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Issue 5

SERAPHEUM

OM EL BAHAREYA

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BOOK REVIEW

'That decision,' she said, 'was more momentous than the decision to launch the revolution itself'

Jane Bancroft in Ibrahim Abdel Meguid's *Birds of Amber*

Edward Lewis

The photograph says it all. A figure on a balcony, arms raised with thousands of followers filling a public square below. The faithful occupy every available space straining their necks to catch a glimpse of their leader, willing him on and filling him with confidence. Large flags are waved from balconies and banners surround the throng of people who cheer and applaud. Excitement, jubilation, pride and hope jump from the picture and you can almost hear the crackle of the microphone and the sudden hush of anticipation as he begins to address the people.

Similar scenes have been captured all around the world when historic events, such as this one, take place. The stage and pose are universal, as is the ultimate message – triumph. The date is 26 July 1956 and the event is Gamal Abdel Nasser announcing the nationalization of the Suez Canal from a balcony in Manshieh, Alexandria. It was a momentous event in Egypt's history and one that not only united a people and country but announced Egypt was no longer simply a host for foreign empires. For the first time in centuries Egypt had control of her land and economy, therefore her destiny and future. Nasser's regime was one which the vast majority of Egyptians could identify with in terms of religion, language and ethnicity, factors that had been missing since the days of the Pharaohs.

2006 marked the passing of fifty years since Nasser's announcement in Alexandria. It was in his city of birth that he decided to make his famous speech and a sign that even the most European of cities was to become Egyptian once again. Whilst events surrounding the nationalization, including Britain's, France's and Israel's response and also that of the USA and Russia, have been documented and commented on in numerous history books, a social and more intimate perspective is evident in Alexandria's popular literature in books such as Harry Tzalas' *Farewell to Alexandria* and *Birds of Amber* by the established Alexandrian author Ibrahim Abdel Maguid. The feelings of everyday Egyptians are expressed in the colorful setting of 1950s Alexandria before and during the mass exodus of foreign communities. Patriotism, disillusionment and anti-colonialism provide the backdrop for these stories and give a valuable insight into the reaction of Egyptians to the events by those who did not represent the elite or privileged but the poorer citizens of Alexandria who inhabited the districts of Karmuz and the Mahmoudieh Canal and whose jobs included being *bawwabs*, soldiers, railway workers and doing nothing.

Abdel Meguid's intricate portrayal of his neighborhood (the author was born in Karmuz) and its inhabitants in the aftermath of Nasser's speech follows a series of characters as the Suez crisis unfolds in front of them. Everyday life in a district that represents Alexandria's heart is described and intimate issues are explored such as relationships and love, hopes, dreams and disillusionment, health, death and disease, crime and fear and anti-colonial and patriotic fervor. The book provides an alternative to much of Alexandria's literature concerning the 1950s and represents a truly Egyptian understanding of the events.



The book may well be fiction but it is not hard to imagine similar characters and sentiments as Eden, Mollet and Gurion went ahead with their aggressive plan and Egypt attempted to establish independence and equality with other countries.

"They all fell silent reverently and pricked up their ears. Abdel Nasser's voice was coming through. "We will fight to the last drop of our blood. We will fight and we will never surrender," they burst out shouting "God is great! Down with Eden! Down with Mollet! Down with Ben Gurion! We'll die so Egypt can live!" It was obvious that all Alexandrians had turned out in demonstrations declaring their will to die for their homeland. They were truly prepared to sacrifice themselves for the country, but they were quite far away, on the margin of Alexandria, and no one would hear them on that day that they'd never forget."

'Amm Ahmed, father and son' in Harry Tzalas' *Farewell to Alexandria* is also a valuable piece of literature as it follows the actual speech through the eyes of three young Alexandrian boys who attended the event in the crowded city square. In context with the rest of the book, Tzalas recounts the individuals and events that made up Alexandria as the European community slowly left the city and the description of the atmosphere and reception towards Nasser gives an idea of the scale and gravity of his words.

"I hereby declare the nationalization of the Suez Canal. The canal belongs to us, and the income from the tolls charged for passage through it will build our dam."

"The square was frozen. The audience realized that they were experiencing a historic moment. There was a pause that seemed to last forever, as if everything were hanging in the air. And then the crowd began to cheer, chanting over and over again: "Gamal, Gamal, Gamal"..."

Tzalas also manages to capture the disillusionment and unfulfilled dreams that many were to experience after the initial excitement faded. One of the characters of the story, a young Egyptian boy named Badri, vows to take up arms against the aggressor, become educated and rise to the rank of officer and travel. It is clear Nasser's words from that square inspired a strong belief in the impressionable young boy. Yet Tzalas returns to Alexandria some years later to find Badri's circumstances have not changed, nor improved. Badri represents the many Egyptians who were unable to fulfill their ambition of bettering their lives despite gaining independence and freeing themselves from foreign influence, something many believed would come naturally.

Nasser continues to be judged and his actions continue to be debated the world over. The fifty year anniversary of the nationalization of the Suez Canal has once again put Nasser under the spotlight and his actions scrutinized. Whether seen as beneficial or not, Alexandria, and indeed Egypt, is unlikely to witness a speech like that of Nasser's in terms of scale, courage and significance.



1 Abdel Meguid, I. *Birds of Amber*. Cairo: AUC Press, 2005.
2 Tzalas, H. *Farewell to Alexandria*. Cairo: AUC Press, 2000.

The Cemeteries of Alexandria The Untold Narrations of a Cosmopolitan City

Yasser Aref

One of the visible manifestations of Alexandria's cosmopolitanism is its cemeteries. In Chatby alone there is the Necropolis, which dates to the late Ptolemaic/early Roman periods. In the twentieth century, the area of Chatby became the hub of the cosmopolitan experience. There was (and remains) a massive concentration of community schools, welfare foundations, hospitals and cemeteries. There was also a huge representation of the diversity and pluralism of Alexandrian society. This is vividly expressed in the cemeteries. In addition to the ancient Necropolis, the modern city boasted, in Chatby, cemeteries for the following: Jews, Muslims, Anglicans, Copt Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic and Latin Catholic. There were also cemeteries for the Free Thinkers, those who would not confess to any faith.

In addition to the Chatby complex, the Muslim inhabitants of old Alexandria had a burial site near Pompey's Pillar, where certain families continue to bury their dead. Finally, the Alamein cemeteries honor the fallen at the Battle of Alamein in World War II, and bear monumental witness to the futility of war.

A close study of these three burial sites (Chatby, Pompey's Pillar and Alamein) has been initiated through the Ramses II project and will involve both the tangible and intangible heritage of Alexandria. Through an examination of the architectural styles of the monuments and tombs, as well as the oral narratives and memories of concerned individuals, certain patterns regarding migration, social history, class distinctions and status and religious traits will emerge. A map of the socio-religious history of modern Alexandria will be drawn.



From Abou Kir to Cairo Station

The Railway Trail

M. Awad

Part I: From Abou Kir to Sidi Bishr

The brief notes on the toponymy of Alexandria were compiled in part for the Alexandria Regional Railway (Abou Kir to El Amriyeh) project. The first phase of the project line, Cairo Station-Abou Kir, follows the trails of the Abou Kir railways, originally built during Khedive Ismail's reign in 1876, and part of the suburban Alexandria Rosetta line (approximately 71 kilometers), branching to Abou Kir (approximately 3 kilometers). The selected 18 stations on the line are named after their respective localities.

The following brief notes cover relevant historical material and descriptions of both landscape and built environments. The intention is to evoke the historical significance and bring its meaning to life in the contemporary context. Much of the information was compiled from diverse historical sources and based on personal research and analysis.

The journey has been split into two stages. The first will focus on the railway route from Abou Kir to Sidi Bishr, with the following issue continuing from Victoria to Cairo Station.

Abou Kir

The name given to a small village on the outskirts of Alexandria is derived from the name of an Alexandria saint, St. Cyr – a martyr of the early Christian persecutions under the rule of Diocletian (284-305 CE). Cyr, a learned monk instructed in medicine, dedicated his knowledge and life to helping and treating the poor. He was joined by another monk and they were both accused of stirring trouble and revolt. Tortured and eventually put to death, they were buried at the church of St. Mark. One century later their remains were reburied in a small village near Canopus. This village was later to become known as Abou Kir.

Since antiquity Abou Kir has remained a remote village of fishermen and a vacation summer resort. Its coastal beaches are rich with antiquities and archeological sites such as Cleopatra's baths and forts (still waiting to be rediscovered and evoked). Abou Kir is also known for its Nelson's Island where the famous naval Battle of 1798 cost Bonaparte his fleet, which still lies sunken in its bay.

Today it is still reputed for its excellent fish and famous Zephyrion restaurant, the site of its fishing harbor as well as camping and naval facilities, yet much of the natural setting is spoiled and degraded by the chaotic housing and the poorly planned industrial and commercial installations.



El Montaza Palace

Since the Second World War archeological discoveries first investigated by his Highness Prince Omar Toussoun and more recent discoveries by the French and Egyptian archeological team headed by Frank Goddio brought into prominence the importance of the site of the sunken city of Heraklion and other more recent archeological finds on the island of Nelson include the remains of a fortress and tombs dating back to the Pharaonic period. Remains of Ptolemaic housing discovered by Paulo Gaulo are revealing the existence of the site pre-dating the foundation of Alexandria.

El Maamoura

El Maamoura is the area located between Montaza and Abou Kir. The area known until the turn of the century as El Kharaba, meaning 'the deserted' or 'ruins', was later purchased by Princess Malak who built a small palace and changed its name to Maamoura, meaning 'the urbanized'.

King Fouad annexed Maamoura to the Royal Domains or El Khassa el Malakieh and King Farouk used prisoners' labor to level and plant the domain. The post 1952 era witnessed the transformation of these 300 feddans into a residential summer resort. Even President Nasser and his deputy Abd el Hakim Amer had two exclusive villas set on Maamoura's privileged beach.

