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## Chapter 5

# Colonial Nostalgia and Cultures of Travel: Spaces of Constructed Visibility in Egypt

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Egypt must soon be the favourite ground of the modern Nimrod, travel – who so tirelessly haunts antiquity . . . Thebes will be cleaned up and fenced in. Steamers will leave for the cataract, where donkeys will be in readiness to convey parties to Philae, at seven A.M. precisely, touching Esne and Edfoo. Upon the Libyan suburb will arise the Hôtel royal au Rameses le grand for the selectest fashion. There will be the Hôtel de Memnon for the romantic, the Hôtel aux Tombeaux for the reverend clergy, and the Pension Re-ni-no-fre upon the water-side for the invalids and sentimental – only these names will then be English; for France is a star eclipsed in the East.

(George William Curtis, 1856, *Nile Notes of a Howadji*)

Is getting to and from the registration desk to the elevators [at the Luxor Las Vegas] by boat along the river Nile any stranger than squeezing the Temple of Dendur into the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York? Any stranger than traveling to Luxor, Egypt itself?

(Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, *Destination Culture*)

### Traditions, Travel and Texts

In this chapter I want to disrupt some conventional appropriations of 'traditional environments'. 'Tradition' is at once an indispensable and an irredeemably compromised term. In one sense, my arguments can be read as merely another elaboration of the ways in which European modernity has 'invented' traditions – its own and those of other people. But I also depart from the usual terms of those discussions by connecting the invention of tradition to what Edward Said has identified as the citationality

structure of Orientalism, in which successive writers cite and invoke one another, and thereby sustain a canonicized tradition that both invites and legitimates their claims to authenticity and truth.<sup>1</sup> I recover these connections between traditions and texts through the cultures of travel that were set in motion by European and North American tourists in Egypt between 1820 and 1920.

Eric Hobsbawm has suggested that 'invented traditions' are responses to novel situations – to the anxiety of the new – but this should not be limited to historical change: travelling through space is freighted with its own geographies of uncertainty in which travel writings are strategically implicated.<sup>2</sup> In the case that concerns me here, these writings helped to establish a tenacious continuity of disposition and practice whose chains reach beyond the nineteenth into the twenty-first century. More than this, these textualizations were embedded in the appropriation of Egypt as not so much an 'environment' as 'a space of constructed visibility' within which 'tradition' was seen in particular, partial, and highly powerful ways: where some traditions were illuminated, recuperated and privileged, while others were dimmed, marginalized or erased. Here, too, there is a vital continuity between cultures of travel in the past and in the present which becomes visible as a sort of 'colonial nostalgia'; and for this reason much of what follows is written under the sign of a postcolonialism that I need to clarify in advance.

### Colonial Nostalgia and the Colonial Present

It has become commonplace to remark that postcolonialism revisits the colonial past in order to retrieve its impositions and exactions, its erasures and suppressions. Thus, Ali Behdad, in an essay that frames many of my own concerns, has offered an 'anamnesiac reading' of Orientalist cultures of travel in the age of colonial dissolution: a critical reading that 'unmasks what the object holds back and exposes the violence it represses in its consciousness.' If postcolonialism is thus 'on the side of memory', as he has suggested, then it declares its *parti pris* by staging a 'return of the repressed' to counter what he calls 'the nostalgic histories of colonialism'.<sup>3</sup> The inherent violence of the colonial past must not be forgotten; but what makes those histories so nostalgic – and so dangerous – is the *seductiveness* of colonial power. Hence, Leela Ghandi has argued that postcolonialism

... can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past. The process of returning to the colonial scene discloses a relationship of reciprocal antagonism and desire between coloniser and colonised. And it is in the unfolding of this troubled and troubling relationship that we might start to

discern the ambivalent prehistory of the postcolonial condition. If postcoloniality is to be reminded of its origins in colonial oppression, it must also be theoretically urged to recollect the compelling seductions of colonial power. The forgotten archive of the colonial encounter narrates multiple stories of contestation and its discomfiting other, complicity.<sup>4</sup>

Those seductions continue to exercise an extraordinary power at the start of the twenty-first century, which is why I prefer to speak not of the condition of 'postcoloniality' but instead of 'the colonial present', and why I wish to explore some of the ways in which the fatal attractions of colonial nostalgia are inscribed within contemporary cultures of travel.

To illustrate what I have in mind I offer two late-twentieth-century exhibits. In 1994 Gallimard published a guidebook to Egypt which was translated from French into English the following year and published in the United States by Knopf. Like several comparable texts it exquisitely aestheticizes and commodifies a particular visual economy of travel. The book opens with two double-page, silver-tone illustrations. The first juxtaposes 'Boats on the Nile' with 'Tourists returning from Karnak'; the second depicts 'Tourists picknicking in a temple'. All of these images were produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Significantly, whenever tourists are shown elsewhere in the text – as in a montage outside Sheppard's Hotel in Cairo, described in the caption as 'the epitome of European colonialism', or posing at the Pyramids – the illustrations are all taken from the last *fin de siècle*.<sup>5</sup>

My second exhibit is a tourist brochure produced for Thomas Cook's 1997-98 season on the Nile.<sup>6</sup> 'In the gracious days of Edwardian cruising', prospective clients are reminded,

Thomas Cook's palatial paddle-steamers dominated the Nile. Immaculately maintained and luxuriously furnished, they represented the era's best in comfort and technology, combining gleaming brasswork and deep-pile carpets with such things as electric light . . . And life aboard was described as 'the perfection of human existence.'

The present Nile fleet is advertised as 'a contemporary version of that grandeur'. Two vessels are singled out for special attention. The first is the MS *Eugénie*, 'named after the French Empress who opened the Suez Canal in 1869.' It was constructed in 1993 'in the style of the Belle Époque and bears a nostalgic resemblance to the paddle-wheelers of old.' In fact, everything about the ship, would-be travellers are assured, 'is designed to add to its turn-of-the-century allure.' In particular, 'the service, provided by 65 crew to 102 passengers, belongs to another age,' so lavish indeed that the voyage is promised to 'recall the grand opening of the Suez Canal, when Africa became an island and crowned heads of state sailed majestically

through the new waterway – followed by Thomas Cook with a small party of adventurous tourists.’ The second vessel is the MS *Prince Abbas*, where Thomas Cook has joined forces with the Nile Exploration Company to ‘recreate the spirit of Victorian discovery tours, while incorporating cossetting comforts of modernity.’

On first sight of the delightful *Prince Abbas*, you are transported through time to years gone by, to the elegance and style of an Agatha Christie film set, to romantic Victoriana. Fashioned with the steam ships of old in mind, this comfortable craft has promenade decks and paddle-wheels to add to the aura of nostalgic authenticity.

‘The door to every cabin and suite opens directly onto the covered decks,’ just as they did in the past, ‘but once inside you are met with all the modern conveniences of a first-class hotel.’ From this privileged vantage point each cabin has ‘a window onto the ancient world’ where passengers can ‘watch the timeless scenes,’ travelling ‘through 5,000 years, past almost biblical scenes – the billowing white lateens of feluccas, blue-gallabeahed men riding yellow camels, black-robed women bearing water pots on their heads.’

These exhibits are colonial nostalgia materialized and made visible, and they represent a visual thematic that needs to be taken with all possible seriousness. In particular, one needs to ask how this visual effect works and, simultaneously, what is hidden from view: what is *not* reflected in these silver-toned images and what is *not* seen in these ‘timeless scenes’.

### Spaces of Constructed Visibility

To respond to these questions I work with three sets of ideas. In the first place, Henri Lefebvre has suggested there is an intimate connection between what he has called ‘the production of space’ – a concept which now seems much less startling than when it was first proposed – and the systematic grid of power that inheres within modern scopic regimes. His ideas can illuminate some of the ways in which, in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ‘Egypt’ was under construction as a series of superimposed, overlapping and contradictory spaces through the investments and exactions of the ruling dynasty of Muhammad Ali and his successors, the appropriations of a wealthy land-owning class, and the various entanglements of European capitalisms with British, French and Ottoman imperialisms. Thus, ‘modern Egypt’ was being produced as a space of capital accumulation – a space of calculation and exploitation, of surveillance and supervision – in which an identity was forged between the abstractions of Space and the operations of Reason, an identity which appeared as an ‘objectivity’ that was seen as ‘order itself’. There was a

palpable intimacy between the production of this spatial order and the disciplining of human bodies: what Timothy Mitchell has called ‘a common economy of order and discipline’.<sup>7</sup> There are of course significant connections between the production of this ‘modern Egypt’ and the production of a ‘traditional Egypt’, supposedly lying outside and yet alongside – and accessible from – the modern. But what interests me here is the formation of a visual economy that links political economy to cultural appropriation, and in particular the ways in which ‘Egypt’ was constructed as a particular sort of object.

In the second place, therefore, I draw on John Rajchman’s highly suggestive reading of Foucault’s spatial analytics to sketch the ways in which European and American cultures of travel were involved in staging Egypt as ‘a space of constructed visibility’: as a space within which ‘Egypt’ was made visible in particular ways for a particular audience.<sup>8</sup> The geography of this staging was dispersed through multiple sites, both inside and outside Egypt, and worked through a series of discourses and practices that installed a tensile apparatus of power, knowledge and geography. Clearly, ‘traditional’ Egypt was constructed in some measure through politico-economic and geopolitical formations that constituted it as both an obstacle to and an object of ‘modernization’ or ‘development’.<sup>9</sup> But what interests me here is the way in which ‘traditional’ Egypt was also produced for travellers and tourists as a space that could be ‘rationalized’: as a space striated by routes and itineraries, triangulated by sights and views, and codified as a series of imaginative geographies through which its landscapes were made visible as a panoramic totality: ‘timeless’, ‘authentic’ and ‘real’.

These productions were not the result of any transcendent logic or design. In the third place, therefore, I suggest that the micro-practices which were involved in the elaboration of these spaces can be brought into view through the actor-network theory developed by Bruno Latour and others. The construction of ‘Egypt’ in these ways was not the pure product of European dictation in which capitalism and colonialism inscribed their marks on an empty surface, filling a blank space awaiting its object. The investment schemes of international banks, the operating strategies of tour companies, and the emerging protocols of archaeology – to name only three of the powerful European agencies involved in the manufacture of ‘Egypt’ – were all immensely important in the formation of these partitioned spaces and in the mobilization and accumulation of the discourses through which they were made visible; but so too were the knowledges, skills and labours of countless local merchants, interpreter-guides, boat-owners, sailors and donkey-boys. This is not to oppose the ‘power’ of various capitalisms and colonialisms to the ‘complicity’ or ‘resistance’ of subaltern peoples; rather, actor-network theory allows for a *dispersed* and *distributed* understanding of agency by directing attention to the variable powers conferred upon all these actors by virtue of their

enrolment in *heterogeneous networks*. This is to map a complex, foliated space of agency where agency, individual and collective, is always mediated by the spaces in which and through which it takes place. As 'Egypt' is constructed in these various ways, divided into the seemingly separate spaces of the 'modern' and the 'traditional', so some discourses and practices become privileged ('rational') whereas others become marginalized ('customary'). And yet the actor-networks through which these powers are conferred turn out to commingle the 'modern' and the 'traditional', the 'rational' and the 'customary' in such a way that the partitions between these spaces and the privileges accorded to them are constantly interrupted, confounded and dislocated.

