

Once upon a time, years and years before 1881, a goat belonging to Ahmed had strayed away from its herd into the alcoves of the mountain of Al-Deir Al-Bahari in Luxor, Egypt. It walked and walked in crippling fear until it fell down a long dark tunnel and was unable to move. When Ahmed followed the screaming calls of his lost goat, he was led to a set of vertical shafts that honeycombed the cliffs of the mountain. As he cursed the goat, he descended down after it to find himself in a tight corridor, heavily inlaid with dark shapes. As soon as he lit a candle, the shapes glittered like ancient jewels revealing a collection of dusty wooden coffins, stretching out like the sea, as far as he could see, like waves stacking upon one another. Ahmed saw Royal cobras, cartouches inscribed on coffin lids, shabtis, canopic jars, heaps and heaps of funerary equipment. Ahmed's eyes lit up and widened in surprise and admiration. He realized: this was a royal find.

This comic accident marked the starting point of the legend of the family of Abdel Rassoul. From this moment onwards, Ahmed Abdel Rassoul and his two brothers, members of an Upper-Egyptian clan from the village of Gourna, became the secret owners of the first royal cache tomb ever to be found in Luxor. And as a consequence, they also became the owners of the largest illicit antiquities trade in the country, which they continued as an extended private family business.

In the movie *Al-Mummia*, or *The Night of Counting the Years* (1969), Egyptian director Chadi Abdel Salam portrayed the descent of a second intruder into the hidden tomb (fig. 1). In 1881, one year before the British colonial rule over the country, the son of Ahmed Abdel Rassoul paved the way for new invaders. By doing so, he betrayed his family's legacy, reporting the secret location of the treasure to the foreign antiquities service in Cairo.¹ The Affandeyya of the city broke through the rocky way on horses, while the mountain family hid within the same alcoves that had once led them to their unexpected prize.² They witnessed in grief their processional end, silently passing over their felony to the other thief.³

In his movie, Chadi Abdel Salam represents Wanis, the subaltern, as the central protagonist, problematizing the standard ethics of the field of archaeology by questioning issues of ownership and protection. He chose to narrate the story from the position of the internal confusion of a hidden, suppressed, and ashamed local trader. Even though the clan itself has a strong form of unofficial power, the image of Wanis is that of a true form of questioning. Abdel Salam

Stranger than Dracula

More Fantastic than Frankenstein

More mysterious than the Invisible Man

Not quite human, not quite corpse

It shall awaken memories of love and crime and death⁴



fig. 1 Screenshot from *The Night of Counting the Years*, dir. Chadi Abdel Salam, Egypt: General Egyptian Cinema Organisation & Merchant Ivory Productions, 1969.

represents the archaeological site as a place where theft continuously operates and where a subliminal search for identity is practiced; an arena of failing to find a sense of identity without voluntarily losing it to either one of the constructed scales and forms of nationalism. Unlike his family, Wanis did not perceive the artefacts as goods, nor did he exoticize them as objects of historical and cultural relevance. He did, however, look at them as some means of belonging, since he was forced not to find a sense of community within his family after discovering their business. The decision of choosing the side of 'history' for him was nostalgic. While in the end it meant choosing his 'country'— a representation of nationalist frameworks—it still did not solve his identity crisis. In the 1880s, Egypt was still under colonial rule, and Egyptian national identity was in dire need of reclamation. The dilemma was that the means to reclaim it would still hand it to the same outsiders who claimed a more righteous grip on science and history. The representation of Egyptian archaeology in cinema, pop culture, and documentaries have always revolved around the foreign discoverer; a proper reflection of the history of the practice in Egypt and its celebration of western discoveries. Postcolonial attempts to change this viewpoint have merely replaced the foreign hero with an Egyptian one, abiding by the same "colonial matrix of power"⁵, embodying the characteristics of a western champion as a model. Chadi Abdel Salam's depiction of the incident, however, traverses the western-dominated structure represented

¹ The Antiquities Service (officially known at its inception as *Service des Antiquités*, and currently known as the Supreme Council of Antiquities SCA or Ministry of state for Antiquities MSA) was formed in Cairo in 1858 by Auguste Mariette and was directed by Gaston Maspero at the time of this incident. For almost a century, this governmental department created by local officials to track the trade of Egyptian artefacts has been appointed by French scholars.

