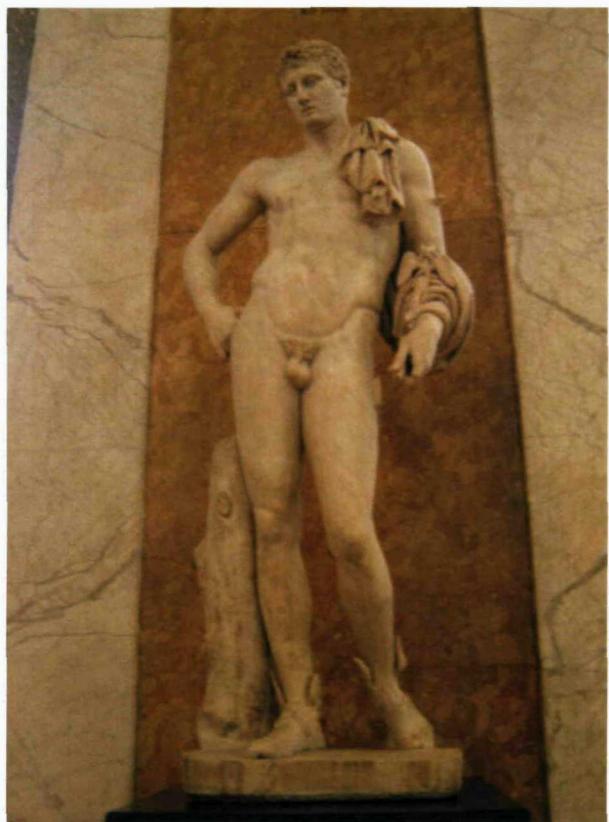
Figures 27, 28, 29 and 30. Moving left to right from top left: Statue of Hermes c. 2nd century AD; statue of the goddess Sekhmet from the temple of Mut at Karnak c. 1370 BC; a selection of amulets and charms; a finger ring with the Lord's Prayer, 1676 (all British Museum).

Chapter Two

Restoration, refinement and romance in the museum

The Restoration and the eighteenth century were times of enormous growth and change in Great Britain, as the nation came to be known after the Act of Union of 1707. Britain became an empire, the power base shifted from country to the city marking the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and crucially, the British became a literate nation (see Lipking and Monk 2000: 2045). The period also saw the growth of the museum as an institution, becoming more widely open to the public and yet increasingly tied to the state as the years passed. Collections such as those of Sir Hans Sloane and Elias Ashmole (the latter's being based on the contents of the Tradescant's *Ark*) merged into the larger British and Ashmolean Museums (see Jenkins 1992; MacGregor 1983, 2001; Schubert 2000; Wilson 2002). From 1660 to 1785 the literature of the period developed in several interesting ways, in turn mirrored within the collective remembrance of the museum environment. In this chapter I analyse three of the most important of these developments: the questioning of religion, narrative refinement, and the growth of natural history as a major focus for both literature and the museum, before finally turning to the impact of the Romantic movement. Here we see just how ingrained in museums particular iconographic narratives became - western representations that moved further and further away from many Egyptian, Arabic, or simple put, 'eastern' forms. I conclude this and the previous chapter's analysis with comment upon how my ideas fit with some of the recent debates in the museological world.

The Restoration and the eighteenth century: a questioning of religion, narrative refinement and the impact of nature on the museum

A questioning of religion

The Restoration of 1660 saw an increased optimism creeping into writing of the period. The chaotic civil wars of the 1640s that had ripped the country apart had finished, the Protectorate had also ended and a new monarch now sat upon the throne. Milton replied to these events by publishing *Paradise Regained* (1671). The civil wars markedly changed the audience to which authors wrote and an increased desire to reach the masses rather than just the aristocracy was consequentially notable. However, after the upheavals of war, the execution of Charles I, the establishment of Cromwell's Protectorate and the restoration of Charles II, a spirit of scepticism and questioning crept into the scholarly and artistic worlds. Previously the prevalence of biblical icons in representations of the past was discussed; this domination began to be questioned after the reformation and yet the Bible's influence *did not* disappear from the museum environment. Christianity and religion began to be observed in different manners and correspondingly great arguments erupted within the scholarly and artistic worlds. The rise in travel to the New and Old

World brought Europeans into close contact with a variety of indigenous pagan peoples. This in turn encouraged them to focus intently upon the origins of their own faith; could it too have grown from a pagan belief system? Did the word of God diffuse 'Tower of Babel' style or was religion actually inherently diverse and culturally specific?[1] John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) although a profoundly political epic intimately tied with the events surrounding the Popish Plot of 1678, and the corresponding political struggle between Charles' Tories and the Earl of Shaftesbury's Whigs, still reflected the beginnings of the diffusionist/diversity debate:

> 'In pious times, ere priestcraft did begin,
>
> Before polygamy was made a sin;
>
> When man on many multiplied his kind,
>
> Ere one to one was cursedly confined;
>
> When nature prompted and no law denied
>
> Promiscuous use of concubine and bride;
>
> The Israel's monarch after Heaven's own heart[2],
>
> His vigorous warmth did variously impart
>
> To wives and slaves; and, wide as his command,
>
> Scattered his Maker's image through the land.'
>
> (Dryden 2004: 5)

Dryden is likening Charles II to David, he is also evoking the era before 'priestcraft' spread to the land, a time of polygamy and closeness to nature; in many respects he is discussing the simple and sublime origins of religion before what he saw as its tainting by corruption and superstition. This was a sentiment clearly echoed by the *Deist* movement of which the Irishman John Toland was a key figure (1670-1722, see Williams 2003: 213). Toland argued in his rather controversial work *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696 [1995]), that the influence of priests had led to the original 'true' spirit of Christianity, a kind of primitive monotheism, becoming flooded with pointless complications, or as he wrote in a letter of the time: 'absurd jargon, ridiculous practices and inexplicable mystery's' (Toland 1995). The antiquarian William Stukeley's fascination with the British druids led to him arguing against the Deist movement, but nonetheless to Stukeley archaeological remains such as Stonehenge were still indicative of a kind of 'primitive monotheism'; a viewpoint that has been extraordinarily hard to remove from the modern popular psyche (see Stukeley 1743 for example). Other writers such as John Locke (1690), Pierre Bayle (1697), David Hume (1757), and more so Voltaire (1794) put forward theories that increasingly eroded the diffusionist argument; the writer Jonathon Swift was particularly vociferous in his decrying of God (see Williams 2003 for more). Yet, the idea of a primitive monotheism did not completely disappear from the museum environment nor did it entirely leave romantic writing. In

1851, Richard Westmacott's grand Winckelmann-esque *The Progress of Civilisation,* a sculptural homage to the diffusionist idea of the growth of religion was installed above the front entrance to the British Museum, despite the standpoint being nigh on obsolete by this time (see Williams 2004; figure 31). These arguments, of which the early collectors' and travellers' pieces made such a contribution, were in turn part of the growing movement away from poetry and towards prose as the main form of the period. They also remind us of the impact of Puritanism upon the origins of scientific thought in Britain. This influence, this desire to refine religious practice in the country, in turn also contributed to a form of narrative refinement during the period.

Narrative refinement

By 1660, the expansive and indulgent epics of Milton and the metaphysical musings of Donne, Vaughan, Herbert, Crashaw, Marvell and Southwell were beginning to fall out of favour. Instigated by figures such as Dryden and in turn added to by Alexander Pope, lyrical verse was gradually ousted by a more didactic and descriptive poetry. In short, narrative forms were becoming evermore refined from the Restoration onward[3]. As we have seen, even God's power was waning; a pervasive scepticism threatened to undermine traditional values, and this scepticism was voiced in an ever more didactic, refined and often satirical manner; clearly observable within in the works of Samuel Johnson, the diaries of Samuel Pepys, the plays of Behn, Dryden, Shadwall and Southerne, the poems of Pope and the books of Jonathon Swift (see Greene 1984; Lipking and Monk 2000; Manning 2001)[4]. By way of a brief case study, let us momentarily compare the ways in which Dryden depicted the past with the manner used by Milton. Milton begins *Paradise Lost* (1667) with the following:

> 'Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With the loss of Eden, till one greater man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
> Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
> That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed...'
> (Milton 2003,VI: 1)

He begins by discussing in a rather esoteric and obtuse manner the distant past of humankind; The Fall; as he does so he philosophically evokes the tragedy of existence. To Milton, life was all about the restoration of man to paradise and as such the past was to him ultimately tragic, for it was in the furthest corner of our history on earth that we as humans lost all that we once had.

Turning again to Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) the refinement in his narrative is obvious; indeed to him the distant past appears a rather more innocent, albeit it sexually promiscuous, than tragic place:

> 'In pious times, ere priestcraft did begin,
> Before polygamy was made a sin;
> When man on many multiplied his kind,
> Ere one to one was cursedly confined;
> When nature prompted and no law denied
> *Promiscuous use of concubine and bride.'*
> (Dryden 2004: 5)

In some respects this move to a form characterised by a greater clarity makes one think of the transformation from the rather mixed, esoteric displays of the Tradescants' *Ark* into the more ordered and refined remembrance of the Ashmolean Museum (see MacGregor 1985; MacGregor *et al* 1983). The focus of the narrative of these collections, as in the case of the poems above, was the same and yet the latter Ashmolean displays became that bit less 'metaphysical' and bit more 'didactic', much like the metamorphoses from the private collections of Hans Sloane into the rather more refined arrangements of Montagu House (see Anderson, Caygill, MacGregor and Syson 2004; papers in Impey and MacGregor 1985; MacGregor 1994; MacGregor *et al* 2000; Moser 2006; Wilson 2002; figures 33 and 34). In the eighteenth century an increased refinement became even more apparent. Alexander Pope dispenses with any metaphorical pretence and simply names his ambitious poem on the nature of man *An Essay on Man* (1733). Despite consciously echoing the types of questions raised in *Paradise Lost*, Pope's writing is even more forthright in manner than that of Dryden:

> 'Say, first of God above or man below,
> What can we reason, but from what we know?
> Of man, what see we but his station here,
> From which to reason, or to which refer?
> Through worlds unnumbered though the God be known,
> 'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.'
> (Pope cited in Lipking and Monk 2000: 65)

Echoing the rise of Puritanism, we see no metaphysical musings here, we can only say what we know; to Pope any attempts to be more philosophically grand are overblown and pointless. Though apparently everywhere, God could only be seen in our own world; the answer to human

history lay in observable nature and not in abstract depictions and musings upon heaven and hell. As they were essentially seen as a part of nature, the ancients and their relics were in turn slotted neatly into these increasingly didactic, refined and 'natural-orientated' narratives.

Natural history

Collecting minerals had been in vogue for some time prior to the reformation, evidenced by the geological specimens on display within the cabinets of curiosities on the continent. However these collections became ever more 'refined' as the years passed (see Cook 2003). By 1728, John Woodward had amassed an extensive number of geological specimens, made public in his *Fossils of all Kinds Digested into a Method* (1728) and the posthumously published *Catalogue of the English Fossils in the Collection of John Woodward* (1729). Additionally, Hans Sloane had a vast amount of minerals and fossils in his pharmaceutical collection, and in observing a copy of Sarah Stone's watercolour of Sir Ashton Lever's Museum of the late 18th century, one becomes aware of the magnitude of natural history collecting of the period (c.1760-1844, see Cook 2003: 97; figures 35 and 36). As pointed out by Jill Cook, it would appear that collecting by this point had therefore become to all intensive purposes a 'scientific pursuit' (2003: 95). But the display of the past and of natural history had not totally shed all of its iconographic, literary and artistic roots. As it had in the then contemporary world of English literature and art, nature had simply become one of the most important foci for the collectors' narratives. We have already seen that a refinement in form was key to writing of the period, as was a more sceptical approach to the authority of the divine; an increasing focus on nature, side by side with a love for archaic and classical forms was *embraced* by the poets and in turn the rising population of prose writers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nature, in itself so significant to the Renaissance writers became if anything an even more important motif in the Enlightenment (see Bewell 1989; Edwards 1999; Goodman 2004).

Although authors are beginning to argue that the oft perceived subservience of history to nature within the Enlightenment and later Romantic periods was not as simple as sometimes thought[5], it is nonetheless apparent that the ancient world was often seen as part of the same subject area as natural history (see Huxley 2003; Syson 2003). It difficult to single out one text alone that really signalled the increased popularity of nature, yet Thomson's publication of *Winter*, the first of his cycle on the seasons would be a likely candidate (c.1726). The landscape, indeed the natural world as a whole became the place by which one could observe and in observing come into thrilling contact with the sublime. To Alexander Pope, and indeed to most writers of the time, to study the 'ancients' was to study nature. In his new translation of Homer, Pope indicated that he (Homer) and nature were the same; he also emphasised that the rules of Art, the epic, the tragic, the pastoral, the satire and the ode learnt as a craft from the classics were essentially examples of

'nature methodised' (cited in Lipking and Monk 2000: 2056, for more see Pope's *An Essay on Man* 1733)[6]. These forms, the *methods* utilised for representing the natural world are still prevalent in the museum environment. This point represents the crux of my argument in this chapter; as nature rose in prominence as the focus for museum collections, these collections did not necessarily divorce themselves from contemporary literary themes and fashions. As the classics and the natural world were seen to be intimately linked, the correspondingly ancient form that was the epic became a manner by which to make the natural world 'methodised'; it thus became the prevailing storyline for large collections. As argued previously the epic and elements of the tragic have been the most utilised forms for the written representation of the past in the western world (the Bible essentially being a religious 'epic'); when the museum began to emerge in its recognisably modern form, in many respects the collectors and increasingly the trustees transposed (possibly entirely subconsciously) its collections into a somewhat epic form; a grand tale of the rise and fall of empires, of the heroic actions of historical figures; a remembrance that was often set against a biblical background (Moser [2006] addresses the concept of the role of the museum in terms of constructing knowledge in a far more thorough manner than that seen here).

In many respects 'natural history' would likely have been seen as the greatest epic ever to be told; man was thus to be thought of as the greatest of epic heroes. Of course 'man' had to be embodied by a selection of key, in many cases, romantic historical figures. Being largely moulded in Europe and increasingly North America, these epics would therefore be told in a manner suited to a well educated western upbringing. Neo-classicism and increasingly romanticism provided a fashionable, elitist manner of telling the past for a western audience; a representation of history drawn from a narrative tradition that was well over a thousand years old.

The museum as a 'romantic' memory of the past?
Romanticism and the past

The noun *romantic* has a different meaning dependent on the author writing about it[7]. Although not wishing to dwell upon this label, one must however make explicit the point that the term is problematic[8]. Nonetheless, I have chosen to retain it for my analysis for ease of description, and clarity of argument, using it to signify a historical period and a style of writing, rather than a coherent school of thought[9].

In 1798, *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth and Coleridge's great cornerstone work first appeared (Wordsworth 1798). At this point the term 'romantic' was no literary compliment; indeed the label had connotations of being rather light and fanciful. It took until 1801-4 for the phrase to really begin to come into vogue. During this period the German scholar August Wilhelm

Schlegal exploited the term in a lecture series in Berlin. To Schlegal, romanticism was in some ways set against classicism; the movement to him representing the work of Boccacio, Dante and Petrarch and linked with progressive, somewhat Christian views (see Wu 1998: xxx)[10]. It was not until 1818 when the Frenchman Stendhal professed himself *un romantique;* a follower of Shakespeare and Byron that the term was initially used by an individual as a label for both their personality and ideals. The romantic period may roughly be defined as beginning in 1789 with the outbreak of the French revolution and ending in 1824 with the death of Byron. Gothic fiction popularised by Mary Shelley, Ann Radcliffe, Henry Lewis, and Charles Maturin, and the work of essayists such as De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb, alongside the poetry of the time have all fallen under the romantic umbrella. These individuals were united by their revolutionary ideals, their wide travels and their intimate relationship with the natural world[11]. The ancient landscape and the ruins of past civilisations provided a poignant focus for romantic writing[12]. Expansive epics, nostalgic musings and a love of classical ruins and the sculpture of the ancients united them with the emerging museums of the period. In many respects the two told similar stories about the past, drawn from the same iconographic heritage.

The ancient landscape

Through William Wordsworth romantic writing has a famous link with the Lake District. Alongside the British countryside, classical and exotic eastern landscapes also abound within romantic works[13] [14]. Nostalgia and a sense of loss were paramount in the early nineteenth century evocation of the ancient world. For instance in *The Ruined Cottage* (1797-8), Wordsworth meets an elderly man in the overgrown garden of a ruined hovel. The old man sits and he thinks about a place and time now gone:

> '...You will forgive me, sir,
> But often on this cottage do I muse
> As on a picture,'
> (Wordsworth 1998: 280)

As in the use of emblems by the writers of the Renaissance, the ruin within the natural landscape acts as an evocation of the past, and a nostalgic past at that (much like Pomian's 'semiophores' [1990]). These romantic sites were crucial to the writers' connection with history; they worked as a picture of a time now past, and a symbolic key to unlock one's imagination of those times. Tombs and ruins provided a window through which the artist observed the history of the landscape, the physical join between the ancients and the natural world. To museums, ruins became important to the remembrance of the past, evidenced by their systematic acquisition of examples of ancient sculpture (see Jenkins 1992; Moser 2006; Wilson 2002; on

romanticism and the archaeological landscape see Johnson 2007). Even when these fragments were transposed onto public display and thus taken out of their true context, the remains of the ancient landscape still grabbed at the romantic imagination:

'I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said – "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desart…Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those professions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed"…'
(From *Ozymandias*, Shelley 2002: 110)

Ozymandias was the Greek name for Ramesses II, and it is believed that this poem was written as a direct result of Shelley witnessing the *Memnon* head in the British Museum in December 1817 (see Jenkins 1992; Wilson 2002; figure 37).

Rather cleverly the museum transposed the ruins of other landscapes into a British context, as it did so creating a new and romantic world for the British viewer; a collection of beautiful and exotic emblems through which the visitor, like the old man of *The Ruined Cottage* could imagine the past, as Matthew Johnson suggests, free of any consideration of the social forces behind that landscape (2007) In the case of *Forgotten Empire*, the 2005 exhibition of Ancient Persia at the British Museum, the remains and castes of Persepolis, aided by a section of photographs of the surrounding landscape allow the visitor to picture the romantic times of Darius and Xerxes.

Finally it should be noted that although the contemporary love of the Sublime in nature is often contrasted against religious belief[15], the Christian ruin still held enormous emotive power in romantic imagery, albeit perhaps metaphorically acting as a symbol for the ageing and thus crumbling of traditional belief. Keats' and Charles Brown's collaboration *Stanzas on some Skulls in Beauly Abbey, near Inverness* (c. 1819)[16] and Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (1798) are both good examples of this practice[17].

Romantic heroes and heroines

Much scholarly attention has been placed on the Romantics' ideal of history (i.e. Fay 2002; Smiles 1994; Zimmerman 1999, on the historical landscape see Johnson 2007). Classical heroes, gods and goddesses abound in their writing (as they also do in the museum environment, see figures

38-40 for example), but recent research such as Elizabeth Fay's has increasingly concentrated upon the idea of 'romantic medievalism', a phenomenon defined by its focus upon the concept of chivalry present in medieval legends such as the tales of King Arthur (2002). For example Wordsworth and Byron demonstrated a 'chivalrous' element in their work, evoked by their choice and representation of the hero and heroine. Wordsworth's *The White Doe of Rylstone* (c.1807-8), itself a descendent of Spenser's *Faerie Queen* offers a clear example of his idea of the medieval. In the opening stanzas he evokes a husband and wife lying in bed contemplating the work of Spenser. They are particularly enraptured by the tale of Una and her search for her beloved Knight:

> In trellised shed with clustering roses gay,
> And, Mary! Oft beside our blazing fire,
> When years of wedded life were as a day
> Whose current answers to the heart's desire,
> Did we read together in Spenser's Lay
> How Una, sad of soul – in sad attire,
> The gentle Una, of celestial birth,
> To seek her Knight went wandering o'er the earth.'
> (Wordsworth cited in Fay 2002: 96)

Una acts the part of the veritable damsel in distress, sad and in search for her chivalrous Knight[18]. Byron provided a model for that Knight. In his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), the Byronic hero is somewhat of a chivalric libertine, a character modelled upon the adulterous Lancelot (as noted by Byron himself [see Duff 1994: 123])[19].

This 'romantic medievalism' was in turn subsumed into (then) contemporary eastern romances such as Robert Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817)[20]. In the latter the young princess, Lalla Rookh, travelling from Delhi to Cashmere to be married is coincidentally met by the gallant young poet Feramorz. He quickly makes her rethink the whole affair by way of his beautiful poetic meditations on oriental history:

> 'To Lalla Rookh alone it [the wedding] was a melancholy pageant; nor could she
> have even borne to look upon the scene, were it not for a hope that, among the
> crowds around, she might once more catch a glimpse of Feramorz.'
> (Moore 1986: 294, my brackets)

A focus on chivalrous figures can be seen within the museum environment; however when using the term chivalry, this phenomenon is not taken to be only applicable to the medieval past, indeed I do not take it to indicate just the actions of 'damsels in distress' and their male 'Knight' saviours as I believe neither did the Romantics. Chivalrous characteristics essentially focus on the doing of good unto others, especially when the *other* are the weaker party[21]. Thinking once more of the *Forgotten Empire* exhibition at the British Museum, specifically the Cyrus Cylinder; the decree lauded in the BBC news throughout 2005 as being indicative of the religious tolerance displayed by the Persian ruler Cyrus, one can see the romantic creeping in yet again. The cylinder represents and embodies not only the chivalry displayed by the Persian ruler Cyrus, but indeed the chivalry of the entire Persian nation. Furthermore the British Museum's driving premise of 'illuminating world cultures', and the oft-perceived role of the BM and other museums as educators to the public[22] can in many ways be seen as the clearest marker yet that not only do museums focus on romantic characters in their display storylines[23]; as *institutions* they can even model themselves on a romantic concept of chivalry. In some respects they often appear to be portrayed as sites that act as the saviours of national and even world knowledge. Museums could thus be seen as imagining themselves as the benefactors of a weaker party, perhaps represented by their visitors or increasingly the 'communities' reached via the institutions 'outreach' officers[24]. This adherence to the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the lack of opposition displayed within the emerging public museums is underlined by Kim Sloan's belief that the 'foundation of the British Museum was one of the most potent acts of the Enlightenment' (2003: 13).

Myth and legend

The classics, the romances of Arthur and eastern myths all found a home within the romantic mindset, much as they found a home within the museum environment and within other representations of the past (particularly painting, see Moser 1998; Smiles 1994, for examples of romantic mythical characters in the museum see figures 39 and 40). To the romantic writers of the early nineteenth century, myth and legend helped to create a context in which to ground their grand epics and their individual political, philosophical and religious musings. The ancient and exotic landscape and the heroic characters of these landscapes together found a binding device expressed in myth. Although other, eastern stories were powerfully evoked in poems such as Byron's *Destruction of Sennacherib* and *Visions of Belshazzar* (1815), Coleridge's *Khubla Khan* (1816)[25], and Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), Greece and her legends were still the setting *par excellence* of the early 1800's[26]. In the preface to Shelley's *Hellas: A Lyrical Drama* (1821) he explains this reason for worshipping Greece so:

'The human form and the human mind attained to a perfection in Greece which has impressed its image on those faultless productions whose very fragments are the despair of modern art.'

(Shelley 2002:430)

In the epic *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-19), which he claims to have written mainly 'on the mountainous ruins of the baths of Caracalla' (2002: 207), Shelley travels through history using a plentiful helping of Greek myth to evoke the possibility of a creative rebirth of the human and even the entire universal psyche (for more on the history of the poem's composition see Reiman and Fraistat 2002: 204). The evocative remains of the baths of Caracalla helped Shelley to create this work; indeed in many ways his remembrance of classical myth was inspired by these ruins[27]. This kind of epistemological 'enlightenment' portrayed by means of the classical world, makes one think of the museum with its airy displays of Greek archaeology and sculpture, particularly as seen in the British Museum, the Ashmolean, the Burrell, and the collections of John Soane[28].

The museum, as a house of learning's use of Greek objects evokes Greek myth which seems in turn to evoke in the viewer as it did in Shelley, a feeling of the Sublime (see Jenkins 1992 for more on the aesthetics of classical sculpture in the museum). The creation myths of the Greeks and the well known heroes of these stories brought life to the objects and the ruins of the romantic imagination. Given the architectural importance attributed to the Parthenon marbles' depiction of Greek legend in the British Museum, it appears that classical myth is in some way preserved within these objects, in these ruins on display, giving them a profound resonance and an air of wonder (for more on the history of the marbles see Wilson 2002; on resonance and wonder in the museum see Greenblatt 1991). Around the same period John Keats wrote *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1820). The detail of a heifer being led to slaughter on the south frieze of the Elgin Marbles is likely to have supplied the details for the fourth stanza (figure 41):

'Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
   To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
   And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?'
(Keats 2003: 345)

As it did to the Romantics, Greece continues to remain the mythological site *par excellence* for the modern European national museum (Winckelmann 1764; Jenkins 1992, in contrast to Egypt see Moser 2006)[29] [30]. The museum and the romantic became thoroughly entwined in the early nineteenth century, so much so that when fashions moved forward, many museums instead

remained firmly cemented in a rather romantic, or generally speaking, an elitist 19th century context. Indeed, one has only to think of the manner in which the visitor quite literally walks across the words of Tennyson as they enter the recently redeveloped Great Court of the British Museum, in order to recognise the import of this statement (figure 42). With their roots in the romantic movement; a movement often defined (and criticised) by its, unflinching libertarianism, individualism and respect - even admiration for change and revolution, museums, as some have noted (particularly Richard Sandell [2002; 2005; 2007) should aim to follow some of the central tenets of the romantic doctrine, that is of escaping a notion of their own glorious, utopian past and instead immersing themselves in a future that celebrates difference, dynamism and transformation (see Berlin 2003 for more on these themes).

Telling the past, memory and the museum

Scientific advancement, evolutionary ideals and developments in archaeology are key to modern European museum representations of the past. But these things have to be placed in a narrative, in a storyline, and many museums in Britain and in Europe tend to structure their exhibits according to a profoundly epic and romantic manner[31]. Indeed Romanticism and empiricism had clear links to one another as noted by Matthew Johnson in his recent *Ideas of Landscape*:

> '...Romanticism led directly to an empiricism in which the facts were held to speak
> for themselves, without the benefit of intervening theory.'
> (Johnson 2007: 81)

Broadly speaking the museum portrays its objects in a uniquely elitist *European* manner drawn from a specific iconic context of well over two thousand years of age (see figure 43 for example). In many respects this specifically western narrative acts as an invisible spine to western museum displays, an unseen back bone upon which the artefacts of the past are hooked. In turn, mixed into this remembrance and yet somewhat ignored within this chapter for the sake of clarity of argument, were elements drawn from the history of the antiquarian study of the past, the discipline of philosophy and the theories of the natural sciences (Foucault 1970; Moser 1998, 2006; Piggott 1989; Trigger 1989). A scientific storyline dependent on the episteme of knowledge in which it was created to some degree, but as we have seen also a notably western iconographic narrative also drives both the historical, modern and postmodern manifestation of the museum in Britain and although not focused on in any depth here, in Europe as a whole. Many of the ideas expressed in this and the previous chapter, have developed directly from notable advances within museological studies. Stephanie Moser's seminal study of the manner in which museum collections construct a set of knowledge, a story of sorts of a particular period or people, has provided a foundation for this analysis (2006), an analysis also influenced by Susan Crane's

studies of renaissance collecting practices (2000). The latter suggests that museums function as sites in which memory plays a significant role in meaning making (on the role of memory and the object/museum see Butler 2007; Jones 2007). In short, objects become curios through their symbolic link to a particular shared, narrative, memory or storyline. Much influenced by the work of Arnold (2005), Moser (1998; 2006) and Smiles (1994), I wanted to portray the history of the museum, and particularly to analyse the ways in which knowledge about the past is created through the repetition of popular icons in the exhibitionary displays of these institutions (see Moser 1998; 2003; 2006 for more on this concept). Indeed, the conclusion was reached that western museums may be viewed as a way of telling a particular story[32], as well as an archaeological and scientific display phenomenon. As a whole they should be seen as institutions utilising predominantly elite, western narratives that are correspondingly based on predominantly elite, western themes, memories and iconography (see figure 44)[33]. This chapter brought the analysis up to the 19th century and to the birth of the national museum. As Edward Said noted in *Orientalism*:

'...without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand
the enormous systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage
– and even produce- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically,
scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.'
(Said 1978: 3).

I do not aim to instigate a sense of a 'clash of civilisations' in this and the next two chapters, rather I argue that in order to move forward, to reconcile, we must be aware of the differences inherent in the ways in which societies tell the past; only from this point may we work towards a common ground in the museum space. So, in studying the nature in which European museums borrow from a specific iconographic tradition in this and the previous chapter, I now begin a process of *relearning*. As discussed, a museum at its very simplest is a richly textured narrative, a story that draws heavily from the cultural memory in which it was created. Influenced by my research in Quseir, I now ask that we additionally strive to encourage making this narrative widen its net and in turn to draw its influences from the memories of those whose pasts it chooses to represent. If, as Butler (2007), Crane (2000) and Jones (2007) suggest, memory is attributed to an object through its symbolic link to a particular narrative then what would happen if another narrative, another set of memories were to be linked to this same object(s)? As Beverley Butler notes:

'...museum and heritage culture, like Narcissus looking into his pool (as a 'world in itself'), still fails to engage in alternative conceptualisations of itself within a wider global context.'

(Butler 2007: 272)

I do not aim to relegate the object to a secondary role, rather I realise that in recognising the manner in which objects may act as important iconographic symbols we may use them to hint at different narratives and new stories – in this they are extraordinarily powerful tools. I suggest that it would be both interesting and challenging if European museums could use more Egyptian, Arabic or simply non-academic storylines to structure their own representations and remembrance of heritage. As museologists and scholars of archaeological representation a great deal can be learnt from this practice. Indeed we suddenly start to question the very idea of the museum as we know it.

[1] Through the realisation that locally found stone tools were not a natural phenomenon, antiquarians were encouraged to re-assess human origins (see Swann 2001; Trigger 1989)

[2] This refers to David 'a man after God's own heart'(as described by 1 Samuel 13,14) and represents Charles II.

[3] A good example of the refinement and increasingly didactic nature of narratives of the period may be seen by the growth of the novel in the 1740's.

[4] In a country that had but recently killed one King, what could now be sacred and indeed where could true unwavering authority be found?

[5] Particularly Kevis Goodman (2004).

[6] Remembering the word 'poet' comes from the Greek for 'maker'.

[7] Terry Eagleton argues that the Romantic period represents the time during which the English definition of literature began to truly develop, and as he reminds us, it is not until the nineteenth century that the modern sense of the term 'literature' really comes into being (Eagleton 1996: 16-17). It is significant that the modern idea of the 'museum' also only really gets under way during this period. In many ways the modern definitions of the terms 'literature' and 'museum' are thus both inextricably linked to the nineteenth century, especially to the social and political changes brought about through the Romantic upsurge in society and the arts.

[8] Romanticism as a movement of thought has caused numerous difficulties in definition; see Brookner (2000) for a wider discussion than that presented here.

[9] For my purposes it also remains enough to primarily concentrate only upon the six canonical writers: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats and Shelley. Although fascinating and important to recognise the works of other writers of the romantic mould; particularly William Cowper, Mary Shelley, Ann Radcliffe, Thomas De Quincey, James Henry Leigh Hunt and Dorothy Wordsworth, in writing a bibliography of authors worthy of study I had soon amassed well over fifty of significance to the period. One simply cannot account for a detailed analysis of all of these when specifically writing an argument relating to the museums, rather than to *romanticisms'* development. Duncan Wu's *Romanticism: An Anthology* (2005) and A *Companion to Romanticism* (1997) and *Romanticism: A Critical Reader* (1995) present a far greater depth of analysis than that presented here (also see Curran [1986]). Additionally any discussion of romanticism is incomplete without mention of Isaiah Berlin's seminal *The Roots of Romanticism* based upon his Mellon lectures of 1965 (Berlin 2000).

[10] In saying it was somewhat opposed to classicism, the Romantics nonetheless still utilized classical imagery exhaustively.

[11] Indeed, the Romantic movement grew with and even influenced the increased publication of popular travel accounts during the 19th century (see Jacobs 1995 for more).

[12] Especially in Shelley's *Alastor* 1814 (see Shelley 2002: 74-90).

[13] Particularly influenced by travel accounts such as James Bruce's *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (1790) and literature of the Grand Tour such as Forsyth's *Remarks on Antiquities, Arts and Letters* (1824), Englebach's *Naples and the Campagna Felice* (1815) and Colt Hoare's *A Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily* (1819).

[14] Keats' *To the Nile* (c.1818) is a good example of representation of the exotic landscape. However the romantic ruin was not constrained to the landscape only, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1797-98 [1996: 81-100]) evokes the ancient seascape through the use of a ruined ship and the tale of a sailor who travelled upon her (see Wu 2000 for reproductions of these).

[15] Especially in Shelley's case.

[16] See Wu (2000) for reproduction of this poem.

[17] Again see Wu (2000) for reproductions of these poems.

[18] A similar evocation of the female may be seen in Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (c.1790).

[19] This poem interestingly also contains one of Byron's most venomous attacks of Lord Elgin's removal of the Parthenon marbles. Romantic the ruins may have been, but this did not mean that the Romantics necessarily wanted them removed (see Wilson 2002: 73).

[20] Inspired by the increase in translations of eastern folk tales such as the *Alf Layla wa Layla*, 'The Thousand and One Nights' (see Caracciolo 1988).

[21] The woman being often seen as the best motif for the purpose, and yet in the post-modern world the weaker other is often merely portrayed as 'the victim' and this is often as much about race and class than it is gender.

[22] The museums educative role is clearly seen as paramount in the recent *The Engaging Museum* (Black 2005).

[23] The Sutton Hoo warrior, Ramesses II and the Emperor Augustus for example (see figure 38)..

[24] Community archaeology in itself may be accused of doing the same, that is of placing itself in a position of power by presenting itself as a benefactor to global indigenous communities.

[25] See Wu (2000) for reproductions of these.

[26] Although interestingly classical antiquities held little interest for Hans Sloane (Wilson 2002:16). See Wu (2000) for reproductions of these poems.

[27] At least so Shelley claims, bearing in mind that he probably did not write anywhere near the entire work at this one site (see Reiman and Freistat 2002: 204-5).

[28] A good example during the period discussed being Smirke's temporary Parthenon Gallery, installed in the British Museum in 1816. Although less airy (being essentially a brick built shed) than its present incarnation, it does nevertheless, demonstrate the then huge interest in classical mythological sculpture (see Wilson 2002: 71-5; for more on the social implications of the classically inspired Georgian redevelopment of London see Arnold 2000, on the relationship between antiquarianism and Romanticism see Trigger 1989: 65-7)

[29] Christianity however also still continues to exert its mythological grip also, as evidenced in the media hubbub surrounding the display of the Cyrus Cylinder and the striking display of the Black Obelisk of Shalmenassar III in the BM's Assyrian Sculpture galleries (figure 43). Both of these are noticeably 'biblical' artefacts.

[30] Although the removal of ruins was not always greeted with acclaim by those who loved the classics, remembering Byron's venomous poetic attacks on Elgin (see Wilson 2002: 73)

[31] Although I accept that in many cases this is an entirely subconscious act. Again see Arnold (2005) for more on the use of archaeological objects to create museological narratives.

[32] Though I recognize the problems inherent in defining 'literature'.

[33] Fabian (1983, 1991), Fisher (1975), Pomian (1978, 1990) and Stewart (1984) have encouraged this line of thought. Their ideas on museums as a source of western identity are understandably key to my work.
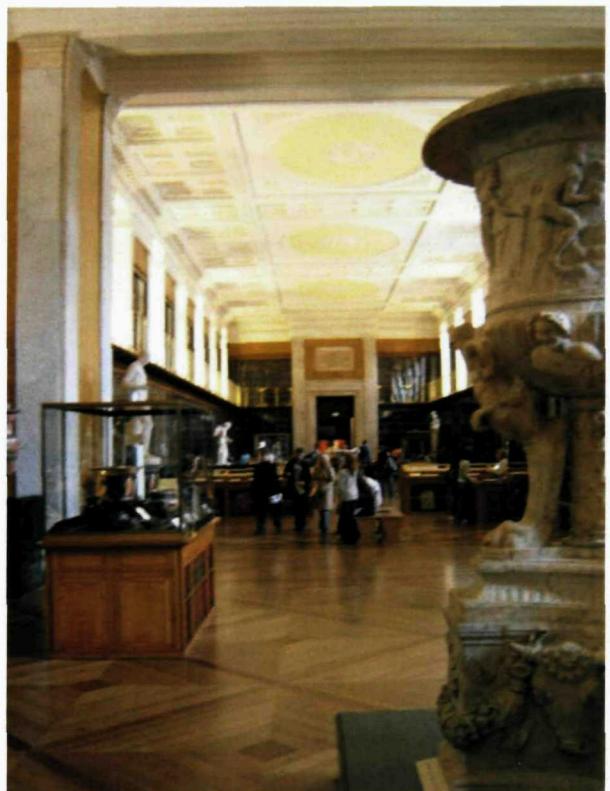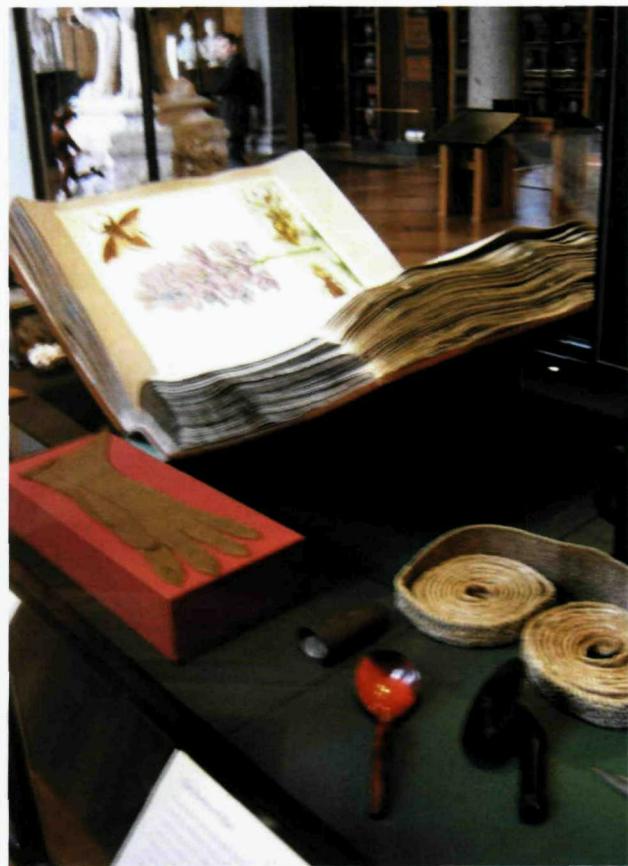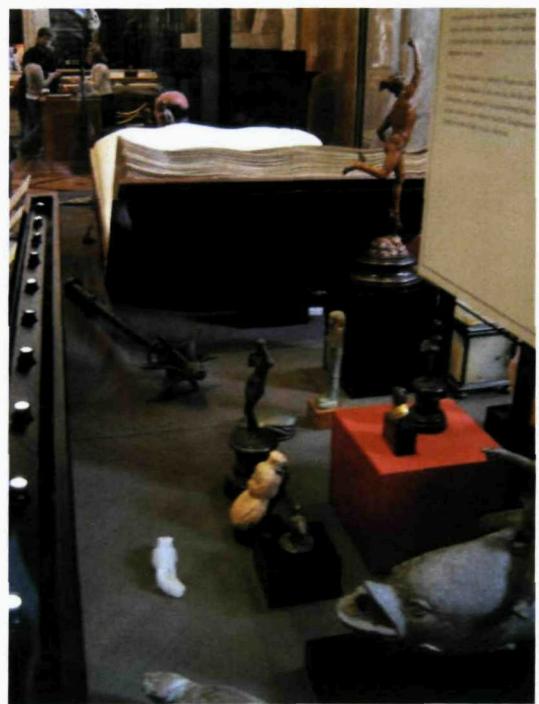
Figures 31, 32, 33 and 34. Moving left to right from top left: *The Progress of Civilisation*, by Richard Westmacott (1851); Narrative refinement? Replicas of cabinet of curiosities based upon the collections of Hans Sloane; View of the Enlightenment Gallery, British Museum (all British Museum).

Figures 35 and 36. Top: Displays of Natural History, Enlightenment Gallery, British Museum. **Above:** A copy of Sarah Stone's watercolour of Sir Ashton Lever's Museum (from Cook 2003: 97).
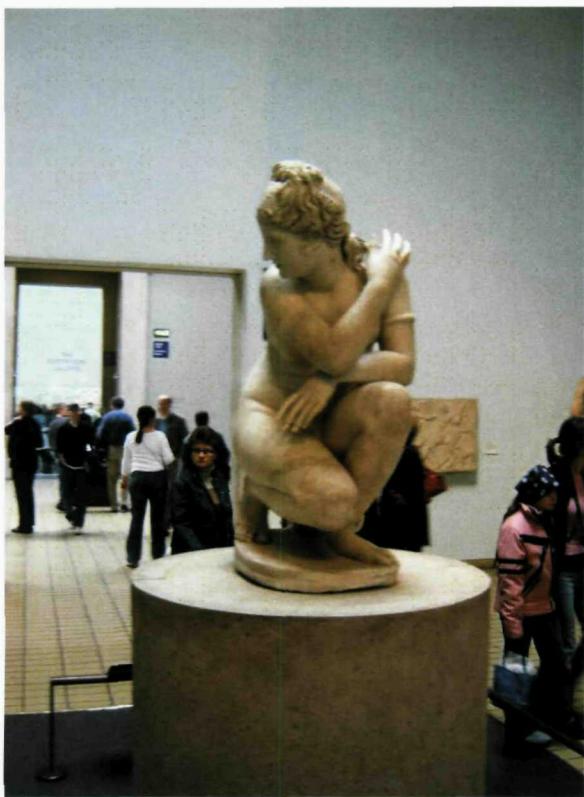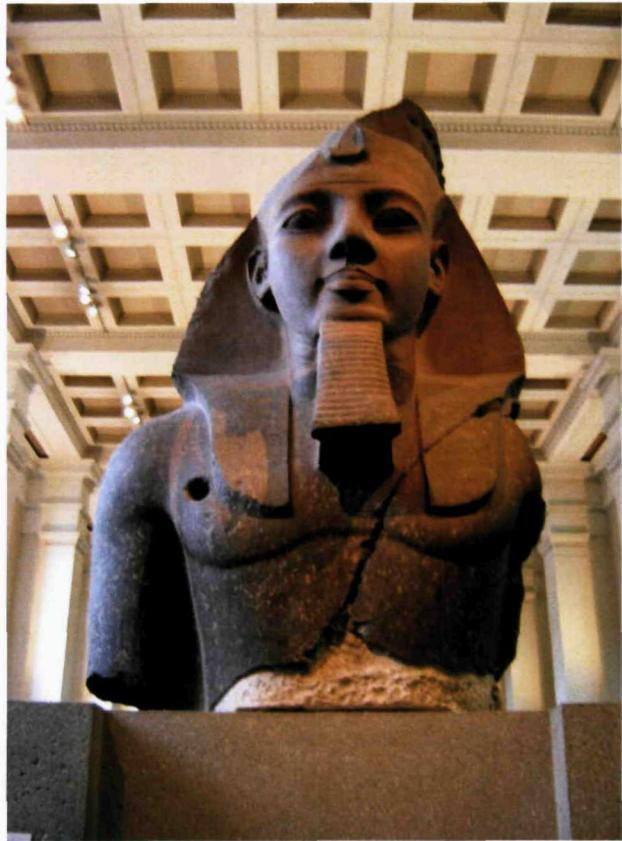
Figures 37, 38, 39 and 40. Moving left to right from top left: Colossal statue of Ramesses II, bust of the Emperor Augustus, Lely's Venus (Aphrodite), Mithras slaying the Bull (all British Museum).
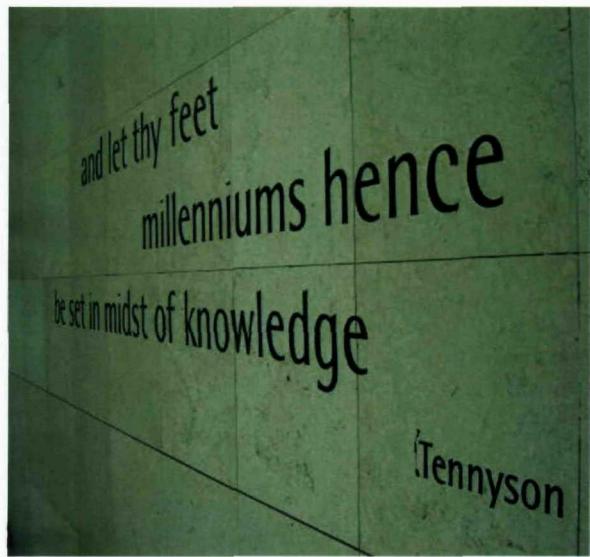
Figures 41, 42 and 43. Top: Detail of a heifer being led to slaughter on the southern frieze of the Parthenon Marbles. **Above:** quote from Tennyson, Great Court, British Museum. **Right:** the Black Obelisk of Shalmanesar III, depicting Isrealites bringing tribute to the Assyrian king (all British Museum).

Figure 44: The library in Sir John Soane's house (from Burn 2003: 47).

Chapter Three

Re-imagining the past: poetry and performance in Arabic and Coptic representations

A feeling of awe swept over me when I left Hurghada airport during what was my first visit to Egypt in September 2002. The country looked old, and in my subconscious, it felt old. Surprisingly the predominantly Muslim population of Egypt seemed through what I thought were rather liberal, fair and un-biased eyes, strangely *alien* to the landscape. In reading several analyses of European tourist views of Egypt, I had winced in a politically correct fashion at the predominance of negative portrayals of the modern Egyptian population; having recently become a member of a community archaeology project I had assumed that I was an exception[1]. I was wrong. I have never forgotten this first impression of Egypt, but I have questioned it, indeed I find it fascinating; where did it stem from, why do so many Europeans share the same initial reaction to Egypt, a reaction that essentially observes Egypt as ancient, yet sees the Egyptian people as a modern intrusion? Here is a clue:

> 'And it came to pass, that, when Abram (sic) was come into Egypt, the Egyptians
> beheld the woman (his wife) that she *was* very fair. The princes also of *Pharaoh* saw
> her and commended her before *Pharaoh*: and the woman was taken into *Pharaoh's*
> house.'
> (12, Genesis 14-15, my emphasis and brackets)

Ignoring for one moment the discussion of the Egyptians' relationship to Abraham's wife Sar-a-i, we notice something obviously linked to the predominance of a view of Egypt as discussed above. Abraham's first visit to the country, an ancient, biblical excursion, clearly represents the Egyptians as the people of Pharaoh; a name repeated three times in as many lines. Therefore this passage underlines the notion that, historically, the country's population was not comprised of an Arab majority (figure 45). Whether or not this and other biblical stories such as *The Flight into Egypt* have had a direct link to the dominance of a European impression of the modern Egyptian as a foreigner in an antique land is hard to ascertain[2]. However this observation offers a clue as to where this interpretation comes from; it hints at one possibility of the narrative root of this specific, subconscious reaction to Egypt. But to further complicate matters for the Muslim population of Egypt, in *Surahs* 79 and 85 of the Qur'an, Pharaoh, much as he is described in the Old Testament, is painted as an infidel. For example in *Surah* 79, *Those Who Pull and Withdraw* (*Surat an-Nazi'at*) it is stated that:

'He (Pharaoh) disavowed and disobeyed (the word of God).'

(The Qur'an, 79: 21, my brackets)

As the country of Pharaoh, ancient Egypt and her archaeological monuments are thus open to being portrayed as the remains of a wicked, unbelieving people[3]. Does this begin to explain why conventional archaeological discourse fails to ignite the imagination of many of the people of Quseir? Do they simply feel alienated from the ancient Egyptian past; would they rather hear later, perhaps more Islamic or even explicitly Coptic orientated stories? This is far too simplistic an interpretation and is not the case at all, but nevertheless we are beginning to get to the crux of the problem here. Alongside the findings of the preceding chapter we are starting to see that the iconographic animations of the past, the telling of the stories of a society's history, are crucial to the representation of archaeology. Even more crucial are the choices made in terms of the storylines that are utilised in this telling. If one is to construct a more engaged representation of Egyptian history, or indeed, the history of any group different to one's own, then as stated previously, one must begin to learn something about those modes of telling the past. Chapters one and two established that in following a narrative that borrows from a western iconographic tradition, the museum in Britain is inextricably linked to the historical narratives expressed within such things as classical, biblical and romantic literature, and I now argue that we should consider adopting Egyptian iconographic narratives as well. Ultimately we may therefore be able to challenge what Johannes Fabian sees as the museological distancing of the 'other', by actually seeking to drive elements of the display of Egyptian archaeology with the narratives and memories of modern Egypt (see Fabian 1983). Before doing this western scholars, such as I, must first turn to this 'other' history with the aim of becoming far more thorough in our understanding and knowledge of the most popular icons and memories used to represent the past within it. As archaeological museologists we then have the option to re-use these icons as an alternative source of museological narrative - icons that in their *familiarity* to an Egyptian audience, yet in their *unfamiliarity* to a conventional British museum going audience could act as a potential source of interest and wonder, whilst still nevertheless striving to avoid turning them into curiosities (on resonance and wonder in the museum environment see Greenblatt 1991)[4].

This and the next chapter seek to provide an analysis of some of the major ways in which Coptic and Arabic narrative traditions have engaged with and created a sense of the past[5]. As a group without the same museum visiting tradition as the European world, the past was kept alive by other means, in this case what in archaeology we refer to as literature, oral history, theology or performative traditions (figure 46), though as we have seen archaeology and museums have also been directly influenced by such things. Therefore it is to this area that this study of the representations of modern Egypt should begin. An important decision made in this study,

largely due to the paucity of evidence for certain periods (particularly pre-Islamic works), has been a thematic rather than a specifically chronological arrangement of sources. [6] It will be noticed that although I begin with a study of the religious beliefs of the Copts (figure 47), this remains at best a very brief introduction to some of the ways in which Coptic Christians remember their sacred past - I simply do not have the room here to go into any greater detail. This is one of the main topics that I wish to address in a future research project. Nevertheless, it soon becomes apparent that for many Coptic Christians relics and the corresponding religious narratives and performances that accompany them are crucial aspects of interacting with their history, of animating their past and enacting their memories.

Turning to Arabic literature, although fascinating in its re-use of classic modes of representation, it is often difficult to divide into clear 'progressions' or changes of style[7]. It is possible to arrange works chronologically[8], but as the Syrian poet Adonis has suggested, it is perhaps better to think of genres, rather than historical development (2003, also see Kilito 2001). Nonetheless, the analysis does begin with a somewhat chronological discussion of the representations of the past by both the pre-Islamic (*Jahiliyya*)[9] poets and the Qur'an. These represent the main heritage inherited by later poets and writers; the Qur'an in particular being a kind of 'cultural yardstick' by which to measure one's talent (Allen 2000: 52 [figures 48-51]). From this point the discussion becomes thematic and turns to Arabic poetry; a form portrayed for nearly a thousand years as the traditional record of Islamic history, the *Diwan al-arab*[10]. If as the traditional tellers of the past of the social group of which they were a part, the poets of the *Jahiliyya* and their Islamic followers may be likened to historians, then does this begin to explain the presence of a colourful, indigenous 'oral' history my British colleagues working in collaboration with our colleagues in Quseir have begun commenting upon in recent years (especially Glazier 2003, 2005; Moser *et al* 2002)? As outsiders, if we are to have any degree of success in making our representations of the past more meaningful to Arabic-speaking, Egyptian audiences (what in Britain are marginal audiences), then perhaps we should be studying the mechanics of meaning making within the *qassida* as well as the conventional archaeological and museological history and theory upon which we currently place so much emphasis?

Coptic representations of the Egyptian past

Although frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, the history of Christian Egypt really begins with the visit of the holy family during their flight from King Herod (Meinardus 2002:1)[11]. In itself, this act fulfilled an older prophecy 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt' (Hos 11:1). Largely due to his martyrdom in Alexandria the Christians of Egypt see Saint Mark the Evangelist as the founder of their church. It is often defined by its monastic retreats, founding both the eremitical and cenobetic forms of

monasticism; St Antony the hermit of the Eastern Desert being particularly influential in this respect (Meinardus 1989). Indeed, Coptic Christianity is undergoing somewhat of a revival in Egypt and elsewhere, despite centuries of struggling for survival. This began during the Sunday School movements of the 1940's and 1950's in Cairo, Giza and Asyut, gaining momentum after the enthronement of the Coptic Pope Cyril VI in 1959, culminating in the pontificate of the present Pope Shenouda III (Meinardus 2002: 3; Partrick 1996). For the Coptic population of modern Egypt, sacred history tends to revolve around the commemoration and remembrance of the stories of the holy family's visit to the country. In this respect, relics provide the visual, physical stimuli for these religious tales.

According to the Gospel of St Matthew, after fleeing from King Herod the holy family sought refuge in Egypt, returning to Palestine after Herod's death three years later, in 4 B.C. (see Meinardus 1960; Mingana 1929) [12]:

'And when they (the magi) were departed, behold, the angel of the lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.'
(Matt. 2:13-15, my brackets).

Meinardus, notes the prevalence of many Egyptian stories in which the wondrous acts of the Christ Child in the Nile Valley are remembered, suggesting that Egyptians had accepted divinity prior to Christ's public ministry – something that lies somewhat outside of conventional biblical history (2002: 13).

Before departing from Bethlehem, according to the Coptic tradition, the holy family together with the mid-wife Salome, remained in a small grotto known in Arabic as *Magharat al-Sayyida* (the grotto of the Lady); an ancient sanctuary still jointly venerated by both Muslims and Christians. White stones found at this site are rumoured to have been coloured by the Virgin's milk as she suckled the Christ Child, and to this day it remains a popular place of pilgrimage for expecting, and young mothers. (Meinardus 2002: 15). After passing through the Plain of Jericho, Ashekelon and Hebron, the holy family eventually entered Egypt, coming upon the Nile Valley via Wadi Tumilat in ancient Goshen (see Burmester 1955 for a detailed mapping of the holy family's travels in Egypt). The Coptic Synaxarion (calendar) points to Basata (also known as Bubastis, Pi-Beseth, Basta, or Tell Basta) as the first town on the Delta to be visited by the family and Salome. Yet their reception was a hostile one and despite Christ revealing a holy, healing spring there, they were set upon by two brigands (Meinardus 2002: 18). The holy family then

travelled a day further south, reaching the town of Bilbais. According to tradition, the family passed a funeral during which Jesus, seeing and feeling compassion for the mourners, brought the dead man back to life. During the middle ages, pilgrims regularly visited a tree, which both they and the local Muslim population believed marked the family's stay and the miracle that was performed by Jesus in the town (Meinardus 2002: 18). Next, it is said that the family crossed the Damietta branch of the Nile where they then journeyed west to al-Gharbiya (see Burmester 1955; Meinardus 1989 for more). The Ethiopic and Coptic synaxies describe that on the way to this settlement Jesus placed his foot on a stone, imprinting it in doing so (Meinardus 2002: 20). Continuing onwards the family passed near to Wadi al-Natrun, a part of the Eastern Desert that was blessed by the Christ child. To this day four monasteries remain at this place; Dair al-Baramus (Monastery of the Romans), Dair al-Surian (Monastery of the Syrians [figure 47]), Dair Anba Bishai (Monastery of Saint Bishoi) and Dair Abu Maqar (Monastery of Saint Macarius) (Meinardus 2002: 20; Meinardus 1989). Travelling south, the family passed through the city of On or Heliopolis (Jer. 43: 13) stopping at what is now the village of Matariya, a suburb of Cairo. The Ethiopic Synaxarion mentions that here Jesus took the staff of Joseph, broke it into three pieces and thrust them into the earth. After this he dug a well and watered the splinters of the staff, which subsequently grew into three trees. Christ named these 'Balsam' and declared that from them the oil of baptism was to be taken (Meinardus 2002: 21). Next they visited what is now Harat Zuwayla, the site of the present Church of the Holy Virgin at the end of the small road leading from Shari' Bain al-Surayn, in the northeast district of Cairo. A convent annexed to this Church houses a well believed to have been blessed by Christ (Meinardus 2002: 22). Additionally in the province of Beni Suef, the sacred palm tree, mentioned in the Qur'an as a place visited by Mary during her birth pains, grew:

'The birth pangs led her to the trunk of a date-palm tree.
"Would that I had died before this," she said,
"and become a thing forgotten, unremembered."

Then (a voice) called to her from below: "Grieve not;
Your Lord has made a rivulet gush forth right below you.

Shake the trunk of the date-palm tree
And it will drop ripe grapes for you.'
(Qur'an 19: 23-25)

Travelling even further south the holy family passed through present day al-Qays, al-Ashmunian, Dairut al-Sharif and al-Qusiya. Having been driven out of the town, the family rested upon a

mountain near to the last one of these settlements. During their stay, they were once more set upon by the brigands of Basata, who having followed them throughout their journeys in Egypt had seized this opportunity to pounce upon them. According to the Coptic tradition, these brigands were the men later to be crucified to the left and to the right of Christ (Meinardus 2002: 26)[13]. Near to this place, roughly eight kilometres south of Meir, the holy family rested near to a ruined, dried up well. Nevertheless, Christ outstretched a finger and water slowly bubbled to the surface, and so the family sojourned at this site for six months. In Coptic belief, this sanctuary is now what has become the modern Dair al-Muharraq (Monastery of the Holy Virgin), the oldest church in Egypt and the focus of perhaps the most important Coptic pilgrimage (Meinardus 2002: 26; also see Meindarus1970; 1989). Finally, oral history states that a place ten kilometres southwest of Asyut, marked the southernmost extremity of the holy family's travels in Egypt (Meinardus 2002: 27).

As can be seen in these central stories of the Coptic tradition, Egyptian heritage is directly linked to the visit of the holy family. Important sites and relics are viewed in light of a certain narrative tradition, dominated by the scriptures and by oral history. In the previous chapter it was observed that museums have been strongly influenced by a biblical iconographic tradition and yet Coptic imagery, iconography and history have remained divorced from this tradition. Ancient Egypt remains hugely popular in museums in the UK, yet Coptic history often remains marginalised within these collections. By beginning this analysis by studying some of the key narratives of Coptic Christians as a whole, we may already begin to gain some clues as to how we may begin to reconsider the display of Egyptian heritage. We should start by noting the importance of highly symbolic, in this case religious, narratives and memories to the animation of the Egyptian past.

The Arabic literary heritage: *Jahiliyya* poets and the Qur'an
Jahiliyya poetry
An increasing sense of cultural identity appears to have been growing amongst the pastoral tribes of the Arabian peninsular during the sixth century AD. Key to this was the rise of a common poetic language out of the various dialects of Arabic. It was a formal language, whose refinements of grammar and vocabulary gradually evolved via the elaboration of one linguistic form or more likely, the merging of several. This new poetic language emerged out of the use of rhythmic, elevated and rhymed speech; a cumulative tradition of which tribal gatherings, markets and even the great Arabic courts on the fringes of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires all played an important formative role (see Hourani 2002:12-15; Irwin 2002: 1-29; on the imagery of classical Arabic poetry see Jan Van Gelder and Hammond 2007a) and 2007b). Elaborate poetic conventions filtered out of this tradition, the most valued of which was the ode (*qassida*)[14]. The

qassida may be defined as a poem of up to one hundred lines, written in one of several accepted metres with a single rhyme running spine-like through it. Each line is made up of two hemistiches with the rhyme being carried in both, in the initial line of the poem, but only in the second hemistiche for the rest. For example the first three verses (*bayt*) of a modern Bedouin *qassida* dealing with a nostalgic longing for one's home, clearly demonstrates the use of these main poetic conventions (the rhymed emphases are underlined and the poem is written in Latinised Arabic for clarity and ease of reading):

> '1. Al-beriha fi-l-lel bitna gisaya
>   u-gilil min niski 'ale hal mawajie
> 2. ya ma-halal-finjal be nil-widaya
>   -hiss alamaniyyat fi hinwir ir-rie'
>
> 3. u-jamr ar-ratim nurzum 'aleh-as-saswaya
>   War-raba' fi zill al-'arisa makawie'
> (Bailey 2002:27, my emphasis)

Generally each line was meaningful in itself and enjambment was rare. However this did not prevent a continuity of thought or theme from one line to the next, and throughout the poem as a whole. The *qassida* is prevalent throughout the Arab speaking world, although in modern times new and more experimental forms are becoming increasingly popular in artistic circles[15]. Much like the epic discussed in the last chapter, the *qassida* nevertheless tends to remain one of the most common modes through which traditional Islamic accounts of the past are still represented[16].