The cultures of travel that I describe in this chapter involved attempts to construct what Jonathan Murdoch has called 'spaces of prescription', within which routes, sights and imaginative geographies could be regularized, standardized and made predictable; but as travellers and tourists made their way through these actor-networks they often found themselves within 'spaces of negotiation' that were fluid, individual and improvisational.<sup>10</sup> Their navigation was a slippery affair that usually required the recognition and even incorporation of 'local knowledges' that at once confirmed and capsized the valences of colonial discourse. The instability of these encounters was brought about in all sorts of ways, but the promiscuous entanglements of 'culture' and 'nature' within these hybrid actor-networks were of particular significance in punctuating the passage of tourists up and down the valley of the Nile. Sighting 'Egypt' within spaces of constructed visibility was thus always a precarious and conditional *achievement*.

In what follows I work with these ideas to recover an historical geography of the 'invented traditions' involved in the Nile voyage in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### Sails and Dreams: The Romantic Nile

Apart from those travellers who treated Egypt as a mere staging-post between Europe and Asia, most European and American visitors to Egypt in the middle years of the nineteenth century went up the Nile by *dahabeah*, and their collective experiences provided what came to be construed as one of the central organizing structures of Orientalist cultures of travel. A *dahabeah* was a large houseboat with triangular cross-sails. It had a cabin at the stern, divided into a saloon, individual sleeping quarters, closet, and bathroom. This space was reserved for the hiring party, who spent much of the day – and ate most of their meals – on the roof of the cabin under a large awning. The crew slept on the open deck around the forward mast; there would usually be 12-16 of them, including a captain (*reis*) and cook. Each hiring party would outfit their boat from the bazaars

and stores in Cairo, under the eye of the *dragoman* (interpreter-guide) who had been engaged for the voyage; other provisions would be bought in towns and villages along the valley, while the gentlemen would shoot birds for the table en route, and small livestock and poultry would be towed behind in a small boat.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the canonical accounts of Nile travel were written about voyages on a *dahabeah*, so that each party was keenly aware that it was reproducing the experiences of its predecessors and, indeed, that its success in doing so – recorded in letters, diaries and journals – was in some sense a measure of its own experience. In consequence, this textualized chain also provided the yardstick against which later means of travelling on the Nile were to be gauged. The *dahabeah*, declared Thomas Knox, was 'the proper way to do the Nile trip.'<sup>12</sup> 'Proper' carries all sorts of connotations, but here it entangles privilege with authenticity. Three such privileges were of special importance.

In the first place, the experience of sailing up the Nile on a *dahabeah* was only open to people of independent means. It required the investment of considerable time, since it took most parties a week or more to reach Egypt from Europe, two weeks to 'do' Cairo and the Pyramids and to make arrangements for the Nile voyage, and then nine weeks or so to sail up to the First Cataract at Aswan and float back down to Cairo (and many elected to go as far as Abu-Simbel and on to the Second Cataract). It also required the expenditure of considerable sums of money.

In the second place, the *dahabeah* was a native craft that was made over into a 'White space': it had a native captain and crew, and its passage was made subject to local customs and convention, but travel writers and guidebooks issued elaborate advice to travellers on hiring, furnishing and commanding the vessel that would serve to establish their own sovereignty. Travellers who hired *dahabeahs* invariably prided themselves on being 'monarchs of all they surveyed', sailing under their own national flags, living in their own 'little worlds', following their own cultural codes and establishing a racialized order of power and precedence. These stage directions and scriptings transformed the *dahabeah* into a secure viewing platform from which Egypt was assumed to be available as a 'transparent space', fully open to the tourist gaze.<sup>13</sup>

In the third place, the *dahabeah* was supposed to give a privileged access to Egypt as an 'anachronistic space'. This was made possible in part by the imaginative disassociation it effected between the frantic world of European modernity and the tranquil Orient. Within this extravagantly imagined geography the *dahabeah* became what Laporte called 'the child of antiquity, wafted by the breath of heaven.' To sail on the Nile thus opened a passage directly into the past, and travel writers of the period constantly impressed on their readers the power of reverie. The imagery of a dream licensed the quintessential Orientalist fantasy of entering into the

'slumbering Orient' and becoming physically immersed in another world. According to the young Florence Nightingale in 1849:

You feel, as you lie on the divan, and float slowly along, and the shores pass you gently by, as if you were being carried along some unknown river to some unknown shore, leaving for ever all you had known – a mysterious feeling creeps over you, as if it were the passage to some other world . . . You lose all feeling of distance [and] all feeling of identity too, and everything becomes supernatural.<sup>14</sup>

For Nightingale that 'other world' was the world of the ancient past and of the Bible, and she eschewed contact with the *fellabin* in the villages of the Nile Valley. But many other travellers drew parallels between the bas-relief scenes they saw on the temples and tombs and the other 'living Egypt' outside. In the end, they privileged the view from the *dahabeah* precisely because it allowed for a proximity, even an intimacy between them and local people.

But it was not all plain sailing; and while the *dahabeah* voyage was elaborately scripted its containing assumptions and conventions could nonetheless be challenged and called to account. There were three main ways in which the privileges of security and sovereignty that accreted around these invented traditions could (in principle) be dislocated: the breakdown of civil order, the eruptions of 'culture-nature', and the interventions of local people.

For much of the nineteenth century most travellers thought of the Nile Valley (at least as far as the First Cataract) as a space of civil order, and as the voyage on what Emily Beaufort called the 'now fashionable and crowded Nile' became routinized so the anxieties of Europeans and Americans about their personal safety were banished to the margins of their mental landscapes. They frequently met up with other touring parties and enjoyed 'the Society of the River' and its security of numbers, but they were also afforded considerable physical protection by the civil and military authorities. Local villages were required to supply men to watch over each *dahabeah* when it moored for the night, for example, and while travellers were divided over the effectiveness of the measure – the watchmen frequently slept soundly until morning – most of them thought the precautions unnecessary. They were in no doubt that the authorities would take very seriously indeed any attacks on 'Franks' and their boats.<sup>15</sup> Much of this could be attributed to the emphasis placed by Muhammad Ali on law and order: the Nile was a vital economic artery, and once he assumed power he lost no time in making the river secure. Travelling through Egypt in 1835-36, American John Lloyd Stephens was shocked by Muhammad Ali's cruelty and oppression, but he accepted that his despotic rule had 'made Egypt, from the Mediterranean to the Cataracts, as safe for

the traveler as the streets of New York.' Similarly, Harriet Martineau thought it 'the least that European travellers can do in acknowledgement of the security and facilities which the Pasha's government affords to testify to that security and those facilities.' By the 1840s it was widely accepted that brigandage and piracy on the river had been more or less extinguished by 'stationing well-armed sloops on the Nile and by destroying some of the most notorious of their haunts,' and many travellers saw the ruins of the village of Beni Hassan as a monument to the Pasha's success in imposing order on an otherwise 'anarchic' landscape.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, such a sensibility was disrupted from time to time by political and military adventures, such as the local rebellions against the central authorities in the 1860s, the terrible British bombardment of Alexandria and the subsequent occupation of Egypt in 1882, and the Sudan campaigns in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Yet little of this seems to have compromised the extraordinary self-confidence and assertiveness of most travellers. On the contrary, while these episodes disrupted their plans and threatened the envelope of security within which they were accustomed to moving, the restoration of order through the exercise of military power did much to confirm in their minds the supremacy of the colonizing flag under which they sailed and its conjunction of 'might' and 'right'.

Equally striking was the capacity of travellers to detach themselves from the landscape of violence through which they passed. As the 1865 rebellions were being put down, a party of Englishmen including the Reverend Smith and his clerical father were sobered by the sight of vultures wheeling in the sky above the corpses and the smoking ruins of villages which had been razed to the ground by the Pasha's troops. But forty pages later in his account of the trip Smith was able to conclude that he could not imagine any more 'agreeable or even luxurious mode of passing through any country than that afforded by the Nile boat,' where travellers could 'dream away their time on the deck under the awning, drinking in the balmy air of Egypt, and interested and amused by the shifting scenes on the river banks.'<sup>17</sup>

However, cultures of travel were also marked by a concern for the travelling body – for its vulnerability and integrity – that reached beyond the danger of interpersonal violence. And in many cases these supremely self-confident performances seem to have been more profoundly described by the instabilities and eruptions of culture-nature. Disease was one of the most threatening of these mutant hybrids. Cholera and plague were even more alarming prospects in Egypt than they were at home, and most travellers fled at their approach. Few were brave (or foolhardy) enough to follow A.W. Kinglake's example of remaining in Cairo in 1834-35 when 'the plague was so master of the city, and stared so plain in every street and every alley.' Kinglake claimed he stayed because his experience was 'sharpened by the sting of the fear of death.'<sup>18</sup> Books listed many other

diseases and ailments, and advised travellers on the medicines they should take with them. As Charles Warner wryly observed, it made a 'cheerful prelude to [the voyage] to read that you will need blue-pills, calomel, rhubarb, Dover's powder, James's powder, carbolic acid, laudanum, quinine, sulphuric acid, sulphate of zinc, nitrate of silver, ipecacuanha and blistering plaster.' It is difficult to know how often travellers used any of these remedies: Warner and his friends 'never experienced a day's illness, and brought them all back,' but he agreed that 'the knowledge that we had them was a great comfort.'<sup>19</sup>

The vulnerability of travellers was also shaped by the physical landscapes through which they moved. Some writers thought it impossible to bring Egypt's landscapes, at once 'cultural' and 'natural', within the compass of their own language-games because they were read as a visible testimony to the 'queerness' of the Orient. To Florence Nightingale, for example, 'the whole Nile [was] so unnatural, if one may use the expression, so unlike nature' that it lay outside the competence of any European language.<sup>20</sup>

And, in fact, many European and American writers held this 'nature' at a distance by imagining it as a landscape painting, at once controlled and contained, though few of them saw it through such jaundiced eyes. This visual effect – nature as a still life – was reinforced by the emphasis constantly placed on the play of colour and light, and on the minimalist, skeletal and geometric forms of the landscape, which, to Traill, was 'the slightest of impressionist sketches, dashed off as it were in half a dozen strokes of Nature's most careless brush.'<sup>21</sup> If the colonial picturesque was, as Sara Suleri has suggested more generally, a gesture of self-protection, in Egypt its poetics played into an Orientalist fantasy of a passage through a placid dreamworld:

Thus we glided on through the scenery of a dream – without effort, peaceably, silently. Silently, for nature in its happiest moods has a silence of its own, articulate and musical. There is a silence made up of all the stray notes in the broad landscape – the song of birds, the murmurous hum of summer insects, the distant lowing of oxen, the rippling of the stream, a kind of invisible harmony . . .<sup>22</sup>

But from time to time and from place to place that 'harmony' was shattered, and 'nature' exceeded its containing frame, and these excesses and interruptions called into question the conventional ways in which travellers understood both 'culture' and 'nature'. The stable geometries of the red and the black, for example, the parallel lines of baked desert and fertile valley, could be redrawn by violent windstorms that could rage for days.