² Affandeyya is the plural of *Affendy*, an Arabic title of nobility (of Ottoman origins) meaning 'Lord' or 'Master'. The word is used to denote government officials; the *other* who is coming from the capital city. Typically superiors, and in this specific case, invaders as well, the Affandeya of this story represent the intruders to the family's mountain, to their treasure, and to their country.

³ The name 'Ahmed' and the family relations in this version of the story (a son and two brothers) are fictional. The real name of the discoverer is not known and the person who reported to the officials was a family member; one of his descendants.

⁴ Paraphrased excerpt from the official trailer of the movie *The Mummy*, dir. Boris Karloff, Los Angeles: Universal, 1932.

⁵ Walter Mignolo, 'Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)coloniality, Border Thinking, and Epistemic Disobedience', in: *eipcp*, September 2011. Accessed through: www.eipcp.net/transversal/0112/mignolo/en on 16 October 2016.

Fikri Abaza, a journalist in Al-Ahram newspaper, wrote a fictional letter to Tut Ankh Amun in 1924. He said: "My Young King [Tut Ankh Amun], are they going to transport you to the museum and set you next to the Qasr al-Nil barracks to add insult to injury? So that, my free king, you might look out over your occupied country? So that you might see your enslaved people? So that you might learn that those who robbed your grave now dig another for your nation?"

in this cinematic genre. His emphasis is not on the heroism of discovery — regardless of the nationality of the discoverer — but on the critique of archaeological work. He presents it as a discourse of robbery and trade rather than a scientific or exotic practice of finding. By exposing the story of a confused local thief, the movie does not only represent a political struggle but chooses to magnify an internal ethical one. It represents the neglected and misunderstood artefacts of ancient Egyptian civilization as the loss of an allegedly authentic Egyptian identity while also depicting the conflict between the city and the rural areas as an ambiguous unresolved reflection on the price of this identity itself. In this case, there are two layers of provincialism, one positioning Egypt at the periphery of Western imperial domination, and another due to the social segregation within the country itself and the contrast between cities and rural areas. In fact, the internal struggle of Wanis, which stretched between theft, his great ancestors, his family, and the Affandeyya, is the main focus of the movie. This struggle persists in contemporary questions of possession versus protection which continue to strike on contradictory levels of ownership, searching for and defending nationalism. It is a price of identity that extends to a paradoxical betrayal of the identity itself. Should we save our history, or own it?

In October 2010, I came across two adjacent articles in the *Al-Ahram* newspaper (fig. 2). The first article, 'Carter reappears in his house every night!', explains the inauguration of the house of Howard Carter, the famous British archaeologist known for discovering the tomb of Tut Ankh Amun. The second article, 'Hassan Fathy disturbs Luxor's governor in his sleep!', explains that New Gurna, one of architect Hassan Fathy's most important projects, had reached a dire condition of degradation, mainly due to destructions and a lack of maintenance, and therefore was added to the 2010 World Monuments Watch List of Most Endangered Sites. At the time, I found these two types of spectral apparitions interesting as an ironic comparison between two projects of failure; one had ended and the other had just begun. It read as a comparison between two iconic figures who became heroes for their history of circumvented mistakes.

At present, preserving the house of Howard Carter in Luxor, represents a part of a greater governmental plan to turn the city into an open-air museum. It is, however, the only dig house that has been preserved. "The plan by the government for Luxor's open-air museum covers improvements to the archaeological environment in Luxor, protecting the physical bodies of the monuments and removing modern transgression [...]."⁶ It seems to suggest that every building which is not regarded as a *monument* shall be demolished in favour of future excavations.⁷ Therefore, this plan violates archaeological standards that consider modern histories as important as ancient ones, by disregarding any cultural heritage that is not from the age of the pharaohs. People living in legal houses on the East bank were forcedly evacuated, and, in some cases, relocated to different governorates. Informal settlements of looter houses in the West bank were demolished instantly in 2007, "due to what authorities said was a damaging proximity to ancient tombs", while adjacent excavation houses remained erect, or were getting renovated and reopened to the public, like in the case of Carter's house.⁸ For local treasure hunters, their digging was condemned and disregarded and their material presence,