Significantly poetry in the pre-Islamic period was not written down; it was (and continues to be) an oral art form, created to be recited in public by either the poets themselves or by a skilled reciter (*rawi*) with a large degree of audience interaction. The notion of *orality* is thus crucial to the discussion of the poetry of the *Jahiliyya* (Adonis 2003: 14). Orality implies both the listening of the audience and the vocal expression of the poet. Individuality when reciting would have been important in demonstrating personal skill, as the poet would have been recounting already well known exploits of the history, customs and traditions of their social group. They had scope for improvisation just so long as this remained within certain frameworks or accepted formal norms. The sense of the poem had to be conveyed in a single line, through a sole unit of words. These lines had to then join together, in doing so further complementing one another and gradually building the overall narrative. Additionally, a good performance was expected to be thoroughly unique even if the poet or *rawi* was reciting an already well known ode.

Of first and foremost importance to our understanding of the historical representations of the Arabic world is the collection of what are often deemed to be the supreme examples of ancient poetry, the *Mu'allaqat*, the Seven Odes or Suspended poems (see Blunt 1903; Imru' al Qays 2002). These and other famous pre-Islamic poems form what in Arabic is often referred to as the *diwan al-'arab*, ('the register of the Arabs'). Created by ancient literary characters such as Labid, Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, Imru'l-Qays, 'Antarah, and al-Muraqqish, (amongst others), this corpus of poetry represents for many the most significant of the historical records of the pre-Islamic past (figures 46 and 52). Indeed according to the medieval Islamic historian Ibn Kathir (c.1313-1387), the seven acclaimed *qassidas* forming the *Mu'allaqat* were honoured by being written down and hung within the *Ka'ba* enclosure in Mecca:

> 'They say that the seven *mu'allaqat*, the select, displayed odes, were hung up on the *Ka'ba.*'
> (Ibn Kathir 1998: 85)[17].

It does not really matter if the *Mu'allaqat* or 'Hanging Jewels' were ever actually displayed in the *Ka'ba*; what matters is that it was deemed important enough within the medieval (and modern) mindset that they *should* have been hung in one of the most symbolic sites of the Muslim world. These poems, as records of history, rather like archaeological artefacts, are seen as carrying an air of wonder, a resonance extremely important to Islamic heritage (see Greenblatt 1991). Additionally, through the very act (true or not) of their hanging, the *Ka'ba* was symbolically transformed into what may be described as the first museum of Arabic heritage[18]. In this respect poetry, not prose, oral history rather than the historical object and thus, the poet rather than the conventional historian would appear to be of more significance to these early representations of the past.

In the earliest stages of the tradition, the birth of a poet was a cause for social rejoicing; the Arabic word for poet, *sha'ir* roughly translates as 'one who senses'. Poets could rouse the tribe with eulogies (*madih*) of their glorious history and chivalrous deeds; they could extol the qualities of fallen ancestors in elegies (*marthiyah*) and they could launch vicious tirades against enemies in cruel lampoons (*hija*). Furthermore, whilst experiencing his first set of religious experiences on Mount Hira in the Meccan valley, during the seventeenth night of Ramadan, Muhammad is said to have replied to the angel's curt demand '*iqra* (recite)' by protesting that he was not a *Kahin;* that is one of the ecstatic poet-prophets of Arabia and the accepted keepers of tribal, religious and historical knowledge (see Armstong 1991:46; Ibn Ishaq, cited in Guilamme 1955: 193; Irwin 2002: 2-3; Qur'an 96). In many respects the poets at this point still bore qualities similar to a social historian or wandering scribe of the grouping to which they belonged.

In one of the most ancient *qassidas* to have come down through the ages, an ode of the *Mu'allaqat*, by 'Antarah (c.600-620 AD) we see an almost archaeological question being posited (as pointed out by the Moroccan scholar Abdelfattah Kilito):

> 'Have the poets left anywhere
> In need of patching? Or did you,
> After imaginings,
> recognize her abode?'
> ('Antarah cited in Kilito 2001, trans Cooper)[19]

Antarah evokes the charms of his beloved and describes the ruins of her desert encampment. This concentration on ruins (metaphorical, poetic ruins as well as physical, topographic ruins) was key to the ancient Arabic odes. Turning to some examples taken from the vast amount of pre-Islamic poetry composed by women, one can further analyse the construction of historical knowledge within the lines of the pre/early Islamic *qassida*.

Tumadir bint Amr ibn Ashsharid, perhaps better known as Khansa (d.646) is often regaled as the finest female poet of the *Jahiliyya* (al-Udhari 1999: 58). Most of her poems fall into the category *marthiyah* (elegies to the fallen); in her case elegiac verse specifically composed in order to remember her two brothers and four sons that had been killed in war. It is rather rare for early poets to dwell upon events from much beyond two or three generations of there own[20]. This focus on the recent past is still very much prevalent amongst writers in modern Egypt and the Arabian peninsular (see Allen 2000; Badawi 1975; Jayyussi 1987). In Khansa's poetry this reminiscence on time and the loss of her family is particularly eloquently phrased:

> 'Time is full of surprises.
>
> It ignores the tail but lops off the head, it spares the fools but buries and owls[21] the wise.
>
> Night and day, though they look different, never change, only people rot away.'
> (Khansa cited in al Udhari 1999: 58)

History or the passing of time is represented here as being untrustworthy; it takes those who do not deserve death. Crucially to Khansa, time is portrayed in a wistful manner as a series of unchanging days and nights that gradually claim the figures of the present, ageing and ultimately destroying them[22]. In this respect the remains of the past serve as a reminder of those who have

gone; those claimed by the passing of time. But not all of the people of history were remembered in such a nostalgic manner - only direct ancestors deserved this. Enemies are evoked all together more negatively as seen in the following line of a *hija* dealing with the killing of the poet's father by her brother in law Jassa and his cousin Amr:

'To hell with Jassa and Amr who lunged your brother with scorpioned spears.'
(Umama bint Kulaib, cited in Al Udhari 1999: 42)

Poetry may have positively remembered the ancestors of the social group to which the composer belonged; however if dealing with an outsider or a threat to this social grouping, this poetic remembrance became barbed with hatred and tainted with disregard.

These early poems may not offer an explicit representation of the distant past, yet when studying them one notices some key patterns emerging in these, what constitute the roots of the Arabic portrayal of history. Firstly, we see that the representation of the past was firmly linked with the remembering of social, but predominantly, blood-ancestors. Naturally this meant that a discussion of deep time was limited (much different to the classics evocation of the heroic period discussed in the last chapter). Secondly, history is ultimately presented through poetry and is particularly linked to the concepts of orality and *performance*. The past was thus a story to be told and embellished, not something to be written down to remain frozen forever in the pages of a book. This concept of uniqueness, this poetic striving for individuality contrasts against the representations of history discussed in the last chapter. As a society in which the written word is celebrated, studied, replicated, venerated and often tied to the physical objects from the past, this concept of change and embellishment may seem fanciful; it acts against our almost in-built desire to see the 'authentic' words of history. Immediately in this investigation we are thus edging towards a sense of difference.

Muhammad and the Qur'an

Coptic and Islamic traditions are closer than may be apparent at first. Both place emphasis upon oral history and folk tradition, and both utilise religious imagery that relies upon scriptures described in the Old Testament. With this in mind, I shall know turn to the impact of the Qur'an upon the representations of the past in Egypt. In June 2004 a register taken when working with a class of sixteen, eight to ten year old children from Quseir revealed that of all the individuals listed, over half bore the title Muhammad somewhere in their names. One cannot underestimate the influence of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad upon the lives of most Egyptian Muslims; yet archaeologists working with Muslim people often know little of this most important of Islamic literary milestones (as mentioned previously 18th and 19th century travellers such as

Edward Lane, did however devote a great deal of their time studying the religious practices of Egyptians – see figure 53). Without doubt the Qur'an remains as Roger Allen terms it, the 'cultural yardstick' by which representations of history are measured throughout much of the Arab speaking world (Allen 2000: 52, one of the few easy to obtain studies of the archaeology of Islam is by Timothy Insoll [1995], see figures 48 -51 for evidence of the impact of the Qur'an upon the Arabic-speaking artistic world)[23].

The origins of Muhammad's revelations

The life of Muhammad, as the biographers remind us, is rather obscure[24]. Nevertheless it is accepted that around 570AD he was born into the Meccan clan of Hashim, a relatively minor part of the tribe of the Quraysh. As well as being successful traders, it is thought that the Quraysh also had an administrative connection to the *Ka'ba*, the holy sanctuary in the middle of the town. This place represented the main religious site of the time in the Arabian peninsular, a centre in which local deities such as *al-Llah, al-Lat, al-Uzza* and *Hubal* were venerated through the ceremony of *tawaf;* the ritual circumambulation of the *Ka'ba*. Prior to Muhammad's birth and continuing throughout his early life, his biographers speak of the Arabic world predicting the arrival of their own prophet, a spiritual leader who was to be sent directly to them by God. Leading a rather ordinary mercantile life, it was not until he was in his mid-twenties that Muhammad took a middle-aged widow, Khadija, as his wife, agreeing to help her with her own relatively prosperous trading business in doing so.

Particular anecdotes begin to hint at the special nature of Muhammad prior to his initial revelations. For instance the medieval historian Ibn Ishaq stated that: 'not a stone or tree that he passed but would say, "Peace unto you oh apostle of God"' Ibn Ishaq (cited in Guillaume 1955: 71). Eventually Muhammad began undergoing regular spiritual retreats on the slopes of the local Mount Hira. It was during one such nightly retreat that, now about forty years of age, he unwittingly made contact with the supernatural. He felt a crushing embrace constrict him, an embrace said to have been by an angel of God. Whilst continuing to hold him in a vice-like grip the angel curtly demanded that Muhammad begin to 'recite' or 'read' (*iqra*) a series of lines what would later become known as the *Surah al-'Alaq* (The Clot/Embryo). Muhammad panicked, pleading that it was not his place to do as the angel asked, he felt that he was not worthy of this duty and that he did not know what to say or how to say it. The angel merely gripped him tighter, eventually forcing him to repeat the following words:

'Read in the name of your Lord
Who created,
Created man from an embryo;

Read,

For you Lord is most beneficent,

Who taught by pen,

Taught man what he did not know.'

(Qur'an 96: 1-5)

Thus began a series of revelations that lasted for the rest of Muhammad's life, words that he and his millions of followers believe to be the speech of the divine and the doctrine of *Al-Llah*; (the God). After exile to Medina, numerous battles and finally, truces with the Quraysh, Muhammad died in 632 AD during a final farewell pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca. His legacy of 114 revelations came to form the *surahs* of the Qur'an and alongside the *hadiths* of those who knew him; they came in turn to form the basis of a major empire, which at its height stretched across Arabia, Asia, Africa and Europe. Crucially the doctrine as espoused in the Qur'an, whose very title can be translated as the 'reading' or 'recitation', is seen by the majority of Muslims as just that, a performance of the word of God as voiced by God. It is not a story of the acts or the deeds of those closest to God, but is rather understood to be the very word of God, spoken in his terms and in his tongue. The ultimate object of Muslim history is thus actually not even an object as such, but rather it is a recitation; that when read aloud, allows the reader to repeat the words, to perform as Muhammad did the text in the very language used by the divine itself. Together with the poetry of the *Jahiliyya*, the orality integral to the recitation of the Qur'an reminds us that traditionally, Islamic representations of the past tended to be both extremely poetic and performative in nature.

Poetic remembrance in the *surahs* of the Qur'an

The rich poetic heritage handed down by the Pagan Arabs to their Islamic followers utilised historical narratives based mainly on the themes of love, camels, horses, war, hunting and the landscape (Ali 1994: 7; also see Irwin 1999: 1-28; Homerin 1994). Qur'anic Arabic added to this poetic heritage, bringing with it an increased emphasis on metaphor, abstraction, assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia. It must be remembered that the language of Qur'anic or classical Arabic is remarkably complicated. Words derived from the same linguistic root as one another will inevitably branch into separate meanings. In turn the particular significance placed upon them is entirely dependent upon context, emphasis and that words position within the overall line of which it is a part (see Ali 1994: 7)[25].

Recitation

Before continuing in our analysis, it is important to first consider the actual recitation of the Qur'an, a factor that is key to the impact of its representations (Davies 2002). The Qur'an being

read aloud is one of the most familiar sounds to be heard throughout the Muslim world and Egypt is in no way an exception to this. Lines from the Qur'an frequently open and close radio and television programmes, they are read at marriages, funerals, in parliament, and during saint's days celebrations (*moulids*) – indeed the Qur'an is recited at any occasion that requires the blessing of God. Qur'anic studies, *qira'at*, present seven[26] authoritative 'readings' that are drawn from the traditions of the most prominent individual transmitters up the tenth century AD (Davies 2002: 158).   The three disciplines, *adab al-Qur'an, adab al-tilawa* and *adab al-qari wa-mustami* (etiquette regarding the Qur'an, the transmission, the listener and the reciter) expand upon the appropriate etiquette of the listener, reciter and recitation of the Qur'an and alongside the rules of *tajwid,* set down during the tenth century, seek to ensure the preservation of the divine sound of the text (Davies 2002:159; Nelson 1985).

One of the main reading styles is *murattal* (also known as *tajwid* and *tartil)*, the unembellished, subtle style heard in prayer, classes and private devotions. The prominent principle of *murattal* is a focus on a plain, literal and simple recital. The voice and posture of the reciter are relaxed and the volume is no higher than that of an ordinary conversation. Each line is spoken fairly quickly, in one long breath and with little melodic enhancement (Davies 2002:159)[27]. In Egypt there exists a far more elaborate style of reading, *mujawwad* [28] or 'beautiful' recitation. In this tradition the reciter uses elaborate melody (*maqam*) in an attempt to emotionally engage the audience with the text, to encourage spiritual enlightenment and to promote religious ecstasy. The *mujawwad* reciter memorises the text and then learns the 'melodic principles of Arabic musical composition' (Davies 2002: 159), eventually applying one to the other. Individual reciters build their own highly unique styles, but they will frequently quote melodies utilised and created by other skilled readers (Davies 2002:159)[29].

The recitation of the Qur'an helps one to understand the differences between western, biblical traditions of representing the past and Islamic traditions. In a modern, English church service psalms from the Bible are read for much of the time with a normal intonation, with no melody and little ornamentation. The reading of the Qur'an, as seen, is actually governed by rules of recitation, it is in fact much more of a *poetic* performance in this respect. The representations of Islamic religious culture are thus dominated by an explicit notion of orality; they are performed – indeed theological history, in this case, is a rhythmic performance.

The representational content of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is subdivided into 114 chapters or *surahs,* and each of these has a particular title, for instance the 2nd *surah* is called *al-baqarah,* the cow. The title of the specific surah is taken from a

word mentioned as little as once within it; as such it does not really reflect the content as a whole (something notably different to the titles use within an English tradition). Apart from the first, *al-fatinah* (the 'prelude' or 'opening'), the *surahs* are largely arranged according to their length. *Surah 2, surat al-baqarah* (the cow) is the thus the longest in the Qur'an, and comprising just one verse, the final *surah, surat an-Nas* (the men) is the shortest. Each is prefaced by a brief introduction detailing its number and title, the place in which it was first recited (generally Mecca or Medina), the number of verses it contains and the position of the *surah* in the overall sequence of Muhammad's revelations[30].

Qur'anic representations of the past are inevitably poetic in form and in focus they tend to dwell upon key historical and biblical characters. Discussed in a total of 14 *surahs* , 'Pharaoh' is one of the most frequently mentioned pre-Islamic figures.[31] In turn (both bearing their own *surahs*) poets and *jinns*[32] are also discussed in some detail (i.e. Qur'an 29 *surat ash-shu'ara'*; Qur'an 72 *surat al-jinn*). Historical case studies are regularly included throughout the text and act as devices upon which to meditate. The Qur'an frequently calls for the reader or listener to consider specific examples from the past, to study them and in doing so, to learn from them (see Qur'an 12: 110-11; 14: 5; 30: 9; 35: 43; 40: 21).[33]

Qur'anic depictions of Pharaoh and other pre-Islamic rulers tend to paint them as licentious unbelievers. Particularly focusing on the ancient Egyptians, yet also mentioning other fallen civilisations, it often portrays pre-Islamic societies as victims of God's wrath; their ruins function as suitable reminders of the social degradation and corruption of these societies. However, the Qur'an does use ancient remains in a more positive manner as important philosophical icons[34]. For instance in *surah 89, surat al-fajr* (the dawn) the following is spoken of:

'I call to witness the dawn

And the Ten Nights[35]

The multiple and the one

The night as it advances,

Is there not an evidence in this

for those who have sense?

Have you not seen what your Lord did to the 'Ad

Of Eram[36] with lofty pillars

(erected as signposts in the desert),

The like of whom

were never created in the realm;

And with Thamud

who carved rocks in the valley;

And the mighty Pharaoh

Who terrorised the region,

And multiplied corruption

So your Lord poured a scourge

of punishment over them.'

(Qur'an 89: 1-13)

At first glance the lines above appear to create a negative representation of those past societies discussed in the *surah*. Yet much of this impression lies in its translation into English. Firstly we must realise the effect of the context as stated in the first three lines, upon these representations: 'I call to witness the dawn and the Ten Nights, the multiple and the one'. This *surah* is discussing the idea of day and night, the notion of rise and fall in nature, and thus it concentrates on the universal truth that is represented by life and death. The remains of the magnificent gardens of Eram act as signposts, as do Pharaonic ruins and the carvings of Thamud. These sites serve to remind the viewer that God punished these societies, ultimately destroying them, but if we once again look beyond the restrictions of the English transliterations we may also realise that these remains additionally act as poetic emblems that represent the passing of time; markers by which one may remember and consider the rise and fall of civilisation and correspondingly the life cycle of humankind. The representation of the past in this case is not only poetic, but also philosophical.

In *surat ar-Rum* (the Romans) the Roman civilisation provides a similar focus for contemplation. The Romans represent a social group once on the ascendancy that according to the *surah* could now be witnessed in their descent from power. As a people who themselves ignored the lessons of the past and therefore paid the price of their ignorance, the Roman civilisation thus provided another important historical lesson.

'The Romans have been conquered

In the neighbouring land.

...Have they not travelled on the earth and seen

how the others before them had met their end?'

(Qur'an 30: 2-3, 9-10).

The Qur'an uses historical figures and groups as a form of poetic remembrance that doubles as a metaphorical comment on life and death. In English these depictions often seem to be little more that 'fire and brimstone' threats used to cow those lacking in faith, those who refuse to

acknowledge the divinity of *Allah*. Yet they should be considered in a somewhat more complex manner than this. These representations should also be seen as important symbols of the cycle of life and the transit of time. The ruins of the past initially remind the viewer of a once powerful civilisation, but the Qur'an states that they also indicate that these civilisations, as nature and like the human body, are also affected by the passing and ravages of time. Through this poetic remembrance the Qur'an uses the past to connect with the listener or reader on a more personal level; it is the intention that the reader or listener sees God as their salvation; as their means by which to face the passing of time and in turn to conquer it. The past provides a landscape, a focus for this religious contemplation.

Oral history in the *Hadith* tradition

Religious acts such as the *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), acts in which an individual actually seeks to emulate the actions of Muhammad as spoken of in the Qur'an, are additionally based on another set of equally important historical, representations; what are called the *Hadiths* (sayings) or histories of the Prophet (see Al-Bukhari 1998; Hawting and Abdul-Kader 1993). This important set of oral testimonies was most famously compiled by the religious historian Muhammad Ibn Ishma'il Al-Bukhari (d.870 [1998]). The *hadiths* are quite literally 'sayings' about Muhammad, drawn from the accounts of a series of pious individuals who, having been rigorously tested, are said to have known the Prophet on a personal level. From a representational point of view the *hadith* tradition indicates emphasis being placed on oral as opposed to written history[37].

Perhaps the main point to be taken from the *hadith* literature is that a great deal of modern Islamic religious and daily practices are based upon these ancient oral testimonies. The sayings that comprise the literature range from the importance of practicing charity, (*saqa't/ zakat/ sadaqah*):

> 'Abu Musa reported[38], The Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him said:
> "*Sadaqah* is incumbent on every Muslim.'"
> (Al-Buhkari 1998: 209)

Through to the need for generous shop-keeping:

> 'Jabir reported, The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him said:
> "May Allah have mercy on the man who is generous when he buys and when he sells and when he demands (his due)'"
> (Al-Buhkari 1998: 294)

As discussed previously, museums tend to follow correspondingly western, literary and historical narratives. In this they act as sites in which the objects are structured according to storylines taken from written history. These are in turn moulded and presented through the medium of a specifically western iconographic tradition and set of memories. This practice in itself therefore often leaves little to no room for representations drawn from oral history. Instead it somewhat undermines them. Yet as indicated by the importance placed on the *hadiths* and the stories of the Coptic Church, orality is one of the key modes of animating the past in Egyptian society. Does this therefore begin to explain what at first appears to be a lack of museological interest amongst many of the people that I have met in Quseir[39]? In our representations of the past in museums do we as western archaeologists and museologists place too much emphasis on the written word and thus correspondingly too much importance on the physical artefacts of the past – it is in our interest to analyse these objects, but perhaps we could focus a little more upon their symbolic role in certain narratives and memories as well?

Some representations of the past in classical Arabic poetry[40]

Reiterating the argument so far: it takes little more than brief and cursory glance at the poetry of the *Jahiliyya* and at some of the representations of the past found within and inspired by the contents of the Qur'an to notice that the manner in which history is evoked in pre and early Islamic literature is significantly different to many conventional western modes of telling and animating the past. As has been established in chapter two, western narratives employed by museums appear to borrow elements from classical, biblical and European motifs in their representations; Muslim narratives in turn tend to borrow from their own pre-Islamic and Qur'anic heritage. From the outset poetry, orality and performance were key to traditional portrayals of history and in many respects this continues to be the case to this day. However before one can begin to understand these representations of history and indeed to attempt to employ them in the dominant narratives utilised by European museums of Egyptian archaeology, one must study the rich poetic heritage of the Arabic-speaking world in more detail. It is within this corpus of data that one may really begin to tease apart and to analyse many of the most evocative and influential of the representations of the past (for a general introduction to the topic see Adonis 2003; Allen 2000; Ashtiany 1990; Irwin 2002; Jones 1992, 1996; Sperl 1989; Sperl and Shackle 1996; Stetkevych 1991; Zwettler 1978).

The eleventh century critic Ibn Rashiq (d. 1065) wrote one of the most important analyses of the Arabic poetic canon. In this work, entitled *al-Umdah fi mahaisn al-sh'r wa-adabihi wa naqdihi* (The Pillar regarding Poetry's Embellishments, Proper Usage, and Criticisms [1934])[41] Rashiq presents the poet as a person who sees and feels things that other, somewhat less sensitive people, simply cannot. To Rashiq they are thus gifted individuals born with a particularly powerful ability to

make sense of the world around them. In terms of the portrayal of the past this naturally places the poet in a more privileged position than their peers. The poet is gifted with remembrance and with the understanding of their social groups' history - it is they that make sense of this history through the medium of rhythm and rhyme. To classical Arabic writers such as Ibn Rashiq and his forebear Qudamah ibn Ja'far (d. 948) the poet was *born* with their abilities, they could not be *taught* them through education. As such more artistic significance was attributed to natural (*matbu*) rather than to artificially contrived (*masnu*) poetry (Allen 2000: 67; also see Abbas 1959). If a western museologist was to adopt a similar mindset then they would draw the conclusion that an overly analytical and theoretical representation of the past is in many respects actually secondary in these traditions to a more performative, unique and personal expression of history.

The forms of telling the past: categories of Arabic poetry

Later Arabic critics such as the Iraqi poet, Saffi al-din al-Hilli (d.c. 1339), talk in terms of the seven categories of Arabic poetry: *qarid, kan wa kan* (once upon a time), *dubayt* (or *ruba'i* [quatrain]), *muwawshah* ('girdled' –similar to the *qarid* group in form but with more emphasis on quotation), and the *quma* and the *zajal* (both being a kind of poetry that allowed for the use of language from outside the remits of conventional classical Arabic, with the latter category quite literally meaning 'shout') (see Allen 2000: 81-2, for Arabic references see Ibn Qutaybah 1964; Ibn Rashiq 1934). However, simply because of their wide popularity and prevalence, I shall only elaborate upon the *qit'ah* and *qassida* - what collectively constitute the *qarid* group of poetry at this stage.

The *qit'ah* and the *qassida*

The *qassida* has already been discussed in some depth within this chapter; nevertheless the significance placed upon this particular poetic form deems further elaboration worthwhile. The *qassida* has always been a poem intended to convey a message. It is possible that its slightly shorter variant, the *qit'ah* actually preceded it, but due to a paucity of material and chronological evidence this developmental cycle is somewhat difficult to analyse in any real detail. It is suffice to acknowledge that together both categories may be defined as the belonging to the *qarid* group[42]. Notable variations are displayed within examples drawn from differing historical contexts, however the arrival at a final, significant point forming the crux of the poem, alongside several other important structuring principles are clearly observable within all of the *qassida's* incarnations. The introduction to Ibn Qutaybah's (d.889) *Kitab al-shi'r wa-al-shu'ara'* (Book of Poetry and Poets, [1964]) provides a useful window into an early summary of the *qassida's* main structuring principles:

'I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of Odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling places and the relics and traces of habitation…Then to this he linked the erotic prelude…Now when the poet had assured himself of an attentive hearing, he followed up his advantage and set forth his claim: thus he went on to complain of fatigue and want of sleep and travelling by night and of the noonday heat…and when, after representing all the discomfort and danger of the journey…he entered upon the panegyric and incited him to reward…'

(Ibn Qutaybah, trans Nicholson 1987: 77-8)[43]

It is particularly interesting that Qutaybah's analysis notes that prior to plunging into the main poetic narrative, the opening of a *qassida* should seek to focus upon the 'deserted dwelling places and the relics and traces of habitation'. To Qutaybah, the true poet should thus seek to begin their ode by evoking an almost *archaeological* site - a ruined or deserted area of past human habitation. This initial image sets the scene for the poet's tale; it inspires their story and through this evocation of the past the dominant narrative is introduced. This observation is crucial to our analysis of the classical Arabic representation of the past; for it demonstrates that the *qassida* really is one of the most significant contexts through which history is remembered in this tradition. The *qassida* also offers one of the earliest examples of the representation of the 'archaeological' site. As seen, these deserted places serve as the prelude to the ode, acting as the gateway to the entire creative process itself.

Ibn Qutaybah's study breaks the *qassida* into six main developments or themes. These consist of the aforementioned nostalgic opening (*nasib*), leading through to a release (*takhallus*) and travel section (*rahil*). The middle and end of the poetic dialogue initially involves the praise of tribal attributes (*fakhr*), and after this follows the lampooning of the main adversary of the leading character (*hija*). Finally the ode ends with a series of moral aphorisms (*hikam*) (see Allen 2000: 77; Irwin 1999: 1-2; Lyall 1918-21; Nicholson 1987: 77-8).

By way of demonstrating these structuring principles, we may turn to a *qassida* by one of the greatest love poets of the classical Arabic period, the Meccan-born Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a (c.644-721). This particular poem thus firstly exhibits the *nasib* or nostalgic opening:

'Should you depart from Nu'm's[44] (deserted) encampment at the first hint of the morrow's dawn,
Or set off with the lengthening shadows, press forward into the next day's heat?'
(Abi Rabi'a 1984: 29, my brackets)

Then there is the release or *takhallus:*

> 'The night of Dhi Dawran you forced me, the blind lover, to set out, to brave
> terror.'
> (Abi Rabi'a 1984: 30)

This is followed by the *rahil* or travel section:

> 'My sturdy mount was in the open, its saddle
> Exposed to night wanderers or any passer-by.'
> (Abi Rabi'a 1984: 30)

Next, follows a rather brief acknowledgement of the tribe to which the main character belongs and to whom the lady of the opposing clan, Nu'm, gives herself. The *fakhr* is thus formed through the discussion of the brave actions of this heroic man of the Khattab area/family:

> 'Abu al-Khattab you will be my prince,
> Without rival, as long as I live.'
> (Abi Rabi'a 1984: 31)

Then the inability of Nu'm's tribe to catch the brave Abu al-Khattab after his night of passion with her is noted (acting as the *hija* if you like):

> 'She said 'The time for the clan to awake
> has come...I replied 'I will make a dash for it...'
> (Abi Rabi'a 1984: 31).

Then an aphorism is delivered to the main character by the sisters of Nu'm who aid him in his escape, thus providing the concluding statements of the poem (the *hikam*):

> 'Do you not fear your enemies on a moonlit night?
> ...Is this always your way,
> are you not incorrigible, not ashamed: will you not desist, take heed?

> If you do return, cast your eye on someone else

So that our tribe will think you love another.'

(Abi Rabi'a 1984: 32)

If we are to be serious in our quest to challenge conventional western museological narratives as the appropriate mode of representing Egyptian antiquity, then the study of these particular poetic structuring devices are important. The analysis of the *qassida* offers us a window into classical Arabic representations of history. Crucially this analysis provides us with a series of narrative developments that are key to an Islamic portrayal of the past; indeed, they provide one with an insight into narrative developments that are used to this day in the oral representations of the history of the families of many Ababda Bedouin and fishermen who live in and around modern Quseir. Could we use these narrative developments as a source by which to structure our own museum displays of Egyptian archaeology in the UK?

The seven poetic types through which the past is represented

Arabic poetry may be split into seven main types, defined by their central poetic 'goal' or theme (*gharad*, pl *aghrad*) (see Allen 2000: 83; Irwin 1999: 43, for a more alternative analysis see Sperl 2004). The first of these is the panegyric/eulogy (*madih*), stemming from this came the lampoon and invective (*hija*). The third type concentrates upon the praise and remembrance of the dead (*ritha*). These first three themes worked to foster a communal spirit, they extolled the social virtues of *murawah* (chivalry) and *hamasah* (heroism and vivacity) inherent in that particular tribe or family grouping, or in the case of the *hija*, lampooned another groups' lack of these qualities. Three other types, linked to the larger purposes of the *madih*, *hija* and *ritha*, were love (*ghazal*), the descriptive poem (*wasf*) and the ascetic/spiritual theme (*zuhdiyyah*). Finally, a notable quantity of classical poetry concentrates upon the praise of wine and the extolling of debauched behaviour in general (*khamriyyah*). Before one apparently strays too far from the argument of this chapter, it is necessary to define exactly why the study of these poetic types is useful to our analysis of the representation of the past. Although there is no one genre that focuses solely on the portrayal of history, it must be noted that all of the seven types tend to invoke the past to make their points and to reach their conclusions. In short history, as discussed in relation to the *qassida*, acts as the vehicle through which the theme of the poem is presented. The past is therefore not just a record of historical events, but as in the *Qur'an*, it is actually the place through which the audience are encouraged to meditate upon life and to consider certain social critiques. As is the case in a Western tradition, history is also rarely neutral in the Arabic lexicon; it is a landscape that is open to being manipulated by the individual discussing it. In light of an analysis of Arabic literature the possibilities for a museum prepared to incorporate elements drawn from these modes of telling the past, I hope, are again making themselves apparent in the reader's mind. Could these seven

themes in turn give future museum displays of Egyptian heritage their structure, their message and their narrative hook?

Madih: the past as panegyric and eulogy

One of the greatest exponents of the panegyric is the famous court poet Abu'l- Tayyid Ahmad ibn Husayn, generally referred to by his nick-name al-Mutanabbi ('would be prophet', d.965, see Frangeigh 2005: 367; Irwin 1999: 221-2). Al-Mutanabbi has had an influential impact on later writers; his verses are frequently evoked and replicated within modern Arabic writing, and even to this day his poetry is recited by people from Quseir. In the following lines of one of his most famous panegyrics he praises a victory over the Byzantines at al-Hadath:

'Resolutions come in accordance with the worth of the resolute
   Noble deeds come in accordance with the worth of the noble

In the eyes of the puny, puny deeds seem important; in the eyes
   Of the important, important deeds seem puny.'
(al-Mutanabbi 2005: 369)

Here al-Mutanabbi patriotically glorifies the heroic deeds of a favoured ruler and the (then recent) past is therefore utilised as tool through which to praise the present. Al-Mutanabbi's predecessor Abu Tammam (c.805-45), a poet working in the *badi*[5] style in the court of the Caliph al-Mu 'tasim (c.833-42) was also an expert of the panegyric, (for more see Frangiegh 2005: 377; Abu Tammam 1951, 1967). In his famous *qassida* dealing with the Caliph's capture of the Byzantine town, Amorium in 838, he writes:

'Sword tells more truth than books; it's edge is parting wisdom from
   vanity:
In gleaming blades, not lines of dusky tomes, are texts to dispel
   uncertainty and doubt...

...Day of Amorium fight! Our hopes have come away from you with
Udders of bittersweet milk...
...From the age of Alexander, or before then, time's locks have
grown grey while she remained untouched by age.'
(Abu Tammam 1990: 159-61)

Again this is a poem frequently repeated amongst the educated classes in Quseir, it evokes an ancient town and it uses this town's capture to eulogise the poet's patron. In this respect the past provides Abu Tammam with a suitable landscape through which the goal of the poem is reached, and the heroic actions of his patron are suitably praised[46].

Hija: the past as lampoon, satire and invective.

Invective, lampoon and satire (*hija*) of ones enemies form an ancient aspect of Arabic poetry. *Hija* also act as a sort of public entertainment, in which one's wit is pitted against another's. During such matches the audience was/is quite literally treated to a verbal battle. If one sits in a coffee shop in Quseir for any length of time then you will notice similarly satirical exchanges regularly occurring between old friends. Additionally members of the local Ababda Bedouin population still frequently recite long, antiquated satires of their rival tribes, the *Ma'aza* and *Bishari* (to be discussed later).

Once again in the following examples we see the poet using the past (amongst other things) as the setting for these frequently vicious tirades against their foes. As pointed out by Roger Allen, the easiest targets for lampooning and mocking were the chivalry (*muruwwah*) of the person/tribe in question, and the honour of their women (Allen 2000: 91). The most famous example of poetic jousting (*naqa'id* 'flytings') within a continuing contest in *hija*, is the argument between the poets Tammam ibn Ghalib al-Farazdaq (d. 728) and Jarir ibn Attiya (d. 728). Jarir insults the honour of al-Farazdaq's sister, Ji'thin. In response to this, al-Farazdaq delivers a verbal mauling of the history of Jarir's tribe, the unfortunately named Banu Kulayb ('sons of the puppy'). These particular 'sons of bitches' were portrayed by al-Farazdaq as weak cowards, who were in turn poor fighters (for more see Allen 2000: 91-2; Beeston 1983; Irwin 1999: 45-7). The famous, Al-Mutanabbi once again provides us with one of the most quoted of all *hija*, his barbs in this case aimed squarely at Kafur, the eunuch king of Egypt (c. 10th century):

> 'Till I met this eunuch, I always assumed that the head was
>> the seat of wisdom,
> But when I looked into his intelligence, I discovered that all his
>> wisdom had resided in his testicles...'
> (Al-Mutanabbi cited in Allen 2000: 92)

This may just seem to be a rather crude insult with little relevance to our argument, but the *hija* tradition continues in Quseir to this day. As previously stated, within the local cafes, one will regularly hear a mixture of classical quotes from al-Mutanabbi, Jarir and al-Farazdaq, alongside cruel one-liners about rival shop-keeper's families, rival families in general, and verbal battles

between friends. The past often acts as the landscape for this battleground, and family history is frequently the source of the main insults[47].

Ritha: the past as elegy

This form, by virtue of its main goal (*gharad*) being to remember the dead and gone, is perhaps the poetic genre most noticeably linked to the past. Many of the frequently cited elegies (*marithiyah*, pl. *marathi*) are by women in a state of mourning for their men-folk. For instance, the aforementioned poetess Tumadir bint Amr ibn Ashsharid, or Khansa (d.646) remembers her lost half-brother, Sakhr:

> 'The rising and setting of the sun keep turning my memory of Sakhr's
> death
> And only the host of mourners crying for their brothers saves me from
> myself.'
> (Khansa cited in al Udhari 1999: 59)

In her own elegiac verse, Hafsa bint al Hajj Arrakuniyya (d.1190)writes of her lost love, the poet Abu Ja'far ibn Sa'id, killed by the jealous king of Grenada:

> 'They killed my love, then threatened me for wearing my mourning clothes
>
> Let Allah bless those who grieve or untap their tears for the man killed by his
> haters.'
> (Hafsa cited in al Udhari 1999: 230)

Elegy is not only confined to the remembrance of departed loved ones, the ruins of beloved cities also provide an important focus for the *ritha,* as evidenced by Ibn al-Rumi's (d.896) mourning of the destruction of al-Basra by the *Zanj* in 871.[48]

> 'What sleep is their after the enormous catastrophes that have
>   beset al-Basrah?
>
> ...My heart is seared with grief for you, poor al-Basrah, with flames
>   of burning fire...'
>   (al-Rumi cited in Allen 2000: 96)

The Arabic elegy often remembers past events and historical heroes – in short it expresses a yearning for these things to return. As such within these meditations, history is portrayed somewhat like a double-edged sword - it is at once cruel, taking the things most beloved to the poet, and yet these aspects of the past are also nostalgic places to be sorely missed, despite the troubles that befell the composer and their family during these times.

Wasf describing the past

Wasf or descriptive poetry often concentrates upon the flora and fauna of the desert, a practice that hints at origins amongst the tribes of the vast steppes of the Arabian Peninsula. Great anthologies of these descriptive texts were drawn together during the eight, ninth and tenth centuries. Amr ibn Bahr, better known as Al-Jahiz's (the Goggle-eyed, c.776-869) *Kitab al-hawayan* (Book of Animals) is a good example of this practice. These descriptive traditions are often found within the early parts of the *qassida* in which the poet narrates a dangerous journey through the desert *(rahil)*. A focus on animals, and a tradition of depicting the natural world in itself hints at a vast reservoir of potential texts by which one could expand and add greater meaning to displays of certain aspects of ancient Egyptian material culture – mummified animals for instance. A descriptive poetic tradition will eventually tend to turn its eye to the past in itself. This is clearly the case in the writing of perhaps the most famous of all *wasf* poets, Al-walid ibn 'Ubayd al-Buhturi (d.897). In the following lines, al-Buhturi stares at a wall-painting in the ruined palace at Mada'in (Ctesiphon). The painting depicts a battle at Antioch[49] between Persian and Byzantine forces. When observing it, al-Buhturi imagines himself being offered a glass of wine by the monarch, Anushirvan (see Allen 200: 100; Irwin 1999: 139-143). In this poem, al-Buhturi sees the palace restored to its former glory; he is directly inspired by the wall painting, he envisages the ruins filled once more with dignitaries and he even visualises the great battle itself:

> 'At the sight of Antioch's fall you would start
>
> At Greek and Persian turned to stone,
>
> With the fates at large as Anushirvan
>
> Under banner imperial drives his troops
>
> In sea of armour closing in
>
> On Byzantium's emperor saffron-robed...'
>
> (Al Buhtari, cited in Teutey 1985: 241)

As seen in the verses above, the Arabic descriptive tradition often uses the ruins of the past to inspire the narrative. Unlike more frugal descriptions often employed by museums that can amount to little more than a date and a line or two of 'factual' prose, *wasf* poems are frequently inspired by the remains of history to imagine the context of the object or ruin and to transport

the writer to those times. These are historical *descriptions*, yet they allow for a degree of fantasy that many museologists and exhibition designers would argue they can but dream of[50]. As we shall see, an imaginative interaction with one's history is in turn inherent to many of the representations of the past of my colleagues from Quseir.

Ghazal: the past as a love story

In this particular type of recitation, the past actively encourages the remembrance of a lost love, or a particular historical episode serves as the landscape in which to set a romantic story. As pointed out by the scholar of Arabic literature, Roger Allen, the *ghazal* genre is born directly out of the *nasib* of the *qassida* – in short it comes from the section devoted to describing a ruined settlement or encampment (2000: 102, for more see Stetkevych 1991). In this respect, the past and a feeling of nostalgia for a missed loved one are representationally entwined. Indeed, departed lovers are remembered by the (near archaeological) remains of their presence and passing:

> 'Khawlah has left traces by the outcrops of Thamad, that show
>
>   Like tattoo traces on the hand.'
> (Tarafah [d.c.600] cited in Allen 2000: 103)

Within a Bedouin tradition, history often provides a specific context in which a love story may be situated. For example, the *Banu Hilal* remembers the actions of a heroic slave, Abu Zayd, in the eleventh to twelfth century. In the beginning of the tale the love interest of the story, Dawaba, peers out of her window and dreams of joining the Hilali tribe, particularly a young Hilali man, Yunis:

> 'Then Dawaba peered down from her lattice window,
>
> She wore earrings, glittering jewels
>
> ...she saw fair Yunis from her lattice window –Look!
>
> ...Passion for the Hilali youth enmeshed her.'
> ('Awadallah cited in Slymovics 1987: 82)

In this particular epic the past provides the setting for a romance; it functions as a frame in which to position the main narrative. Nostalgia appears to add significance to the *ghazal* and thus in this respect, history helps to add emotional weight to this type of poetry. We are again reminded

that within an Arabic tradition, the past - indeed archaeology, is perhaps at its most evocative when it is remembered by way of a specific, emotive and poetic theme – in this case through the medium of the love story (see figure 54 for an example of a modern Arabic-speaking artist taking a love poem as their inspiration [in this case from the Persian poet, Hafez [c. late 14th century]).

Zuhdiyyah: the lessons of the past

The word *Zuhd* ('asceticism') hints at the topic upon which this type of poetry focuses- life, death and other such weighty questions that surround human existence (see Allen 2000: 119, for more examples see papers in Jones 1992). In this respect many of the Qur'an's verses may therefore be defined as *zuhdiyyah*. The past plays an important role in this type of poetic, moral questioning; it is used to add depth and meaning to key philosophical points raised within the verses. For instance in one of the tales of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* (Thousand Nights and One Night)[51], *Madinat al-nuhas* (The City of Brass), the Amir Musa ibn Nasayr is sent on a perilous journey by the Umawi Caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, to locate the jars in which the mythical King Solomon trapped a host of *jinn*[52]. This particular narrative contains some of the finest examples of the ways in which *Zuhdiyyah* verses act as representations of the past. The 'ascetic' verses are written on ancient pillars and statues within the city itself, they are included within the narrative as important moral 'lessons' aimed at the visitors to the remains of this old civilisation. One of these tablets reads as follows:

> 'The signs that here their mighty works portray
> Warn us that all must tread the self same-way
> O thou who standest in this stead to hear
> Tidings of folk, whose power hath passed for aye,
> Enter this palace gate and ask the news
> Of greatness fallen into dust and clay:
> Death has destroyed them and dispersed their might
> And in the dust they lost their rich display;
> As had they only set their burdens down
> To rest awhile, and then had rode away.'
> (Burton 1889 VI: 88-9)

Clearly these verses are reminiscent of some of the Qur'anic representations discussed previously. Again, ruins provide a lesson for the (then) modern world. The past, the remnants of the inhabitants of the city serve to remind the Amir of the corrosive power of time. In these verses and often within *zuhdiyyah* as a whole, an archaeological site is treated as an ascetic place in which to ponder the important issues of life. It is also portrayed as a site that instils a kind of 'moral'

enlightenment in the viewer/visitor, yet ultimately acting as a poetic meditation upon mortality that is relevant to all humankind. Interestingly tales still told in Quseir today that function as a warning for others frequently utilise the archaeology site Quseir al-Qadim as the focal point of the narrative; those who disturb the remains and the artefacts are often said to have died or been killed shortly afterwards (see Glazier 2005).

Khamriyyah: drinking and the past

Although seemingly rather irrelevant to our study of the Arabic poetic depiction of the past, the celebration of wine drinking (*Khamriyyah*), nevertheless should be analysed in some detail. In Quseir people have brought to my attention a few significant snippets of lines from famous pre and early Islamic odes to drinking when they are shown images of pottery and amphorae found at a local archaeological site or within museum cabinets (see figure 55)[53]. Maymun ibn Qays al-A'sha, Omar Khayyam, Jalal al-din Rumi, Amr Ibn Kulthum, Alqamah ibn Abadah, Labid and Adi ibn Zayd are amongst the most famous - and indeed the most frequently quoted of these 'wine' poets (see Allen 2000: 112; Kennedy 1997). The restrictions placed on the use of alcohol within Muslim society are well known, yet these restrictions did not stop the pre-Islamic genre of *khamriyyah* poetry from continuing to flourish in a swiftly expanding Muslim world[54]. Poetry developed in order to rebel against the orthodoxies of Islam and (in the Sufi tradition) developed to remember God, may at first seem to have little to do with the representation of the past. Nonetheless it is interesting that verbal responses to pottery, drinking vessels, stoppers, glassware, indeed anything possibly associated with wine[55] are notably more poetic from many individuals from Quseir and the nearby Ababda Bedouin tribe than in any that I have experienced amongst more 'academically sanctioned' archaeological groups.

As mentioned previously this type of 'wine' poetry, is often associated with Sufis, of which the Egyptian Sharaf al-din 'Umar ibn al-Farid ('the sultan of the lovers', d. 1235) is one of the most famous (see Arberry 1957). In the following lines he actually seeks to venerate God through a meditation (*hal*) upon the drinking of an intoxicating cup of wine:

'In remembrance of the Beloved[56] we drank a wine through which
    we became drunk before ever the vine was created.

For a cup it has a full moon; it is a sun circled by a new moon;
    when it is mixed, how many a star appears!'
(al Farid cited in Arberry 1957: 34)

A symbolic use of the contents of a cup as a wider metaphor for important social issues, ethics, and even for God, is potentially interesting for western museums. Museum visitors are unfortunately somewhat used to viewing cabinets of pottery vessels with little more than a date and provenance to separate each find. Yet as I have experienced in Quseir, these same somewhat 'plain' drinking and storage vessels can be transformed through just a few poetic lines. This metamorphosis witnesses these same objects moulded into artefacts with important and wide reaching resonances for society. It is apparent that these meanings, these poetic reverberations that seemingly emanate from an individual's personal interaction with these objects, are often directly derived from the practice of *Khamriyyah;* thus these deeper meanings are born from what is a very specific mode of telling the past, a particular set of memories, as opposed to a conventional/sanctioned archaeological tradition.

So, in considering this final point and having introduced some of the main representations of the past in Coptic, Qur'anic and classical Arabic literature, I now close this chapter. I will conclude both this and the proceeding analysis of the representations of *Adab*, folk and Bedouin narratives more fully at the end of chapter four.

¹ See Hassan (1998); MacDonald (2000, 2004) on the negative impressions of tourist visitors to Egypt.

² For instance the image of Joseph, Mary and Christ entering Egypt as foreign, 'holy' travellers; as outsiders but as outsiders who are nevertheless represented as being of far greater significance and import than the indigenous population of the country (see figure 17). Dominic Montserrat's study of the representation of Akhenaten (2003) places similar emphasis on the significance of Biblical portrayals of Egypt.

³ Though this is not always the case, as recently pointed out by Okasha El Daly (2005).

⁴ On the concealment of Islamic icons in anthropological writing see Variscio (2005).

⁵ This dataset has been compiled largely from translations, a decision central to this thesis. Although capable of basic conversation and currently still learning the rudiments of Arabic, I chose mainly to concentrate upon scholarly translations of the original works. Ideally my own translations would have formulated this study, but I have had to accept that to get to a level by which my command of Arabic was suitable for this, I would need at least a few years of training and learning, as well as at least a year living amongst Arabic speakers. For the purposes of this research project this just was not possible. Furthermore, as this thesis hopes to act as a guide for those considering working within the framework of community archaeology, it is fuelled by a desire to demonstrate that one can utilise a variety of methods of learning the representations that communities use to understand their past. In an environment where funding rarely exceeds a few years, this chapter seeks to indicate that one can work around the problems inherent in a language barrier, something that arguably puts off a great deal of western archaeologists from interacting with the community in which they work in the first place. Finally, where possible translations, incorporating the original Arabic, the Latinised Arabic and the English translation have been favoured. Additionally all texts and quotations have been cross-referenced with at least three native Arabic speakers.

⁶ A thematic approach is thus more appropriate here that the chronological approach adopted in chapters one and two.

⁷ A medieval poet will for instance borrow old classical narratives, re-use them and add a little of their own personality in the retelling

⁸ Badawi's discussion of modern Arabic poetry being a good example of this (1975).

⁹ This is a rather derogative term meaning the period of un-enlightenment or ignorance.

¹⁰ Many of the illustrations of this chapter are examples of modern Arabic art – an art largely based upon calligraphy. See Porter (2006) for reproductions and more on this topic.

¹¹ For the purposed of this introductory study I largely use the work of the Coptic scholar Meindarus (1960; 1978; 1989; 2002).

¹² According to local tradition.

¹³ Indeed the man on the right was Egyptian, and having tried unsuccessfully to stop his accomplice from robbing the family, he is said to have been the first person to enter heaven after Christ.

¹⁴ Most scholars believe that rhythm began in the pre-Islamic period with *saj* (rhymed prose or rhyme without metre, a term also used to describe bird song). This was followed by *rajaz*, a mode that utilised a metre made up a single hemistich like *saj*, but was divided up into regular rhythmic units. The *qassida* was the culmination of the two forms (see Adonis 2003: 17).

¹⁵ For instance two recent anthologies, *Victims of a Map* (Adonis, Darwish and al-Qasim 2005) and *Angry Voices* (Enani 2003) give good examples of Egyptian and Palestinian free verse poems in translation.

[16]Surviving poetry from the *Jahiliyya* and the early Islamic period is therefore extremely unlikely to be of the exact form as the original; later versions were typically transcribed by philologists from already much altered versifications (see Irwin 1999: 1-29).

[17] Although the truth of this action is debatable (see Irwin 2002: 6). Nonetheless it should be noted that amongst the community of Quseir it is fairly universally accepted that the hanging of the odes is historical fact.

[18] This is similar to the way that Samuel Quicheberg viewed both the Temple of Solomon and the collection of King Hezeki'ah - that is both as early museums and yet also as important religious sites.

[19] For more on this ode see Ibn Kathir (1998: 86).

[20] This observation comes directly from the analysis of a dataset of translations that amount to over sixty poems from the Jahiliyya alone.

[21] The owl (m. *Sada*, f. *Hada*) acts as an Arabic metaphor for the blood-soul of the deceased (al Udhari: 1999: 58). So 'owls' in this case refers to the removing of the soul through the act of killing.

[22] A theme continued in the Qur'an (see below).

[23] Having discussed some of the Western approaches to Islam it remains for me to make one more observation before progressing with my own discussion of the Qur'an. The Qur'an, like the poetry of the pre-Islamic period, is meant to be read aloud, and crucially to be memorised by its students. Thus I believe that one must be mindful of the notion of religious orality when analysing any translation of it. Many western versions of the Qur'an tend to portray it as a prose driven document, stylistically similar to the Old Testament. Having had much of the Qur'an recited to me in Quseir, I argue that this rendering is extremely misleading. Rather, rhythm and rhyme are central to the original version, underlying its historical, Arabic poetic lineage (see Nelson 1985; Graham 1987). It is primarily for this reason that the Pakistani novelist, poet, critic and diplomat Ahmed Ali's bilingual edition of the Qur'an remains the favoured translation to be quoted in the following pages of analysis (1994).

[24] This is not the place in which to analyse and to discuss the life of Muhammad in great detail, therefore in order to gain a fuller impression of what amongst Muslims are seen as nothing less than the most important events of Islamic history, instead see any one of the many biographies of the Muslim Prophet currently available (for a general introduction and for references used in this discussion see Armstrong 1991; Bellamy 1973; Burton 1977; Hourani 1991: 14-21; Rogerson 2003; for Islamic interpretation see Abd al-Malik ibn Hashim 1957; Ibn Kathir 1998; Ibn Khaldun 2005; McAuliffe 2006;Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Waqidi 1955)[24].

[25] Robert Irwin (1999: 31) reminds us that within Muslim doctrine the Qur'an is quite literally untranslatable. I thus continue my analysis with caution and choose not to focus in great detail on the style of language, but rather the use of the main historical icons mentioned within it.

[26] Though in some schools there are as many as twelve to fourteen (Davies 2002: 159).

[27] It is the duty of every Muslim to learn this style of recital (at the very least).

[28] Also sometimes known as *tilawi*.

[29] Slower tempos, longer syllabic durations, ornamentation and pauses help to build and release emotional tension. All performances are driven by the rather difficult task of encouraging the listener to concentrate upon the holy text; but not to stand in awe of the reciter's charismatic readings of it.

[30] Additionally a group of mysterious letters precedes 29 of the 114 *surahs*, the function of which still remains largely unclear (see Allen 2000: 54). The two most frequent of these enigmatic sets, begins with the letters *ALIF-LAM-RA* and *ALIF-LAM-MIM* (see Bellamy 1973).

[31] Qur'an 2: 49-50; 7: 103-7; 10: 75-92; 26: 11; 28: 38; 40: 28-44; 44: 27-33; 54: 41-42; 69:9; 73: 16; 79: 24; 85: 16; 89: 15.

[32] Faerie/devil like creatures, set between the human race and angels (for more on the stories of the *Jinn* of Quseir see Glazier [2003, 2005]).

[33] In this discussion I merely intend to introduce a few examples based on the assumption that I write for an audience with little to no knowledge of the Qur'an. To gain a complete impression one must read the Qur'an in its entirety and hear it recited in its original Arabic by a skilled Imam (see Wansbrough 1977 for more on the interpretation of the Qur'an).

[34] See El Daly (2005) for more.

[35] The Ten Nights are the first ten nights of the lunar month when the moon rises, and the last ten when the moon wanes. The *surah* is thus dealing with the law of opposites and the rise and fall of life (see Ali 1994: 536).

[36] These were said to have been magnificent gardens built by the pre-Islamic ruler, Shaddad bin 'Ad.

[37] Once again, as with my discussion of the *surahs* of the Qur'an, this section will but briefly touch on the *hadiths*, using them rather simplistically as a case-study for the analysis of Islamic literary representations of the past. To fully understand and appreciate their significance, one should really consult them in their entirety (see Al-Bukhari 1998).

[38] This is the person from whom the testimony originated.

[39] To be discussed in the next chapter.

[40] I only discuss classical Arabic poetry, because, despite being largely drawn from the 7th-11th centuries AD, this really does represent the most influential corpus of poetry in Quseir and indeed, the Arabic world in general. It is therefore within this dataset that one finds the most important and quoted representations of the past.

[41] Often merely observing the colourful title of an Arabic scholarly work is enough to note the poetic and metaphorical approach to research.

[42] In contrast to the *qarid* group, another category of poetic expression is the *rajaz* (see Adonis 1990; Allen 2000: 80). This type, much used in camel drivers' songs, is believed to have fallen between the *saj* and the emergence of the *qarid* groups, and is characterized by its rhymes and rhythmic pulses. The Umawi poets Al-'Ajjaj (d. c.717) and his son Ru 'bah (d. c. 735) are particularly notable exponents of this art (Allen 2000: 80).

[43] See Lyall (1918-21) for the full translation.

[44] Nu 'm acts as the female love interest of the story.

[45] This style is notable for its use of strange, surreal imagery in creating atmosphere and feel in the poem (see Irwin 1999: 132)

[46] James Monroe argues that the panegyric has nothing to do with history (1971: 7), yet I disagree with this assessment. I accept that the present was what was being eulogised, but history was *crucial* to this practice in that it served to affirm the status of the object of the panegyric.

[47] Critical as the *hija* is, the past is also often evoked in a humorous manner as well.

[48] An enormous slave army.

[49] 540 AD.

[50] Although the prehistory gallery at the Museum of Scotland has begun to challenge a conventional use of text by incorporating poetic descriptions within its displays.

[51] Discussed in more detail below.

[52] I quote from the translation by Richard Burton [1889]. For me this is one of the most colourful versions of the *Nights*, yet also one of the more thorough (see Irwin 1994 for more on the translation of the *Alf Layla wa Layla*).

[53] Hassan al-Aqied, a highly regarded reciter of Ababda tribal epics, told me in January 2006, that many of the pots in the displays could be brought to life through a poetic meditation upon the social act of drinking.

[54] The primary installment of Naguib Mafouz's 'Cairo Trilogy', *Palace Walk* (1956) frequently paints colourful pictures of 'wine parties' in early twentieth century Cairo, reminding us that *Khamriyyah* poetry is still of significance to modern Arabic writers.

[55] Coffee drinking is also a social act dwelt upon in Bedouin poetry (to be discussed in chapter seven).