The Nile itself was forever changing its course from one season to the next; banks were undermined, new shoals appeared, and some stretches were notorious for sudden squalls and shifting currents that could capsize

a boat. For travellers intending to sail into Nubia there was also the First Cataract to negotiate. Some hired another boat for the journey from Aswan to the Second Cataract, but for most the ascent through the turbulent waters assumed the status of a rite of passage that soon became one of the central traditions of the Nile voyage. This 'opera of the Cataract', as T.G. Appleton called it, was not only a dangerous performance, as the *dahabeah* was whirled around, hurled against the rocks, and slowly dragged up river against the force of the waters by an army of local men and boys. It was also a terrifying glimpse of 'a world turned upside down'.<sup>23</sup>

The way in which travellers saw this inconstant, inverted and even 'unnatural' nature cannot be disentangled from the way in which they understood – and misunderstood – local culture. Most of them privileged their experience of sailing on other rivers over the local knowledge of their boat crews. According to J.W. Clayton, these sailors knew as much about sailing as they would about the building of Nelson's Column or the novels of Henry James.<sup>24</sup> Shipwrecks were not uncommon, and travellers who escaped (not all did) frequently attributed the disaster to the ignorance and incapacity of the crew, and their survival to their own foresight and fortitude. Thus, Julian Arnold blamed the wreck of his family's *dahabeah* on the 'Arab indecision' of their *reis*. Running into a squall, the 'unusual commotion' brought Arnold's father out on deck, 'who, realising the need of some decisive move, told the bewildered [*reis*] to furl the trinkeet sail or, if not possible, to let everything fly.' Either way it was too late; the boat foundered. The family and most of the crew scrambled onto the submerged hull, where the sailors 'continued to howl and lament in a most ridiculous fashion.' 'They seemed to have no manhood left,' Arnold wrote, 'appearing not to retain the slightest reliance on their own personal exertion.'<sup>25</sup>

These responses flowed from a complex reservoir of assumptions about local people. Although their actions were frequently dismissed as the products of stupidity and superstition, many writers also insisted that local people had become such skilled participants in the expanding networks of travel and tourism that there was a cunning and even a cupidity behind them too. 'Taking strangers up the Nile seems to be the great business of Egypt,' Warner cautioned his readers, and for those strangers – 'innocents abroad', as Mark Twain famously called them – 'all the intricacies and tricks of it are slowly learned.' When Arnold described tourists and local people making moves on 'the chess-board of *dahabeah* travelling', he was configuring tourism as an elaborate game, a battle of wits, which was supposed to be part of the fun. 'The traveler who thinks the Egyptians are not nimble-witted and clever,' Warner advised, 'is likely to pay for his knowledge to the contrary.'<sup>26</sup> Local people were skilled in the arts of resistance and had long deployed them against the military and civil authorities, and so it is scarcely surprising that they should deploy similar tactics against the exactions of wealthy travellers and tourists.<sup>27</sup>

For the tourist there were all sorts of ways of keeping these 'games' within bounds. Books provided advice on how to draw up a formal contract setting out the requirements of the hiring party and the responsibilities of the *reis* and his crew.<sup>28</sup> Although travellers presumably took some comfort from this and frequently declared themselves 'monarchs of all they surveyed', their authority did not go unchallenged. Guidebooks and travel writings usually recommended fairness and firmness in dealing with the boat crew, but many of them recognized that a persistent refusal to comply with the instructions of the travellers might require physical punishment. This was invariably represented as being 'traditional'. 'The discipline of the stick,' W.H. Bartlett wrote in one of the classics of Nile travel, is 'perfectly well understood in Egypt.' Such an extreme measure 'revolts at first one's English prejudices' (or so he said), and he declined to allow his *dragoman* to beat their 'lazy' and 'worthless' *reis* on his behalf. But he admitted that he soon came to regret his 'ill-timed interference with established usage,' because 'reluctance to harsh measures passes for facility and weakness.' Others disagreed. The more temperate Wilkinson was 'far from advising that constant use of the stick which is sometimes resorted to most unnecessarily,' and Bayle St. John insisted that 'the Arab sailor has none of the qualities of a man fit to be beaten, except that he does not return the blow and forgives it in an hour.'<sup>29</sup>

If sentiments like these were coloured by paternalism, they did at least establish parameters which many travellers were reluctant to transgress. Others elected to apply to a local magistrate or governor to bastinado the offender – which involved beating the soles of his bare feet with whips – but once the sentence had been passed they often intervened to have the punishment cut short or even set aside. 'We decided between ourselves to let the punishment commence,' Bayard Taylor recalled, 'lest the matter should not be considered sufficiently serious, and then show our mercy by pardoning the culprits.' Their decision, so Taylor assumed at any rate, 'was received with great favour; the two culprits came forward and kissed our hands.'<sup>30</sup> Ida, Countess Hahn-Hahn, did not care for such squeamishness at all:

If the *reis* and steersman were to receive a thorough bastinado, we should get along as well as possible, but they have learnt the abhorrence of Europeans to such measures, and therefore take advantage of our forbearance. You see, my dear brother, that the voyage of the Nile has its shady side.<sup>31</sup>

The Countess would undoubtedly have regarded the experience of Adam Kennard as positively sinister. Kennard and his companion sailed up the Nile in 1855 and were unusually abusive towards their crew, who 'mutinied' one by one. Their *dragoman* was the first to leave, abandoning them far above the Second Cataract: 'Our sole turnpike to all Moslem joys

left us,' Kennard complained, 'five hundred miles up the country, surrounded with every species of Arab knavery and ferocity, and unable to speak a word of the language.' They subsequently had a violent argument with the *reis* over his refusal to proceed at night; pistols were fired and the whole crew deserted apart from one sailor and the cook. The hapless pair then had no choice but to help haul the boat back to Aswan: 'Harnessing ourselves into the rope, [we] commenced . . . the laborious undertaking of tracking a Nile boat of some twenty tons' burthen for seven miles against a strong current and a contrary wind.'<sup>32</sup> This was a stark reversal of the usual roles, since it was supposed to be the crew who tracked boats up the Nile, while the hiring party lounged on the deck exchanging remarks about the 'laziness' of the Arabs.

The purpose of stories like this was to promote the privileges of the travellers, of course, and accounts of the ways in which such trials were overcome served to establish both the authenticity of the experience and the authority of the narrator. In a sense, the very existence of obstacles and dislocations was testimony to the continued presence of the 'traditional', whereas the fact that they were surmounted was testimony to the power of the 'modern': and both of those terms were unambiguously racialized. In most cases we have no direct access to what the largely unlettered labourers thought about such matters. And yet accounts like these *can* bring into view the colonizing system of power, exploitation and exaction that lay behind the 'traditions' of the Nile voyage. In reading these texts against the grain, reversing the privileges that their narrators arrogated to themselves and exposing an underbelly of violence, it becomes evident that the 'space of constructed visibility' within which these cultures of travel were staged was never stable nor one-dimensional. The ways in which the established assumptions, expectations and practices of the Nile voyage were brought to crisis reveal that space to have been a field of chronic tension, displacement and compromise.

And that space was soon to be displaced in quite other ways.

### 'A Perpetual Cloud of Smoke'

A more or less regular steamboat service between Alexandria and Cairo had been established by the early 1840s to speed the overland transit of passengers to and from India. Although this was not universally popular, few travellers wanted to linger in Alexandria, and most of them were keen to reach Cairo as soon as possible.<sup>33</sup> They saw the fabled 'city of the Arabian Nights' as the real threshold of the Orient, and while it was possible to hire a *dahabeah* in Alexandria, it was Cairo that became the usual base camp for the ascent of the Nile.

Attempts to establish a steamboat service above Cairo met with little success until the 1870s. Several small, English-built steamers had been

operated in the early 1860s on behalf of the Khedive by the Azizeh Company, but they were entirely at the ruler's beck and call, and all in all it seems clear that tourist traffic was never an important consideration. Despite this problem, such was the hegemony of the *dahabeah* that it seems doubtful that many travellers would have taken advantage of the steamers.

When Thomas Cook took his first party of tourists to Egypt early in 1869, he hired two of these old steamers – the *Benha* and *Beniswaif* – from the company which had now gone bankrupt to transport his thirty-odd clients from Cairo up to Aswan and back. The venture soon revealed the shortcomings of the existing arrangements. The boats were infested with fleas; they constantly ran aground on sand-banks; and when one of them broke a paddle-wheel, so one passenger recorded in her diary, the captain of the other 'wanted a written order from Mr Cook to proceed to Thebes without us [but] Mr Cook would not put pen to paper as he had little power over the Viceroy's regulations.' There were many other minor incidents, eventually provoking the exasperated diarist to exclaim: 'So much for Nile travelling where nothing can be believed or depended upon.'<sup>34</sup> Later in the year Cook returned with another party to witness the opening of the Suez Canal, and while he despaired at the way in which the Canal had attracted 'greedy and reckless speculators and a race of avaricious adventurers, accompanied by a race of harpies of the vilest composition, who pander to the worst passions of corrupt humanity,' he still described his passage through the Canal as 'one of the red-letter days of my tourist life.'<sup>35</sup> The following year his son John Mason Cook hired the large new steamer *Beherah*, which could accommodate forty-four passengers, and which had hitherto been reserved for guests of the Viceroy, and – as the company was later to boast – 'thus personally conducted to the First Cataract and back the largest party of English and American tourists that had to that date ascended the river as one party.' He returned convinced that 'the traffic of the Nile might be considerably developed.'<sup>36</sup>

To do so, however, required the introduction of a regulated system so that – contrary to the frustrations visited upon Cook's first party – *everything* 'could be believed and depended on.' As I want to show, the production of such a system involved both appropriating the privileges of security and sovereignty that accreted around the 'traditional' Nile voyage and guarding them against the usual sources of dislocation and disruption. Neither of these was a foregone conclusion and, as I also want to show, the production of the space of constructed visibility within which – and through which – Thomas Cook & Son operated was thus a conditional *achievement*.

In the early 1870s the company obtained the exclusive agency for the passenger service of the Khedive's steamers, and soon set about promoting the advantages of steam over sail. The arguments were driven home in the columns of Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser throughout the

decade. Progress on a *dahabeah* was so slow, it was claimed, that passengers rapidly tired of the 'monotonous' scenery; dependent on the vagaries of the wind, they could find themselves becalmed 'for a whole week', and then the only way forward was for the crew to track, 'a very painful sight and really galley-work.' Then there were the inevitable social tensions that arose among a (too) small party 'living day and night in close proximity [where] continual frictions are unavoidable.' Worse, the trip was positively dangerous. 'If the truth were told of the disasters, delays and deaths in connection with *dahabeahs* that went up the river last season, Egyptian visitors would be very cautious how they committed themselves to the dangerous and dilatory service.' The steamer was not only quicker and more sociable, in Cook's estimation it was even more rational. On a *dahabeah* the custom was to sail upriver as fast as possible, taking advantage of the sporadic winds from the north, and reserve the inspection of the tombs and temples for the slow journey down river with the current, a convention which Amelia Edwards – no friend of Cook – complained was tantamount to reading the 'Great Book' backwards. But the steamer made its major stops on the journey upriver so that, as the company put it, 'the order of sight-seeing is perfectly in harmony with the importance of the monuments.'<sup>37</sup>

Seasoned travellers were not only unconvinced by all this, they were absolutely horrified at Cook's programme. Their twin criticisms were really only different ways of putting the same, profoundly class-structured objection.

First, the steamer was vilified as the ensign of European modernity. By bringing the 'modern' so abruptly into the heart of the 'traditional', the very presence of the steamer was a forceful reminder of the precariousness of 'the timeless Orient' – of the predicament of belatedness – and noisily intruded the 'modern' into scenes where most travellers expressly did not wish to see or hear it. 'When you visit a country of the past,' Laporte advised his readers, 'do not be persuaded to despise the institutions of the past.'

But it was not only the machinery of the steamboat that provoked angry denunciations; it was also the 'mechanical' culture of organized tourism itself and its sense of unvarying regimentation. Although Samuel Manning travelled on a steamer himself, he allowed that

The delicious sense of repose, the Oriental *Kief*, the Italian *dolce far niente*, which constitutes so large a part of the enjoyment of the Nile trip, is impossible on board a steamer. [T]he rate of progress . . . is yet far too rapid to let us abandon ourselves to the lotus-eating indolence which can expect to find anything in Egypt so refreshing to the wearied frame and over-wrought brain of the traveller in search of health. Then, too, it is impossible to linger where we please. We must hurry on. Two hours may be enough for the tombs



of Beni Hassan, three hours for the temple at Esneh, four days for Luxor and Karnak; but it is distressing to feel that we cannot stop if we like. Haunted by the fear of being too late, we complete our survey, watch in hand, to be sure of catching the steamer before she leaves her moorings in the river.<sup>38</sup>

Second, since the steamer was both faster and cheaper than the traditional *dahabeah*, it opened Egypt to tourists of lesser means. By the early 1870s Cook was taking parties of his 'personally conducted' – what his critics called 'Cookies' or 'Cookites' – up the Nile every fortnight: a venture that was often criticized for its social pretensions.