⁶ Ghada Mahmoud Ahmed Mohamed Kamar, *The Development of Luxor Open Air Museum and Its Social Impacts: An Assessment Using Geographic Information Systems, Vol. 1*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation from the University of Leicester, 2014, p. 120. Accessed through: ira.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/29162/1/2014%20KAMAR%20GH%20PHD%20VOL%201.pdf on 13 October 2016.

⁷ Information about the development plan has been gathered from the official master plans, documents and reports of the comprehensive development plan for the city of Luxor, prepared by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities in 2004 (in Arabic). See in English for example G. Abraham, 'The Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Luxor', in: C.A. Brebbia, J.F. Martin-Duque et al., (eds.) *The Sustainable City II*, Southampton: WIT Press, 2002. Accessible through: www.witpress.com/Secure/elibrary/papers/URS02/URS02037FU.pdf.

⁸ Abigail Hauslohner, 'Egypt's Plan for Luxor: Vegas on the Nile?', in: *Time*, 2 October 2010. Accessed through: content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2026394,00.html on 13 October 2016.



fig. 2 Manipulated image of two adjacent articles from 2010 from the newspaper *Al-Ahram*, for *The Palimpsest Tests*, artwork by author, 2014. 'Voices in the West Bank!' is the main title of the article. 'Carter reappears in his house every night!' is the subtitle of the first article (on the right), and 'Hassan Fathy disturbs Luxor's governor in his sleep!' is the subtitle of the second article (on the left).

represented in the structures of their houses, got wiped away, while foreign colonial archaeological and architectural practice remained as a part of Egyptian heritage as constructed by authorities. One reason for this is the evident hegemony of imperial history and its ongoing inscription in current politics and governmental — or rather military — strategies, which can be regarded as some kind of a reciprocal xenophilia.

On top of that, there is an ongoing exclusion and invalidation of local heritage, which is generally considered by the government as belonging to a low social and economic standard. Hassan Fathy (1900–1989), one of the most acclaimed Egyptian architects, designed a village to relocate the looter village of Gurna (known to be of Abdel Rasoul's family) in 1948. The project New Gurna was completed and considered state of the art, but the villagers never arrived; their newly designed village was a forced cell — beautiful but alien nonetheless. And most importantly, it did not sit on a treasure — their source of income. In 2010, when New Gurna was added to the 2010 World Monuments Watch List of Most Endangered Sites, Fathy disturbed the governor's sleep to warn him about the inevitable failure of all his new plans, reminding him of the tragic history of his own project. New Gurna did not only fail to function socially and to solve the issue of amateur excavations but is now also deteriorating structurally, failing to maintain its value as an architectural heritage site due to the state's negligence. As Samir Farag, Luxor's governor at the time, visited the decomposed buildings in New Gurna to check their condition with international officials, he also visited the newly

renovated house of Carter in what must have been a cynical celebration. It is paradoxical to see, what is chosen to be celebrated and commemorated and what is intentionally left to erase or to rot.

Less than two kilometres away from New Gurna, Marsam Hotel is situated: a house that hosts excavation missions in Assasif, Luxor (fig. 3). It is known as the hotel of El Sheikh Ali, a descendant of Ahmed Abdel Rassoul. When it was built in the early 1940s, the location of the house was chosen cleverly in order to eventually host archaeological missions, even though not explicitly launched as a dig house. Before, at the exact same location, between 1924 and 1939, the dig house of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago was located here. A quick comparison between both buildings supports the claim that they are actually one and the same house. In 2014, I asked the son of Sheikh Ali if the two houses are the same. He showed me photos to prove that his hotel is indeed the old Chicago house. The game between Abdel Rassoul's family and the foreigner archaeologists has a long history, and the way for them to stay in the 'business' is to make friends with their enemies. However, when I met Nicholas Warner in 2013, a British architect and Egyptologist and an expert of mud brick buildings in Egypt, I asked him whether the Marsam Hotel was the Chicago house. He insisted in rage that it was not. I suspect that the American mission of the Oriental Institute of Chicago, like Warner, believes that Sheikh Ali has recycled the windows of the original Chicago house to build its replica, an operation that made the current structure quite deceiving. This was an easy way for him to consolidate his version of the story. It makes sense to think that the Americans get angry seeing him succeed in giving off the impression that he now owns the American house — which they know for a fact was demolished. A series of extended field inspections and photo comparisons have proven — and it is also my own speculation — that the hotel is indeed a different structure, but one that looks exactly like the Chicago house.⁹