[56] 'Beloved' here means God.
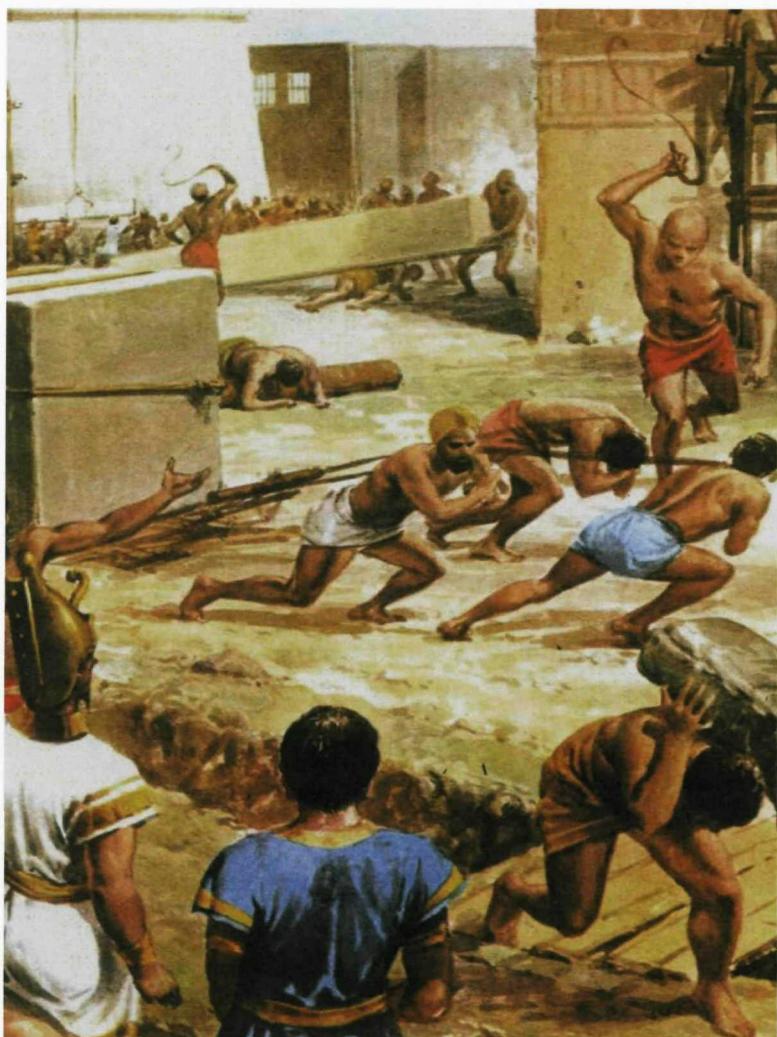
Figures 45 and 46. Left: Wicked Pharaoh? Illustration by Sandro Nordini and Aldo Torchio from *The Children's Bible in Colour* (1964: 97). **Below:** Suad al-Attar, *Inspiration from a Poem* 1999 (verses from the *Mu'allaqat*).
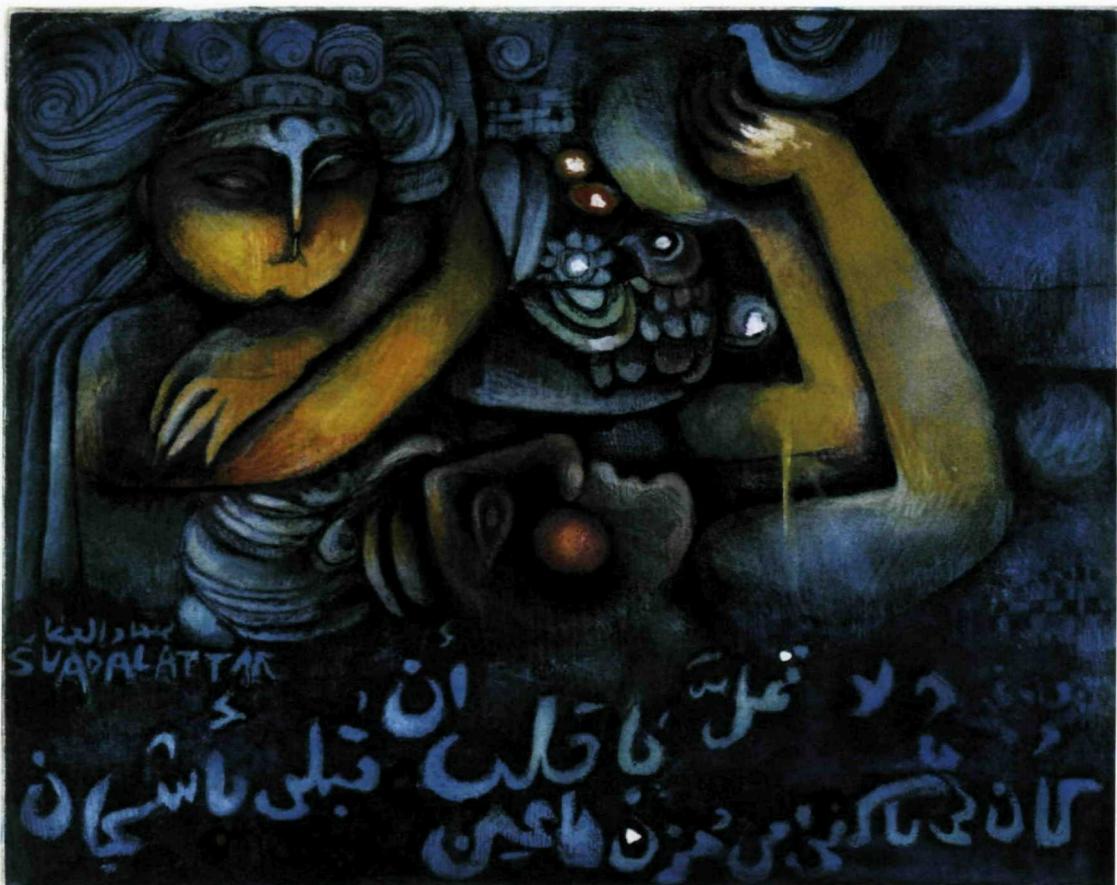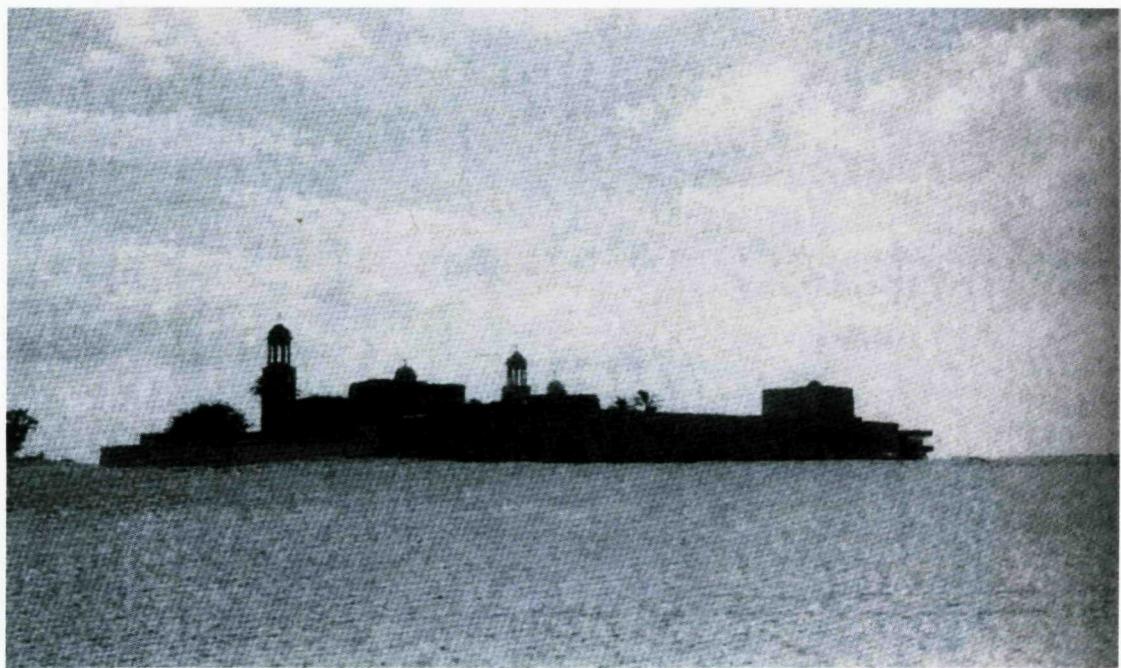
Figures 47, 48, 49 and 50. Clockwise from top:
The Monastery of the Syrians, *Wadi al-Natrun* (from Meinardus 2002); Ghani Alani, *Untitled* (verse from the Qur'an), c.1990; Qur'an, British Museum; Charles-Hossein Zenderoudi, *Untitled* (text from the *Fatiha* [opening of the Qur'an]), 1986.

Figures 51 and 52. Above:
Osman Waqialla, *Kaf ha ya ayn sad*,
1980. **Right**: Ghani Alani, *Untitled*
(verses from the *Mu'allaqa*),
c.1990s.

Figure 53: *Postures of Prayer Part I.* From Lane (1836:34).
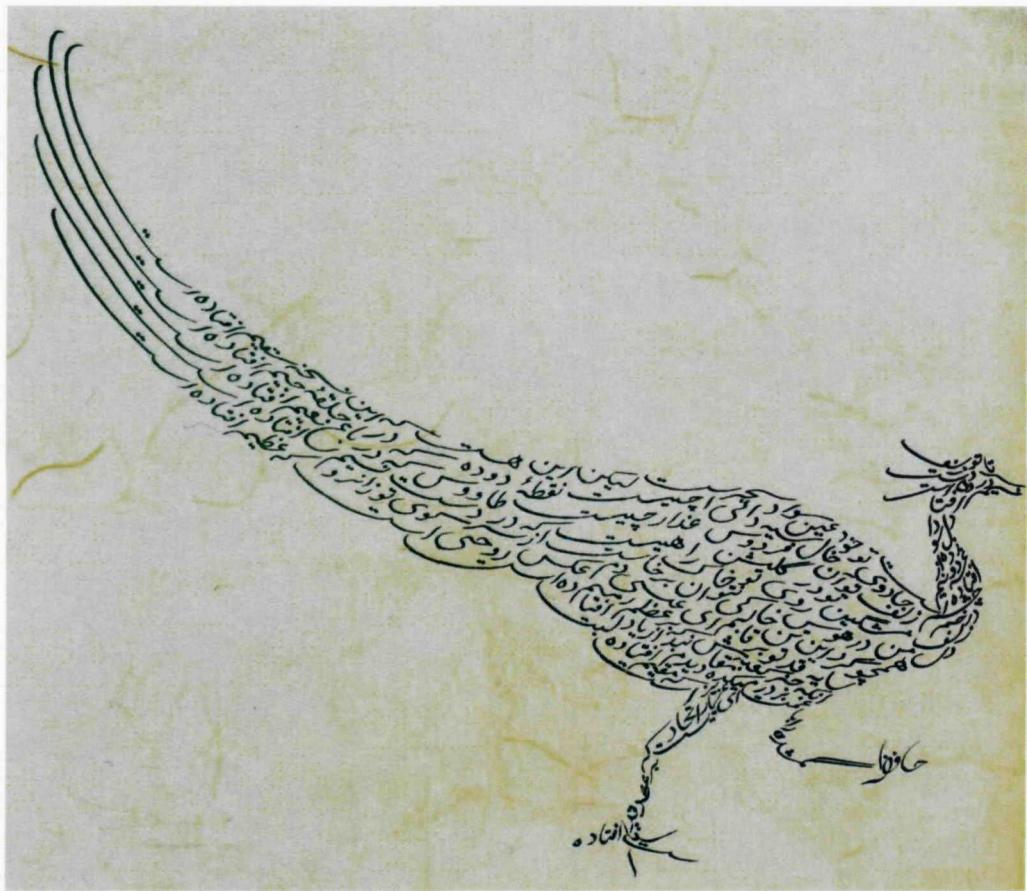
Figure 54: Jilla Peacock, *Ten Poems from Hafez*, 2004.

Figure 55: Farhad Moshiri. *Drunken Lover*, 2003 (lines from Omar Khayyam).

Chapter Four

Representing the past in Arabic belletristic prose and narrative (*adab*), Arabic folk song and Bedouin poetry

Continuing the analysis started in the previous chapter, *Belletristic prose and narrative* is the initial focus of this chapter (a term borrowed from Roger Allen [2000: 133]). Described in Arabic as *Adab*, a word that crudely may be translated as 'literature'[1], this body of work can be contrasted against poetry (*ash'ar*) for being driven by written prose rather than vocalised verse or rhyme. The portrayal of the past in modern folk and Bedouin songs and poetry completes the overall analysis that was started in the last section[2]. Finally this chapter concludes with a series of observations relating to the nature of these Coptic/Arabic representations of the past[3]. The concept articulated here of 'relearning' is then developed in chapter five where the representations of my colleagues from Quseir begin to be analysed and described in light of their historical, iconographic context[4]. As seen, the poetic canon is crucial to our understanding of an Arabic remembrance of the past. By observing the ways in which some of the main poetic themes and categories utilise history as a landscape or framework for their narratives, western archaeologists and museologists can begin to gain some insights into alternative representations of history. We have begun to see that a poetic tradition of telling the past is ingrained within Coptic and Arabic culture, and alongside the findings of the previous chapter, are gaining an ever increasing feel for the importance of fostering an understanding of the differences inherent in different modes of animating history.

Adab: history in Arabic belletristic prose and narrative

In this section the analysis thus far will be further added to by concentrating upon the broad category of Arabic literature that Leder and Kilpatrick have defined as:

> 'Works principally in prose, in which there is a pervasive concern with artistic
> expression as well as the communication of information.'
> (Leder and Kilpatrick 1992: 2)

Roger Allen goes further than this and unites these works under the banner of 'belletristic prose and narrative' (Allen 2000: 133), thus giving this section its heading (for more on the representation of history in this literature see El Daly 2005).

It is important to note that whilst the novel and short story supplanted poetry as the favoured representational mode of the Arabic world during the mid-twentieth century, prose had been much overshadowed by poetic expression up until this point. It is also extremely difficult to group Arabic prose under the western umbrella term 'literature', as even such mainstays of

European reading society as *The Thousand and One Nights*, have long been excluded from the traditional canon by Arabic critics - in the case of the *Nights*, they were seen as rather provincial, guttural tales that belonged in the streets rather than within the hallowed circles of intellectual society (see Caracciolo 1988; Irwin 1994)[5].

Many *adab* works are effectively a dialogue, true to their origins in intellectual debate at a variety of differing occasions – soirées (*musamarat*), sessions (*majalis*) and conferences (*muhadarat*) (see Allen 2000: 135; Hafez 1993). Again, orality is thus implicit within *adab* literature; as text rose in prominence amongst the *udaba* they merely combined it with their already pre-standing tradition of elevated language. The study of *adab* could and frequently has been the focus of a book' However, for our purposes only a few examples of the representation of past within this literature shall be analysed (see Allen 1995; Ashtiany *et al* 1990; Beeston *et al* 1983; Hafez 1993; Kilito 2001; Leder and Kilpatrick 1992; Lyons 1995 for more). Beginning with one of the most famous of Arabic works in the western world, *The Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf Layla wa Layla*), this section will then dwell upon three main *adab* case studies in detail, the writings of Al-Jahiz, Ibn Khaldun, and finally Ibn Shuhayd. These particular authors have been specifically picked both for their role as famous examples of differing classical Arabic *adab* approaches to the past, but also as influential standard bearers of different genres of writing, that in turn are indicative of differing manners of representing the past in the Arabic world.

The *Alf Layla wa Layla*

The collection of stories grouped under the title of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* began to infiltrate European circles in translation during the early 18th century. Taken from a manuscript of a collection of stories acquired during his travels to the Middle East, the French scholar Antoine Galland published the first two volumes of his *Mille et Une Nuit* in 1703 (see Bencheikh 1988; Irwin 1994: 296-297). Between 1704 and 1717 he later acquired and published further tales, included in which were the soon-to-be-famous stories of Aladdin and Ali Baba that Galland had gained from the oral repertoire of the enigmatic figure, Hanna of Aleppo (see Allen 2000: 168; Bencheikh 1988). Galland's translations heralded what was to become a western infatuation with the 'Arabian Nights' (as they were to be better known). The most famous and influential of the English translations of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* were those by Edward Lane (1839), Richard Burton (1889) and Dr J.C. Mardrus and Powys Mathers (1899)[6]. The rather obscure origins of these tales have rendered it difficult to ascertain their provenance and the original date of their creation, Edward Lane in particular noted:

'When a complete copy of the Thousand and One Nights is found, the price demanded is far too great for the reciter to have it in his power to pay.'
(Lane 1836: 381)

The reason for the scarcity and the expense of manuscript copies of the *Nights* is due to the fact that what tales did exist would have been owned by the *hakawati* or storyteller who told them - a figure that until recent times was one of the most prominent individuals within Arabic societies. One can assume that these narratives themselves had actually come from a far older corpus of North African and Asian stories that would have in turn formed the oral repertoire of many important public and private occasions (see Allen 2000: 168).

Although ultimately acting as 'imaginative journeys'[7], popular stories such as these are absolutely key to an understanding of Arabic remembrance, for as is the case with poetry, it is frequently within these narratives that the past was, and is still kept alive (see figures 56 and 57). The *Nights* may be seen to belong or at least to have elements in common with what in Arabic are collectively termed *Maqamah*; a type of popular, fictional narrative traditionally recited by a skilled *hakawati* (see Allen 1995; 2000: 162-7; Burgel 1989; Lyons 1995; Pinault 1992). The word *Maqamat* derives its meaning by inferring a place of standing, to which the idea of the delivery of an uplifting message was gradually attached (Allen 2000: 162). Many of the stories in the *Nights* work to achieve a similar end - they essentially act as moral fables. Legends of this kind form the earliest lore of the Arabic peoples and significantly for this study they were included in influential historical anthologies compiled by important classical figures such as Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 892) and Ali al Mas'udi (d.956). Pre-Islamic love stories (such as those of Layla and Majnun), animal fables, the *Ayyam al Arab* (tales of tribal battles) and the adventures of ancient heroes and heroines made their way into the oral repertoire of the story-tellers and as such these individuals came to act much like the historians of their social group. Poetry was frequently recited alongside these tales; thus in this respect history once again utilised, and worked as, a performance. Furthermore the past as it existed within these tales, formed an imaginative and a moralistic journey for the audience.

The stories of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* are frequently recited amongst older (generally male) people from Quseir, and as we shall see can often be used to attribute meaning to the archaeological site, Quseir al-Qadim. In many ways one can view the *Nights* as the *locus classicus* of the traditional Arabic frame-story. The collection begins with a framing narrative in which the young maiden Shahrazad, the daughter of the *Wazir* (minister of the king) is sent for by the monarch, Shahriyar - who as a result of his wife's infidelity was now a self-proclaimed hater of women. After arriving at the royal palace she is made to weave a number of stories in order to keep her life. Shahrazad

in turn acts the role of the story teller *par excellence* - she becomes the vehicle, the *hakawati* through which each separate tale is narrated, offering as is frequently repeated in the text, 'a lesson for those who would learn'. For our purposes it is interesting that as each story unfolds they act in many ways as a noticeably *historical* lesson 'for those who would learn'. It is not my concern to extrapolate upon all of the fables, tales and love-stories included within the *Alf Layla wa Layla* here (see Robert Irwin's *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* [1994] and Ferial Ghazoul's *The Arabian Nights: A Structural Analysis* [1980] for a fuller analysis). However one can take three specific narrative types from the corpus of stories contained within the *Nights* as cogent examples of *adab/maqamah* representations of the past[8].

Included within the tales told by Shahrazad in the first ten nights is *The Story of the Fisherman;* one of the many narratives focusing on the accidental release of malevolent beings from ancient storage vessels. This particular episode tells of an old fisherman, who, whilst fishing one day feels a weight pulling at his net. He dives into the ocean to investigate, whereupon he finds an old earthenware jug. He flings his net out again and draws even more of these strange objects from the sea-bed:

> '(he) threw the net, and waited till it had sunk and was motionless: then drew it out
> and found in it a quantity of broken jars and pots.'
> (Lane 1839, volume I: 25)

Feeling somewhat perturbed, he cast his net once more, but this time finds a strange brass bottle with a lead stopper in it. Upon pulling the stopper a huge *Efrite (Jinni)* escapes and promptly threatens to kill the poor fisherman, who in turn has to use all of his wits and cunning in order to escape its rage and fury. This story and others like it are fascinating as they clearly include several references to archaeological remains – in this case they represent the resting place of absolutely ancient evils. As I shall discuss later, similar stories are recounted amongst the fishermen from Quseir when asked about the site of Quseir al-Qadim (see Glazier 2003, 2005). Quseir al-Qadim is a place that is littered with old earthenware pots (in this case Roman amphorae).

Another type of story found with the *Nights* is of a kind that focuses upon travel and the recounting of adventures during such journeys. *The City of Brass* discussed earlier, belongs to this genre of narrative. It is significant that in the case of these travellers' tales remains from the past often create a specific focus for the story – in *The City of Brass*, it is an ancient, supernatural city that is found, a place that had been frequented by King Solomon himself[9]. In Quseir, there are a number of popular anecdotes that mention a settlement said to appear some 10 kilometres into

the desert, next to the remains of a Roman Fort at Bir an-Nakhil (figure 8). This place is known by some in Quseir as the City of the *Jinn* (*Madinat al Jinni*), once again indicating cross-over points with the *Alf Layla wa Layla*[10].

Perhaps the most famous narratives of the *Nights*, *The Voyages of Sinbad the Seaman* are another form of travel story; as they are told as seven 'voyages' we can assume that they are likely to have been drawn into the corpus of the *Thousand and One Nights* from a separate, possibly older tradition and repertoire. In these narratives, the main protagonist, Sinbad always initially sets sail from the port of *al-Basrah* (in what is now modern Iraq), when some or another disaster inevitably strikes him and his crew, resulting in them being washed up on strange islands populated by either unusual humans, half-humans, animals or the remnants of hostile, ancient civilizations. Again, as we shall discuss in the forthcoming chapters, travellers' tales of this sort are frequently recounted in Quseir, the most common involving a sailor being shipwrecked upon an island in the Red Sea that is ruled by an old and kindly serpent. The serpent foretells the seaman's future and offers him ancient objects as gifts[11].

Linking onto this kind of tale are the famous animal fables of the *Alf Layla wa Layla*, of which *The Fable of the Fox and the Wolf* is a good example. In this particular story the two animals live in a den together, but the wolf oppresses and victimises the fox. From this standpoint the tale proceeds to narrate the story of the relationship and adventures of the two beasts, who still come to encounter similar problems to the human characters of the collection. Erudite and intelligent animals, serving as characters that offer moralist and ethical advice to humans, are again frequent icons in the stories of the archaeological site and its environs that I have heard in Quseir (see figure 58). As we shall see, wise turtles, giant whales and cockerels are linked to Quseir al-Qadim and hounds, wolves and serpents regularly populate the dreams of those who visit the ancient archaeological site.

Al-Jahiz: the past as moral discourse

The essayist, anthologiser, wit and polymist, Abu 'Uthman 'Amr ibn Bahr al Fuqaymi al-Bahri or al-Jahiz (as he is better known) as Roger Allen notes, is the acknowledged master of Arabic prose (Allen 2000: 140). Al-Jahiz (*lit.* 'the Goggle-eyed') was born in Basrah around 776AD and died in this same city at some point circa 868-9AD. He is credited as being the author of some two hundred works, of which thirty are preserved and a further fifty are at least partially complete (Sergeant 1997: xvii). Al-Jahiz immersed himself in the political and religious issues of his day and in these writings he eloquently used his prose as a manner in which to address the failings of society. This polymath-like approach saw him frequently reflect on history, and once again it was situated in narratives and stories that had a moralistic tone to them. Rather like the *Nights* his

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Kitab al-Hawayan (Book of Animals [1938-45]), utilised animal fables as a tool in which to address key social issues. His *Kitab al-Bayan wa-al-Tabyin* (Book of Clarity and Clear Expression [1948-50 – see al-Maqdisi 1968 171-2]; figure 59) eloquently evokes the importance of clear speech and orality when dwelling upon important topics (of which the discussion of history is one). To Al-Jahiz it is the Bedouin people who are the masters of this orality:

> 'For me, there is no speech on earth as enjoyable and useful, as elegant and sweet to the ear, as closely linked to sound intellect, liberating for the tongue, and beneficial for improving diction as a course of prolonged listening to the way the eloquent, intelligent and learned Bedouin talk.'
> (Al-Jahiz cited in al-Maqdisi 1968: 171-2)

Once more we are reminded of the importance of orality, performance and animation of the past in this tradition. Al-Jahiz is perhaps best known for his essays on proper behavior and morals, of which *al-Bukhala* (*The Book of Misers* [1997]) is perhaps the most famous and influential. In this particular book the author presents a group of stories about a series of miserly characters, dwelling upon their rather tight-fisted approach to life. This may seem to be moving somewhat away from our discussion of the Arabic portrayal of the past, but these stories are *historical* anecdotes. We, the readers, do not get a long list of 'factual' misers alongside a detailed chronology of their miserly actions, as would perhaps be the case in a western tradition[12]. Instead the audience is treated to a series of fully developed narratives that are extremely eloquently written. For instance, not unlike the *Hadith* tradition discussed previously, al-Jahiz often begins each 'case-study' by stating *so and so said...*:

> 'Al-Khali al Saluli said: "One day al-Thawri- who used to own five hundred *jaribs* lying between Kursiyy al-Sadaqah (a certain tax district/centre?) up to the Murrah (a canal in Basrah) and would only purchase any prime land and any parcel of land famed for its fertile soil...addressed himself to me."'
> (Al-Jahiz 1997: 87)

The story then goes onto elaborate upon this character's (al-Thawri's) miserly actions. It is interesting that in al-Jahiz, *adab* literature, in this case designed to be an essay rather than an imaginative story, still nevertheless uses almost fictitious narratives to make its main points. The past, and indeed the problems of the then modern world are not written by an impartial observer but they are instead analysed in story, in metaphor and in a dialogue. Can a museum as we know it ever hope to compete with this long standing tradition? Indeed could it ever totally lose its impartiality? This is a question that I try to answer to some degree in chapter nine.

Ibn Khaldun's *Muqiddimah*: writing the history of the Islamic world

Before going any further in our own study of Ibn Khaldun, a more creative approach to representation of history is succinctly expressed in the title of his forebear and inspiration, Ali al Mas'udi's (d.956) history of the world and ancient peoples, *Muruj Al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al Jawhar* (Golden Meadows and Jewellery Mines [1988]) [13]. Indeed our case study Abr-ar Rahman Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun al Hadrami (1332-1406) refers to al Mas'udi as *imam li-al-mu'arrikhin:* the model for historians (Allen 2000: 153). Born in Andalusia (southern Spain) Ibn Khaldun, like al-Tabari and al-Mas'udi, is most famous for his *Muqaddimah* a grand history of the Islamic world. The six chapters of the *Muqaddimah* work from a very general to very specific scale of analysis - summarised by Bruce Lawrence (2005) as follows:

(1) On human civilisation and the part of the earth that is civilised.

(2) On desert civilisation, among tribes and savage nations.

(3) On dynasties, the caliphate, and royal authority.

(4) On sedentary civilisation, countries and cities

(5) On crafts and ways of making a living

(6) On sciences, their acquisition and study.

(Lawrence 2005: xii)

The principles of organisation of the *Muqaddimah* are interestingly rather similar to many popular English works of history (Bronowski's *Ascent of Man* [1973] springs to mind). However in observing just a single, short passage taken from Ibn Khaldun's writing, one will notice that the tone of the writing is far more poetic and philosophical in many respects. In the lines below he dwells upon the importance of dream visions in the history of human civilisation:

'Real dream vision is an awareness on the part of the rational soul in its spiritual

essence of glimpses of the forms of events. While the soul is spiritual, the forms

of events have actual existence in it, as is the case with all spiritual essences. The

soul becomes spiritual through freeing itself from bodily matters...'

(Ibn Khaldun 2005: 80)

Despite the *Muqaddimah* being one of the most standardised and studied historical texts of the Arabic world and even though it is structured in a rather evolutionary, Service-like manner[14]; to Ibn Khaldun the history of human civilisation is clearly not just about historical events – apparently it is just as important to discuss metaphysics. Later, I shall discuss the importance placed upon dreams by many people from Quseir. Not unlike Ibn Khaldun, a discussion of history often involves much more than just an archaeological explanation – something that I

discovered to my disadvantage whilst speaking to thirty children in a primary school in Quseir in December 2003 [15].

The *Risalat at-Tawabi wa Zawabi* by Ibn Shuhayd: history in the dream world

The *Risal at-Tawabi wa Zawabi* (Treatise of Familiar Spirits and Demons) by the Andalusian poet Abu Amir ibn Shuhayd al-Ashja 'I, al-Andulusi (d. 1035) in light of its title, may seem to be a fanciful or spiritual book with little obvious link to the representation of the past. Yet, like Ibn Khaldun discussed above, this particular work closely allies the dream world within a study of history. A visit to the afterlife provides a framework by which the narrator discusses a series of meetings with prominent litterateurs from the past. The spirits of eminent, deceased poets such as Imru' al-Qays, Abu Nuwas, Abu Tammam and al-Mutannabi, prose writers such as 'Abd al-Hamid, al-Jahiz and Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamdhani and a series of *jinn* critics are met by the author in this 'journey of the imagination' (Allen 2000: 162; also see Monroe 1971). The *Risala* is an evocation of history – indeed it functions somewhat like an essay on art history, yet the book is also used by the author to make a specific point: as a poet he is able to meet all of these classical characters, his masters, and better them (or at least be told that he is sufficiently qualified as a poet to depart from them). Ibn Shuhayd is thus utilising the landscape and the important individuals of the past to counter his critics. Ultimately this work of *adab* is a powerful representation of history, but it does not discuss it in the third person – the author actually presents a detailed *first person* account of the ancient figures that it deals with. James Monroe (1971) has provided us with a useful overview of the *Risala*:

> (1) Introduction; (2) Part One: The Familiar Spirits of the Poets; (3) Part Two: The Familiar Spirits of the Prose Writers; (4) Part Three: The Literary Critics among the Genii; (5) Part Four: The Animals among the Genii [16].
> (Monroe 1971: 17)

As one can see this work is a study of the past, but the author meets the figures of this past in the spirit or dream world. He also meets marvellous animals and the *Jinn* in this same unusual environment. In the *Risala*, the boundaries between myth and reality can be far more permeable than they are in a western historical tradition. This, as we shall see, is a practice that is absolutely integral to many of the representations of archaeology of the people that I have met in Quseir[17].

Singing history: representing the past in 'folk' song and poetry

The analysis of the dataset thus far has hopefully set forth the argument that within an Arabic/Coptic tradition the past is frequently represented through story, poetry and performance, and objects can be somewhat secondary to these things. History provides suitably

poetic landscapes in which to set key narratives, themes and topics. From the stories of Coptic Christians, the poetry of the *Jahiliyya* and the representations of the Qur'an, to the portrayals of the past within classical Arabic poetry and prose, it has been seen that throughout the history of the Arabic-speaking world, ancestors have not always been remembered primarily through old objects, but are often instead brought to life through the words of a poem, in a finely crafted metaphor or within an eloquently written piece of imaginative writing. Before beginning the analysis of the representations of the past in Quseir one must firstly consider a final popular genre in which the past is represented: folk song and poetry. When I use the term 'folk' I deliberately separate this body of data from the other areas of previous discussion. Though ultimately impacting on all walks of life in the Arabic world, the latter are nonetheless still seen as the products of sanctioned literary and intellectual society. In this final section I shall therefore introduce and analyse some of the representations of the past within *mawwal* [18](folk) and Bedouin poetry (see Bailey 2002; Cachia 1989; Hanna 1967; Reynolds 1995; Sowayan 1985)[19]. These particular representations still largely belong to an oral tradition and therefore have yet to match the levels of publication to which the classical literature has currently reached. Nevertheless, despite being linked to a non-western, originally non-literate folk tradition, these songs and poems are prevalent throughout rural Egypt and across the Arabian peninsular. As we shall see in the forthcoming chapters they are also prevalent in Quseir, providing some of the most interesting, evocative and emotive constructions of history to be found within the city and its immediate environs.

Mawwal representations of the past

'The largest body of Arabic literature has been preserved in formal classical Arabic. Until recently, however, folklore has not been included in the literature...For example, the songs of the Egyptian farmer sitting in the shadow of a tree in front of a waterwheel; the melodic exchange of spontaneous poems by workers who till the land or carry on their backs the heavy bricks for construction; the poetic meditations of the *nuti*, "the sailor" who rows his boat on the Nile; the Bedouin's chant in the desert; the songs and dances of wedding celebrations; or the lamentation poems for the dead in funerals...'
(Hanna 1967: 182)

One could justifiably add that the representations of the past of these people have not been considered in the representations of Egyptian archaeology in the museum environment either.

The *mawwal* (folksong/poem) in Quseir, Egypt and indeed the Arabian world as a whole often remains an indispensable aspect of daily life (see figure 60). It is not a novelty but is rather a tradition whose roots stretch as far back as the *mawawil* of the Fatimid dynasty (c. 10th century AD – see Hanna 1967: 182). Indeed it was the folksingers' *mawawil* that frequently had the honour of remembering the victorious battles of the medieval Muslim world. For me, Hanna's groundbreaking study of 1967 still offers the best description of the *mawwal* (despite its rather patronising tone):

> 'The *mawwal* is a poem in colloquial Arabic that is sung by common people –
> especially peasants and workers - as well as professional bards. It is considered one
> of the genuine cultural elements which express the true life of the Egyptian masses
> in their poor homes, their humble coffee shops, market transactions and social life.'
> (Hanna 1967: 182)

But the *mawwal* like the other traditions previously discussed, is also the place for popular representations of history. For instance in turning to Pierre Cachia's *Popular Narratives Ballads of Modern Egypt* (1989), one can see a variety of folksongs that deal with the past. Once again history becomes the focus for creativity in these *mawawil*. For instance, in a piece transcribed from the singer Fatma Sirhan, entitled *Nutq il-Gamal* ('The Camel's Utterance') the historical legend of a famous southern Bedouin Sheikh provides the main narrative theme[20]:

> 'Let them hear of his miracles, all who are present:
> Of a beduin [sic] sheikh who belonged to the south
> He had a wealth in excess of what scribes could [record]
> A person of standing, and wielding authority.'
> (Sirhan cited in Cachia 1989: 189)

History and especially significant historical characters are evoked time and again in *mawawil* (Cachia alone transcribes a historical animal fable, two saint stories, three scriptural songs, one political tale and three 'honour crimes' of times past [1989: 121-323]). Folksingers are clearly following the tradition of the poets and *rawis* as discussed above; they are utilising and remembering the past in rhyme and music[21]. As we shall see singers in modern Quseir are no way an exception to this, a truism which in turn leads one to ponder how archaeologist outsiders such as I could ever hope to replicate the popularity of these modes of telling and animating the past? Museums, as seen, have links to western iconographic traditions: in many ways they tell similar stories utilising the same themes. But could we ever hope to re-align aspects of the display of Egyptian archaeology to fit the structures and the narratives of the *mawwal* as well as all

the other poetic and performative traditions of representing the past in the Arabic, indeed even the non-elite, non-archaeological world? Again this is something to be addressed within chapter nine.

Bedouin poetry and the past

Bedouin poetry and songs have much in common with classical Arabic representations of the past: the *qassida* remains the most utilised structure for telling history, the tales of the ancestors of the tribe are told in performance and rhyme and Qur'anic inflections are also present in these nomadic peoples' poetry and music. However, as we shall see, Bedouin descendents living in Quseir place the narrator of history into a particularly lofty position of power and prestige. Indeed even being but a close associate of a Bedouin singer is enough to position this individual into a heightened social standing when discussing history in the city[22]. In the final section of analysis of this chapter, I merely wish to introduce the Bedouin tradition in a generalised manner (for more on Bedouin culture see Abu Lughod 1986; Bailey 1972, 2002; Slymovics 1987; Sowayan 1985, Tregenza 2004). I shall dwell on this particular tradition in more depth in chapter seven, in which I analyse the modern representations of the past of the nomadic Ababda living in Quseir and her environs.

Rather like those in the *Jahiliyya* and in classical poetry, historical tales of a Bedouin context fall into two main groups: poetry and song not of the reciter's own composition (referred to as *naql* in a Bedouin context)[23] and new verse composed by the reciter (*sha'ir*) (see Bailey 2002: 8). Additionally there is a third, equally important poetic tradition; the *bida'* or spontaneous improvisation (Bailey 2002:8). Masters of this style (*badda'in*) are individuals who have come to be famous not for their finely crafted *qassida* but rather for their wittily improvised chants, created on the spot in celebratory tribal dances[24]. Though often of an amusing or erotic nature; serious issues such as those surrounding important historical events are frequently the focus of the songs of the *badda'in* (Bailey 2002: 9).

Songs dealing with inter-tribal warfare are of particular import to Bedouin groups. In these narratives, the major battles and campaigns of times past provide the poetic theme. Clinton Bailey draws our attention to the tribal songs of the Sinai and the Negev, for instance focusing on the war of *Zari' al-Huzayyil* (c. 1875-1887AD) (Bailey 2002: 253-83). The main protagonists in this story, the Tarabin and Tiyaha, were tribes that had jointly invaded and correspondingly fought many battles in the Negev[25] during Napoleon's occupation of Palestine in 1799 (Bailey 2002: 253, also see Bailey 1980). The songs and poems that describe this war often focus on the hostilities that occurred after Dahshan Abu Sitta of the Ghawali division of the Tarabin tribe killed Muhammad as-Sufi - a member of a rival division, the Nijmat. In the ensuing fight

between these divisions, Dahshan eventually sought refuge in Zari' al-Huzayyil, a prominent figure of the Tiyaha tribe, managing to persuade the Tiyaha to join him in his fight with Hammad as-Sufi[26] the leader of the Sufi elements of his own Tarabin tribe. In the following lines, a warning is sent from Mustafa al-Ugbi, a poet of the Tiyahi-Ghawali coalition, to this Hammad as-Sufi. As Bailey notes, this particular poem is still recited by poets from modern Bedouin groups in the Sinai and the Negev, yet interestingly they still use the *first* rather than *third* person. It is as though it is through the first person (albeit as a collective) that history comes alive, in turn serving to make the story less remote, indeed serving to make the tribal past, in this case, less remote. In the lines below, the poet praises the strength of the *Tiyaha* and thereby threatens Hammad as-Sufi's men:

'And we Tiyaha are a sword ever gripped at the hilt,
   Providing profit to the camel merchant, although we are few[27]

Our lands are lands of plenty, whose harvests we glean,
   And those sent forth to scout out are quickly met[28]

By lads firing weapons unrestrained.'
(Bailey 2002: 257)

Tribal stories of battles from the past are extremely common amongst modern Bedouin groups, and as we shall see the Ababda tribe of Quseir are no exception to this practice. Again, this indicates that the representation of the past amongst the Bedouin is all about *performance* (see Abu Lughod 1986; 1993, on performance see Butler 1990; 1993). History is once again the preserve of poetry and music and it is meant to be presented in the first person, in a personal, evocative and emotive manner. Indeed history is linked to tribal culture. Objects too, are linked to this culture, and rather like the *Khamriyyah* tradition mentioned above, drinking vessels inspire a whole series of songs dealing with the importance of the very social act of sharing a drink. Coffee is especially important to Bedouin life as seen in this old poem:

'By God Ahmad rise and light me a fire;
   A fire whose flame will bring brightness and pride

Then ready what is needed of coffee and spice
   And roast the grey beans till they're brown on each side

Don't forget the proportions you need when they're done

And measure the water six parts to one;

And serve from the right to avoid the guests' spite

If another's served first they may think it's a slight.'

(Hamdan Abu Salam Abu Mas'ud cited in Bailey 2002: 132)

When viewing images of archaeological artefacts reminiscent of objects that are relevant to Bedouin social life (like coffee pots), poems such as the above are often the direct reaction of members of the Ababda tribe in Quseir (again to be discussed in more depth in chapter seven). In the oral history of modern nomadic groups, one finds an absolute wealth of examples of a poetic and performative response to the past. Objects do not solely dominate these representations as they appear to dominate the European museum environment. Rather they are integral to a good story with a strong narrative. Indeed, as we shall see old artefacts belonging to Bedouin tribes do not necessarily have a power and a resonance of their own, but rather these things are brought to life through poetry and through ancient orally-transmitted songs. Yes, they impact on the *telling* of the past, but they always service the narrative, the remembrance and the performance to which they belong. Could this ever really be the case in a museum of Egyptian archaeology, in Britain, one logically wonders?

An alternative telling?

If chapters one and two succeeded in demonstrating that the museum environment acts as a kind of well crafted story – a dominant western narrative that is highly dependent upon the iconography of the classics, the Bible and the fashions of the Renaissance, Enlightenment and Romantic periods, then chapters three and four have sought to contrast this iconographic tradition with that of the Coptic and Arabic world, offering an analysis of some of the main modes of the remembrance of the past in this 'other' tradition. In advocating a collaborative archaeology, I believe that it is important to understand Arabic/Coptic Egyptian representations in a far greater depth than that which, as a western archaeologist, I did prior to this study[29]. In the following chapters I shall proceed to examine the representations of the history found in the particular Egyptian context of Quseir. However before doing this, I outline a few conclusions relating to the main principles of Coptic/Arabic portrayals of the past. These include the important role of orality, performance, narrative, metaphor, and individuality.

Orality

By studying the representations of the past of the Arabic *Jahiliyya* and of Coptic Christians, through to those contained within the corpus of modern Islamic folk literature, it is immediately noticeable that a highly developed concept of orality is key to these representations of the past. History is frequently better *told* than written. As illustrated through examples such as the

traditions of the Coptic scriptures, the Qur'an and the *hadith* literature, great emphasis is placed upon recitation and performance and correspondingly significant import is attributed to oral history. This led to poetry forming the *Diwan al-Arab* - the record of the Arabic world and the significance placed upon oral history in the Coptic Church. A firmly ingrained poetic representation of history in turn actually means that as an archaeologist seeking to emulate and to understand the animations of the past in Quseir, it was important to move beyond the traditional boundaries of archaeology and to examine Arabic/Coptic literature for often it was here, *not* in a museum, that the past was kept alive and remembered within these specific Egyptian traditions[30].

Performance

In a context that places a great emphasis on orality, then logically one may conclude that a strong performative tradition will also exist in this same context. As seen by the analyses of this chapter, this is certainly the case. If the past is kept alive in poetry, story and music then the storyteller and reciters, the *rawi, hakawati, badda'in* or *udaba* had to be proficient performers; they had to be able to bring their representations of the past alive whilst in front of an often highly critical audience. As we shall see in the following chapters, their ability to function as a good performance is central to many of the archaeological representations of my colleagues in Quseir. One may conclude that in this tradition, archaeological objects lose a great deal of meaning if taken out of this performative context.

Narrative

It is interesting to note that whilst the Bible is narrated in the third person, the Qur'an is actually recited in the first. Indeed the great majority of the most import works of Arabic literature are written in the first person. This naturally places an emphasis upon an engaged and personal representation of the past. A strong narrative is, as seen, essential to the animation of history in a traditional Islamic context. Even Coptic holy sites, were venerated through the remembrance of an emotive, symbolic religious story. Perhaps this goes some way to explain the prevalence of folklore in Quseir and, as is to be seen, the frequent situating of artefacts into colourful, emotive narratives (see Glazier 2003; 2005; on Egyptian folklore in general see El-Shamy 1980)?

Metaphor

A derivative of the orality, performance and the imaginative narratives of the Arabic world, metaphor is an integral part of these representations of the past. If poets were in many ways the traditional tellers of history within this tradition, then it is logical to note that metaphor and abstraction will be key to the presentation of the past. When an individual living in Quseir compared the history of their city to a 'small girl sleeping', this point would seem to have been eloquently made (Glazier 2003: Int 3.29).

Individuality

Finally, alongside these four areas, an individual response to the past is important to Arabic representations. Yes, genre was key to writing in this tradition, but so too was a personal and unique angle on this genre. We will recall that even when reciting the Qur'an - the most religiously important document in Muslim society, the very *direct* word of God in many respects, individuality is nevertheless still expressed through personal ornamentations and vocal styles. Indeed Coptic stories of the holy family's visit will fluctuate from town to town. Similarly when a familiar story, poem or aspects of the past is discussed in Quseir, an individual and interesting take on this story, poem or historical event, is crucial to its overall reception.

The thematic foci above are useful as a means by which to provide a rough set of working guidelines to begin to understand the iconographic context of some of the representations of my colleagues in Quseir in the forthcoming chapters. Having firstly set forth the argument that even in the UK, museums are somewhat linked to a dominant, elite western iconography and then proceeding to contrast these same narratives against Arabic/Coptic traditions of animating the past[31], it is now time to turn to the very crux of this thesis, the representations of history and archaeology alive in modern Quseir. From the analysis of the dataset obtained from fieldwork, I hope to then be able to offer recommendations for incorporating some of the representations of Quseir into future museum displays of Egyptian heritage in contexts outside of Egypt. I also seek to provide comment upon the epistemological and theoretical basis of a collaborative archaeology and to challenge the idea of the museum of the future in doing so.

¹ This word can also be translated as 'ethics'.

² For more on modern Arabic literature (a topic that I have had to leave largely untouched due to space) see Badawi (1975); Jayyussi (2005, 1987)

³ I understand that by studying Arabic representations of the past I am at risk of portraying them as an opposite to western approaches. This is not the intention, I am merely seeking to observe the manner in which Arabic representations construct meaning of the Islamic past, reflecting upon both their differences, but also their potential for the redisplay of Egyptian archaeology in the UK.

⁴ All the texts analysed in this chapter have been chosen in light of the community of Quseir's knowledge of them. All the major case studies represent authors and works that I have had mentioned to me during my various conversations in the city.

⁵ The notion of *belles-lettres* in Arabic is most notably linked to the concept of *adab,* a somewhat difficult term that has undergone many linguistic changes over the centuries (Allen 2000: 134). The original meaning of this noun, implies inviting someone to a meal, from this came the definition of enriching the mind through the consideration of etiquette, leading finally to the modern idea of *adab* as being a corpus of literature devoted to the nourishment of the mind (see Hafez 1993). The writer of *adab* is traditionally defined as the *adib* (pl. *udaba*) - a polymath scholar that merged together a wide knowledge of art, history, politics, grammar, eloquence, oratory and moral philosophy (Allen 2000: 134). Individuality was important, but this individuality was expressed within a generic framework – prior to studying this corpus of literature it is therefore important to adjust one's notion of *authorship* accordingly (see Kilito 2001).

⁶ Disagreement, as is often the case with major works of translation, was rife amongst these authors. For example Burton heavily critiques Lane's translation in the preface to his own version of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* (1889: xxvii).

⁷As Roger Allen puts it (2000: 162).

⁸ I choose to quote from Edward Lane's translation of the Nights in this section (it provides one of the more thorough translations of the *Alf Layla wa Layla*) – I therefore accept the limitations and likely individual biases of the text, but as I am only concentrating on the main icons driving the narrative, slight omissions and differing emphasis within the tales should not adversely affect my discussion.

⁹ Also we must remember that interestingly this tale also include strange vessels – in this case bottles in which Solomon has trapped a host of demons.

¹⁰ To be discussed in the following chapters.

¹¹ Much the same as the Middle Kingdom story of the shipwrecked sailor (see Quirke 2004).

¹² Though it would be unlikely that anything approaching this angle on history would appear in a more 'sanctioned' western approach anyway.

¹³ Another person that was highly influential to Ibn Khaldun and one of the greatest monuments of Arabic historical writing is the author Muhammad ibn Jarir (d. al Tabari (d.923). Earlier the point was raised that the scholarship behind the writing of the *hadith* literature rested firmly on an acceptance of and correspondingly wide use of oral history. Like al-Jahiz and al-Buhkari, al-Tabari's milestone *Kitab ta'rikh al-rusul wa-al-muluk* (Book of History of Prophets and Kings) relies heavily on oral history (see Allen 2000: 152-3; Rosenthal 1968). As a former compiler of commentaries of the Qur'an (*tafsir*) he too adopts the same standards of authentication used in the hadith literature (*muhadith*); which thus meant a reliance on

oral history (Abu al-Fida 'Imad al-Din Isma'il ibn Umar ibn Kathir's (700-774AD) biography of Muhammad is another good example of this practice [see Ibn Kathir 1998]).

[14] See Service (1962).

[15] To be discussed in forthcoming chapters.

[16] Note the use of the animal fable again.

[17] Crapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (1980) discusses the importance of dreams in North African, in this case Moroccan communities, in more depth.

[18] Also sometimes referred to as *Nabati* poetry (e.g. Sowayan 1985).

[19] As we shall see though I impose a distinction between *mawwal* and *Bedouin* poetry, the two are actually strongly linked to one another. I base my distinction on the people reciting them; '*mawwal*' is amongst settled groups in Quseir and 'Bedouin' refers to songs and poems that exist amongst the members of the local nomadic Ababda tribe living in, or near to Quseir.

[20] I use this example, for as shall be seen in the following chapters, a similar tale is still recited in Quseir to this day, suggesting that the song probably finds it origins amongst the Ababda tribe. A colleague working in the Theban foothills has also told me of a similar story being recited amongst the Qurnawi community living there.

[21] For more on the musical notation of the *mawwal* see Cachia (1989); Reynolds (1995).

[22] Yet, as we shall see this relationship is flexible; at other times for a settled member of the community of Quseir to be deemed a close associate of the local Ababda tribe, creating the impression of that individual being somewhat of a social dissident.

[23] Similar to a *rawi* in many respects.

[24] See Saleh (2002) for more on Bedouin dance traditions in an Egyptian context.

[25] Arabian Peninsular.

[26] The son of the murdered Muhammad.

[27] As Bailey points out, this refers to their aptitude at stealing horses and selling them to merchants (Bailey 2002: 258).

[28] A hint at what will happen to Hammad al-Sufi's men if they attack the poet's tribal lands.

[29] Due to the restrictions of this project I have had to largely ignore Coptic Christian representations-although this remains an area that I intend to study in more depth in the future.

[30] Quseir, and other towns of the Egyptian Red Sea coast, are fairly unique in the country for still having such widespread storytelling/performative traditions. Although they do exist in the Nile Valley they are perhaps not quite so prevalent.

[31] Acknowledging a great deal of this specifically western iconographic cultural context in doing so.

Figures 56 and 57: Nja Mahdaoui, *La volupte d'en mourir: conte d'Al ibn Bakkar et de Shams al-Nahar*, (two calligraphic passages from the *Alf Layla wa Layla*), 1992.

Figure 58: Sabiha al Khemir, *The Birds Choose their Spokesman* (from a 10th century fable, *The Story of the Island of Animals*), 1993-4.

**Figures 59 and 60.
Above:** Ali Omar
Ermes, *Shadda*
(passages from *Kitab
al-Bayan wa-al-Tabyin*
by Al-Jahiz c.776-
868/9), 1980. **Left:**
A 'Zikr' (musical
gathering) from
Talbot Kelly (1912:
224).

Chapter Five

Hajjis, hilyas, moulids and sheikh's tombs: remembering some aspects of the religious past of Quseir with Lamya Nasser el Nemr[1]

Having observed the manners in which Arabic and Coptic representations have often relied on a performative, symbolic and poetic approach to history, I now turn to the first of the chapters that look to elements of the portrayal of the past in Quseir itself. I begin by addressing the ways in which religion plays an important role in the remembrance of local history. Quseir has a relatively small Coptic population that utilise the opulent Italian Church of Santa Barbara as their main place of worship. This lavish, originally Catholic, church was built during the residency of the Italian Phosphate Company in the north of the city (c.1916). I shall not deal in detail here with the representations and testimonies of the Coptic residents of the city – as stated I leave this as the focus for a future research project. This chapter looks instead at religious portrayals of history, mainly through the eyes of my friend and colleague, Lamya Nasser el Nemr – a member of the project at Quseir, but also a devout *sunni* teacher and a young mother (figure 61). I thus present a very context-specific view of Egyptian and Arabic history in the following pages, and only one of the many ways that she interacts with her own and others' pasts. I begin by discussing some of the thinking behind my methodology for this and the next three chapters. I then turn to a conversation that I had with Lamya in April 2005; as I move through this narrative I investigate the key icons and symbols that she has mentioned to me, indeed her insights trigger this elaboration[2]. In turn I include further individual conversations with Lamya and others from the city to add detail and emphasis to certain significant points made in the text[3].

Methodology: the influence of Edward Said, Johannes Fabian and Lila Abu-Lughod

My debt to Said's *Orientalism* (1978) has already been established; indeed chapters one to four were intended as a response to Said's central critique of the dominance of western literary forms that have consistently continued to marginalise the eastern world. Although a selective view, I attempted to look at both English and Arabic literature's portrayal of the past; arguing that if the former tended to have had the most impact on museum displays, then it is time that we also introduced the latter, especially in displays of Egyptian archaeology. It is also worth mentioning the impact of one of Said's perhaps less influential works upon this thesis. In *Representing the Colonised: Anthropology's Interlocutors* (1989) Said appears concerned that the 'representation' of the 'Other', both deeply imperialistically entrenched words, has tended to be dominated by a western gaze that has seen the Middle East, but more particularly Islam in general, linked to the word

'terrorism' (Said 1989: 218; 1997). Said pervasively argues that these representations alongside those of Latin America:

> 'provide evidence of a direct connection between specialized "area" scholarship and public policy, in which media representations reinforce not sympathy and understanding, but the use of force and brutality against native societies[4].'
> (Said 1989: 218)

Johannes Fabian (possibly unwittingly) addresses and even complements many of Said's critiques in his work. Indeed, his seminal *Time and the Other* (1983) and *Time and the Work of Anthropology* (1991) have in turn offered many insights into the imperialistic practice of ethnography that have been influential to my research in Quseir (also see papers in Fahim 1982)[5]. Fabian's ideas on coevality, the centrality of the sharing of time with one's interlocutors, as stated, form an important part of my fieldwork:

> 'It is by diagnosing anthropology's temporal discourse that one rediscovers the obvious, namely that there is no knowledge of the Other which is not also a temporal, historical, a political act.'
> (Fabian 1983: 1)

> 'In *Time and the Other* I tried to show connections between representation as an idea central to various kinds of semiotic and symbolic approaches and the creation of distance.'
> (Fabian 1991: 208)

A desire for greater emphasis on equality in the representation of the ethnographic encounter was central to my decision to name my interlocutors, and to take great pains to ensure that my colleagues in Quseir - Lamya, Amer, Eman, Hassan, Sabr and Yasser, as well as all the other people that I mention were not overly temporally distanced from both I and the reader in this thesis. Fabian has pointed out that in a traditional view of anthropology, speech and listening should be key to my work (1983: 162), yet I speak only basic Arabic and in this manner I have thus broken what has been a major rule of anthropology – the learning of the language of the people with whom I work. Nevertheless this lack of fluency as well as being frustrating has also been liberating, actually fitting a concept of 'sharing time'. For when one's language is stuttering one cannot but feel inferior to one's interlocutors. I took detailed transcriptions through local translators during my early days in Quseir, but this very act immediately distanced those with whom I communicated. Their words became frozen, and when I included these transcriptions in

my own writing, they lost the vibrancy and the dynamism that was present in the original conversations. The stalling English of the direct translations distanced the speaker's words from my own academic prose. This is seen in the following example, taken from the early days of my fieldwork:

'MW: A man, how you call him, he prays alone in the desert...a hermit?

AJ: Yes.

MW: He went to a cave to be with Allah. A *jinni* tempted him to go to talk with people but he keeps praying. In the city, three brothers work. They sell things - merchants?

AJ: Yes.

MW: They have a sister, they ask the hermit to look after her, while they go away. He refuse, but then agrees. The *jinni* tries to make him sleep with her. He refuse, then the devil, you know *Iblis*?

AJ: Yes I do.

MW: He makes him sleep with her – the hermit is a man and he is weak.'

(Personal Journal 2002)

In the above I appear to be the main holder of knowledge. Muhammad el Waffer (MW) keeps asking me if his language is correct, his stalling English places my own prose into a position of power. Yet on that day (discussed in more detail in chapter six), he was helping me to translate a book and this story provided an aside that he utilised to aid my understanding of some of the key points within the text. As an antiquities inspector Muhammad is a respected and relatively prosperous member of Upper Egyptian society. I was a young student, and new to Egypt. Muhammad could speak at least three languages, and was conversing in English in recognition of my poor grasp of Arabic. None of this comes across within this particular transcription. Muhammad instead becomes distanced via my chosen mode of representation of his words (see pages 161-162 for the final version of this encounter).

When I now speak with a colleague from Quseir, we each talk in a mixture of our individual and our second languages and from this initial meeting I will produce a series of bullet points which I eventually return to the person that I spoke with. Finally, as often as possible we get together and mould these notes into a form of coherent narrative. In many ways we thus actually construct a document, a creative piece of writing (see Bruner 1986; Stahl 1989 for more on ethnography as narrative). Yet I am still left with the quandary of how to construct a suitably 'academic' chapter; an act that in itself is almost unavoidably subjective and distancing. My manner of addressing this problem is to write the encounter into a narrative as opposed to utilising a direct transcription. I try to play with the act of writing, like Abu-Lughod, to write

against a dominant western academic culture (see Abu-Lughod 1993: 25, also see Crapanzano 1980; 2004; Clifford 1986; 1988; papers in Clifford and Marcus 1988; Geertz 1973; 1988; Said 1989)[6]. This could be problematic and yet unashamedly writing in the first person, deliberately foregrounding my own personal signature, is an act that all of my colleagues that I mention in this, and the next three chapters, have given their blessing to. Alongside Said and Fabian, the following chapters are therefore deeply influenced by Abu-Lughod's pioneering ethnographic work (1986; 1993). In her own words, in relation to the Egyptian Awlad 'Ali Bedouin group that she lived with in the late 1970's, 'I rarely felt comfortable tape-recording' (Abu-Lughod 1993: 1). In this same book, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories,* she goes on to explain that her previous research, published in *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (1986) was therefore created almost exclusively from eighteen tattered note books (1993: 1). Likewise much of the data of this and the next three chapters has been selected from my own twelve 'tattered note books' and I too have 'rarely felt comfortable tape-recording'. My colleague Darren Glazier has formulated and carried out an interview programme in Quseir which has provided a foundation study of social relations in the city (Glazier 2003). Begun in 1999, this study of the perception of heritage in Quseir drew on 170 taped interviews with residents of the city and was conducted in collaboration with the Quseir Heritage Preservation society. Submitted as PhD thesis in the University of Southampton in 2003, Glazier's research looked at issues such as the representation of the past in Quseir, the perceived economic impact of archaeological investigations in the area and the benefits to archaeology and local groups inherent within a collaborative study of the past (Glazier 2005: 159).

In my eyes this first period of research is analogous to Abu-Lughod's *Veiled Sentiments,* whereas my thesis seeks to develop a more humanistic approach to the subject as did *Writing Women's Worlds.* As the latter could not have occurred without the former, so my research could not have been done without Glazier's initial interview programme in the city. Like Abu-Lughod, my longing for an expression that better matched the representations of the people with whom I have worked, initially led to me turning to feminist thought in an attempt to consider the possibility of writing 'in a different voice' (Gilligan 1982)[7]. Marxist critique of the use of a dominant language and narrative and the idea of culture (Althusser 1977; Crehan 2002; Gramsci 2005; Williams 1983), expanding into the work of Judith Butler (1990; 1993) naturally played a large part in the formulation of my thoughts in this respect. Yet, as a male researcher working in an Upper Egyptian city, I accept that unfortunately much of my work will remain gender biased. As I strive to find new possibilities for telling the past, I have attempted to avoid producing a study that deals exclusively with the representations of men from the city, yet due to embedded social, gender divisions in Quseir my work with local women has been understandably limited in some areas. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned, I begin the study by turning to an analysis that

has been inspired by several, very context specific conversations that I have had with Lamya and finally I conclude the overall study in chapter eight with a discussion of my work with Eman Attia Mustapha.

The religious remembrance of Lamya Nasser el Nemr

In the afternoon of the 9th of April 2005 Lamya and I began a short conversation in her office in Quseir. If one turns to the religious literature that Lamya reads and studies as a devout *Sunni* Muslim, it soon becomes clear that to represent her words through direct transcription is problematic; as Fabian (1983) has suggested this act serves to take her words out of context, to make them an other and to portray her speech in a profoundly western format (also see Butler 1993). I present much of this conversation as a narrative in the first person, structured not unlike the historical conversations discussed in the *hadith* literature or other such mainstays of Islamic histioriography as Ibn Kathir's history of Muhammed *Al-Sira al-Nabawiyya* or Abu Ja'far Muhammad Al-Tabari's exegesis of the Qur'an (see Al-Bukhari 1998; Hawting and Abdul-Kader 1993; Ibn Kathir 1998; Al-Tabari 1987), both of which are important authors in the Arabic lexicon that Lamya has told me about during my regular stays in Quseir.

On that particular day in April 2005, Lamya had recently become married and was excitedly awaiting the birth of her first child. She jokingly noted that if she had a girl (as she expected), then when I next saw her she would be Um Nuer ('mother of Nuer') as opposed to Lamya Nasser el Nemr (see Schleifer 1986 for a greater discussion of motherhood and Islam)[8]. It was a very hot and humid day for the time of year and we were both feeling rather uncomfortable. Children played on a small playground outside her window, whilst we drank tea at a table in her office. Many things had changed for both of us since our last meeting in June 2004. I have known Lamya since September 2002, although she has worked with the project at Quseir since 1999. As fellow arts graduates we initially bonded over a shared interest in Surrealism and an enjoyment of the works of Max Ernst and Salvador Dali. As we were sitting drinking tea, I asked Lamya about her new job as a teacher in a local school. She told me that she specialised in what she referred to as *fiqh;* a type of teaching that focused upon Islamic jurisprudence or the human interpretation of religious law (see Saeed 2006: 43-45). The majority *Sunni* population of Quseir tend to look at history through a religious lens, something that had become increasingly clear to me over the few years that I had visited the city. Not knowing much about this notion of *fiqh*, I asked Lamya to elaborate. She told me that shortly after becoming engaged, she had undergone a powerful spiritual enlightenment that had affected her very deeply. Understandably, it had changed her outlook on the representation of the past somewhat. As this term was the first thing that she commented upon in this conversation, so it is here that I analyse some initial clues to an alternative telling of history, a telling drawn from Quseir.