Toussoun

The district is named after the estate belonging to the Daira Toussoun, owned by the prominent member of the Royal Family, H.R.H Prince Omar Toussoun (son of Prince Mohamed Toussoun Pasha, son of Viceroy Mohamed Said Pasha). Prince Omar Toussoun, also known as the Prince of Alexandria because of his love for Alexandria and the strong ties with the city, unlike most other members of the Royal Family, resided permanently in Alexandria. His residence in the Bacos district presently houses the Alexandria Radio Broadcast and Television Service. Prince Toussoun, privileged with a special guard and flags, is also known as a historian and author of several publications on Alexandria, the Oases, the Mahmoudieh Canal, the Egyptian Navy and the Nile and Equator.

El Islah

Al Islah, meaning 'reform', was the name given to the area between Maamoura and Abou Kir. Following the agrarian reform of the 1960s, the offices of the Ministry of Agriculture managed the area, including the land confiscated from the Royal estates of Daira 'El Khassa el Malakieh'.

El Montaza

Montaza meaning 'promenade' in Arabic, was given as a name to the area by Khedive Abbas Helmi. The history dates back to 1892 when Abbas II visited a certain Mr. Zorié at his bungalow. The Khedive, expressing his interest to buy the property, was offered it as a gift by Zorié. Abbas then contacted the neighboring owners and purchased their properties, thereby increasing his own land to 325 feddans.

The Salamlek, built by Abbas in 1898, was designed by Dimitri Fabricious Pasha who had also designed the palace lived in by the



ALEXANDRIE - PURGE DE SIDI BISHR

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Khedive's mother, better known as 'The Sad Palace' or the 'Sarayah el Hazinah'. Khedive Tewfik died before the palace was completed and his widow, the mother of Abbas Helmi, lived in mourning in the palace. The Salamlek was conceived in Austrian style as a hunting lodge within a forest landscape and was meant to suite the tastes of the Khedive, who had been educated in Austria.

During the First World War, the palace was used by the British as a military hospital. In 1924 King Fouad convinced the Egyptian government to buy the property from its former owner. The Haramlek was built in 1927 to be the sovereign's summer residence and designed by E. Verrucci Bey, chief architect of the royal palaces, and built on a rocky beach and cactus garden. It was conceived in astonishing yet joyous Florentine architecture. The bridge and tea pavillion were designed by Mustafa Pasha Fahmy during the reign of King Farouk.

The post 1952 transformation of the royal site was redeveloped by the Egyptian/Italian managed Montaza and Mokattam Co. The newly added beach cabins and casinos were designed by the Italian landscape architect Pietro Porcinai and slightly amended by Piero Verbinschack who also supervised their execution. The more recent additions by the Montaza and Maamoura Co. (1988) transformed the general character of the original setting, reflecting more exploitation tendencies.

El Mandara

The name is said to have originated from a rest-house (mandara in Arabic) used by peasants and vendors en route in and out of the city. When the Abou Kir railways were constructed, the name of the locality was adopted for the station. Radamez Lakany in his *Quelques notes de typonomie d'Alexandrie* (1968) suggests that the name could have originated from the name of a pious woman 'El sette Mandara' residing in the area. The district's name first appears in Mahmoud el Falaki's map of 1866.

El Assafra

El Assafra is the name given to the area between Sidi Bishr (Miami beach) and Mandara. Little is known or confirmed about the origins of this term, but it possibly refers to the basin or land plot (Hode) belonging to El Assafiry, the name of its proprietor. Other speculations on the origins of the name of the area include the word assefah, meaning 'tempest' in Arabic, owing to its open beaches, or the word asafer, meaning 'birds' and perhaps used as reference to the nesting grounds of migrating birds.



Beach cabins at Maamoura designed by Pietro Porcinai and Piero Verbinschack, acting resident architect



An old photograph of the Salamlek, Montaza

Nothern Assafra, once stretching across open lands with wooden bungalows erected on its sandy Corniche has developed since the decades of the 1970s into a middle class resort composed of high-rise apartment blocks. The southern sections, particularly south of Gamal Abdel Nasser Street and the railway line, developed more into a lower middle class permanent residential district.

Miami

The name probably originated around the 1930s and most likely derived from Florida's Miami Beach. It applied to the area of the beach also known as Sidi Bishr n'3. The beach was reconstructed in 1958 when its wooden cabins were replaced by more permanent concrete structures. The new facilities included locker and shower rooms as well as a casino and a nightclub. Sheltered by an island, the beach was favored by many members of Egypt's select society and hosted numerous summer events such as the Miss Alexandria beauty contests. The cabins were recently demolished (in 1997) during the expansion and enlargement of the Corniche coastal road.

Sidi Bishr

The name of the locality is attributed to the learned and pious Sheikh Sid Bishr. Bishr Ibn Marwan belonged to a group of Arab ulemas known as Bishr. The mosque intended to be built by Khedive Tewfik was begun around 1880. The story goes that Sidi Bishr appeared to the Khedive in a dream and asked that the mosque be dedicated to him. Tewfik died soon after and the mosque was completed by his son Abbas Helmi II.

The Ramleh Railways, which for a long time terminated at St Stefano, were later extended to Le Palais, the site of the palace of the Queen Mother or Sarayah. They were later prolonged to Sidi Bishr, this part reserved exclusively to the Khedive until 1909, when it was opened to the public. The line was extended to Siouf or Victoria after Victoria College was inaugurated in 1909.

Sidi Bishr, nearly depopulated until the Second World War, received many immigrants, especially after the bombardments of districts such as Bab Sidrah (June 23, 1940). It is reported that in 1937 Sidi Bishr had a permanent population of 1000 inhabitants, in 1947 this rose to 5131 and in 1960 increased further to 11,000 inhabitants, according to Radamez Lakany.

The area was famous for its sand dunes, palm trees and mill or El Tahouna (near the mosque and around the area where El Banna later had constructed its prefab bungalows). But Sidi Bishr was also renowned for its sandy beaches (I, II, III). On its Corniche stood as well as the famous Casino, the Maisonnette, reputed for its sea water pool, the Royal Automobile Club, designed by the architect Ali Thabet, and built on the rocky beach and the rocky well spouts known as Bir Massoud.

Next Issue – From Victoria to Cairo Station

The Legacy of Om El Bahareya

Edward Lewis

Alexandria is not short of colorful characters; from Callimachus to Cavafy the city has enjoyed a host of extraordinary individuals that have contributed to the city's rich heritage. Writers, architects, scientists, poets and artists have all been celebrated and treasured yet some Alexandrians, despite their love and endeavor towards the city, are cherished only by those who knew them or were touched by them - charity will never be as glamorous or alluring as art. Frequently demonstrating extreme acts of generosity and compassion these individuals rarely receive the plaudits they deserve or are remembered in the light that they should be. Essmat Hassan Mohsen is one such example. Better known as Om el Bahareya (Mother of the Navy), she dedicated her life to



Om el Bahareya 1906-1972

members of the Egyptian Navy making her an icon within the Navy and her beloved Anfushi but relatively unknown outside naval circles. It is testament to her efforts and humanity that she is remembered today and that an organization is continuing the work she started. Through meeting officers who knew her and those responsible for extending her legacy, a picture emerges of an extraordinary woman who was as tough as she was generous as well as highly intellectual and well traveled. Smiles, laughter and sighs from those retelling her personality are tell tale signs that Om el Bahareya was far more than simply a charity worker.

Om el Bahareya's love for the sea and Navy was no accident. Seamanship ran through her blood due to a privileged and impressive naval tradition that dated back to the days of Mohamed Ali. Her grandfather, Admiral Hassan Pasha el Iskandarany, was a highly respected officer and key member of Mohamed Ali's Egypt. Born in 1790 on the banks of the Black Sea, Hassan el Iskandarany came to Egypt in 1800 where he later graduated from the Naval Academy and embarked on various scientific expeditions that took him to countries as far away as Norway, Sweden and Brazil. He returned in 1825 to command several vessels involved in the naval campaign against Greece, miraculously escaping death when his ship exploded in the Battle of Navarino.

The title of Vice Admiral of the Egyptian Navy was bestowed upon him in 1835 and a sparkling naval career was brought to an end in 1852 when he drowned whilst on operational duty during the Russian War. If Om el Bahareya's passion for the Navy stemmed from her grandfather then her personality and frankness was derived from her flamboyant grandmother who was said to be such a handful that, according to one story, during a typical tantrum in Mohamed Ali's palace (where she resided as a member of the Royal Family) the Pasha himself ordered that she be married to the next person who entered the door. Hassan Iskandarany entered and Mohamed Ali kept his word!

Born in 1906 Essmat Hassan Mohsen enjoyed a privileged childhood, as one would expect from a descendant of the royal family, yet despite her high level of education and lifestyle she had a knack of getting into trouble and was forced to leave Egypt after graduating from school. She headed for France where she stayed for eighteen years studying and teaching at the Sorbonne, Paris. Essmat took advantage of her situation and traveled extensively throughout Europe sending a postcard from whichever country she was in to her professor in Paris who, after receiving cards from all over the continent, likened her to the famous traveler Ibn Battuta, calling her Bint Battuta (this would later become her pen name).

Returning to her beloved Egypt, Essmat began to participate in naval events and rekindled her relationship with the sea that had been broken when she left for France. 'Mother of the Navy' is an apt name for someone who identified the need to provide support to Egypt's youth serving their country. Her door was always open for mariners and support always offered to those who struggled with the rigors of naval life and all that it entailed. Medical bills were settled by her, wedding gifts and contributions made and warm clothes donated during the winter. She bought and slaughtered a calf every greater Bairam for the sailors and handed out food and presents to those separated from their families. She strongly believed in the all-round development within the Navy and in her pursuit of educating and spreading knowledge to the naval cadets founded a scientific, cultural and literary library for the naval forces. In addition, she paid the tuition fees for poor students.