Even though my intention of visiting Ali Abdel Rassoul's son in his hotel was directed strictly towards my research of the house and its history, I couldn't hold myself back from mentioning a wandering goat. The son became furious and asked me to stop repeating barbaric and nonsensical stories based on assumptions, firmly discounting the most well-known account of Egyptology's oral history to this day, while at the same time insisting that his hotel is, in fact, the original Chicago house.

The Abdel Rassouls still represent an important and rare example of locals struggling to gain a grip on their past within a fierce colonial environment. Creating history and utilizing heritage is a business. It is my impression that Sheikh Ali knew very well that if he was able to make people believe that his house was the old Chicago house, its value would rise in time. Since he and his family have worked in the business of archaeology for years, it is his conviction that what remains is what makes people believe in a certain version of history — not the bare truth, and not what is written in records. The landscape of the past is in a continuous process of reshaping and will embrace one story if it endures for long enough to take a part in it. As long as there is an insistence and necessity to craft and practice the details of a constructed story, it will survive, and therefore will succeed to become history.

The West bank of modern day Luxor is the city of the dead for ancient Thebes. The West bank hosts the necropolis of Thebes besides the mortuary temples that were intended to serve the diseased

⁹ Most of the field inspections and historical research on the Marsam Hotel has been conducted with Marcel Maessen, the founder of t3.wy Projects and the initiator of t3.wy Foundation for Historical Research in Egyptology



fig. 3 Marsam Hotel. Luxor, 2010. Photo: Marcel Maessen.

pharaohs. Within that landscape of ancient tombs and temples, you can find a group of relatively new houses. These houses are known as the 'dig houses'. The dig houses are the residences of excavation missions, missions that are inherently foreign. This foreign practice started as a trade due to the Western demand of pharaonic artefacts, which was intensified by the Napoleonic Expedition (1798–1801), and lasted until the mid-nineteenth century. In 1835, Mohamed Ali, the ruler of Egypt at the time, banned the unauthorized removal of antiquities from the country. However, the uncontrolled flow of artefacts into private and public collections and museums continued, whether as goods or as gifts to foreign dignitaries offered by Egyptian rulers. In 1858, a governmental department was created to carry out its own excavation and approval of foreign archaeological missions, however, it was dominated for decades by French directors. After the British invasion in 1882, British scholars became more dominant in the scene. It was not before the total independence from the British rule in the early 1950s that the Egyptians started having actual control over the artefacts of their country, allowing foreign missions to work under the supervision of the Egyptian Authorities (Supreme Council of Antiquities).¹⁰ Members of those missions — archaeologists, Egyptologists, and architects, among others — live in excavation houses during the entire digging season, at least four months every year: 'homes away from home'. Inside them, besides the foreigners, exist smaller families of locals working as the caretakers of the houses. They live there for the whole year while maintaining a quiet distance from the other residents. Quite similar to the indoor situation, implanted foreign dwellings coexist as semi-empty, and even quite secretive but dominant, ghostly structures within the desert landscape. Their secrecy resides in their introversion and exclusiveness to the members of their missions. Their dominance lies in the position the houses themselves take, prominent in their image and the historical conflict they maintain, both over treasures and architectural presence, along with the local clans that stand in silence observing them. On the dig site, the same politics apply, the foreign archaeologist gives orders while the local worker does the actual digging; when the worker makes a find, the archaeologist claims the discovery.

¹⁰ Accessed through: www.sca-egypt.org/eng/sca_history.htm on 30 October 2016.