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Fiqh: 'understanding'

As in her teaching of *fiqh*, Lamya mentioned that the past should be used to teach the visitor ethics and good conduct, to encourage them to better themselves. *Fiqh*, she mentioned, constituted a mental act of understanding; the material remains of the past as powerful symbolic objects should therefore provide the physical, visual stimuli for this spiritual understanding. The term '*fiqh*' is closely associated with a separate word '*shari'a*'. The former means something near to 'understanding' or 'knowledge' in English and it may be tentatively attributed to the Arabic noun *faqih:* 'man of understanding'. *Shari'a* can be linked linguistically to terms such as 'the path', 'the way' or 'the road' - the journey set before Muslims by God by which they may become enlightened and thus achieve salvation and enter paradise (*janna*) (Saaed 2006a: 43). Both ideas are important elements of Islamic law and together they form a significant aspect of the curriculum that Lamya is employed to teach. Indeed the word *fiqh* and those linked with it are often found in the *hadith* literature. For instance a famous commentary of the *Kitab al Fada'il al-Sahaba* mentions that the Prophet Muhammad bestowed a blessing upon his companion Ibn Abbas (d.687) by stating 'May Allah grant him deep understanding (*faqqihhu*) thereby' (Hamid Siddiqui 2005). From this broad meaning, *fiqh* gradually came to mean something more tangible being used to define the main body of knowledge associated with the commands and prohibitions of the Qur'an and the *hadith* literature. The concepts of *shari'a* and *fiqh* gradually became differentiated from one another - *shari'a* dealt with the commands and the prohibitions found in the Qur'an in their entirety, whilst *fiqh* focused on the understanding of this material through other sources. The source of *shari'a* therefore was the Divine, yet the foundations of *fiqh* were more closely associated with the human. Nevertheless in recent years the usage of these terms has become somewhat more interchangeable (Saaed 2006a: 44). By discussing the idea of *fiqh*, Lamya was not stating that a museum should use the past as source by which to make divine laws for the present, rather she was making the point that, to her, history should not just be presented as a series of unconnected events or aspects of material culture found in different contexts. The past, she argued, provided us with a source by which we could better ourselves; museums could therefore be dynamic sites in which ethics were addressed and moral obligations were discussed in the public domain.

The *hajj:* performing history?

After this discussion, we had another cup of tea together and Lamya told me that a museum should also be a site of performance, for her remembering the past was about enacting the actions of Muhammad, the *hajj* being the perfect example (figure 63). She did not mean that visitors should literally embark on a pilgrimage, but rather that they should experience history as a

symbolic, personal journey (*rihlah*). She pointed me to the relevant *surah* in the *Qur'an*, and asked that I elaborate in my writing in order for her intentions to be more fully understood.

But prior to this I shall momentarily digress to consider another important related episode drawn from the early days of my fieldwork. During my first visit to Quseir in September to October 2002, Muhammad el Waffer, an antiquities inspector working in the citadel in the centre of Quseir, took me to the city library in order to learn more of Adam and Hawwa's (Eve's) fall to earth. Lamya had recommended that I did this when I had first met her – I needed to know more of this story if I was to understand the symbolism behind representations of the *hajj* found in Quseir. On the morning of Tuesday 1st October 2002, as I already mentioned, Muhammad and I translated a book together: '*Qawi wa Itkhabba*' (?), of which the English translation is something like 'Strong and Hidden' or 'Strong and Hiding' (1992). The author, Ahmed Ben Abdu Haleem mentioned that the *jinn* – malevolent creatures moulded from the fire of the Divine during the creation of the world, had tempted Hawwa to eat the forbidden fruit of paradise (*janna*). Consequentially Adam, Hawwa and the *jinn* were disgraced in the eyes of Allah and had subsequently fallen to earth (Haleem 1992: 1-9). In this respect they were therefore to be the very first of many victims of the *jinn*. The *Ka'ba*, the initial shrine made in honour of God, is particularly representative of humanities' primary step on the path to redemption of this original sin.

> 'Perform the pilgrimage and holy visit (*Umra*), to Makkah (Mecca)
> In the service of God.'
> (Qur'an 2: 196, my brackets)

The pilgrimage (*hajj/umra*) to Mecca and Medina forms a crucial aspect of religious life. It is expected, that as Muhammad did, the truly pious (so long as their health permits it) should undertake a trip to Mecca at least once in their life, preferably during the holy month of *Dhu'l l-Hijja* (see Crone 1987; Findley 1989; Peters 1994)[9]. Indeed Mecca as the 'holy-place' (*Haram*) predates Mecca as the 'city' (Peters 1994: 10). At the centre of the settlement is the *Ka'ba* (the House), a sacred building regularly venerated by a series of ritual acts. Intimately tied to both the Old Testament and to the Qur'an, it is said that the *Ka'ba's* construction may be linked to Adam, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Isma'il (Ishmael) (Peters 1994: 11; for a Muslim point of view see Azraqi 1858: 106). It is a flat-roofed, cube-shaped structure, roughly fifty feet high by forty feet wide. The building stands in the centre of an open space enclosed by porticoes, known as the *Haram* (the Sanctuary). Around the *Ka'ba* stands the *maqam Ibrahim;* the 'Station of Abraham', a domed structure that encases an important religious icon - a stone bearing human footprints believed to have been left by the feet of its namesake. Behind this building is a colonnaded well head known as the *Zamzam*. It is in this well that the sacred shrouds of the

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Ka'ba are regularly washed and ritually cleaned. Finally, next to the *Zamzam* is a large pulpit. The entire enclosure is designated as sacred religious territory, for which reason outsiders have and continue to be strictly prohibited from entering it. The Black Stone is perhaps one of the most actively worshipped parts of the complex. Built about four feet from the ground into the southeast corner of the *Ka'ba,* this stone is traditionally believed to have been a part of Adam's original building on the site (see Azraqi 1858: 477-8).

Two significant stories exist that focus upon the origins of the *Ka'ba* and the Black Stone. The first of these dictates that the stone came from a local mountain Abu Qubays, where it had been concealed during the biblical flood that had destroyed the rest of the Adam's original structure. This holy stone was later re-used by Ibrahim in turn forming the foundation for his own religious structure (Peters 1994: 14; Azraqi 1858: 477-8). The second, rather more cynical of these tales instead sees the stone, or at least its use in the rebuilding of the *Ka'ba,* as being of a much later origin. The main proponent of this view, the historian Ibn Sa'd links the rock to the Quraysh, the tribe to which Muhammad belonged. Ibn Sa'd believed that the Quraysh brought the relic down from Abu Qubays only four years before Muhammad's initial revelations on Mount Hira (cited in Rubin 1982: 119). Regardless of which of these stories carries the most evidential support, it is notable that within many Islamic representations of the past, such as the residential *hajj* wall paintings in Quseir, the Black Stone is important not only as an artefact, but it is also equally significant for its iconic role in what constitutes an important Islamic historical narrative. The *hajjis* touch the stone in an act of performance, they remember the past not simply by looking at an old artefact but through actually re-enacting what Muhammad himself did, feeling what he felt. They therefore consume their heritage by directly experiencing through touch and performance an act spoken of, and venerated, in the Qur'an.

As I have mentioned, on the 5th of April 2005, but also during a previous conversation in December 2003 with both her and Eman Attia Mustapha, Lamya suggested that the *hajj* paintings of Quseir were a good example of the manner in which the past is remembered in the city; a trip to a good exhibition should be like one of the pilgrimages depicted in these wall paintings; a memorable journey through which the viewer became enlightened, rather than bored. It should also acknowledge the importance of symbolic journeys of history, praising the individuals who went on them. Like her teaching of *fiqh,* the past should be used to teach the visitor ethics and conduct, to encourage them to better themselves.

As what was once a very important *hajj* port, Quseir is littered with iconography of the holy pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Based upon information drawn from my personal photographic and written collection, I estimate that these domestic wall paintings are present on

the sides of around three hundred properties in the centre of the city. For the sake of clarity I have however limited the geographical range of this discussion to thirty houses situated in an area lying between the Al Seekana Mosque to the west and the main beach to the east with a diameter of approximately two kilometres. Bisected by Al Gomhoria Street (the tourist hub of the city), this central locality provides a good representative sample of the most popular forms of *hajj* iconography to be found throughout Quseir (see figure 62).

The medieval traveller, Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah ibn Battutah (d.1377) of Tangiers' *Rihlah* (the Journey) describes the ecstasy of the holy pilgrimage:

> 'Of the wondrous doings of God Most High is this, that He has created the hearts
> of men with an instinctive desire to seek these sublime sanctuaries, and yearning to
> present themselves at their illustrious sites, and has given them such power over
> men's hearts that none alights in them but they seize his whole heart, nor quits
> them but with grief at separation from them.'
> (Cited in Hourani 1991: 151)

Throughout Quseir, the main icons of the *hajj* are relatively uniform (figure 64). According to my colleague Amer Abdo Muhammad, for the last twenty years or more the painter of these images has been a nameless local man with a 'natural expression', from which I believe he infers that although the artist lacks formal education he is valued for his individual style. Taken in its entirety the image will normally consist of a central symbol representing the *Ka'ba*, the focus of the pilgrimage, the minarets of the great mosque in Mecca and the crescent moon of Islam (for examples of differing *hajj* paintings and other wall paintings from the city see figures 64-72). Alongside these will be stylised excerpts from the relevant *surah's* of the Qur'an, the name of the pilgrim and the date of their journey. Newer additions include doves (indicative of the serenity of paradise [figure 68]), the mode of transport taken by the *hajji* (figure 69) and often their and their family's portraits (figure 70). Images are painted around the main entrance to the house, often framed by the windows to either side of the front door. These illustrations offer one of the clearest available examples of the representation of the past in Quseir and the vital importance of emotive narratives in this iconographic tradition. If one looks to what is perhaps the oldest *hajj* image to be found in the city centre, situated on a house dating to the French occupation (c. 1800) behind the Al Farran Mosque in the *Al Hara al Foqania* (the Upper Quarter), the lone presence of a two dimensional image of the *haram* of the *Ka'ba*, suggests that the 'first house' forms the primary pictorial icon of the *hajj* painting tradition in Quseir (figure 67). This, now very faded, black and ochre image dominates the area above the doorway, as the occupier or the guest moves through the entrance into the house they process under the *Ka'ba*;

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possibly symbolically enacting the pilgrimage in doing so. In many ways the house is blessed by this very visual, public statement of faith. Performing the ritual seven-fold circumambulation of the structure, the figures surrounding the Black Stone comprise little more than black down strokes of the artist's finger or thumb. The abstraction of the form of the *hajji's* would appear to continue for at least another two hundred and fifty years in the city; only in images of the last twenty five or so years has figurative imagery become more popular. Created in late 2003, perhaps the most explicitly figurative painting is found on a house behind the Carpe Vitam Learning Centre in the *Al Hara al Westania* (the Western Quarter [figure 70]). The illustration consists of three main scenes. Moving left to right, the first of these images depicts the *hajjis* donning the sacred white garment, the *ihram* and proclaiming their intentions to God during the approach to Mecca[10]:

> 'Here am I, oh my God, here am I; no partner hast Thou, here am I; verily the
> praise and the grace are Thine.'
> (Von Grunebaum 1951: 28)

Next a group of pilgrims are seen surrounding and jointly venerating the *Maqam Ibrahim*. Finally, the circumambulation again decorates the doorway into the household.

Gradually boats, and later aeroplanes, became popular icons to symbolise the *rihlah* ('journey' [see figures 65, 66 and 69 for examples]). Based on what appears to be the oldest of these, a boat on the outside of the city bakery, one may estimate that the late 1970s/early 1980s marked the rise in popularity of icons such as these[11]. They are representative of the spiritual journey itself and what would have once been the caravan of pilgrimage. Indeed, on one of the more recent properties, a house just behind the above-mentioned bakery in *Al Hara al Tahtania* (the Southern Quarter) a boat is the only pictorial representation of the *hajj* - in this case the spiritual journey was apparently of more importance than the depiction of the actual destination itself.

Forming a fully integrated and central aspect of the overall form of the paintings, calligraphy is key to all of the *hajj* paintings of Quseir. Amer Abdo Muhammad suggests that most of the *hajj* calligraphy has been highly influenced by the Turkish *diwan* style (see Khatibi and Sijelmassi 2001: 81). In some of the most recent examples seen on the walls of opulent houses next to the Al Sakeena Mosque and at the northerly end of Al Gomhoria Street, the Arabic letter *Kha* (representative of the word *Ka'ba*) pictorial depicts the journey to Mecca, the stokes of the letter are elongated to form icons of the sun and the ocean. In one particularly striking example of this kind, the letter acts as the frame for the main illustration of the sanctuary itself (figure 71). The earliest paintings utilising this pictorial calligraphy would appear to date to the turn of the 21st

century and are largely limited to the wealthier houses of the city - properties mainly belonging to prosperous economic migrants from tourist towns in the Nile Valley and Lower Egypt.

From the analysis of some of the main iconographic conventions of the *hajj* paintings in central Quseir, one gains the impression that the representation of modern pilgrimages, serve to venerate and remember an important historical act performed by Muhammad. The house of the *hajji* acts as a canvas for the pictorial celebration of the past and of Islamic culture in a wider sense. Indeed, the telling of the history of the town is linked to the remembrance of a religious narrative in which a physical object, in this case the architecture of the houses of the *hajjis* of Quseir, have become frames, even public displays symbolising this important narrative of travel and memory of devotion. In many respects Islamic Quseir venerates a major part of her history not within a set exhibition space, but through the agency of her inhabitants, who have chosen to remember their personal, yet also social history upon their own homes. As Lamya and Eman both suggested to me on a separate occasion (20th June 2004), in this respect the public portrayal of Quseir's history is perhaps more egalitarian, in the sense that it is more readily accessible to a wide range of people, than a museum in the city could ever hope to be.

The *hilya* or the poetic veneration of Muhammad

Once, as I was about to leave Quseir on the 24th June 2004, Lamya gave me a picture of the *Ka'ba* enclosure as a gift. Pictures like this are sold in many shops in the city. Their gaudy yellow frames and bright, shiny imagery can be found in many people's homes and offices. The focal point of this particular picture, emblazoned across a holographic image of the Great Mosque, was a passage of golden writing. Lamya told me that this was a depiction of Muhammad; a '*hilya*':

> 'He with a heart like an ocean was an incomparable pearl –
> No wonder that (his colour) was inclined towards white!'
> (Khaqani 1847 cited in Schimmel 1985: 39)

In a faith that has tended to avoid figurative representations, particularly those of holy personages[12], Muslim artists have produced a uniquely 'literary' way of venerating the beauty of the Muhammad- the *hilya*, or the poetic description of the Prophet (see Grabar 1987; Schimmel 1985). Traced as far back as the later 9th century AD[13] the *hilya* ('ornament') is a series of verses in which Muhammad is depicted and celebrated (see Schimmel 1985). These verses were very common in medieval times but they also continue to proliferate in the modern Arabic world, often transcribed through the use of striking calligraphy (Schimmel 1985: 36-40). A good example

of this practice is the Turkish *hilya* by Khaqani, a 16th century poet (see Khaqani 1847)[14]. In one line, Khaqani describes Muhammad in the colours of clothing that he chose to wear:

'In white, he looked like a pearl, in red, like a rose.'
(Khaqani 1847: 12).

In the *hilya* the Prophet is venerated not in image or sculpture, something common within the remembrance of many other world religions, but rather in metaphor and in simile, not unlike the pre-Islamic *marthiyah* (elegy) discussed in chapter three. These verses are sacred; they dissuade the evil eye from focusing its corrupting gaze upon one's home, in turn deterring Satan (*Iblees*) and therefore protecting the owner or writer from being cursed (*mal'un* [Khaqani 1847: 12; also see Mustaqimzade 1928]). Although the *hilya* was most widely spread in Ottoman Turkey it is still prevalent throughout many Islamic societies across the world, acting rather like an icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a Roman Catholic household (Schimmel 1985: 36). To execute a *hilya* in fine calligraphy is to confer a great blessing upon oneself. For example Annemarie Schimmel discusses in her book *And Muhammad is His Messenger* a Turkish widow who created nine *hilyas* to act as the nine children she was unable to have (1985: 36). Although she does not mention any specifically Egyptian examples of this practice, it is nevertheless something that plays a significant representational role in Quseir - as has been seen, buildings in the city are regularly decorated with lines from the Qur'an (figure 72). Additionally inside many local houses, several delicately executed and carefully framed *hilyas* of the Prophet are hung in prominent positions within the main living and reception areas. In this respect literary representations act as objects in themselves; they are presented much like a family heirloom may be within a white middle-class western household and they act like triggers to remind the home owner of the beauty of their Prophet.

On the 19th June 2004, a colleague and I were walking along a residential back street in the *Al Hara al Foqania* district of Quseir, Lamya had gone for lunch and so we took this as an opportunity to take a stroll through the city. As we wandered in and out of the winding streets of this quarter, we were stopped by a man of some fifty years. As two white Europeans armed with cameras, he assumed that we were tourists and offered to show us around his '*mathaf*' (museum) for a little *bakshish* (fee). Unable to restrain our own curiosity we agreed to his offer, paid our money and went into this gentleman's house. His museum was in his front room and his exhibits mainly consisted of around a dozen framed *hilya's*. We sat and took tea with him, and parted without learning his name. This was a very specific episode, in which we made no attempt to deny our outsider position in the city, for that hour we were tourists, something that I normally take great pains to avoid being seen as. Yet, when I told Lamya, although being

primarily annoyed that we had been charged, she also saw this as a good opportunity to witness the importance of the *hilya* as a representational icon in the city. She noted that it was interesting that this man's 'museum' was based purely on reams of framed text – something that was becoming increasingly unfashionable in academic museum studies (see Serrell 1996). However, she pointed to the notion that poetic text in this respect could, and indeed has, become an object in itself; the *hilya* demonstrated that it can actually serve as an important and emotive representational device. Until this moment I had never thought of text in this way; indeed that day profoundly altered my perception of its potential use in the museum environment.

Adhan: orality and the representation of sacred history

During our conversation on the 5th of April 2005, the afternoon call to prayer (*adhan*) (figure 73) began to echo from the minarets of the nearby Al Farran and Al Qenawi mosques (figure 74); Lamya highlighted that this was another example of the performance of the past in the city, for *orality* was key to remembering one's history (see Davies 2002:159; Nelson 1985; on orality and the Qur'an see Saeed 2006: 18-20):

> '*Allahu ackbar, Allahu ackbar*
>
> (God is great, God is great)
>
> *Ashandu an la ilahu illa llah*
>
> (I testify there is no god but God)
>
> *Ashandu anna Muhammadan rasul*
>   *Allah*
>
> (I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God)
>
> *Hayya 'ala 'l-salat*
>
> (Come to prayer)
>
> *Hayya 'ala 'l-falah*
>
> (Come to prayer)
>
> *al-Salat khar min al-nawn*
>
> (Prayer is better than sleep [included only in the predawn call])
>
> *Allahu ackbar, Allahu ackbar*
>
> (God is great, God is great)
>
> *La ilaha illa llah*
>
> (There is no god, but God).'
>
> (Marcus 2002: 153)

The *adhan* is performed five times a day, and acts as a loud, beckoning call to the residents of the city to come to pray and thus remember their religious history and responsibility. There are three main types of ornamented call in Egypt; all are performed by a single, unaided male voice (*mu'adhdhin* [Marcus 2002: 154]). The first is based upon the melodic model *maqam rast* and consists of the notes C, D, E half-flat, F and G (Marcus 2002: 154). The second utilises the model *maqam hijaz* formed of the notes D, E-flat, F-sharp, and G. Both of these styles are particularly common in Cairo (Marcus 2002: 154). The third model *adhan shar'i* is based upon only two notes and is highly syllabic in structure (Marcus 2002: 154). Most of the callers in Quseir use either *maqam rast* or *maqam hijaz* as their source for melodic ornamentation. The *adhan*, as Lamya noted, functioned as an important act of remembrance, the sound dominates life in Quseir. In this case orality, as she pointed out, may be seen as an important aspect of public interaction with the religious history of Islamic Egypt.

As the sound of the call to prayer finished, we ended that particular conversation about history and the role of the museum by remembering the importance of children; Lamya was concerned that exhibitions be serious, informative and ethical and yet also humorous and fun for the younger generation. As an expecting mother in a very mixed up, at times barbaric world, she placed a great deal of hope in the next generation of people to live in it. Museums were also about learning from past mistakes, she hinted as we parted.

Although not strictly accepted by many of the more conservative *Sunnis*, Lamya finally commented that the many tombs of the sheikhs found throughout Quseir and the festivals or *moulids* that commemorated them offered another important example of a local remembrance of the past. As I left her office and she went to pray, she advised me to visit some of these shrines, but to note that these were 'cultural' and not 'religious' sites. She may have recommended that I visited them but nonetheless, as a *Sunni* Muslim, she did not accept the divinity of these saints of Quseir. As I was writing this chapter, Amer told me that the commemoration of sheikhs' tombs was similar to, even possibly a *Shi'a* tradition, brought to Quseir during the Fatimid period and that the annual *moulids* or saints' days that celebrated them, were actually of a *Sufi*-like tradition – perhaps explaining why many of the *Sunni* inhabitants of the city refused to acknowledge these places as anything more than, as Amer and Lamya put it, a 'cultural' phenomenon.

Shias, Sufis, Sunnis and sheikhs' tombs: Quseir's unvisited *matahif* (museums)?

During the upheavals after the death of the Prophet, Muslim society split into several groups with diverse theological and political orientations (c. 632 – 750AD). In the Umayyad period (661 – 750AD) several notable factions emerged, the *Kharijis* (*khawarij*), the *Shi'a*, the *Qadaris* (*qadariyya*), the *Mu'tazilis* (*mu'tazila*), the *Jabris* (*jabriyya*) and the *Murji'is* (*murji'a*). The *Shi'a*, drew

their name from the word *shi'at Ali* or the partisans of Ali, arguing that Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, should have been his natural political successor. In the eyes of the *Shi'a* the political leadership of the Muslim world should therefore have remained within the Prophet's immediate kin group. Sufism emerged in the eighth century, emphasising a mystical, ascetic approach to the divine. Perhaps the first book to talk in detail about the central tenants of *Sufism*, was the Iranian Sufi scholar Abu Nasr al-Sarraj's (d.998) *Kitab al-Luma'* (the Book of Flashes) (see Arberry 1950: 79). He discussed seven main stages of spiritual attainment of the *Sufi* path; repentance; watchfulness; renunciation; poverty; patience; trust and acceptance (Arberry 1950: 79; Saeed 2006a: 7; also see Smith 1973; Trimingham 1998). Other key components of Sufism outlined by Saeed (2006a: 74-5) include:

- Wearing a patched robe (*khirqa*).
- The eating of only lawful food – that grown or otherwise earned by the labours of one's own hands.
- Periods of fasting.
- That true fasting included the fasting of the heart as much as the body.
- Regular prayer and Qur'anic recitation as means to draw near to, and to remember God (*dhikr*)

Perhaps the most important defining factor of *Sufism* is the renunciation of worldly pleasures in favour of a totally unselfish love for God.

Between the seventh and ninth centuries, these early debates and arguments gave way to a synthesis of sorts and *Sunnism* developed. Conflicting positions and divergent ideas were gradually refined and subsequently developed into what has become perhaps the most orthodox form of Islam, adopted by the majority of people in Quseir. This 'mainstream' became known as *ahl al-sunna* or the people of the *sunna*, those who follow the path of the Prophet (Saeed 2006a: 9). The consolidation of theological creeds (*Aqa'id*), schools of religious law (*Madhahib*) and scholastic disciplines such as the interpretation of the Qur'an, the collection of hadith, the principles of jurisprudence and the recordings of early Islamic history came to define *Sunnism* (Saeed 2006a: 9, also see Robinson 1996; Saeed 2006b).

By considering this brief religious/political history the reasons behind both Lamya and Amer's rejection of the sheikhs' shrines in Quseir becomes clearer. True or not, if they both consider this as a *Shi'a* tradition which was in turn influenced by *Sufi* mysticism, then as a practice it clearly goes against the orthodoxy of *Sunnism* – in short it moves away from the premise that as a Muslim one should only venerate God. This standpoint in itself also additionally demonstrates

the influence of *Wahhabi* reform in the city. Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab (d.1792) was born in Nejd in central Arabia, and was educated in Medina. His main work was an influential booklet, *Kitab al-tawhid* ('The Book of the Unity of God') that primarily focused upon the ideas of the unity of God (*tawhid*) and polytheism (*shirk*) (see Al-Wahhab 1996). Angry at the what he viewed as the growth in folk superstition in the Arabian peninsular and based on the literal interpretation of the *hadith* literature he argued that polytheism meant the seeking of help and intercession from anyone other than God, and that this therefore included such things as the popular veneration of saints (*moulids*) and the visiting of shrines. Although Lamya is not a strict *Wahhabi* follower, neither is Amer, they alongside many others in the city have nevertheless adopted a *Wahhabi* standpoint regarding sheikhs tomb's – they should not be venerated. To them, erecting a shrine to any figure from history is evidence of polytheism. Lamya had mentioned that the sheikhs' tombs were in many ways like a *mathaf* (museum), yet she refused to visit them – this in itself posed a problem for me, indeed the very idea of a museum in Quseir had been shaken to its very core. Nevertheless, upon further study, as Lamya said herself, the sheikhs' tombs do still offer some very interesting insights into the representation of the past in the city.

The tombs of Sheikh Abd al-Khader al-Jelany and Sheikh Abu al-Hassan al-Shazly

Moulids or celebrations are key to the remembrance of the local sheikhs in Quseir[15]. During these celebrations, less conservatively-minded people gather outside the shrines, read the *Qur'an*, dance, sing and recite poetry. Food and other gifts will often be donated to the deceased and on some occasions individuals will even sleep by the tombs, hoping to have prophetic dreams in doing so. *Moulid an-Nebee* or the celebration of the birth of the Prophet in Cairo is perhaps the most famous of the Egyptian examples (see Lane 1836: 408-420) - although even this tradition was discredited by Al-Wahhab as a superstitious, polytheistic practice (Saeed 2006: 132). Half a dozen sheikhs tombs can be found in the centre of Quseir, but I shall only discuss the double-shrine of the Indian and Yemenese Sheikh's Abd al Khader al Jelany and Abu al Hassan al Shazly (built c.1960) found behind *Quptan Adel's* coffee-shop in the southern *Al Hara Al Tahtania* district - these were the only tombs that I have been taken into, and additionally were the specific examples given to me both by Lamya and Amer, during my visits to the city (figures 75 and 76). Generally during the summer months, once a year the shrines are painted and decorated by local *fellaheen* (working classes) employed by the government. One enters the enclosure via a small arched entrance, traversing a small courtyard before finally arriving at the tombs themselves. Inside each of these is a long, oblong structure, the *tarkheebeh*, above which silk or cotton drapes and ornamental lanterns are hung. The walls are festooned with beautiful calligraphic lines from the *Qur'an* and charms, gifts and food offerings are also often left in the shrines and dedicated to the memory of the deceased in a ritual performance of remembrance[16]. Interestingly these structures are only memorials. According to Amer, neither of the tombs actually contain the

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bodies of the sheikhs; Abu al-Hassan al-Shazly is buried around 300 kilometres south of Quseir, in what Amer referred to as the 'Homaethra Valley', and Adb al-Khader al-Jelany is buried even further away in Southern Morocco.[17] In this case the actually physical remains of the deceased are not necessarily needed in order for the shrine to act as a memorial, as a special site of interaction. It would seem that remembrance through performance is actually more important here (Jones 2007: 63). The past is again interacted with and consumed in a performative fashion, through narrative as much as object. Significantly the *matahif* of the city, Quseir's 'museums', are a) derided as polytheistic and thus ignored by many of the local *Sunni's* and b)when they are venerated, they often function without the physical presence of the individuals (or their artefacts), that they were built to remember. Rather, metaphor and story would again appear to hold more significance in this form of interaction with, and representation of, the city's past.

Talking to Lamya, questioning transcription and remembering the religious aspect of life in Egypt

By talking to Lamya - and this chapter only really represents one main conversation with a few extra discussions with both her and others from Quseir included to enhance it, I gained an insight into a series of very context and temporally specific representations of the past of the city. I deliberately focused on elements of the religious representation of the past of Quseir – as Lamya has recently had a self-confessed powerful spiritual awakening, it seemed right that her chapter reflected this in some way. The reader will have noticed that I have shied away from using transcribed quotes. As I have stated, when writing this piece I did try this approach but I found it to be inappropriate.   In light of Fabian's critique of the ethnographic distancing of the interlocutor, I felt that I was once again merely following the imperialistic trend, he, Said and Abu-Lughod sought to do away with. More importantly, I felt that this style of writing distanced Lamya - it was written in a language that was at the opposite end of the spectrum of our original conversation. However, I did not want to simplify her and the other peoples' speech. I felt that I had to explain the context of what they said, I had to understand the historical import of their ideas, indeed, in many respects Lamya's words acted as trigger for my own re-assessment of the representation of the past.   It has been seen that museums in the UK can be linked to narrative traditions born out of an elitist European iconographic context; this was contrasted against Arabic and Coptic representations of the past. As I close this first chapter based upon my work in Quseir, I hope that it is becoming clear that one simply cannot include marginalised, Egyptian voices in museums in the UK on an ad hoc basis. The more we listen to these voices then the more our own thoughts about museums will change; indeed we are encouraged to even begin to ask what a museum actually is? Do these things even exist, indeed, could they even exist in other, non-western contexts and if so are they are an imposing, public building, a visit to a

sacred site or merely a noisy three hour conversation in a café, in which the past is performed, remembered, played with, and moulded to fit the questions of the present?

¹ It will be noticed that my transliteration of Arabic words and names is not always uniform, for example here I use Lamya Nasser el (of) Nemr instead of Lamya Nasser al Nemr. The main difference is that I write peoples' names from Quseir how they have written them for me. For everything else I use al instead of el and Muhammad instead of Mohammed etc. Also, when using the map given to me in Quseir, I use the printed version of the street/place names. This often means that I will write Al Gomhoria, instead of al-Gumhuriyya etc.

² Both this and the next three chapters utilise only a handful of the many conversations that I have had in Quseir, over the telephone, via letters and by email. I chose to select specific examples from which to draw my main analysis – I simply do not have the room to look at all of these conversations, indeed this would be a truly unfocused exercise.

³ The analysis of this and the next three chapters have come from what is now nearly 1000 hours of contact time with individuals from Quseir. The majority of this time was spent conversing face to face in Egypt, with the remainder being collated over the phone. I do not include email conversations in this total, but these number around 100 sent and received. As mentioned above, this data-set has been notably refined in the next few sections; essentially I use only information that my interlocutors and I deem to be of direct relevance to an analysis of the representation of the past.

⁴ Also see Varisco (2005).

⁵ Additionally Fabian's *Anthropology with an Attitude* (2001) and *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (2000) have been very useful to the presentation of my data set.

⁶ Janet Hoskins study of the relationship between objects and people has also been influential to my work in Quseir (1998). The ways in which individuals from the city interact with treasured objects can be similar yet also markedly different to Euro-American possessiveness (see Strathern [1993: 98] for more on the colonial, acquisitive nature of Euro-American possessiveness of objects).

⁷ For more on feminist approaches to anthropology see Butler (1990; 1997) Collier and Yanagisako (1987); Gordon (1988); Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen (1989); Moore (1988); Morgen (1989); Sanday and Goodenough (1990); Visweswaran (1988)

⁸ This was something of a joke, as generally the prefix 'um' is reserved for the first born son, not daughter.

⁹ In Egypt this can cost up to 40,000LE.

¹⁰It seems unusual that the illustration is 'read' from left to right, when written Arabic proceeds in the opposite direction. This act as well as the explicitly figurative nature of the illustration therefore suggests a strong western influence.

¹¹ Although earlier images may well have existed, that have since been destroyed by the rays of the powerful Upper Egyptian sun or the bite of the demolition ball.

¹² This is sometimes over-estimated as although undoubtedly figurative representation is far scarcer in Egypt than in Europe, we do still see significant numbers of depictions of people..

¹³ The Islamic poet Tirmidhi quotes a *Hadith* (later addition to the Quran) in which the Prophet states 'For him who sees my *Hilya* after my death it is as if he had seen me myself, and he who sees it… for him God will make Hellfire prohibited.' (cited in Schimmel 1985: 36).

¹⁴ The *hilyas* of Ahmet Kamil Efendi (1882) and Yesarizade Mustafa 'Izzat (1830) are other good examples of the use of calligraphy as a visual icon (cited in Schimmel 1985: 36-7).

[15] Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (1980) offers perhaps the most thorough exposition of the North African veneration of saints.

[16] See Fredirik Barth's study of the initiation ceremonies of the Mountain Ok of Papua New Guinea for a supplementary ethnographic study of performance and ritual as aspects of collective remembrance (1987).

[17] This is a similar practice to that found in ancient tomb sites such as those uncovered at Thebes (Luxor).

Figure 61: Lamya Nasser el Nemr holding a coin found during the excavations at Quseir al-Qadim.
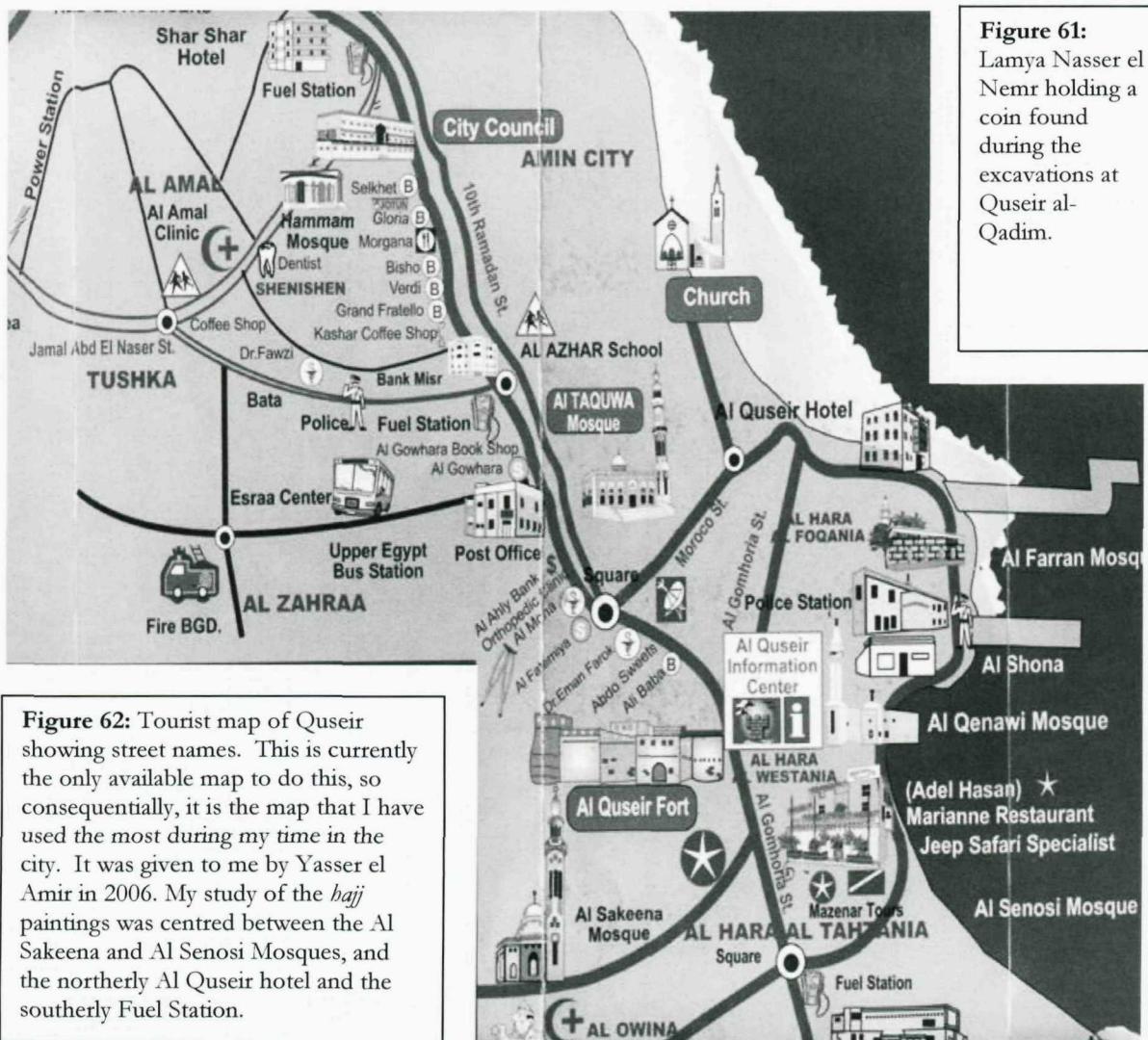
Figure 62: Tourist map of Quseir showing street names. This is currently the only available map to do this, so consequentially, it is the map that I have used the most during my time in the city. It was given to me by Yasser el Amir in 2006. My study of the *hajj* paintings was centred between the Al Sakeena and Al Senosi Mosques, and the northerly Al Quseir hotel and the southerly Fuel Station.
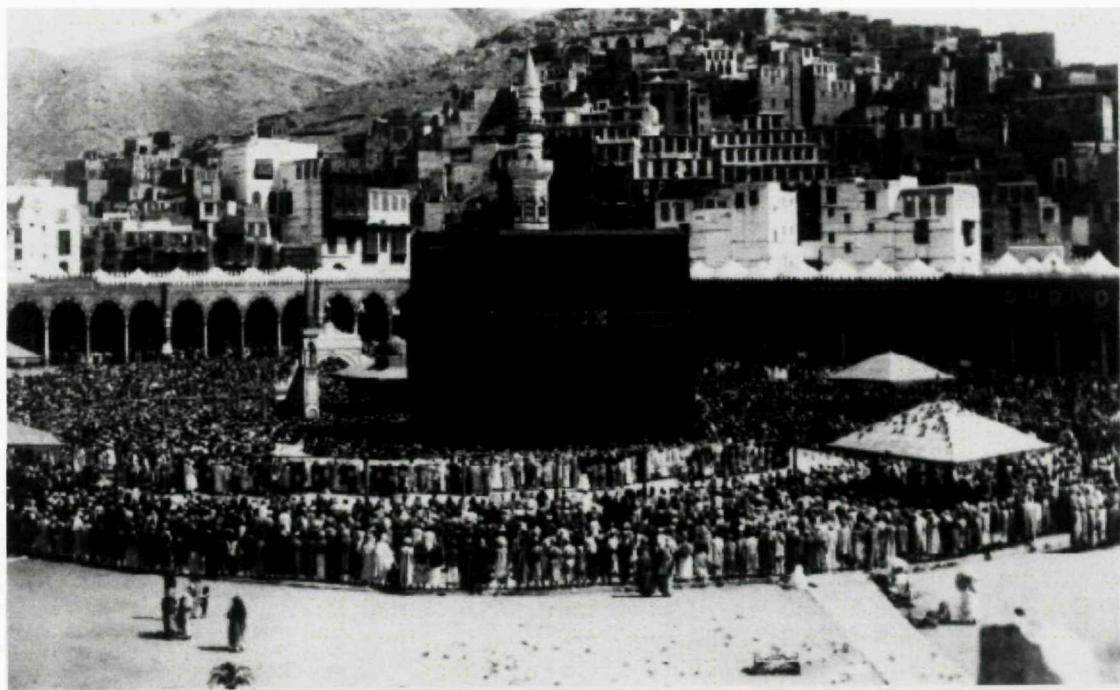
Figure 63: Photograph of the circumambulation of the *Ka'ba*, early 20th century. From Peters (1994:189).

Figure 64: *Hajj* painting in Quseir (c.2000-2003).
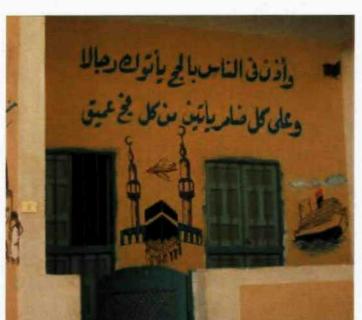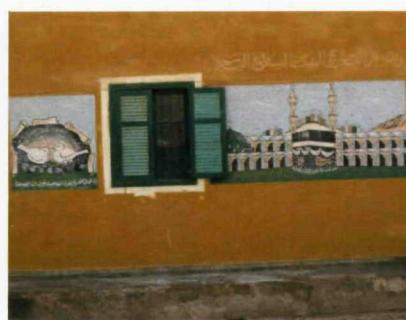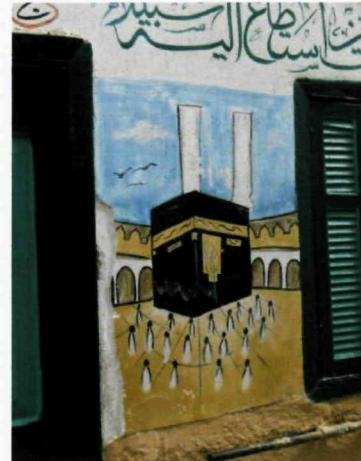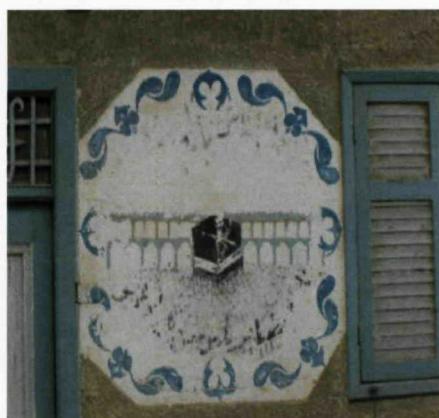
Figure 65. Selection of residential *hajj* paintings in Quseir, showing development through time.
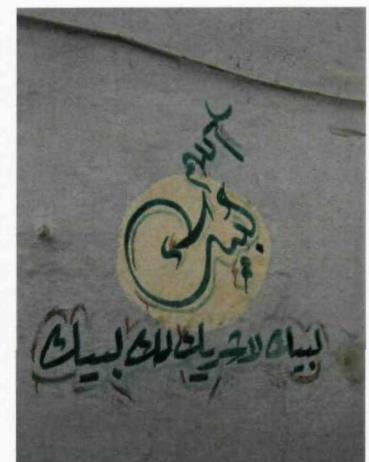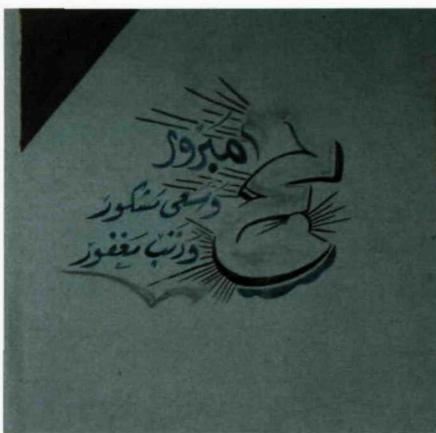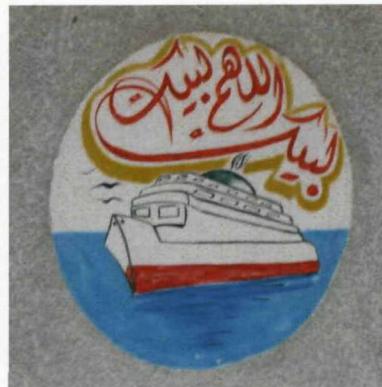
Figure 66. Selection of residential *hajj* paintings in Quseir, showing development through time.

Figures 67 and 68. Left:
Early *hajj* imagery,
showing the *Ka'ba*. Note
the lack of people.
Below: Later *hajj* imagery
(c. 2005). Note inclusion
of people and doves
indicative of paradise.
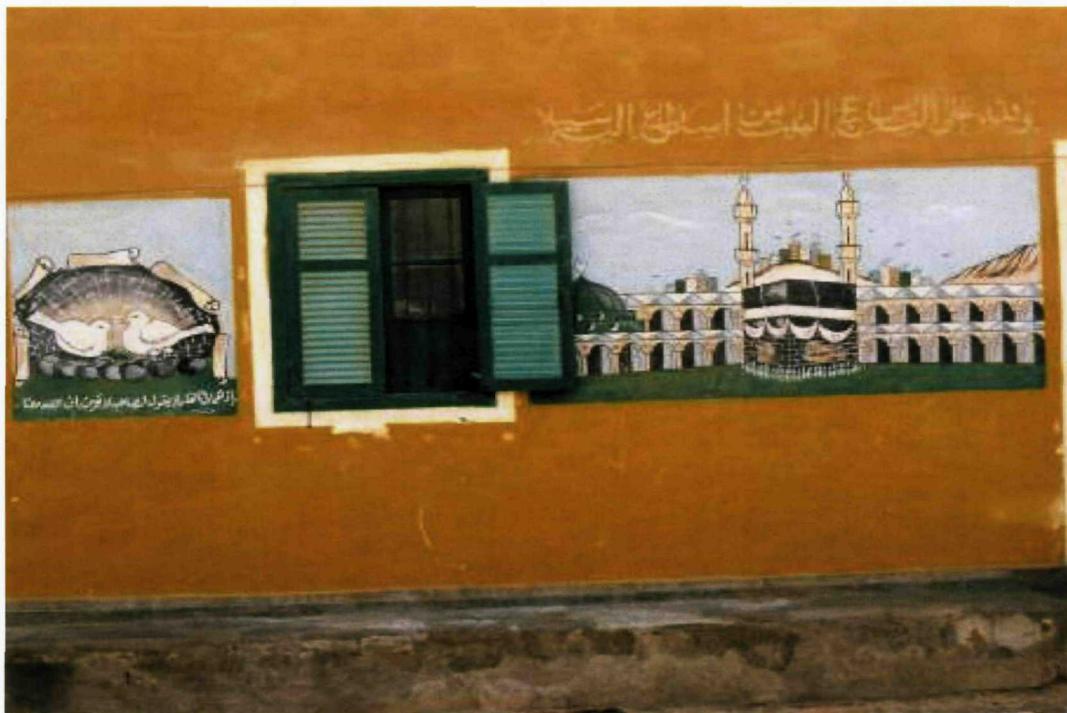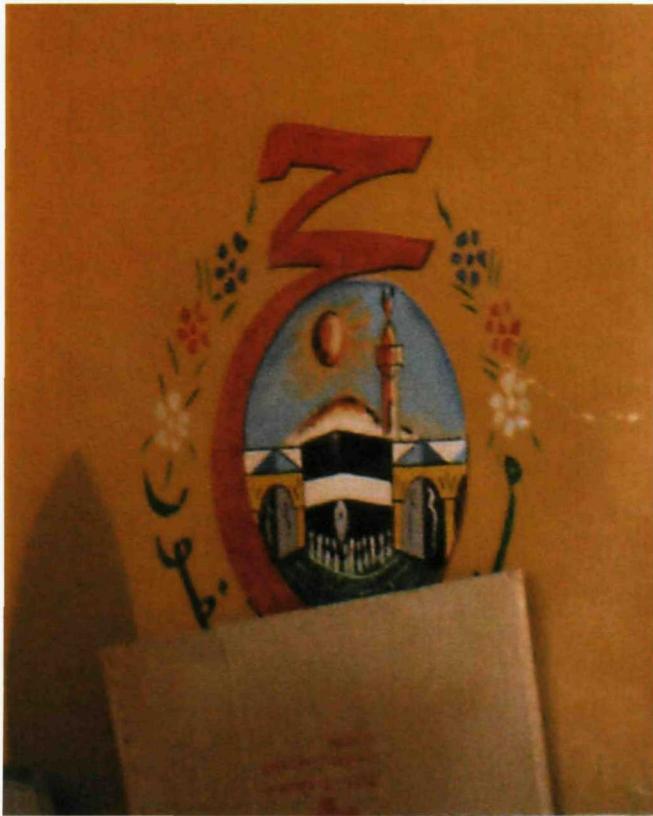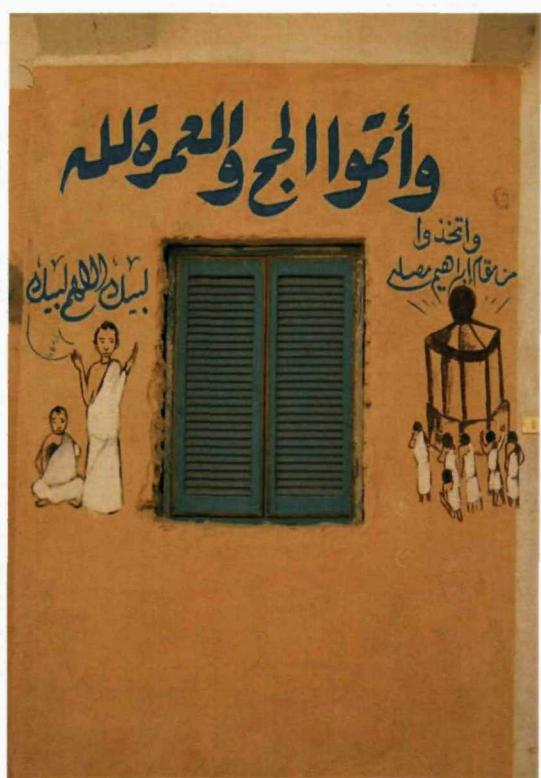
Figures 69, 70 and 71.
Clockwise from top left:
The pilgrims' mode of
transport; later figurative
imagery (c. 2005); illustrative
calligraphy.
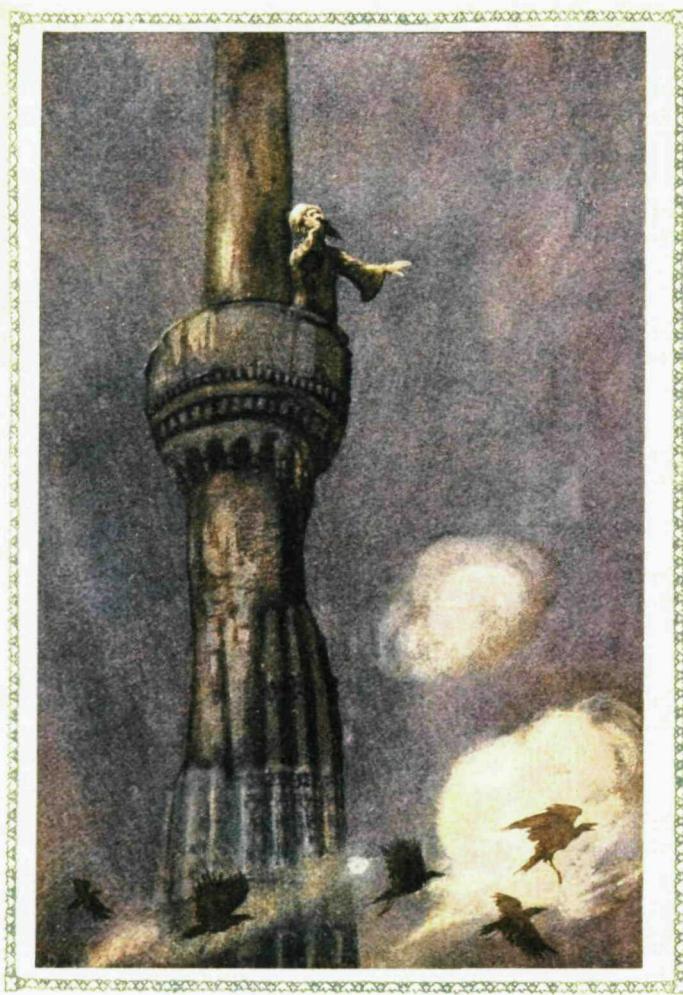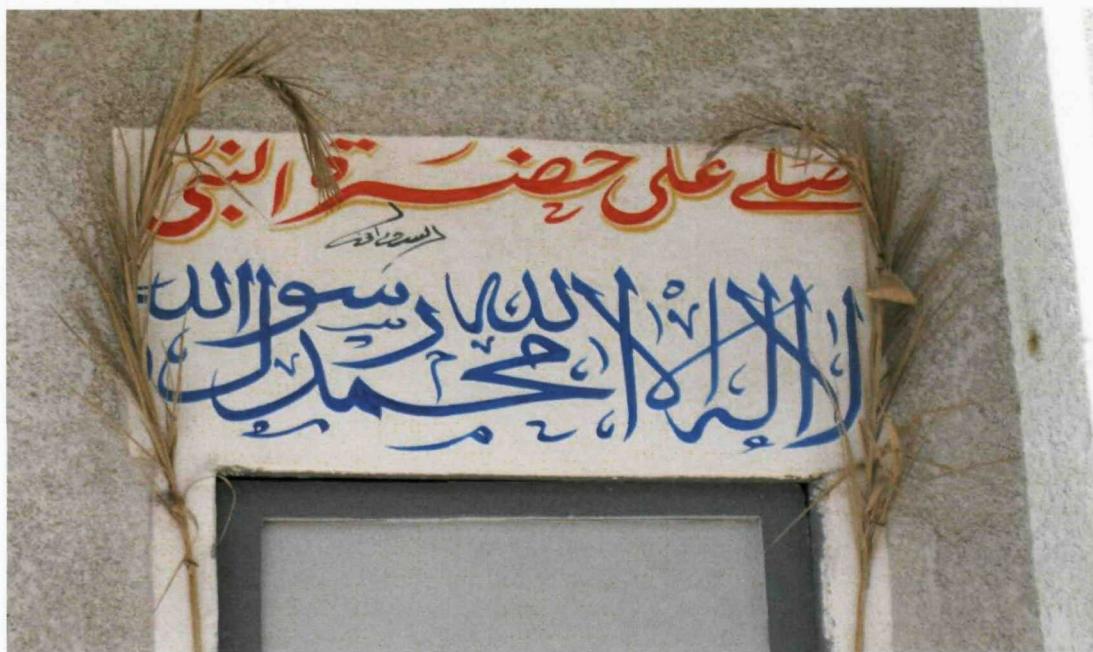
Figures 72 and 73.
Above: Residential calligraphy in Quseir. **Left:** *Call to Prayer*, by Willy Pogany, c.1859.

Figures 74, 75 and 76.
Left: The Al Farran Mosque. **Bottom left:** Exterior of the tombs of Sheikh Abd al-Khader al-Jelany and Sheikh Abu al-Hassan al-Shazly, Quseir. **Bottom right:** Interior photograph of the tombs of Sheikh Abd al-Khader al-Jelany and Sheikh Abu al-Hassan al-Shazly.
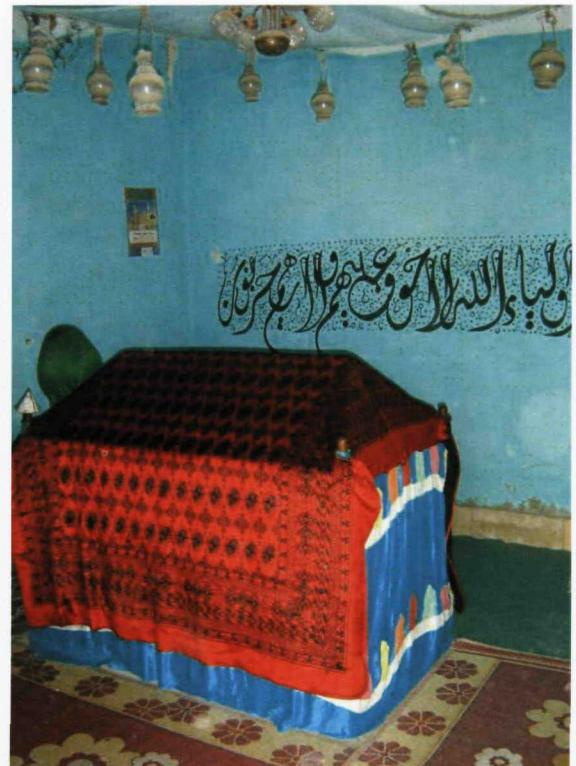
Chapter Six

Café culture: swapping stories with Amer Abdo Muhammed and others

'Go dismiss all your guides

Throw to the mud…to the fire

All the notes and impressions you've written

Any old peasant in this land

Can tell you with five verses from our sad *'Ataba*[1] songs,

All the history of the East

As he rolls his cigarette in front of his tent.'

(Al-Maghut cited in Jayyusi 1987: 311)

In June 2004 I told a story to a mixed group of primary school children from Quseir. This tale was made up of series of local folk stories that my friend, Amer Abdo Muhammed, had mentioned to me over coffee in our favourite café, *Quptan* (captain) *Adel's*, and from narratives recorded by Darren Glazier (2003). After we had finished this particular narrative, Lamya asked the class to draw some pictures inspired by what they had just heard. The story that I had told them began in a coffee shop, but most of the main action occurred in the citadel in the centre of Quseir and at the archaeological site, Quseir al-Qadim. Out of the twenty-four pictures that were handed back to me, only eight had any reference to the archaeological site; a paltry three drawings contained images of the citadel, but a staggering fifteen focused on local coffee-shops on the beach in Quseir (see figures 77-80). It appeared that the children associated café culture with the remembrance of the past; indeed, in this case coffee shops were more closely linked to the past than the site of Quseir al-Qadim, and its annual inundations with western archaeologists.

I first met Amer on the 26th September 2002 in *Pharaon Bazaar*, the shop he owns and one of the oldest of its kind in Quseir (figures 81-83). He has known and been a friend of the archaeological project since its inception in 1999, regularly furnishing the excavators with variety of gifts and souvenirs of their stay in the city. Born in Qena, he moved to Quseir as a young boy and stayed on in the city after finishing school. As the oldest of a family that had just lost their father, he built his business from next to nothing using his first profits to pay for his siblings' schooling and to help his mother with the upkeep of the family home. He is still very close to his family and although he and his wife now live in Quseir, they regularly visit his mother in Cairo.

Amer has the most comprehensive knowledge of Egyptian folklore of anyone that I have met in the country – indeed almost this entire chapter is based on my conversations with him in the city

and via the telephone. It was Amer that made me question the notion of a museum, it was him who made me look at it as a kind of story, a literary narrative, and it was he who encouraged me to try to retell this narrative, but perhaps most importantly, Amer made me do away with my Dictaphone: like he and his friends I too had to remember the stories that I heard, in turn moulding them from my memories into a narrative of my own. Amer is seen as somewhat of an outsider in Quseir - he has often told me that at times he feels alienated from his adopted city and this, he explained, is the reason why he has spent so much time with his Ababda friends in the south of the city, whom he refers to as 'the princes of the desert', learning their stories, and in turn sharing his own extensive knowledge of ancient Egyptian myth with them (see figure 80).

This chapter seeks to discuss some of the conversations that I have had with Amer and others from the city, but more so I wish to argue that café culture, although often a rather male dominated sphere, is the main public site through which Quseir remembers her past: here ancient Egyptian tales and poetry mix with Ababda song, classical Arabic literature and Qur'anic inflections in long, highly animated conversations over tea, *shisha* (water pipe) and dominoes[2]. This specific discussion has been split into three main areas; I could not hope to cover every aspect of storytelling in Quseir, and so have instead opted for a selective view of the narrative/poetic types that are most specific to the representation of the past in the city. Ancient Egyptian myth is crucial to most of the tales Amer and his friends tell one another and, on their request, I have had to learn the basics of an entire literature that was previously unknown to me. If I was to understand Amer, then I had to attempt to catch up with his seemingly encyclopaedic knowledge of ancient Egyptian stories; tales that he recycled into narratives that were relevant to the present, to modern Egyptian life in general. After this initial study, I then turn to iconography inspired by the classical Arabic literature and the *Alf Layla wa Layla* comparing these with the foundation analysis of chapters three and four. Finally, the site of Quseir al-Qadim is then focused upon. I close the chapter by looking at the lampooning that peppers every conversation in the coffee shops, indeed as I discussed in chapter three, it should be remembered that the past provides a site in which one may also engage in a battle of wits with one's friends (*hija*). I also consider the concept of swapping stories; Amer and I have built our friendship by exchanging folklore and poetry drawn from our respective histories.

The voices and the objects of ancient Egypt in the stories of modern Quseir

In April 2006 Amer sent me a general introduction to ancient Egyptian myths with an accompanying note telling me that this book contained all of the most popular tales that he has heard told in the cafés in Quseir (Hart 1990)[3]. From this basic text I have additionally split the tales that I personally know into groups of relevant themes. Each subsection addresses transliterations of the original texts and subsequently compares these with the Quseir variants.

