ARAMCO WORLD
magazine

P.O. BOX 2106
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77001
(PRINTED IN ENGLAND)
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

JANUARY–FEBRUARY 1982

THE HIDDEN POWER

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

VOL 33 NO. 1 PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY JANUARY–FEBRUARY 1982

SPECIAL BLUE BINDERS, TO HOLD 12 ISSUES OF ARAMCO WORLD MAGAZINE, ARE AVAILABLE FROM EASIBIND LTD., 4 UXBRIDGE STREET, LONDON W8 7SZ, ENGLAND, FOR $6.50 EACH. MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO EASIBIND LTD.

REPRINTS OF SOME ARTICLES ARE AVAILABLE FOR CLASSROOM USE. REQUEST SAMPLES FROM THE EDITORS.

Published by Aramco, a Corporation, 1345 Avenue of the Americas, New York N.Y. 10019; John J. Kelberer, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer; Hugh H. Goerner, President; J. J. Johnston, Secretary; Nabil I. al-Bassam, Treasurer; Paul F. Hoye, Editor; Martin Love, Assistant Editor. Designed and produced by Brian Smith Associates. Printed in England by Ben Johnson & Co. Ltd. Distributed without charge to a limited number of readers with an interest in Aramco, the oil industry, or the history, culture, geography and economy in the Middle East. Correspondence concerning **Aramco World Magazine** should be addressed to The Editor, 55 Laan van Meerdervoort, 2517AG The Hague, The Netherlands. Changes of address should be sent to Aramco Services Company, Attention S. W. Kombargi, 1100 Milam Building, Houston, Texas 77002. ISSN 0003-7567

Cover: For nearly 50 years, Sayeda Missac has been sculpting – in mud – arresting figures that she calls her "people" – a series of cowled "mothers" similar to this lovely woman. Sayeda is one of numerous poor Egyptian children who participated in an attempt by a Cairo educator to prove an unusual theory: the existence in modern children of what the educator called "a hidden power": the artistic talent of ancient Egypt's craftsmen. As these sculptures suggest, Sayeda and others did seem to possess remarkable talent. Photograph by John Feeney. Back cover: Lebanese vocalist Fayrouz. Photograph by Katrina Thomas.

◀Fayrouz: "Nostalgic but vibrant, sad but defiant, folkloric and yet so new… By turns mystic… elegiac and fiery; her singing has expressed the whole emotional scale of Arab life with haunting intensity…"

AFTER 10 YEARS, LEBANON'S MOST FAMOUS VOCALIST COMES BACK TO AMERICA

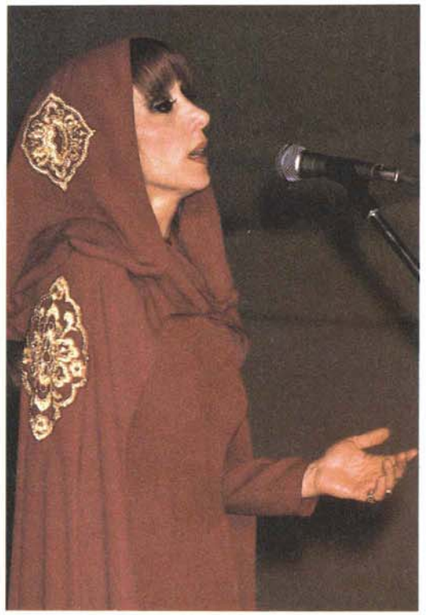
THE RETURN OF FAYROUZ

WRITTEN BY BARRY HOBERMAN. PHOTOGRAPHED BY KATRINA THOMAS

To the Arab world, Fayrouz came . . . at a time when Arabic singing was weighted down with convention and predictability, and spirits were nationally at their lowest; her voice rang, as though from the beyond, the notes of salvation and joy. Arab music has never been the same since.

"Nostalgic but vibrant, sad but defiant, folkloric and yet so new, hers has been for nearly 30 years perhaps the only voice that seems so capable of jubilation in an almost cosmic sense. By turns mystic… elegiac and fiery, her singing has expressed the whole emotional scale of Arab life with haunting intensity. Often singers give listeners pleasure, as they expect. She often gives them, beyond their expectations, ecstasy.

—Jabra I. Jabra



Who is the biggest star, the most prominent name, in contemporary western popular music? Mick Jagger? Paul McCartney? Bob Dylan? There really isn't a single, obvious choice – it just depends on whom one asks.

In the Arab world, however, the situation is different. From Morocco to Oman, from Syria to Sudan, there is overwhelming agreement that the pre-eminent figure in current popular music is the captivating Lebanese vocalist, Fayrouz, the woman called "The Soul of Lebanon." Small wonder then that Americans and Canadians of Middle Eastern origin were jubilant when it was announced, last September, that Fayrouz would soon embark on her second concert tour of North America, a full 10 years after her first set of performances here. For the thousands of devoted fans who had last seen her in 1971 – and had been awaiting her return since – it was welcome news, indeed.

Above and left: Fayrouz — often called "The Soul of Lebanon" — ended her North American tour with appearances at the United Nations' building and at Symphony Hall in Boston.

Fayrouz's North American concert series – which began at Washington's John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, October 4, and concluded with a triumphant appearance at Boston Symphony Hall on November 22 – was actually part of a spectacular three-continent tour that included Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela and Australia on its subsequent itinerary. Organized and sponsored by the Forum for International Art and Culture, and the Arab American Cultural Foundation, the tour is the most extensive ever undertaken by Fayrouz and those accompanying her: the Lebanese Folkloric Ensemble Dance Troupe, the Lebanese Choir and Orchestra, her talented sister, Hoda Ziade, a much-beloved vocalist in her own right, in all a supporting cast of over 50 musicians, singers and dancers.

I had never seen Fayrouz in concert, so, when the tour was announced, I was thrilled at the prospect of hearing, in person, the premier singer of Arab music. Now, having attended two of her performances, I realize that she is much more than that. Quite simply, Fayrouz is one of the world's nonpareil musicians and outstanding artists, an international treasure of the order of Rostropovich, Sills, Ravi Shankar, Miles Davis, Sutherland, Pavarotti, Ella Fitzgerald and Dylan.

Joseph Eger, music director and conductor of the United Nations Symphony, agrees. Having long admired Fayrouz and recognized her inimitability, Eger invited her to inaugurate the U.N.'s "music in the lobby" series, an example of Eger's oft-demonstrated willingness to explore unfamiliar musical territory.

Formerly an associate conductor to Leopold Stokowski, Eger has also worked with such popular musicians as the late John Lennon and keyboardist Keith Emerson and is thus well suited to stage a collaboration with Fayrouz. And Fayrouz, many of whose songs trumpet the poignant yet proudly defiant promise of a Lebanon made whole again, of a healed and rejuvenated homeland, seemed the ideal choice for this concert in a building dedicated to peace.

The performance at the U.N. came a few days after Fayrouz's appearance at the Music Hall in Houston, which members of her entourage cited as being one of the tour's musical peaks. (Following her debut at the Kennedy Center, she had also played Cleveland, New York's Carnegie Hall, Detroit, Montreal, Toronto, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.) The U.N. concert, my first opportunity to see her, was unusual for a number of reasons. It marked the only time on the tour that she was not supported by her normal accompanists – although several musicians from the Lebanese orchestra sat in with the U.N. Symphony.

The audience was by invitation only. It was also the one concert at which Fayrouz was unable to use her own sound system. And although members of her organization – perfectionists all – were heard to grumble about the latter fact, her listeners did not seem the least bit disappointed. My friend Sheri and I certainly weren't.

Fayrouz was introduced by Ghassan Tueni, Lebanon's Ambassador to the U.N.

After a concert, Fayrouz, tired but triumphant, greets fans.

Attired in white, she walked onstage with measured, graceful steps, her manner supremely dignified and regal. The concert was designed, in part, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of the Lebanese poet Khalil Gibran, and Fayrouz opened with *al-Ard Lakum* ("The Land is Yours"), a Gibran lyric set to music by her son, composer/multi-instrumentalist/playwright/actor Ziad Rahbani.

From the first few notes, you know immediately that you are in the presence of one of the world's most remarkable voices. It has a vibrant purity and rich, velvety texture that contrasts sharply with the grainy, guttural quality characteristic of many traditional Arab vocalists. Fayrouz's range, moreover, is breathtaking, and she eschews the profuse trilling and clustering of vocal embellishments favored by other singers. As a result, her sparing, elegant use of traditional ornamentation is all the more striking.

Her very selective use of onstage gestures produces an equally dramatic effect. When she sings, Fayrouz stands straight, her look coolly deadpan, almost stern at times. It's as if she were saving

Accompanying Fayrouz on a tour — begun in the Kennedy Center in Washington October 4 and going on to Mexico, South America and Australia — were a supporting cast of 50 musicians and dancers including the Lebanese Folkloric Ensemble Troupe.

every last drop of emotion for that gorgeously expressive voice. But on the occasions when she stretches her arm out toward the audience, or clutches her hands to her breast, or gives a quick, fiery shake of the shoulders – then the crowd's impassioned response tells you a lot about the relationship between Fayrouz and her fans. There's a constant two-way flow of energy between performer and audience that makes a Fayrouz concert more than just a musical event – and this is true even for fans who do not understand her Arabic lyrics.

The U.N. performance was thoroughly satisfying. Fayrouz's Lebanese musicians meshed well with Eger's mostly youthful ensemble – and there were memorable juxtapositions: the stark woodiness of a *na'i,* a simple reed pipe, sounding its sinuous, fluttery tune above a background of violins and cellos. And where else could one hear a *tabla,* the common Middle Eastern-South Asian hand drum, suddenly pick up the tempo to kick a western orchestra into high gear? The audience clearly enjoyed themselves, yet they weren't as unabashedly demonstrative as I'd expected. Dignitaries don't want to be seen yelling and hollering, I suppose.

Two days later, in the nearly empty expanse of Boston Symphony Hall a few hours before the concert there, I chatted with Iraqi-born San Franciscan Violette Yacoub, president of the Forum For International Art and Culture and chief organizer of Fayrouz's 1971 and 1981 North American tours. I commented that the crowd at the U.N. had been enthusiastic but perhaps a touch restrained. "Wait till you see how the Arab community here reacts," she replied. "And Hoda will sing a song in Armenian for the many Armenians in Boston – and the Arabs will cheer just as loudly as the Armenians."

I asked Violette if she could think of any western performer, past or present, who might stand as a good analogy to Fayrouz. "Vocally she has always been compared to Edith Piaf, but in terms of how she is regarded in the Middle East, I would say a combination of Judy Garland and Bob Dylan." Judy Garland and Bob Dylan? "Well, Judy Garland, because of the great love Fayrouz's audience has for her, and their massive outpourings of affection. And Bob Dylan because the audience listens closely to the lyrics she sings and puts a lot of stock in them."