The most outspoken of Cook's *fin-de-siècle* critics was the French romantic novelist Pierre Loti, whose description of a visit to the temple at Abydos was, in its way, exemplary of both nationalist *hauteur* and class condescension:

But what is this noise in the sanctuary? It seems to be full of people. There, sure enough, beyond a second row of columns, is quite a little crowd talking loudly in English. I fancy that I can hear the clinking of glasses and the tapping of knives and forks . . . Behold a table set for some thirty guests, and the guests themselves – of both sexes – merry and lighthearted, belong to that special type of humanity which patronises Thomas Cook & Son (Egypt Ltd.) They wear cork helmets, and the classic green spectacles; drink whisky and soda and eat voraciously sandwiches and other viands out of greasy paper which now litters the floor. And the women! Heavens! what scarecrows they are! And this kind of thing, so the black-robed Bedouin guards inform us, is repeated every day so long as the season lasts. A luncheon in the temple of Osiris is part of the programme of pleasure trips. Each day at noon a new band arrives, on heedless and unfortunate donkeys.<sup>39</sup>

Farther up the Nile, Loti recoiled at the arrival of yet another party:

But all at once there is a noise of machinery, and whistlings, and in the air, which was just now so pure, rises noxious columns of black smoke. The modern steamers are coming, and throw into disorder the flotillas of the past: colliers that leave great eddies in their wake, or perhaps a wearisome lot of those three-decked tourist boats, which make a great noise as they plough through the water, and are laden for the most part with ugly women, snobs and imbeciles . . .<sup>40</sup>

If sentiments like these preserve – in acid rather than aspic – the privileges of the little world of the *dahabeah*, nonetheless by the turn of the century the larger world had already turned.

## Full Steam Ahead

By the end of the nineteenth century Egypt had become an extremely fashionable destination for well-to-do European and American travellers. Cairo, wrote Reynolds-Ball in 1901, 'is indeed emphatically a society place, and of late years especially, as an aristocratic winter-resort it ranks with Cannes or Monte Carlo.' For its winter residents – the *hivernants* – at the fashionable hotels like the Continental, Sheppard's and the Gezireh Palace, 'from January to April there is one unceasing round of balls, dinner parties, picnics, gymkhanas and other social functions.'<sup>41</sup> Much the same was true at Luxor and at Aswan, where new, modern hotels were also the centres of the tourist's social circle: 'During the day there are sports of all sorts, and in the evenings concerts, balls and bridge-parties. From time to time gymkhanas, donkey and camel races, paper-chases &c. are held, when ladies, gentlemen, children, young and old, take part with extraordinary enthusiasm.'<sup>42</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Nile voyage had been transformed too. It was still possible to make the trip by *dahabeah*, but the boats were now less expensive and could even be hired through Thomas Cook. This was still an expensive proposition, of course, but once Thomas Cook had entered the market the company lost no time in trumpeting its belated discovery of the 'many' advantages of the *dahabeah*. In particular, the traditional Nile voyage conferred both 'absolute privacy' and 'perfect independence' upon its clients. In a bold understatement, Cook conceded that the company had 'merited, to a certain extent, the accusation that we have ridiculed the expensive luxury of the *dahabeah*,' but in mitigation added that 'during the past nine years we have, at the request of private families, arranged for the voyage to the First or Second Cataract by *dahabeah*, and during the seasons of 1879-80 and 1880-81 we had the pleasure of organizing and carrying out no less than *nine special private parties*.' The social aspirations of that emphasis were unmistakable: so much so, indeed, that the company reversed its recoil from the tyranny of the wind, the monotony of the landscape and the horrors of tracking. 'The crews are practiced in "tracking" and real delays are of rare occurrence,' it was now announced, 'but as the Nile is full of variety, and places of interest abound, enforced detention is seldom wearisome.'<sup>43</sup> Still, the number of available boats dwindled and Cook slowly edged out many local operators. By 1888 Edwards already noted that 'the increase of steamer traffic has considerably altered the conditions of Nile travelling' and 'fewer *dahabeahs* are consequently employed.'<sup>44</sup>

The tourist steamer had in fact become highly fashionable, as Cook moved resolutely up-market in what John Mason Cook described as a 'voyage from vulgarity'. In 1879 he had decided 'to reduce the numbers of our parties and keep them more manageable than they have hitherto been.'

Parties were now to be 'select and private', conducted by 'gentlemen of experience and culture', and catering for members 'uniformly of the most intelligent, refined and cultured class.' In 1880 Cook signed a ten-year agreement with the Khedive, 'under which we take a more perfect control of the steamboat traffic on the Nile than we have hitherto done'; the company now assumed 'full control of the fittings and appointments of the steamers as well as the working of them.' All seven ships were refitted and the number of cabins reduced 'so that with every berth occupied the steamers will not be inconveniently crowded, as they have hitherto been.'<sup>45</sup>

The company's plans were interrupted by the Urabi revolt in 1881, however, and by the British occupation in the summer of 1882. In late October John Mason Cook travelled out with three companions for a lightning tour to assess the situation. In Alexandria they breakfasted 'in the only hotel left standing', and found the destruction in the rest of the city 'fearful'. Undeterred, they hurried on to Cairo where they were immensely relieved at the 'great fun' still to be had in the bazaars of the old city and at the Pyramids.<sup>46</sup> On their return, Cook moved quickly to reassure his would-be passengers that order had been restored and that the envelope of security was intact. But the immediate consequences were serious. In December 1882 an American archaeologist working in the Nile valley recorded that 'the Cook steamer had nine passengers and but four *dahabeeyehs* have gone up; there are scarcely any travelers; the occupation of the *dragoman* and the *anteekah*-seller is well-nigh gone.' The interruption turned out to be protracted. Not only were regular steamboat services suspended during the military operations, but soon afterwards a cholera epidemic hit the tourist traffic; then in 1884 the company was contracted to provide transport for Gordon's ill-fated mission to Khartoum, and later in the same year to ship the relief column of 18,000 British and Egyptian troops from Alexandria to the Second Cataract.<sup>47</sup>

The company's complicities in the colonial project were not confined to the materialities of these military campaigns; its involvement also had a powerful symbolic charge. The Gordon relief expedition was fraught with anxieties and punctuated by arguments over payment, and a committee of inquiry concluded that the company had made 'a very considerable profit' out of the army's operations and that any further financial demands would be 'exorbitant'.<sup>48</sup> Most historians agree that John Mason Cook's motive was patriotic, and he was plainly bruised by allegations of this sort. More significant, however, was the way in which the company capitalized on its adventures. Cook was now seen as a symbol not only of British presence but of British power in and even British sovereignty over Egypt. An imaginative chronicle of the company's success in transporting the relief column to Wadi Halfa described John Mason Cook as 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt' and 'Pharaoh of the boats of the north and south', filling the heart of Queen Victoria by bringing her soldiers to Wadi Halfa: all of

which was recorded in hieroglyphics 'found at Assouan'. The exorbitant language and the textual form amounted to a comic conceit, but it was also a profoundly serious one which identified Cook with – and inscribed Cook within – the space of 'traditional' Egypt.<sup>49</sup>

This appropriative gesture spiralled beyond the company's military services to underwrite Cook's *system*, a combination of political economy and disciplinary power by means of which the company established and enlarged its own space of prescription. It was this conjunction that had made Cook's military service possible. When the company declared that 'the Government must either buy us out or they must give us the work,' this was the unvarnished truth: but it was a truth that had been successfully manufactured by the company itself.<sup>50</sup> After the Anglo-Egyptian campaigns this regime of truth – this apparatus of power-knowledge – was put to work to produce a space within which 'traditional' Egypt could be made visible to a travelling audience in ways that were so routinized and so rationalized that they seemed perfectly natural and naturally transparent.

The suture this installed between the logistics of military operations and the logistics of modern tourism was recognized by a British journalist:

In Egypt he who puts himself in the hands of Cook can go anywhere and do anything. Whether it be the transport of an army or the regulations for the use of a steamer's bath-room, you will find every point thought of and every point thought through.<sup>51</sup>

By this means 'Egypt' and its 'exhibition' were made to appear as both incontrovertible and interchangeable. That identity was underscored by the same writer who described the Khedive as merely 'the nominal Governor' of Egypt; 'its real governor' was Thomas Cook. He gave that combination of political economy and disciplinary power an explicitly colonial gloss:

Mr Cook is a blessing to Egypt – perhaps the only one of England's recent blessings which nobody disputes. It is not only the vast amount of money he brings into the country, nor the vast number of people he directly employs. Besides that, you will find natives all up the Nile who practically live on him. Those donkeys are subsidised by Cook; that little plot of lettuce is being grown for Cook, and so are the fowls; those boats tied up on the bank were built by the sheikh of the Cataracts for the tourist service with money advanced by Cook.

Therefore, when the Governor is pleased to travel up and down his Nile, you may see the natives coming up to him in long lines, salaaming and kissing his hand. When he appears they assemble and chant a song with refrain 'Good-mees-ta-Cook'. Once he took Lord Cromer up the Nile, and they went to visit a desert sheikh somewhere at the back of Luxor. The old man had no idea that the British had been possessing Egypt all these years – barely knew that the late Khedive was dead,

'Haven't you ever heard of me?' asked Lord Cromer. No; the sheikh had never heard of Lord Cromer.

'Have you heard of Mr Cook?'

'Oh, yes; Cook Pasha – everybody knows Cook Pasha.'<sup>52</sup>

Whether the vignette was fanciful or not, the symbolic management of Cook's extraordinary and seemingly ubiquitous presence was unmistakable. As Douglas Sladen remarked, surveying the company's tourist steamers berthed at Cairo, 'Cook is the uncrowned King of Egypt, and this is the navy with which he won his battle of the Nile.'<sup>53</sup>

It was quite a navy. Throughout 1885 the company had waited with growing impatience for the old steamers to be released from their military contracts. By the end of the year it was obliged to announce that 'we have not received back from the [Egyptian] Government the Tourist Steamers in a fit state to justify us advertising the commencement of our regular steamboat service before the first week of January 1886.' Cook accepted that once the steamers had been returned they would need extensive repairs and refitting before being used for commercial passengers; but it soon became clear that they could never again be used for a 'first-class passenger service'. Instead, several of them were to be 'remodelled and fitted up' to provide a cheap express service (which would convey both tourists and 'native passengers'), while the company would build its own Nile fleet for the exclusive use of its foreign clients. Contracts were placed for four new vessels, and in 1886 Cook launched the *Prince Abbas*, the first of the company's fleet of 'floating palaces'.<sup>54</sup>

Cook was determined to attract a clientele to match. Mabel Caillard, who travelled up the Nile with John Mason Cook on several occasions, recalled that he desperately wanted 'to charm into his net the big fish who so far had disdained to be classed in the category of Cook's travellers.'<sup>55</sup> In 1888 the Reverend Charles Bell, travelling on Cook's *Rameses*, declared that 'We were very fortunate in our fellow-passengers on the Nile, some of them highly cultured and of wide reading, in whose society time went not only lightly but profitably. There were scientific men, and men of travel; ladies who sketched admirably, and had a true feeling for art.' More than twenty years later it was even easier for Philip Marden to insist that:

For the great majority the tourist steamer must always remain the popular choice – and, be it said, the perfectly satisfactory choice. I have small patience with the supercilious disdain which superior persons see fit to bestow on the common herd who are forced to take their Egypt under the chaperonage of either of the well-appointed steamer companies that now exploit the Nile. For most of us there is no other way – and for the reasonable traveler there is no need of a better.<sup>56</sup>

The fact of the matter was that Cook had acquired a certain cachet. The company still had its critics, and traditionalists continued to rail against the speed at which it passed tourists through Egypt on what one writer described as 'the Rameses Limited Express'.<sup>57</sup> Even so, Cook's tourist steamers no longer automatically invoked images of 'mechanical' tourism, and by 1906 George Ade among many others did not hesitate to describe the three weeks devoted to their ascent and descent of the Nile as 'a loafing voyage'. Neither were Cook's clients the object of a universal upper-class disdain, and in 1907 Norma Lorimer, like countless others, advised that 'where money is a matter of no consideration, Cook's boats are, of course, the most pleasant and luxurious method of travelling.'<sup>58</sup> Effortlessly joining Ade's leisure to Lorimer's luxury, Douglas Sladen (the snob's snob) wrote of his several trips up the Nile on board a Cook's tourist steamer:

Breakfast is a country-house meal . . . In the height of the season, when the tourist steamers are full, on the days when there are no excursions, the particular young man sometimes breaks out into silks suits and wonderful socks, or at any rate rare and irreproachable flannels, just as the girl who has come to conquer Cairo society rings the gamut of summer extravagances. They have the moral courage for at least two different costumes between breakfast and dinner.