Kate Crehan has commented upon Gramsci's notion of the subaltern's appropriation of elitist intellectual thought as a means of taking back power (2002: 156-9). In many ways I wish to demonstrate the manner in which Amer, a man who in his own words simply did not have the money for university, has learnt the corpus of ancient Egyptian literature independently, taking his country's heritage back for himself and through his business, using it to make a living and to feed and to clothe his family.[4]

Creation myths and *Pharaon Bazaar*

Amer frequently mentions Ptah and the creation myths of ancient Egypt in conversation. One of the most famous texts dealing with this issue, the so-called 'Memphite theology', carved into a large black granite slab, by order of King Shabaka of the Twenty-Fifth dynasty, offers one of the most comprehensive clues regarding theological concepts in ancient Egypt (British Museum No. 498, c. 710BC). According to the introduction of this text, the Shabaka Stone was copied from an older, worm-eaten papyrus or leather document, a work of the Old Kingdom and possibly a Pyramid text (Lichtheim 1973: 51). It consists of two horizontal lines of text, written across the entire width of the top of the stone, and sixty-two columns beginning on the left side of the stone. Sethe (1928) and Junker (1940; 1941) have both provided early transliterations of this difficult work. Sethe sees it as a dramatic play, Junker as a treatise. Miriam Lichtheim appears to agree with the latter's hypothesis that the piece deals with three interrelated topics: (1) Ptah is the king of Egypt and the unifier of the land. (2) Memphis is the capital of Egypt and the hinge of Upper and Lower Egypt. (3) Ptah is also the supreme god and the creator of the world (1973: 51). When I asked Amer about this particular text over the phone on the 14th February 2007, he began a long discussion of the significance of Ptah as 'supreme creator' of ancient Egypt.

As the owner of *Pharaon Bazaar*, Amer is understandably proud of his country's heritage. His shop itself is somewhat akin to a seventeenth/eighteenth century European cabinet of curiosity in its display style (figure 82). The creation myths of ancient Egypt regularly creep into our conversations, and often while I wait for him, I will listen to Amer sitting in his office telling his customers about the deities of the Pharaohs; he stocks a large amount of modern papyri reproductions of famous texts and imagery, and each sale is accompanied by a detailed description of the piece his customer is buying. Amer told me that Ptah gave life to the other gods through his heart and his tongue, his presence is carried through every living thing's heart and speech, something stated in the trilogy of Memphite theology itself: '52a) Ptah-the-great is heart and tongue of the Nine (Gods)' (Lichtheim 1973: 54). Amer has commented that perhaps Ptah is even present in the stories that he and his friends tell in the cafes – is he their mouth, and their speech? In this respect, the telling of a story about the past is in itself a performative re-enaction of one of the key premises of the creation myths of ancient Egypt. Amer also mentioned that Ptah is superior to Atum, in that the Ennaed of Atum was brought forth through

'his semen and fingers' (Lichtheim 1973: 54), which were in turn created by Ptah's teeth and lips (Lichtheim 1973: 54). He commented that the act of speech is a very important and significant aspect of life, it is magical in its power over the other manifestations of the body, he joked that it also makes him a living, and for this he has much for which to thank Ptah.

On the numerous occasions that I have taken coffee in the office (figure 83), I have noticed that *Pharaon Bazaar* is littered with images of the *ankh*, the sign of life, and many statuettes of the Theban god Amun can be found on the shelves, holding an *ankh* in one hand and in the other, a scimitar; the symbol of power and conquest (see Hassan 2003 for more on the bazaar and the selling of the ancient Egypt, also see El Daly 2003). Amer has told me that this figure is important, for he represents the supreme creator god, transcending all other deities. As Amun is associated with Thebes, Amer talks about him a great deal, for Luxor is, as he reminds me, not too distant from his own native Qena. The name 'Amun' maintains a mysterious hidden quality; his name could never convey his inner nature to the other gods. Excluding the period of around two decades when the sun disk of Akhenaten was promoted to the paramount deity, Amun gradually became the head of the Egyptian pantheon during the New Kingdom, becoming Amun-Re synonymous with the sun god - even the Ennaed of Heliopolis was seen as a form of Amun. An example of this extensive veneration can be seen in the text of a votive stela from Deir el Medina (Berlin Museum 20377). Amun is enthroned before a large pylon, Nebre with arms raised in prayer kneels before him, and below this scene are sixteen lines of a prayer, from which the following excerpt is taken:

'You are Amun, the Lord of the silent,

Who comes at the voice of the poor;

When I call you in my distress,

You (5) come to rescue me,

To give breath to him who is wretched,

To rescue me from bondage.

You are Amen-Re, Lord of Thebes,

Who rescues him who is in *dat;*

For you are he who is (merciful)

When one appeals to you,

You are he who comes from afar.'

(Lichtheim 1973: 106)

Of all the myths of creator gods, Amer talks most frequently of Amun and Ptah, and the majority of the conversations that I have had with him about these deities have occurred via

telephone or whilst taking coffee in his office, not in the public cafés . Whether this is simply a coincidence or is perhaps indicative that talk of the creator gods of ancient Egypt is somehow evidence of polytheism, and thus best kept to private meetings, I am unable to comment at this stage. Nevertheless, a discussion of gods appears to hold more significance when alone in *Pharaon Bazaar*, a building modelled, as Amer said himself on ancient Egyptian tombs, than in a loud coffee shop. Indeed, on these occasions Amer acts somewhat like an intermediary between me and the old texts themselves– he jokes that he needs no Champollion to do this. In many ways, as the owner of Pharaon Bazaar, he is also a keeper of the knowledge of the pharaohs.

Bringing Osiris, Isis and Horus to life in some of the stories of Quseir's cafés

Several times I have heard narratives that have included details of the ancient Egyptian myths of kingship in Quseir's coffee shops. Despite beginning the analysis of this chapter by looking at creation stories - tales that I have only heard discussed in private - I now turn to café culture proper and attempt to recreate two specific conversations that I was involved in with Amer at *Quptan Adel's* over the last two years (14th April 2005; 2nd February 2006). These discussions focused upon narratives about Osiris, Horus and Isis – three of the most important deities of ancient Egypt.

As has been mentioned previously, *Quptan Adel's* coffee shop is on the beachfront in the southern *Al Hara al Tatania* district of Quseir (see figures 84 and 85). The tombs of Abd al-Khader al-Jelany and Abu al-Hassan al-Shazly that were discussed in the last chapter, are situated just behind the café, and the front terrace looks out over the Red Sea, having a view of one of the most visually spectacular vistas of Egypt. In the morning and the evening, fishermen can be seen bringing in their nets, children play and swim, whilst their parents relax by the ocean. The café itself attracts men of all ages, and is a particularly popular haunt of the police, Ababda Bedouin descendents and fishermen. Women and children tend to prefer the well known hot chocolates of Restaurant Marianne's. *Quptan Adel's* is famous in Quseir for its lively conversations and competitive games of backgammon and dominoes. The café is draped in colourful neon fairy lights, and a large television sits in the centre of it. Football matches and popular Arabic music channels tend to be on throughout the day and the evening. Situated fairly close to *Pharaon Bazaar* it is Amer's favourite watering hole and it is here that the majority of our conversations have taken place.

On the 14th of April 2006, Amer and I spent the evening together at the coffee shop, as we were sitting looking out over the sea; we began to talk about ancient Egypt, particularly the stories of Osiris and Horus. We had reached this topic after an hour of conversation, that had encompassed jokes, politics, Arabic literature and when, occasionally joined by other's from the

café, seemingly relentless lampooning of one another. The myths of kingship, specifically the murder of Osiris and the vengeance of Horus, Osiris and Isis' son, are some of Amer's favourite stories about the past. When we talk, there is rarely ever a pause before we get onto this topic, often we can be discussing the weather, politics, families, business – anything and the conversation will unexpectedly turn to the ancient past of Egypt. It is very rare that this will focus upon a specific object, and Amer has never mentioned any museum exhibits that he has visited; he knows a great deal about the museums of Egypt and Europe, but rather I feel that for him, ancient Egypt tends to live on in stories, in books, in dreams and in the objects that he sells in his shop (see Hassan 1998 for more on the lack of Egyptian visitors to museums in the country). These things simply hold more relevance to his life than an impersonal, public display does.

On the evening of the 14th of April, we were engaged in a discussion of the politics of the Middle East. Amer was particularly concerned about the recent invasion of Iraq by American and British forces and he had been expressing some particularly apocalyptic views for the future (see below). After this we entered into a narrative about the mines of King Solomon, before finally settling upon a discussion of the murder of Osiris. This was prompted by my own comments about the difficulties of working with a museum of Egyptian archaeology when one's training has largely focused only upon the history of the last two thousand years of the country, and archaeologically-speaking, mainly a single Roman/medieval harbour site at that.

The stories of Osiris, the god-king murdered by his rival Seth and resurrected by his sister Isis, and their son Horus, are hinted at and expressed, albeit often briefly, in a variety of sources from the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms, particularly the *Pyramid Texts*, coffin spells, papyrus Chester Beatty I, Papyrus Berlin no. 1204, the stela of Ikhernofret in the Berlin museum, and the stela of Amenmose in the Louvre. On the latter, a round-topped limestone stela dating from the Eighteenth Dynasty, there is a depiction of two offering scenes. The official Amenmose and his wife Nefertari are seated before an offering table on the left and on the right is an unspecified lady, Baket. A son with his hands raised in offering stands before Amenmose, and behind him and his wife stands another son, with more offspring seated below. A priest performs rites before Baket. Below these images is a hymn to Osiris, the fullest account of the myth in the Egyptian language (Lichtheim 1973: 81, for a more general discussion of Egyptian religious literature see Assman 2001). The actual slaying of Osiris is barely commented upon, but the text does deal with the resurrection of Osiris, his intercourse with his sister Isis, the birth of Horus and Horus' eventual victory over Seth:

'Mighty when he (Osiris) fells the rebel,

Strong-armed when he slays (10) his foe.
Who casts fear of him on his enemy,
Who vanquishes the evil-plotters,
Whose heart is firm when he crushes the rebels.

Geb's heir (in) the kingship of the Two Lands…
His sister was his guard,
She who drives off the foes,
Who stops the deeds of the disturber
By the power of her utterance.
The clever-tongued whose speech fails not,
Effective in the word of command,
Mighty Isis who protected her brother,
Who sought him without wearying.
Who roamed the land lamenting,
Not resting till she found him,
Who made a shade with her plumage,
Created breath with her wings.
Who jubilated, joined her brother,
Raised the weary one's inertness,
Received the seed, bore the heir,
Raised the child in solitude
His abode unknown.
Who brought him when his arm was strong
Into the broad hall of Geb…

They gave to Isis' son his foe,
His attack collapsed,
The disturber suffered hurt,
His fate overtook the offender.

The son of Isis who championed his father,
Holy and splendid is his name,
Majesty has taken its seat,
Abundance is established by his laws.'
(Lichtheim 1973: 83-4)

On the 14ᵗʰ of April, Amer began by mentioning the great sea eagles that he often saw flying over the ocean when was taking coffee. He paused to order two plain tobacco *shishas*, beginning once more when they arrived and after taking a deep draw from one of them. He commented that the eagles flew near to Quseir al-Qadim, and after another pause mentioned that they reminded him of Isis in the kite-form that she took to receive the seed from Osiris. He continued in this vein, telling me that Isis eventually gave birth to Horus, another being that could take the form of a bird, in this case, a hawk. He remembered that his Ababda friends often threw bread to the sea and beckoned at the heavens, perhaps this too was in recognition of Isis and even Horus? Could they be feeding the sea eagles, even venerating them? Were the great sea eagles that everyone saw at Quseir al-Qadim there for a specific reason? After this we moved onto a discussion of another text, the Shipwrecked Official (see below), but firstly it is worth considering another conversation about Horus and Isis, prior to continuing.

On the 2ⁿᵈ of February 2006 we were once again sitting in *Quptan Adel's*. It was a rather over-cast morning, and we were having a coffee and *shisha* together. Amer had just given me a large pendant representing the eye of Horus - when I asked him about its meaning he told me that it brought luck, like Horus I too would have a successful life. As an archaeologist it was important that I remembered the story of Horus, a long and complicated tale. It was not for me to necessarily only remember the objects of Quseir al-Qadim but to also think of the stories that Amer had told me, the tales and legends of the ancients alongside the magnificent archaeology of Egypt. It struck me that as one might wish for a keepsake of an exhibition, Amer had given me a keepsake of his stories. It was somewhat self evident who, in this case, he viewed as the more proficient in the representation of the past of Egypt.

Quseir or Thago, the port of Queen Hatshepsut?

Queen Hatshepsut is a very popular historical figure in the stories of Quseir. I shall momentarily turn away from my conversations with Amer Abdo Muhammad, and instead firstly detail a discussion that I had on the 28ᵗʰ January 2006, with another friend of mine, Yasser el Amir, the manager of Restaurant Marianne's, the largest and most successful café in the city. I regularly relax under the veranda with Yasser at the front of Marianne's (when he is not running one of his very popular tourist safari trips into the Eastern Desert). Amer has often suggested speaking to him to learn about the past of the city, for he knew the local historian, Kamal el-Din Hussein Hamam. I have been acquainted with Yasser and made use of his hospitality for five years now. Indeed, it was Yasser that first introduced me to Ababda Bedouin of Quseir, coincidently his boss, Adel Hassan, the owner of Marianne's is related to a chief of the Southern Ababda and he is also close friends with Sheikh Hassan al-Aqied, one of the most famous Bedouin musicians of the region (see Chapter seven). I happened to be walking past Marianne's when I heard Yasser

calling for me to stop and to have a drink with him. We sat down together and, as we had not seen one another for a year, Yasser asked me what brought me to the city, to which I replied that I was researching the idea of re-representing the past of Egypt in the UK, and that I had recently been speaking with the Petrie Museum in London. He mentioned to me that it was likely that Quseir may have been the port from which the famous Eighteenth dynasty Queen Makare Hatshepsut (whom both he and Amer believe could possibly be linked to the legendary *jinn* Queen of Sheba), sailed to Punt (see figure 86). Although, archaeologically, there was little to suggest this, he was sure that this was indeed the port of Thago, the harbour used by the Queen's army to sail to Punt and elsewhere (see Bradbury 1988; Harvey 2003: 85-6; Sayed 1977; 1978 for more on the possibility of Red Sea travel to Punt). Prior to the explosion of beach cafes, he told me that late at night the beach used to be filled with the *jinn* and that this made him scared to walk along it alone. Furthermore, the nature of these things may even suggest that Sheba or Hatshepsut had been there – the *jinn* were in many respects gathering at what to them was a heritage site.

The inscriptions of two remaining, pink Assuan obelisks erected by Queen Hatshepsut in the temple of Amun at Karnak, offer an insight into her desire to make clear her devotion to her divine father Amun and her genetic father Thutmose I. In particular she emphasises her right to be king – she is both son and daughter of Amun, in this she too shares of the divine (Lichtheim 1976: 25, for original translation see Breasted 1906: 308-19; also Lepsius 1849-56: 22-4; Sethe and Helck 1906-58: 356-69):

> 'Amun, Lord of the Throne-of-the-Two-Lands[5];
> He made me rule (30) Black Land and Red Land as reward,
> No one rebels against me in all lands.
> All foreign lands are my subjects,
> He placed my border at the limits of heaven,
> What Aten encircles labors for me.
> He gave it to him who came from him;
> Knowing I would rule it for him.
> I am his daughter in very truth,
> Who serves him, who knows what he ordains.
> My reward from my father is life-stability rule,
> On the Horus throne of the living, eternally like Re.'
> (Lichtheim 1976: 28-29)

As I was writing this chapter on the 23rd February 2007, Amer told me that Quseir, as Yasser had suggested, was indeed the port of Thago, the site that Hatshepsut's army embarked from to sail to Punt. The mythical Punt, he commented, was either in southern Africa or the Arabian peninsular (see Meeks for more on the problems of locating Punt [2003], on the interpretations of Punt see Harvey [2003]). He clarified that the purpose of this expedition was to collect the materials for her Theban temple, found at Deir al-Bahri. He also noted that one could see detailed images of this trip on the lower terrace of the southern side of this temple (see Harvey 2003 for more on the iconography of Punt and Hatshepsut's expeditions [also see figure 86]). A lack of archaeological material did little to suggest that this story was not true, the legend of Thago, port of Hatshepsut, lives on in the tales of the coffee shops, in which many individuals of the city interact with and learn about their past. A museum is apparently not needed for this.

Middle Kingdom prose tales

The Tale of the Shipwrecked Official

Punt has been linked to the famous Middle Egyptian tale of the Shipwrecked Official; indeed the serpent of the narrative is often associated with the ruler of this mystical land (Harvey 2003: 88). As well as telling me about the original text (14th April 2005), on the 2nd February 2006, Amer recalled that there was a particular story that he had heard during his one of his frequent night-time visits to the Ababda settlement to the south of Quseir that bore certain similarities to this ancient narrative. He mentioned that an elder of the tribe had invited him into his house, offering him coffee, yet curiously did not mention what this individual's name was. The older, nameless man closed the door, remarking that he had recently returned from a long and arduous journey. He noted that his colleague/relative that he had travelled with had left Quseir, but had mentioned prior to leaving that he himself had heard of a man from the area that had undergone a magical journey. This third individual was a sailor, a fisherman that had been shipwrecked upon an island in the Red Sea that lay just to the south of Quseir. Yasser has suggested that the island of the ancient Egyptian tale may also be found in the ocean just to the south of the city. The cause of this shipwreck was a giant, yet kindly sea serpent. After inadvertently sinking the fisherman's boat the serpent saved him from a wild storm, taking him to his island home where in an attempt to reimburse him for the loss of his fishing boat, he subsequently prepared a magnificent feast for the sailor. As they ate, the serpent mentioned that he had lost the rest of his family for they had all died as a result of being burnt by the fierce rays of the sun. The serpent again turned to the fisherman and told him that he would be rescued from the island and upon returning would become rich. The means for this prosperity were to be found in a group of old Pharaonic goldmines located in the mountains to the south and west of Quseir[6]. As foretold, the next day the fisherman was picked up by a passing ship - Amer mentioned that this boat was not unlike a phosphate ship that we could see docking as we spoke. He then told of the

old Ababda man remarking that after a brief reunion with his family, the sailor departed to attempt to find the gold mines discussed by the kindly old serpent.

In order to demonstrate the similarities between the Tale of Shipwrecked Official and Amer's story, I shall quote from Stephen Quirke's summary:

> 'The tale is set within a tale. In the framing tale, an unnamed…'Mayor' and … 'Follower' arrive at the southern border of Egypt, on return from an expedition; the mayor is fearful following his failure, and the follower (not necessarily his follower – Middle Kingdom expedition inscriptions show that the two titles may be of equal social status) tells a tale of a previous expedition to reassure him. In the tale within this tale the Follower recalls how he was the sole survivor of a shipwreck, washed up on an 'island of the ka' (the part of the person receiving sustenance; also the word for food to sustain the person) where a giant serpent ruled. The serpent tells the shipwrecked sailor how he was one of seventy-five serpents, but that a star fell and burnt the rest of his family: this further tale within a tale echoes in later religious writing, in the seventy-five addresses to the sun-god and his seventy-four forms (the Litany of Ra in tombs of New Kingdom kings). The shipwrecked sailor is rescued. The composition ends abruptly with the despairing reply of the mayor.'
>
> (Quirke 2004: 71)

By linking Quseir to this story in this manner, by organically moulding the past and the present together via an individual narrative, the city is cast back to the Middle Kingdom. The ocean comes alive, it becomes a place that holds many secrets, a heritage site of great importance to the modern life of Quseir.

The exile of Amer?

As seen in the comparison of the Tale of the Shipwrecked Official and Amer's narratives of the 14th April 2005, and the 2nd of February 2006, many of the stories that I have heard in Quseir are based on journeys (rahil). Inspired by my enthusiasm, on the former of these occasions Amer began another discussion, this time of a reoccurring dream that he had been having at the time. I shall discuss the significance of dream-narratives, and the issues of studying dreams and nightmares in more detail below, but firstly I wish to demonstrate how he united the Middle Kingdom prose tale, The Exile of Sanehat with this dream of his, and how both followed a similar narrative. Again, I use this as an indication of the manner in which ancient heritage is brought to life in the present of Quseir via an emotive and personal story recounted within a café.

In hushed tones, Amer told me that he was concerned that he was drawing to the end of his life - although only in his late thirties, he believed that he would not live to see his fortieth birthday. He mentioned that he felt that he could claim ancient aristocratic blood, but that something had happened a long time ago, an argument or a dispute which had led to his family being estranged from the nobles of Arabia. He had even dreamt of things that had suggested this to his waking mind. In a recent example he dreamt that he was a powerful warrior, but that he did not fight in Egypt. He was somewhere else, possibly either South America or the Arabian peninsular, going to war for a different nation. He felt that he lived in this country, though it was not his home; he foresaw his death, but it was in Egypt. Upon waking he believed that he had return to his real home, and that his adventures were over. Although two years short of forty, he knew that he had lived for many years - an exiled existence in which he had experienced more that any other man in Quseir.

Again I shall use Stephen Quirke's summary of the Middle Kingdom prose tale, *The Exile of Sanehat to* demonstrate some of the key similarities with Amer's narrative (2004):

> 'At the death of the old king, he (an Egyptian palace official, named Sanehat) fears strife and flees Egypt to build a new life in exile under a ruler in Syria. At the height of his powers he is challenged to a duel by a Syrian champion: Sanehat kills his opponent in the duel, and begins a period of peace. At the approach of old age, he feels driven to return home to end his days, and be buried, as an Egyptian. The reigning king of Egypt invites him back, and he returns to the palace he had left years earlier. He has learned what it means to be an Egyptian, and he has become an Egyptian again – but can he or his audience really be the same after this voyage of self-discovery?'
>
> (Quirke 2004: 58, my brackets)

Amer, consciously linked this dream to the tales of ancient Egypt and he even mentioned Sanehat in the same context. He, like Sanehat, knew what it meant to be an Egyptian in exile, and I and the others in the café were held in suspense as he narrated his story. In this respect a Middle Kingdom prose tale, a story that he knew very well, had provided this literary landscape, a model for his own narrative, not just an artefact of the past but also an inspiration for the present and a justification of Amer's status in the city. Indeed we, his audience, could never be the same after this voyage of self discovery of which we had just shared on that particular evening in April.

The Ababda as the 'eloquent peasants' of ancient Egypt?

I shall discuss some of the representations of the Ababda Bedouin of Quseir in greater detail in the next chapter, but it should be noted that the Ababda also frequently play a significant iconic role within the stories of the past that are told by the settled population of Egypt – people like Amer and his friends. As outsiders to the city, characters renowned for their seemingly magical ability to survive in the desert, the Ababda are often romanticised and linked to the Egyptian past, yet can also be despised and presented very negatively as travelling 'gypsies', sorcerers, thieves and drug dealers (for more on the social structure and governance of the Ababda in the region see Nielson 2004, on Bedouin culture in general see Abu-Lughod 1986, 1993; Bailey 1972, 2002; Slymovics 1987; Sowayan 1985, Tregenza 2004). Nevertheless, they are often more positively represented as warriors, poets, seers and benevolent magicians; on many occasions Amer has even suggested that they may be seen as the last surviving link to ancient Egypt (for an example of the impression of Bedouin as seers/holders of wisdom and knowledge see the *Anecdote of Townsman and a Bedawiyeh* [Lane 1839, volume III: 103-4]). He has told me that the Ababda can trace their ancestry back to the guardians of the tombs of the pharaohs. Furthermore, it is they that hold the true knowledge of the archaeology of the region, one (nameless) family still hold a golden statuette of a horse, a gift that Amer tells me was given to a distant relative as a mark of gratitude by the ancient rulers of the country – he promises to one day to introduce me to these people so that they may show me this artefact[7].

In *Quptan Adel's*, on the 2nd February 2006, Amer introduced me to a group of four young Ababda Bedouin men. When they heard that I was a British archaeologist, they told me that they knew of a several gold mines in the mountains to the south of the city, and that they had seen a great settlement appear in Bir an-Nakhil, a city of the *jinn* (*madinat al-jinni*). They did not talk of old objects on this occasion, but rather entire, lost archaeological sites and settlements. Apparently, it was not I as an archaeologist, that was necessarily in the position of power, but rather they appeared to be informing me of the physical remains of their heritage – the Ababda, as Amer mentioned later that day, held the secrets of the past in their songs and dances, not unlike Khuninpu, the eloquent marshdweller of Middle Kingdom literature, they could sing and perform long poems in the lines of which the wisdom of the world was held (see Lichtheim 1973: 169-73; Quirke 2004: 151- 165).

New Kingdom prose tales: apocalyptic visions and the destruction of mankind

In a particularly emotional conversation that I had with Amer in April 2005[8], we looked out across the bay of Quseir and imagined what was happening in the rest of the world. Amer told me that, like myself, he was feeling concerned about the conflicts in the Middle East. He likened the war in Iraq to the cataclysmic events described in New Kingdom prose tales such as *The*

Destruction of Mankind, the mythological tale forming the first part of the longer *The Book of the Cow of Heaven*, as inscribed in the tombs of Tutankhamun, Seti I, Ramses II, Ramses III, and Ramses VI (see Lichtheim 1976: 197, for original translation see Erman 1911: 47-9; Maystre 1941: 58-73). Miriam Lichtheim summarises the initial narrative as follows:

> '(It) relates how the sun-god Re set out to destroy the human race because mankind was plotting rebellion against him. But after an initial slaughter, carried out by the "Eye of Re," the sun-god relented and devised a ruse to stop the goddess from further killing.'
> (Lichtheim 1976: 197-8)

In a similar fashion to the biblical stories of the Flood, the theme of the story revolves around divine wrath and the punishment of the sins of the human race. Amer, told me that the hunt, and the subsequent wars for as he put it, the black gold of Iraq and Iran, could well cause a similar apocalyptic vengeance to be dispensed upon mankind. In this respect perhaps this old story was a kind of prophecy for things to come, the nearing of the day of judgement?

> 'Let your eye go and smite them for you, those schemers of evil.'
> (Lichtheim 1976: 198)

Again, Amer had utilised a narrative drawn from the history of Egypt to comment on a very confused, mixed up modern world – the past offered clues to the future of this world if it was to continue to behave in the same manner as it had of late. As Amer suggested before ordering another drink, could we actually be nearing Armageddon? Indeed I can still recall, the powerful desire to change archaeology, the burning need to re-think the representation of the past in order to make it comment more fully upon the present, that I felt at that moment and indeed continue to feel as I submit this thesis.

Dreaming ancient Egypt

Dreams and their interpretation play an important role in many North African societies and Quseir is certainly no exception (see Crapanzano 1980; on the evidence for dreams in ancient Egypt see Szapowska 2003; for an example in Arabic literature see *A Dream* in the *Alf Layla wa Layla* [Lane 1839, volume II: 380-1]). It should be noted that the dream narratives that I discuss in this section, are very subjective – dreams will soon fade upon waking and so many of the tales that I have heard are more than likely a mixture of memories of the original dream or nightmare, with new narrative elements added by the dreamer during the conversation itself. Nevertheless, the discussion of dreams in the cafés of Quseir provides a very popular form of public

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interaction with the past. Powerful images of ancient Egypt often come to individuals when they are asleep, hinting at treasure, and the existence of unopened tombs and undiscovered temples in the region.

On first meeting Amer on the 26th September 2002 he told a colleague and I that he had been troubled by a reoccurring dream in which he was continually plagued by snakes and dogs. These creatures were taking old Egyptian objects and trying to hide them from him. He told us that he took this to mean that one of his employees were stealing from his shop – indeed that very morning he had confronted one of them and they had broken down in tears, admitted to this act of theft and subsequently begged him for his forgiveness. Amer mentioned that he had also often dreamt of ancient Egypt and the pharaohs. Furthermore during our meeting at *Quptan Adel's* on the morning of the 2nd February 2006, an old fisherman joined us at our table and began to describe a nightmare that he had, that he was adamant had become reality. He told me that he dreamt of an old 'pharaonic' temple in the mountains to the south of the city. In this dream, he and a friend were walking amongst the craggy peaks on a clear moonlit night[9]. They came upon a *Maghreb* (Moroccan/north African/outsider) magician, who was muttering incantations over a fire (a belief in magic in Egypt has long been noted by travellers – see Lane 1836: 248-249 for example [also see figures 87 and 88]). Suddenly the hillside that they were standing upon began to fall apart; the quake instigated a massive mud slide that, when it had finished, revealed a golden temple. The door to this mysterious temple flew open and a chariot ridden by powerful Nubian warriors came thundering out. At this point in the dream he awoke, but the story did not end there. He went on to tell me that the brother of the friend in his dream had actually found the *Maghreb* and the temple, but he was killed shortly afterwards. As in Amer's dream, the past was central to the prediction of future events, indeed, the fisherman told me he could find this temple and that one day he would go to it and reveal it himself – he needed no archaeologists in order to do this. His dreams, he suggested were more reliable, more valuable to him, than a group of archaeologists and their museums could ever be (see Burton 1889 volume IV: 289 for a similar dream narrative).

Classical Arabic literature, poetry, folklore and the past of Quseir

As discussed in chapters three and four, knowledge of the Arabic literary, iconographic heritage is key to understanding the import of many of the representations of the past of the people from Quseir. Amer and several other individuals that I have met in the city encouraged me to look to this heritage in order that I may understand the historical context of the stories and narratives popular in the coffee shops. Ancient Egypt provides the foundation for many of these tales, yet, I argue that the Arabic heritage is actually of more significance to the portrayal of the past in the cafés of the city. Yet, again this section provides a selected view of these stories; indeed I have

chosen only a handful of the most common of the tales that I have heard in Quseir (see Glazier 2003; 2005 for more).

A classical influence? Imru' al-Qays and the story of Sidi Ramadan

In chapter three, I argued that the popular legend of the hanging of *Mu'allaqat*, the 'seven odes' of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry upon the *Ka'ba*, suggests the importance of the literary heritage to the interactions with the past of the Arabic speaking world. In Quseir one finds a similar emphasis placed upon this literary history. This assessment was largely drawn from the countless occasions when I have attempted to instigate a discussion of the archaeology of the region that I have actually ended up being told of the significance of the Arabic literary canon. Both Amer and Yasser have mentioned Imru Al-Qays al Dalil to me[10], suggesting that I should consult his *Mu'llaqa* so as to gain an insight into what constitutes an emotionally stirring, interesting narrative – not only do they see this as a form of artefact, an example of ancient writing, but it also offers a potential model for future representations of the Arabic/Egyptian past. To further the point that they have raised, I shall now compare his *Mu'llaqa* to a story that I heard during my first visit to Quseir – a tale that was told by a long term friend of the project Sidi (Mr) Ramadan, an ex phosphate miner from the city (figure 89).

> 'I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of Odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling places and the relics and traces of habitation.'
> (Ibn Qutaybah, trans Nicholson 1987: 77)

Following the convention as outlined in this famous excerpt from Ibn Qutaybah's *Kitab al-shi'r wa-al-shu'ara'* (Book of Poetry and Poets, [1964]), Imru Al-Qays' *qassida* opens with the *atlal* the description of the desert campsite, before moving into the *nasib* (prelude)[11]:

> 'Halt, friends both! Let us both weep, recalling a love and a lodging
> By the rim of the twisted sands between Ed-Dakhool and Haumal,
> Toodih and el-Mikrat, whose trace is not yet effaced
> For all the spinning of the south winds and the northern blasts;
> There, all about its yards, and away in the dry hollows
> You may see the dung of antelopes spattered like peppercorns.
> Upon the morn of separation, the day they loaded to part,
> By the tribe's acacias it was like I was spitting a colocynth;
> There my companions halted their beasts awhile over me
> Saying, "Don't perish of sorrow; restrain yourself decently!"'
> (Imru' al-Qays, trans Arberry 1957: 61)

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This narrative development can in turn be compared to the story told by Sidi Ramadan, over tea at his home on the 2nd October 2002. Interestingly Ramadan worked on the excavations at Quseir al-Qadim, yet on this particular occasion our discussion did not focus upon on the artefacts that he had been involved in finding, but was actually somewhat more similar in structure to a classical Arabic *qassida*. Ramadan began by telling me that a number of years prior to our meeting he was standing at his own 'deserted dwelling place' – in this case the remains of a *Mamluk* cemetery at Quseir al-Qadim. He told me that at the time, he was thinking of his wife and digressed in order to mention how proud he was of her and their children, some of whom happened to sitting near to us as we spoke (figure 90). Returning to his tale, he mentioned that he began his journey home as the swift desert night drew in. He had made this trip on innumerable occasions; it took him away from the cemetery and along an area of shoreline that has since been turned into the private beach of the luxury Movenpick hotel (figure 91). In some respects this introduction formed a *rahil* or travelling section of his tale, something echoed in Imru al' Qays writing:

> 'Well now, you tedious night, won't you clear yourself off, and let
> Dawn shine?
> …Many's the water-skin of all sorts of folk I have slung
> By its strap over my shoulder, as humble as can be, and humped it;
> Many's the valley, bare as an ass's belly, I've crossed.'
> (Imru' al-Qays, trans Arberry 1957: 63)

Ramadan then described a storm that rolled in from the ocean, the wind battering him on his journey home – again following a similar pattern to Imru' al-Qays:

> 'Friend, do you see yonder lightning? Look, there goes its glitter
> Flashing like two hands now in the heaped-up, crowned
>   Stormcloud.
> Brilliantly it shines – so flames the lamp of an anchorite
> As he slops the oil over the twisted wick.'
> (Imru al-Qays, trans. Arberry 1957: 64)

In Ramadan's tale, the storm was magical, and it created dust-devils that slowly took the form of ape-like *jinn*, that in turn followed and chased him – but, thanks to his great strength and cunning, he out-ran these things and eventually arrived safely at his home, some eight kilometres away – a place protected from the *jinn* and the evil eye by being covered in hand-prints symbolising Allah and the hand of Fatima (figure 92). In this case, the classical developmental

tradition of the *qassida*, had clearly influenced Ramadan's own narrative. He began at an archaeological site, but after this initial opening, the tale concentrated more upon the conventions of his own literary heritage than it did upon the ancient objects and the artefacts that have so fascinated the European and American excavators of Quseir al-Qadim. He did not copy Imru al-Qays, but I make the point that what I first thought to be a simple folktale was actually far more indicative of a skilfully moulded story that drew from a detailed awareness of, what to me, was an alien historical narrative tradition.

Hassany's journey from Luxor to Quseir

As a descriptive narrative, Ramadan's tale fits neatly into the *wasf* (descriptive) genre as discussed in chapter three. During a brief afternoon meeting with a young trader Hassany, at his stall on the beachfront outside Restaurant Marianne's (figure 93) on the 12th April 2005, I heard a thoroughly debauched tale that Hassany actually likened to a classical *khamriyyah* poem – I had mentioned that I was an archaeologist, with an interest in the representation of Egypt in museums. In response, to a familiar backdrop of football on the television and loud pop music on the radio, Hassany told me of his home town of Luxor, his fondness of drinking whisky and the local wine, *Omar Khayyam*, the effect that this had on his viewing of the famous monuments and his subsequent journey to begin a new life in Quseir. He actually commented that his story was a modern version of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*[12], the collection of quatrains attributed to a 11th/12th century mathematician, astronomer and philosopher (1048-1122), and made famous in the English language by Edward Fitzgerald's popular 19th century translation (1859):

'Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
    And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,
    "Awake, my little ones, and fill the Cup
"Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."'

And, As the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted-"Open then the door!
    You know how little while we have to stay,
"And, once more departed, may return no more."'
(Fitzgerald 1859: 1)

As in the lines above, Hassany told how he and his friends had been drinking since the morning amongst the ruins of Luxor. He thought of the old monuments, to him they acted as a symbol of stagnation, and he felt a new life beckoning for him by the Red Sea, a life that was to be blessed by freedom. He had seen a great deal of *jinn* in Luxor, perhaps they had travelled from Aswan, he suggested? This in itself hinted at a time of change, he felt that a wind of transformation was blowing through Egypt. Observing this omen, he had taken up a bottle of wine, packed his bags and began his journey to Quseir. The city had a colourful history, he thought, though not as magnificent as that of his native Luxor. He arrived in Quseir earlier that year and set up his bazaar on the beach; like Khayyam he was a hedonist and a skeptic, but he was also a realist, the past of Quseir would soon be known and it would draw tourists from around the globe. He would be ready to make his fortune, and so live out the rest of his days as a free man. I was an archaeologist, he was a hedonist – we both used the past for our own ends, he mused. He asked that I write his tale, his *khamr* in my thesis, he felt that the past was a playground as a much as a serious site of study – could a museum learn anything from this he asked? His story of walking into the Eastern Desert to leave his old life behind, in favour of a glorious, though still obscure future, strongly reminded me of a poem by the Cairene poet Yasser Abdullatif, in the sixth verse of which the following is written:

'I shall go out to the desert like a fugitive,

And under the skull smelting-sky

My past life shall melt away,

And I shall see my future as a mirage.'

(Abdullatif 2003 [1994]: 46)

The poem is called *Archaeology*, and I have promised myself that in memory of Hassany's journey, I will strive to have it included within a museum of Egyptian archaeology in the UK so that it may avoid being the site of stagnation that made Hassany leave his past behind him, and may instead make a small step toward becoming a site of dynamism, challenge and change.

The *Alf Layla wa Layla* (Thousand Nights and One Night) and the past

Over lunch at his house on the 2nd February 2006, Amer showed me his library of books. Volumes by Abu Tammam, Al Jahiz, Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma 'Antarah, Al-A'sha, Abu Nuwas, al-Bukhari, al-Mutanabbi andd Ibn al-Rumi (amongst others), dominated the shelves, but so did several copies of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* (for more on the classical authors see Adonis 2003; Allen 2000; Beeston 1977; Clouston 1986; Jones 1992; 1996; Stetkevych 1991; 1993; Zwettler 1978; on the Nights see Ghazoul 1980; Irwin 1994). After perusing the many rows of books, Amer mentioned that he particularly liked the *qassida* tradition of classical Arabic poetry, at the time a

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recording of a modern recitation that had just come on the television allowed him to demonstrate its beauty as a narrative form. He also showed me a vast collection of Disney comics and his battered, yet treasured, Harry Potter volumes.

Classical Arabic literature is noticeably important to Amer and to others in Quseir, but it is the tales of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* that I have heard evoked the most often in conversations about the past in the city. As I did in chapter four, I shall mainly utilise Edward Lane's translation for comparative purposes (1839, 1908), although again it is also recommended that the reader consult Burton's and Madrus and Mathers' volumes for a fuller impression of the tales (Burton 1889; Madrus and Mathers 1899). When walking the streets of Quseir, one notices a proliferation of hand prints on the walls of many of the peoples' houses – these prints act as a magical, protective device, a symbol of Allah to ward away the evil-eye and to keep the *jinn* at bay (see Abu-Lughod 1986: 114-115; Elyachar 2005: 137-166 for more on the affects of being looked upon by the evil eye [*manzur*]; figure 92). The presence of these icons, as well as the many mentions of the *jinn* in the conversations that I have had with people in Quseir, indicate that the stories of the *Thousand Nights and One Night*, are not mere fantasies, indeed these tales are intimately linked to old places and objects, they bring them to life, giving them contemporary relevance. Fishermen talk of mysterious amphora jars being found in the ocean, whilst others discuss the spirits and the *jinn* of Quseir al-Qadim; also many people tell of an ancient underwater city that lies in the ocean, a city of angels, and even, so Ehab Mustafa of *The African Art Company* on Al Gomhoria Street says, devils. In these *adab/maqamah* narratives, the past is populated with strange creatures and magical objects - it provides a landscape in which to situate moralistic journeys.

Stolen artefacts, wronged owners and cursed thieves

During the morning that we spent in *Quptan Adel's* on the 2nd February 2006, Amer had told me that when he was a child his father had introduced him to a man with a large scar running down his face. Soon, in a manner similar to the framing narratives of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* a story within a story ensued. This individual, Amer mentioned to me and to a growing number of Ababda Bedouin men, had once owned a strange book that he kept locked in his house. He took the book from a sage, for it was very ancient, holding the secrets of both the pharaohs and the lords of Arabia within its pages. Indeed, the owner himself had discovered two temples and a ruined palace, simply by repeating some of the mantra's and spells written in this antique tome. One day this man awoke to find a *Maghrebi* magician[13] in his house, the intruder had hold of the book, and struck him a fierce blow with it, knocking him to the ground where he fell unconscious. He eventually awoke some time later, bleeding, to find both the Moroccan and the book gone (again see Crapanzano 1980 for more on the practice of magic in Morocco). Amer

noted that the scar on this individual's head provided the proof of his story – he himself had seen this wound. The man was cursed.

The presence of a magical book, that conveys wisdom and knowledge to the reader; an object that was only meant to be used by an adept of the magical arts can be seen most clearly in *The Story of King Yunan and the Sage Duban* (Lane 1839, volume I: 29-40). In this tale the king Yunan is told to execute a loyal sage by a jealous courtier (again see figures 87 and 88 for examples of magical charms). Prior to his beheading the sage offers to give Yunan the most magical book in his collection. The king slays Duban and takes the book for himself; in doing so unleashing a fatal curse upon himself. In this particular *adab* narrative, as was the case in Amer's story, taking old treasures from those that one has wronged is portrayed as an unethical act, for which you will be punished. Old artefacts often carry curses of this type, yet if they are taken and used with good conduct in the forefront of the owner's mind, then this fate can be avoided. However, the consequences are dreadful for removing them without permission, stealing them to use to one's advantage.

The adventures of Quseir's fishermen
Glazier has recorded many accounts of fishermen encountering strange creatures, storms and ghosts (*afrites*) (e.g. Glazier 2003: Int. 11, 17, 35, 36). In these tales fishermen find huge lobsters and turtles that disappear when touched; indeed in one case an individual casts an anchor near to the shoreline by Quseir al-Qadim and subsequently vanishes (2003: Int. 11). Here I wish to argue that fishermen, as they are portrayed in the *Alf Layla wa Layla*, are actually seen as some of the most likely people to have magical encounters with entities from the past of the region. It is they that find legendary islands filled with ancient treasures (as described in comparison to the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Official* above), they that encounter monsters from a bygone age, it is even they that find old, mysterious objects in the ocean. Here I shall recount just two evocative stories that were told to Amer and me by a young fisherman in *Quptan Adel's* (February 2nd 2006). I have selected these narratives due to their iconographic similarity to some of the fishermen's tales in the Nights (see Lane 1839, volume I: 24-46; volume II 58-9; volume IV: 128-65 for more).

This man had heard Amer and I chatting in the café, and pulled up a chair. He did not introduce himself (although I believe that I have heard others calling him by the name 'Mahmoud'), but I felt that Amer knew him, though he has not mentioned this fisherman since that day. Amer was telling me that there are many stories of a huge whale that lives in the waters of the bay of Quseir; indeed it had actually taken a local fishing boat into its mouth, swallowing it and the sailor whole (see Glazier 2003 for more on stories similar to this). The beast was ancient, possibly being born during the reign of the pharaohs. The young fisherman interrupted us to

state that it was in fact his grandfather that had encountered this Old Testament-like whale. The old man had gone deep into the monster's stomach, before finally being regurgitated near to the site of Quseir al-Qadim. A strange circle was left on his cheek - a mark of this incredible encounter. The fisherman, Mahmoud (?), then went onto explain that when he went out in this boat, he now left a trail of ash in the water – this mimicked the ink of the giant squid, the only natural predator of the whale.

In Burton's translation of *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, the famous sailor meets with some similar sea monsters:[14]

> 'Presently we heard a terrible great cry like the loud-pealing thunder…Then behold, there came up a huge fish, as big as a tall mountain, at whose sight we became wild for affright and…marvelling at its vast size and gruesome semblance; when lo! a second fish made its appearance which we had seen naught more monstrous…but suddenly up came a third fish bigger than the two first…Then the three fish began circling around the ship and the third and biggest opened his mouth to swallow it, and we looked into his mouth and behold, it was wider than the gate of a city and its throat was like a long valley.'
> (Burton 1889, volume I: 50)

In Quseir, the whale is an ancient monster, a living embodiment of the past. As an icon, it actually links the region to stories in the *Alf Layla wa Layla,* and the Qur'an – indeed Amer and his friends both used Sinbad and *Yunus* (Jonah) as direct comparisons[15]. It is the fishermen that verify this story; indeed often it is they who are the witnesses of the magnificent past of the area.

After this tale, we heard that Mahmoud had a friend that had cast his net into the ocean along the coast to the north of Quseir. He had pulled up a vast amount of old pottery jars, similar to those found at nearby Quseir al-Qadim (figure 95). One of these had a heavy stopper in it. He pulled at this stopper, eventually removing it. A huge *afrite* (evil *jinni*) escaped and chased this individual, who panicked and threw the jar back into the ocean where it sank, fortunately dragging the *jinni* with it to the bottom of the ocean.

This tale is remarkably similar to *The Story of the Fisherman* discussed in chapter four (Lane 1839, volume I: 24-46):

> 'When he (the fisherman) opened it (the net) and found in it a bottle of brass, filled with something, and having its mouth closed with a stopper of lead bearing the impression of our lord Suleyman[16]… So he… picked at the lead until he extracted

it from the bottle…and shook it so that the contents might pour out; but there came from it nothing but smoke…after a little while, the smoke collected together…and was converted into an 'Efrit, whose head was in the clouds, while his feet rested upon the ground.'

(Lane 1839, volume I: 26).

The narrative tradition of the Nights lives on within these tales of the fisherman of the city and in doing so they are in turn united with the past – their occupation is a particularly dangerous one, and by travelling unaided into the ancient and mysterious Red Sea, they are seen by others as being particularly prone to encounter the past of the region - not in the form of an excavation conducted by maritime archaeologists, but rather in a sea adventure that sees them meeting legendary beasts from a distant past, and even discovering and actually uncovering the old, magnificent treasures of this past.

The merchants and the *jinni*: Amer and Ehab Mustafa's encounters with the *jinn* of Quseir

'there was a certain merchant who had great wealth, and traded extensively with surrounding countries; and one day he mounted his horse, and journeyed to a neighbouring country to collect what was due to him, and, the heat oppressing him, he sat under a tree, in a garden, and put his hand into his saddle-bag, and ate a morsel of bread and a date which were among his provisions. Having eaten the date, he threw aside the stone, and immediately there appeared before him an 'Efrit, of enormous height, who, holding a drawn sword in his hand, approached him, and said, Rise, that I may kill thee, as thou hast killed my son. The merchant asked him, How have I killed thy son? He answered when thou atest the date, and threwest aside the stone, it struck my son upon the chest, and, as fate had decreed against him, he instantly died.'

(Lane 1839, volume I: 13)

I have heard countless stories of the *jinn* in Quseir, as has my colleague Darren Glazier (see Glazier 2003, 2005; Glazier and Jones 2007; Jones in press). However, due to the limitations of space imposed upon me here, I shall close this particular section detailing the significance of representations similar to those in the Nights, by discussing only two specific conversations of the *jinn* in which I have been involved. I begin with a narrative that I heard whilst sitting having a cup of tea with Ehab Mustafa, the owner of *The African Art Company*, and a close friend of Amer's (figure 94). On the 22nd June 2004, Ehab and I were relaxing in the shade of the citadel

in the centre of Quseir. Each day as I travelled from the Carpe Vitam Learning Centre to the citadel, I would pass in front of his shop, situated as it was at the northerly end of Al Gomhoria. Gradually we got talking, and after hearing that I was conducting research in the city, he would invite me in for a drink on quiet days; as a graduate of English and Arabic literature he was interested to hear more about my own studies. Whilst we relaxed out of the reach of the penetrating rays of the sun, we watched the latest influx of tourists from the nearby hotels enter Quseir - Ehab asked if I had come across the *Alf Layla wa Layla* in my readings. For him, these tales were the lifeblood of the narratives of Egypt, and were therefore a vital example of the country's heritage. Many of these stories pointed to the existence of ancient, lost cities, describing the beings that existed in times past in great detail. The *jinn*, he told me, populated a great underwater city in the Red Sea. They also inhabited the ruins of Quseir al-Qadim and many of these beings were actually related to those that lived in the ocean. On some days, if one looked carefully and from a great height, one could see the sun glinting off the spires of this place - if the water was clear enough the light would filter through the waves, catching the precious jewels embedded in the towers of this strange township in doing so. He wondered aloud if this was perhaps the remains of Pharaoh's famous army - when Moses passed through the Red Sea, did it really destroy all that followed when it closed once more? When I asked Ehab if he, himself had seen the *jinn*, he replied that they may only be witnessed when one thinks, as he put it, in a metaphysical manner. The heart, the mind and the soul had to work in unison - only those of a philosophical manner could see them. In these troubled times the *jinn* adopted the shape of their human cousins, but one day, he assured me, they will return to their true form. This statement was fascinating as I had never considered them as metaphors, an indicator of the state of the world. Not only this, but Ehab described the *jinn* as a symbol of the past as well. As they populated the remains of history, where they lived, so too did magnificent archaeology.

Nearly two years later (2nd February 2006), Amer agreed with Ehab's earlier suggestion that the *jinn* had now chosen to take the form of humans. He mentioned that he had encountered a *jinni* in the guise of an old, cowled woman, whilst returning home late one night. She was sitting on the steps near to what by day was Quseir's busy fruit market, next to the remains of the Austrian embassy; he even took me to the exact place that he had seen her (figure 96). The woman reached out to him, calling to him - but he knew her for what she really was. He ran as fast as he could, stopping only when he eventually reached his apartment nearly a kilometre away. This *jinni*, knew that he had a vast knowledge of the past of the area, and he felt that she wanted to stop him sharing this knowledge with others. She was a guardian of the treasures of Quseir and her environs and she did not take kindly to people revealing her secrets.

Stories relating to Quseir al-Qadim

Darren Glazier's study of the folklore of the city that focuses upon the archaeological site of Quseir al-Qadim, revealed the presence of five popular, reoccurring narrative themes (for a more detailed analysis see Glazier 2003; 2005; Moser *et al* 2002, on the relationship between archaeology and folklore see papers in Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999; Wallis and Lymer 2001; on Egyptian folktales see El Shamy 1980)[17]. The first of these consists of a tale that discusses a European, generally of Greek origin, asking a local resident about the presence of treasure at the archaeological site. Eventually the outsider gives his informant a map of the area, which is then used to uncover magical artefacts, particularly ancient cloth that vanish into dust upon contact (i.e. Glazier 2003: Int. 8). Secondly, many stories that detail an umbilical-like tunnel that links the citadel in the centre of the city, with Quseir al-Qadim; a distance of some nine kilometres, exist (e.g. Glazier 2003: Int. 11). Thirdly, an as yet unverified, sunken ship in the bay of Quseir is mentioned (see Glazier 2003: Int. 34; 35, also this is occasionally linked to ancient Egypt and *The Shipwrecked Official*). Finally I have already mentioned tales relating to Glazier's remaining two themes, narratives focusing upon the mysterious experiences of local fishermen at the site, and cautionary tales, often involving the appearance of *jinn* and *afrites* (for examples of these themes see Glazier 2003: Int. 11; 17; 36; 41 – Sidi Ramadan's tale, discussed above, fits into the latter of these types). In this final section of the analysis of the representations of the past in the stories of Quseir, I will concentrate upon just three very context specific episodes that serve to expand upon some of these themes. This time I shall initially discuss the stories of Muhammad el Waffer (1st October 2002) and Diaa Abdel Aziz (2nd October 2002), before concluding the chapter with one final narrative from Amer himself, a narrative that mentioned the site yet also allowed for a merciless lampooning of his friends (26th September 2002). Again all of these discussions occurred, or at least began over tea, coffee and *shisha*.

Origins: *Tic-Tac coffee shop*

On the morning of the 30th September 2002, I entered the small *Tic Tac Coffee Shop* on 10th Ramadan Street, the main thorough-fare into the city. I was there for a meeting with Diaa Abdel Aziz, an old friend and translator for the project[18]. As always, music played on a small radio, combining with the catchy, penetrating mobile phone ringtones of the other visitors in the café. Diaa arrived shortly afterwards, I had met him the previous week, introduced by my colleagues on my first ever day in the city (21st September 2002). He was busy trying to get a faltering petroleum business off of the ground, but nevertheless offered to tell me more about the folktales of the archaeology site two days later. As we sat and took tea together, Muhammad el Waffer joined us. As an antiquities inspector he mentioned that he knew a great deal of the stories of Quseir al-Qadim, and he offered to take me to the local library to learn more of the *jinn* and the *afrites* of Egypt. Again, the coffee shop acted as the meeting place, the stage for the

discussion of the past. Diaa and Muhammad were almost engaging in a performative battle, each offering their own tales of the archaeological site. Stories of the past appeared to actually act as an important source of intellectual status. It struck me that museums, with their often didactic or typological display strategies had no hope of joining, let alone competing in unique, imaginative, iconographic, albeit also macho and bombastic contests such as these.

Muhammad el Waffer and the hermit of Quseir al-Qadim

Once again, on the morning of the 1st October 2002, I met Muhammad at the *Tic Tac Coffee Shop*. Upon leaving the shade of the café, we walked to the library in the easterly *Tushka* district of the city. It was on this occasion that we translated the book by Ahmed Ben Abdu Haleem, discussed in the previous chapter. However, after this we began to talk about the *jinn* of Quseir al-Qadim and their relationship to the archaeological remains. Muhammad was joined by one of the librarians, a young woman that had recently graduated from university. Muhammad began by telling me that he had heard people beside his house cursing Allah, using God's name in a blasphemous manner as they spilt the milk and dough that they were using to make bread. These people then put some tea and poured some milk into a kettle, hanging it up to boil over a fire. A short while later they removed the lid yet only found a collection of stones accompanied by disembodied, whispering voices. He then mentioned that some of the amphora jars found at Quseir al-Qadim had alien writing upon them, letters inscribed by the hands of demons. Indeed, you could even give money to certain individuals, generally Sudanese magicians, to speak with the *jinn*, encouraging these things to curse people. He had heard many accounts of men who, having visited the site of Quseir al-Qadim fell into deep slumbers, plagued by dreams of the *jinn* and *afrites*. These beings often tried to forcibly marry them, and only prayer could vanquish their proposals. Indeed, this happened to a girl that both he and the librarian knew; one day this girl awoke with strange marks covering her body, for she had become married to a *jinni*. A Sudanese doctor told her to face a mirror and to reject the advances of this creature, which she did, apparently with some success[19].

He stopped for a moment, and we took tea together, during which he began yet another cautionary tale linked to the archaeological site. Finishing his drink, Muhammad, told me that a hermit went to stay in a cave near to Quseir al-Qadim, he felt that he wanted solitude in order to be closer to Allah (figure 97). Whilst alone in the desert a *jinni* appeared before this hermit, tempting him to go back into the city, but he merely continued to remain locked in prayer and the spirit eventually became frustrated and vanished. In the city there were three brothers, all of whom worked as traders. These brothers had a sister, and they asked the hermit if he would look after her whilst they went away on a trading journey. At first the hermit refused, but after much pleading from the traders, he eventually agreed to their request. During her stay, the *jinni*

returned and tried to make the hermit sleep with the beautiful woman, but he refused. *Iblis* himself then appeared from the fires of hell, using all of his evil powers to tempt the hermit:

'Remember, when We asked the angels to bow in homage to Adam, they all bowed but Iblis,
Who disdained and turned insolent,
And so became a disbeliever.'
(Qur'an 2:34-5)

As a result of the devil's temptation the hermit's meagre human will finally faltered, and so in his weakness he slept with the traders' sister, who subsequently became pregnant with his child. *Iblis* then told the hermit that the only solution to his predicament was to pray to him, instead of *Allah*, recommending that he also kill the woman, and child, and bury their bodies in a secret location. When the traders eventually returned, *Iblis* appeared before them in their dreams, telling them of the hermit's betrayal and ordering them to kill him. Upon waking the brothers journeyed into the desert, whereupon finding the holy man weeping, they dispatched him. Muhammad told me that by committing this final act of murder, the evil *jinni* and his master were proven victorious for they had consigned the three traders and the hermit to eternal damnation. To avoid a similar fate he noted that the *jinn* and the *afrites* of Quseir al-Qadim could be scared away by light and by the barking of dogs; being weak and mischievous these things could never touch strong hearted, pious individuals.

In this narrative one notices some important factors at play. Firstly Quseir al-Qadim is actually associated with devils, and evil malevolent spirits. Yet, at the same time hermits go to stay there in an effort to connect with the divine itself. Again, one can observe a duality of symbolism associated with the area. If visited with good intention and a strong heart, the site offers a chance to transcend one's everyday boundaries, yet perhaps in order to keep a sense of balance it also offers the risk of damnation, if one is weak willed.

Diaa Abdul Aziz's story

The next day (2nd October 2002), I went to meet with Diaa once again. Upon his arrival we caught one of the city's many taxi microbuses, driving to a large, opulent house on Al Oroba Street in the south of Quseir. We entered the courtyard, sitting down in a large airy lounge. After having a drink and exchanging small talk for around half an hour we began our conversation about Quseir al-Qadim. Diaa told me that many people had mentioned hearing a rooster crow when walking at the site; he explained that this was clearly a supernatural sign. The rooster was attempting to warn people to keep away from the undiscovered treasure that lay

buried under the earth and the crowing hinted at the presence of an *afrite*. Despite seeming to be another cautionary symbol, chickens and roosters are also sometimes portrayed as messengers of Allah. For example, in a short story about an old lady, 'Um Ya'qub' by the Lebanese-American poet and writer, Mikha'il Nu'aima (b.1889, d.1987), a magical chicken is described in some detail:

> 'The chicken would circle around her, repeating in its peculiar language, "Your bread is delicious Um Ya 'qub. Feed me and God will feed you."'
> (Nu'aima 2006: 114)

Again, the dual nature of the site was coming through in Diaa's story, it was a place of God yet it also harboured *afrites* and therefore *Iblis* also expressed an interest.

Diaa then proceeded to discuss the presence of a tunnel between the citadel and Quseir al-Qadim, as many others had before him (Glazier 2003; 2005). He told me that during the recent renovation of the Ottoman fort, a group of local workmen uncovered a great pit in the centre of the parade square (figure 98). Digging further down, one of them discovered the entrance to an old, ruined passage (figure 99). Bravely, he entered the darkness of the tunnel and disappeared into the shadows, leaving his colleagues anxiously waiting behind at the entrance. To their relief he returned a short while later; telling them that the tunnel had led him out into the desert, where he emerged at the bay of Quseir al-Qadim, near to what is now the private beach of the Movenpick hotel. His colleagues remained scared of this strange subterranean passage and so, despite his protestations they quickly covered it over with earth (see Glazier [2005: 167-8] for a greater analysis of stories of this kind). As Diaa finished he told me that a museum of Egyptian archaeology needed to include stories like these - they were what kept the past alive and relevant in modern life. Antiquities were he acquiesced, interesting in themselves, but soon lost their modern resonance if they were placed out of context and divorced from the narratives of modern and ancient Egypt. The tunnel provided a symbolic metaphor; a link between the new and the old settlements of the area. As we finished our tea, Diaa reminded me that although the archaeologists may have found the magnificent remains of Quseir's heritage, they must not forget the equally magnificent tales that went with them. As an archaeologist this left me considering just how we may be able to construct an emotive and powerful narrative via material culture - something that I return to within the final chapter.

Swapping tales, trading jokes

On the first day that I met with Amer (22nd September 2002), he told me about a series of subterranean rooms that lay beneath several houses in the city. If one entered any of these under crofts you would be greeted by piles of golden Roman statues, progressing further you would

come out in the desert and before your eyes you would see a huge pharaonic temple; an archaeological site that was not marked on any current maps or surveys. Around this area you would see great *ankh* symbols carved into the hillsides, marking gold deposits and underground springs. During this conversation in one of the smaller cafés next to the grand Al Senosi mosque[20], a friend of Amer's arrived – he nodded at me and joked that Amer was leading me astray. He retorted by saying that this individual was a tight fisted miser, and then called to the waiter to bring his friend a drink. They then mocked each other for at least five minutes before Amer finally concluded the story that he was telling to me about the archaeology of Quseir.

Over the years I have had to become accustomed to holding my own in lampooning matches and I have had to build a repertoire of jokes in order to gain respect from Amer and his friends; wit is a virtue that Amer has been particularly blessed with. We also swap folklore from our respective histories; as mentioned, he has sent me anthologies of ancient Egyptian myths and in turn I have posted him books of Celtic legends from the British Isles. In this respect I feel that our friendship is marked by our mix of joke and story trading - indeed it would be nice to think that museums could adopt a similar relationship to their 'source communities' (Peers and Brown 2003).

Finally to conclude both this chapter and to illustrate the point I have just made, Amer told me in a text message he sent to me whilst I was writing this chapter over Easter 2007, the objects of the past and the stories that go with them are twins – a museum must include both. I pondered this for some time, and realised that he had sent me a profoundly important message, quickly noting it in my journal.

Later he sent a second message that read as follows:

'Queen Elizabeth

George Bush

Tony Blair

Jacque Chirac

Vladimir Putin

......& Amer Abdo Muhammad

All world leaders wish you a happy Easter and a happy new year.'