The concert that followed was the kind of joyous celebration that gets even the dourest skeptic clapping his hands and tapping his feet if not dancing in the aisle. Violette was right about the substantially more extroverted crowd. Who says Bostonians are prim and proper?

Fayrouz wore twice as many stunning costumes as she had at the U.N., sang more than twice as many songs, and smiled five times as much. (I think she liked us, Boston.) As for Hoda, she sang her Armenian song and, as predicted, everyone went wild. The dancers of the Lebanese Folkloric Ensemble contributed a splendid exuberance, performing tastefully updated versions of traditional folk dances – including the famous *dabke,* or line dance. The orchestra, conducted by Tawfiq al-Basha, provided Fayrouz with exceptional instrumental support, and once again I found the musicianship of Samir Siblini on *na'i* and Setrak Sarkassian on *tabla* especially irresistible. Oh yes – it was Fayrouz's birthday, and we did our part too at the end by singing "Happy Birthday to you."

Backstage after the concert, I spoke briefly with a drained but smiling and obviously pleased Fayrouz, a tiny woman, softer and more delicate-looking than she appears on stage or in photographs. I wished her happy birthday, congratulated her on an outstanding and memorable performance, and tried for a quick interview.

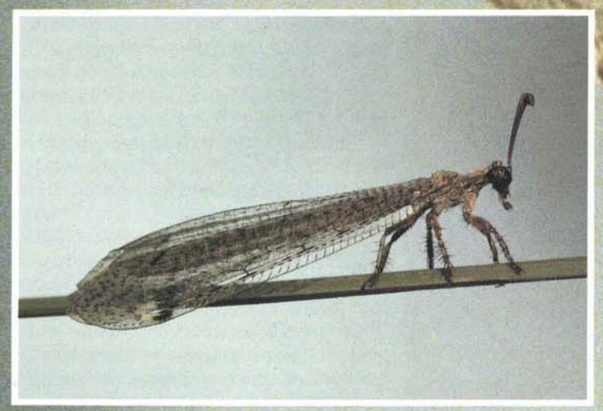
Fayrouz listened to my questions in English and then responded in Arabic, after which her brother, Joseph Haddad, interpreted. Did American audiences differ this time around? Yes, they were more emotional and showed an even greater love and appreciation than in 1971, making her try that much harder. Was it true that she admired Bob Dylan and Joan Baez? Yes (she grinned). When would she be returning to the States? I'm ready for the next performance now, she joked.

I'm ready for her next performance, too. Whenever and wherever it may be. I should add that I saw Bob Dylan for the first time about a month before the Fayrouz concerts. I've enjoyed his music for many years, and it was a great thrill to see the elusive and enigmatic Mr. Dylan in person. But it was an even greater thrill to *hear* Fayrouz, the Soul of Lebanon indeed.

Barry Hoberman, a free-lance writer specializing in Islamic history, studied at Duke University, Harvard and the University of Indiana.

The Arabian Lion

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY TORBEN B. LARSEN



The African lion, unfortunately, has been extinct in Arabia for the last 100 years, but there are still lions in Arabia. Admittedly they're tiny, but proportionately they are every bit as ferocious as the real thing – and a good deal smarter. They're called the ant-lions.

Known to scientists as *Myrmeleontidae,* in the order *Neuroptera,* the ant-lions are common throughout Arabia, but few people recognize them – and even fewer know of their unique life style.

Adult ant-lions resemble dragonflies, with four narrow, transparent wings. The largest are as large as the biggest dragonfly, while the smallest are no more than a few centimeters across the wings. Unlike dragonflies, however, they settle with the wings folded neatly along the back, except when alarmed; then they raise all four wings together. Closer investigation will show that the head has two prominent, clubbed antennae just like a butterfly's.

Adult ant-lions are often attracted to light and are regular visitors to the walls of a well-lit veranda. Though their flight is rather weak and fluttering, it suffices to bring males and females together so that they can mate; indeed, at the adult stage, the ant-lion seems to have no other purpose in life.

But why are they called ant-lions? Because, as larvae, the ant-lions are ferocious predators which feed almost exclusively on ants. Squat little creatures, with short legs, tough bodies and heads which carry impressive fangs, the ant-lion larvae live in soft sand where they trap ants in steep pits. With quick, powerful flicks of their heads and fangs, the ant-lion larvae throw sand, and even small stones, quite a long way, until the sides of the pit are so steep that ants stumble into them and slide to the bottom – where the ant-lions wait to seize them with powerful fangs.

Should the ant look as if it might be able to escape, the ant-lion has an extra trick up its sleeve. With the same sharp flicks of the head used for digging its trap, the ant-lion throws sand at the ant – forcing it to the bottom of the pit, where, once it is killed and sucked dry, it is unceremoniously thrown out of the pit just as quickly. How many ants an ant-lion eats as a larva is uncertain, but I am sure the number runs into the hundreds.

Since ant-lions live – literally – "in the pits," it's easy to spot them – not least because they usually live in little colonies in soft sand or dust; thus they are usually found in places sheltered from rain or excessive wind. Chances are that somewhere around any house in Arabia there will be ant-lions.

Ant-lions are particularly common in the dry zones of the world, and in their own modest way they are very successful. So successful, in fact, that it would have been strange if nature had allowed them to keep their hunting technique to themselves. And, as it happens, a small, obscure group of flies has developed the same technique, although the general shape of the fly larvae is very different. Probably the fly is also found in Arabia, though as yet there are no firm records.

The ant-lion's specialized and highly efficient life style is, of course, the result of evolution. The ant-lion, in fact, is a finely tuned result of a long evolutionary process that probably started with the largest of the Arabian species digging themselves into sand for protection while eating prey – and receiving an unexpected bonus. While digesting their previous prey, they would sometimes find additional victims accidentally stumbling into their pit. Since the pits provided food as well as protection, the ant-lions gradually developed the digging to the point where they no longer had to go hunting at all.

Torben B. Larsen writes regularly for Aramco World *on the entomology of the Arabian Peninsula.*

The Egyptian Revival

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILLIAM ROCKETT

William Bullock, England's answer to P.T. Barnum, shared with the Shakers, Mormons and other American idealists of the early 19th century a vision of utopias springing up across the new land. His would be "Hygeia," an Egyptian city that would rise upon the banks of the Ohio River as Aswan and Luxor blossomed upon the Nile thousands of years ago. Except for the shop and tearoom of a Mrs. Frances Trollope, erected in Cincinnati, across the Ohio from Hygeia's site, Bullock's dream went no further. Nevertheless, Trollope's "bizarre bazaar" has a small place in history. Designed by Seneca Palmer, it was one of the first of some 80 structures erected in America's first 75 years that have been designated "the Egyptian Revival."

Richard G. Carrott, professor of art history at the University of California at Riverside and author of *The Egyptian Revival* (University of California Press, 1978), got interested in the subject through two earlier outbreaks of Egyptomania in Europe. Wandering into the Church of St. Maurice in Vienne, France, Carrott was "struck by the magnificent pyramid monument by Michelange Slodtz," erected between 1740 and 1747. "Five minutes earlier," says Carrott, "I had noted the Roman pyramid in the nearby square," and the juxtaposition of two Egyptian revivals some 1,600 years apart prompted him to explore a little-known corner of the American Republic's early history: its own obsession with things Egyptian during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Like Europeans, most Americans today take for granted the Egyptian symbols and forms that are part of their own cultural and historical baggage. The Washington Monument is, after all, a classic obelisk as Egyptian in design – and even in purpose – as the "Cleopatra's needles" found in New York's Central Park, on the banks of the Thames in London or in Rome.

Then too, half the Great Seal of the Republic is decidedly Egyptian. Look at the back of a dollar bill: to the right is the familiar eagle gripping a banner reading: *E Pluribus, Unum* – "Out of Many, One." But on the other side? On the other side is a pyramid surmounted by a human eye, over the legend, *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (sic) – roughly, "The New Order of the Ages."

As they saw it, Americans were creating a new order, and that meant establishing a bit of instant credibility through association with an old one. "With a newly won national identity," says Carrott, "Americans sought to achieve an ancient past for their land."

In this, Americans weren't too different from the Romans who dreamed up Romulus and Remus, and a wolf to suckle them, as founders of the state, later improving upon that by crediting Aeneas with the job. Aeneas, the Roman story went, came from Troy – every bit as ancient and as refined a place as the Greek city states that Rome was busily conquering.

At right: Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts features a beautifully sculpted sphinx, a memorial to the Civil War dead.

In Newport, Rhode Island, architect Isaiah Rogers put up a clearly Egyptian gate and obelisks at Truro Cemetery.

Some American myth-makers found *their* Aeneas among Egyptian seafarers, who, they suggested, visited the shores of America, and left colonies long before Columbus or the Vikings. Robert Cary Long Jr., for example, an expert on Mayan ruins, believed the builders of pyramidal temples in Central America journeyed there from Egypt before the time of Cheops and the Great Pyramids at Giza. North America, of course, could boast no such ruins, but early Americans claimed a similar heritage anyway. "After all," says Professor Herb Kraft of Seton Hall University's Archeological Research Center on the North American Indians, "there are still . . . strange mounds, many of them pyramidal in shape, that dot the landscape in states like Ohio."

In the 19th century, these mounds fascinated American journalists. The *Washington Daily National Intelligencer* even compared the 1819 expedition led by American explorer Stephen H. Long – which explored the unknown lands between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains – with the "French expedition into Egypt. . . ."

"Although the Missouri is not embellished by such stupendous monuments of art as is the Nile, her Indian mounds afford matter for much interesting disquisition. . .", said the paper.

The French expedition referred to by The *Intelligencer* was the scholarly and scientific expedition that accompanied Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign in 1798 – and produced the 20-volume *Description de l'Egypte* (see *Aramco World*, March-April 1976), as well as a book by Vivant Denon, a young army officer with an interest in Egyptology, who later became director of the Louvre.

Denon's account – which gave almost equal time to the ancient land's artistic achievements – was entitled *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte pendant les Campagnes du General Bonaparte.* It appeared in Paris in 1802 and, just a year later, Arthur Aikin's English translation was published in New York. In it, Americans learned that, "Nothing is more simple and better put together than the few lines which compose this (Egyptian) architecture."

With that, and the publication of the first volume of *Description* – in 1809 – the Egyptian revival was triggered. Between them, Denon and Edmé Francois Jomard, editor of *Description,* provided American architects with the models they required to resurrect Egypt in America. William Blake urged England to build the New Jerusalem; men like John Haviland would encourage America to recreate Karnak.

Martin Milmore's sphinx seems at home in New England.

Mind you, William Bullock, though planning a new Egypt on the shores of the Ohio River, wasn't quite in the same category. Bullock was the owner-operator of The Egyptian Hall of Piccadilly in London, a showplace where Bullock, like Barnum in America, could thoroughly titillate the public for a small fee and call the experience educational. Where Barnum gave New Yorkers Tom Thumb and Gargantua, however, Bullock offered 32 stuffed sea lions and what the museum catalogue described as "an exquisite model in rice paste of the death of Voltaire" – as well as the inevitable "Egyptian mummy."