Conjuring up the world of the country-house weekend, the garden party and the golf club, of Hurlingham and Royal Ascot, Sladen re-inscribed the same distinctions as Loti in a parallel social register. 'Cook's trips up the Nile cost a great deal of money,' he added astringently, and 'the English people who go on them belong mostly to the class of the unemployed rich.' By the turn of the century Cook's 'floating palaces' lived up to their name, and the company's published programme included a list of the 'names of some of the royal and distinguished persons who have travelled under the arrangements of Thomas Cook and Sons' which included royalty from all over Europe and beyond.<sup>59</sup>

It is thus not surprising that many of the privileges formerly associated exclusively with the *dahabeah* were successfully appropriated by those who travelled on the steamers. For G.W. Steevens in 1898:

[T]he keynote of Nile life is peace; it is an existence placid, regular, reposeful. There is just enough variety in it to keep your mind awake, and just enough sameness to keep it off the stretch. There is just enough excursioning ashore to persuade you that you are not lazy, and just enough lazing aboard to assure you that you are enjoying rest. You pick up letters on the way, enough to remind you that you are of the world, and to convince you blessedly that you are not in it. A vision of half-barbarous life passes before you all day, and you survey it in the intervals of French cooking. You are not to worry, not to

plan, not to arrange about anything; you are just to sit easy and be happy . . . Rural Egypt at Kodak range – and you sitting in a long chair to look at it.<sup>60</sup>

Recalling a trip in 1913, Rudyard Kipling wrote:

[T]he land of Egypt marched solemnly beside us on either hand. The river being low, we saw it from the boat as one long plinth, twelve to twenty feet high of brownish, purplish mud, visibly upheld every hundred yards or so by glistening copper caryatides in the shape of naked men baling water up to the crops above. Behind that bright emerald line ran the fawn- or tiger-coloured background of desert, and a pale blue sky closed all. There was Egypt even as the Pharaohs, their engineers and architects had seen it . . . When the banks grew lower, one looked across as much as two miles of green-stuff packed like a toy Noah's Ark with people, camels, sheep, goats, oxen, buffaloes, and an occasional horse.<sup>61</sup>

This sense of enframing – of 'traditional' Egypt as a succession of framed pictures or a moving panorama – was an exceedingly powerful organizing trope, but its power derived not only from enduring cultural conventions but also from their mobilization within a new actor-network. The services that Cook had provided for the Anglo-Egyptian campaigns helped to identify the company with the stability and security – the civil order – that had been achieved through the exercise of political and military power. Indeed, by the end of 1885 the company affirmed that 'the present state of Egypt, combined with the security always imparted by the presence of English soldiers, conduces to the conviction that the country is once more open to tourist travel.'<sup>62</sup> The envelope of security had been not only restored but strengthened. And yet if the company's activities were to give a new lease of life to the cultures of travel that had sustained the traditional *dahabeah* voyage, but which were now to be set in motion under the sign of a distinctively *modern* tourism, then the other sources of dislocation that had hitherto plagued the Nile voyage had to be contained: the eruptions of culture-nature and the interventions of local people.

Although Egypt was still seen as an unhealthy place for its native population, haunted by endemic diseases like ophthalmia, it was increasingly advertised as 'the first of health resorts' for those who visited from colder climes, where 'the charms of its lovely climate, the restorative effects of reposeful air, give relief and new life to the invalid and the toil-worn.' This was a sort of colonization – certainly a cultural appropriation – of its climate. Prospective tourists were now informed that 'the risks run by visitors of contracting disease' were 'probably neither more in kind nor greater in degree than at home.' The exception was Cairo, where 'the dangers are increased mainly because the old town is insanitary and its inhabitants careless and uncleanly; but even so they may be rendered

insignificant by exercising ordinary precaution.' Even there, by 1906 Cook's *Handbook* noted with pleasure 'considerable improvement in Cairo as a health resort,' not only in the continued development of 'the European quarter' of modern hotels but also in 'the native quarters of the city' where 'the Egyptian is no longer allowed to live amid dust and dirt.' On the Nile, where a *cordon sanitaire* could be put into effect more readily – where, as a relieved Elizabeth Butler put it, 'a few yards of water afford you complete immunity from that nearer contact which travel by road necessitates; and in the East, as you know, this is just as well'<sup>63</sup> – fears of illness were consistently downplayed.

'Culture-nature' was also domesticated through the production of other modalities that imposed new orderings – new modes of regulation – on the admission of 'nature' into 'culture'. In the past most travellers had been delighted by the food on board their *dahabeah*, and writers regaled their readers with accounts of well-stocked pantries and groaning tables. Although it was the responsibility of the *dragoman* to superintend the purchase of supplies and of the cook to prepare the meals, however, this had often required considerable planning and supervision on the part of travellers. Guidebooks included detailed lists of provisions to be brought from England and provisions to be bought in Alexandria and Cairo; anything else had to be purchased from the villages and towns strung out along the valley. But the spaces of prescription within which Cook and the other travel companies operated now allowed tourists to occupy different positions within the new actor-networks, and responsibility for provisions passed to the company and its agents. Clients who hired a *dahabeah* from Cook were guaranteed an excellent table. Clients could also receive 'from the steamers constant supplies of fresh fruit, vegetables, poultry, &c., &c., and specially fresh beef which cannot be had on board an ordinary *dahabeah*, unless seven or eight *dahabeahs* happen to meet together, enabling them to divide a whole bullock amongst them.'<sup>64</sup>

In fact there was a close articulation between tourist traffic on the river and the new hotels on its banks. The Karnak Hotel at Luxor had a kitchen garden of more than four acres which supplied 'the finest fresh vegetables'; cattle, sheep and poultry were fattened for the hotel table; and the hotel's dairy provided fresh butter, milk and cream 'to meet the demand of [Cook's] steamers and *dahabeahs*.'<sup>65</sup> The Cataract Hotel at Aswan, opened by Cook in 1899, boasted a vast dining room designed to resemble the interior of a mosque, which de Guerville pronounced 'delicious':

It is easy to understand the enormous difficulties which have to be overcome to conduct really well such a place, and to offer daily, at six hundred miles from Cairo, a varied and excellent menu worthy of any of the big Paris restaurants, to hundreds of guests with appetites whetted by an open-air life. It is really extraordinary to find on the frontiers of Nubia, at a reasonable

price, all the comforts and luxuries to which we are accustomed, and for which we are willing to pay a large price, at Ostend, Baden Baden, Nice or Monte Carlo.<sup>66</sup>

These technical interventions coupled 'culture' and 'nature' in new ways, and I suspect that many of them passed unremarked by tourists who had indeed grown accustomed to them. But from the closing decades of the nineteenth century these changes in agricultural production and marketing systems were connected to the construction and extension of barrages and irrigation schemes that dramatically increased the cultivable area, and few tourists missed the significance of projects on such a grand scale. By 1891 the French-built barrages north of Cairo had been restored; a new barrage was completed at Asyut in 1898; and in the same year work was started on the Aswan Dam at the head of the First Cataract, which was completed in 1902. When John Ward visited the construction site at Aswan he reversed the Orientalist image of 'traditional' Egypt as a dreamworld to conjure up the magical transformations wrought by British modernity: 'At first one thinks it must be a dream, that Harland and Wolff's Works, Crewe Station, Wolverhampton iron forges, the Aberdeen granite quarries may have got mixed, and all have been dropped down together.'<sup>67</sup> Many British and American travel writers represented these vast public works as spectacular colonizations of an unruly and incontinent nature. In a vivid illustration of the sexualized tropes that so often framed these schemes Frederic Penfield, the US Consul-General, praised the British architects of the Aswan Dam for 'compelling the great river to pay tribute to agriculture rather than wasting its virtue in the Mediterranean Sea, knowing that the pregnant soil could in a few years be made to defray the cost of any reservoir that human agency could construct.'<sup>68</sup>

And yet – even as it sought to regulate the admission of a virile 'nature' into a modernizing 'culture' – the construction of the Aswan Dam allowed this colonized 'nature' to spill over into other 'cultures'. Local villages were submerged by the rising waters of the lake, and the Roman temples on the 'sacred island' of Philae were flooded for part of the year. Soon after the dam opened one observer reported that

Steamers that once lay twenty-five feet below the post-office at Shellal can now steam over the roof of that building, if it were in existence. Tourists who have had a very stiff and dusty climb to reach the kiosk on Philae can now enter between the columns in a rowboat. Philae to Kalabsheh is now devoid of cultivated land, the water reaching to the foot of the rocky hills; the villages which once stood on along the banks have disappeared, as have also the inhabitants, with the exception of a few who have built their huts on the mountain-side. To reach the temple of Taffeh, the steamer must pass under overhanging date-palms and over the house-tops of a once existing village. *It*

*is gratifying to note that the water has in no place reached the temples . . . At some of the villages the natives beg for bakshish, on a plea that the water has covered their land, and therefore deprived them of a living.*<sup>69</sup>

As my added emphasis indicates, it was the threat to the temples on Philae that concerned most writers: not least because the construction of the dam heightened the tension between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' and in doing so visibly dramatized the predicament of belatedness. This was the object of Loti's lament in *Mort de Philae*, where he described how the Aswan Dam had destroyed the First Cataract and sentenced Philae to death.