Her contribution extended beyond acts of kindness and during the 1956 triple aggression in Egypt, Om el Bahareya's house became a workshop for making clothes for those engaged in the conflict thus significantly contributing to the Egyptian's efforts in defending her territories. She always attended the graduation ceremonies of the naval school students and personally awarded a valuable gold wrist watch to the most outstanding cadet (a tradition that has continued to this day). It is clear that she was regarded as a significant part of Alexandria's naval scene since she was always present at the launching of new ships and was the one honored with presenting a holy Koran to the ship's commander along with an engraved brass plate of Al Korsi verses.

Writing formed another way in which Om el Bahareya could express her close relationship with the Navy. Under the pseudonym Bint Battuta, she wrote several books, most with maritime themes, and dedicated them to the library and the graduates of the naval school. Demonstrating her broad education, titles included *Historical Conversations, Phoenicia, Pages from the History of the Egyptian Navy during the Reign of Mohamed Ali and Heroism of a Pirate*.



Om el Bahareya with officers from Egypt's military, including current President Hosni Mubarak (second in, top right)

Om el Bahareya was also a stout supporter of the countryside and as well as devoting herself to the Navy applied herself to helping the farmers of Alexandria's environs. She spent considerable time in the estate she inherited from her father in the village of Subraris in the Beheira governorate and looked after its inhabitants in much the same way she did with the Navy. Her impromptu visits often included the handing out of wedding and festival gifts in addition to listening to the villager's problems and needs, helping them and providing support wherever she could. She was also a teacher to many of the inhabitants and regularly held cultural evenings where she would retell important events and stories regarding Egypt's history and its important figures. She loved the Delta way of life and was equally loved by all those who she helped and guided.

Om el Bahareya's love of Egypt was unquestionable but was seriously tested when a great deal of her property was confiscated under Nasser's government. Since her father was not a descendant of the royal family she was given back his land in addition to her jewelry, since it was inherited, but everything was lost under the nationalist blanket. These events did not affect her charity and, in an ironic twist, the very man who took much away from her presented her with the Order of Merit in acknowledgment of her status in Egyptian society and services to the naval forces.



Om el Bahareya at a sports day between the Egyptian Air Force Academy and Naval Academy, Alexandria 1956



Essmat Hassan Mohsen died in 1972 but her presence in the Egyptian Navy lives on through the Om el Bahareya Family Association. Founded in 1973 by many of her close friends, the association echoes the work of Om el Bahareya and continues to care for the Navy in a manner which is both practical and considerate. Some 200 members, all related in some way or another to a member of the Egyptian Navy, pull together and fill the void left by Om el Bahareya relying primarily on donations from outside the organization.

In addition to offering the most needy naval families financial support, the organization presents money to outstanding children of Egyptian seamen, trains the daughters and wives of seamen in various handicrafts and has established a day-care center and summer school in Kom el Dikk with nominal fees. Gifts are given to naval men and their families during religious festivals and 100 exceptional members of the Navy are presented with food subsidies every month. The valuable gift of listening to personal problems, something Om el Bahareya was always prepared to do, is not lost and the association provides valuable support for those experiencing difficulties. The offices, located down town, display numerous photographs of the woman who inspired them to continue the work she started and those who work there, such as Hassan Abdel Khalek, have fond memories and stories of her work, her life and her character. The photographs often show Om el Bahareya seated in the middle with officers surrounding her as if in a family portrait, giving the impression that these young men could well be her sons.

Standing alone and very much out of place in Anfushi is one of the few reminders of Om el Bahareya's life and spirit. Facing the yawning Mediterranean Sea and located in close proximity to the current Naval Academy, her villa tells us a great deal about the woman and her way of life. Most obvious is the location; for a lover of the sea there are fewer better places to live than the district of Anfushi. The sea breeze and incessant sound of waves crashing on the Ras el Tin beaches would have provided comfort and reassurance to someone who felt out of place away from the sea. The design is also a giveaway. The top floor is in the shape of a ship's bridge and during Om el Bahareya's time was complete with telescope and extensive nautical library where officers and seamen alike would sometimes drop in and discuss the issues troubling them or simply to chat. Sadly this building is in a state of disrepair and no longer a landmark of Anfushi where an elderly woman, dressed in black complete with hairnet and cane, could be seen gazing out to sea, embracing the seaboard as if it were, just like the mariners of Alexandria, her very own.



Om el Bahareya in her youth

Special thanks to Hassan Abdel Khalek, Layla Abd Hady and especially Nader Diab.

Om el Bahareya Family Association, 3 Ali Amin Maher Street, Alexandria
Tel: 4670730



Om el Bahareya with Egyptian naval officers



Prize giving on graduation day



The Om el Bahareya Family Association today

Meeting Eve Durrell

Harry E. Tzalas

Eve Durrell is no more of this world; she passed away in England a year ago, or more perhaps. But an Alexandrian friend I met recently, and who knew Eve, was quite surprised to hear of this. Her death at an advanced age made only a few lines in the inside pages of some newspapers. Eve Durrell left this world in as discreet a manner as she had lived.

I had first seen a photograph of Eve Durrell, née Yvette Cohen, many years ago and was stunned by her beauty. The photograph had been taken in 1946 in Rhodes when Lawrence was living there with his newly wed wife. Eve wore the local traditional dress of the Dodecanese women, dazzling under the Aegean sun. I always think of that photograph as representing one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. That was the image I had kept in my memory of the second wife in the tumultuous life of the author of the *Alexandria Quartet*. I often had asked myself if she was Justine.

I met Eve Durrell late in my life when, after decades of unjustified absence, I decided to travel regularly to Alexandria, my city. It was on the occasion of the launch of the English translation of my book *Farewell to Alexandria: Eleven Short Stories*. The American University in Cairo Press had organized the presentation at the Hellenic Cultural Foundation, the old Tositseia School of Sidi Metwalli Street. An elderly lady, quite agile, accompanied by a young Alexandrian, Christine Ayoub, appeared at the top of the grand marble steps which lead to the impressive hall of the Center; I was introduced to the lady, she was Eve Durrell.

Moments later the presentation started. The chairs were arranged in double rows, in a large semi-circle radiating from the microphone where the persons responsible for the publication stepped up one after the other, saying, as it is customary in these events, all the good things they could think of about the book which would soon be in the windows of bookstores.

Contrary to my habit of carefully following what is being said and to prepare for when my turn will come to speak, all my attention was captivated by the presence of that elderly lady. I tried to recognize the features on her face by juxtaposing them onto the photograph of half a century earlier, attempting to bring to life the exquisite beauty impressed upon my memory. Yes, it was indeed the same person but, alas, Time had taken its odious toll. I cursed Time and the ravages that it brings on humans. This was Eve, the little Jewish girl with whom Durrell had fallen in love and married during the most productive period of his literary career, this was the girl who may have been the inspiration for the character of Justine, this was the silhouette that Nessim had seen reflected as a hazy mirage in 'the monumental mirror of the gaunt vestibule of the Cecil! This was 'Gypsy Cohen' to whom Larry dedicated Justine with the words: "To Eve, these memorials of her native city".

I was searching for an explanation for the so short blooming of roses and the ephemeral life of human beauty when I was brought back to reality by the speaker; it was my turn to say something.

Later, at the reception Eve Durrell queued patiently to get my autograph on the book she had bought and then vanished, smiling, as silently as she had appeared. In the course of the years that followed I had the opportunity to dine twice with Eve Durrell in Alexandria, once at the Delta Hotel restaurant and once at the Cecil. And then I met her in London, for the last time in 2003, when she came to a lecture I gave at the London Hellenic Society.

When Eve Durrell visited Alexandria from London, where she lived most of her life, she used to stay at a small modest hotel, near Ramleh Station, the Sea Star.

During these two long Alexandrian conversations we never did talk of Lawrence; in fact, I was not interested in hearing any more of Larry, so much had been written on the life and the difficult character of the famous author. I wanted to know more about Eve, the person who had lived for a few years in his shadow and then disappeared from his life.



Eve loved Alexandria and she longed to return. We spoke a lot of the City, especially of the years of the Second World War and of the period after. I was a child then but still hold vivid memories of the time when the City was adrift, going first through a war, then a revolution. Eve wanted to leave London and live permanently in Alexandria. London was too expensive and the climate was dreadful! We spoke of the scent of the *foi*, the Alexandrian jasmine, the beauty of the flamboyant and of that very special breeze that comes from the sea on summer nights after a hot day. Little boys used to sell strong scented, heady garlands along the Boulevard Saad Zaghloul and the Corniche. The *foi* is sold no longer, there are myriads of cars, now, and only rarely does a carriage pass. Alexandria has changed; we have changed too.

Unlike most Alexandrians, Eve had nothing bad to say about anyone. To my surprise, she was totally alien to the gossip, a highly revered Alexandrian performance. If she mentioned names it was to say good things about those concerned; if she had nothing to say, she smiled.

At 'Le Jardin', the restaurant of the Cecil, our table, close to the last window, had a splendid view on the illuminated Qaitbey Fort. Contrary to E. M. Forster who, nearly a century ago, even when multiplying by five the height of Qaitbey still failed to see the Pharos, I could well, with half closed eyes, distinguish the Seventh Wonder built by the Second of the Ptolemies. That is the way, I thought, one must look at Alexandria. Then proceeding in the same manner I saw in the kind face of the smiling mature lady the young girl in the traditional Rhodian dress, posing in the Old City of the Knights of St. John. Did Eve Durrell inspire Justine, the heroine of the first of the *Alexandria Quartet* books? Probably yes, but an author never uses a person as a painter uses a model. An author may juxtapose features from many faces, use many different characters and then, from these ingredients molded by his fancy, creates a heroine. Lawrence Durrell pours a large part of imagination and fantasy into his Durrellian Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive and Clea. The City also is Durrellian. Notwithstanding what the author assures the reader in the note of his first book, his Alexandria is not real. But Eve was real; she was and remains an Alexandrian heroine strolling in the mist of the mythical City dear to C. P. Cavafy, E. M. Forster, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Fausta Cialente, Stratis Tsirkas, Edwar Al Kharrat...