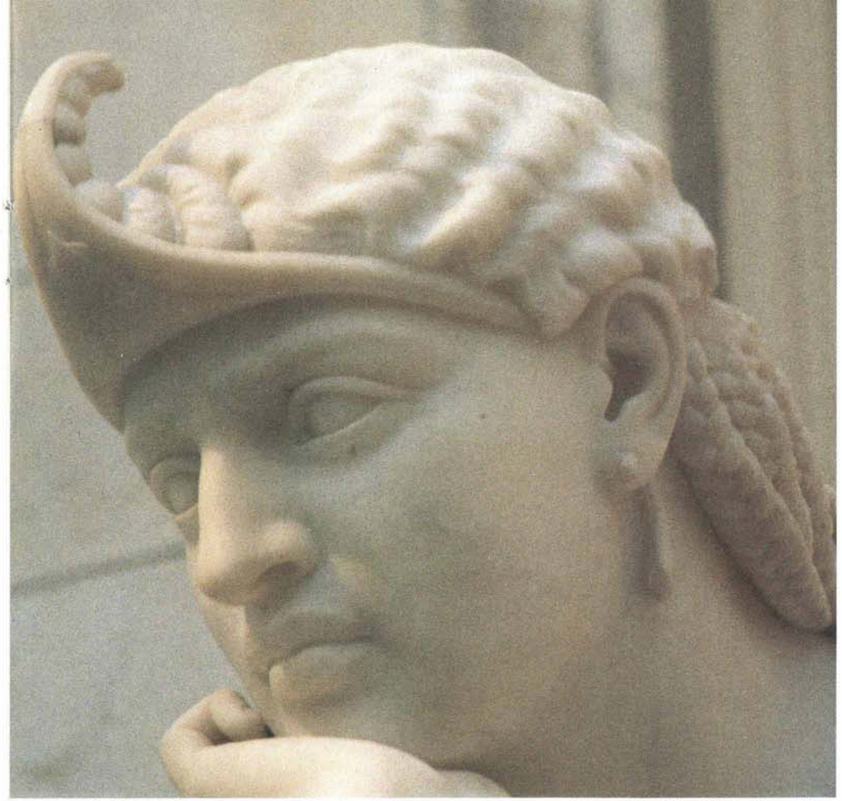
In search of new wonders for his Piccadilly emporium, Bullock, crossing to the New World in 1827, saw, and was taken with, Elmwood, a Palladian villa across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. As a result, he came up with the idea of "Hygeia" – a community taking its name from the Greek goddess of health – bought the villa, persuaded an architect to draw up plans for "Hygeia," wrote a book about his trip and returned to Cincinnati to await colonists.

Only one of any consequence came: Mrs. Frances Trollope, who arrived in 1828 with an extraordinary plan. She wanted to establish a bazaar where Cincinnati's 20,000 inhabitants might find what the city director called "every useful and useless article, in dress, in stationery, in light and ornamental household furniture, chinas and more pellucid porcelain, with every gew-gaw that can contribute to the splendor and attractiveness of the exhibition."

In addition, a saloon would provide ices and other refreshments which would "lend their allurements to the fascinations of architectural novelty" – i.e. Seneca Palmer's fantasia of Egypt and Arabia, muddled together in what must have seemed to the more sensitive the product of Arabian Nightmares.

This time it was Denon's account of the Temple of Edfu which gave an architect – Palmer – his lead, but the result was the same: what Professor Carrott calls "commercial picturesque," a vaguely Egyptian building in which Palmer mixed up lotus columns from Denon and arabesque windows to produce "Trollope's Folly," as it was later known.

Historian Clay Lancaster, in the now defunct *Magazine of Art,* says that Mrs. Trollope intended to "improve the taste of this commonsense population, who, she intended and fully expected, would ultimately look up to her with awe and admiration." But it was not to be. First the gas mains began to leak, so Mrs. Trollope had to resort to oil lamps for illumination. Then she contracted malaria, so she had to sell off, quickly, $10,000 worth of goods. She even tried staging plays, but nothing worked, so she returned to England, leaving the bazaar to be auctioned off. It became first the Ohio Mechanics' Institute, then later a "physico-medical institute," and was finally demolished in 1881.



At the Metropolitan Museum this Muse by a 19th-century sculptor suggests the extent of Egyptian influence then.

That fate, in fact, was shared by many of the major Egyptian Revival buildings in America, from the New Bedford railroad depot in Massachusetts to the most famous structure of them all, the prison-court complex of New York City, called "The Tombs." An example of the Egyptian Revival monument, "The Tombs" was also what Alexis de Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America,* described as the effort by "pious individuals" to ameliorate the condition of the American prisons.

In the first half of the 19th century, "reform" was a popular cause, and two systems were vying for acceptance: the "silent system," in use at Sing Sing in New York, and the "separate system" favored by the Quakers of Pennsylvania. Both were designed to afford each criminal time and privacy to dwell upon his sins, resolve to amend his life and prevent, as Carrott points out, "the contagion of criminal ideas between inmates. . . ."

Both concepts, however, required new buildings – with room for the prisoners to dwell upon their faults – and architect John Haviland, who owned the second edition of *Description,* chose Egypt as his model when he undertook the design of a prison for the State of New Jersey. It was, he said, "the first specimen in America" of real Egyptian Revival architecture.

Like Americans who lived upon the banks of the Mississippi – "The American Nile," they called it – the 19th-century inhabitants of New Jersey were already intrigued with Egypt – as any map would show. New Egypt, N.J., for example, is a stone's throw from Trenton, and is but one of numerous names, such as Memphis, (Tenn.), Thebes, Karnak and Cairo (Ill.) which reflect this fascination.

This interest, however, also took odd shapes – as G.W. Smith's 1833 disquisition, *A Defense of the System of Solitary Confinement,* suggests:

> The Egyptians were accustomed to bury alive in the dark, narrow and secluded cells of some of their vast and secure edifices, which at once served for prisons and for tombs, certain offenders against their laws. These unhappy victims, from the hour when they were immured, until the tedious period when death released them from their lingering misery, never beheld the light of day, never inhaled the fresh air of heaven, and never again beheld the face of man, or heard the consoling accents of his voice.

Although this seems a far cry from the hopes of the reform-minded Quakers – among whom Smith was numbered – it may shed light on the building of new prisons in the New World. As a recent report by Princeton's Heritage Foundation suggests, "One cannot help but wonder whether the inhumanity of the Egyptians was not somehow accepted and approved by the reformers as an image – an image which might assist the rehabilitation process inside the prison by literally scaring away potential criminals with an 'awesome' building." In any case, Haviland, presumably with his *Description de l'Egypte* in hand, promised the legislature he would "avoid useless ornament. . ." and drew the plans for the new prison: an imposing edifice of local sandstone which glowed pinkish-brown above the banks of the canal.

Save for the long, great wall and the corner towers that encircled the prison, little remains of the original today. Despite strong opposition from state and national historical trusts, a recent legislature demolished much of the old building to make way for the kind of pre-poured concrete pile that has become the wattle-and-daub of contemporary architecture. Gone are the winged disk over the main doorway, the hieroglyphed walls, the columns of sandstone taken from pictures of the Temple of Amenophis III on the Elephantine.

But it seems to have been a success. Haviland went on to build The Tombs for New York, and a courthouse and jail for Essex County in Newark; none has fared any better than the Trenton prison. The Tombs burned and the courthouse, a beautifully proportioned building that looks not at all out of place in the old photographs of horse-and-buggy Newark, has given way to a massive Greek-Revival temple.

Elsewhere, among the Egyptianized buildings still left, most are small in scale and two are decidedly quirky: the First Baptist Church of Essex, Connecticut, and the Whalers' Church of Sag Harbor, Long Island, both decidedly Protestant and conservative, yet clearly derived from Egyptian themes.

Dorothy Zaykowski, librarian of the Sag Harbor History Room of the town's public library and a member of the Presbyterian congregation, says the old Whalers' Church is part Egyptian but also contains motifs drawn from Corinthian and Chinese Pagoda. It even had, she said, "a Christopher Wren steeple that fell in the hurricane of 1938."

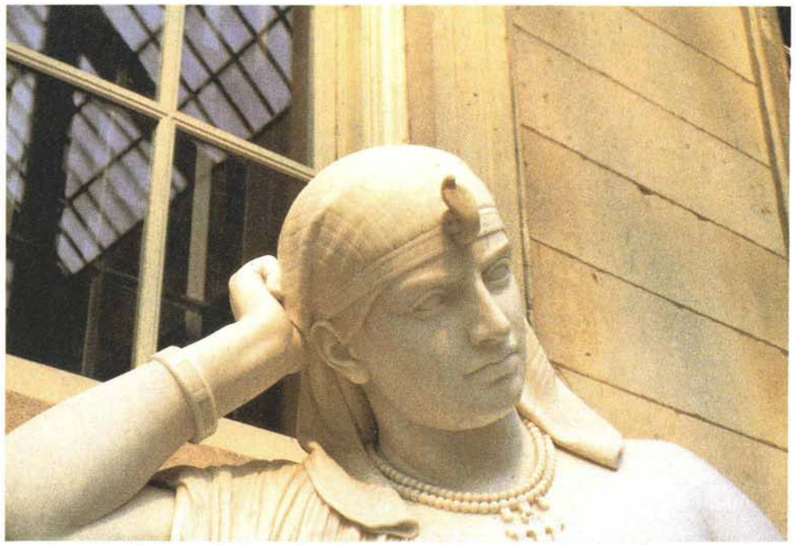
Both churches are in excellent condition, speaking well for the durability of Egyptian design – from granite and sandstone to lath and plaster is a remarkable evolutionary process – though the Essex church has also lost its steeple. Both buildings in fact resemble their Egyptian models more closely now than in former years.

An example of Egyptian impact: the Endicott's Mastaba.

But while these little congregations in Connecticut and Long Island welcomed churches with origins in ancient lands, some wild debates erupted in the 19th century over the application of Egyptian design to clearly the most logical purpose: the building of cemeteries.

The idea of the rural cemetery, like prison reform, was a novelty, brought about by hygiene as much as by esthetics – as medical men of the day encouraged alternatives to the cluttered foundations and churchyards of American cities. In addition, though, the cemeteries – like the cities of the dead across the Nile at Karnak – would provide the public with areas of green parkland.