The dam was raised a further five metres between 1907 and 1912, doubling its storage capacity, and by 1914 Sidney Low was reprimanding the 'aesthetic sentimentalism' of the dam's critics. 'We cannot sacrifice the interests of millions of Egyptians, living and to come, in order that a few genuine students and a considerable number of idle tourists may gaze at some interesting, though not supremely important, examples of Ptolemaic art.' Low evidently did not think much of tourists, least of all 'the clients of Cook'. At Aswan, he wrote, 'one finds oneself whirled tumultuously into the full stream of Egyptian pleasure-seekers.' For the most part these modern tourists did not take the antiquities 'too seriously': 'They visit the monuments in parties and in high spirits.' In Low's eyes, the pity of it all was that 'of modern Egypt – the real, living Egypt – they know even less than they do of that ancient Egypt which still lies half buried under the dust.' The only Egypt that tourists really appreciated, so he said, was 'the Egypt of Messrs Cook, the Egypt of the hotels and the palace-steamers, the Egypt of the *dragoman* and the donkey-boy.' And it was 'modern Egypt' – colonial Egypt, more emphatically *Britain's* Egypt – that captivated Low, and for this reason he believed that the tourist gaze at Aswan ought to be diverted from the ancient temples:

[T]he lover of the aesthetic has his compensation in the charm of an imposing and significant contrast. The temples rise like islands out of the broad sheet of water – the huge artificial lake into which this reach of the Nile has been converted by the dam. The stone colonnades, looking more Greek than Egyptian in their lightness and grace, are beautiful in their way; but there is a beauty of another kind – the beauty of stern majesty and purposeful strength – in the mighty bar of granite that lies athwart the river and curbs its pace or holds the tremendous energy of its impact in suspense.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, that 'stern majesty and purposeful strength' – the virility of British colonial power – had already captured Cook's attention, and the company had added the dam to its itineraries. Two hours were devoted to 'exploring [the] enchanting island in every part,' and passengers then rejoined the

steamer for the short trip to the dam. 'After viewing this stupendous work for storing the waters of the Nile for irrigation purposes, and lunching in the newly erected Chalet overlooking the Cataract, donkeys will be in waiting for the return journey.'<sup>71</sup>

These vast engineering projects also affected navigation through their various impacts on winds and channels. Some writers claimed that the 'increased canalization and the added area of vegetation [had contributed] to a diminution of the frequency and force of the *bhamsin*,' and though this was not without controversy Cook's *Handbook* agreed that in some places these changes had helped 'to make the winters less dry and the summers less hot.'<sup>72</sup> If, on some reaches of the river, *dahabeahs* were now less likely to run foul of violent windstorms, however, they could still find themselves becalmed; but in such circumstances Cook's clients could call upon the company's powerful steam launches for a tow. And if the modern barrages regulated the flow of the Nile, tourist steamers could still run aground at some times of the year; but this was now frequently treated as a lark. 'I fancy this occasional contact with the African continent under our feet will become so common an occurrence,' Marden continued, 'that we shall soon pay little heed to it.'<sup>73</sup> Indeed, colonial modernity's power over the physical landscape had become so impressive that Lorimer was surprised to find that she had to transfer from one steamer to another at the First Cataract:

I imagined, I suppose, if I ever thought about it at all, that there was some splendid lock system on the Nile which would wipe out all the difficulties and enable Cook's tourists to continue their journey undisturbed. But not at all! For once in the course of our luxurious trip under his guidance we have been put to a few hours' inconvenience.<sup>74</sup>

In fact there was an elaborate system of four locks to the west of the dam, but since most tourists still elected to travel only as far as Aswan it made sense for Cook to run separate steamer services on the Upper and Lower Nile. The curtain had fallen on 'the opera of the Cataract' for the traditional *dahabeah* voyage too: 'The American sun-seeker or English milord, making the voyage to Wadi Halfa by his own *dahabiyeh*, will no longer have his craft hauled up the cataract by a hundred shrieking Arabs and Berberins, for most likely it will be taken up the rapids and through the locks by electricity generated by the rushing Nile itself.'<sup>75</sup> If 'nature' continued to be seen as a spectacle to be witnessed from the comfort of the deck, therefore, it was a 'nature' which – for its modern spectators at least – was now contained by a modern techno-cultural frame.<sup>76</sup>

The actor-networks of modern tourism also considerably diminished the capacity of local people to intervene in the plans of tourists. There was still a raw violence to some of Cook's ancillary operations, perhaps most obviously coaling the steamers:

A dirty disagreeable operation it was, filling the atmosphere with clouds of fine black dust, and making a mess of everything about the decks. The work is performed by a number of the poor peasants, chiefly women and children, who are forced to do this without any remuneration from the authorities. The unfortunate *fellaheen*, who were half-naked and miserable, carried the coals on their heads in small baskets, and they ran up and down the bank in Indian file, urged on by one or two men with whips, who superintended the work . . . When it is over, they all congregate on the bank and look with interest upon the steamer and its passengers who, on such occasions, appear on deck, and occasionally fling copper coins and oranges among the dusky throng.<sup>77</sup>

And there were the usual warnings about crafty merchants in the bazaars, about sellers of antiquities who turned out to be manufacturers of the same 'antiquities', coupled with constant complaints about the incessant clamour for *baksheesh*. But these excesses and cautions also served to bring into view Cook's own system of disciplinary power. According to John Ward:

The very name of Cook becomes in Egypt a magic talisman securing all who trust in it immunity from fraud and protection from rudeness, incivility [and] petty annoyances of any kind . . . Messrs Cook take an ignorant Arab or an ebon-tinted Nubian from his native village, put him through some mysterious training known only to themselves, and in a short time he is fit for use, is labelled 'Cook' in large letters and lo! he at once becomes a patient, efficient and trustworthy servant of all bearers of their tickets.<sup>78</sup>

Stevens employed a different metaphor, but its burden was exactly the same. 'Cook's representative is the first person you meet in Egypt, and you go on meeting him,' he explained.

He sees you in; he sees you through; he sees you out. You see the back of a native – turban, long blue gown, red girdle, bare brown legs; 'How truly Oriental!' you say. Then he turns round, and you see 'Cook's Porter' emblazoned across his breast. 'You travel Cook, sir,' he grins; 'all right'. And it is all right: Cook carries you, like a nursing father, from one end of Egypt to the other.<sup>79</sup>

That sense of security, of paternalism and protection, was installed from the moment of arrival. Early in the twentieth century one French writer described 'pandemonium' – 'a Tower of Babel' – as his ship dropped anchor at Alexandria and crowds of porters swarmed on board to claim the luggage. Out of this chaos, as if by magic, would appear Cook's sturdy porters. And once on the river the same sense of ordered ease – of order as ease – prevailed. Brushing aside the traditional images of local people,

Cook's advertisements proclaimed that its *dahabeahs* would be under the command of 'an experienced and trustworthy *reis*' and that its parties would be accompanied by 'a skilled and competent *dragoman*.' The presumption was not that the old stereotypes had been wrong; it was that a significant change had been brought about by the power and perfection of Cook's own system. 'Thanks to the extent and permanence of our organization,' the company explained, 'we have at our disposal the pick of native employees.'<sup>80</sup> It was the same on the tourist steamers. The officers were all British, and from the beginning the company announced its intention 'to appoint an improved class of waiters and servants' on its new ships.<sup>81</sup>

It seemed to work. 'The servants on Cook's boats spoil you for any other servants,' Sladen marvelled. 'They hang about you like shadows in soft white robes, wondering what you could want next.'<sup>82</sup> This was more than a matter of service, however, because the 'white robes' were part of the 'reality-effect': they confirmed the persistence, the substantial presence, of the Orient as a *tableau vivant* to which tourists on the steamers enjoyed a privileged access. In much the same way, Sladen was delighted to find that the chief *dragoman* on board the steamer was 'Mohammed, the *doyen* of Cook's,' not only because he conjured up what Sladen called 'the good old days' – though he was now, of course, answerable to the company for his actions – but also because he was 'even more endeared to the tourist by the picturesqueness of himself.'<sup>83</sup> 'Picturesqueness' was an absolute requirement; it was essential for the actors to look the part. In the same vein, Lorimer echoed the sentiments of many of her companions when she declared she would be perfectly satisfied 'if there was nothing else to watch all day but the antics of our Soudanese crew':

There is the ostrich-feather broom boy who watches for a speck of dust to brush away, and the brass boys who lift up rugs and mats to find some hidden treasure in the way of knobs to polish, indeed there is a boy with a grinning smile and flashing teeth for every mortal occupation you can imagine. I often wonder if there is a special crew kept to do nothing but say their prayers, for there is always a group of black-skinned Soudanese in white drawers on their knees in the bows of the boat. Perhaps Thos. Cook and Son recognise how valuable they are for 'off days' on the Nile, for tourists to kodak.<sup>84</sup>

The 'kodak' was the apotheosis of the appropriation of Egypt as a late Victorian and Edwardian exhibition in which scopic pleasure was not compromised by physical vulnerability.<sup>85</sup> For clients who hired one of its *dahabeahs* 'all trouble and annoyance incidental to disbursements in strange money and among a rather grasping people are altogether avoided,'

Cook's brochure promised, and 'every charge, every probable outlay is included in the hire of the ship.' It would no doubt be wrong to exaggerate the degree to which Thomas Cook and other travel companies succeeded in establishing their own spaces of prescription. There must have been all sorts of ways in which their local employees – and the countless others with whom tourists came into casual contact – were able to make their own accommodations and negotiations with the actor-networks of modern tourism but which are largely absent from the accounts provided by writers who travelled on the first-class tourist steamers. But the reason for that absence is revealing. For what is so striking about Cook's *fin-de-siècle* operation is its success in contracting the space of trans-culturation and minimizing such fluid, sensuous and spontaneous interactions between tourists and local people. The modern culture of travel was identified with a visual economy that was, in some substantial sense, de-corporealized; the bodies of local people were reduced to silhouettes or silent spectacles, glimpsed in the distance working the *shaduf* or witnessed on board mopping the deck.

For those who wished to do so, it was possible to close that distance, which is how Cook advertised the remodelled express post-boats it operated on behalf of the government:

Native passengers are conveyed on the lower deck, and as this necessitates the calling at many of the small riverside towns and villages, glimpses are afforded of quaint native life not always compassed by the tourist programme. The lower deck of a post boat is quite removed from the travellers above, and presents a varied and motley crowd of passengers – natives of all classes, parties of troops, rich proprietors and the fellaheen, sometimes a *zenana* had been improvised with close drawn curtains to shroud the Mahomedan ladies from all observation.<sup>86</sup>

Cook was not alone in these observations, which offered travellers the prospect of a sort of 'natural history' of other cultures, allowing them to gaze over 'native life' unchallenged and perhaps even undetected. Some writers recommended the post-boat over the tourist steamer for these very reasons:

Native passengers travel in the lower deck of the mail boats; they provide themselves with their own food; consequently, at various places where the steamer stops, there are the most lively scenes between the native passengers and their compatriots on shore, bargaining for sugar cane and other articles of food; then there are farewells on departure, and greetings on return, which are full of little touches of tragedy or comedy.<sup>87</sup>

'From these scenes of native life,' she continued, 'the gilded seclusion of the tourist steamer is removed.' But it was precisely that 'gilded seclusion' – what Kipling described as sitting 'on copiously chaired and carpeted decks, carefully isolated from everything that had anything to do with Egypt'<sup>88</sup> – and the sense of a panorama unfolding effortlessly before one's eyes – 'rural Egypt at Kodak range' – that had become the attraction for most tourists. The work of production – and perhaps even the possibility of performance – had been made faint; what was powerfully present was projection. Indeed, seventy years before Thomas Cook was to conjure up 'an Agatha Christie film set' to advertise the company's Nile cruises, Grenfell declared that 'Egypt had become the first materialized movie film on record, where the audience does the moving.'<sup>89</sup> Egypt had been reduced to its exhibition.

### Colonial Nostalgia and Cultures of Travel

And so let me finally return to the two exhibits from our own *fin de siècle*: the guidebook and the tourist brochure. What can be made of them? John Frow has suggested, I think persuasively, that there may be an irredeemable nostalgia contained within most modern forms of tourism.<sup>90</sup> But it should be clear why I place the emphasis on a distinctively *colonial* nostalgia. In doing so, however, I depart from the usual meaning of the phrase. When Renato Rosaldo originally described 'imperialist nostalgia', he had in mind what he took to be a characteristic of cultures of colonialism and imperialism – namely, a desire for the very cultures that had been destroyed by their encroachments and inscriptions.