Alexandria Development

Alexandria has gone through many transitions in her unique and proud history. The small fishing village on Egypt's north coast was quickly turned into a leading Mediterranean city, diverse in its population, rich through its trade links and intellectually advanced due to her Library and Mouseion. The architect Dinocrates and administrator Kleomenes, initially under the supervision of Alexander the Great, created a flourishing city that was also to experience periods of decline before Mohamed Ali revived the city and it once again became a beacon within the Mediterranean. Contemporary Alexandria, having once again fallen behind her Mediterranean sister cities, is hoped to be transformed yet again and a recent conference held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina gave the chance to Alexandria's public to see how the city might change as well as giving prospective architects the opportunity to display their visions for the city.



Presentations of international architects

Organized by the University of Alexandria, Bibliotheca Alexandrina and Alexandria Governorate the focus of the two day conference was to develop a site that is not only one of the most important within the city, but one that holds the most potential - the eastern harbor. The format of the conference revolved around presentations given by various international architectural firms with a jury deciding on three proposals to go forward to the next conference. The successful project will be presented to the Egyptian Government where they will hopefully attract funding. In addition, separate presentations concerning the underwater archaeological museum, aquarium and new airport were displayed thus demonstrating the scale in which the development is hoped to take place. In his opening speech the Director of the BA, Dr Serageldin, highlighted its importance to Alexandria when he said the conference 'represented the sustainability of our future and our dreams.'



Members of the jury evaluating the designs

In the opening session Dr Mohamed Awad highlighted the areas of concern and the locations to be addressed including the land surrounding the BA, the Corniche, underwater archeology and the Eastern Harbor as a whole.



Dr Ismail Serageldin explaining one of the projects to Governor General Adel Labib and Dr Hani Helal

The architectural firms then took it in turns to display their innovations for the city and explain the reasons for their choice of location and development. The firms were a diverse mix from Europe and America and included the original designers of the BA, Snøhetta of Norway. A theme shared by all the firms present was to create a 'necklace' effect along the cornice of the eastern harbor. This concept involved developing existing sites along the waterfront that would light up the harbor, similar to a neck chain with polished stones placed at intervals. This could be achieved without mass development since there are already a number of sites that have the potential to fulfill this role such as the BA, Saad Zaghloul Square, Aboul Abbas el-Morsl Mosque and Fort Qaitbey. The idea of building a viewing tower was presented by a few of the firms as was enclosing the harbor and creating a bridge for ships to pass.



Jury members discussing the projects

The economic potential was not overlooked and another common theme was the establishment of five star hotels, apartments, shops and restaurants in both the areas around the BA and Fort Qaitbey. The fine balance of introducing commercial development whilst protecting cultural heritage was identified and seen as a key component of the city's future and one all the firms were keen to highlight.

The presentation concerning an underwater museum in Alexandria was the first time a realistic vision for this exciting project has been shown. Highlighting the relationship between man and the sea, demonstrated through examples of recent projects in France and Japan, French architect Jacques Rougerie outlined the simple design and how such a concept could make the most of Alexandria's rich submerged heritage. The museum would be located in the bay of the Eastern Harbor and consist of a number of towers emerging from the water with four defined holes for diving. An open air exhibition and museum would make this a unique attraction and the first of its kind in the world.

Peter Chermayeff followed this with an equally impressive idea for a world class aquarium to be built adjacent to Fort Qaitbey. The complex would include three towers, each with a separate theme: Nile, Mediterranean and Red Sea. It is envisaged that it will be far more than an aquarium since a conference and research center are also to be included.



Dr Hani Helal, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research



Jacques Rougerie Kjell Thorsen of Snøhetta architects

The financial implications of such ambitious projects would mean that Alexandria would require external funding and a great deal of it. In addition, such complexes take a great deal of time to execute and the city would have to brace itself for a number of years under construction. Other concerns regarding the development of the city are the implications on the environment and the city's heritage. It is essential that Alexandria retains her unique atmosphere and charm whilst undergoing such changes. Yet, despite these reservations, there is no denying these are exciting times for Alexandria and Egypt. Such changes would enhance the city's reputation as a distinctive destination within Egypt and put her back on the map as a leading Mediterranean city.

Handiwork in Shaping



n Alexandria: g the City



Photos by Abdallah Dawestashy

Alexandria Annual Film Festival

September 2006

Mona El Nashwi

The Alexandria International Film Festival is held annually in Alexandria by the Egyptian Association for Cinema Writers and Critics under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with Alexandria Governorate.

Organized by the Egyptian Association of Film Writers and Critics, the Alexandria Film Festival aims at promoting film culture and strengthening the ties among filmmakers throughout the world. Although films from all countries are welcome, the festival places particular focus on Mediterranean productions. Entries are organized into two main sections: Competition and Out of Competition, with the former solely dedicated to feature films from Mediterranean countries.

The activities of the 22nd session of Alexandria International Film Festival took place from the 5th to the 10th of September, 2006. Ten Mediterranean countries competed for the prizes of the festival, including four Arab countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine besides Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Bosnia and Serbia and Montenegro.

The Honored

The administration of Alexandria International Film Festival dedicated the 22nd session to late Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz given the 25 movies based on his writings. The festival also honored actors Ezzat el Alaili, actress Pussi and Turkish director Fatih Akeen as well as late actors Abdel Moneim Madbouli and Abu Bakr Ezzat.

The following films were entered in the Official Competition of Long Movies from Mediterranean Countries

Lebanese movie "Another Day" (Youm Akhar): The movie deals with the state of the city of Beirut after the civil war and the Israeli invasion in the eighties by presenting the story of an abducted father who stands for getting out of the past to the present. The movie indicates that the war time is not as important as the post-war stage.



مهرجان الاسكندرية السينمائي الدولي 22
Alexandria International Film Festival
 من ٥ إلى ١٠ سبتمبر ٢٠٠٦
 from 5 to 10 Sep 2006

Logos of sponsors and partners including the Ministry of Culture, the festival's organizing association, and various international film organizations.



The Syrian movie "Under the Ceiling" (Taht el-Saqf): The movie deals with a secret love story between a video cameraman and the wife of his friend with the background of historical, political and social incidents which Syria has been exposed to since Israel's occupation of Lebanon in 1982.



Adel Adib

Egyptian movie "Love Game" (Le'abet el-Hob): The movie deals with how the typically oriental man regards the liberal woman, via presenting a group of male-female relationships and how the young men and women differentiate between what is right and what is wrong as well as how to satisfy their community and maintain their personal freedom at the same time.

Norwegian-Moroccan movie "A Look" (Nathra): The story focuses on a youth who returns to Morocco to seek relief, but always feels guilty and insecure, particularly during the confrontations with the French occupation of his country at that time.

The Jury

The Jury was chaired by Egyptian director Khayri Beshara with French director Serje Loberon, Greek director George Katakozinos, Egyptian director Enas el Degheidi, Moroccan actress Mona Fattouh, Spanish critic Antonio Fenerpetcher and Russian writer Natalia Kof as members.

The Jury Awards

At a press conference held on September 10th, 2006, the head of the jury of Alexandria International Film Festival director Khairi Beshara announced the results of the winning films.



Greek Consul General, Mr Lalakos, collects the award for best film

The best film award went to the Greek film "Coral Hariton" whose director won the best director award, and the special jury award was given to the French film "I Died out of a Fast Heartbeat".



Bridgette Remer collects the special jury award



Winner of best actor award, Khaled Abul Naga

Egyptian actor Khaled Abul Naga was awarded the best actor prize for his role in the Egyptian movie "Love Game". The best actress award went equally to the Serbian actress Nada Seragin and the Greek Maria Thafilotto.

The best scenario award was given to Milina Marco for her role in "Tomorrow Morning". The best performance award went to the Lebanese directors Jumana Haggi and Khaleel Gorbeesh for their film "Another Day", while the first direction award was given to Egyptian director Mohamed Ali for the film "Love Game".



Alexandrian born director Mohamed Ali

In addition, the head of the association of cinema writers and critics, Mamdouh Elleithi, announced the result of the media competition of the Egyptian cinema and the awards which amount to 100,000 LE granted by the TV and Radio Union. The first award (50,000 LE) went to the Egyptian film "Jacoubian Building". The second was 30,000 LE for "A Human Being" and the third was 20,000 LE for the film "Leisure Time". The association also granted certificates of honor to the writer Waheed Hamed and actors Adel Imam and Khaled el Sawi as well as director Marwan Hamed for the film "Jacoubian Building" and the actor Karim Abdel Aziz and Menna Shalabi and director Ahmed Galal for the film "A Human Being"

beside granting certificates of honor to actors of the film "Leisure Time", Randa Al Beheiri, Ahmed Hatem, Safa Tag Edeeen and Amr Abed, in addition to honoring singer Mohamed Tharwat for singing at the concert held in memory of Naguib Mahfouz.



Lebanese Consul General Nedal Yehia

Interviews

Director Ahmed Saleh announced the festival a success. "It is the first festival since the early nineties without fights", he said. He added that such a success was only possible thanks to the efforts of the lady who arranged the festival, referring to Irese Nazmi. In a negative comment, however, he maintained that one of the disadvantages of the festival was the poor budget. According to him, the participation in any festival depends on the budget to invite more movie stars and critics, tickets and accommodation.



The disaster in his opinion is that most movie stars, critics and especially journalists live in Cairo, which is a great obstacle facing the participation in the Alexandria festival.