The first great necropolis was Mount Auburn, established in 1831 under the joint auspices of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and Dr. Jacob Bigelow of Harvard University. It was Bigelow who designed the gateway and

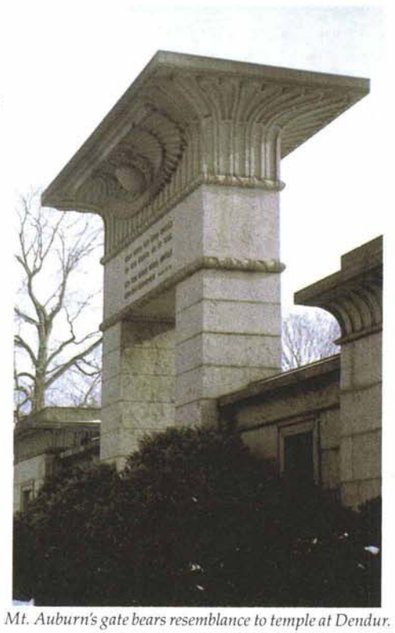


Another statue at the Metropolitan's American Wing, a replica of Cleopatra by an American 19th-century sculptor.

lodges, taking as his models "some of the best examples in Dendera and Karnak."

One old Massachusetts family – the Endicotts – went even further; they chose the ancient "*mastaba*" – in Egypt a tomb with sloping sides – as the architectural basis for their family crypt, while Martin Milmore's beautifully sculpted memorial to the Civil War dead, and the Yankee colonel who led them into battle, is an imposing sphinx – strangely at home among the bare trees and white snows of New England.

The erection of clearly Egyptian



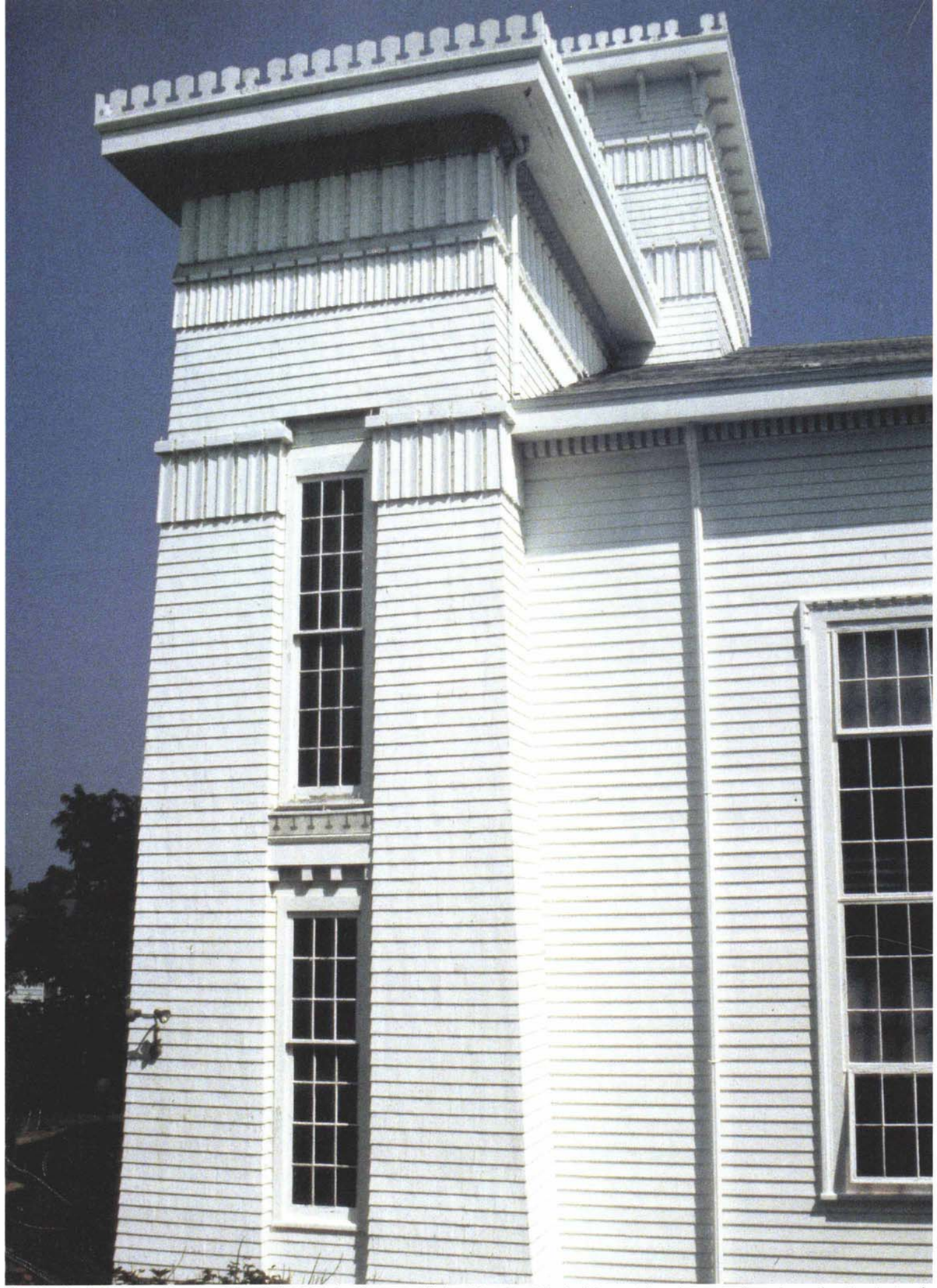
Mt. Auburn's gate bears resemblance to temple at Dendur.

cemetery gates spread as rapidly as the rural cemetery itself from New Orleans to Connecticut. Even urban churchyards were given an Egyptian flavor; in Boston Isaiah Rogers built a gate for the Old Granary Cemetery, burial site of the likes of Paul Revere and the Adams family. Rogers duplicated his gate of winged disk for the Touro Cemetery in Newport, Rhode Island, already home to an impressive family of Momma, Poppa and Baby Bear obelisks. At least 15 such gates were erected between 1830 and 1850 and C.W. Walter, an author, defended the practice in *Mount Auburn*. "The now mythologized doctrines of Egypt, seem to have been the original source of others more ennobling; and hieroglyphic discoveries have traced, and are tracing, them far beyond the era of the pyramids… to a pure, sacred and divine source… Egyptian symbols certainly present many sublime ideas. . . ."

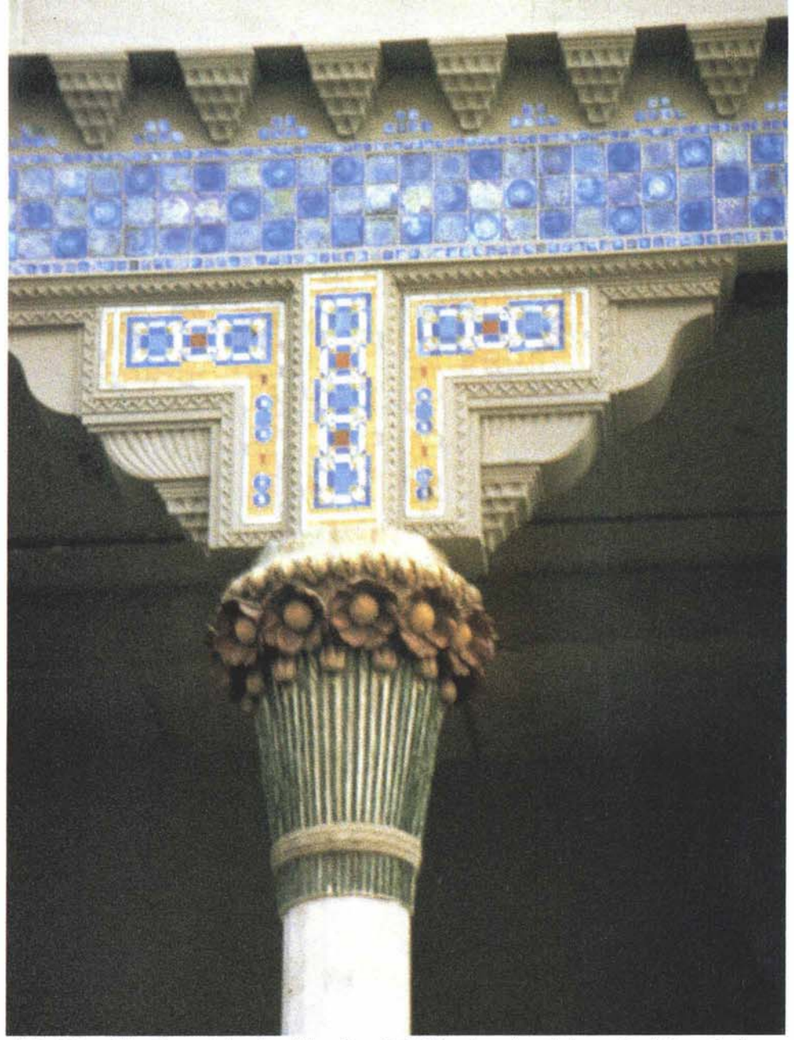
In the winged globe of Mount Auburn's gateway, Walter found "a most beautiful emblem of benign protection… We do not know of a more fitting emblem than this for the abode of the dead, which we may well suppose to be overshadowed with the protective wings of Him who is the great author of our being – the 'giver of life and death.'"

Yet even Walter's enthusiastic defense was not enough to stem the destruction of the Egyptian Revival's greatest monuments as its force in architecture

One of two odd churches on the East Coast, the Whalers Church, Sag Harbor, L.I. retains traces of the Egyptian theme built into its architecture during the "Egyptian Revival" in the U.S.A.

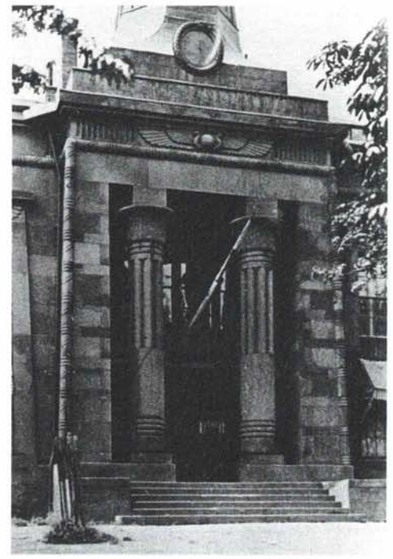


Though white clapboards are the essence of New England church architecture, this church is on Long Island and from certain angles suggests line and mass of an Egyptian temple.



At the Metropolitan Museum's American Wing, the capital of this column is an obvious replica of a Karnak column.

Prominent among "revival" works are: the Trenton Prison (above) and the Newark City Hall both by John Haviland.



ebbed. The world was entering an age of new courage in the arts, an age which would demand of architects as well as artists that they eschew the past in favor of the present or – better still – an as-yet-undefined future. Frank Lloyd Wright and Saarinen in architecture, Joyce and Proust in prose, Picasso and Klee in painting put much of the past behind them in order to free their own imaginations.

Yet the Egyptian still survives in American and European contemporary architecture. One need go no further than Kevin Roche's pyramids for College Life Insurance headquarters in Indianapolis, or James Stirling's history building at Cambridge University. Architects like Leon Krier are calling for a return to "urban classicism," demanding that we not dump the past, but save and reconstruct "civilized society."