Curiously enough, agents of colonialism . . . often display nostalgia for the colonized culture as it was 'traditionally' (that is, when they first encountered it). The peculiarity of their yearning, of course, is that agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed. Therefore, my concern resides with a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed.<sup>91</sup>

Yet it seems to me that the two exhibits with which I began are signs of colonial nostalgia re-inscribed as a conspicuously *therapeutic* gesture that fuses two moments into a single constellation.

The first is a nostalgia *for colonialism itself*, a desire to re-create and recover the world of late Victorian and Edwardian colonialism as a culture of extraordinary confidence and conspicuous opulence: in a word – Thomas Cook's word – 'majesty'. This is to redeem a culture of travel that was, long before the British military occupation of Egypt in 1882, profoundly colonizing in its gestures, practices and appropriations. But it is

to redeem it in such a way that the inherent violence of its dispositions is lost from view. Colonialism is recuperated – and rehabilitated – at a distance, so to speak, through the production of what Paul Smith calls an 'inflated truth' whose manifestations fill the visual frame and crowd out the other figures. Thus the Edwardian tourists at lunch in the tomb leave in the shadows those who cooked for them, waited on them, and guided them through Egypt; the opening of the Suez Canal is invoked without summoning the forced labour that was expended in its construction or recalling its disastrous effect on the Egyptian economy.<sup>92</sup>

I am not surprised that these other histories should have been erased, needless to say, although fleeting traces of them reappear in other guidebooks to modern Egypt. But I want to insist on the complex ways in which notations of class are folded into this history of the colonial present. Orientalism and colonialism more generally are marked by 'race', gender and sexuality in highly significant ways – and colonial history and postcolonial criticism have done much to bring these to our attention – but in most of this discussion the *class* positions, privileges and practices carried within its cultural formations seem to have gone largely unmarked and unremarked. Yet this is central to understanding the power – and the seductiveness – of both colonialism and nostalgia.

The second moment is more oblique. It involves the recovery not only of *fin-de-siècle* claims to power but also its claims to knowledge. For these guidebooks and brochures imply that we are not 'too late' – that we can steal a march on the anguish of 'belated Orientalism' – and that we can do so, ironically enough, by imaginatively transporting ourselves back to its definitive period. By accepting this invitation, responding to its visual interpolations, and situating ourselves as late Victorian and Edwardian tourists, we are assured (and, I think, reassured) that it is possible to regain an intimacy with a 'timeless' Egypt and – by virtue of the privileges that are attached to this subject-position – to guarantee the authenticity of this 'Orient'. The formation of this subject-position, and the constellation of power, privilege and nostalgia that is accreted around it, is not independent of the exhibition of 'traditional' Egypt as a space of constructed visibility. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries it became a commonplace for travellers and tourists to describe Egypt through a series of visual metaphors: as a kaleidoscope, a diorama, a panorama, a phantasmagoria, a magic lantern show, a movie film. We might now revisit that past, go behind the elaborate stage-machinery and finally realize that we have been the architects of the illusion all along.

### Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Sixth Conference of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments,



'Manufacturing Heritage/Consuming Tradition,' Cairo, December 15, 1998. This work is part of a larger unpublished manuscript tentatively titled *Dancing on the Pyramids: Orientalism and Cultures of Travel*.

1. E. Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin, 1979, revised 1995, pp. 176-177.
2. E. Hobsbawm, 'Inventing Traditions,' in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 1-14.
3. A. Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 6-8, my emphasis.
4. L. Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp. 4-5. There is a considerable – and fractious – debate over the meaning of the 'post' in postcolonialism, but Ghandi's arguments seem to me to be compelling both politically and intellectually. See also D. Gregory, *The Colonial Present*, Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, forthcoming.
5. *Egypt*, New York, Knopf, 1995.
6. Thomas Cook Holidays, *Egypt, Jordan and Israel*, January-December, 1997, pp. 12-18.
7. H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, 1991 translation, first published in French in 1974; T. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988. Mitchell deploys Foucault rather than Lefebvre, and there are significant differences and oppositions between these two French theorists, but I cite Mitchell here because I think his work can be used to illuminate the equally important parallels between them.
8. J. Rajchman, 'Foucault's Art of Seeing,' in Rajchman, *Philosophical Events: Essays of the '80s*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, pp. 68-102.
9. T. Mitchell, 'The Object of Development: America's Egypt,' in J. Crush (ed.), *Power of Development*, London, Routledge, 1995, pp. 129-157.
10. J. Murdoch, 'The Spaces of Actor-Network Theory,' *Geoforum*, vol. 29, 1998, pp. 357-374.
11. The English transliteration varies from author to author; *dahabeah* is the most common form, but there were several variants, and I have not attempted to standardize them in the quotations that appear throughout the essay. The party hiring a *dahabeah* would usually be between three and eight people. Smaller parties would sometimes hire the smaller (and faster) *cange*: see, for example, W.H. Bartlett, *The Nile Boat, or Glimpses of the Land of Egypt*, London, Virtue, 1849; and L. Pascal, *La Cange: Voyage en Égypte*, Paris, Hachette, 1861.
12. T. Knox, *The Oriental World*, Hartford, CN, A.D. Worthington, 1877, p. 529.
13. D. Gregory, 'Scripting Egypt: Orientalism and the Cultures of Travel,' in J. Duncan and Gregory (eds.), *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, pp. 120-127.
14. F. Nightingale, *Letters from Egypt: A Journey on the Nile 1849-50*, A. Sattin (ed.), New York, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p. 48. This passage – and the relationship between Nightingale's 'dream-images' and her obsessive 'dreaming' – is more complex than I can explicate here: see D. Gregory, 'Between the Book and the Lamp: Imaginative Geographies of Egypt, 1849-50,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 20, 1995, pp. 29-57.

15. E. Beaufort, *Egyptian Sepulchres and Syrian Shrines*, London, Longman, Green, 1861, vol. I, p. vii. 'Today the inhabitants of a village in a district where a traveller has been robbed are required to pay compensation to the victim; all in consequence have an interest in maintaining good order and keeping a vigilant watch': A.C. Bey, *Aperçu Générale sur l'Égypte*, Bruxelles, Meline, Cans, 1840, vol. II, p. 97.

16. J.L. Roberts, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1991, originally published in 1837, p. 25; H. Martineau, *Eastern life, Present and Past*, Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848, pp. 159-160; and Countess L. Hahn-Hahn, *Letters of a German Countess*, London, Colburn, 1845, originally published in German, 1844, III, p. 182. See also A.L. Al-Sayyid Massot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 100-101. There were periodic outbreaks of peasant violence against the central authorities, but these were localized and seldom prolonged: outside pockets of protest in Upper Egypt and the Delta, Massot claims, 'the country was remarkable for its tranquillity,' pp. 135-136.

17. A.C. Smith, *The Attractions of the Nile and its Banks*, London, John Murray, 1868, vol. II, pp. 116-131, 173.

18. A.W. Kinglake, *Eothen*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928 ed., originally published in 1844, p. 186. Although most travellers recoiled from that particular *frisson*, many of them realized that the landscapes through which they passed were saturated with the signs of death. Some of the most vivid testimony can be found in Flaubert's writings describing his *voyage en Orient* in 1849-50, where Egypt becomes not only a memorial to the dead – a landscape of temples and tombs – but a land where death is still ever-present: his journal and his letters home are pock-marked with fragments of half-buried mummies, the cries of the dying, the muzzles of hunting dogs purple with clotted blood, and the carcasses of camels and donkeys: see Gregory, 'Between the Book and Lamp,' p. 42.

19. C.D. Warner, *Mummies and Moslems*, Tornot, Belford, 1876, p. 104. In fact, Warner was exasperated by the preparations: 'I bought chunks of drugs, bottles of poisons, bundles of foul smells and bitter tastes. And then they told me I needed balances to weigh them in. This was too much. I was willing to take along an apothecary's shop on this pleasure excursion; I was not willing to become an apothecary,' p. 103.

20. Nightingale, *Letters*, pp. 45, 47.

21. Beaufort, *Egyptian Sepulchres*, p. 23; A. Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, London, 1877, 2nd ed., 1888, p. 72; and H.D. Traill, *From Cairo to the Soudan Frontier*, London, John Lane, 1896, p. 201. All this said, it should be noted that many travellers railed at the inadequacy of their own watercolours and sketches.

22. H. Hopley, *Under Egyptian Palms, or Three Bachelors' Journeyings on the Nile*, London, Chapman and Hall, 1869, pp. 89-90. Cf. S. Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 75; Suleri also accentuates the ways in which desire and sexuality surface through the picturesque.

23. T.G. Appleton, *A Nile Journal*, Boston, Roberts, 1876, p. 131; the diabolical imagery is from Florence Nightingale's description of the island of Elephantine at the northern end of the cataract in her *Letters*, p. 86; Warner's reflections on the 'convulsion of nature' are from his *Mummies*, pp. 217-232.

24. J.W. Clayton, *Letters from the Nile*, London, Bosworth, 1854, p. 53.
25. J. Arnold, *Palms and Temples: Four Months' Voyage upon the Nile*, London, Tinsley Brothers, 1882, pp. 63-75; see also his father's account in E. Arnold, *Wandering Words*, London, Longmans Green, 1894, pp. 49-70.
26. Warner, *Mummies*, pp. 52-53, 92; M. Twain (Samuel Clemens), *The Innocents Abroad*, New York, American Publishing Co., 1869; Arnold, *Palms and Temples*, p. 157.
27. See E. Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
28. See Gregory, 'Scripting'.
29. W.H. Bartlett, *Nile Boat*, pp. 109-110; J.G. Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes*, London, John Murray, 1843, vol. I, p. 216; and B. St. John, *Village Life in Egypt*, London, Chapman Hall, 1852, p. 223.
30. B. Taylor, *A Journey to Central Africa, or Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile*, New York, Putnam, 1854, pp. 63-64. There was probably a formulaic quality to these exchanges on both sides, though Taylor seems to have convinced himself that the outcome was as he said: he later wrote that 'as we make no unreasonable demands we are always cheerfully obeyed,' and that 'the most complete harmony exists between the rulers and the ruled' on board the *dahabeah* (p. 87). Other travellers consoled themselves that the punishment was far from severe. 'It was over in less time than it takes to write it,' Smith recorded, 'and we were told it was a light punishment and did not hurt him much. It was a comfort to have the intelligence, for I was suffering beyond description': J.V.C. Smith, *Pilgrimage to Egypt*, Boston, Gould and Lincoln, 1852, p. 219. Other travellers were markedly more sensitive to the suffering of the unfortunate victim. Stephens witnessed the bastinado being applied after a dispute between two Egyptians: 'When I heard the scourge whizzing through the air, and, when the first blow fell upon the naked feet, saw the convulsive movements of the body, and heard the first loud piercing shriek, I could stand it no longer': see J.L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1991, originally published in 1837, pp. 147-149.
31. Hahn-Hahn, *Letters*, pp. 155-156.
32. A.S. Kennard, *Eastern Experiences Collected during a Winter's Tour in Egypt and the Holy Land*, London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1855, pp. 129-131, 178-181, 189-193.
33. E. Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross, or Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel*, London, Colburn, 1855, original ed. 1844, pp. 17, 29.
34. P. Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Tourism*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1981, pp. 125-127; *Miss Riggs's Diary*, Thomas Cook Archives, London, February 18, March 3, 1869.
35. Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, p. 131.
36. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, October 11, 1886, p. 3; Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, p. 130. Thomas Cook was neither the only nor even the first European tour operator in Egypt. Henry Gaze was there before him and there was a considerable rivalry between the two companies until Gaze's sons declared

bankruptcy in 1903: see Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, p. 185; and Knox, *Oriental World*, p. 531.