Critic Tarek el Shennawi also agreed with director Ahmed Saleh that the participation in the festival was quite poor, especially on part of the audience. "Festivals are for the audience, not critics!" said el Shennawi.



His Excellency, Governor of Alexandria General Adel Labib

ALEX CINEMA

Alexandria played a pioneering role in the establishment of the Egyptian cinema industry. Its early cinematographers were amateurs who experimented with this new form of art, and who were scriptwriters, directors of photography, actors and producers all in one. The first studios and films were Alexandrian, and Alexandrian by definition was a mixture of foreigners resident in Alexandria and Egyptians. As the art and the industry flourished, cinema makers gradually moved to Cairo where there was a larger audience, and where the newly created Studio Misr provided sophisticated equipment. Now, a hundred years later, AlexCinema explores the history of the birth of the seventh art in Alexandria, and the attempt to revive the art of film making in the city of its birth.



THE BIRTH OF THE SEVENTH ART IN ALEXANDRIA

Visit the website – www.bibalex.org/alexcinema

Exhibition – Conference Hall, Bibliotheca Alexandrina – 9th June 2007



The Serapeum of Alexandria

The Temple of Serapis is there, the one and only strange sight in all the world. For nowhere in the world is found such a building or such an arrangement of a temple or such an arrangement of a religion (anonymous author AD 359).

Edward Lewis

Alexandria was a city spoilt in antiquity with beautiful architecture on a scale that rivaled the other great Mediterranean metropolises such as Rome, Athens and later Constantinople. The Pharos, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Caesarium, Gymnasium, Royal Places and Great Library were among the buildings that immortalized the city and provided the stage for giants such as Julius Caesar, Mark Anthony, Cleopatra and Augustus to carve their names in history. A city of Alexandria's prestige and intellectual tradition deserved such a setting and it is not unusual for travelers of that period to marvel at the city's architecture, riches and advancement. Strabo, who visited Alexandria in the first century BC, frequently showed his admiration in his classic and invaluable *Geography* as did Dio Chrysostom two centuries later. Yet there was one building in particular that epitomized the city's diversity, provided spiritual and intellectual guidance and inspired Alexandrians and foreign visitors alike through its sheer scale and beauty - the Serapeum. Located in the modern Kom el Shogafa district, the Serapeum was the heart of both Ptolemaic and Roman Alexandria and was what the Eiffel Tower is to Paris or Big Ben is to London. It is also now the focus of Alex-Med as the center attempts to reconstruct and recreate the complex with the use of 3-D simulation software and scaled models.

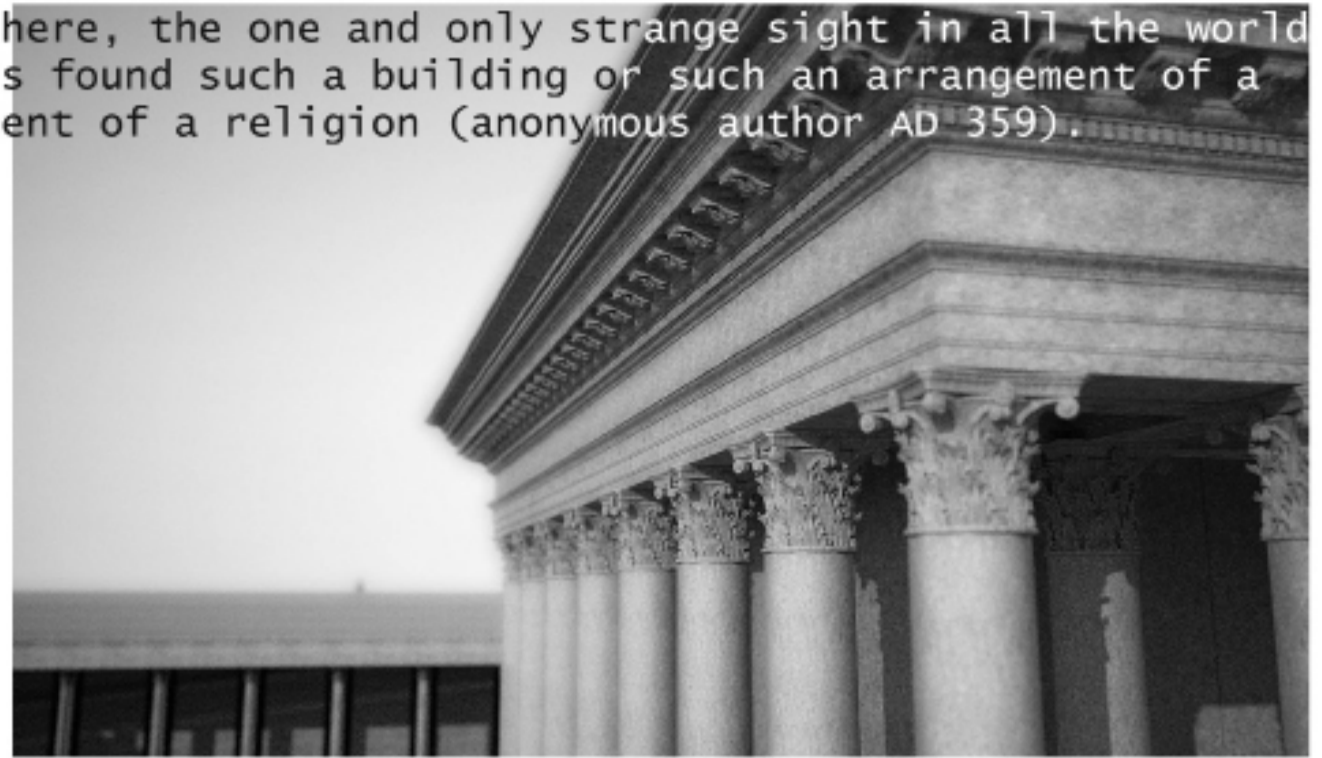
For a building of such magnitude it is a tragedy that very little is left. As with much of Alexandria's past glories, the humid air has eroded the sparse remains, leaving very few clues for archaeologists and historians to piece together. In addition, recent development, often hastily erected and with little respect or regard for the ancient landscape, has smothered much of the archeological record. Despite this silence, the Serapeum remains one of the most important finds concerning Ptolemaic Egypt and is one of the only Alexandrian temples to have been extensively excavated. To many first time visitors the site is primarily associated with the misnamed Pompey's Pillar and not seen within the far grander complex. With a little imagination and research it becomes possible to visualize the layout and scale of the Serapeum due to the crude trenches that outline the walls and individual buildings. The various patterned granite segments strewn throughout the complex enables one to imagine the extent and beauty of decoration whilst its elevated and commanding position allows the visitor to gauge its vital role within the city.

There is division among scholars as to exactly in whose reign the Serapeum was built under but the most widely accepted theory is that it was the vision of Ptolemy III Euergetes I (246-221 BC).

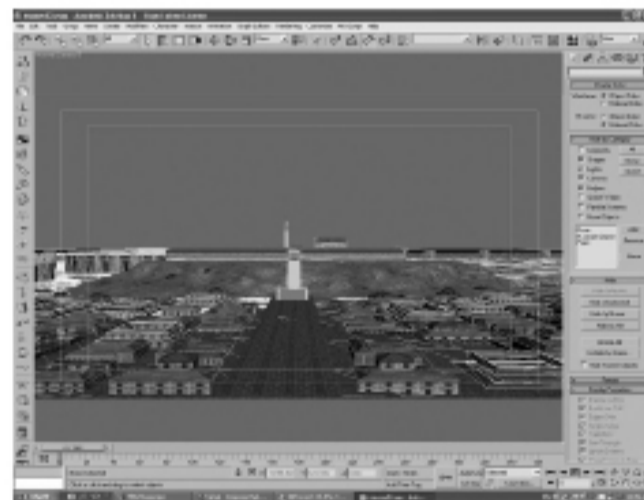


Digital reconstruction of the Temple of Serapis

alex.med@bibalex.org



The site was by no means vacant when Euergetes I started to erect the walls and worship had been taking place on the site during the time of Ptolemy Soter I (and possibly even before the arrival of Alexander the Great¹). It was a complex that demonstrated the incredible blend of cultures as well as religious tolerance. The greatest example of this is found in the deity to whose name the complex was dedicated, Serapis. The cult of Serapis was a conscious effort by the ruling powers to create a patron deity for Alexandria, something the Greek population in Egypt, and in particular Alexandria, were without. Greeks arriving from across the Mediterranean brought Olympian gods to the shores of Alexandria but left behind the formal worship of particular deities from their own cities - Ptolemy wanted to fill this gap and provide a focus of worship for the city's inhabitants.



It had been the intention of Alexander the Great, as founder of the city, to dedicate places of worship 'both to the Greek gods and to the Egyptian Isis² and Ptolemy echoed this view when he established Serapis due to the mix of influences and what the god represented. The physical appearance of the god reflects influences from the Greek Pantheon, especially features associated with Zeus. Serapis is often shown as a draped figure, seated on a throne with a beard and curly locks on his forehead (usually five) and in his hand he holds a sepulture. Whilst his physical appearance is wholly Hellenistic, his role and what he represented to the people was a fusion of Egyptian and Greek beliefs.

The Egyptian influence, probably the most powerful, came from Osiris, the Egyptian god of the Underworld.

At times the dividing line between Osiris and Serapis seems only loosely drawn, shown through various artifacts including a Greek foundation plaque discovered just outside the city which dedicates the building to 'Osiris who is also Sarapis.'³ Through this association with the Underworld, Serapis had two Greek counterparts, Hades and Dionysus (in his chthonic role) and this triad constituted the basic elements in the composite make up of Serapis.⁴ Although Serapis' role as Lord of the Underworld was his strongest, it was by no means his sole role. Osiris was associated with the cult of the Nile and became responsible for the annual Nile flood and the grain supply, so too did Serapis.⁵ In addition, Serapis was the god of healing and associated with his Egyptian counterpart, Imhotep.