As the Smithsonian Institution's Farouk El-Baz has pointed out, Egyptian buildings may have survived as long as they have because they actually imitate the sculpture of the wind and sand of the desert – they echo natural formations found throughout Egypt. Given the Egyptians' original source, it is little wonder that successive generations of builders – Greek, Roman, Renaissance Europeans, 19th-century Americans, 20th-century Internationalists – have met with great success in returning to the shapes and forms and symbols Walter called "pure, sacred and divine."

William Rockett is an instructor at Rutgers University, a reporter and a freelance writer. He specializes in art and architecture.

From ancient Egypt came... THE HIDDEN POWER

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN FEENEY

THE HIDDEN POWER

Far from the noise and dust of Cairo, the Habib Gorgi Museum, a small, gray-domed Egyptian house, stands amid palms and open fields – remote, almost unknown, yet unique. For the Habib Gorgi Museum houses a collection of sculpture lovingly created by young, superbly talented Egyptian children, and shaped, not from granite or limestone, like Egypt's ancient sculpture, but from another substance vital to the country's history: mud.

When you think of "Egypt" you may well think of sand – the Sinai desert, for example, stretching off toward the east. But for thousands of years Egypt's most precious element was its mud: the tons of rich black mud carried into Egypt by the Nile to carpet its fields and enrich its farms every year in the annual miracle of the Nile Flood. Indeed, in ancient times Egypt was known as the land of *kamt* or *quemt,* meaning "black" or "dusky."

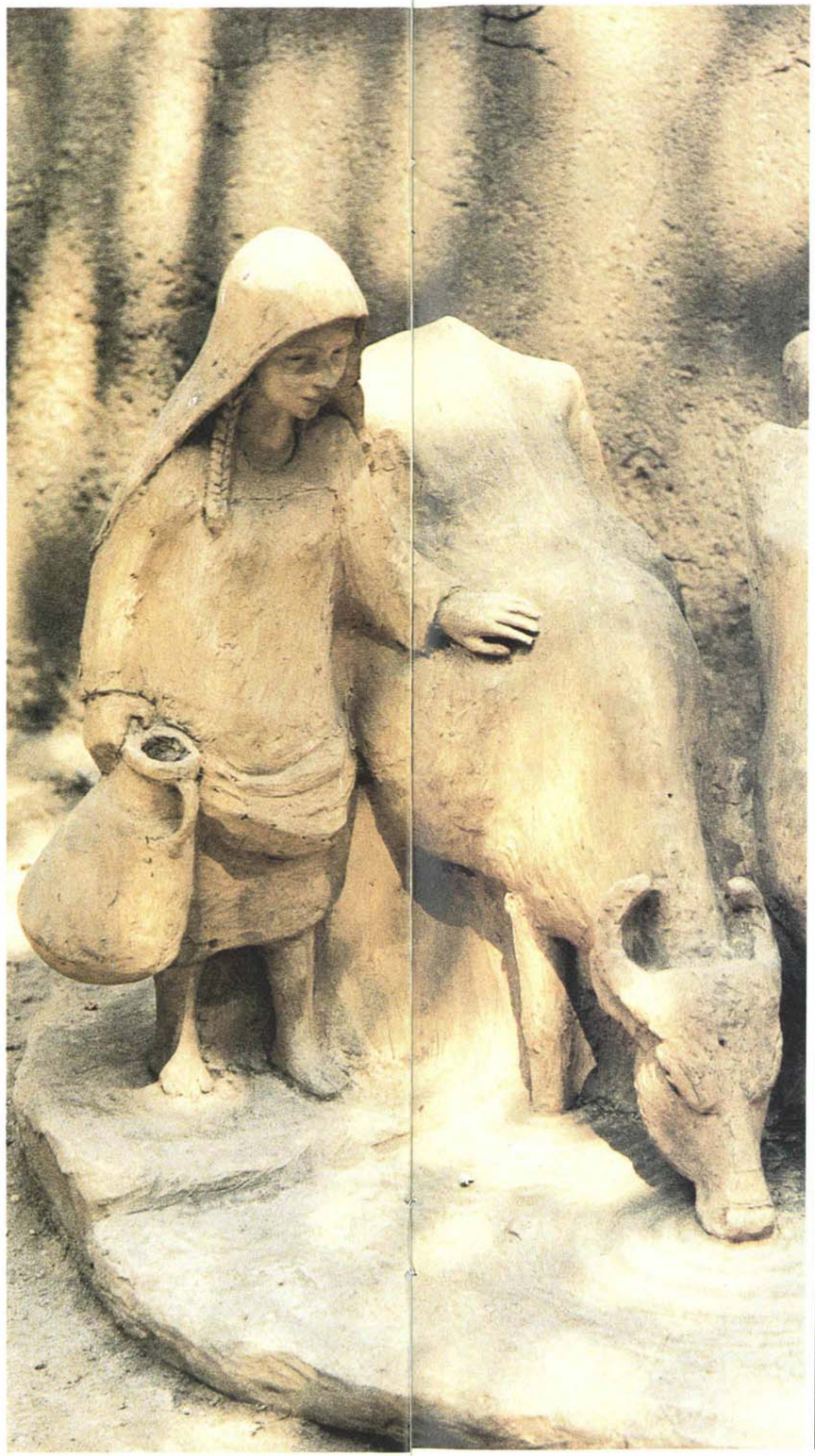
In one sense, therefore, mud, the essence of Egypt, was the logical material to choose when Habib Gorgi, the Chief Inspector of Art in the Egyptian Ministry of Education, launched an experiment in sculpture to find, according to one source, "traces of Egypt's ancient skills in the souls of today's children." "In every human being there is a hidden power of creation," Gorgi would say. "Nothing can destroy it. It has been with people since the beginning of time. It is like water and keeps on returning with each generation."

Habib Gorgi was the first to admit that this was an unorthodox view. He knew too that it would never be accepted in Egypt's school system; he was part of that system himself, after all. But he held to it firmly and in 1936 opened a studio in his home to prove it.

Even then, before his pupils had begun to turn out their sculpture, Habib Gorgi was said to possess a rare gift for understanding children on their own terms. "Inside us all, we know without knowing," he used to say. "We must just learn how to open the door."

Aided by his wife, he tried to open such doors – by opening the door of his own home. Choosing 10 children – there were never more than 10 at any one time – he set to work creating what he called "the right atmosphere." "We used to all sit on the floor in one big room," one said later. "We sang songs, and though most of us were very poor we forgot and were happy."

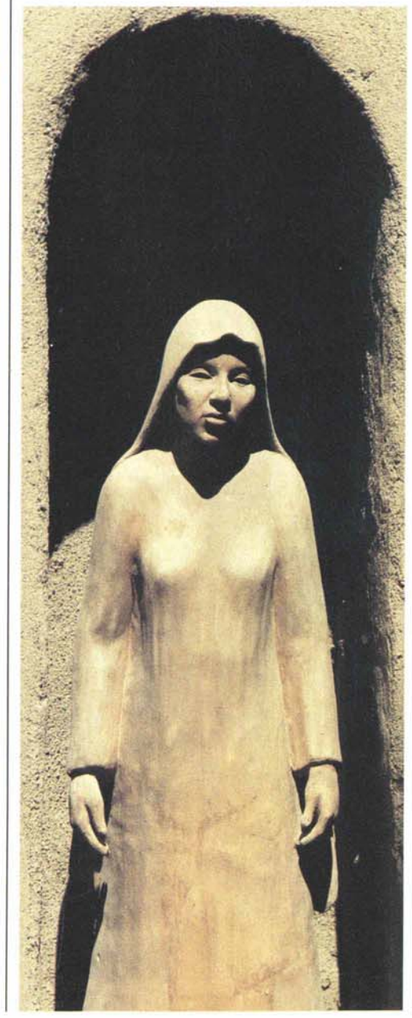
As part of his theory, Habib Gorgi thought it likely that traces of ancient skills would be more apt to exist among the children of the very poor – whose way of life had undergone little change since the time of the building of the pyramids; people like Sayeda Missac from Embaba.

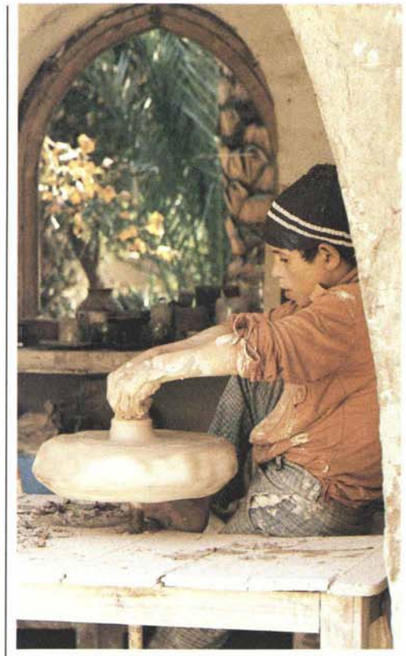


Above: Sayeda Missac, with one of her "people." Center: A small figure of girl and gamousa *by a student called Yahia. Right: A "tired woman" by Sayeda. Far right, above: A boy shapes a clay pot as Sayeda did 30 years ago.*

In those days, Sayeda Missac, eight years old, and her numerous brothers and sisters, lived mostly by their wits in one of the poorest districts of Cairo. From the first, however, Sayeda responded eagerly to the experiment. She delighted in making small pictures in relief, a kind of wall panel about 16 by eight inches, showing the crowded bazaars and the haggling merchants selling chickens and rabbits in the teeming district she knew so well. Every so often, it is true, she would unexpectedly leave the house and go back to the excitement of the crowded streets of Embaba, but each time she left, she would return and work harder than ever. Her focus was on what she called her "people," usually traditional mother-figures wearing the traditional Egyptian cowl.