Architecturally, these dig houses are a misunderstood copy of the norm, a re-interpreted borrowing of local elements, a hybrid of a westerner beyond the West; bedrooms on arcades of internal courtyards, domes (sometimes fake) and rounded arches, castle-like structures inside a landscape of arid houses camouflaged against the mountain. But those arcades, built into the dig houses, usually cover a line of bedrooms looking outwards to the street or onto courtyards where residents sit and gather. An approach that signifies how the copying of what is perceived as Eastern or as oriental architectural features is quite pictorial. The traditional usage of such elements, such as the internal courtyards, for example, are mainly aimed at sustaining privacy and for micro-climatic reasons. Apart from the temples and tombs, which are ancient Egyptian and royal in style, the West bank is cluttered with simple local modern houses built from mudbricks with flat roofs in straight lines. Within such a landscape, the dig houses are built with an orientalist view, almost like an out-of-context blind copying. If they're not fenced off and enclosing what looks like a forest from outside, they usually stand on the top of a cliff and are usually decorated with domes and arches. That's why they instantly and oddly stand out in the valley.

Dig houses are inherited estates: their unofficial ownership flows from the hand of one archaeologist to another, hosting one mission and then the next. They sometimes switch nationalities, as if the possession of each house, which remains forever clutched to its location like a tick, was somehow mobile. And all the while, the dig site stays the same, never fully unravelled.

Since the houses keep hosting different nationalities, their legal status as properties of the Egyptian government remains ambiguous. Some of the houses started as informal structures, built up by one or two persons as a temporary residence and workplace, a shelter in close proximity to the dig site, gradually transforming from a tent into a room into a bigger room until they expanded into houses hosting official (foreign) institutions. The French house at Deir El Medineh is one such example of this (fig. 4). It started as a tent built by the Italian Egyptologist Ernesto Schiaparelli in 1905 when he began the first serious excavation in the area. He then transformed his structure into a small room until he finished his work four years later. In 1914, the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) held the archaeological concession at

¹¹ Excerpt from the prologue of *A Story of Intentional Errors*, Abila elBahrawy, 2015.

I was visiting Hatshepsut temple when this building grabbed my attention. With domes and arches it stood there on a high cliff, dominating the Theban necropolis, overlooking the temple and the processional way that leads to it — which is now a huge parking lot.

I asked and asked guards and police, tour guides and vendors: “What is this building?”

They all shrugged except for one taxi driver who insisted: “ده البيت الألماني” he said, “it's the German house”.

From there it all started, and we took a stroll around the West bank, scanning its landscape with our eyes, looking for all the other German houses that stood on top of high cliffs of ancient rubble, overlooking the vast valley.¹¹



fig. 4 French House at Deir el Madina. Luxor, 2010. Photo by author.

Deir el Medineh and a French team directed by Bernard Bruyère excavated the entire site starting in 1922. The building has been expanding since then, housing the French mission every year.¹²

But there are different stories; the land of the German house, for instance, was given to the Germans as a present by the Egyptian Khedive Abbas II in 1904; the Germans marked their government's ownership of the property by erecting the German flag and since then it belonged to them. However, it is now under threat of being demolished for further excavation, since — according to speculation — it is possible that the rest of the temple of Thutmes IV lies beneath it.¹³

Like the German house, most of the dig houses in Luxor happen to be on top of already existing 'monuments'. They need to be close to the sites of the missions. *La maison de fouilles de Deir el Madineh* hides three tombs that lie behind it. Inside the kitchen, there is an entrance to a tomb that is now used as a storage space. The Polish house covers entrances to at least six tombs. Some of them are now used as study rooms and guard

¹² Cédric Gobeil, 'The IFAO excavations at Deir el-Medina', 2015. Accessed through: www.oxfordhandbooks.com.

¹³ Daniel Polz, 'Das Deutsche Haus in Theben: "Die Möglichkeit gründlicher Arbeit und frischen Schaffens"', in: Günter Dreyer and Daniel Polz (eds.) *Begegnung mit der Vergangenheit-100 Jahre in Ägypten. Deutschen Archäologisches Institut Kairo 1907-2007*. Mainz am Rhein: Von Zabern, 2007, pp. 25-31.

¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, 'Excavation and memory', in: Marcus Paul Bullock, Michael William Jennings et al. (eds.) *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 2 (1931-1934), Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 576.

For the 'matter itself' is no more than strata [...]. Genuine memory must yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs about the strata from which its finding originate, but also gives account of the strata which first had to be broken through.¹⁴

houses. And the list goes on, as the whole West bank is, after all, a big cemetery, filled with hidden graves and covered with mortuary temples.

The urban development plan of the Egyptian government, which has been in progress since 2004, is aimed at recreating the ancient city of Thebes through unearthing its original urban plan. "The historical concept was set to demonstrate to visitors the cultural value of archaeological areas, with regards to the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians. This included reviving the pharaohs' caravans and festivals through symbolic illustration. [...] There was also a perceived need to develop tourist services [...] that might turn Luxor into a tourist city that integrates international historical value while at the same time providing suitable modern services."¹⁵ The setting needed to be more attractive to tourists; tourism being the main goal and source of income the city depends on. The plan proposed the excavation of the Sphinx Avenue which connects Karnak Temple to Luxor temple, spanning up to 2.7 kilometers, and which is currently buried under the fabric of the modern city. This would entail demolishing parts of the modern city that stand on top of ancient Egyptian monuments, disregarding the layers of history that have accumulated, whether imperial or local, dirty or clean. I see this approach as aiming to create what would look like a Pharaonic Disneyland for tourists and lacking a basic sensitivity and understanding of a historical representation that respects the archaeological integrity and the minds of the tourists themselves.¹⁶

As part of the governmental plan, the French houses on the East bank of Luxor — Georges Legrain's house and the village of the Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Étude des Temples de Karnak (CFEETK) — were demolished in 2006, after two years of negotiation regarding the status of these houses between UNESCO and the Egyptians. However, the dig house of Howard Carter in the West bank, saw a different fate:

Despite the stillness of afterlife and the silence of death that wraps the West bank of Luxor, the city of the dead, some faint voices mysteriously echo in the mute valley, and surprisingly, they speak in English!¹⁷

Although he died seventy years ago, Carter reappeared in his house, as a hologram, when it was opened to the public for the first time in 2009 (fig.5). He walked around his study room and sat behind his desk telling his stories and glories to the visitors:

I suppose most excavators would confess to a feeling of awe — embarrassment almost — when they break into a chamber closed and sealed by pious hands so many centuries ago. [...] Three thousand, four thousand years maybe, have passed and gone since human feet last trod the floor on which you stand, and yet, [...] you note the signs of recent life around you [...]¹⁸

When he died in 1939, Carter left the entire furniture of his house to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Even though the Metropolitan Museum of Art did not want the furniture for its collection, it managed to oversee the removal of most items from the house, donating them to the Franciscan order in Luxor. When the government decided to reopen the house of Howard Carter in 2009, they discovered that the Franciscan order had thrown all the furniture away in 2004. Despite setting out to acquire closely matched furniture, the collection as finally assembled is not even from the right time period.

Some accounts mention that the house was built of simple mud-brick walls that were kept visible. They speak of very little

¹⁵
Op. cit (note 6).

¹⁶
In 2011, when the revolution of January 25th started, the work stopped, leaving the future state of the plan unclear.

¹⁷
Adapted translation of the opening lines of the article "Voices in the West Bank!" in *Al Ahrām* newspaper, by Riad Tawfiq, 19 October 2010, p. 21.