As Alexandria grew into a maritime powerhouse and trade links extended throughout the whole of the Mediterranean, so too did the cult of Serapis. Cult centers were found in most large cities in the Greek world and even in regions that were politically hostile to the Ptolemies such as Macedonia, Iran and Syria.⁶ It was clear that a complex built in his name had to echo this impression and his influence within the Mediterranean.

In line with the work being conducted within Alex-Med, a team of architects started to explore the Serapeum with the aim of displaying their findings in a publication, 3D animation and scaled model. Site visits were organized, archaeological reports examined and historical accounts analyzed in order for the team to gauge as accurately as possible the dimensions of the complex, the changes made over time and its fate. Of particular importance were recent excavations and reports by the Australian archeologists Judith McKenzie who continued the work done by earlier archeologists such as G. Botti (1894-96) and Alan Rowe (1941-2). From their research it emerged that the Serapeum went through a number of changes throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods as well the during the rise of Christianity, where not only the shape but the complete function of the site changed.

The original complex built under the Ptolemies consisted of a series of temples, rooms, underground secret passageways and statues all situated within a large colonnaded court accessed through two gates.



The Serapeum of ancient Alexandria

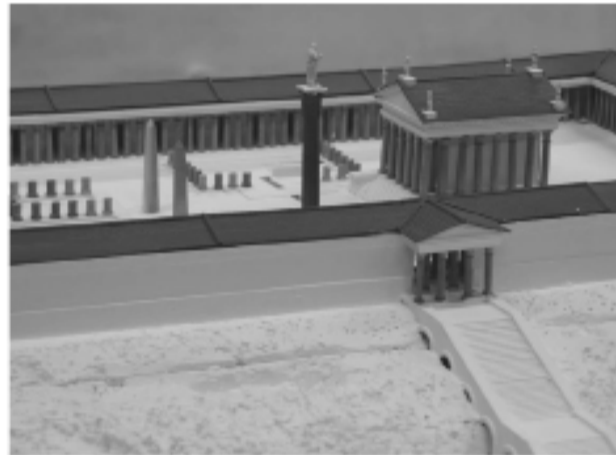
The architectural style of this center piece appears to have been wholly 'classical' and not Egyptian shown by one of the main sources of evidence - Roman coins. Although these coins date after the Ptolemaic Dynasty, the temple did not undergo any significant change until AD 181⁷ and provide some of the most important information including the number and style of columns as well as the general design. The other temples of the Serapeum are thought to have been dedicated to various deities including Harpocrates, the childlike god who, with Isis and Serapis, made up the Alexandrian Trinity. The Egyptian god Anubis is also strongly connected to Alexandria⁸ and, whilst the evidence is not conclusive, the remains of a building discovered are presumed to have been associated with the jackal headed deity. Various statues, including a pair of red granite sphinxes that remain on site today, were included in the complex as well as other wholly Egyptian elements demonstrating the cultural and religious hybridization of Ptolemaic Alexandria.

Situated just outside the Ptolemaic enclosure and accessed by a stairway was a Nilometer fed directly by an underground channel from the Canal of Alexandria (the ancient fore-runner of the Mahmoudieh Canal).⁹ The Nilometer could measure the height of the annual Nile flood and the subsequent level of fertility that could be expected for the coming year¹⁰ and its construction may well have been linked to Serapis' role concerning the Nile and grain supply.

Despite the introduction of Imperial rule announced by Octavian in 30 BC when he annexed Egypt, the Serapeum remained largely unchanged. Like much of the Empire's administration, Rome did not seek to radically change or disrupt the existing way of life but simply install a system that would ensure Egypt contributed to the sustainability of the Empire. It was not until the late first century AD that the

Serapeum went under any significant change due to a large fire that destroyed much of the complex. Written and archeological evidence support the theory that the Serapeum was rebuilt between AD 181 and 217 and included significant changes.

The most obvious alteration to the Serapeum during the Roman period is that it was larger than its Ptolemaic predecessor. Many basic elements, such as columns and capitals, were enlarged making the building even more impressive. A new temple of Serapis was built directly over the Ptolemaic temple to a larger scale and the colonnaded court was widened to fit in with the Roman interest of axial plans.¹¹ A single wide main entrance was formed thus replacing the two that existed under the Ptolemies and a pool was also added to the north of this entrance. Diocletian's column (commonly known as Pompey's Pillar) was erected in 298 AD in the highest and most visible section of the city to commemorate Diocletian's victory over rebelling Egyptians. A statue was possibly supported by the pillar since a volume of the *Description de l'Egypte*¹² depicts a segment of a statue resting at the base of the column.



Yasser Karakiry's (Alex-Med) scale model of the Serapeum in the Roman period

It is this point in time, during the Roman period, that Alex Med have focused their research. Using a scale of 1:200, the impressive model measures 1.20m by .80m and is based on the reconstruction of Judith Mckenzie, a professor of archaeology at Oxford University, and assembled by Yasser Karakiry of Alex Med.

The physical changes under the Romans did not alter the Serapeum's primary role as the religious center of Alexandria and it continued to function as such until the temple's demise in AD 391 at the hands of Christians.

The most important pagan building in Alexandria was destroyed and the city no longer reflected the mixture of religions it had for centuries before. Churches were erected within the complex and paganism was no longer tolerated. Alexandria, a city that once demonstrated unique interaction and hybridization, now had one dominant religion - Christianity. However less than three centuries later the complex changed once again as Amr, the Islamic general, entered the city. The Serapeum was left to ruin and the site left derelict until Saladin broke up many of the columns and tossed them into the shallow waters of the bay to reduce the destructive effects of the waves on the city's walls as well as making Crusader ships think twice before approaching the city.¹³

As Alexandria's role as Egypt's primary port declined during the Medieval years the Serapeum lay unnoticed until the reign of Mohamed Ali when Alexandria regained her prestige. Archeologists and historians have since begun to examine the site and slowly piece together the little material that remains. Most recently and as part of a series of digital reconstructions (including the Pharos, Kom el-Dikka and Attarine Mosque) made by Alex-Med, the Serapeum will be brought back to life through 3D simulation. Hassan Baghdady has created stunning reconstructions outlining the differences of the complex throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. The area directly around the Serapeum, including streets and houses, has also been reconstructed giving a real idea of how the Serapeum would have looked out over the city. It is hoped this will be one of several models displaying some of the impressive sites of ancient Alexandria including Taposiris Magna and Kom el-Dikka and contribute to our knowledge of Alexandria's ancient past.

¹Tacitus wrote in the first decade of the second century AD that there was 'a shrine sacred from old to Serapis and Isis'. Tacitus, *Hist* 4.84
²Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander III* 1.4-2.2. Loeb Classical Library
³Fraser, P.M. 1972. *Ptolemaic Alexandria*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 253.
⁴Fraser, P.M. 1972. *Ptolemaic Alexandria*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 253.
⁵McKenzie, J et al. 2004. 'Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the archaeological evidence', pp. 81.
⁶Fraser, P.M. 1972. *Ptolemaic Alexandria*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 275
⁷McKenzie, J et al. 2004. 'Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the archaeological evidence', pp. 88.
⁸Fraser, P.M. 1972. *Ptolemaic Alexandria*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 270.
⁹McKenzie, J et al. 2004. 'Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the archaeological evidence', pp. 90.
¹⁰Bowman, A.K. 1986. *Egypt After the Pharaohs*. British Museum Publications Limited, London, pp. 103.
¹¹McKenzie, J et al. 2004. 'Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the archaeological evidence', pp. 81.
¹²See *Description de l'Egypte* vol. 5, 475
¹³Abd al-Latif. *Relation de l'Egypte par Abd al-Latif*, trans S. de Sacy (1810)



Alex Med's 3D reconstruction of the Serapeum and surrounding buildings

Searching for Family Connections and Stumbling over Architecture and Urbanism in Alexandria

Galen Cranz

When I had an opportunity to attend an international conference in Alexandria this year I looked forward to being able to see at last the city where a relative, my grandmother's uncle, had once lived. I discovered letters that my great great-uncle had written to my grandmother, Genevieve, in the 1940s. My mother only knew that an uncle lived in Alexandria and taught gymnastics and mathematics at a French lycee. For her he was part of the dim past and she thinks her mother wanted it that way. My grandmother's desire to embrace her new life in America may account for her neglect of her uncle.

An Armenian Turk born in 1876, Professor Arthur Elmas was educated in Paris, and in 1900 moved to Alexandria where he lived for the rest of his life. By the 1940s his two brothers, a sister-in-law, and mother were buried in Paris. His letters beseech his niece (my grandmother Genevieve Aslanian Whitaker) in America for news and contact, because she and her two siblings are the only relatives he has left. Seven of the letters were in French, and one was in Turkish using Armenian script. The poignancy of his pleading for contact ("Why don't you write me? Why have four years passed since I have heard from you?") made me want to represent my family and respond to his call even if decades late. I had two return addresses and the names of two schools where he had taught or bequeathed money. My task was to be made all the more difficult by the fact that street names were completely unrecognizable since the Revolution. Having consulted numerous sources I realized that the street names could have been changed, not just re-labeled in Arabic script. That's why nobody recognizes the name of streets! But why didn't somebody else tell me this? Could it be that this event is no longer in collective memory? Could it be that young people are not even aware that the city streets had been renamed in recent history?



Souvenir à ma nièce

Arthur Elmas

ca. 1935

Friday, September 15, 2006

Having found where he lived during his time in Alexandria I wanted to find where my great great uncle was buried. I had photographed his apartment building in order to be able to show my relatives at home what his last residence probably looked like. Even though it was dark the first story of all the buildings along the street were so brightly lit that the flash on the camera might not have been necessary. The photograph I took was surprisingly representative of the emotional reality: a garishly bright street level with a dim, faint presence of the past, hovering above like a ghost about to take its leave.