Another talent was discovered in Yahia Abu Serer. Yahia, who tended to keep apart from the others, lived in a pastoral



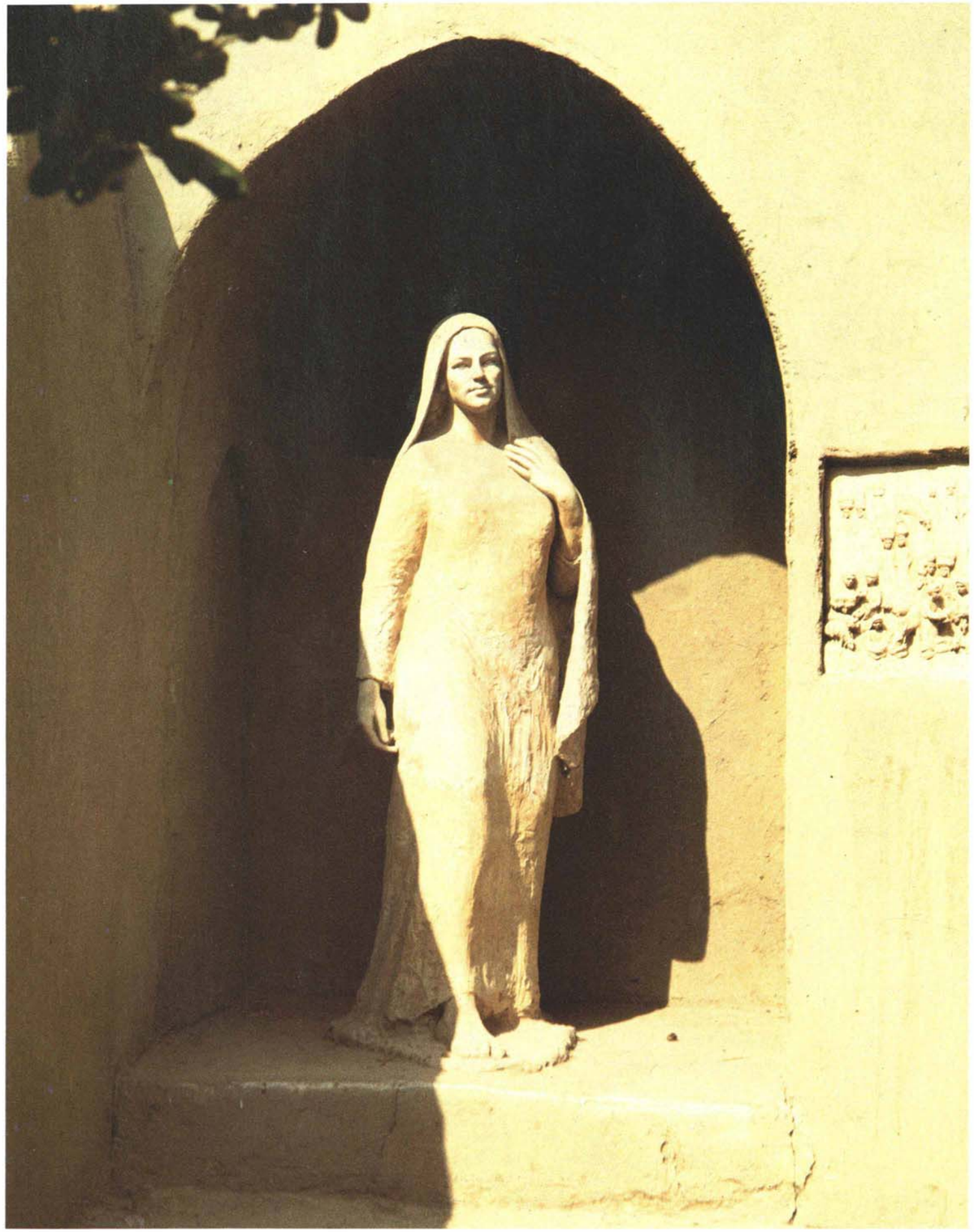


world of his own and devoted all his time to sculpting animals. All the animals in the museum, in fact, are his work and some of his finest pieces are of boys driving cattle to drink from, and bathe in, the Nile.

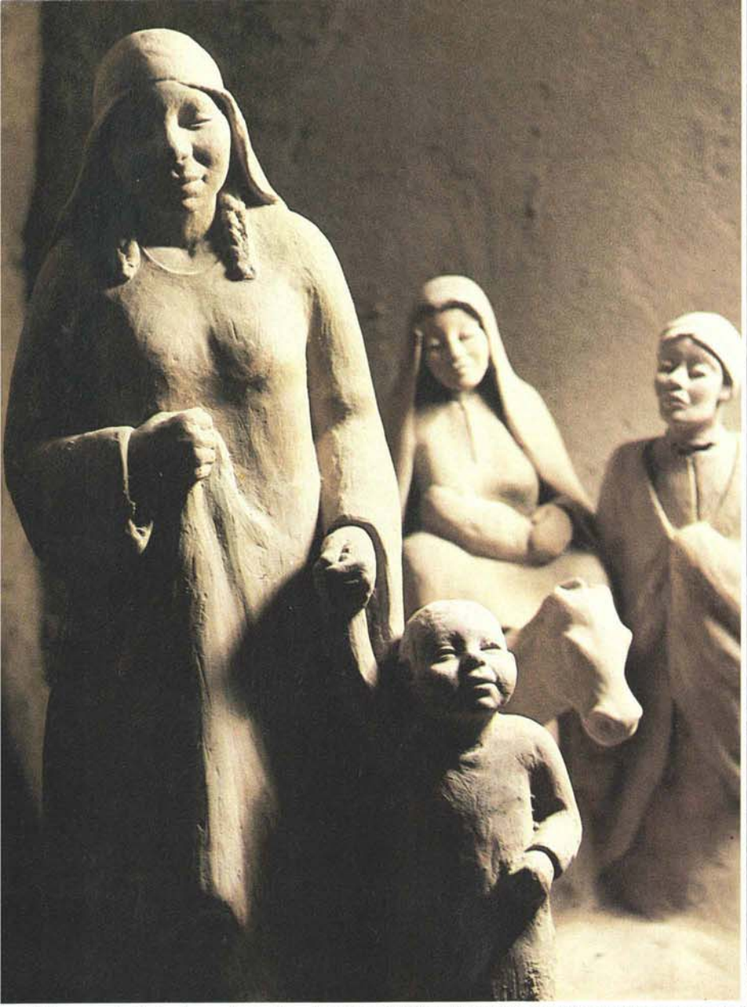
Yahia is typical of the children who came to Habib's studio. He came at 12 and was still there 13 years later when, as an adult, he went on a month's visit to Luxor. Entranced by the paintings and engravings he saw there in the tomb, he returned to work at a feverish pace. During this period, Yahia, using only his small penknife, patiently worked for months on panels, each no more than 18 by nine inches, carving out delicate reliefs of animals moving through the Nile marshes. About this time, sadly, he lost two fingers and had to finish his last panel without them.

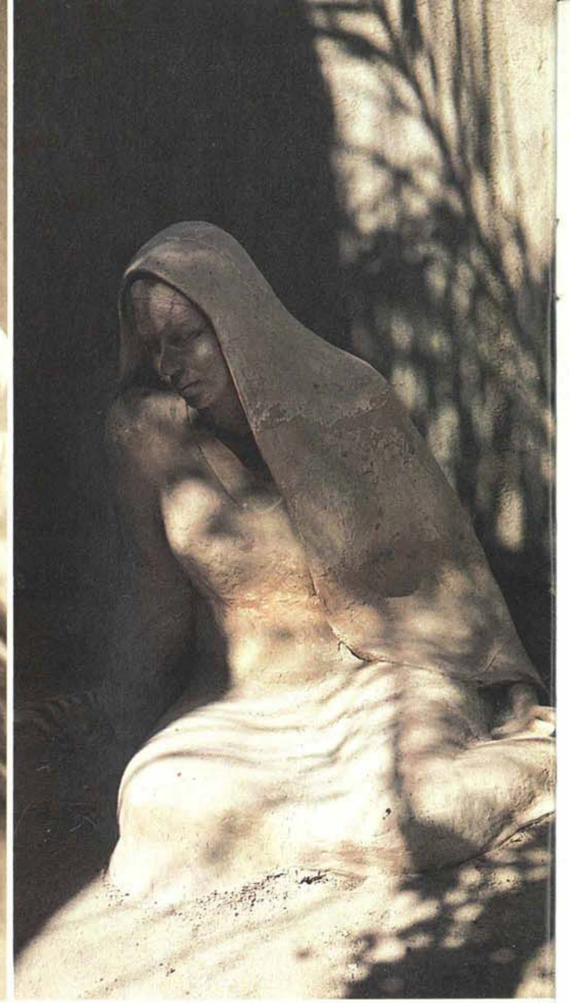
Sayeda, too, went on working long after childhood. At 28, in fact, she starred in a film on the sculpture of one of her almost life-size "mothers" from start to finish – a documentary called *From the Depths of the Mud.*

Always daring, Sayeda was the only one of the child sculptors to attempt life-size forms, and her "beautiful lady" – the figure of a hauntingly beautiful Egyptian peasant lady sitting on the ground – is the only sculpture in the collection in bronze. Cast under the auspices of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, this figure was later placed in a small public garden in Alexandria, and is an attraction there to this day.

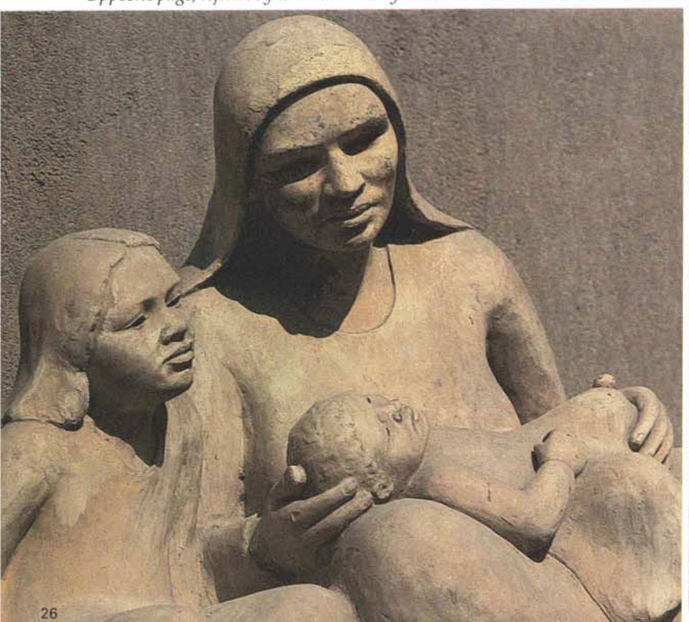


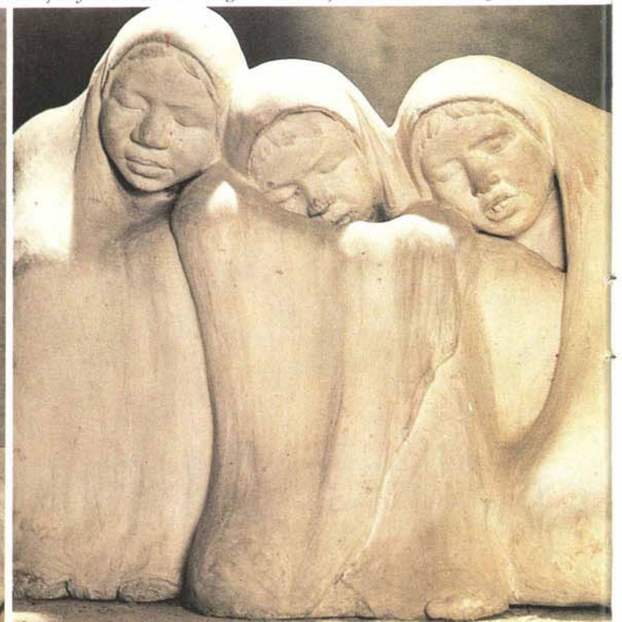
At left: Sayeda Missac's "Standing Woman," in courtyard. Above: Hahia Abou Serea's panel of mother and daughter leading livestock to the field. Below: Badour's "Bride with women."