I feel that at times everyone - myself included - can be accused of taking themselves and their work a little too seriously. In our relationship to others, whether they be our interlocutors or our 'target audiences' it does us good to remember the importance of humour as an emotional tool to bring people together (Moser 2003: 17).

[1] A type of very sad, *mawwal* folk song (Jayussi 1987: 311).

[2] Although poetry and storytelling are also key to the representations of women in Egypt (see Abu Lughod 1993; Booth 1991).

[3] Miriam Lichtheim's three volume study of Ancient Egyptian literature has provided the majority of comparative material for this section (see Lichtheim 1973; 1976; 1980).

[4] Although I focus on storytelling in this chapter, I take Peter Gran's (2004) critique of the 'romanticisation' of Upper Egyptian society seriously. I instead aim to demonstrate that when discussing the past this narrative tradition provides a manner of taking power back from entrenched specialists such as myself and thus I strive to promote empowerment rather than an idealistic, orientalist fantasy. Additionally, I do not wish to suggest that objects are not important in Quseir, but often it is their setting into a skilfully performed narrative that adds to their significance in the present.

[5] Upper and Lower Egypt.

[6] Possibly this refers to the ancient mines discovered at Bir an-Nakhil and Bir Kareim (Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 265-6). Although difficult to date, it is likely that these mines were in use during Roman times, possibly even before (see Whitcomb and Johnson 1979: 256).

[7] Although made of different materials, one can nevertheless see parallels between this and *The Story of the Magic Horse* in the *Alf Layla wa Layla*:

> 'while the King was sitting on the throne of his dominions, on a certain day, during one of
> these festivals, there came to him three sages: with one of them was a peacock of gold; and
> with the second, a trumpet of brass; and with the third, a horse of ivory and ebony.'
> (Lane 1839, volume III:1)

[8] Again, on the evening of April 14th April, but I have had similar conversations with both Amer and another friend of the project, Muhammad Saleh, during field seasons carried out in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

[9] As an interesting aside, Kasia Szapowska has noted that a clear, moonlit night was seen as good dream symbol in ancient Egypt, particular in Ramesside hymns and prayers (2003: 130-1)

[10] Amer, on the 14th April 2004; 2nd February 2006, Yasser on the 28th January 2006.

[11] I use the translation of A.J. Arberry for this section, yet one should remember that, like all Arabic literature in English, there are many varied translations of this poem (for alternatives see Blunt 1903; Clouston 1986; Jones 1996 for example).

[12] It is quite possible that Hassany was playing to popular stereotypes of the Upper Egyptian peasant as a throwback to popular Orientalist literature (Mitchell 2002: 123-152).

[13] Amer translated this word to mean Moroccan in this context.

[14] Interestingly Lane's work does not include this event in this story, possibly because it is not actually key to main the tale itself. It also bears similarity to the story of Yunus (Jonah) and the Whale in the Qur'an (Qur'an 10).

[15] Also see *Jonah of the Sea* (Osman 1991) for an example of an Egyptian women's story that follows a similar pattern. Also in modern Arabic fiction such as Yasin Rifa'iyya's *God and the Fish* (2006), fish are seen as Allah's bounty - they are offered a gift of sustenance to the pious. In this sense fishermen, in harvesting this bounty are is a sense the intermediaries between the townsfolk and Allah.

[16] King Soloman is seen as the master of the *jinn* in the *Alf Layla wa Layla* (Lane 1839: 25).

17 Although focusing upon the religious representations of Lamya Nasser el Nemr in the previous chapter, it should be noted that she has also frequently mentioned the folk-tales of Quseir. However for her they are mainly useful as children's stories. She tends to believe that religious philosophy is more important for the adult mind.

18 Diaa was one of the main translators that Glazier used for his own research.

19 See Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (1980) for more on marriage to the *jinn*.

20 This magnificent piece of architecture was built in 1892 and is one of the most visited mosques in the city centre.
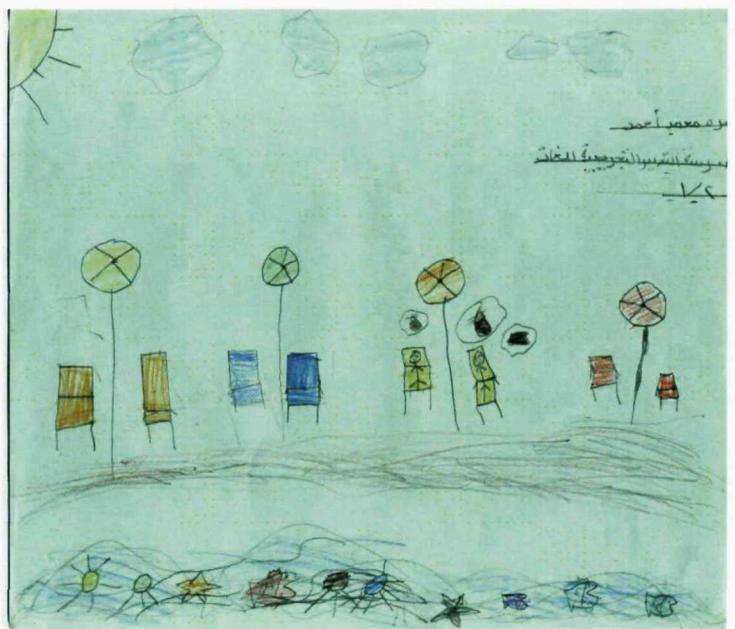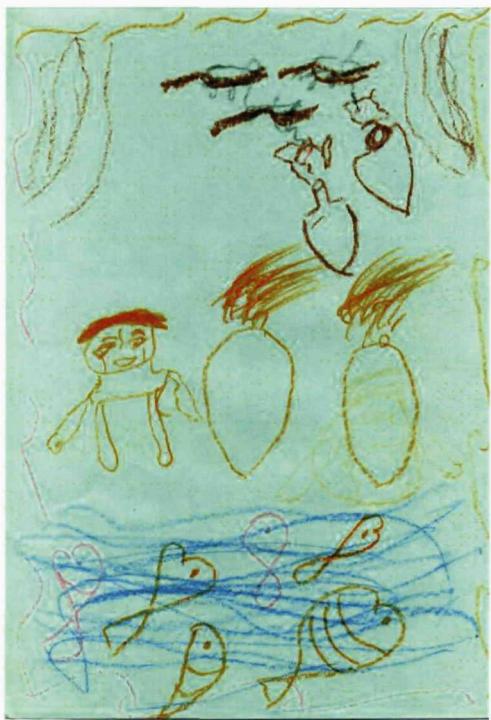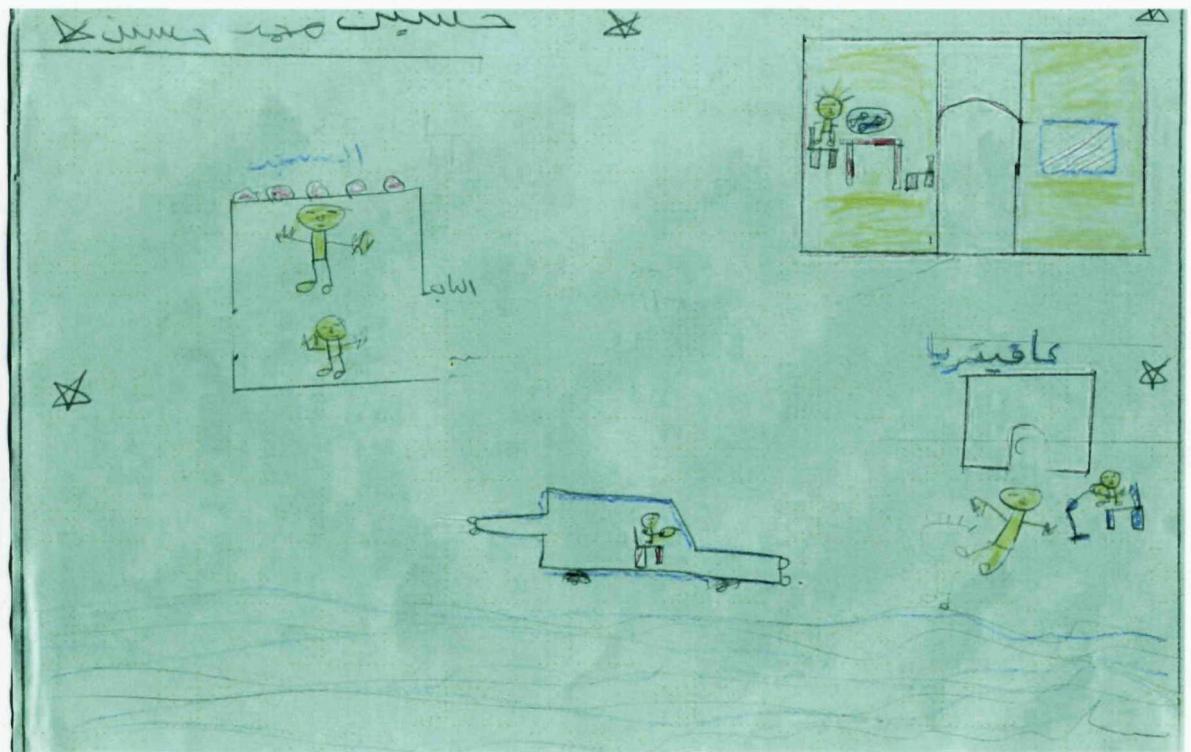
Figures 77, 78 and 79. Top: Child's drawing depicting the citadel in Quseir, a house, a café, a microbus and the beach. **Above left:** a drawing of the *jinn* escaping from Roman amphorae. **Above right:** a picture of the beach cafés of Quseir (all created by children at the LDC, Quseir, 2004).
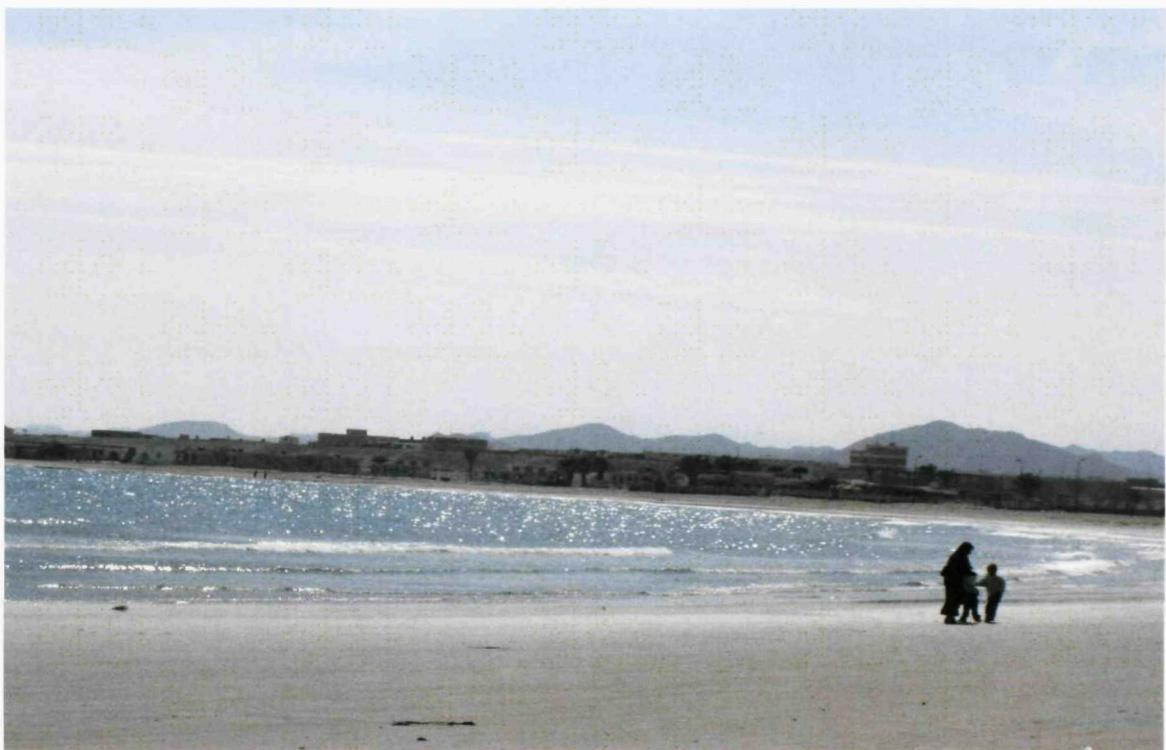
Figures 80 and 81.
Above: The beach of Quseir facing south. Note the Ababda Bedouin village on the other side of the bay. **Left:** *Pharaon Bazaar*, Al Gomhoria Street, Quseir.
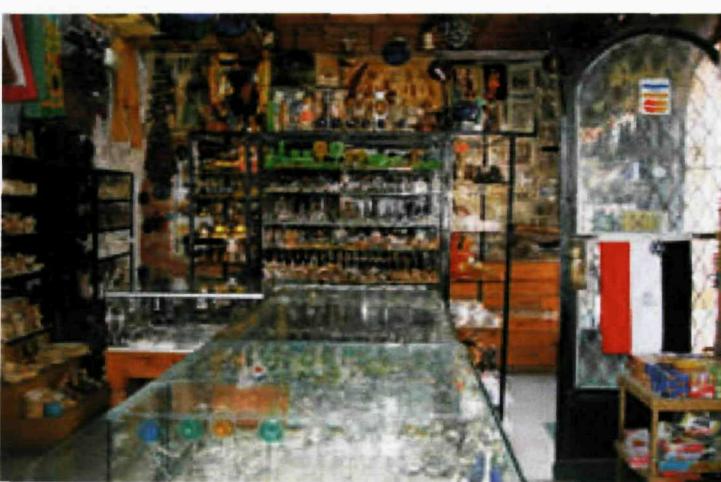
Figure 82: Inside *Pharaon Bazaar*. Note ancient Egyptian replicas in background.

Figure 83: Amer's office, *Pharaon Bazaar.* Note Bedouin textiles hung on walls.
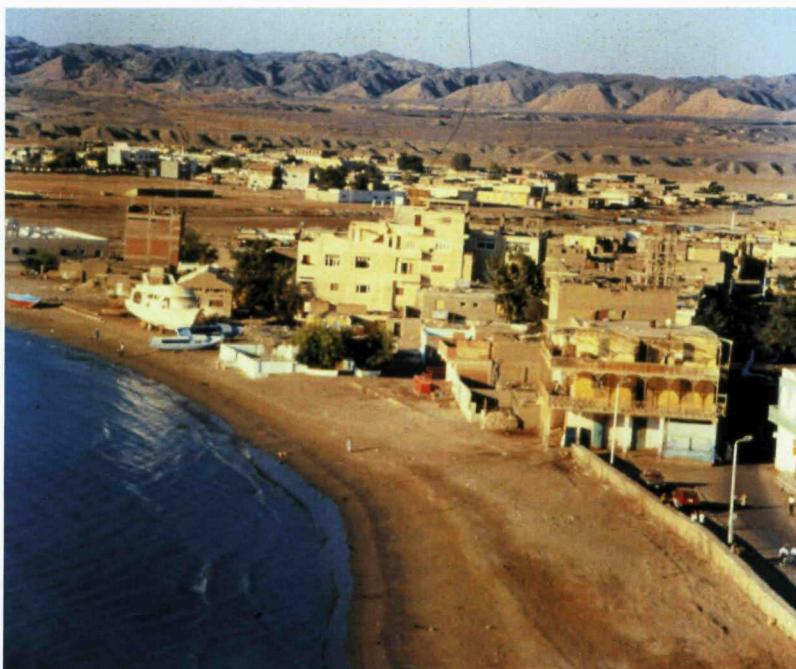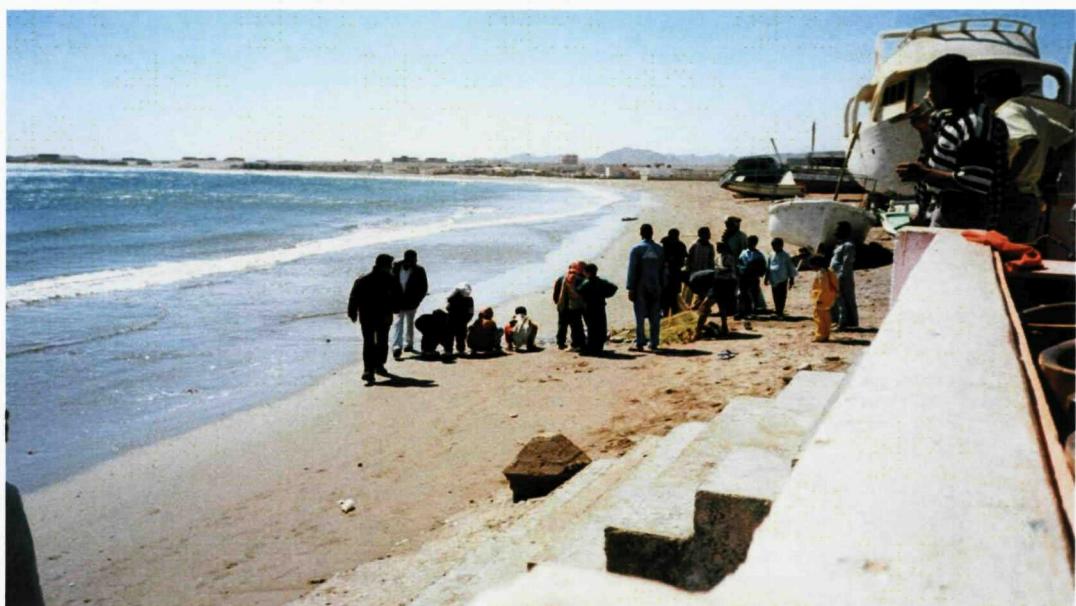
Figures 84 and 85. Above: Fishermen outside *Quptan Adel's* café. **Left:** Quseir from the air. *Quptan Adel's* café is situated next to the two blue fishing boats (the outdoor, walled seating area where I have been told many stories, is clearly visible).
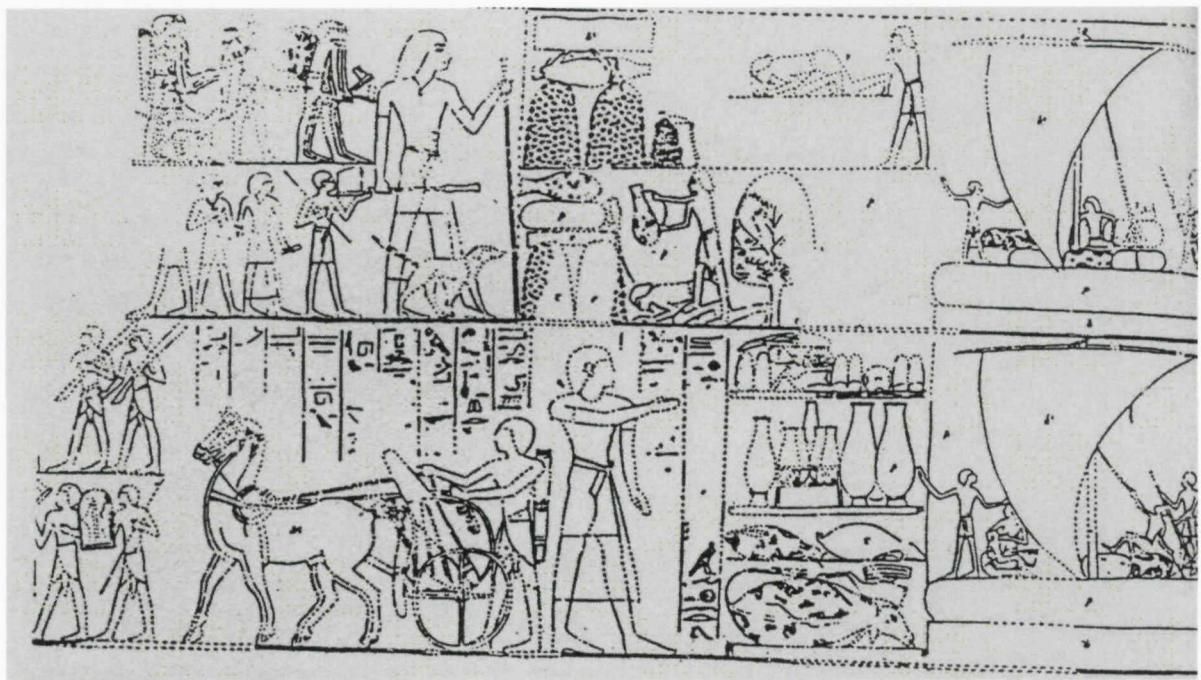
Figure 86: Egyptian depiction of Puntites meeting Egyptians outside the Nile Valley and Punt, from Theban tomb-chapel 143 (from Kitchen 1993; fig 35.7, cited in Meeks 2003: 62).
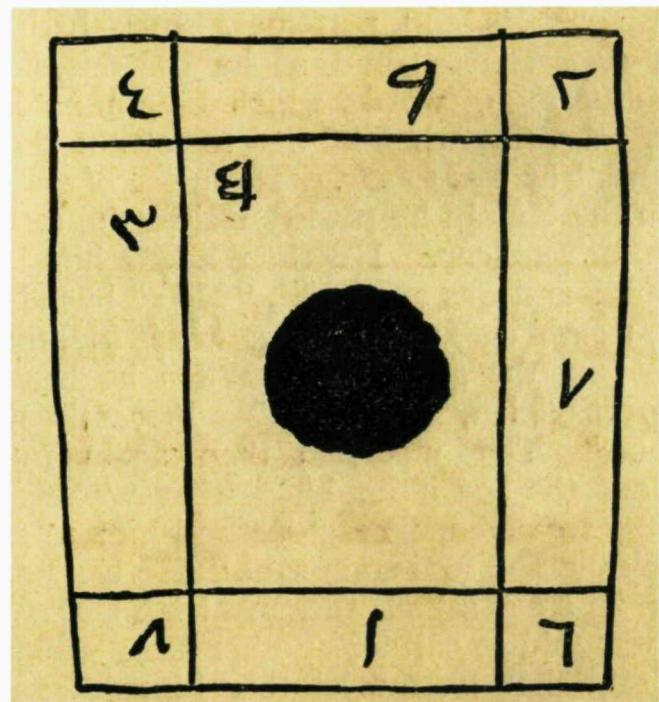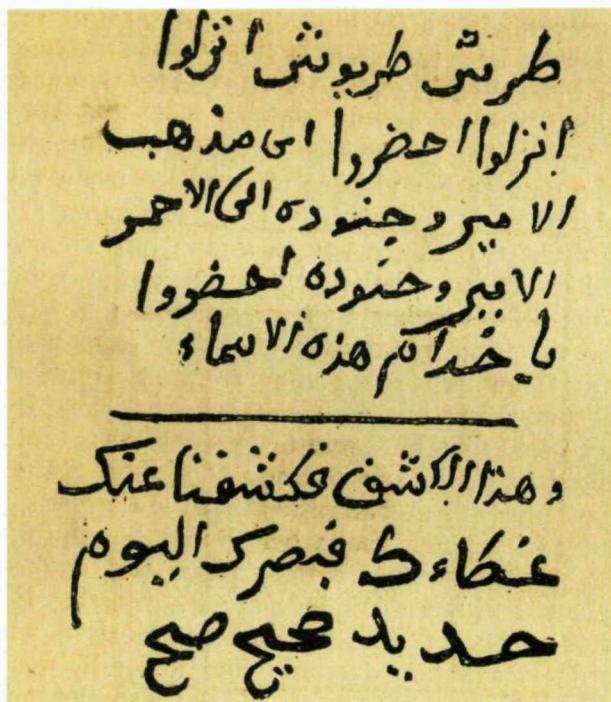
Figures 87 and 88. A belief in magic? **Left:** Magic invocation and charm (from Lane 1836: 248). **Right:** Magic square and mirror of ink (from Lane 1836: 249).
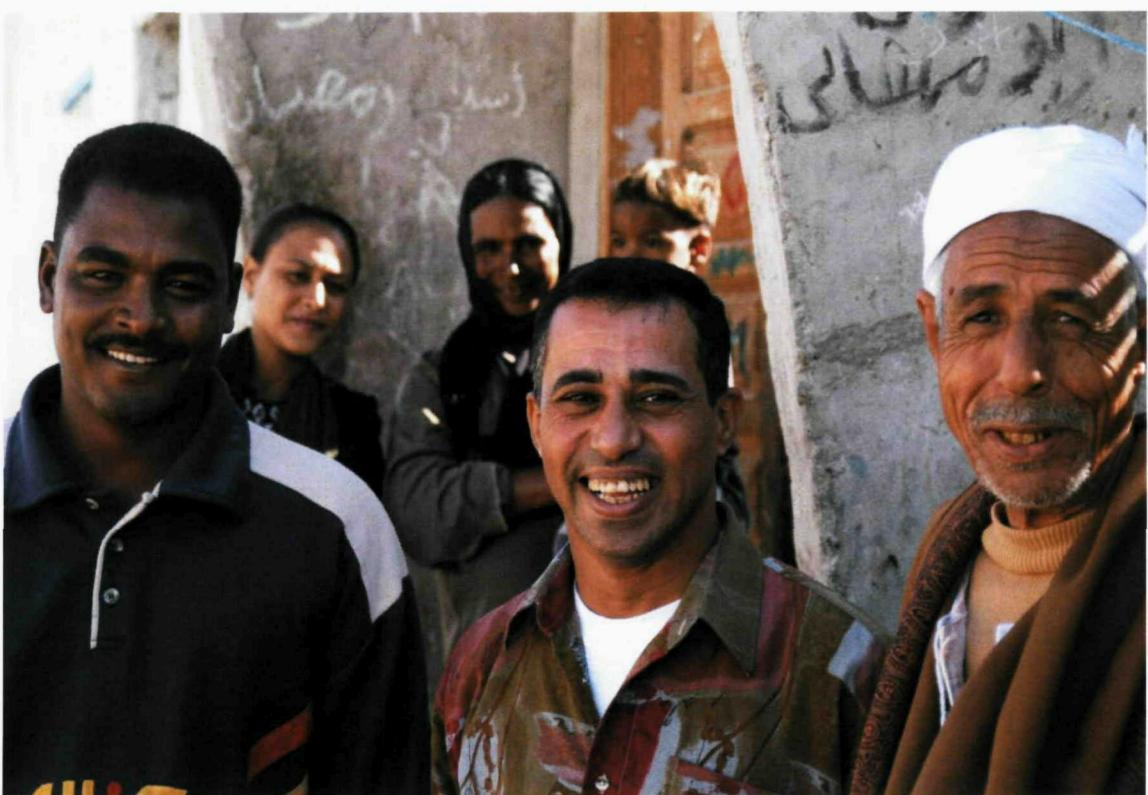
Figures 89 and 90. Top: Sidi (Mr) Ramadan (centre) and close friend Sidi Ali (far left) having a tea break during the excavations of Quseir al-Qadim. **Above:** Sidi Ali (far right) and Sidi Ramadan's family outside Ramadan's house in the phosphate village, Quseir.
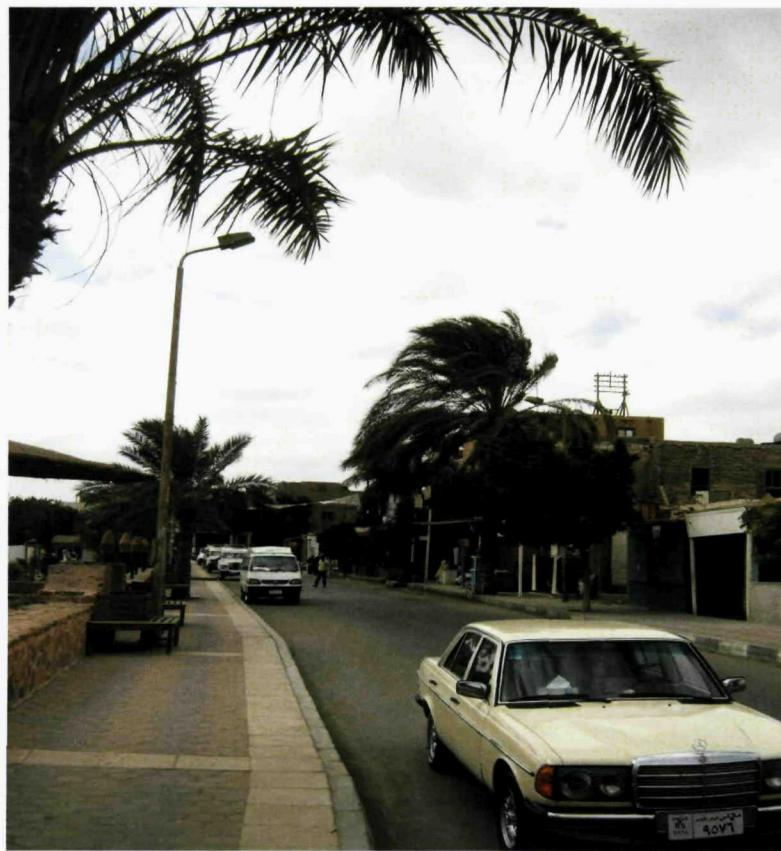
Figures 91, 92 and 93.
Clockwise from top: The
Movenpick hotel; hand
prints on a house in Quseir
ward off the evil eye; the
beachfront, Quseir, with
Restaurant Marianne's
visible just behind the palm
trees on the right.
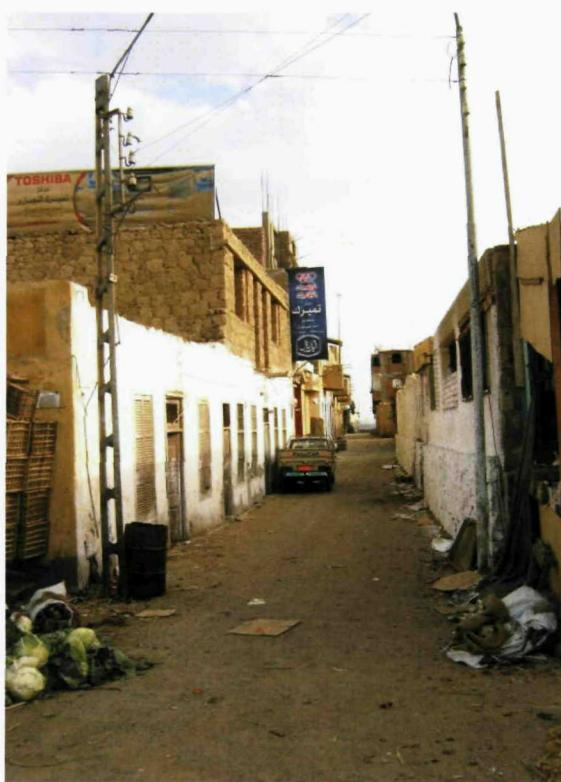
Figures 94, 95 and 96. Clockwise from top:
African Art Bazaar, Al Gomhoria Street seen
from the citadel; piles of Roman Amphorae,
Quseir al-Qadim - objects frequently linked to
the *jinn* in local stories; the market at Quseir.
Amer claims to have met a *jinni* in this area.
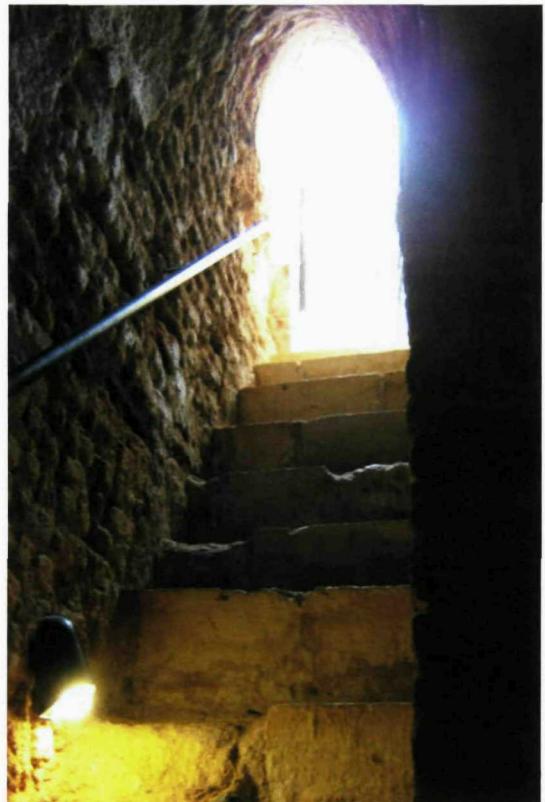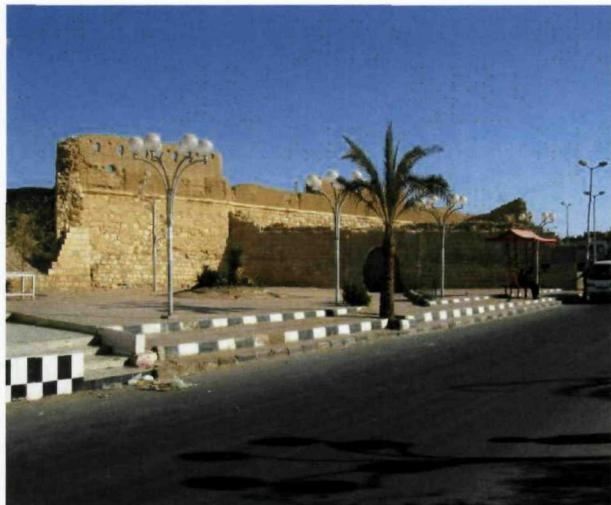
Figures 97, 98 and 99: Top: The desert around Quseir al-Qadim. It is here that the hermit of Muhammad el Waffer's tale was supposed to have stayed prior to the tragedy. **Above:** The citadel in Quseir. **Right:** The possible site of a tunnel in the citadel? Steps leading out of a central, underground storeroom.

Chapter Seven

Song and dance: performing the past with Sabr and remembering Ababda history with Sheikh Hassan al-Aqied

> 'I will sing and sing
> I will submit my art to creatures
> Men would then talk to spirits
> And those arriving take over from those leaving.'
> (Bayram Et-Tunsi/Ahram Zakaria, *Ghanni Li Shwaya*)

In the last chapter I analysed some of the main stories about the past that I have heard in Egypt. In both that and in chapter five I have initiated a search for an alternative telling of the history of Egypt, in this case drawn from the very specific context of Quseir. By analysing the conversations that I have had in the city, I am trying to introduce and to better understand a set of historical memories quite different to my own. In the last twenty years, authors such as Clark (1997); Gell (1998); Gosden (1999, 2004); Gosden and Knowles (2001); Hoskins (1998); Jones (2007); Miller (1987; 1998); Thomas, J (2002) and Thomas, N (1991, 1997)[1] have become increasingly interested in the relationship between memory and material culture, a movement that has consequently influenced much of the work that I have presented within the pages of this thesis. I now want to move away from religious narratives and storytelling and instead consider the role of music as a source of shared memory in Quseir. I propose that musical performances provide some of the most important symbolic languages for engaging with the past in the city. As in the last two chapters, I base this analysis upon a series of encounters with people living in Quseir: mainly Sabr, the most famous local *semsemia* musician, and Hassan al-Aqied, one of the most renowned Ababda Bedouin performers in that area of the Red Sea coast of Egypt. Material culture is of great importance to both of these people's music - for Sabr his grandfather's *semsemia* and his collection of fishing artefacts add to his songs and his prestige as source of 'traditional lore' (Cachia 1989: 41), for Hassan, a collection of tribal objects are utilised to add meaning to the dances that he leads and in turn to emphasise a strong sense of Ababda identity.

Ballad mongers: Sabr's *semsemia* troupe

Sabr's family name remains very elusive. Many times I have asked others what his name is, and they always answer, 'Sabr', or at most *Sabr al-Semsemia*[2]. As a musician and fisherman he adopts a rather marginalised position in society[3], only being called upon at festivals, private celebrations or increasingly by the tourist market requesting 'fantasia' evenings at the local hotels (see figures 100-102). His performances utilise a mixture of modern songs derived from the Port Said region, alongside older material from the Arabian Peninsular and the Nile Valley. He is supported by *riqq*

(tambourine), *darabuka* (an hour-glass shaped drum) and clapping. Dancing accompanies the music, generally of a form derived from the northern *bambutiyya* – a corruption of the English 'bumboat' named after the boat peddlers who sold their wares in the Port Said/Suez canal region. The legs and pelvis adopt a Charleston like movement in this dance, whilst the upper body mimics fishing related actions such as rowing, winding ropes and bargaining (Saleh 2002: 623). Alongside this a form adapted from the *Burmiyya* dance of the *Zaqqalin* or labouring classes is also regularly performed. This largely consists of a shuffling, hip-shaking lower-body movement, punctuated with leaps and lunges (Saleh 2002: 623). Scarves are tied around the waist of the men to emphasise their gyrating hips. Often these are then handed to women in the audience during the climax of the performance, amidst excited shouts, shrieks and cheers.

Recently Amer told me (April 2007) that much of Sabr's material is quite different to that of the country's more famous groups such as the internationally known *El Tanbura*, for he plays in, as Amer puts it a '*Yamany*' (Yemeni) style – a very spiritually uplifting music that is favoured by both *Allah* and the *Jinn* alike. Furthermore Sabr's troupe plays their *semsemia* material in the hotels but only reserve their *Yamany* songs for friends and colleagues. Here we again notice what Barbara Bender would refer to as evidence of 'contested landscapes' (1998; Bender and Winer 2001). The hotel is distinguished from the city as a site for the highly popularised and profitable *semsemia*, whilst the more uniquely spiritual performances are saved for domestic or wild landscapes; two different types of remembrance for two particular contexts and audiences. As a folksinger, Sabr follows a long popular Egyptian musical lineage; indeed the Petrie Museum of Egyptian archaeology in London holds examples of ancient Egyptian instruments similar in style to the five-stringed, lute-like *semsemia*. As discussed in more detail in chapter four, Sabr follows the *mawwal* tradition of Egyptian singing (see Cachia 1989; Hanna 1967; Slymovics 1987). Pierre Cachia, like Susan Slymovics, refers to these singers as 'ballad mongers' or merchants of art (Cachia 1989: 40; Slymovics 1987, also see Shiloah 1975)[4]. He notes that the ballad monger is most prevalent in Upper Egyptian towns and villages where they tend to supplement their main income by playing music for their host community (1989: 41). Often professional singers become itinerant workers living on the margins of society, frequently disliked by the townspeople for whom they sing (Cachia 1989: 41). However Sabr is a settled musician and although remaining somewhat of an outsider in Quseir, he has come to be generally accepted in the city and is known as a successful fisherman as well as a musician. He lives in a large sprawling bungalow in the very centre of the city, colourfully decorated in *hajj* imagery and pictures of fishing boats (figure 103). Cachia notes that the ballad monger can learn his or her craft in variety of ways: the songs can be picked up from a parent or relative, or may just have well been acquired by a period of apprenticeship to an already well established singer (Cachia 1989: 42-43). Although songs are orally transmitted this does not necessarily mean that the singer will not

interweave their own words and phrases into the music (Cachia 1989: 49-58). As he learnt his trade from his father, in turn utilising an instrument made by his grandfather, Sabr falls into Cachia's category of kin-based transmission. Sabr is nearing seventy so he has two main apprentices in his group, his nephew and another younger man, apparently of no direct relation to him.

I first met Sabr in 2004. As a colleague and I wandered the back streets of Quseir in search of *hajj* paintings to photograph, we stopped to observe the striking image of a *hajj* journey on his bungalow (figure 103). As we stood pointing at the image, a man (possibly in his thirties) came out of the house and introduced himself to us as Hassan. Hearing that we were archaeology students he invited us inside to see his uncle's museum. We accepted, and went indoors to be met by Hassan's wife who in turn ushered us into the living room. This space strongly resembled a cabinet of curiosities – fishing nets, stuffed fish and marine life covered the walls and the ceiling, pictures filled any available wall space and musical instruments hung in corners of the room (figures 101 and 102). Sabr was asleep on a couch at the back of the room at the time, so we turned to exit, however upon waking he told me to sit down – as a musician he was used to keeping unusual hours and company and he was also used to his nephew inviting people into his home to see the family museum. In many respects Sabr's collection acts a source of material memories – a picture of his grandson is stuck below a clock bought on a trip to Rome, where he was invited to a play at a world music festival (see figure 102). Stuffed fish, turtles, eels and shellfish caught by Sabr, alongside netting and fishing tackle hang from three of the walls (figure 102). Slightly set apart from the rest of the objects, his *semsemia* hangs by the entrance to the room, perhaps indicating the status that the instrument confers upon him (figure 101). There is a notable lack of archaeological material or indeed artefacts much older than eighty years of age. Each object is directly linked to Sabr's life, and each piece contributes to his recollection of that life. Sabr and I chatted for about half an hour during this initial informal meeting yet I did not see him play; he mentioned that it was the wrong time for music. I did, however manage to snatch a glimpse of Sabr's music in the Flamenco Hotel's 'Oriental night' later that week.

As I had no contact details I was not to see Sabr until the 30th of January 2006. Once again I was walking the back streets of Quseir when passing Sabr's house, I luckily met Hassan, who recognised me from two years previously and subsequently invited me inside. Sabr, Hassan and I had tea together, and once more I departed without seeing him play. Coincidentally that same morning I had prearranged to go to see a *semsemia* performance with Adel Aiesh, the manager of Quseir Heritage, the main NGO that the Project in Quseir works with when conducting fieldwork in Egypt. On the 31st of January, Adel promised to take two colleagues and myself to see his friends perform some of his favourite music about the past, friends that turned out to be

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Sabr's *semsemia* troupe. We entered a dimly lit bungalow behind the Al Sakeena mosque, and as we were asked to relax into the atmosphere, tea was served, and cigarettes were handed out to everyone. The inside was decorated with handprints and bright posters. One of these depicted a young man clasping a rat to one ear and shellfish to the other. A large television encased in an incredibly ornate cabinet dominated one corner of the room (figure 100). Unexpectedly I was asked if I could record the performance; Sabr wished to hear himself play so that he could ascertain inconsistencies in the music. However as with my time with Amer, I was asked to wait until all conversation had finished prior to beginning the recording. The performance began with Sabr firstly bowing his head in silence and then taking up his *semsemia*. Whilst more tea was served, he played a two minute introduction and the *darabuka* player began to strike a rhythm. This introduction flowed into the next section during which everyone else began clapping on both the on and the off beat, creating a trance-like drumming in the ears in doing so. After another minute Sabr's voice suddenly sailed out over the rhythmic clapping, and he began a story of dancing, music and his joyful love for life. In a call and response fashion Sabr sang the lead line, whilst others in the rooms echoed the last few words or the audience sang questions relating to his sentence. After seven minutes the pace of the music was raised, the singing stopped and with a sudden clap the song was over. His next piece told of the loss of a woman whom the main character longed for with all his heart. Adel mentioned that this song, like the last was set in the distant, possibly Ottoman past. The following piece took the audience to a moonlit night upon the Red Sea; the words were those of the captain of a foreign (Yemeni?) boat who missed his love awaiting his return in his homeland many miles away. Sabr then began what he noted as his oldest song, a tale of a speaking camel and a Bedouin Sheikh. Cachia included a similar piece in his *Popular Narrative Ballads of Modern Egypt* transcribed from the singer Fatma Sirhan, entitled *Nutq il-Gamal* (The Camel's Utterance'), suggesting that this is a famous piece of folk music included as a central cog in the repertoire of many Egyptian ballad-mongers:

> 'Let them hear of his miracles, all who are present:
> Of a beduin [sic] sheikh who belonged to the south
> He had a wealth in excess of what scribes could [record]
> A person of standing, and wielding authority.'
> (Sirhan cited in Cachia 1989: 189)

As the song proceeded we were beckoned to dance the *bambutiyya* and *burmiyya*. For Sabr the audience was now enacting his songs, as they clapped they became part of the history that he sang of. They punctuated his verses by asking questions, they felt and danced his words, the past was alive and it was a site of joyful remembrance and imaginative journeys. He played on for a further twenty minutes, stopping only when Adel and myself had stopped dancing. Indeed, as we

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sat for a final cup of tea, it was noted I and my colleagues had finally 'let go'. This was something that was vital to the reception of this particular manner of representing the past. The audience had to become more than passive onlookers, but I wondered could we do the same in a museum? In Quseir Sabr is seen as the curator of his own private museum, should we follow his lead and employ a more poetic, performative, and even musical approach to remembering the past? This is something that he, and Adel, suggested to me before we left the house late that evening (figure 100 was taken that night).

As Andrew Jones has noted:

> 'Remembrance is in part produced by the nature and drama of action. Here material culture acts as a means of embodying the past and presenting the future. As material citations these practices are doubly effective; they serve to reiterate past practices, and they do so because of the sensually and dramatically spectacular nature of the ritual. However these rituals are also directed towards future moments of remembrance.'
> (2007: 63)

Sabr's music acts as a form of performative remembrance of history, yet as mentioned above, by playing to a contemporary audience he is ensuring the survival of his music and by expressing a need for it to be included in a museum, he is in turn directing his performance 'towards future moments of remembrance'. Indeed as Judith Butler (1993) suggests, the way something is spoken is key to its reception. In Sabr's music, his singing style both remembers an inherited tradition and when sung to an outsider like myself, makes clear this traditions' difference to my own privileged scholarly inheritance of academic books, colonial treasures and European museums[5]. By asking for it to be included in a museum in Europe, Sabr was challenging this alien environment, his music acted as source of pride and as a tool of reclamation.

Ababda Bedouin remembrance: Sheikh Hassan al-Aqied's performances
Remembering tribal history - Ababda dances
The *Sa'id* (Upper Egypt) has often been seen as a source of disruption by those living in the cities of Lower Egypt, particularly Cairo and Alexandria (see Gran 2004; papers in Hopkins and Saad 2004). The notion of tribe (*qabila*, pl. *qaba'il*) is of particular significance to Sa'idi life; Quseir is no exception (Korsholm Nielson 2004: 213). Indeed one of the largest tribal groupings in the area are the al-Ababda Bedouin of the Eastern Desert and Red Sea coastline.

The majority of those claiming tribal descent link their ancestors with groups that originally came from the Arabian peninsular and settled in the Nile Valley during the seventh and eight centuries AD (Korsholm Nielson 2004: 214; Saleh 2002: 63). The Ababda are frequently described as one of the *Bija* tribes, a grouping that ranges from the southernmost reaches of the Eastern Desert into eastern Sudan; the northern extension of the people speaking Cushitic languages (Korshom Nielson 2004: 216). Many Ababda dispute this classification, maintaining that unlike the southerly Bisharin, they are actually descended from the Arab Zubayr Ibn al-Awwam - if they happen to speak non Arabic languages such as the *tu-Bedawi*, this merely comes as a result of a history of mixing and trading with Bishari groups (Korsholm Nielson 2004: 216). The majority of the Bedouin in Quseir have given up the traditional herding and trading pursuits of their ancestors, generally making a living from agricultural practices instead. Many even work in the city for up to six months of the year, residing in a village in the southernmost extremity of the *Al Hara al Tahtania* district. As discussed in the previous chapter, some of Quseir's most successful businessmen such as the proprietor of Restaurant Marianne, Adel Hassan, claim Ababda descent. Perhaps due to the impact of Saudi *Wahhabi* reform and anger at Bedouin exemption from military service up to the 1950s, many people in the city view these groups with suspicion, distrusting their nomadic lifestyle and '*bija*' traditions. However, others such as Amer, Yasser and Eman are proud to count the Ababda amongst their closest friends.

Ababda groups are famous for their performances, which like Sabr's *semsemia* renditions, remember the past by virtue of several significant traditional musical forms. One of the most popular and common Bedouin dances is the *Kaff al-'arab*, in which one or more female dancers stand facing a row of male singers who clap their hands as an accompaniment (Saleh 2002: 624; on folk dances in Egypt and the Middle East as a whole see Saleh 1979; Alexdru and Wahba 1967; el-Khadem 1972; papers in Zuhur 1998). The dance is broken into three main sub-sections: the *shittaywa* or the dance proper, the *ghannaywa* or poetic recital and the closing *magruda* sung by a soloist and chorus (Saleh 2002: 624). The *al-hashiya* (dancer) advances towards the men, favouring those who lunge and a clap in the most energetic manner. Accessories used in this dance include sticks and even guns and rifles, indeed as a form of courage dance the *hashiya* herself may wield a sword during the performance (Saleh 2002: 624). This form is widespread throughout Egypt, varying from region to region and from group to group. In Quseir it is often mixed with another – the Ababda martial dance. In this example two men are paired off and given antique tribal blades, elephant hide or leather shields and they are dressed in ritual cloth and leather armour. Accompanied by the zither (*tanbur*), or *semsemia* and rhythmic clapping the two men taunt, leap and lunge at one another, flicking their wrists to send shivers along the blades length, symbolically re-enacting old tribal battles in doing so (Saleh 2002: 624).

Sheikh Hassan al-Aqied

Before moving onto discuss my meeting and conversation with Sheikh Hassan al-Aqied, it is worthwhile to firstly consider my initial encounter with Ababda Bedouin musicians (as briefly mentioned in the introduction of this thesis). This happened during the morning of the 12th April 2005 in the school in which my colleague Eman Attia Mustapha teaches; the Ahmed Ali primary. I shall discuss both my conversations with Eman and the school in more detail in the following chapter – for now I shall concentrate only upon the performance that I witnessed on that particular morning. Eman and her fellow teachers had invited two colleagues and I to see a group of Ababda Bedouin children put on a show; a show that they enacted most break times. Returning once more to Bender's ideas of contested landscapes (1998), it was apparent that this was a rather contrived situation and quite different to performances intended to be consumed by a fellow Ababda audience. Firstly, it was in a classroom at the request of their teachers, not in the Ababda village in which the youngsters were used to playing. Secondly they were playing for a group that, to them, was comprised of three wealthy Europeans. Eman noted that in the village (a place under threat by tourist developers), the music acted as a source of pride and defiance. This was still the case to a degree in the classroom, but at certain points it felt to me as if it was presented more as a school play for a group of governors than a shared proclamation of tribal kinship.

A group of half a dozen eight to ten year old boys and their classmates came into the room in which we were seated. After an introduction by Eman, the group began to clap, whilst one individual took the lead and another played an introduction on his father's *semsemia* (figure 18). As the performance was broken into three main sections, it suggested that we were witnessing a dance derived from the *Kaff al-'arab* tradition. One of the boys took a spare school dress and threw it over his head and shoulders to form a veil, which one of the others mentioned was meant to signify his role as the *al-hashiya* of the performance, due to the lack of Ababda girls. Additionally two of the boys took up sticks half way through the first section and began to make a striking motion with them in the air, a hybrid of both the Ababda martial dance and the *Kaff al-arab*. At the end of the performance the soloist sang whilst we were invited to form a circle and to dance around him with the chorus. As the show finally came to a close nearly an hour after it began, Eman noted that the language in which the boys were singing was derived from an African (Cushitic) dialect and thus she could not translate it in any real depth. When we chatted to the group afterwards they told me that they knew little about the archaeology of Quseir al-Qadim and although they were interested in what I told them, they felt that the things that they had learned from their fathers and the poems recited by their mothers were of more significance to their life, to their social history (again, see Abu-Lughod 1993 for more on the stories and poems of Bedouin women). As important tribal history was conveyed via emotive, symbolic

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music and dance, a museum could not compete with this long standing tradition, unless it was a venue for facilitating performance such as these. The young singer told me that he would rather that their songs were included in a museum as a means to remind non-Ababda viewers that there was more to Egypt than its Pharaonic past, than a museum itself was actually to be built in their own village.

A conversation with Sheikh Hassan al-Aqied of the Ababda Bedouin of Quseir

My meeting with Sheikh Hassan al-Aqied was organised during an earlier conversation with Yasser el Amir (28th January 2006) (figure 104). After discussing Quseir's possible link with Queen Hatshepsut's journey to Punt, (as mentioned in the last chapter), I asked Yasser about the Ababda that lived in and around the city. Yasser replied that he knew many Bedouin people, even Restaurant Marianne's, the café that he managed was owned by Adel Hassan - the cousin, as Yasser put it, of 'the chief the whole of the southern Ababda'. Yasser himself was so intrigued by these people that he regularly drove into the mountains to film Ababda dances that were led by his friend and colleague Hassan al-Aqied. He also mentioned that important tribal objects were used in this music. I then showed him some images of the display cabinets of the Petrie Museum in London; these included a display of pottery and drinking vessels, a collection of shabtis, a cabinet of stela and a general view of one of the museum's galleries in its entirety. Yasser was interested, but suggested that ancient Egypt needed to be presented alongside the music and traditions of the Ababda – a link needed to be made between the Ababda city of Shalateen in the South of Egypt and London. As I got up to catch a taxi, he told me that I needed to speak to Sheikh Hassan, and so we arranged to meet again at the coffee-shop two days later.

'I begin, I versify to the people of

Muhammad, His eyes Kohl darkened

I begin, I versify about the men

The horsemen, the Arab Hilali.

One day westward they went scouting

Upon their shoulders bearing SPEARS (aside) A SPEAR

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Upon their shoulders bearing SPEARS.'

('Awadallah 1987 cited in Slymovics 1987: 78-9)

After initial introductions during the evening of the 30th January 2006, I asked Hassan if he knew the Banu Hilal, part of which I have cited above (taken from an excerpt of Susan Slymovics' study of the 'Merchant of Art' tradition in Egypt [1987]). Whilst in Quseir I had heard that this famous epic was still recited by individuals in Luxor and Qena and so I assumed that Hassan would also know of it. Instead he abruptly told me that this was a northern tradition and therefore sung by the Ma'aza tribe and by groups from the Sinai peninsular - the Ababda sang their own material. This short tempered reply gave me my first impression of the importance of music as a source of tribal pride, identity and shared memory in Quseir. Hassan then told me about the camel market at Shalateen, the second biggest of its kind, and mentioned that this was the best place to see the old Ababda traditions being acted out. I asked him how many songs he knew - he knew over a hundred, he replied - he was proud of his recognised status as the best reciter in that area of the Red Sea. I then showed Hassan the images of the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology in London. Glancing at the images on the table before him, he noted that the objects were clustered too closely together, mentioning that he kept his tribal artefacts in his house, where they remained unseen until they were needed for specific performances. Hassan stopped at the photograph of the pottery cabinet, and told me that similar objects were still in use as coffee pots - there was an entire poetic tradition devoted to the etiquette of sharing a drink[6]. This practice is something that Clinton Bailey has studied in the context of Bedouin groups in Sinai and the Negev:

'And kindle a fire, but then let it decline,
    To take care while you roast lest the coffee-beans burn.

As you toss them between the three blackened stones
    Heedful of him who discretely discerns.

And fight for the right to sup the camp's guest,
    God made us five fingers and keeps us in store.'
(Salih Imbarak 'Id 1972, cited in Bailey 2002: 130-1)

In another example Bailey discusses a similar Bedouin poem of instruction:

'When travellers, men of oaths, at your tent one day arrive,
    Drop all else and make for them a brew that will revive.'
(Id Hammad Mis'ad 1970, cited in Bailey 2002: 134)

Poems of this type act as teachings important to the *Bedu* way of life, and Hassan had learnt and passed on many similar tunes and verses. Furthermore, for him the objects in the Petrie did not act as symbols of a distant Egyptian, Coptic or Roman past, but rather he saw them as icons that were indicative of a series of poems recited during the occasions when he or his family would use similar objects.

Hassan mentioned that if I had more time I could go to see him perform for his Ababda kin, if not, he said that Yasser had made several videos of him playing and that he would be glad to give me one of these so that I could understand his words with more clarity. I asked if he knew the Middle Kingdom *Tale and Laments of Khuninpu*, and then recited a few lines to him - I was interested to see if this story about the brutal treatment of a travelling individual by a servant of a high official and the king would resonate with his own experience of belonging to nomadic group. As Quirke has noted:

> 'The hero Khuninpu is an inhabitant of the desolate landscape of the Wadi Natrun, in the First Intermediate Period...His Egyptian 'title' *shty* is often translated 'peasant', and the tale is often called in Egyptology 'the Eloquent Peasant', but the people of the Wadi were the diametrical social opposite of the Egyptian peasant farmer, in a fierce social division between the settled and the nomadic or semi-nomadic; that division exists today between farmer and Bedouin, in Egypt , or between settled people and gypsy or traveller in Europe.'
> (Quirke 2004: 151)

Although Hassan told me that he could understand the plight of the individual and argued that, like those of his family, the man was an eloquent poet, he felt no other connection – not because the piece was so old, but because it was about a person that lived in a social grouping that bore no geographical relevance to the Ababda. In his eyes, the two simply could not be compared. However if this spatial (as opposed to temporal) difference was explained in detail beforehand, then there would be no problem displaying an Ababda satire alongside this older poem.

After our discussion of Khuninpu, Hassan proceeded to tell me that his epics and dances utilised three hundred year old tribal swords, Elephant hide shields and armour to add meaning to the performance – performances generally focusing upon old tribal conflicts with the southerly Bishari and northerly Ma'aza. On these special occasions, even the women wore the antique silver jewellery given to them by their and their husband's families. Some of the songs that he sang at these times were of anything up to a thousand years of age, possibly even older. He told me that these nights acted as his places of remembrance, much as the Petrie and other museums

acted as mine. As a gift and symbol of our friendship he offered me a video recording of these dances, which I in turn promised to include in this thesis.

Sheikh Hassan and Yasser's gift: five examples of Ababda performances

In this final section I shall analyse the eleven minutes of VHS footage that Yasser passed onto me on the 2nd February 2006 (figures 105-111). By breaking up the dances into several key areas, one gains a clear insight into this important aspect of the representation of the past in an Ababda tradition, albeit one that is very specific to Quseir. Tribal memory, tradition and gender divisions are all conserved within these dances and are in turn transferred to younger family members through performance (see Butler 1993). As Jones has suggested: 'remembrance is as much a bodily activity as a cognitive one' (2007: 31). In his writing on the Roma (2004), Michael Stewart notes that it is in their interaction with non-Roma that these groups remember their collective history – in short, like the Ababda, memory is recalled by actions that create a sense of difference to their settled neighbours. For instance it is noticeable that in the VHS footage, the dances are being viewed by non-Bedouin, Egyptian tourists[7] with a clear divide between the two groups. The swords and instruments utilised in these performances add to their role as a form of commemoration. Again to quote Jones:

> 'As an index of past action material culture is ultimately connective, it connects people to the physical world, to temporal processes, and through its physicality directs them to future action. In this sense, like commemoration, there is a sense of recurrence. Material culture likewise provides the ground for connecting individual and collective remembrance. In short material culture is critical to the maintenance and performance of tradition.'
> (Jones 2007: 46)

Material culture is central to Ababda performances, these objects are tied to the narrative of the song and they act as important tropes, as physical metaphors of the battles of the past, yet also the ongoing battles of the present.

The following analysis is a rather clinical description of the main events in the VHS footage. I made a decision to use this style of language in an attempt to highlight the sanitising effect that a video recording has upon a tradition that is intended to be consumed as a live performance, and, to quote Hassan seen 'under a desert moon'[8]. During this analysis I am therefore also very conscious of momentarily moving slightly away from the theme of coevality that has so driven the rest of my writing about my experiences in Quseir.

The first piece

00:00:00-00:00:26

The footage begins during the night in the desert. Two young (eight to ten year old?) Ababda girls dance back and forth facing the camera, as they move they flick their eyes back in their sockets, only revealing the whites (figure 105). It is likely that these youngsters are acting the part of the *al-hashiya*, thus suggesting the influence of the *kaff al-arab* tradition on this piece. The age of the girls demonstrates an early transmission of knowledge from their families. The music is provided by *semsemia* and *darabuka*, which are added to by the collective, rhythmic clapping of the rest of the group.

00:00:26-00:00:49

A man in his late thirties/early forties plays the *semsemia* and sings the lead, his daughter[9] sits next to him playing the *darabuka* (figure 106). As they play, a group of ten or so men and boys stand in a semi-circle chanting and singing. A youth of ten to twelve years of age wields a sword in the pose of the Ababda martial dance. The sword is raised every third beat of the drum, and his left hand is held aloft imitating the use of a shield. The others lunge and goad at him, suggesting a hybrid of the martial and *Kaff al-arab* traditions.

00:00:49-00:01:10

The youngster hands the sword to the elder of the tribe, a man approximately in his early fifties. He immediately shivers the blade with great skill, continuing to do so for twenty seconds. The weapon is then handed to another adolescent boy.