Using only light, a 21st-century environment has been carved out of the late 19th century building fabric. Contemporaries haven't bothered to tear down this European urbanism yet. Instead, they rely on this brilliant tunnel of light, composed of and decorated with bright signs and glass window displays. Disneyland has been created within Durrell's Alexandria. My experience of the city's modern architecture had been broadened further when visiting the grounds of "El Salamlek" Montaza Royal Palace for a conference dinner. Along these many kilometers we passed a continuous line of 20-story high-rise buildings, crammed cheek by jowl next to one another without any regard to privacy, views, or shadows. Every rule that an urban designer might ever have learned about rational, sensitive, aesthetic, socially conscious, or efficient planning was violated. Who is responsible for the way these buildings are jammed together?

The conference was drawing to a close and I knew I would very much regret not taking advantage of being in the city to find Arthur's last resting place. Mohammed Awad had helped with my first quest and he also proposed searching the numerous cemeteries to learn more about Professor Elmas' career, death date, and life. Since Arthur had invested so much in the design and planning of his own gravestone I felt that locating it was important. I was due to leave the next day...

Saturday, September 16, 2006

After some hemming and hawing I decided to stay an extra night in Alexandria because I was not certain that I would be able to locate the cemetery by the end of the day, especially if I attended any of the closing ceremonies of the conference. I took a cab to St. Catherine's where the porter took me to the receptionist who spoke some English but not a lot. He asked me to write my questions for the director since he had no time to meet me in person. In my letter I asked if my uncle had worked there, if his library had been donated to the school, and if he knew where he was buried. I left my telephone number at the Hotel Cecil, emphasizing my limited stay, and my home address in United States. I never heard from him.

I knew that if I could find the cemetery I would have a good chance of finding Arthur's gravestone. One of the letters to my grandmother explained that he could not be buried in German-occupied France during World War II, so he was preparing his gravestone for burial in Alexandria.

He told Genevieve what would be on the gravestone--a list of his accomplishments, a mini-curriculum vitae! He was a professor, a graduate of a French school in gymnastics, a delegate to the Olympics in 1906, and founder of a prize in his own name for artistic gymnastics.

Since I was unable to see the director, I asked the receptionist where my uncle might have been buried. I said that he was an Armenian Catholic. If Catholic, he said that I should go to the Latin cemetery. I went straight there and entered the porter's lodge at the Latin cemetery. They have books that list every person buried there. Since our last letter is dated November 4, 1948, the Italian speaking porter and I started looking from November 1948 onward. Eventually he got bored and joined his companion drinking tea and left me to look through the book on my own. Most of the recorded names were Italian, but there were others as well. None of them were Arthur Elmassian or Elmas.

When I indicated that I had not found his name, the porter suggested that I try the Armenian cemetery. Oh, now they tell me. There is a separate cemetery for Armenians. But where is it? Near. Well, what does that mean, I wonder. How near or far is near? The porter who speaks Arabic, Italian, but very little English directs someone in Arabic to take me to the Armenian cemetery. It actually is fairly close, in fact it is adjacent across a dirt road that separates the two cemeteries.

No one at the Armenian cemetery speaks even a little English. Eventually, a man who uses this road as a practice road for a driver's training business that he runs was recruited to help translate. I explained that I am looking for the grave of Arthur Elmassian and showed the list of things that I expected to find on the gravestone. They told me they would find it before I returned in an hour.

At lunch I ended up speaking briefly with Dina Shehayed, an Egyptian professor of architecture. Her mother is Armenian, so she can speak it! She wrote a note in Arabic explaining that she would return with me on Sunday morning and that she spoke Armenian. Hope replaced defeat and sadness. We agreed to meet at Hotel Cecil at 10 the next morning.

By the time I walked back to the Armenian cemetery it had been well over two hours, but the driving teacher was there again with another student. He talked to the two men in charge and told me that they had found the grave. I am surprised by my feelings of elation that are more personal than I would have thought. I feel more than just the usual satisfaction of problem solving. I feel some personal caring and some feeling that I will be personally enlarged by making this connection with a part of my family.

I follow the man who also seems to have some personal satisfaction at his success. He takes me to a grave with Armenian script, but immediately I can see that it is not the right one because the death date is 1906.

Apparently, the only thing that they had been able to read on the list of items that would be on the gravestone was the date 1906 when Arthur had been a delegate to the Olympics.

I explain that this cannot be the correct grave since Arthur was still writing letters to Genevieve in 1948. At this point they suggest that I try the Armenian Catholic cemetery.

What! Now they tell me? I have said over and over that he was an Armenian Catholic and only now I am being sent to the Armenian Catholic cemetery. Well, where is it? I asked. Again, they claimed that it was very close, but it was now close to five o'clock, so they suggested that I go the next day. In addition, they suggested, still through translation, that I go first to the Armenian Catholic church and look through their burial record books, so that I can learn where his plot might be. They gave me a street address for the Armenian Catholic church.

Sunday, September 17, 2006

This is my day to do or die. My mission had evolved from me wanting to see where our uncle lived and worked to where he died. After breakfast I went out early to photograph Rue de Telegraphes Anglais in the daylight before my meeting with Dina. I walked up and down the street trying to imagine what he might have experienced, noting which buildings and vistas would have been there during his lifetime. A major boulevard at the other end of his street would have had a similar look and in the other direction an elegant wood lined coffee shop caught my attention.

In contrast to the scale of the façades of these 19th-century buildings a "new shopping mall" is being built at an intersection, in what might be called peasant taste. Or, one might call it neo-baroque, or even cinematic. The difference between architectural expression and decoration has disappeared in this instance. In the 19th and even 20th centuries a motif like a leaf would have decorated an architectural feature in series- along a floor or around a door. Today a single leaf extends over several floors in bright blue, part of a large brooch-like composition that covers the entire façade. It's flashier and bigger than its surroundings;



is it also garish and obvious? The composition lacks the depth that more restrained geometrical compositions offer, because there's only one way to read this façade. It does not provide internal harmony, let alone harmony with its surrounding buildings. But does that matter? After all, how long will those buildings be there? Somehow Alexandrians do not see that the cosmopolitanism for which it was so famous might be preserved as such.



I met Dina and we started our job-- to see if we could find his grave that day. I showed her the address on Port East Street that I had been given for the Catholic Armenian Church. It was in the same central district that we were in so it wasn't too hard to find.



We walked about a block and a half --along the street rather than stumbling along the broken sidewalks that present a more difficult obstacle course than dodging traffic on the street. In any case, we found it! On the exterior of the walled compound is a stone sign about 9 x 15" with both Armenian and Latin script identifying this place as the Armenian Catholic Patriarchy.

Dina made contact with the lay leader of the church, Robert Balian, and he said that he thought he knew exactly where this grave was because it was unusual. Most headstones lie horizontally, but his was erected vertically. Because he was an athlete, he requested to be buried vertically!

We navigated through the narrow doors of the courtyard out into the street and off we went to the Catholic Armenian cemetery, literally adjacent to the Armenian cemetery. Robert knew exactly where the grave was, just to the right of the center of the cemetery.

He walked ahead and there it was, CV and all! The headstone was just as he described it in his letter to Genevieve with the addition of one important piece of information. Our great great-uncle died in 1949, the year after his last letter to Genevieve.

He went to his grave as Elmas rather than Elmasian. Why did he drop the tell-tale Armenian ending? Fear or self-loathing--two of the relics of genocide? Or French-Armenian fusion? All --or none-- of the above? He mentions having taken care of his mother's and brothers' graves in Paris, but no mention of his father. Why not? Did his father die before they moved to Paris? Could his father have abandoned the family? Did he drop the --ian ending so as to not be the son of anyone?

A shrub has grown up in front of his grave, so Robert indicated to the groundskeeper that he should trim the foliage. I photographed from as many different angles as I could imagine being of interest, and even photographed the small plaque on the side that indicated the name of the Greek artisan who created the gravestone. I had my picture taken at the grave, and I stood next to the tombstones -- as vertically as I could. After all, his epitaph reads here stands Professor Arthur Elmas.

The cemetery is not kept meticulously, but it is beautiful, quiet, with palm trees, white bougainvillea, some substantial crypts, and some extravagant sculpture, all in dazzling sunlight. A few high-rises and industrial structures can be seen from within the walls of the cemetery, but by and large it is a peaceful oasis. I hope that land use policy never allows these serene cemeteries to be abandoned and built over. Losing these breathing spaces would mean losing open space in this crushed and overburdened city, not to mention the archeological losses. We left just in time for me to return to the hotel for my luggage and a cab to the train for Cairo.

I did it! With a lot of help I found our relative, his residences, his workplaces, and his gravesite. Wow. I got onto the train with snacks I bought at the station--sesame seed sweets and a sandwich -- which I proceeded to devour in exhaustion, exhilaration, and sweet contentment. After so much uncertainty, confusion, and disappointment the feeling of completion was quite something.

Galen Cranz is a professor in the department of architecture at the University of California.