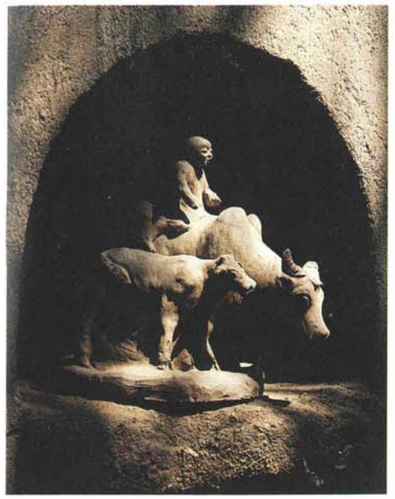


This page, clockwise from above: Sayeda Missac's "Flight"; her life sized "Lady," the only one to be cast; "Mother, daughter and baby" and Badour's "Sleeping women." Opposite page, left: a boy with animals by Yahia in museum niche. Center: another of Sayeda's "Mothers." Right: A view of the museum's courtyard.





After nearly 30 years, the young sculptors have grown up – and most have gone. But their work remains. This is because Habib Gorgi, to the day he died, refused to sell any of his children's work.



The success of his experiment, he suggested, was enough.

"Money comes and money goes," he said, "but this work in mud will always give pleasure to everyone who sees it. Why sell it?" Instead, the sculpture went into a museum – a museum built of mud by Ramses Wissa Wassif, Habib Gorgi's son-in-law and his wife, Sophie.

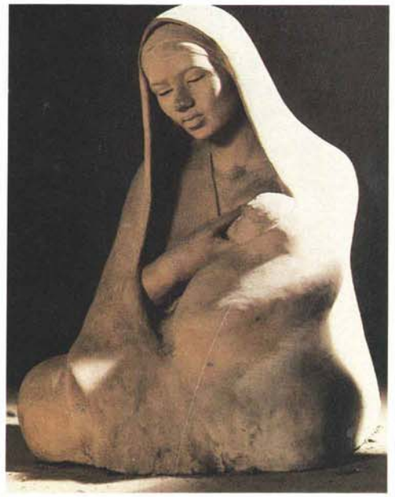
Like the sculpture, the museum itself is unusual. Built at Haraniya, on the road that leads to the Step Pyramid at Sakkara, it reflects the views of an accomplished if unorthodox architect. Ramses, for example, always believed that in building a house you should "use what lies under your feet" – and so built the museum out of clay pisé, a mixture of rammed mud and a little sand. The total cost was just 800 Egyptian pounds ($975).

In planning the building, Ramses, now dead, instinctively drew on his knowledge of mud-brick Nubian architecture, which, he said, "is best for our Egyptian climate." Before starting to build, he also studied the angles of the sun for a whole winter and summer to find out how light might best enter – or not enter – all year round; in Egypt it is often just as important to keep the intense sunlight out as it is to let it in. He also studied the prevailing breezes to gauge how best to cool the house.

Like the mud it is made of, the museum is a humble place. But it is also lovely. On one wall of a sunlit courtyard are Sayeda's early market scenes of Embaba – the bazaars and the teeming crowds in the district where she was born. In tall arched niches open to the sun, so that shadows continually move about them, stand Sayeda's veiled Egyptian ladies. Intensely real, they seem to pause in some household task as if to speak. In a dark passageway you'll find the limestone panels carved by Yahia after visiting the tombs in Upper Egypt; as you might expect, they are lit by just enough reflected outside light. Yahia is also represented by a group of his beloved "parched water buffalo in search of water," only 10 inches high, one startlingly real on a ledge set against the glare of the open sky.

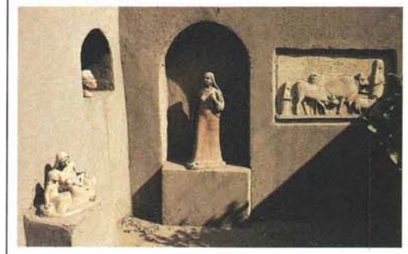
The *chef d'oeuvre,* however, may well be in a small courtyard, where, suddenly, there she is, sitting in the shade on the bare dusty ground as in any Egyptian village, the shadows of a live date palm moving about her: Sayeda's "beautiful lady," whose bronze replica delights many visitors to her garden in Alexandria.

In this same courtyard of shadows, set in a wall niche, is a 12-inch statue of a boy riding a water buffalo molded by Yahia when he was 15. Just below the niche, sitting on a mud platform, there's a larger group of women and their animals beside the Nile, work created by Yahia 20 years later.



Leaving the sunlit courtyards, you enter the cool darkness of two lofty, Nubian-arched galleries. Here, there is a profusion of small sculptures bathed in pools of soft filtered sunlight, skillfully angled in through the thick mud walls. After the intense light in the courtyards these ghostly figures, appearing in the semi-darkness, seem to belong in some strange dream: a boy leading his blind father, Semira Hosny's "gossiping village women," Badour's "cold and sleeping forms" huddled together for warmth – all the vivid thoughts of children given form in mud long ago.

The mud they used did not, in fact, come from the Nile; it came from a site near Aswan. When the sculptures were complete they were fired in a kiln to give strength. Even so, they remain quite brittle and can be broken easily. One day, it is hoped, funds will be available to cast the main treasures of the museum in bronze to preserve them, as Habib Gorgi hoped, "for all to see."



But though the sculptures remained, the sculptors – sadly – did not. Despite the obvious talent required to create such delights out of mud, most of Habib Gorgi's protegés never continued with their art. Even Yahia, was enticed away – to work for a local fabric maker – and soon lost "the hidden power" that Gorgi's experiment had drawn forth. Recently, for example, Yahia, now 46 years old, returned for an afternoon's talk and, on looking around at what he had created, said, somewhat sadly, that it was all over for him. "I can no longer do things like this."

With one exception, the girls also went away – to marry, never to sculpt again. The exception was Sayeda, who, as a young girl, was always disappearing, then returning. Eventually she vanished, apparently for good. But a few months ago, the indefatigable Sayeda, after 15 years, returned one more time – to work, as in the old days, "in the right atmosphere." She also returned, she said, to the things she does best, rather than what she had been doing these past years: commercial sculpture for tourists.

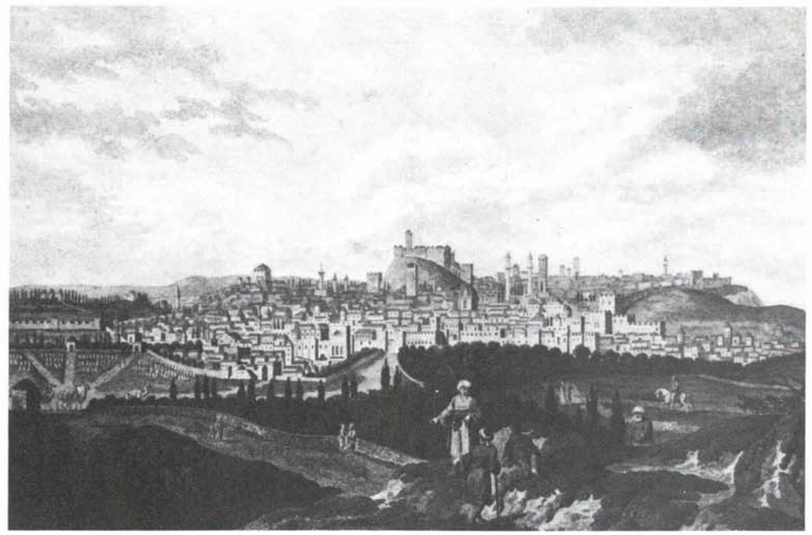
Of all the children found and taught by Habib Gorgi then, Sayeda alone has become a sculptor. She has, in fact, been sculpting in mud for nearly 50 years. Now 57, but still flashing a youthful, impish smile, Sayeda pounds clay as if she were kneading dough and can, with a scowl, ruthlessly smash a figure diligently kneaded, and patiently coaxed and smoothed.

"Why Sayeda? What went wrong? That was good!" "No," Sayeda says, "she did not answer me."

John Feeney, writer, photographer and film producer, writes regularly for Aramco World *from Cairo.*

The Russells of Aleppo

WRITTEN BY JOHN MUNRO. PHOTOGRAPHED BY KATRINA THOMAS



Travel writers are a curious breed. Though they profess to tell of foreign peoples and places, they frequently provide much closer insights into their own backgrounds.

There are, however, refreshing exceptions, and among them are the brothers Russell – Alexander and Patrick – whose weighty treatise, entitled *The Natural History of Aleppo,* stands as a monument of objectivity at a time when Europeans had little interest in, and less understanding of, the Muslim faith and the lands where it was practiced.

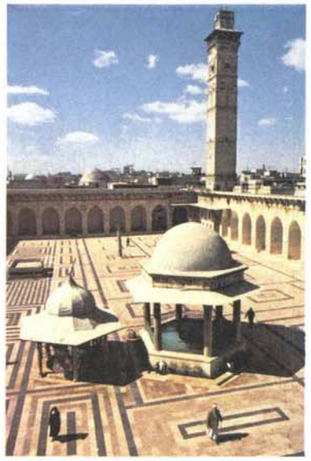
The Natural History of Aleppo was the result of the Russells' long residence in the city. Alexander was there from 1740 to 1753 and Patrick from 1750 to 1768 while they were physicians with the Levant Company, a firm of British traders operating in the Ottoman Empire. Its main factory was in Constantinople (today's Istanbul) with depots at Smyrna (modern Izmir) and Aleppo (in today's Syria); Aleppo, in fact, was the main entrepôt for the silk trade between England and Iran.

Generally speaking, a tour of duty with the Levant Company in the Ottoman Empire was unpleasant. As one example, foreigners in a lawsuit were not permitted to introduce evidence against an Ottoman subject. In addition, they had to tolerate restrictions on their movements and until the 19th century even European ambassadors were introduced formally to the Sultan as "naked and hungry barbarians," who had ventured "to rub the brow of the Sublime Porte."

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that European attitudes were frequently hostile. Henry Maundrell, for example, who was appointed chaplain to the Levant Company in Aleppo in 1695, and later wrote *A Journey From Aleppo to Jerusalem in 1697* (See *Aramco World,* July-August 1964), reveals little sympathy for Oriental ways as well as an almost total ignorance of the Islamic faith.