00:01:10-00:01:42

As the youth takes the sword, several very young boys (roughly four to six years of age) can be seen jumping up and down and clapping their hands to the music. The onlookers shout taunts at the dancer, including *imshi* (get away!) and *yalla* (faster!).

00:01:42-00:02:27

The youngster hands the sword onto another older man amidst loud cheers and shouts from the circle (figure 107 and 108). These positive affirmations continue throughout his dance suggesting that this individual is well recognised for his proficiency and prowess. Again every the blade is shivered on every third beat: 1 2 **3** 4, 1 2 **3** 4, 1 2 **3** 4, 1 2 **3** 4, etc.

The second piece

00:02:27-03:32

The camera focuses upon an image of the waxing moon in its first quarter. The group is the same as in the previous footage, only this time Hassan plays the *semsemia* himself. Again an adolescent boy wields the sword in the style of the martial dance, before handing it to his brother (figure 109). He has a cloth tied across his body to imitate ceremonial tribal armour (figure 110).

00:03:32-00:04:04

Shortly before the camera turns to a young girl again acting as the *al-hashiya* of the piece, Yasser appears on screen wearing Ababda clothing. Four boys advance towards her, lunging and clapping at the same time. This indicates that two dances are actually being enacted during the same piece of music – the rest of the group remains engaged in the martial dance, whilst the four boys and the girl are acting out something similar to the *kaff al-arab*.

The third piece

00:04:04-00:05:16

The opening shot sees a return to the *semsemia* player of the first piece, his daughter still plays the *darabuka*, as she does throughout the entire video. In the opening few seconds the other women of the group can be seen waiting in the background by a large open-faced tent. Although outside of the male dominated dance proper, they clap and trill from their vantage point (see Strathern 1988; Butler 1993 for more on the performance of gender division).

00:05:16-00:05:57

An adolescent boy aggressively wields a sword to a notably different piece of music. Hassan mentioned that this song focuses on a battle between the Ababda and their ancestral rivals, the Bishari tribe (figure 111)[10].

The fourth piece

00:05:57-00:06:39

A close-up of the full moon opens the recording of this performance. The second adolescent dancer of the first piece is now playing the *semsemia* and singing the lead. He recites part of the song that the Ababda children reproduced for my colleagues and I, at the Ahmed Ali Primary School the previous year. Again this is therefore a mix of the *kaff al-arab* and Ababda martial traditions.

00:06:39-00:06:53

The sword is offered by one of the adolescent boys to his two brothers, who refuse it, instead offering it to the older, more proficient individual that was cheered in the first piece. Again he takes the blade amidst shouts of recognition from his peer group.

00:06:53-00:07:33

The performance closes with a final close up of the full moon.

The fifth piece
00:07:53-00:08:33

Yet another boy sits in on the *semsemia*. The martial dance is enacted to the same song as that in piece four. This section is completed with the trilling of the women by the tent.

The sixth piece
00:08:33-00:10:43

Reprise of the footage recorded in the first piece.

The description above is intended as a basic guide to the footage that was given to me by Hassan and Yasser. At times it is clear that the performance was intended for the camera and thus in parts, probably quite different to an unrecorded piece. Nevertheless it gave me a unique window into what Hassan termed the 'Adabda past'. In these representations performance was key to the transmission of tribal knowledge to the younger members of the group; it acted as a collective source of memory and a defiant stand against a swiftly modernising and westernising Egypt. Unlike my own museum going culture, these dances used material culture in a far more poetic manner, as key icons to be handled, and to be used in dances. I discussed the manner in which museums tell a certain type of story and remember a certain past in chapters one and two, as I sat and watched this video when I arrived back in the UK I was struck by the way in which the boundaries between audience and dancer were so blurred in this Ababda tradition of telling the past. Again I felt that the museum, with its now seemingly rather stifled objects and passive audience needed to be rethought. It needed more performances and its often elitist western, scientific, classical, biblical and romantic memories needed to be made far more egalitarian, although the difficulty would lie in striking a balance between this and the desires and needs of its pre-existing audiences. Yet, as I watched I thought that the museum now needed to open its mind to international collective memories as well as to those from its own past. In my mind it needed to become a stage to remember different pasts and therefore ultimately, like Hassan's beloved dances, a performance by which to challenge a sometimes uncertain future.

Music as Museum?

Music and drama have often been used a source by which to subvert a recognised status quo. Sabr and Hassan did not see me as an expert, neither did they make any real attempt to acknowledge my position as an archaeologist - I do not believe they were that interested in what I had to say about their past. However, they did view my connection with London as a means by which to enable their voices to be heard upon the international stage. I asked them both if they would like a museum or heritage centre in Quseir, a place in which they could play their songs? They reminded me that they already had places in which to play their songs, and they had their own collections, why did they need a specially sanctioned site provided by the government or a body of archaeologists and heritage professionals? If anything I could learn from them, for my world of 'museums' (as opposed to their own 'collections'), as Hassan remarked, needed music; music provided an ocean, a series of waves that flowed from the world of ancient Egypt into the ears of the modern listener. *Semsemia* songs that celebrated the revolution of 1952, or Ababda love songs, offered a set of memories that could challenge the colonial past and the west's ongoing infatuation with the pharaohs and their treasures. Aside from music and drama in the conventional sense, even specially commissioned audio-visual Egyptian serials focusing upon modern life in the country have the potential to work in a similarly subversive fashion (see Abu-Lughod 2005). Advances have been made in this intersection between theatre, performance and the museum (e.g. Hughes 1998, Gillam 2006; Pearson and Shanks 2001), but we need to build upon them[11]. Furthermore, music and performance can bring people together. They can bind them, regardless of ethnicity, occasionally even class (the use of selective tickets and invitations to specific organised events aside), in the search for a better future. So, to close with the anti imperialistic words of the Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish:

'Is it in such a song we cushion the chest of a knight with a dream

Hold his last shirt, victory sign and the key to the last door

So we can plunge into the first sea? Greetings to you, friend of my

    home, you who have no home.

Greetings to your feet/the shepherds will forget the traces of your

    eyes on the soil.

Greetings to your arms/the sandgrouse will fly over here again.

Greetings to your lips/the prayer will bow in the field. What shall we

    say to the embers in your eyes? What shall absence say

to your mother? He's asleep in the well? What shall the invaders say?

    We have conquered the cloud of the voice in the month of August?

What does life say to Mahmud Darwish? You have lived, loved and

    those you loved are dead?

Is it in such a song we cushion a dream, hold a victory sign and the

   key to the last door

So as to shut this song from us? But we will live because life goes on.'

(Mahmud 2005: 25)

As Darwish notes, song and dance can remind us that colonialism, as Chris Gosden (2004) has also hinted, is not the natural way of things. It is not the norm, nor indeed, should it ever be.

[1] Influenced in part by the work of Strathern (1988).

[2] *Semsemia*, as is to be discussed, is a type of Egyptian folk music, common on the Red Sea coast and around the Nile and Suez Canal regions.

[3] See Slymovics (1987) for more on the role of musician as outsider in upper Egyptian society.

[4] Although Slymovics (1987) studies a reciter of historical epics, a singer that should not be confused with the ballad monger who will generally perform more recent material.

[5] Chris Gosden's recent *Archaeology and Colonialism* (2004) offers a useful overview of the relationship between colonialism and material culture.

[6] As mentioned in chapter four.

[7] Indicating the gradual rise in interest of traditional folk practices in Egyptian society as a whole in the last forty years or so (Allen 2000: 207)

[8] The style of deconstruction use here was influenced in part by the work of Barthes (1967); Bourdieu (1977) and Derrida (1978).

[9] This was confirmed by Hassan.

[10] He also noted that these conflicts were now something of the past (28th January 2006).

[11] Work at Milestones Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilisation and the University of Manchester has been particularly groundbreaking in this respect.

Figures 100, 101, 102 and 103. Clockwise from top: Sabr's *semsemia* troupe. Sabr is the second from left and Adel Aiesh, manager of Quseir Heritage, is sitting on the far right; Sabr's *semsemia*; stuffed fish and netting display in Sabr's living room, and the outside of Sabr's house, Quseir, 2006.

Figures 104 and 105. Top: Yasser el Amir (left) and Sheikh Hassan al Aqied, Restaurant Marianne's, Quseir. **Above**: Ababda girl rolling her eyes during a dance, Quseir, 2006 (still taken from Hassan's VHS tape).

Figures 106 and 107: Ababda Bedouin dances, Quseir, 2006 (stills taken from Hassan's VHS tape). Note the antique sword being used as a central prop in the performance.

Figures 108 and 109: Ababda Bedouin dances, Quseir, 2006 (stills taken from Hassan's VHS tape).

Figures 110 and 111: Ababda Bedouin dances, Quseir, 2006 (stills taken from Hassan's VHS tape).

Chapter Eight

Acknowledging the possibility of a shared heritage and a unified social conscious with Eman Attia Muhammad

As I begin this last chapter based upon my fieldwork experiences in Quseir, I feel concerned that in discussing the ideas, stories and beliefs of my colleagues in the city, I am potentially at risk of promoting an idealised impression of Upper Egypt; a fantasy of village and city life, as a mix of characters fresh from the pages of the *Arabian Nights*, ancient throwbacks and romantic, poor but happy peasants (see Gran 2004). This is an act that has been committed many times before. As Timothy Mitchell has noted (2002: 123-51) throughout the 20th century these kinds of stereotypes were maintained through the publication of popular books that invented and reinvented the iconic peasant of Egypt such as Henry Habib Ayrout's *The Egyptian Peasant* (1963), *The Fellaheen* (1981) and Richard Critchfield's *Shahhat: An Egyptian* (1978). By trying to instil a sense of coevality between the reader and my interlocutors, I have attempted to avoid this phenomenon within the pages of this thesis. As Mitchell discusses, as museums are a tool by which to promote and to remember a glorified national past, so the villagers and townspeople of Upper Egypt have tended to have been portrayed as a frozen relic of this past: as a living history exhibit (2002: 128-9). This has been one of the reasons that I have deliberately asked my colleagues in Quseir about their own personal relationships to the museum, finding that for most of them it is both an alien and alienating environment. This is not because of simple ignorance on their behalf, but more a general feeling of exclusion and thus indifference. Indeed as was discussed in the last chapter, some saw the museum as a poor replacement for already existing forms of collective, public remembrance of the past. Furthermore, these individuals have actually seen fit to advise me and my world of exhibition-going how to better ourselves, not the other way around. This is one of many reasons for my rejection of the proposal for creating a museum in the city at this point in time, yet this has not been an easy decision. For many, the economic reasons alone are a good justification for a local museum, so firstly I shall attempt to make clear my choice, a choice that, if enough people from Quseir say otherwise (which at this point they have not), I will reverse, but only if we can find a way of producing a 'museum' that can utilise its role as social mechanism as a powerful weapon for those in the city *who most need it*, not just for a vocal few who perhaps most *want it*.

Over the last sixty years Egypt has increasingly adopted the principles of the neoliberal free market economy and in turn has sought to transform the poorer parts of the population into small scale entrepreneurs, the vanguard of a new market enterprise based squarely on the principle of the microenterprise (Elyachar 2005)[1]. Traditionally beliefs of the evil eye marking out 'those who neglect the production of positive relational value and concentrate only on

individual, immediate gain' (Elyachar 2005: 10) appear to indicate a notable convergence with current neoliberal market visions implemented in many parts of the country. Indeed as Elyachar has noted much of this transformation has come about through the establishment of numerous NGOs. In the workshop context of Cairo's al-Hirafiyeen district, she argues that the NGO:

> 'was an organization through which wealthy members of the community could intensify their pursuit of individual short-term gain.'
> (Elyachar 2005: 10)

Elaborating further upon this point, she moves onto critique recent scholarly backing of these organisations:

> 'Through the NGO, wealthy masters could pursue contacts with officials in the local government...the meaning of the NGO in the community, in other words, was quite different from that advanced by Appadurai, who has argued for the importance of NGOs as a site of "grassroots globalization" (Appadurai 2000). Rather than oppose the "capital-state nexus" (Appadurai 2000), NGOs in el-Hirafiyeen furthered it.'
> (Elyachar 2005: 11).

As I have mentioned much of my own work in Quseir has been conducted with a local NGO, Quseir Heritage, and although run by individuals who dearly love the city, it could nevertheless be open to a similar criticism. The establishment of a museum of local culture and craft, in many ways a heritage microenterprise in danger of merely capitalising upon a tourist-driven desire to see and to consume a quaint notion of Upper Egyptian life, is thus something that I now view with caution - I do not totally reject the idea, but I believe that a great deal of careful planning is needed before committing to such a project[2]. At first, I would rather promote the idea that museums of Egyptian heritage outside of the country should attempt to unite modern non-Egyptian populations with those living in the country today, bringing the dispossessed together not simply through a blind service of the market, but by a mutual recognition of one another's humanity and history. This personal transformation has in turn been much influenced by numerous conversations with my friend Eman Attia Mustapha, one of the most socially conscious individuals that I have ever met and consequentially the focus of this final chapter drawn from my experiences in Quseir. Before detailing these conversations, it is worth discussing the political history of post-revolutionary Egypt in order to better understand the context of my encounters in the city. I have compiled this brief history through a personal literature search, *without the help of my interlocuters*. As shall be seen, any explicitly political

discussions that we have had have rarely gone further than discussing the last set of elections in Egypt and the negative impact of current Anglo-American foreign policy in the Middle East.

From Nasser to Mubarak: the nature of modern Egyptian political history

The political landscape of Egypt changed forever after the coup of July 1952. In June 1953 the monarchy was formally abolished and the country was declared a republic. Yet, from the very start the newly set up Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) suffered from splits in opinion regarding policy decisions. These divides largely centred around disagreements between the first president General Muhammad Najib and the increasingly popular Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser (see Vatikiotis 1991: 384). Barely two years after the coup of 1952, by 1954 Najib had lost his political influence to Nasser. Nasser had become highly regarded throughout the country as a result of his eighteen months in office as Prime Minister and particularly for what many saw as his favourable temperament to a return of constitutional government (Vatikotis 1991: 384). Under the pretext of collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood, Najib was placed under house arrest, in turn paving the way for Nasser's own ascendancy to presidency (Kassem 2004: 13). During his first ten years as leader, he legitimised his personal dominance of power through many interrelated political factors. He embarked on a process of change that saw the British peacefully, yet publicly, evicted from Egyptian bases, undertook sweeping agrarian reforms and oversaw the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, amongst other major sources of industry[3]. Popular laws such as the guarantee of state employment for university and high school graduates and the creation of a national social insurance all in turn added to his overall charisma and thus political dominance at the time. As Maye Kassem notes:

'These socioeconomic policies enhanced Nasser's personal power in that they created a new social contract between him and the masses…Put simply, Nasser not only headed but also dominated the new Egyptian elite.'
(Kassem 2004: 13)[4]

The defeat in the war against Israel in 1967 and the subsequent Israeli occupation of Sinai somewhat dented public opinion of Nasser. Nevertheless through the implementation of several major new laws and his own shrewd political acumen, he had successfully institutionalised a system of personal control over individuals and the state institutions into Egyptian politics during his sixteen year tenure as president (Kassem 2004: 19). After becoming leader following Nasser's unexpected and fatal heart attack on the 30th September 1970, the then vice president Anwar Sadat, capitalised upon this legacy, indeed the corrective revolution of 1971, the expulsion of the Soviets in 1972, the war with Israel in 1973, the adoption of *infitah* or open door policy in 1974, the beginning of the multi-party system in 1976 and his visit to Jerusalem in 1977, were all

notably personal initiatives and decisions (Kassem 2004: 21)[5]. However, many authors argue that it was Sadat's follower and current president Hosni Mubarak (figure 112), personally promoted from Commander of the Air Force to vice president by the ex-leader, who was to take the idea personal rule to its most dizzying heights following Sadat's assassination in 1981 (e.g. Kassem 1999; 2004; Springborg 1989). To quote the vociferous Egyptian critic, Maye Kassem, once more:

> 'It would be difficult to argue that the formal structure of government in the Mubarak era has changed dramatically since the declaration of the republic in 1954. While the formal structure of government has changed – especially in regard to the less conspicuous role of the military in politics, Egypt's post Nasser Western and particularly U.S. alliance, as well as the implementation of a multi-party arena – the fundamental nature of the system has not. The presidency during Mubarak's tenure remains the ultimate source of power and authority, as was the case with its predecessors.'
>
> (Kassem 2004: 43).

The west's public support of the Mubarak regime does not escape her sharp criticism either:

> 'The west's reinvigorated support of authoritarian allies such as the Egyptian government can be perceived as little more than an erroneous, short sighted approach to addressing the increasingly threatening trend of violent extremists.'
>
> (Kassem 2004: 182)

So, in light of the seemingly authoritarian, suffocating nature of Egyptian politics, I have chosen to finish this chapter, and indeed my entire analysis of my encounters in Quseir by considering some of the many meetings that I have had with my colleague Eman, a person who prides herself on being willing to support both the leaders of her country and yet also to protect and to promote those that feel dispossessed and marginalised from the ruling elite of Cairo (on Upper Egyptian politics in general see papers in Hopkins and Saad 2004). This particularly powerful conversation occurred during the excited atmosphere during the build up to the recent elections in Egypt (2005), an event that was much mooted as the first process of democratic elections that the county has ever undergone. As a teacher, Eman has benefited from Nasser's policy of state employment for graduates; she is proud of his achievements for the national cause of Egypt and likewise is eager to promote modern Egypt in spheres outside of the country's borders. Although employed by a foreign NGO for many years, she and other teachers have often felt let down by this organisation's inability to understand the priorities and needs of Egyptian people –

one of the driving reasons behind Eman herself eventually deciding to take a state organised position at one of the local primary schools. To her this was one of the best ways that she could make a living and support her fellow citizens (on sexual and gender politics in North Africa and the Middle East see Abu-Lughod 1986, 1993; 2005; Hatem 1988; John 1989; Mernissi 1989; Sharawi 1986).

Teaching the past and bettering the present with Eman Attia Mustapha

Eman is one of the first people that I ever met in Quseir and she has been an instrumental part of many of my experiences in the city. Although a couple of years older than me, we are near enough in age to be able to feel a close connection to each others perspectives on life. Eman is also friends with Lamya, having graduated with her. Although not employed by the project in Quseir, she has been involved in our work since the very start. I first met her in September 2002, but did not get to converse with her for any length of time until my next visit to the city in December 2003. During this trip, Eman and I bonded over a discussion of a selection of archaeological reconstruction drawings that I was working on at the time. She told me that we should ask the children that she taught at the Carpe Vitam Learning Centre what they thought of these images and I agreed that this would be a very beneficial feedback exercise (see figures 113 and 114). The project in Quseir has used this Learning Centre as a base - Lamya's office was located in the middle of the complex, and both her and Muhammed Saleh[6], one of the Project's first Egyptian members, worked as English teachers in the Centre. Financial difficulties and misunderstandings have unfortunately dogged the institution, yet it has provided a useful site for employment, out-of-school activities, and English tuition in the city, as well as a haven from the bustle and relentless midday heat of Al Gomhoria Street.

During the early evening of the 10th December 2003, I went to the Learning Centre with my pictures. Eman and Lamya were waiting in the courtyard with a group of twenty five to ten year old school children. They introduced me to the group and we began by handing around a pen and ink sketch of what I imagined the Roman waterfront of Quseir al-Qadim to look like (see Peacock and Blue 2006: 43-94, 116-154 for the full excavation reports; figure 115). Following this we showed the group an illustration of an Islamic caravanserai (again see Peacock and Blue 2006: 95-115, 155-173 for the excavation reports upon which these were based), and then an image of the Roman back streets (figure 116). Finally I produced a watercolour of a man telling a story to an enthralled boy at a local coffee shop (figure 117). All of the children liked the latter the most; they were interested in the images of the buildings, but they felt more engaged by the illustration of the old man. Most of the group could not imagine that the expanse of desert skirted by the opulent tourist hotels once looked like the images that I showed them. After the children had left, Lamya, Eman and I had a cup of tea, and they suggested that if they could

obtain permission, perhaps we could go to a local school the next day and get even more feedback. Sensing my disappointment regarding the children's lack of interest in the archaeological reconstructions they told me that the class was too young to understand them and that I would have better luck from older pupils and teachers.

Having obtained the required permission, the next day Adel Aiesh dropped us of at the entrance to a primary school on the Al Oroba Street in the western *Tushka/Al Zahraa* district of Quseir. We were greeted by the head teacher and taken inside to meet a class of thirty, nine to ten year olds and their teachers. I showed them the pictures and after an initial silence, several hands went up. One boy asked me where the people in the drawings were. A girl, wanted to know where the sea was. This then prompted another boy to shout out, 'Yes, where are the mountains and the sea? The mountains and the sea are Quseir!' Generally the pupils all liked the image of the man telling the story, yet despite my protestations (and the polite requests of the teachers) they refused to be moved by the series of archaeological reconstructions that I presented to them. As we left, Eman mentioned that my work was missing life. I agreed, and I realised that had I assumed that my archaeological expertise would not be questioned, especially by a group of Egyptian children. I realised that I had to focus upon my own speaking skills if my ideas were to have any chance of being accepted in the future. Fortunately the following year I was given the opportunity that I needed.

June 2004: telling stories at the Learning Centre

On the 14th June 2004, a colleague and I were asked by Lamya, Eman and their fellow teacher and friend Marwa Ahmed Alnaidy if we minded coming along to one of the Learning Centre's summer club events. The three of them mentioned that as the children were due to be visiting the site the next day, would we be willing to do a presentation? After my experiences the year before I had decided to bring along a revised version of story that I had written as an experiment in 2003. This tale merged several of the most popular local accounts of Quseir al-Qadim into one overriding narrative. The main progression is as follows: a young boy from the city meets an old man in one of the beach cafés. In a framing tale within a tale fashion, this man then recalls an adventure during his own childhood. He begins by describing how he met a stranger from Greece in Quseir, who in turn gave him a magical map of the archaeological site. The old man tells of his discovery of a strange tunnel in the citadel in the centre of Quseir and how this subterranean passage eventually led him to Quseir al-Qadim. At the site he found strange pieces of pottery, and despite hearing roosters crowing a warning, he picked up an amphora jar. Whilst looking at the pot he slipped and fell, breaking it as he hit the ground. Smoke escaped from the smashed vessel, gradually taking the form of a *jinni*. He ran to the road whereupon he unexpectedly met his mother, who saved him from the dangers of the place and took him home.

Aided by Lamya and Eman, I narrated this story to the same group of children that I had met in the Centre the previous winter. This time my audience was enthralled, and Eman noted that I had found the correct medium for animating the past of the city. Archaeology and history could be impenetrable, but a story had the ability to make a group bond together. She commented that when telling a tale, the narrator is able to engage with their audience in a more equal manner than that of a more typical teacher/student relationship. Lamya agreed and she remarked that especially with children, the imagination is the best way of learning. Crucially when I used icons familiar to the children and the teachers of Quseir, I found that I met with far more success than when I used the representational tools of my own western academic context. Furthermore, Marilyn Booth has noted that women in the Middle East often use storytelling as a source of prestige in an otherwise male dominated society:

'…women as bearers of oral culture have been central to preserving and reshaping traditional expressive forms.'
(Booth 1991: 1)

Indeed, it would seem that Eman, Lamya and Marwa had encouraged me to reshape my own expressive form, in this case in regards to the representation of the archaeological past of Quseir, and through their own intricate embellishments of my story, they in turn reshaped it themselves. Eman noted that this was the best way to remember history, as a group of equals sharing stories, not necessarily in the form of an archaeologist dictating to local people about their own past, in a style comfortable to the narrator, though completely alien to their audience[7].

Bringing the museum to life in the Ahmed Ali primary school, Quseir, April 2005
On the 11th April 2005, Eman invited me to go to the school were she worked in order to ask some of the teachers their opinions regarding some of the early plans for a new building to house the Petrie Museum's collections (Petrie Museum 2004). Accepting her offer, I went to the Ahmed Ali primary school on the southern outskirts of Quseir with the plans in my hand – I hoped that this meeting would give me some general clues as to what the teachers would want in a good museum. As I and my colleagues got out of our taxi we noticed that we had to walk past a large graveyard in order to get to the gates of the school (figure 118). In many respects it was exceptional by this factor alone, all of the other schools in the centre of Quseir face onto respectable domestic streets. As Eman greeted me she told me that many people had commented that as this school was for the poorer, under privileged citizens of the city, she was really more of a social worker than a teacher. This view was based on the fact that its pupil population consisted of large numbers of Coptic, Nubian and Ababda Bedouin children, all of whom are looked upon as outsiders by the more prosperous families living in Quseir (figure 119).

Furthering the school's difference to the others in the area, the head teacher is a Coptic Christian. However, Eman is extremely proud to be a teacher at the Ahmed Ali simply because of this difference.

On the day of this meeting, Eman (like just about everyone else living in Quseir), was excited about the prospect of the upcoming elections to be held in September, an event that was being described outside the country as the first truly 'democratic' election Egypt had ever undergone[8]. According to early results from the polling stations, President Hosni Mubarak of the National Democratic Party was expecting to win, but nevertheless, several other parties were also fielding their own candidates [9]. Like all of her friends Eman was keen to see just what would happen. The elections were an extremely significant point of debate at this time in Egypt, and although the following quotes were taken after they had actually happened, they still give a unique insight into what the BBC presented as a rather polarised nation (all quotes were drawn from www.bbc.co.uk [2005]). On one side of the divide lay those who believed the elections were a fraud, a dupe to keep the US happy:

> 'The majority of Egyptians, because they know how the so-called elections will turn out, don't even bother to become registered voters. Mr Mubarak announced in early 2005 that there would be multi-candidate presidential elections. I went to get myself registered as a voter. I want to have a clear conscience before God. I was told voter registry is only in December of each year. Funny, I thought to myself. I guess that's why the election is in September. Ironic, isn't it?'
> Abdallah, Cairo (14th September 2005)

> 'We've to accept it; Mubarak won but the political atmosphere in Egypt is no longer as stagnant as it's been. The opposition (Kefaya, Islamist, socialist and liberal) should unite in one front. If the pressures continue on Mubarak, I expect he will do more. Yet, we have also to stop being passive.'
> Moataz, Egyptian living in England (14th September 2005)

On the other side lay those who praised Mubarak's actions, seeing the elections as an example of a leader making the right decision:

> 'I voted for Mubarak yesterday. To tell the truth my casting process only took about 10 to 13 minutes. It was very transparent where I voted and nobody looked to be biased to Mubarak, in fact there were many Nour voters who were speaking greatly about Nour. Egypt really needs Mubarak and as an Egyptian liberal, I believe that Mubarak is the most liberal of all the candidates who rely on some

religious groups such as the Muslim brotherhood like Nour. I proudly voted for Mubarak and we are finally a democracy. Yet I know it is the first step on a long road.'

(Ahmed, Cairo, Egypt,14th September 2005)

'Today is a historic moment in Egypt's history, and I was very excited to take part and vote in today's elections. The polling station I voted at was organised, the officials efficient, and I saw no trace of forgery or foul play. I feel proud to be an Egyptian.'

(Afaf Ezz, Cairo, Egypt, 14th September 2005).

'It was like a dream come true to see a partial exercise for democracy happening and we percept it as a crucial push towards political positivity. Mubarak has made the right move at last. We will elect him again and we expect him to make changes in depth and replace many of the everlasting faces that have dwelled so long in the National Party and the parliament.'

(Maha Fanous, Cairo, Egypt, 14th September 2005)

Even the Egyptian media seemed split in their opinion:

'Despite all the violence and violations... the wheel of democracy has been set in motion by President Mubarak's historic initiative and has gained irreversible fertile ground. The process also provided... all the necessary mechanisms to turn the slogan of 'people are the decision-makers' into reality.'

(Editorial in Egypt's Al-Jumhuriyah, 2nd December 2005)

'We were expecting the elections yesterday to be more transparent than in their first and second stages, instead they were more violent... Violence and truncheons reigned supreme in al-Mansura and other constituencies... What happened only confirms that the regime wants parties to be a mere décor, so that it can embellish itself in the eyes of the world... Egypt will be the one to lose out and the nation will pay an exorbitant price for a hideous crime against democracy.'

(Commentary in Egypt's Al-Wafd, 2nd December 2005)

It was in this excitable political climate that I went to the Ahmed Ali, indeed as the elections were yet to occur at this point in many ways the debates in Quseir surrounding them were even more excitable than those seen above. As we entered the school we were greeted and welcomed

by both the head master and manager. After twenty minutes or so I sat down with a group of teachers and presented the document dealing with the proposals for the new building for the Petrie's collections (Petrie Museum 2004). As had become the norm in the British media at that moment in the back of mind I expected a vociferous discussion of world politics, but this was simply not the case. I was half expecting to be asked many difficult questions about the European appropriation of the Egyptian past. Yet instead the people that I shared my time with did not look upon a museum of Egyptian archaeology in London as an entirely negative thing. As individuals living in a relatively small city in Egypt, everyone that I spoke with remarked that the museum actually provided a platform for their heritage, a world stage. But it was crucial that upon this stage the performances of modern Egypt were included.

Mr Abd al-Hakim, the head master, was the first to look upon the plans for what was then being called the Petrie 'Panopticon'. Immediately he mentioned that the new museum designs looked like a theatre that was devoted to the dead of ancient Egypt – what about life in the modern country, he asked. He liked the designs, but felt that the objects were crowded too closely together and that the writing was too small. The displays needed more Islamic artefacts, but more importantly the museum had to organise and hold seminars led by Egyptian people. Guides needed to be posted on every floor and the space should be brought to life by actors – it was a dead theatre, filled with the belongings of the deceased, yet devoid of any living people to explain them. Mr Abd al-Nasser was the second to look at the document. Again he felt that the objects were too jumbled together and that there were simply too many of them – this would confuse the visitor, he noted. It was suggested that the space needed to be filled with large Arabic calligraphy – this would remind the viewer that they looked at the artefacts of what is now an Arabic speaking country, not a civilisation based entirely on hieroglyphs. The Qur'an needed to be displayed and perhaps some areas could adopt an Ottoman influenced architectural style. Mr Nagar Adam and Mr Mahmoud Abd Allah then perused the images. They commented that the artefacts should be arranged according to size, so a pottery cabinet for example, would range from the largest pieces at the top to the smallest at the bottom. As they reminded the viewer of the sadness of passing, shabtis and other grave goods should be displayed to help to move people emotionally. However, upon viewing an image of a skeleton in a large ceramic bowl, they said they felt disgusted, neither did they particularly like the idea of displaying mummies – again this simply made the museum an arena of death. By bringing living people and actors to the space they felt that this atmosphere could be countered. They were particularly surprised by one display with the title 'Rescued or Stolen' – how could the museum admit to the possibility that its collections might have been stolen - surely it would get the institution into trouble? Finally I spoke to Mrs Fawzy Muhammad. Like her colleagues she felt that the designs, like museums in general, were too crowded. Again, she also believed that the displays of dead bodies would scare the visitors and that a performance space with living people

would be better. Unexpectedly, she felt that English text was enough as it was the mother tongue of Britain.

After nearly an hour of discussion the other teachers left me alone with Eman. As we sat and talked, I thanked her for her help – but what would she like to see in the museum? I asked. She commented that she would dearly love to see acting in the space, she would like to hear Egyptian or Arabic music and she wished to see the architecture of the space embrace a more 'Ottoman' style. She told me that she was pleased that the museum questioned its acquisition practices. After this we fell silent for a few minutes and we gazed out across the burial ground to the clusters of Ababda bungalows that lay beyond it. Eman pointed to them and mentioned that the children of the Ababda regularly performed dances at the school; they brought their musical instruments into class and played for the other children. Although belonging to what could be termed an ethnic minority in Quseir, they transcended social barriers through poetry, Eman commented that it provided them with a source of power and pride. To the point of writing I still believe that on that day, Eman was hinting that only through poetry, music and dance, that is, artistic expression, could the minority ever realign their relationship towards a dominant or elite social group – a factor that the majority of the other teachers alluded to as well. If we take what Peers and Brown (2003) call the museums 'source community' to be a minority, then the museum needs to utilise artistic expression from these groups as a manner to challenge and to stimulate its visitors. She invited me to see a performance by the Ababda Bedouin children the next morning, (the performance that I have described in more detail in the last chapter [figure 18]) where this thought was even more firmly cemented in my mind (see Glazier and Jones 2007). As I discussed, through poetry and dance I was forcefully reminded that the past was very much alive amongst the Ababda Bedouin groups that had settled in Quseir and I realised that I simply could not compete with my archaeological presentations, my technical words and jargon, or with my museums, the theatres of the dead. At a time when the western world looked at Egypt through a distinctly westernised political lens, ten or so nine years olds, from what many in Europe would see as poverty stricken backgrounds, proudly enacted their glorious heritage without even so much as a single archaeological artefact to back them up. They transcended their economic, political, even their class distinction, to forcefully announce their ownership of their own particular brand of Egyptian heritage. The group invited me and my colleagues to a unique museum 'without walls'. What I believe to be Eman's hint has therefore become the central thread of this thesis; coevality and coexistence really are the keys to retelling the past of Egypt, for I see them as the source of inspiration for the museum of the future. In many respects meeting and conversing with people from another country or just different people from one's own, can cut through politics, archaeological and anthropological theoretical biases, intolerance and ignorance in manner totally unlike any other means can. Museums need to become open to a far wider range of memories, and to display the memories

of the living as well as remains of the dead. When I last briefly saw Eman during my visit to Quseir in January/February 2006, she gave me a small *shisha* as a gift and as a memento of my time in Egypt. In doing so she presented me with a reminder that the stories that I had heard in the local cafés, in many ways held the true spirit of the country, as opposed to the history that was favoured by my museums that focused upon the past which lay buried in the tombs and the monuments of the pharaohs.

Lebanon, broken promises and losing contact

Retaliating against a series of rocket attacks on her borders, in the summer of 2006 Israel began an unpopular campaign of bombardment of Lebanese towns and cities. Many, including Eman, felt that the west was not doing enough to halt these reprisal attacks. At the time I was becoming involved in setting up a potential cross over project between several schools in the UK and Egypt. The idea was to use the collections at the Petrie Museum as a focal point for a series of artistic exchanges based upon the theme of journeys. I sent an email to Eman, hoping that she would like to get her own institution involved in this project. Eventually she agreed that she would ask the manager and the other required officials in Quseir. I had thought that this exercise could act as a way of bringing people together. In my mind museum collections and artistic expression could go some way to healing the increasingly tumultuous relationship between the east and the west. At first however, Eman was unsure as to whether she wanted her pupils to become involved with British institutions. I was taken aback; I had assumed that she would naturally leap at the chance to work on what I viewed as a potentially prestigious project. Yet, in hindsight, once again I was subconsciously attempting to position myself as the privileged giver, the professional charity dispenser. By refusing to become involved, Eman had discovered a way of redressing the balance and our relationship was switched around. Consequentially I became frustrated, and felt powerless. Eventually, she did agree that it was a good idea and proceeded to gain the required permission. Yet, this time it was my turn to disappoint her. The project was engaged in the hunt for funding and was not progressing very far. Eman asked when I would let her know more, and I explained that I could not answer that question with any real accuracy at that point. A few months later I sent another email telling her that the situation still had not changed and I tried to explain that the project was just an idea and that it could take a very long time to actually materialise. I did not receive one back. It transpired that after becoming engaged Eman now spent most of her time with her family in Cairo. Occasionally I will receive an email as part of a group posting, but still she has never returned any of my personal messages. Despite helping me throughout the main sections discussed in this chapter, Eman has unfortunately not read this conclusion. It therefore remains written entirely from my own viewpoint[10]. Nevertheless her unceasingly energetic pursuit of what she thinks is best for her students, colleagues and fellow Egyptians has inspired me, and has both directly and indirectly helped me to formulate many of the ideas expressed in the next and final chapter of this thesis - my

recommendations for the future of the museum. Most importantly as Eman said, eerily predicting future events during my visit to the Ahmed Ali on the 11th April 2005:

> 'Museums should tell new stories and use music, performance and history to change the world; they should not dwell on modern politics. This only ever leads to misunderstandings between people.'

[1] Although the establishment of Human Rights groups offers a positive counterbalance to this particularly the Partisans Association of Human Rights in Cairo (PAHRC) in 1977 and the Partisans Association of Human Rights in Alexandria (PAHRA) in 1979.

[2] For a greater discussion of the potential problems of foreign investment in Egypt, see Zaalouk's *Power, Class and Foreign Capital in Egypt* (1989).

[3] Benedict Anderson's seminal study of the mechanisms of nationalism (1991) is of relevance here.

[4] For more, also see Ray Bush's *Economic Crisis and the Politics of Reform in Egypt* (1999).

[5] Waterbury provides a more detailed description of these events (1983).

[6] Muhammad now works for the airport at Marsa Alarm. He was central to Darren Glazier's fieldwork in the city between 1999 and 2003. Although I do not really dwell upon my own relationship to Muhammad in this thesis, it should be noted that he nevertheless retains a love for the Project in Quseir and is one of the main proponents for a heritage centre in the city.

[7] This conclusion has also been reached in light of Arun Agrawal's study of divide between indigenous and scientific knowledge (1995).

[8] On the western media's negative portrayal of the Middle East again see Said (1997).

[9] The full list for the elections was made up of representatives from the following parties:

    National Democratic Party
    National Front for Change (includes New Wafd, Nasirite, Al-Tajammu, Kifaya)
    Muslim Brotherhood (as independents)
    Al-Ghad Party
    Socialist Liberal Party
    Social Solidarity Party
    Misr (Egypt) 2000 Party
    Green Party
    Free Social Constitutional Party
    Democratic Union Party
    Socialist Arab Egypt Party
    National Reconciliation Party
    Al-Jil (Generation) Party
    Independents

[10] Eman has seen the notes that formulated everything excerpt the conclusion of this chapter. She has given her permission for me to include descriptions of our meetings, which she has never revoked. Indeed, her silence could simply be caused by now living in Cairo. Nevertheless, I feel conscious of letting her down in some respects and have therefore chosen to comment upon this here. Part of her silence could simply be because of life taking over - she had her own worries to deal with closer to home.

Figures 112 and 113. Above: Mubarak election poster, Quseir, 2005. **Below:** The Carpe Vitam Learning Centre, Quseir.
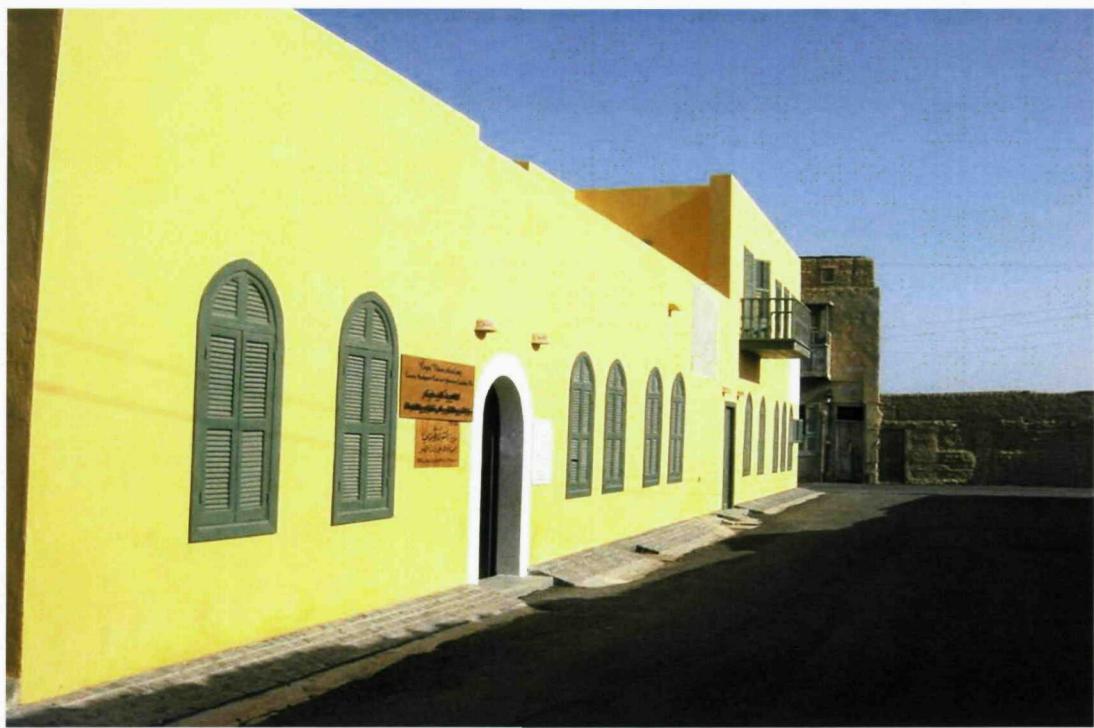
Figures 114 and 115. Above: Teachers at Quseir al-Qadim (Eman is third from right, next to Lamya). Below: Author's reconstruction of the Roman waterfront at Quseir al-Qadim, 2003.
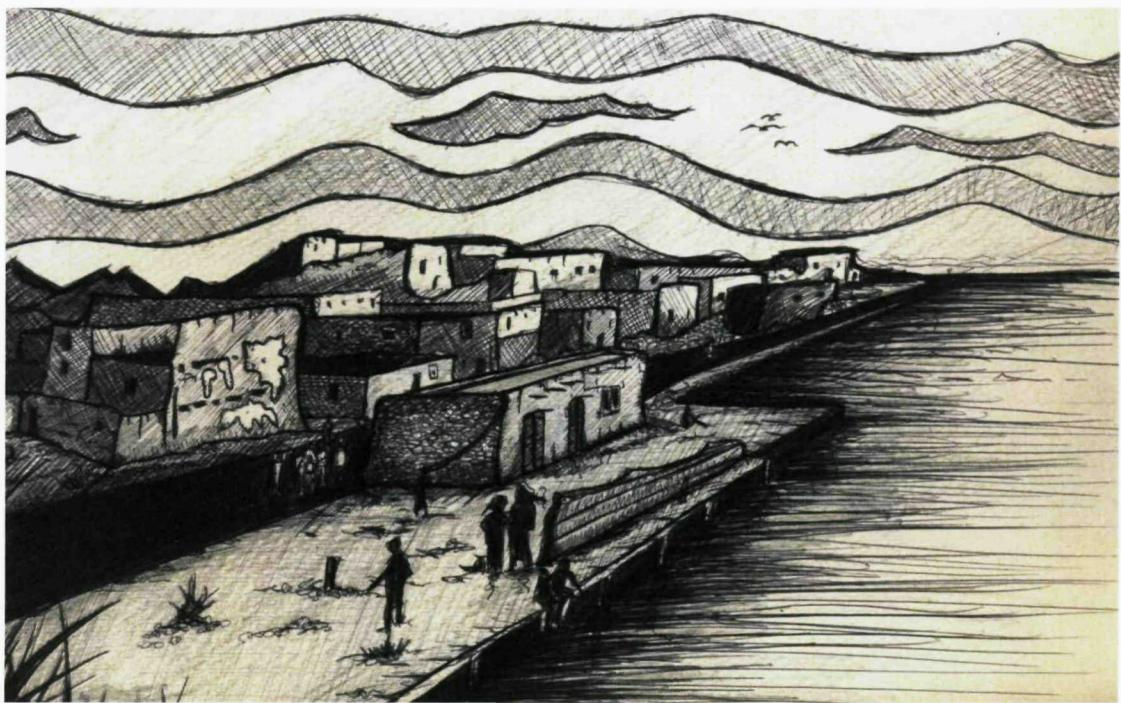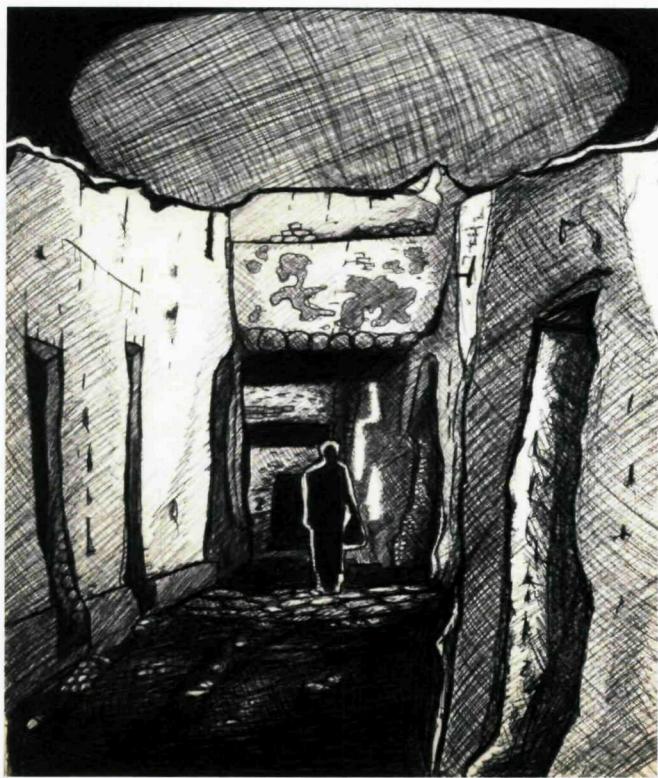
Figures 116 and 117. Left: Author's reconstruction drawing of the Roman streets of Quseir al-Qadim, 2003. **Below:** The most popular image – *An Old Man Telling a Story* (author's illustration, 2003).

Figures 118 and 119: Above: Entrance to the Ahmed Ali Primary School, Quseir. Note the graveyard between the school gate and the Ababda houses. **Below**: Ababda, Coptic and Nubian pupils of Ahmed Ali enjoying break-time.
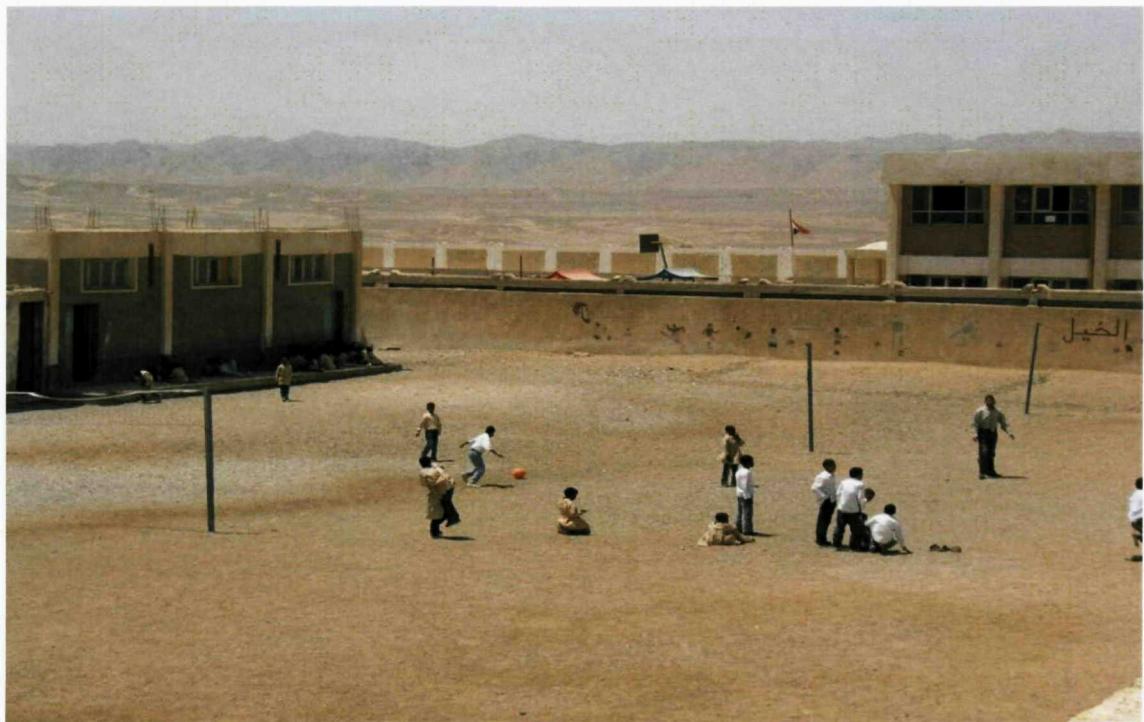
Chapter Nine

Retelling the past, staging the museum of the future

'...the corruption has come from a devastating storm based on distorted principles badly understood which burst suddenly on the country and, as we have seen, turned it upside down in the worst way. Furthermore, the matter is greater and more dangerous than is curable by patch-work cures. What is required is nothing less than another overpowering storm based upon sound and true principles, a storm which must arise, put up what has fallen, and repair what has been ruined.'

(Al-Hakim 1985: 58)

More and more books are appearing that see the museum as a social service, a place that should reflect the needs and the ideals of its host 'community'/'communities' (Hein 1998; papers in Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 2001; Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 1994, 2000; Karp and Lavine 1991; papers in Karp, Kreamer and Lavine 1992; Kavanagh 1996, 2000; Korn and Sowd 1990; papers in Peers and Brown 2003)[1]. We are told that the museum should seek to make itself accountable to a plurality of the past, to the various impressions of its increasingly diverse audiences (i.e. Black 2005; Chittendon, Farmelo and Lewenstein 2004; Keene 2005; Davidson 1991; papers in Durbin 1996; Kavanagh 1996, 2000; papers in McManus 2001). It is inferred that there should be, perhaps even are, no longer such things as meta-narratives; rather we bring our own memories to the collections that we view and we engage with these things in correspondingly different ways to our neighbours (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill 1994; 2000; Kaplan 1995; Kavanagh 1996; 2000)[2]. In this respect, the past has seemingly become piecemeal, a buffet from which we construct our personal dish of morsels, indicative of our own highly individual tastes and memories; thus fit for our own unique consumption. The museum is often seen as a source of social reform simply by virtue of its ability to adapt to all palettes and to all histories[3]. Unfortunately to my mind this postmodern shift in rhetoric makes me feel somewhat uncomfortable, indicative as it is of a form of heritage-inspired consumerism[4]. Call it a meta-narrative, even deride it for a return to modernist thinking, but I would rather see museums looking to the future and striving to act as arenas of dialogue, sites of social comment and as theatres seeking to challenge the status quo[5]. I see them as stages, enabling the dispossessed by giving them a single, unified voice; not a series of fragmented, disconnected ones (as to some extent do papers in Sandell 2002a; Sandell 1998, 2007; Weil 2002). Collections of millennia of human existence should not merely be used to further abstract arguments of Saussurian notions of 'signifier' and 'signified', constantly shifting visual collages that reach little beyond a mass of assorted surfaces, conveying meaning only by the 'agency' of their viewers. Neither should they merely act as vehicles for fashionable designers, powerful private funding bodies and only the

latest trends in university research. I would rather the museum of the future[6] sought to retell the past, to animate history using the everyday stories of humanity alongside the groundbreaking studies of academia, as its scripts. To achieve this I feel that it will have to radically transform itself – indeed in many respects it may no longer even be recognisable as a museum (see figures 120 and 121)[7]. I see a link between the museum and the city, both cannot be easily defined and easily simplified. As the city can perhaps be seen as the ultimate expression of human evolution, of our dreams and needs, I see the museum of the future using its own diverse object populations not to form a series of individualised, nationalised, marketable and easily consumable histories but rather as *the ultimate expression of a unified humanity - in their architecture and their organisation they are capable of representing the very best of us.* Despite using this thesis to bring only a few extra, individual points of view to the debate, I would like to see future museums being planned by as many people as possible – the larger the design population the greater the stimuli for innovative ideas and correspondingly the more powerful the potential statement to be made by the institution. For these important mechanisms of social change should be a statement, not necessarily always a simple reactionary comment aimed at a diverse audience, but rather a revolutionary statement made *by* this diverse audience[8]. Although the museums visitors may not be as diverse as the literature wishes, audiences of the past are nevertheless as encompassing as humanity, for we are all bound by our links and our debts to the past. But how can we unify this past, how can we mould some new statements and tell new stories? In this final chapter I shall at last sketch a few possibilities inspired by my work in Quseir and my rereading of the museum - a few faltering steps towards the realisation of this ideal.

Expanding narratives

Firstly we need to expand our narrative tools; indeed it is this that has been one of the main focal points of this PhD research project. For too long the objects, the collectors, the trustees, the designers and their particular iconographic contexts and prejudices have dictated the flow of the public museum. I feel that is time that we moved beyond mere outreach and listened to the storylines of other people, not as a charitable action but as a source of knowledge and learning. As I have found out, academia and the professional world of museums have a lot to offer to the display of the past, but we cannot offer everything. I could not agree more with Le Corbusier's announcement, that the museum:

'...DOES NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY. IT MISLEADS, IT DISSIMULATES, IT DELUDES. IT IS A LIAR.'
(Le Corbusier 1925 [1987]: 3)

Therefore we must challenge ourselves by looking to narrative and representational forms outside of our genre, our privileged world of conferences, publications, design meetings and our classical, biblical and romantic literary traditions. This need not only include the art world, but also the café, the public house, the street theatre, or in my case, even conversations held in another city in another country; as Moser notes, we must abandon conventional display narratives and 'challenge the iconography' (2003: 11-13) (figures 120 and 121). We must nevertheless remain wary of elitism. In expanding the narrative, we also need to remain self-reflexive. The museum should encourage a swapping of stories – analogy may be a good starting point in this respect. Through these places, whether by opportunities provided by the internet[9] or simply by their role as stages of dialogue, people like Sabr could meet and interact with English folksingers, even North Sea fishermen, swapping their cultures and stories of their pasts. Hassan could be introduced to Hampshire Gypsies, Amer to London shop keepers, market sellers and Egyptologists. Lamya could swap tales of motherhood, and theological history and Eman and her students could meet the poorer pupils of South London to dispel myths of an affluent majority in the UK. Objects, the lifeblood of museums, would benefit strongly from a notion of swapping stories. In order to achieve this transformation exhibitions need to widen their modes of expression. As in Quseir the past is performed, dramatised and drawn, objects are utilised in symbiosis with other mediums, so too must the museum expand its own range of expression. Satire, lampoon and elegy should be employed, as well as the more familiar epic, tragedy and romance. In the museum of Egyptology, ancient Egyptian tales should be mixed with modernist, folk and contemporary Egyptian forms (figures 122 and 123)[10]. As Amer recently told me (April 7th 2007), the objects of the past and the narratives of both history and the present are twins – to separate them is to alienate them. Yet this is not to concentrate only upon the representations of the nation whose past is being portrayed, an unthinking mimesis of only one national, cultural narrative type, rather I would see the best aspects of a variety of ideas from a variety of contexts being employed - for to make something new one must mix a diversity of concepts and innovations. Alongside subverting the concept of the museum, I also argue for the subverting of the concept of the audience and for this one may turn to a selection of different, yet complementary, sources.

Subverting the audience

Ahmad Shawqi, the 'prince of poets', wrote a number of poetic dramas during the latter part of his life. Focusing upon various peoples and events of the past, these included *Masra' Kliyubatra* (The Death of Cleopatra [1929]), *Majnun Layla* (1931) – a verse drama based on the classical poet of the same name, *Amirat al-Andulus* (The Spanish Princess [1932]) and, taking an eighteenth century Egyptian ruler as its focus, *'Ali Bey al-Kabir* (written in 1893 and later revised) (see Allen 1989; 2000: 201-2; Manzalaoui 1977, for more on the development of Arabic drama see Allen

1984; Badawi 1988a, 1988b; Jayyusi and Allen 1995; Al-Khozai 1984, Al-Ra'i 1980). Yet outside of the popular comedies and farces and Shawqi's more serious form of theatre, little existed until the famous Egyptian playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim (d.1987) began his writing career (see Fontaine 1978; Long 1979; Starkey 1987). His socially perceptive and critical plays unashamedly looked to Europe for their inspiration, yet nevertheless retained a style, which although often focusing on the past or on mythology and folklore, still remained firmly rooted within the context of modern Egyptian life and politics. Although having written many well know plays such as *Ahl al-Kahf* (The People of the Cave [1933]), *Shahrazad* (Scheherazade [1934]), *Pygmalion* (1942), *Sulayman al-Hakim* (Solomon the Wise [1943]) and *Al-Malik Udib* (King Oedipus [1949]), it is al-Hakim's post Revolution (1952) works that offer the most interest here (see al-Hakim 1973, 1981). In pieces such as *Al-Aydi al-na'imah* (Soft Hands, 1954), and *Al-Sultan al-ha'ir* (The Sultan Perplexed [1960]), al-Hakim focused upon the loss of traditional, individual power and the corresponding manner in which once powerful elites had to redefine themselves within a socialist context. Alongside these, his work *al-Safqah*, (The Deal [1956]) is important due to its use of a language that specifically sought to move away from the confines of literary Arabic, and thus to encourage permeation beyond the city elite, reaching out to a wider, popular audience instead. Haqim and his follower Ali Ahmad Bakathir (d.1969) both worked in styles that attempted to deal with important social issues, often utilising key historical case studies. In seeking to bring their works to wider audience, they both subverted the concept of theatre going as merely an elitist pastime.

In turn, Al-Hakim and Bakathir's form of realist Egyptian theatre have certain similarities with the ideas of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin (see Benjamin 1973a and 1973b; Brecht 1940). All of these intellectuals to one extent or another proposed that the theatre should seek to remove the elements of the fantastic, or the naturalistic presentation of the play. Through his famous concept of the epic theatre, Brecht in particular sought to subvert the audience by making his actors present their lines in a way so as to alienate the character whom they portrayed. In short, the stage lost its fabulous veneer and it became a place of learning and social critique, as well as enjoyment. The audience viewed realistic scenarios, but by virtue of the actors' clinical portrayal of their characters, remained detached and critical. In this respect Brecht argued that the historical drama had the most potential, for by being situated in the past it allowed the audience to study the action from a temporal as well as spatial distance – they could ascertain for themselves good and bad actions, they could realise the absurdity of certain acts, notice and be made aware of the exclusion or exploitation of certain groups. Here the museum in itself is at an advantage, indeed the objects of its collections are in many respects its historical characters. We would do well to think of the museum as a form of epic theatre, but firstly we need to subvert the idea of the audience by seeking to break down the traditional barriers between visitors and viewed, between contemporary onlooker and the past. As we have seen, Hassan al-Aqied relies

on his audience to hold his artefacts, to dance with them. The barriers between audience and performer/narrator of history are quite blurred, as Hassan sings he requires that his audience additionally sing back to him, often taking the lead, occasionally acting as little more than a backing group. They do not sit or stand quietly uncritically taking in the action as he performs it – if they do this the whole animation of the past simply falls apart, in this respect it is a true dialogue Indeed, the museum could learn from Hassan, (and Sabr for that matter), one of the ways of doing this is to open the design narrative of the museum up to a wider group of people. Crucially history needs to be presented in a manner that allows their audiences to remain critical – this goes beyond a mere questioning text panel, but rather relies on the museum clinically and unflinchingly representing aspects of past exploitation, conflict, marginalisation of social groups, even unsavoury acquisition practices, as well as the glorious remains of the classical world and the epic, romantic stories of long ruined kingdoms and empires. For all the Rosetta Stones of the world, we would do well to also remember the *Dhua Khety*, (Satire of the Trades) of the world:

'He said to him

I have seen violent beatings;

So direct your heart to writing;

I have witnessed a man seized for his labour

Look, nothing excels writing

It is like a loyal man.

Read for yourself the end of the Compilation

And you can find this phrase in it saying

"The scribe, whatever his place at the Residence

He cannot be poor in it"

He accomplishes the wish of another

When he is not succeeding

I do not see a profession like it

That you could say that phrase for,

So I would have you love writing more than your mother

And have you recognise its beauty

For it is greater than any profession,

There is none like it on earth

He has just begun growing, and is just a child,

When people will greet him (already).

He will be sent to carry out a mission,

And before he returns, he is clothed in linen (like an adult man)

I do not see a sculptor on a mission

Or a goldsmith on the task of being dispatched (?)

But I see the coppersmith at his toil·

At the mouth of his furnace

His fingers like crocodile skin

His stench worse than fish eggs

Any craftsmen using a chisel

Is more exhausted than a labourer.

His fields are the timber,

His plough the metal

No nightfall rescues him,

When he has done in excess of his arms in production;

In night he has to kindle a light...'