37. Edwards, *Thousand Miles*, p. 70:

It is the rule of the Nile to hurry up the river as fast as possible, leaving the ruins to be seen as the boat comes back with the current; but this, like many another canon, is by no means of universal application . . . [For] those who desire not only to see the monuments, but to follow, however superficially, the course of Egyptian history as it is handed down through Egyptian art, it is above all things necessary to start early and see many things by the way.

For the history of ancient Egypt goes against the stream. The earliest monuments lie between Cairo and Siout, while the latest temples to the old gods are chiefly found in Nubia. Those travellers, therefore, who hurry blindly forward with or without a wind, now sailing, now tracking, now punting, passing this place by night, and that by day, and never resting till they have gained the farthest point of their journey, begin at the wrong end and see all their sights in precisely inverse order.

My summary version of Cook's arguments is from R. Etzensberger, *Up the Nile by Steam*, London, Thomas Cook, 1877, pp. 7-10. The company used its publication to take a pot-shot at the authority of 'guide-books and [published] diaries of tourists' which sung the praises of the *dahabeah*; they were the product of 'a single short visit,' whereas *Up the Nile by Steam* was 'the result of personal observation during eight seasons' (p. 6).

38. Rev. S. Manning, *The Land of the Pharaohs: Egypt and Sinai Illustrated by Pen and Pencil*, London, Religious Tract Society, 1875, pp. 66-67.

39. This was no exaggeration: countless books describe picnicking among the tombs and temples. See, for example, W.C. Maughan, *The Alps of Arabia: Travels in Egypt, Sinai, Arabia and the Holy Land*, London, Henry King, 1875, pp. 48-49.

40. P. Loti, *Egypt*, London, Werner, 1909, translated from the French, pp. 135-136, 160. The title in the original French – *Mort de Philae* – used the construction of the Aswan Dam and its threat to the island of Philae as a symbol of what Loti took to be the downfall of Egypt – of a particular, romantic and quintessentially Orientalist 'Egypt' – brought about by the British occupation.

41. E. Reynolds-Ball, *Cairo: The City of the Caliphs*, London, Fisher Unwin, 1901, p. 130; cf. T. Mostyn, *Egypt's Belle Époque: Cairo 1869-1952*, London, Quartet, 1989.

42. A.B. de Guerville, *New Egypt*, London: Heinemann, 1906, p. 221.

43. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, November 1, 1881, p. 3; *Programme of Thomas Cook's international tickets to Egypt*, London, Thomas Cook, 1898-99, Thomas Cook Archives, London, pp. 5-7. By 1889 Cook had built three first-class *dahabeahs* of its own, and soon added three more.

44. Edwards, *Thousand Miles*, p. 195 (note added to 2nd ed.).

45. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, November 29, 1880, p. 3; Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, pp. 137, 183.

46. W. Bemrose, *Recollections of Egypt and Palestine*, 1882, manuscript, Thomas Cook Archives; Bemrose was a personal friend of John Mason Cook and accompanied him on his tour 'to visit Alexandria, Cairo, the Pyramids, the Nile and the late battlefields'.

47. Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, pp.189-200. The company's own fleet was not big enough to undertake such an operation on its own; twenty-seven steamers and 650 sailing ships were used to transport the relief column of troops, supplies and coals as far as Wadi Halfa, and John Mason Cook hired 'a little army' of 5,000 local men and boys to work on the mission: *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, February 2, 1885, p. 3.

48. Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, pp. 190-192, 197-199.

49. 'Cook and Son in Egypt (according to hieroglyphics found at Assouan),' Thomas Cook Archives. The conceit was not confined to the company. According to *Vanity Fair*, March 9, 1889:

The nominal ruler [of Egypt] is Twefik; but Tewfik takes his orders from Baring; and Baring, I suspect, has to take his orders from Cook. The latter Sovereign becomes more and more potent as we get further up the Nile and here at Luxor, where a special hotel has arisen under the light of his countenance, he figures quite as a modern Ammon-Ra. It seems likely too that his might and majesty will increase.

50. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, February 2, 1885, p. 3.

51. G.W. Steevens, *Egypt in 1898*, London, Blackwood, 1898, p. 269.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69, 270-271.

53. D. Sladen, *Queer Things about Egypt*, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1910, p. 388. The epithet was a cliché even amongst non-British writers: see, for example, G. Montbard, *The Land of the Sphinx*, London, Hutchinson, 1894, p. ix; de Guerville, *New Egypt*, p. 3.

54. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, February 2, 1885, p. 3; November 2, 1885, p. 3; October 1, 1886, p. 3; February 1, 1887, p. 4; and September 12, 1887, p. 3. The new ships were planned to provide state-rooms for thirty-two first-class passengers, a dining saloon on the upper deck and a private saloon for ladies, and two or more bathrooms whose use was now 'included in the fare'. The first-class return fare from Cairo to the First Cataract was set at £50. The *Prince Abbas* was a magnificent ship, but old prejudices lingered in some quarters. Wilbour declared that 'it is really fine and looks comfortable'; so much so that he asked Mrs Goadison, Ruskin's next-door neighbour near Lake Windermere, why she did not go in it or on one of Cook's *dahabeahs*. She said, 'I could never face Mr Ruskin again if I were to go in a Cook boat.' C.E. Wilbour, *Travels in Egypt, December 1880 to May 1891*, Brooklyn, NY, Brooklyn Museum, 1936, p. 411.

55. M. Caillard, *A lifetime in Egypt 1876-1935*, London, Grant Richards, 1935, p. 55.

56. P.S. Marden, *Egyptian Days*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1912, p. 11.

57. L. Bacon, *Our Houseboat on the Nile*, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1902, pp. 155-159. Bacon satirized the journey from start to finish, from the 'record-breaking transatlantic greyhounds', through the express mail steamer to Alexandria and the train to Cairo, and then the steam-*dahabeah* to Luxor: 'So they return to Cairo [by train], having indeed broken the record for speed but having failed to come into touch with anything along the way.'

58. G. Ade, *In Pastures New*, New York, McClure and Phillips, 1906, p. 197; N. Lorimer, *By the Waters of Egypt*, London, Methuen, 1909, p. 419. There were

other companies operating steamboats on the Nile, including the rival Anglo-American line and the Express Nile Company, but Cook had captured the lion's share of the market by the turn of the century.

59. *Programme*, pp. 73-87.

60. Steevens, *Egypt*, pp. 214-215.

61. R. Kipling, *Letters of Travel (1892-1913)*, London, Macmillan, 1920, pp. 246-247.

62. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, December 11, 1885, p. 3.

63. E. Butler, *From Sketch-book and Diary*, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1909, p. 55.

64. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, November 1, 1881, p. 4.

65. *Cook's Traveller's Gazette*, December 10, 1903, p. 23.

66. de Guerville, *New Egypt*, p. 221; cf. Loti, *Egypt*, pp. 279-280.

67. J. Ward, *Pyramids and Progress*, London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1900, p. 247.

68. F.C. Penfield, *Present-day Egypt*, New York, Century, 1903, p. 151. That this was a colonial project – and a colonial triumph – was made clear over and over again. Thus, for example, the construction of these barrages was 'the greatest of all the tasks which Englishmen have accomplished in Egypt': S. Low, *Egypt in Transition*, London, Smith, Elder, 1914, p. 127.

69. Penfield, *Present-day Egypt*, p. 184; emphasis added.

70. Low, *Egypt in Transition*, pp. 133, 140, 144. Appropriately, the introduction to Low's book was written by Lord Cromer who, as Britain's Consul-General, had approved the construction of the Dam and had been instrumental in the arrangements for its financing.

71. *Cook's Arrangements for Egypt and the Nile, 1908-9*, Thomas Cook Archives, pp. 35-37. The 'Chalet' – a sort of rest-house – had been built by Cook for the use of its clients.

72. Penfield, *Present-day Egypt*, pp. 362-363; and E.A.W. Budge, *Cook's Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan*, London, Thomas Cook, 1906, p. 39.

73. Others were less fortunate and necessarily more attentive. Kipling, *Letters*, March 11, 1913, described being stuck on a sandbank for 28 hours:

The thermometer stood at 55° (this on the edge of the Tropics) but the wind it never stood still for one wicked minute. It blew like Hades and cut like a knife and our miserable steamer swung round and round (but never got off the sand-bank) and other steamers (four others) came up and got stuck too and a little express steamer who was taking cheap tourists on a cheap trip had to stop and throw us a rope and help to haul us off bodily.

74. Lorimer, *By the Waters*, p. 248.

75. Penfield, *Present-day Egypt*, p. 163.

76. At least some visitors recognized that this modern techno-cultural frame was an imperfect construction:

Behold how nature mocketh at man's vain efforts to improve her workmanship! This [Aswan] dam which was to furnish an inexhaustible supply of water, and

abolish famine in Egypt, is now cursed with all the fervour of Oriental hyperbole by the very *fellahs* who expected untold benefit from its construction.

Water there is in plenty, but the crops grow less and less, the cotton poorer and poorer, its fibre ever more brittle. The scientists must once more go to school and learn to undo the harm their famous barrier has wrought. Impounding the water has likewise precipitated the rich sediment, which, brought from the upper reaches of the Nile, had fertilized and enriched the lower valley, and had produced the fabulous crops of former uncontrolled high Niles.

See B.M. Carson, *From Cairo to the Cataract*, Boston, Page, 1909, pp. 219-220

77. Maughan, *Alps of Arabia*, p. 64. Tourists were no strangers to sights like this. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century many of the temples and tombs were cleared using forced labour, but most spectators seem to have had little difficulty in externalizing the scene. At Luxor, for example, the Tirards saw 'five hundred children . . . carrying away the dust in baskets, and emptying them down the steep bank of the river; they did their work singing, scampering and dancing, as if it were a huge game, notwithstanding that they were pursued now and then by the whip of the overseer': H. and N. Tirard, *Sketches from a Nile Steamer*, London, Kegan Paul, 1891, p. 69.

78. Ward, *Pyramids and Progress*, p. 173. He attributed this system to a staff of 'British gentlemen . . . under whose intelligent control at their offices at Cairo and branches at the large towns these natives have been licked into shape' (pp. 173-174).

79. Steevens, *Egypt*, pp. 68-69.

80. *Programme*, pp. 5-6.

81. *Cook's Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser*, October 1, 1886, p. 3.

82. Sladen, *Queer Things*, p. 391.

83. D. Sladen, *Egypt and the English*, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1908, p. 427.

84. Lorimer, *By the Waters*, p. 169.

85. See D. Gregory, 'Emperors of the Gaze: Photographic Practices and the Captivation of Space in Egypt 1839-1914,' forthcoming.

86. *Programme*, pp. 12-13.

87. Mrs. H. Fawcett, in W.J. Loftie (ed.), *Orient-Pacific Line Guide*, London, Sampson Low, 1901, pp. 95-96.

88. Kipling, *Letters*, p. 241.

89. Sir W.T. Grenfell, *Labrador Looks at the Orient: Notes on Travel in the Near and Far East*, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin, 1928, p. 20. For obvious reasons the brochure never identifies the 'Agatha Christie film set' as that of *Death on the Nile*.

90. J. Frow, 'Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia,' *October*, vol. 57, 1991, pp. 123-157.

91. R. Rosaldo, 'Imperialist Nostalgia,' in Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, London, Routledge, 1993.

92. P. Smith, 'Visiting the Banana Republic,' in A. Ross (ed.), *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989, pp. 128-148.

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