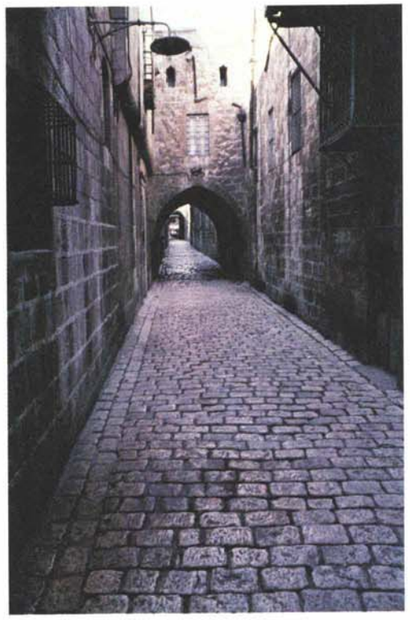
The Russells, however, were different. Possibly because they were physicians rather than traders, they approached their material as dispassionate, empirical investigators and tried to view their subject systematically and scientifically, rather than emotionally.

The Russells' account – which appeared in two volumes – was begun by Alexander shortly after his arrival in 1740, and bears his name as an author. Volume I is devoted to a description of the city and its inhabitants and Volume II is concerned mainly with natural history, monuments, culture, customs and – because they were physicians – common diseases. It included a vivid description of the effects of smallpox and – even more interesting – a suggestion that the Arabs, rather than the Turks or Edward Jenner, discovered vaccination



Inelegant as the Aleppo gardens may appear to the cultivated taste of an European, they afford a voluptuous noontide retreat to the languid traveller. Even he, whose immagination can recal (sic) the enchanting scenery of Richmond or of Stow, may perhaps experience new pleasure in viewing the glistening (sic) pomegranate-thickets, in full blossom. Revived by the freshning breeze, the purling of the brooks, and the vendure of the groves, his ear will catch the melody of the nightingale, delightful beyond what is heard in England; with conscious gratitude to heaven, he will recline on the simple mat, bless the hospitable shelter, and perhaps, while indulging the pensive mood, he will regret the absence of British refinement in gardening.

— Vol. 1, pps 49-50



against this most virulent and infectious disease (See *Aramco World*, July-August 1980).

This suggestion was originally put forth by Patrick in a letter to Alexander in 1767, by which time Alexander had returned to London. In this letter Patrick related that he had been describing vaccination to some Turks in 1757 when a Bedouin woman, who had overheard him, suddenly said that "the practice was well known to the Arabs."

Intrigued by this, Russell went on, he tried to trace the origins of vaccination and found that Arabs "70 years old and upwards" remembered it as "a common custom of their ancestors and made little doubt of its being of as ancient a date as the disease itself."

Pursuing the subject, Russell discovered that Bedouins who had settled in cities no longer practiced vaccination, but that Bedouins in "the adjacent desert" still did. He also discovered, by questioning Arabs who came to Aleppo in caravans, that vaccination was known throughout the Arab world. It would appear, he wrote, that inoculation has "from time immemorial been a practice among the different Arab

tribes with which they were conversant; comprehending, besides those in the numerous encampments on the banks of the Euphrates, and the Tigris below Bagdad, other tribes in the vicinity of Bassora, and in the desert."

Furthermore, he continued, "a native of Mecca, whom I had occasion to converse with this summer, assured me, that he himself had been inoculated in that city." Apparently the custom was also well established in the Arabian Peninsula, in Armenia and in Georgia, and Arabs generally took the "operation" for granted.

From all of these things Russell concluded that the practice was of long standing in the Arab world and that it was only surprising that it had not reached the West earlier.

The same spirit of dispassionate observation infuses their opinions of non-medical subjects. In describing the city of Aleppo, for example, the Russells are at once objective and enthusiastic. They write that "in situation, magnitude, population and opulence, it is much inferior to Constantinople and Cairo, nor can it presume to emulate the courtly splendour of either of those cities." But, they add, the air was salubrious, the buildings elegant and the streets neat and convenient, thus making Aleppo superior to the two more famous centers.

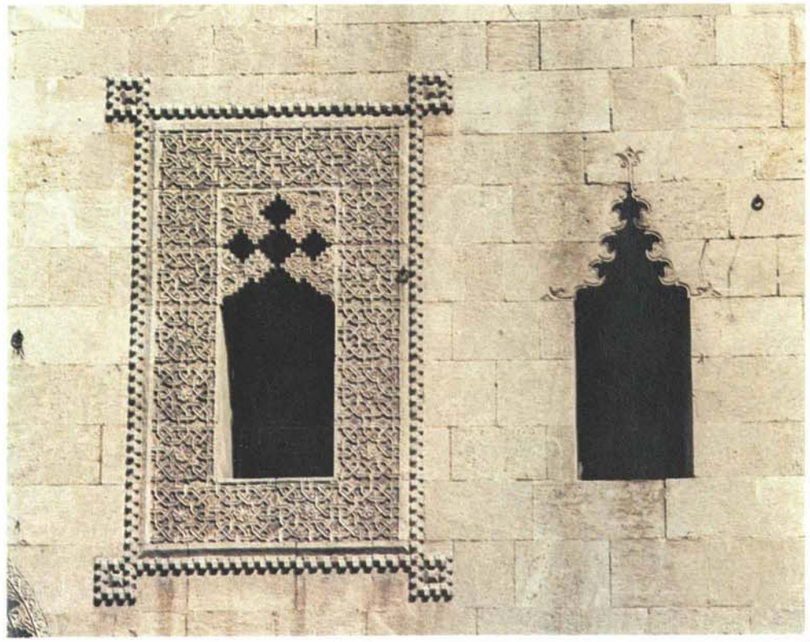
They do not fail either to point out that Aleppo is very picturesque. "The mosques, the minarets, and numerous cupolas form a splendid spectacle, and the flat roofs of the houses which are situated on the hills, rising one behind another, present a succession of hanging terraces, interspersed with cypress and poplar trees."

Unlike many observers, who saw only the exteriors of the houses of Aleppo – not especially impressive – the Russells penetrated the unadorned facades and latticed windows to find an opulent and orderly world and to describe it enthusiastically. They dwell, for example, upon the water-cooled pavements of the more splendid houses, describe the reception halls, typically domed and supported by arches of varicolored marble, and containing niches which housed china bowls, decorative silver utensils or pieces of crystal. They describe the gaily decorated walls and ceilings – "painted in lively colors inter-

The coffee-houses... attract the notice of a stranger... They are found in all quarters of the town, and some of them are spacious and handsome. They are gaudily painted, and furnished with matted platforms and benches; those of the better sort have a fountain in the middle, with a gallery for musicians.

— Vol. 1, page 23

They also go into great detail about the clothes worn by women. Their trousers, we are told, are made of "silk or India stuff, and pursed at the ankle with a riband." Their "shift is of fine silk gauze, hanging down to the feet, under the *kunbaz* and over the *Gintian* [trousers]. Their Cinctures are three inches broad, richly embroidered, and fastened before by a large gilt clasp, set with pearls or precious stones."



mixed with gilding and richly varnished" – and the courtyard arbors, "formed of slight latticed frames, covered by the vine, the rose or the jasmine."

They include too descriptions of such familiar institutions as the coffee house, as well as such spectacles as puppet shows and public story-tellers. The former, say the Russells, were less like dramas than pageants, interspersed with satire relating to local government officials and their policies, with the story-tellers sometimes breaking off in the middle of their stories, leaving listeners to speculate upon the probable outcome until the next day.

In their observations of daily Aleppan life, the authors pay scrupulous attention to detail, noting, for example, how the different classes of society could be readily distinguished by their different dress: the *grand seigneur* in his three-furred garment; the less prominent clad in "a camelot gown with large sleeves; laced down the seams with narrow gold lace," the very poor dressed in single garments made from fox-skins.

The streets are better disposed, and some of them much broader than usual in the East; they are well paved, and remarkably clean, with a commodius footway, on each side, raised half a foot above the rest.

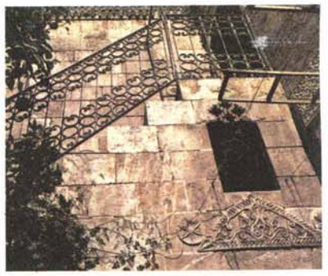
— Vol. 1, page 15

That the Russells were able to describe the Aleppan ladies' dress in such detail was, no doubt, partly due to the fact that as physicians they had access to places where other men did not, as for example the baths and the women's quarters. In this regard the Russells – unlike most writers then and since – clearly pointed out that the erotic visions imagined by westerners were almost totally at variance with eastern reality.

In describing the harem, for example, the Russells calmly point out that the Aleppan women enjoyed much greater freedom than is generally supposed in the West, and, more to the point, that their confinement was often self-imposed, in

The natives of every denomination observe very regular hours. They rise with the Sun, and usually are in bed between nine and ten at night. Most of them lye (sic) down for an hour after dinner. Business is transacted between breakfast and five in the afternoon. The Merchants commonly dine in their apartments in the Khanes; some have victuals sent from their own kitchen, but many content themselves with bread, cheese, and fruit, or perhaps a Kabab from the Bazar. Their chief repast is supper, at their own houses; after which, many of the ordinary people go to the coffee house, where they pass the time till evening prayer, and then retire. People of rank sometimes visit after supper, but seldom are seen abroad later than ten o'clock.

— Vol. 1, pages 143-4



accordance with "their notion of female honour and delicacy."

The Russells' impartial treatment extends to Islam in general. They point out, for example, that while Muslims might criticize Christians and Jews, they rarely mistreated them:

> Notwithstanding the contemptuous light in which the Turks view all other religions, they permit liberty of conscience in their dominions, and tolerate the public exercise of the Christian and Jewish religions, with their respective rites and ceremonies. The different monks dressed in their respective habits, go freely about their functions, and, at funeral processions, elevate the cross, the moment they get without the city gate.

On the other hand, the Russells also noted that little attention was given to science or scientific investigation. Reflecting their 18th-century, empirical training, the Russells note that the educated classes in Aleppo grow up "strangers to experiment" and rely instead on "what is found in books, and almost every fact, and every opinion for which they can produce written authority, is held to be true." Thus, "of the faculties given them by nature, memory alone is exercised; the others rust from inaction."

The Russells were also critical of the local Ottoman administration. Yet even here they took pains to be fair, pointing out that the Ottomans were really no different from the European aristocracy. In other words, the Turks, in the Russells' eyes, were probably no better and no worse than other human beings. The authors did not view them from the vantage point of a supposedly superior civilization. They saw them as people whose ways were different from those of the West, but not necessarily the worse for that – a lack of prejudice which makes their narrative refreshingly different from those of other travelers, who often seem to have been more intent on seeing a reflection of their own preconceived ideas in the places they visited.

In *The Natural History of Aleppo,* therefore, the Russells left what appears to be a historically accurate picture of that city as it was in the 18th century. While some readers may find the Russells' account occasionally prosaic and at times inelegantly written, it provides both an important record of a bygone age and a good example of the impartial inquiry typical of the European Enlightenment.

John Munro, a regular contributor to Aramco World, *teaches English at the American University of Beirut.*