(Quirke 2004: 121-2)[11]

It seems childish to think that the audiences of the museum should not hear such information, that it be deemed too fiery or too negative, or simply too intellectual. Indeed, inducing a shared sense of frustration, as well as camaraderie, pride and happiness with the working populations of history, as well as those from other countries and other backgrounds, is as good a unifying device as any, furthermore as good a means of breaking down barriers between viewer and viewed, past and present, as any[12].

Popular performances?

Here we are now beginning to come to one of the central conclusions of this project; as we have seen in Quseir, the past is performed in conversation, poem, song and dance; in a very broad sense one can say that in this respect the past is acted in a form of popular, everyday theatre. A theatre without walls, without paying audiences and trained actors, but rather a performance that so thoroughly merges reality with fiction, viewer and viewed, secular with religious, past with present, stage with seating that it is absolutely removed from the museum and theatre going culture of which I am familiar[13]. As Eman and her friends at the Ahmed Ali school noted, in this respect we would do well to reconsider the museum as a stage, and therefore to reintroduce real, living human performances upon this stage. Yet, we must beware of elitism and aim instead for a more popular medium – the mobile stage of the fairground, of the street and of the traveller, whilst striving to avoid a consumerist 'Disney-fication' process at the same instance (see Brook [1990], Boal [2000] and Samuel [1996: 169-204] for more on the use of this type of theatre; figures 124 and 125). In borrowing from a predominantly prose/poetic and

philosophical/scientific as opposed to dramatic tradition, the conventional museum in Britain has become a rather silent place; a collection of romantic objects lacking in real human emotion and dialogue. Static text, though often critiqued is still central to these places and when removed is simply often replaced with a pre recorded audio recital of the deleted text or as often text in just yet another guise (projections being common). Film does offer a useful means of reaching a wide audience and of engaging with important social issues, but the power of face to face human contact can not be underestimated. A loud, engaging conversation about the past in a café in Quseir (or in a bar in Soho for that matter) can hold people for far longer than the average forty-five minutes given to the exhibition space. Spontaneity is important, but when dealing with the past in the public sphere and when articulating important research findings alongside social commentary, scripts of some form are also crucial. I do not propose that the museum as we know it be entirely done away with (although sometimes I must admit to feeling that this would be beneficial in certain cases), but rather that it seeks to include, even model itself upon a theatre of sorts, but a form of theatre that is popular, critical, satirical and diverse, not the nostalgic, romantic, re-enactment dominated form that is so indicative and so bound up with postmodern heritage attractions. Additionally, although there is work such as that conducted by the Triangle Theatre Company that seeks to utilise immersive theatre and other avant-garde performance forms within a museum setting, we must nevertheless remain cautious of elitism. There are several examples that we can turn to for inspiration, examples which in keeping with the topic of this thesis, are drawn from both a European and an Egyptian tradition, although it should be remembered that if it is was not for the confines of space imposed here we could move even further abroad and find complimentary examples from many other different contexts, both of the past and of the present.

In 1891, Artur Hazelius' rebuilt his Museum of Scandinavian Folklore in Stockholm to include several large buildings all populated with costumed interpreters (Gillam 2006: 3). Perhaps the earliest European example of performances being held within a museum, this idealised depiction of rural Swedish life was aimed at the working classes rather than the traditional bourgeois audience of the museum (Bennett 1988). Moving to the present day, one soon notices that the idea of an 'archaeology of performance' is itself rapidly gaining kudos within the academic world (Hughess 1998; Gillam 2006; Pearson and Shanks 2001)[14]. Largely developed by British prehistorians, the concept of performance archaeology has perhaps been articulated most fully within the pages of Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' *Theatre/Archaeology* (2001). Querying the rise of popular re-enactment on archaeological sites they argue for a more creative, self-reflexive use of the performative medium, a performance in which they envisage the role of the object as a source by which to extend the body both physically and temporally. This book in itself was notably influenced by several earlier works, with the study of the relationship between an objects

gender identity and the pronouncements of others as expressed in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) being of particular relevance. Moving closer to the topic of this thesis, Robyn Gillam has also recently explored the possibility of encouraging an element of performance within Egyptology (2006). Using archaeological and textual remains she studied the evidence for performative activities in Egypt from the beginning of the historic period up until the late Roman Empire, arguing that despite remaining a difficult and frustrating task, modern performance and interpretation of Egyptian texts can provide some interesting insights into the world of ancient Egypt.

Based on such texts as the Middle Kingdom Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus (see Sethe 1928 for reproduction) and the New Kingdom Triumph or Victory of Horus engraved on the outer western enclosing wall of the Temple of Horus at Edfu (see Fairman 1935), Gillam has attempted to recreate Egyptian drama within a modern context (Gillam 2006: 135-48, also see Piccione 2000). Although acknowledging the many pitfalls of staging a theatrical assignment as part of an undergraduate course, she noted that through focusing on imaginative interpretation of the original texts, not only did the students engage more thoroughly with them, they also brought a great deal of their own life experiences to the task (Gillam 2006: 138-45). As we have seen in Quseir, Amer, Eman and her students and colleagues Sabr, Hassan and Lamya, all advocated performance of one form or another in the museum environment – utilising ancient Egyptian texts as a source of inspiration for these performances not only animates the past, it also allows the populations of the present to physically interact with these texts, bringing them to life through a popular medium. Yet, the literal interpretation of ancient texts should only be the beginning; we need to combine these with other sources of dramatic inspiration as well in order to achieve the transformation of the museum environment that I envisage[15].

Pre-nineteenth century Arabic historical drama was largely dominated by a variety of colloquial performative modes including the renditions of the *hakawati* (storytellers), who would generally include music and gesticulation as part of the narrative, and popular farces such as the shadow play and *Karagoz* (everyman) – a form of Punch and Judy-esque puppet show (see Lane 1836: 323-462; Moreh 1992 for more). Although late nineteenth and early to mid, twentieth century Egyptian drama focused upon European models in an aim to create a true national theatre, attempts to retain the popular origins of dramatic modes of representations continued long after the Revolution of 1952. Incorporating, yet also moving away from popular farce, the Egyptian playwright Nu'man 'Ashur's (d.1987) *An-Nas illi taht* (Downstairs Folk [1956]), like many of Tawfiq al-Hakim's works, addressed the relations between people of different socio-economic classes and professions through the use of colloquial Arabic, yet also, comedy (Allen 2000: 204). In turn, with the rise in governmental and intellectual interest of Egyptian folktales during the

sixties and seventies, a number of plays began to appear that looked to popular stories for their inspiration – Shawqi 'Abd al-Hakim and Najib Surur in particularly being linked to this movement (see Allen 1989; Badawi 1988a; Jayyusi and Allen 1995 for more).

Alongside these Egyptian examples we may also turn to the continent and to Britain for examples of a theatre that strove to reach a wide audience whilst not necessarily comprising its artistic integrity. Moliere's curiously termed 'tragicomedy' is interesting in its ability to mix popular, colloquial farce on the one hand with studied, polished wit on the other (as pointed out by Bermel in his introduction to his translation of Moliere's one act plays [1992: 2)[16]. This style emerged out of his experience as a travelling performer, and was also notably inspired by the popular Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition; a tradition that became synonymous with the 19th century fair in England and a dramatic form from which I believe the museum may also borrow in its search for more socially engaged representations of the past (see figures 126 and 127).

'History, to creative minds, is often a dry dead thing. It is the story of the past.
Creators are concerned with the Present and the Future. It concerns our old
friends Harlequin, Pantaloon, Pulcinella or Punch and their companions...the
Doctor, Brighella, Scaramuccia, Coviello and the Captain. What fun, you think.
Yes what fun...but what genius also, for the inventors of these figures were men
of genius. Whether the inventors were peasants or actors or both is immaterial.
The point has not yet been decided: but is has been very clearly decided and
recorded that the inventors were not *play-writers*.'
(Craig 1999 [1911]: 147)

Commedia dell'arte (roughly translated as 'comedy of the artists') finds it origins in folk tradition and oral history, popular modes only later appropriated by professional playwrights and scholars (see Beaumont 1926; Bucknell 1980; Craig 1912; Dick 1960; Ducharte 1966; Gordon 1983; Oreglia 1968; Rudlin 1994; Sand 1958; Smith 1912 for more on the origins, themes and characters of this dramatic form). In sixteenth century Italy, not unlike 19th and 20th century Egypt, actors took already existing folk forms, in this case improvised mask making, music and dance and moulded them into a theatrical medium. Over the next few centuries these were developed into specialised performance techniques that were in turn passed selectively on to siblings (Rudlin 1994:2). Troupes of *commedia* actors banded together, forming travelling communes that wandered from market and country fair to carnival, setting up wherever they could draw a sizeable crowd. Indeed, if one looks to an image of an English country fair of around 1820, one can notice a group of *commedia dell'arte* influenced characters 'barking' (a form of hawking-like advertising) outside the entrance booth (figure 126). *Commedia* performances

relied upon a set of stock characters, masks, acrobatics, song and dance and improvised comedic interludes, often with interplay between audience and actors. Using these stock characters, alongside the other techniques of the form, plays lampooned social relations and modern politics, frequently drawing huge crowds in doing so. As John O'Brien notes in his *Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690-1760*, the British Harlequin tradition actually served to fill the vacuum in terms of public debate that was created by Walpole's one-party rule (2004). The crucial point here is that a popular dramatic form, not unlike many of the traditions we have seen in Quseir nor so different to the plays of Shakespeare or even the popular British television programme *Time Team*, actually encouraged a flourishing of public debate concerning history, politics and social relations – this is exactly what I feel the modern museum itself requires.

This is not to say that museums should necessarily employ *commedia dell'arte* troupes, but rather that there is room for a dramatic form, with its roots in popular traditions whether Egyptian or European, that may function as a means of encouraging public debate and questioning preconceived notions of the past. What we can ascertain from the Egyptian and *commedia* examples is that this needs to be a colloquial form, not a RADA inspired high art, nor the nostalgic re-enactment of which Pearson and Shanks are so critical (although as Samuel argues we can not ignore the fact that wide numbers of people find re-enactment an exciting alternative to more academically sanctioned approaches to the past [1996: 169-204]). However, the next logical question is could a popular folk-tradition survive when subsumed into such a traditionally middle class environment? Would it transform this site or merely be sanitised and stopped from acting as a satirical and subversive form of entertainment by virtue of being co-opted by the museum? Nevertheless, despite this threat I feel that this modern form of theatre, with a set of readymade, stock characters, has the potential to ask questions of colonialism and imperialism in the museum environment, whilst actual performances by, for example, Egyptian *semsemia* groups, theatre companies and poets alongside ancient Egyptian forms (what we know of them) could function to portray modern and ancient, non-European representation both of, and from, the past.

Yet, it should be noted that before any of this may actually work, the museum of the future must also rethink the idea of its objects; it must consider them as symbolic tropes, even as props, as well as artefacts indicative of a certain period, location or type.

Rethinking the object

The rise of material culture studies in the last thirty years has led to questioning of the idea of the object (see Appadurai 1986; Attfield 2000; Baudrillard 1996; papers in Buchli 2002a; Clark 1997; papers in Crane 2000; Gell 1998; Gosden 2004; Gosden and Knowles 2001; Jones 2004, 2007;

Maleuvre 1999; Meskell 2004; Miller 1983; 1987; Thomas 1991; 1997; Tilley 1991; Ucko 1969). Scholars such as Judith Butler (1993) and Janet Hoskins (1998) have looked at the way in which objects act as important symbolic tropes, items that both serve to reflect social relations and to 'tell the stories of peoples lives' (Hoskins 1998). Indeed as Buchli has pointed out, material culture studies have sought to understand the manner in which the various materials of social life structure and give meaning to that life (2002: 3). Although this thesis has seemingly focused in greater detail upon historical texts and the words and performances of those living in Quseir, I too have attempted to add to the material culture debate, arguing that although objects may structure our lives, we as humans use stories and performances to in turn add meaning to the things that we encounter and we use (as does Jones 2007: 63). The museum, that great temple to the object, has also come about in light of a shared knowledge of certain iconic narratives and memories. In Quseir, the archaeological past, though distinctly based on symbolic material, often actually gains meaning through the application of symbolic narratives to this material. As seen, Sabr and Hassan immersed their important objects within musical, poetic performances, using them as iconographic tropes that added meaning to the tale or song - the museum environment could benefit from taking a similar approach to its collections, a similar view of its artefacts. This differing view of the material 'thing' has been eloquently described by the great Arabic litterateur Adonis in his *al-Sufiyya wal Surriyaliyya* (Sufism and Surrealism 2005 [1995]):

'We know that the term 'moulder/creator' is one of the great names of God, and it is he who has fashioned all existing things and has given them their diversity and multiplicity, a particular form, a shape, which distinguishes them from the rest.

Every object is the visible-apparent image of itself and ideative, concealed image. The image of an object is not restricted, as some people think, to its outward appearance but comprises its innate sense, i.e. its truth and meaning as well. Thus we see that those who are content to copy the external appearance of an object (representing it as a reality – as it appears to the eye) present only a superficial part of it, in addition to which it is a valueless reproduction. When we represent the superficial appearance of an object, we have a false image of it; in order to get a real sense of it, we must conceive it, that is, we must explain its sense and its meaning and we must represent it for that reason in accordance with that conception.'

(Adonis 2005 [1995]: 166)

Museums have tended to place value upon their objects by linking them to scientific, chronological and typological, though as we have seen, arguably also classical, biblical, and romantic narratives; in taking inspiration from my many encounters in Quseir, it is suggested that

the museum need also consider its objects as tropes that may work in relation to narratives drawn from Egypt herself - ancient, yet also modern narratives[17]. As mentioned one way to do this is to situate the object, as Amer, Hassan and Sabr do, within an actual performance of the past and to think of it as a central prop for this performance.

In considering a form of museum theatre as envisaged in the preceding paragraphs, a challenging, subversive and dynamic form, it becomes obvious that objects should in turn be central to this mode of representation. Conservation and issues of security mean that the majority of the artefacts of a collection need to remain displayed in secure cases, yet some artefacts would need to be donated to the performances that I envisage – indeed as seen, Hassan's portrayals of the past were very reliant upon the physical presence of antique material. Therefore archaeological remains need to be reconsidered as important symbols, visual aids to further the narrative of the dramatic mode of which they are a part, whilst not being too swift to completely remove a conservation/research horizon – a sense of balance is required here. Only a relatively small number of artefacts would be needed, for, as seen in Quseir, *semsemia* performances need only the instruments and the musicians as a visual aid. Furthermore, even Ababda Bedouin dances work with only a couple of swords, and even these, alongside the shields are often improvised. A form of performance space surrounded by archaeological material in some way relating to the script and narrative of the drama, poetry or music that is enfolding would probably suffice, although if performances were to tour (as nomadic Ababda, ballad mongers and *semsemia* groups do), then some pieces would need to travel with these troupes. A mixture of both 'in-house' alongside travelling performances such as these would be the ideal solution, yet to do this institutions would need to consider employing and making provision for script writers and actors, preferably, in the case of museums of Egyptian archaeology in the UK, made up of a mix of Egyptian and Europeans, professionals and amateurs. In the selection of artefacts, the narrative would have to be laid out and split into iconographic images, which could then be transformed into relevant symbolic objects.

For example, taking Yasser Abdullatif's poem *Archeology* (as mentioned in relation to Hassany's journey to Quseir in chapter six), as a central, one act performance by a single individual, one may further detail this idea (all examples of potential archaeological objects are taken from UCL's collections unless stated otherwise):

'1

Alternating tiles of white and black

Make up the floor of the hall,

Safely touched by the domestic slippers,

To the study.

An old wooden desk,

With a surface of rough green leather

Traversed by the fingers, turning over the papers,

Unconscious of the texture.

The flood-lit door opens into the garden,

A minute staircase, two or three steps,

And a broom of straw abandoned on the threshold.

A short palm tree is the entire legacy

Of the garden, with spaces of worn-out lawn

Here and there.'

Imagery: Nostalgic, domestic interior – everyday objects touched by an unseen, now departed hand. Garden, relatively unkempt (abandoned broom, worn out lawn etc). The domestic, solitary past of a scholar or intellectual?

Objects: Material associated with writing and the life of a writer. For example, Roman codices displayed alongside a stela fragment from Meydum, tomb 34, depicting a couple, one of which is described as 'scribe, accountant of cattle Paheray' (figure 128).

'2

Miraculously a desert springs up here.

When twelve lean cows die,

And a row of palm trees grows,

A provincial university is established,

With a paved road running by it,

Wide enough for a man wearing an old fez

To walk alone, enjoying the warmth of wisdom.

With the hot, dusty khamasin winds blowing,

He considers the aesthetics of death:

The drunken throws may persist for decades

Before the thinkers take them up

And weave them into a theory of life.'

Imagery: Transformative power of the imagination, from empty unkempt garden to city populated with the departed intellectual of the first stanza. 'Fez wearing' suggestive of an out-

dated individual. He considers the role of scholars in glamorizing those no longer on the earth, reducing them into numbers and data suitable for modern theories.

Objects: Artefacts indicative of the consideration of human mortality and the afterlife. These could potentially include the two Old Kingdom/First Intermediate Period bowls from Qau and Hu currently in the Petrie Museum (figure 129). The first has a letter from a man to his deceased parents inscribed upon it, whilst the second has a piece written from a woman to her departed husband.

'3

The dances by the sea,

The female bodies washed with beer and lemon juice.

With my face to the sea, I turned my back on them

Smoking.

Their music does not accord with the horizon;

Even in picnics death is present

For us to contemplate,

All of us, each in his own way.'

Imagery: Even when relaxing and enjoying ourselves, we are part of the transition of time (the horizon representing time? Music as a distraction from this awareness?). The realisation that we too will one day become the archaeology of the future.

Objects: Modern *semsemias* (figure 130) and New Kingdom/Roman musical instruments - cymbals, bells, pipes and remnants of harps alongside drinking bowls (i.e. 12th/13th dynasty examples from Lahun).

'4

We are leaving the houses

 In search of a postponed death,

For the tales of death out of doors

Are more numerous than the tales of death indoors.

The houses which we had thought were

Matchboxes for sleep, sex and reading –

Actions that help us break the limits of place –

Only exist to be transcended:

They do not, in fact, exist.'

Imagery: Houses, and the domestic everyday environment are seen as ignored by those that write history – with history mainly being the preserve of the stories of spectacular outdoor events. The mundane means by which most of humanity passes their time simply do not exist within accounts such as these.

Objects: Reintegration of everyday, mundane artefacts – combs, beds, evidence of popular, secular writing, domestic pottery etc. Objects could include remnants of Roman furniture, and Naqada period spoons and combs, and the Coptic Ostracon (UC 71106), that bears the lines: 'Concerning the garment which you have slit for me, I have paid you six measures, amounting to one trimesion of gold.' (www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk: 2007; figure 131).

'5

There is an old house on a historical street to which

I am related by something like regret;

I stand on the pavement opposite,

Looking at the wall panels, the windows,

And the surviving decorations:

A clothesline that witnessed generation after generation

Of clothes, and the fingers that played on the pegs

The tune of social climbing.

There is a house which, if I had once inhabited it,

I would not have seen the way I see it now –

Like a homeland and a friend; a house

Only exists when missed.'

Imagery: Old house, forgotten by the owners and thus indicative of the forgetting of the things that one leaves behind in the search for more magnificent things ('the tune of social climbing'). A simple past missed by the author, but not necessarily by historians?

Objects: Artefacts left behind by archaeologists – i.e. what is perceived to be insignificant broken pottery or in the case of Egypt, possibly Islamic and Coptic remains? Pieces sold in bazaar shops for the tourist market in Modern Egypt and Sudan could equally act as potent symbols of 21st century life that are ignored in the museum in the UK, as could Egyptian/Sudanese newspapers, popular Egyptian 'Cleopatra' cigarette packets, framed images of Mecca and Medina sold to the Muslim pilgrim market, and the cheap teapots and tea glasses in use in many modern Egyptian and Sudanese cafés and coffee shops.

'6

I shall go out to the desert like a fugitive,

And under the skull-smelting sun

My past life will melt away,

And I shall see my future as a mirage.

Two girls trying to get some water for their father

From a well with a wall of clay.

I shall escort them on the way back home,

Watching the light of the setting sun

Play on *their silken dresses*,

One blue, the other wine-coloured –

Two color spots on the sea of sand.

Two slits in the dresses, opening

And closing, reveal their Bedouin legs.

Their old father will talk to me

In metaphysics, give me the younger one's hand

In marriage – the one with the small feet –

But I shall secretly sleep with the older.

For ten years I shall shepherd his flocks

And know the taste of pastoral love.

For ten years, then I shall return to the city,

Carrying the vastness of the desert

In my breast and worthy

To break the law which

I ran away from.'

(Abdullatif 2003:44-6)

Imagery: Retreat from the city, Bedouin family as a return to older, simple ways. Rejection of the young in favour of the old, learning from older pastoral past before returning to the city with newly acquired knowledge. The 'ignored' past as a source of education?

Objects: Rejection of famous Egyptian museum icons in favour of little known artefacts i.e., juxtaposition of ancient Egyptian objects with modern Bedouin/fishing/farming/labouring material culture (figure 130)? For example modern Red Sea fishing nets, *semsemias* and examples of domestic *hajj* paintings could be juxtaposed against artefacts made from precious metals for the Egyptian social elite, such as a Naqada gold bead, a cylinder amulet and a gold ring from the Petrie Museum's collections[18].

In the example above, I have roughly drawn up a plan for the organisation of material culture according to a narrative taken from, in this case, modern Egypt. In order to retell the past we need to think in turn of the traditional organisational framework of the museum in the UK as a linking of archaeological objects to typological, scientific, historical, biblical and romantic narratives (among others), only then can we began to rewrite aspects of these narratives to fit other forms, both ancient and modern (see figures 132 and 133 for examples of the use of other literary forms to organise material in the Petrie Museum). Furthermore we need to reconsider the role of the object as an iconographic prop. We need not only link and structure artefacts according to modern poems or dramatic scripts, leaving the selection of the material icons to people like myself and others of the academic or professional worlds. Rather, through a wide, even international, use of focus groups, the choosing of symbolic objects could be widened to include a vast array of different people, of differing ages, cultures and creeds. These same people could in turn structure their own museum cabinets, alongside the displays of specialists, according to their own personal narratives, their own diverse pasts – not as an attempt to further fragment and individualise history, but rather to search for, and indeed to witness a common thread of humanity running through their selection and their deployment of this material (this process has already been started in museums – e.g. see Kavanagh 1998; 2000). For, as Lamya mentioned in relation to the *hajj* paintings of Quseir, we would do well to think of the museum as a form of journey, a pilgrimage of enlightenment through which we may achieve a greater understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live. Paradoxically, in many respects this involves a kind of return journey to the original aims of the early renaissance collections (see Moser 2007: 11-32 for more on the thinking behind the displays of these early museums).

Rethinking outreach: the 'guild' model

'How a nation tells its stories through its cultural institutions gives us clues about its sense of itself, its self-confidence and how well equipped it is to deal with the more difficult and painful aspects of its history. One legacy of this bicentenary (of the abolition of slavery) could be a much more vigorous approach to workforce diversity in the museum and archive sectors. Why are the effective actions that will move us from the state we are in now to the place where we say we want to be still so elusive?'

(Baroness Young, House of Lords 2007: column 1572, my brackets)

'Like organisations came into existence wherever a group of men – fishermen, hunters, travelling merchants, builders or settled craftsmen – came together for a

common pursuit. Thus, there was on board ship the naval authority of the captain; but, for the very success of the common enterprise, all men on board, rich and poor, masters and crew, captain and sailors, agreed to be equals in their mutual relations, to be simply men, bound to aid each other and to settle their possible disputes before judges elected by them all.'

(Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 140-1)

Alongside considering the actual displays of the museum, outreach practices need to also be rethought. I have selected the two quotes above to highlight a) the concern that is currently expressed within the House of Lords regarding the need for workforce diversity in the museum sector and b) what I consider to be one of the solutions of actually achieving this. Taking the idea of the guild as a starting point, I suggest that a selection of groups of likeminded individuals bound by skill, profession or speciality could work together in the museum environment to achieve a co-operative representation of the past. Rather than sending a specialist into any given 'minority' group, armed with a questionnaire, I suggest that by taking the concept of analogy[19] as a starting point we may achieve a far more mutually beneficial form of outreach, something that resembles more closely a series of guilds working together for the good of the museum itself, than a handful of specialists engaged in simple outreach practices. Objects themselves would provide a useful binding device in this respect. For example a musical instrument could be presented to a musical 'guild' made up of a range of different individuals, from different backgrounds. A blind, yet excellent piano tuner, an Egyptian *semsemia* player, a British folksinger, an expert musicologist and a curator of musical collections would be connected in this respect, indeed the portrayal of the past drawn from such a diverse, yet complimentary group would probably be like nothing seen before. Even the architecture of the space, if planned by a similarly mixed group of individuals, but this time sharing a mutual involvement in architectural planning of some sort could be transformed in this respect. Ideally the individuals comprising each 'guild' would be selected by his or her own peer group or from a museum body made up of as wide a selection of individuals as possible. A conglomerate made up of each of these specialist bodies would in turn form the museum-design workforce, rather than the current 'expert, designer + outreach' model. As the political theorist James Tully famously argued for national constitutions that recognised diversity and multiculturalism in the inaugural John Robert Seeley lectures at the University of Cambridge in 1994 (Tully 1995), so I in turn argue that museum mission statements need to model themselves on micro-constitutions that function in a similar manner[20]. Yet, one must of course consider the thorny issues of funding before this fanciful dream may ever become a reality.

Funding issues?

Museum and exhibition funding is still currently drawn from a mix of government, arts council, corporate and private sources (see Perrot 1992; Verbaas 1992 – although quite old now, many of the debates in these pieces are still entirely relevant today). Operating in a highly contentious and competitive arena, the sourcing of potential funding is a major aspect of the development of new displays, indeed many of my colleagues in the heritage sector are frequently so inundated with paperwork that they are unable to commit to implementing radical and ground breaking ideas – they simply do not have the time, let alone the resources. Understandably to some extent financial backers are thus in the position of shaping the representation of the past to be consumed by the visitor. Indeed, one could argue that these particular representations will happen to show certain bodies, certain aspects in a more positive or indeed negative light than perhaps they should. I am not an economist, I can not offer a simple 'catch-all' solution, but in order to promote a more equal, less corporately backed future for museums it holds that one must look to the government and to arts council funding for more help, albeit help that does not always concentrate purely on increasing visitor numbers (see DCMS 2007 for a more detailed discussion of governmental funding for National Museums and Galleries, also see papers in Boylan 1992; Cuno 2004)[21]:

> **'Lord Sheldon** asked Her Majesty's Government:
>
> What plans they have for the future funding of museums and galleries.
>
> **Lord Evans of Temple Guiting:** My Lords, DCMS funding for sponsored museums will increase to £336 million by 2008, a real terms increase of 28 per cent since 1997. *Renaissance in the Regions* funding will increase by 40 per cent next year to £45 million. A key outcome of this investment is free entry to national museums, which has led to a 40 per cent increase in visits. Funding for museums from 2008 is being considered as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.'
>
> (House of Lords: 15 Jan 2007: Column 432)

Free entry is one thing, but I argue that in order for future museums to be able to become diverse, challenging and socially engaged, funding must also be provided for exhibitionary strategies aimed at bringing people and their histories together. Nostalgia, a *'Renaissance in the Regions'* is very well, but museums must increasingly be seen as institutions striving for a better future and as sites that are able to challenge present social and economic inequalities. Although there is some evidence of a governmental attempt to do this, their strategies must broaden their focus and attempt to be a little less self glorifying in doing so[22]:

'**Dr. Kumar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what grants have been made to institutions in *(a)* the UK and *(b)* the North East for events marking the bicentenary of the first Act to abolish the transatlantic slave trade.

Mr. Lammy: The Heritage Lottery Fund has made 115 awards totalling over £11 million to projects related to the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade and the slave trade generally.'

(House of Lords: 2nd May 2007: Column 1702W)

Funding in this case is intimately tied once again to a national nostalgia, a remembrance backed in turn by a monetary system based upon the individual's desire to become one of the super rich, with the focus of the funds garnered by this system centred almost entirely upon the notion of Britain leading the way in abolishing a particularly infamous form of brutal enslavement. Indeed as Lord Newby said earlier this year:

'As a general rule, I am not a great fan of political anniversaries. They lead merely to cloying self-congratulation. The 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade has been rather different. There has inevitably been an element of smugness about the fact that Britain took a lead in ending the trade in slaves, but this sentiment is not new. As Dr Eric Williams, the great Trinidadian academic and politician, put it some 50 years ago:

"British historians write almost as if Britain had introduced Negro slavery merely for the satisfaction of abolishing it."'

(House of Lords: 10 May 2007: Column 1567)

There is a recognition of the fact that other forms of slavery and inequalities still exist throughout the world yet still it would appear that we remain contentedly devoted to issues 'closer to home':

'**Lord Clinton-Davis:** There is an uncanny likeness between the slavery outlawed some 200 years ago, so graphically and horrendously outlined by my noble friend Lady Howells, and the plight that befalls many immigrants in the UK today. We should also remember the horrors of the German concentration camps in the last

century, Darfur and many other terrible crimes. However, I propose to concentrate on issues closer to home.'

(House of Lords: 10 May 2007: Column 1567)

If we are to hope for a museum that acts as a stage that voices a challenge to the past, present and the future, we can not afford to look only to our own back garden, to fund only our own national, corporate or private histories. We have to be prepared to talk to those outside of the privileged world of the House of Lords, academia and professional museology, and even more funding must be made available for projects that look at difficult political issues, such as slavery, in a global[23] as well as local sense, and that consider these things within the context of a much broader timescale and political context – projects and exhibitions remembering atrocities of yesteryear yet also addressing and combating those that still are ongoing in the present. To do this we must recognise each of our individual pasts as an aspect of the jigsaw that comprises the history and the struggles of all aspects of humanity not just that of a series of competing nation states, social groups and unrelated individuals bound to the market and its increasingly globalising tendencies. Yet in remembering atrocities we must not neglect the remembrance of the far more common cooperatively inspired events of the last four and a half million years of our existence. The times when different individuals met, got along with one another and in doing so managed to build a better world for both themselves and their followers[24].

Conclusion: 'Do not prefer the son of a somebody to an ordinary man'

> 'The teaching for king Merykara is a literary composition in Middle Egyptian, the classical phase of the Egyptian language, probably of the Middle Kingdom date (2025-1700BC). In it, the author has a king of Egypt address his son, the future king Merykara, advising him how to be a good king, and to avoid evil deeds.'
> (Quirke 2004: 112)

I have taken the title of this thesis: *Do not prefer the son of a somebody to an ordinary man* from a line in Stephen Quirke's translation of the Teaching for king Merykara:

> **'Do not prefer the son of a somebody to an ordinary man**
> Bring yourself a man for his ability.'
> (Quirke 2004: 113)

Despite its gender specific language and the impact of feminism upon my work, I was drawn to this phrase, indeed I think of the words 'son' and 'man' as interchangeable with 'child' and

'person'. I wanted to use this phrase for two main reasons. Firstly this sentence leapt out at me from the page, its universal relevance echoing down through the ages. As someone who was attempting to strive for otherwise marginalised voices to be included in the archaeological enterprise, this teaching made perfect sense, regardless of context. If we take this phrase as a metaphor, and we do not place to much emphasis upon the use of 'son' and 'man', we will recognise that archaeology and museology have both been guilty of preferring the child of somebody to the child of the ordinary person, they have both preferred the words and the writings of those that they recognise as experts, as scholarly, literary or artistic 'somebodies'. Granted this has yielded many fantastic advances in our discipline and correspondingly in our *representations of history, but in order to retell the past, to look to the future of the museum and* of archaeology we cannot afford to ignore the words of the 'ordinary' people alongside their more esteemed peers – we must seek for a co-authorship of the museum. Secondly, this particular sentence came from ancient Egypt, and this was why I overlooked its gender biased language. As I discussed in the introduction of this project, modern Egypt still lives in the shadow of the pharaohs, often at the detriment of many present day Egyptian people. Ironically, this part of the teaching could be taken to warn against actions such as these, yet we continue to prefer the grand tombs of the Pharaohs, the 'somebodies' in our museum collections. I hope that this PhD thesis has gone some way to address this imbalance. My recommendations may be idealistic, they may be impractical in the current climate of the heritage sector in the UK, but we need some more idealism in the 21st century simply to avoid a simple nostalgic stagnation in our museums. As I stated in the very first line of this piece of work, 'predication is difficult at the best of times', but I feel that if we strive to listen to our interlocutors; to collaborate with them then I have high hopes for the archaeological representations of tomorrow. If we think of the museum as another way of telling the past, but also of imagining the future, and we open its design up to the stories and the viewpoints of even more people, then I feel it will be well on the way to becoming the institution that it has the potential to be. For as the teaching of King Merykara recommends:

'Surpass your forefathers, your ancestors.'
(Quirke 2004: 113)

I could not agree more. But, to do this we must advocate an archaeology of collaboration. Only in an archaeological practice such as this, may we retell the past to be of increasing value to the present. Furthermore, in doing so we may hope to remember, and yet also strive to surpass our ancestors. To do this we must move beyond community archaeology.

¹ Indeed, only through my work in Quseir and by adopting a diverse and interdisciplinary literature search have I managed to escape and so gain a clearer view of current fashions in museum studies.

² Notably inspired by the work of sociologists such as Michel Foucault (1970).

³ McLean's *Marketing the Museum* (1996) makes use of this awareness to ensure that the museum/exhibition may be advertised almost as a brand specifically geared to a specific portion of the market.

⁴ As does David Harvey in his seminal *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990).

⁵ Le Corbusier's decidedly modern take upon the future potential of the museum (1925), voiced many of the concerns currently appearing in the literature, yet still it remains largely ignored.

⁶ I am not the first to use this phrase – see Miles and Zavala's *Towards the Museum of the Future* (1994). On other possibilities for the museum of tomorrow see Weil (2002); Witcomb (2003).

⁷ For an up to date summary of the main museological concerns see papers in Marstine (2006).

⁸ Richard Sandell's *Museum, Society, Inequality* (2002) has been particularly influential here.

⁹ On the digitisation of collections see Keene (2005: 138-157).

¹⁰ See Butler (2003) for more on the practicalities of 'Egyptianizing' the contemporary museum space (in the case of the Alexandrian Library).

¹¹ It should be noted that Stephen Quirke's current plans for the new Petrie Museum *The Cultural Heritage Institute* actually incorporate this satire within aspects of the new galleries.

¹² Osama Abd al-Maguid has noted that organisation via an understanding of labour roles was one of the ways in which the Nubian Museum at Aswan developed the graphics and text of the displays.

¹³ This fits with some of the ideas expressed in Peter Brook's seminal *The Empty Space* (1968 [1990]).

¹⁴ My colleague Jane Glennie and I are currently engaged in writing scripts aimed at a Hampshire Romany audience (see Birkett 2007).

¹⁵ Although envisaging the museum as a performative stage, I am also mindful of it's role as a mechanism for transmitting research findings to a wider public. I do not wish to downplay this role, but instead argue that performance can actually add to it (for more see papers in Chittenden, Farmelo and Lewenstein [2004]).

¹⁶ Interestingly Moliere's writing was influential to the 19th century Lebanese playwright Marun al-Naqqash – his *Al-Bakhil* (the Miser [c.1847]) clearly borrowing from Moliere's play of the same name.

¹⁷ I also argue that the museum must increasingly draw its structuring narratives from subaltern, marginalised groups in its own national context.

¹⁸ Recently (December 2007), we held an experimental recital of ancient Egyptian text in the Petrie Museum and, as in this example, we linked several objects from the collections to the words that we performed (see figures 132 and 133).

¹⁹ This idea owes its genesis to concepts expressed by Stephen Quirke in conversation at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology.

²⁰ Ideally this should act as the backbone behind future mission statements. For more on the concept of museum ethics and issues of cultural identity see papers in Edson (1997), particularly Galla (1997); Okita (1997).

²¹ I accept the worry that government funding leaves museums open to political manipulation (see papers in Boylan 1992 for more), but financial backing derived from a higher taxation of those that can afford it is

far preferable to the current climate of the big corporations and other wealthy donators' domination of new exhibitions in the country.

[22] Colleagues of mine in museum theatre have done some particular challenging interpretations of the issues surrounding slavery and the marginalising of traveller groups – Jane Glennie and Andrew Ashmore in particular have recently been engaged in some inspirational projects at Milestones and Manchester Museum.

[23] Yet avoiding the tenets of globalisation and instead making explicit the particular context of each example.

[24] This is something of which Peter Kropotkin reminded us in his inspirational *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution* (1888[2006]).

Figures 120 and 121. Above: The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London. **Left:** Coffee shop in Quseir, taken from a taxi. Could these two arenas of public interaction with the past ever meet?

Figures 122 and 123. Above: Ababda Bedouin dance (still taken from Hassan's VHS tape). **Left:** Displays at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London. Can the museum borrow from more performative representations such as Ababda Bedouin dances and *semsemia* music?

Figures 124 and 125: The Museum Vs the Fairground? **Above:** *The Fair at Impruneta* by Jacques Callot, 1620. **Below:** The Rosetta Stone, British Museum. The seeming social equality and mass popularity of events like the European fairs, places dominated by the shows of travelling performers, bear similarity to the storytelling contests and music of Quseir. Together they offer an alternative to the staid, passive consumption of the past by audiences in many modern museums.
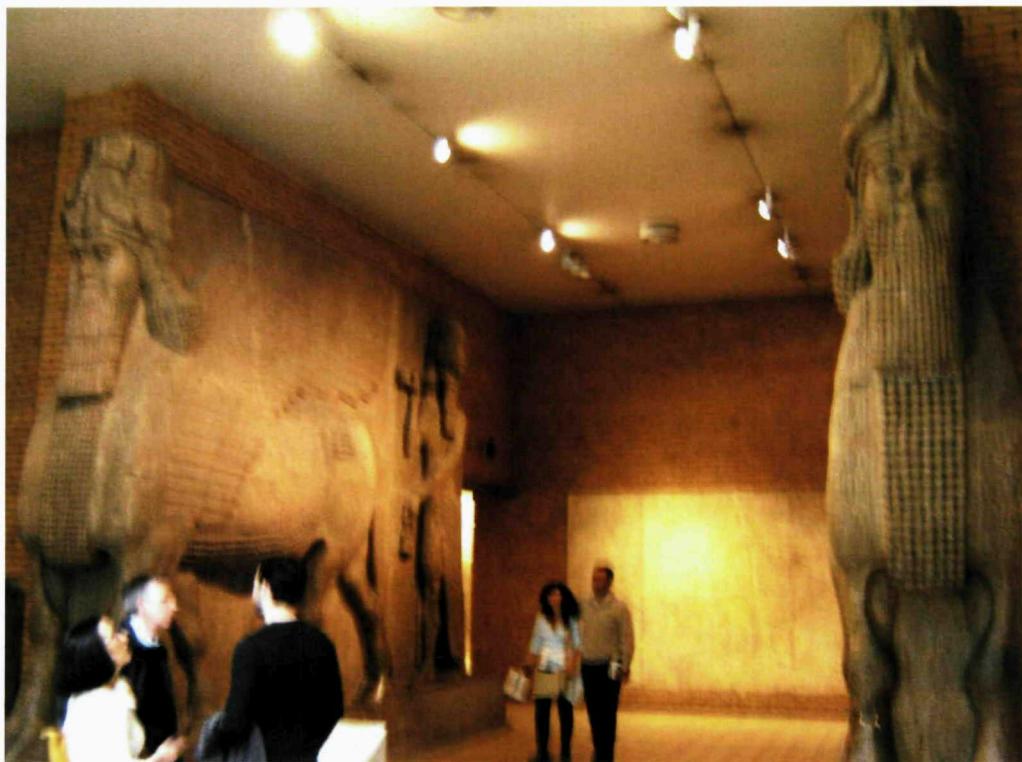
Figures 126 and 127: Top: An English country fair c.1820, showing *commedia dell'arte* influenced characters 'barking' outside a booth (from Rudlin 1994: 6). **Above:** Assyrian sculpture galleries, British Museum. What would happen if satirical, popular, folk-performances such as those of the *commedia* actors were to be staged in venues such as these?
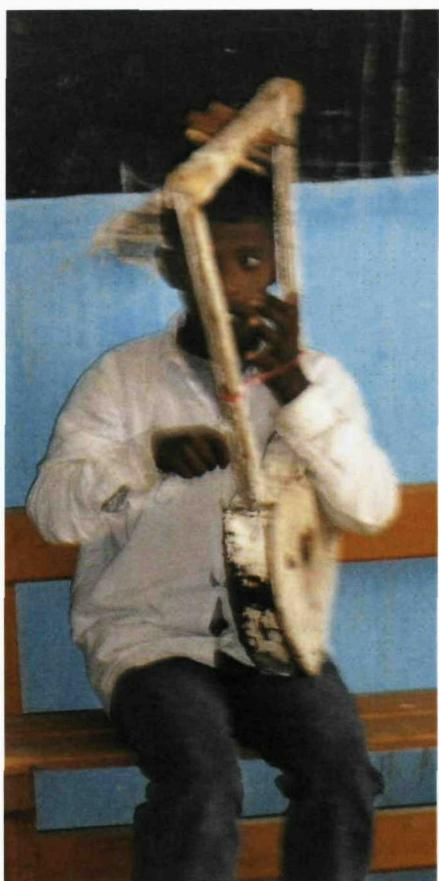
Figures 128, 129, 130 and 131. Clockwise from top left: Stela fragment, with hieroglyphs identifying the couple depicted as 'scribe, accountant of cattle Paheray' and 'his wife his beloved, lady of the house Iniuset' from Meydum tomb 34 (Petrie Museum); Old Kingdom or First Intermediate Period bowl from Hu bearing a letter from a woman to her deceased husband (Petrie Museum); Bringing the object to life: Ababda Bedouin boy playing a *semsemia*, Quseir, 2005; Coptic Ostracon Petrie 4, UCL 71106 (Petrie Museum).

Figures 132 and 133. Top: Performing the past: Stephen Quirke, the curator of the Petrie Museum and the author (seated) reciting the Middle Kingdom *Satire of the Trades* in the museum space, 2007. **Above:** The object as prop – a poetic typology? Egyptian scribal palette, jewellery, netting, razor, chisel and ostracon from the Petrie collection, organised according to the verses of the *Satire of the Trades* and the *Tale of the Fish Pendant*, 2007.

Conclusion

'Looking backwards': tomorrow's archaeology, tomorrow's museology – yesterday's theory?

> 'Funding is always an important issue for community archaeology projects. For that reason, the CBA is now launching a brand-new award: the Marsh Archaeology Award for Community Archaeology www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/awards/marshaward.html. This new award will be given to a community archaeology group in order to recognise and promote high quality archaeological work being carried out by the community archaeology sector. The award winner will receive £1,000 to be used as they see fit. Other entries may be deemed highly commended by the judges if appropriate, but will receive no financial reward.'
>
> (Message posted on Community Archaeology Digest 2007 [http://britarch.net/mailman/listinfo/communityarchaeology])

I deliberately left several months between finishing the final chapter and committing to writing the conclusion for this thesis. The act of producing the last nine chapters, the everyday thinking and pondering of my experiences in Quseir have transformed me as an individual. I began this piece by voicing my concern with community archaeology. In the last few weeks I have finally been able to better articulate this anxiety, but only as a result of the intellectual metamorphosis that I have undergone whilst producing this work. In some respects it seems that our research in Quseir is coming to a close, but through this unique project everyone involved has changed in one way or another. When it was first created we all referred to it as a community archaeology project and I felt proud, for I saw community archaeology as the future of the discipline. Yet when I look at the rise of this practice in recent years, when I read about the developments on the newly set up 'community archaeology digest' in the Council for British Archaeology pages, I feel somewhat unexplainably concerned. When I see the growth of publications with the word 'community' in their title, I now worry even more than I did when I wrote the introduction to this work. Finally when Carol McDavid and John Carman, two authors whose research I rate highly, announce in a circular that they intend to promote the idea that community and public archaeology are the new archaeological theory at WAC 2008 (11th October 2007 [http://britarch.net/mailman/listinfo/communityarchaeology], instead of feeling elated I feel disappointed. I do not deliberately single out Carman and McDavid for critique, but I do wonder if the discipline may potentially be at risk of focusing upon community archaeology to the expense of wider theoretical and social issues. I remember Hampshire County Council's latest corporate slogan of 'maximising well being' in the community, I think of broadcasts from the

minister and shadow minister of 'community cohesion', I envisage new 'community support officers' patrolling the streets, and I consider the media's constant discussion of problems in the 'Asian', particularly 'Muslim, Asian communities'[1]. The word is growing in use in the public eye. Then I realise why I feel this way. In all of these cases professionals, despite saying otherwise, are seemingly distancing themselves from the so called 'community' that they represent. They are there to empower, protect and to support a 'community' but in most cases they appear not to be an equal part of it. The 'community' did nevertheless hold something in common, that is they were linked by their apparent powerlessness in a particular sphere, a sphere to which more often than not a professional representative held the key. In Quseir I learned that in order to achieve anything I had to work within and as part of a group of people. Rather than feeling that I belong to the 'community archaeology sector' mentioned in the quote above, as opposed to seeing myself as the holder of the keys to the realm of professional archaeology, I find myself imagining that I was actually part of a society that was more akin to something that Marx had originally proposed over a hundred and forty years ago:[2]

> 'Let us now picture ourselves, by way of change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common, in which the labour-power of all the different individuals is the combined labour-power of the community. All the characteristics of Robinson's labour are here repeated, but with this difference, that they are social instead of individual.'
>
> (Marx 2003 [1867]: 82-83)

I did not feel that I was following a Marxist model when I began to plan the introduction to this PhD, but as a direct result of the act of writing this thesis, I now find myself concluding it in an increasingly sympathetic manner to this theoretical approach. For through my research I have found that the past was a 'means of production' of sorts that all of us in Quseir held in common. I transformed it into archaeological research, Amer into a living through his bazaar shop, Lamya as a remembrance of the history of her religious beliefs, Eman as a source of empowerment, Sabr as a song and Hassan as a dance. Crucially, I now see that a revolution of sorts is required in the museum world. Also, for the duration of this project, whether true or not, I have felt a part of a particular group, an ideological commune bound by an interest in the past. Yes, I cannot escape my privileged position but I can strive to remove myself from it when with other people. As we have seen, museums have functioned as similar ideological communes, yet in this case theirs was more often linked by certain icons, memories and storylines familiar to the elite of European society. When one sees books such as *Museums and their Communities* (Watson 2007) and *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges* (Crooke 2006) on the market, logically one assumes that these dominant ideological structures are being

broken up, yet to an extent in all of these cases museums appear to be viewed as instruments that can help the 'community' or the colonised should they choose to, as important social, charitable institutions that are in a position to give to, rather than function as an equal aspect of these groups. Yet, in this they still remain to a degree privileged professional outsiders in relation to the people to whom they address themselves. The success of Quseir for me lay in our often subconscious realisation that despite coming from different backgrounds, despite having differing professions, we were all trying to function by means of recognising that we held something in common – the past. I now find myself looking at community archaeology as something of an anachronism. In my eyes the very phrase creates a false divide between archaeologist and 'community', when we should really recognise that we are one and the same. As Jean Grave famously wrote in regards to the social role of the intellectual and artist in 1899:

> 'To live their dream, realize their aspirations, they, too, must work – for the moral and intellectual elevation of the masses. They, too, must understand that their own development is made up of the intellectuality of all: that, whatever the heights they believe they have attained, they belong to the multitude, a thousand bonds hold them to it, fetter their action and their thought, preventing them forever from reaching the summits they have glimpsed. A society normally constituted does not admit slaves, but a mutual exchange of services between equals.'
> (Grave 2005 [1899]: 219)

So when writing this conclusion I am struck by the realisation that the conceptual theoretical thinking behind my work and subsequently this PhD is actually rather old, and is not particularly avant-garde either. My ideas, like Grave's in 1899, are based on a belief that the intellectual is part of society, and furthermore that they can be found throughout all socio-economic levels of that society. I recognise that like Gramsci before me, I too do not believe that intelligence resides solely in the university system nor does it necessarily find its home and final resting place in the halls of museums. As I mentioned previously, I would prefer to see the museum become the instrument of an equal society that promotes research and education amongst that society, rather than the tool of the sanctioned expert and dominant governmental policy (as does Sandell 2002b; 2007). But first one must still consider the context of intelligence and the intellectual in modern society in yet more depth.

The new intellectual, the new museum, an old theory?

'All men are intellectuals...but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.'
(Gramsci 2005: 8)

Antonio Gramsci devoted much of his thinking in the prison notebooks to the idea of the intellectual and in particular to their role in the production of culture. Kate Crehan notes that Gramsci maintained that this group had played a vital role in the process by which a new culture was created (2002: 129) and that:

'what defines the intellectual, therefore is not that s/he possesses "superior powers of intellect" , but that they have in society a responsibility to produce knowledge and/or to instil that knowledge into others.'
(Crehan 2002: 131)

This powerful section of privileged individuals organises society by virtue of the weight, importance and above all, authority attributed to their thoughts and research by the dominant ideology of that society. In many ways the museum has acted as one of the supreme mechanisms of this particular elite. In considering Gramsci's discussion, I am again reminded that at the crux of a collaborative archaeological practice lies the need to rethink the idea of the entrenched specialist, to provide, via the museum, a stage upon which the subaltern may operate as equally as possible to their academically sanctioned peers. Therefore the new museum that I have proposed in chapter nine may only really work if it becomes a mechanism for a new form of intellectual:

'The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists...in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself...which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world.'
(Gramsci 2005: 9)

Gramsci distinguishes between the 'organic' and the 'traditional' intellectual. The former have structural ties to particular classes, whilst the latter have developed over time into 'a crystallised social group...which sees itself as continuing uninterruptedly through history and thus

independent of the struggles of groups' (cited in Crehan 2002: 141). In the last chapter I proposed that through a collaborative archaeological practice this may be challenged and that the museum has the potential to become the arena of the organic or subaltern intellectual as well as the entrenched specialist. Throughout this thesis I have tried to put forward the idea that these institutions are iconographic devices, structures that follow an elitist European storyline that requires a particular shared knowledge as a prerequisite to visiting them[3]. I have then compared and contrasted this with some examples drawn from an Arabic/Coptic tradition – a tradition familiar to many in Quseir, but totally unfamiliar to me. This in turn laid the foundation for the discussion of my actual experiences in the city. Said's critique of Orientalism influenced my desire to present this discussion in light of study of both western and eastern narrative traditions. As I look back over my work, I realise that at times I have represented and even acted like Gramsci's traditional expert, whilst my colleagues in Quseir have tended to fit better his definition of the organic intellectual. This thesis and my recommendations in chapter nine were a direct result of the meeting and the collaboration between these two worlds. Once more it strikes me that theoretically, I have not actually moved much beyond Gramsci's original discussion, written whilst he was incarcerated in an Italian prison between 1929 and 1935. As I mentioned at the beginning of the last chapter, in this I remain somewhat of a modernist functioning in a supposedly postmodern world (a standpoint in itself influenced in part by Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen's [1989] earlier warning of the dangers posed by a postmodern anthropology) [4] .

The left wing historian Raphael Samuel adds to this debate, and to own my standpoint, in his *Theatres of Memory* (1996). Rather than backing the postmodern critique of heritage and 'nostalgia' in Britain, he argues that far from being at the end of history, we are actually witnessing a significant growth in the interest of the past, an interest which moves beyond the confines of academia. He refers to this body of popular memory, as 'unofficial knowledge', a form of knowledge that tends to remain marginalised within the accounts of historians. Critiqued by the left as being a by-product of late capitalism, heritage, so Samuel argues, is actually something used and co-opted by large numbers of people; it attracts wide audiences and therefore democratises the past. Significantly it is often fuelled by popular memory, by unofficial knowledge and it reaches far more people than academia can. He reminds us that:

> 'History is not the prerogative of the historian, nor even, as postmodernism contends, a historian's 'invention'. It is, rather, a social form of knowledge; the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands.'
> (Samuel 1996: 8)

Yet, as a result of my research I now see that if we are to transform the museum we can not believe that it is enough for traditional intellectual society to merely invite those from outside into its confines, sanitising and weakening them in doing so. Benjamin Zephaniah reminds us of this phenomenon in his powerful poem 'Bought and Sold':

> 'Smart big awards and prize money
> Is killing off black poetry
> It's not censors or dictators that are cutting up our art.
> The lure of meeting royalty
> And touching high society
> Is dampening creativity and eating at our heart.
>
> The ancestors would turn in graves,
> Those poor black folk that once were slaves would wonder
> How our souls were sold
> And check our strategies.
> The empire strikes back and waves,
> Tamed warriors bow on parades,
> When they have done what they've been told
> They get their OBEs.'
> (Zephaniah 2001: 15)

Community archaeology and museum outreach practices must be careful to avoid a similar criticism, and now the only way I see that this may be achieved is if a transformation, a balancing between the worlds of the traditional and the organic intellectual occurs[5]. As Raphael Samuel noted, we must recognise and embrace the huge ground swell of interest in the past in the last forty years, we cannot critique it for merely being a result of consumerism gone mad, nor merely as the nostalgic dreams of misguided individuals and uneducated masses, as some in the academic world have done (1996: 264-271). We will remember that antiquarianism, in many respects the forerunner of modern archaeology, was treated as such in its infancy. There is much still to be done, but I hope that in this thesis I have at least begun working towards this eventual goal[6].

'Edilia, or "make of it what you will"'

So, at last, I come to the end of this work. Feeling empathy with his thinking, I have chosen to take the final sub-heading of this thesis from David Harvey's inspirational appendix in his *Spaces of Hope* (2000). He begins this by writing:

'Sometime in 1888, Ebenezer Howard read Edward Bellamy's just-published utopian novel *Looking Backwards*...The next morning he:

> "went into some of the crowded parts of London, and as I passed through the narrow dark streets, saw the wretched dwellings in which the majority of people lived, observed on every hand the manifestations of a self seeking order of society and reflected upon the absolute unsoundness of our economic system, there came to me an overpowering sense of the temporary nature of all I saw, and of its entire unsuitability for the working life of the new order – the order of justice, unity and friendliness."

Howard fused the two sentiments...In 1898, he published, at his own expense (publishers and magazine editors having proven indifferent or hostile), what was later to be called *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. And so the 'new towns' movement was born, a movement that turned out to be one of the most important interventions in urban re-engineering in the twentieth century.'

(Harvey 2000: 257)

Appalled by the 'lack of justice, unity and friendliness' on the streets of Baltimore, Harvey then goes on to write his own utopian ending to his book. He criticises the popularity of declaring the 'death of Utopia' and the current academic trend of associating utopianism with totalitarianism and disaster (2000: 257). Previously, I have been equally guilty of avoiding and distancing myself from utopian ideas - at times in my juvenile writings I have openly critiqued them. Again this PhD has changed my standpoint on this matter, and with a nod to Harvey and Howard, Said, Fabian, Gramsci and Samuel before me, I shall close this work with my own utopia, a theoretical world that has chosen to move beyond community archaeology.

Recognising that heritage is an important aspect of everyone's lives, research moves away from the idea of community archaeology, what in many respects remains a theoretical standpoint that focuses upon outreach deriving from the privileged world of Gramsci's 'traditional' intellectuals. Taking Fabian's and Samuel's ideas as a potential starting point, this transformation would be achieved by being driven by a desire for coevality – a 'sharing of time' between the traditional and organic intellectual. Popular culture, alongside the large numbers of local historical societies, living history groups, and other social arenas of historical debate whether they be coffee shops, public houses, fairs or street theatre, are no longer seen as a phenomenon indicative of the end of history. Neither are they viewed as part of a jigsaw of millions of multi-vocal approaches to the past. Rather they are recognised as an important, popular taking back of history from the confines of the lecture hall, conference session and journal publication circuit.

The division between community and archaeologist is blurred, and collaboration, the building of equal partnerships is encouraged with museums becoming tools central to this transformation. As part of the urban landscape they offer a means of, as Johnson argues in relation to theories of landscape, the uniting of the individual and the larger social climate (2007). Acting like workshops, museums become fluid, self-reflexive sites for presenting the findings of both the 'organic' and the 'traditional' intellectual. The objects of these collections become powerful symbolic artefacts adding weight to narratives drawn from both an eastern and western, elite and non-elite tradition. They unite people via the artefact, the idea of 'source community' becomes wider, and the relationship to the people of the past is made more coeval by using themes such as labour role or life passage, alongside the more familiar chronology and geography, as a focus for discussion. Theory motivated by a desire to interweave individual experience with wider social issues, an interplay between agency and meta-narrative, fuels this study of the past, a study that needs a great deal more than a £1000 award, and an approach that is far removed from the quote that I opened this thesis with:

> 'Enjoy lots of hands-on activities. Visit the Front Room gallery, showcasing work
> from our community programme. Learn about local cultural diversity in our world
> in the East End display.'
> (Leaflet from V&A Museum of Childhood 2007)

In my utopia, museums increasingly use their position in the cosmopolitan urban landscape to draw upon the histories and the experiences of people from across the globe. They argue for the preservation of histories that are at risk of being lost, marginalised pasts are conserved and presented to new audiences. Theatre, rather than being shunned or included in the form of elitist avant-garde performances, draws from popular forms, and in turn utilises these representations to open debate and to instil interest in the audience. Artefacts add power to these performances, acting as much as focal points as props. The findings of archaeology continually redefine these new social mechanisms and the latest scholarly theories are put forward as much within these sites, as in universities and in conference circuits. In turn, feedback is drawn from academic and non-academic, eastern and western sources. Debate is encouraged and a degree of coevality is achieved in doing so. The 'organic' and the 'traditional' intellectual share, eventually they possibly even merge with one another.

Community archaeology could be labelled as reactionary in that as a practice it directly responds to outreach and survey outside of the discipline. However, in my mind by becoming driven by collaboration, the museum and the discipline of archaeology, like this thesis, will become invigorated and increasingly innovative and revolutionary. History, just as Samuel noted, is by

no means finished. Rather, through my experiences in Quseir and elsewhere, I have found that it is just getting interesting. I realise that we may never reach my utopian collaborative museum; perhaps if we did it would cease to function as a utopia? Just like the ideal society of the poet Herbert Read, this collaborative museum possibly:

> '... is a point on a receding horizon. We move steadily towards it but can never reach it.'
>
> (Read 1968 cited in Woodcock 1973: 463)

However as Read also goes on to note we should not let this daunt us. As he suggests, it is the movement towards rather than the arrival at this dream, this theoretical utopia, which is of importance here. It is this push, this forward momentum that will drive new research and intellectual innovation. For regardless of whether or not we ever reach this ideal future: '...we must engage with passion', with what Read refers to as the 'immediate strife' (cited in Woodcock 1973: 463). For Said and Fabian this 'strife' was/is epitomised by the colonial gaze and the occidental depiction of the orient. In the current political climate, a time of renewed media orientalism, a period when the east continues to be associated time and again with totalitarianism and terrorism, it remains here that we must still continue to engage with the most passion. In the museums of the world the remains of millions of years of human history wait to be utilised as symbolic fuel for this engagement. But only through a collaborative museum practice and a collaborative archaeology can these residues of existence ever truly reach their full iconographic potential in today's and tomorrow's worlds. Of that I am sure.

[1] As Said (1978) would note the use of this kind of language creates a sense of otherness, an opposition to those outside of these groups (also see Butler 2001, 2007 for Egyptian examples).

[2] The use of the term 'community sector' is indicative in itself of the Marsh Awards' links to the business world.

[3] Influenced by Moser's recent analysis of the history of museums (2006).

[4] In turn, despite many of my initial ideas being drawn from semiotics, inspired in part by the representational theories of Michel Foucault (1970). Indeed, though in many respects my views fit with Hooper-Greenhill's concept of the 'post-museum' (2000), ironically much of this is due to my attempts to return to a modernist mindset, as opposed to her move to postmodernism and subsequent strict adherence to Foucault's ideas.

[5] Again it should be noted that the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology remains one of the best museums in terms of striving to create and maintain a forward thinking, fluid and above all, revolutionary approach to outreach practices.

[6] A process that, amongst others, was in turn begun by earlier pioneers such as Ardren (2002); Clarke (2002); Glazier (2003), McDavid (1997, 2002, 2003); Moser *et al* (2002) and Sandell (2002).

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