¹⁸
Howard Carter, 'Chapter vi: A Preliminary Investigation', in: Howard Carter and A.C. Mace, *The Tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen. Discovered by the Late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter, Volume I* (1923), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 97.



fig. 5 Hologram of Carter at the Howard Carter house in 2009. Photo: Marcel Maessen.

furniture, chosen with an artistic taste. Later accounts of the furniture suggest that it could have arrived directly from Highclere Castle, which, at the time, was home to the Carnarvon family. Now, instead, an eclectic constellation completed with an antique telephone garnishes one of its desks, claiming to be original. Interestingly, Luxor did not have any phone lines until 1939. These examples show the process of gradual loss in precision, and value of, the actual content of the house, in the face of efforts made to present it as a mere image. Two years after the public opening of the house, Carter's hologram stopped functioning. What plays instead (if the guard feels like switching on the monitor) is a donated amateur video with the audio of Carter's account on the discovery of Tut Ankh Amun's tomb, recorded in 1936, overlaid on top of Reuters media coverage of the opening of the tomb, shot probably in 1923, found online.¹⁹ Nowadays the house is pink, plastered with yellow doorframes furnished mostly

¹⁹
The story of the house's furniture and the broken hologram has been confirmed by Marcel Maessen.

²⁰
Mari Laanemets in reference to Walter Benjamin's 'A Berlin Chronicle' (originally published in 1932). Mari Laanemets, *Places that Remember*, 2000, pp. 72-74. Accessed through: www.eki.ee/km/place/pdf/kp1_09laanemets.pdf on 30 October 2016.

Recurrence and repetitions of situations are no cause for fear. Circumstances and relations are like layers and strata. [...] Occasion structures the recognition or reading of the past. [...] Objects that function as reservoirs of memory can be circumvented.²⁰

in a French style, not British colonial. It carries a memory of a voice that once spoke, in a heroic tone, about embarrassment.

In archaeological practices, whether from a nationalist or an orientalist perspective, there is a confessed sensation of shame or guilt — one that is always mixed with a pleasure fuelled by ethical necessity — towards oneself and one's responsibility towards the world, to uncover the felony of robbing the past. All dealings with material culture can be considered a kind of trade, whether on the black market or in that of international museums rigged by political and economic power dynamics. Going back to Abdel Rassoul, we can consider his confusion an exemplar of a critical moment that suddenly faced the newly 'enlightened' third-world post-Western invasions. He was faced with the question: what to do with the treasure at hand, our treasure? Maybe the right act, to eliminate shame, is to again hide the treasure or destroy it. But what to do, then, with the sense of responsibility cast upon him, represented by the sacredness of his ancestors versus the idea that history is knowledge which must belong to us all? This can be seen as an identity crisis rather than a case of nationalism. Yet as we attempt to grab onto identity, we fall back into the nationalist trap. After all, this type of nationalism has only been viewed and fed to the Egyptians through an orientalist lens. And as we, the Egyptians, gained our full grip on what has been unravelled, we are still trapped inside the teacher's Pandora's box. This mix of value systems, putting value on what is missing and not on what one already has, presents another way of questioning the attitudes of self-perception which modern Egyptians have developed as a result of the rise of archaeology: what is more Egyptian, the nostalgia for belongings or finding ways of making money out of it?

Preserving a house like Carter's has been executed for the wrong reasons; reasons that show how we are dictated by the power structures that this man still represents. Moreover, branding it as a museum that requires an entry fee gives evidence of the twisted link between archaeology and the tourist industry. Eventually, treasure hunters, the Egyptian authorities, and the foreign archaeologists alike, all end up dealing with heritage in terms of market value, whether they like it or not. One of the means to find our own way in writing our history and looking at what we want to look at — not what we are told is valuable — is to cultivate a genuine interest in objectifying the material culture of the western intrusion: putting the ignorance of the enlightened colonizer in the spotlight. Changing the way we perceive the past can help create new ideas that challenge the classical concepts of national identity. Therefore, we should preserve the dig houses to study them as evidence of the colonial nature of archaeology. At the moment, we are either neglecting or demolishing them, or selectively polishing some as remnants of the presence of 'heroes' such as Carter. The dig houses only exist as structures to study their ancient surroundings in which they're located, under the local authorities' approval. We can only hope to find our own way of studying our heritage not by giving the dig houses and their foreign missions the permission to teach us about it, but by examining them *as part* of it. A way to subvert the colonial dilemma, and to repair our histories, is to do our own work of instrumentalization.

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LETS,
OP WAT VOOR WIJZE
DAN
OOK, ONTPLOFT OF
ONTPLOFFEN STAAT.”

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