فنانين من الإسكندرية

السيدة إنصاف عثمان عمّاري، سكندرية من مواليد محرم بك ١٦ سبتمبر عام ١٩٥٠، حاصلة على ليسانس تاريخ وجغرافيا، فهي مصرية المولد مغربية الانتماء جزائرية الموطن، استقرت في الجزائر منذ أكثر من ثلاثين عاما وفي بلد المليون شهيد أسست حياتها وتزوجت وأنجبت طفلان، وعملت أستاذة للتاريخ والجغرافيا في البعثة الفرنسية بالجزائر، وقد جعلها تخصصها في التاريخ تحب عروبتهما وعلمها أن الحضارة العربية غنية جدا، ولذلك اختارت الشعر ليحكي تاريخ أزمنة مختلفة من عمرها وعمر كل المواقف حولها، فلها ٣ دواوين (نض الفؤاد)، (سمراء النيل، همس الكلمات) مترجمان إلى الفرنسية. أخيرا شاركت في ندوة قصر الثقافة بالأنفوشي حول كتاب سمراء النيل وهمس الكلمات من تقديم الشاعر جمال بسيوني والشاعر الكبير فاضل عبد العليم القباني، وكانت ضيفة أيضا برنامج المحلة الثقافية بإذاعة الإسكندرية في شهر أغسطس الماضي، وشاركت في برنامج حوارات مكتبة الإسكندرية للقناة الخامسة (تلفزيون الإسكندرية)، وأخيرا سيصدر كتاب "حبيبة القمر" بالقاهرة.

إلى جانب ذلك فالسيدة إنصاف امرأة نشيطة في العمل الثقافي في الجزائر، فهي نائبة رئيس لجنة القدس وعضوة فاعلة في عدد من الجمعيات المهنية.

أخيرا تقول السيدة إنصاف: "للكاتورة سحر حمودة كل الحب والاعتراف والتقدير لاستضافتها لي، سيدتي، كل آيات الحب والاحترام لك."

من حبيبة القمر

السيدة إنصاف عثمان عمّاري

٢٧ أغسطس ٢٠٠٦

سمراء النيل

يا عز حبيب
لله لسانك
يقل ما لم يخبرني
من حبيبك
من علمك لسانك
نظام جرائدك
وتقاريرك
لولا إيمانك
بما أحسن
بما أحسن لفلان
تلك لم تسرحني

فأنت
العلم في العليل
وזה هو الرضيع
وזה هو الرضيع
لا تترك
من دعوتك
ورحمتك

فسي
لرحمتك وحزنتك
بما أحسن
والله أعلم
لعمرك

من وهران إلى الإسكندرية ألف تحية

ميلادي فوق
أرضك الطيبة
يا إسكندرية الرائعة الفتاة
يا منبع الحضارة الإنسانية
على مدينتك
أجول بين
مع عائلتي
لعمرك الإسكندرية

كامل
يتعدى حيزنا
ليس طمعنا
في سماءك
وتحفنا
لهدي الإسكندرية العليمة
هرمنا
تاريخنا

بمساهمة
كل محبي الخير
في عمرك
التهدية
والهمزة
هي قنطرة التذوق
على رمتها
فرعنة يونانية

و
شبابك ذو السرة
المحملة
وسيدة عصر عابدة
راعية للمركبة القلبيّة
فلمن من حجوا
بما أحسن
وذلك
ونحوها

لعمرك
برسالة وردية
للان
هذه هوية



كتابة مع معاهد الإسكندرية الأثنيّة لواء حد العالم المحبوب واليد صحت حد العبد الأثني العلم الأثني لجامعة البول العروية

Alexander's Tomb

The two thousand year obsession to find the lost conqueror
Nicholas Saunders

Mamdouh El Dakhakhni

Who said that Alexander the Great is dead? Well, his body may have died 2,000 years ago but his spirit is very much alive and still with us today.

And whoever heard of an ancient ruler so powerful that the search for his tomb, containing his mummified body in a golden sarcophagus, continues unabated to this very day?

British archeologist Nicholas J Saunders' new book, *Alexander's Tomb: the two thousand year obsession to find the lost conqueror* (AUC Press LE 120), is an admirable book bringing together thousands of years of speculation as to whether Alexander's tomb is buried somewhere underneath Alexandria and involving us in one of the greatest mysteries of the ancient world.

The ancient obsession to possess Alexander's body led to civil war between two of Alexander's best generals - Perdikkas and Ptolemy I. While Ptolemy had Alexander's body, Perdikkas had the next best thing - the dead King's armor, diadem and royal scepter. The power of Alexander's aura to mobilize the only force that mattered in the world - the Macedonian Army - was brilliantly played when Eumenes, Alexander's former secretary, conjured up Alexander's ghost. He claimed that he talked with Alexander in dreams and consequently the army followed Eumenes's orders as if they were the words of the immortal Alexander(!) Perdikkas's invasion force swept down through Syria, Gaza and into Egypt, shadowed by his fleet. Alexander's two generals faced each other across the Nile. But Perdikkas, despite his massive army, which included elephants, was outfought and outmaneuvered within sight of Ptolemy's stronghold, known as the Fort of Camels, and in a second engagement across the Nile 2,000 of Perdikkas's veterans, weighed down with their armor, were either drowned or eaten alive by crocodiles - the elephants were swept downstream.

The number of Roman emperors who came to Alexandria to visit Alexander's tomb was indeed great. Julius Caesar, Octavian, the disturbed Caligula who imagined himself as Alexander reincarnated, Vespasian, Titus, Hadrian and Septimius Severus who "locked up Alexander's tomb" along with what he believed to be books of magic.

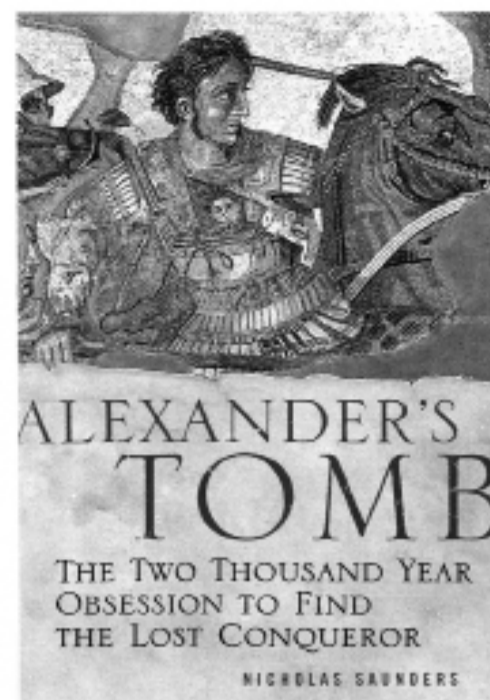
Then came Caracalla, a dangerous megalomaniac who, in adulation of his hero Alexander, ordered that he himself should be called "Great" and "Alexander". But imitation did not satisfy Caracalla who decided that he was in fact Alexander reborn.

He ordered statues and images that showed his "true" identity. When they were displayed publicly the Alexandrians heaped scorn and ridicule upon the emperor. One particular ludicrous painting showed a single heroic body whose head was split into two faces, one of Alexander and the other of Caracalla.

Caracalla loathed the arrogant Alexandrians who poked fun at him and dismissed all his claims to greatness, branding him a ludicrous underachiever. He soon indulged his blood thirst by enticing the city's young men to gather in the Stadium to be enrolled in a special "Alexander phalanx of infantry". Once assembled, Caracalla ordered his Roman soldiers to kill everyone and then rampage through the streets raping and slaughtering anyone they found. Caracalla's vengeance left Alexandria awash with blood but left Alexander's tomb intact.

Having been idolized in the pagan Greek and Roman world, the advent of Christianity left Alexander out in the cold as a mere pagan warlord. But Alexander was restored to respectability when he was referred to as Dul Karnein (he of the two ram's horns) in the Holy Koran, something of a prophet and someone the Lord Creator had spoken to with the containment of Gog and Magog, two terrible monsters, behind a wall of iron "at the end of the world".

Phew! Quite a journey, wouldn't you say? And Alexander's elusive ghost is still with us 2,000 years after he was lowered into his golden sarcophagus. All hail Alexander!



Stuffed Peppers "Fifil rumi mahshi"



Preparation

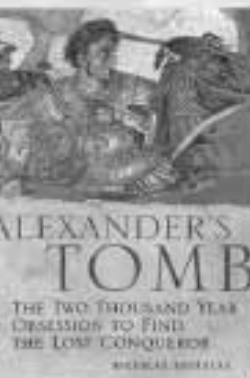
1. Blanch peppers (by briefly immersing them in boiled water), then remove stems and seeds.
2. Finely chop onion.
3. Mix together rice, seasoning, onion, meat and 1 tablespoon of cooking oil with 1 cup of tomato juice.
4. Loosely fill the peppers with mix.
5. Tightly pack peppers in pot making sure they are upright.
6. Add remaining oil to tomato juice, season and pour over peppers.
7. Cook over a low flame for about 30 minutes.

Serves 6

Ingredients

1 Kg green sweet peppers
½ Kg ground beef
1 cup of rice
1 onion
3 cups tomato juice
2 tablespoons cooking oil
Salt and pepper

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ALEX-MED NEWSLETTER

Bringing the Mediterranean Together

This newsletter hopes to reach a wide public, both locally and internationally. It brings to you news about Alex-Med and Alexandria, and encourages you to send your contributions. If you would like to send your views, comments or contribute to topics related to Alexandria and the Mediterranean please use the contact details below. Regular sections include an "Alexandrian Artists Corner" where young Alexandrian artists can publish their poetry or display their art; a gastronomical page to illustrate the diversity and similarity of the Mediterranean cuisine; a page on an Alexandrian personage and another on an Alexandrian building or neighborhood, and a page of photography that captures scenes from everyday life in Alexandria. Our mission is to involve you in our activities and in the making of a new Alexandria – one that honors the past, respects diversity and rises to the challenges of the 21st century.

Editor: Edward Lewis
Graphics: Flora Cavoura
Photography: Abdallah Dawestashy

Sculpture pictured on front cover: Esmat Dawestashy

Forthcoming events

Cycle de conférences "Penser la Méditerranée": la Méditerranée, espace religieux (May 6, 2007)

AlexCinema: Exhibition, Book Launch and Seminar (June 9, 2007)

Contact us:

If you want to be added to our mailing list, please fill in the form and either mail or email it to us. If you would like to send a letter to the Editor or to contribute to the newsletter (either an article in Arabic, English or French, or a poem) please send it to:

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