Introduction

Throughout Cairo there are areas where the streets are paved with books. These impromptu bookstalls sell a variety of material. In Mohandiseen, a wealthy district of the capital, the booksellers peddle books of Sheikh Sharawi alongside those with titles such as *Nisa` al-Khalij: Asrar wa hikayat muthir (Women of the Gulf: Secrets and provocative Stories)*[1], or *Fatayat al-bai' (Women for Sale)*[2] or *Auham al-jins (Delusions of Sex)*[3] or *Al-Mamnua' wa al-Margh'ub fi shahr al-'asal (The forbidden and the Coveted on the Honeymoon)*.[4] (See Appendix, Fig.1) When asked who bought these books of a sexual nature, some in the form of a moralistic polemic against sexual degradation, others simply sexed-up short stories, the bookseller replied with a smile: "Anyone who wants to become cultured". He was expressing a common euphemism using the verb *atsaqqafa* ironically. To become cultured is literally to know about books and intellectual matters. Although this was a simple throw away comment, the bookseller, perhaps subconsciously, seemed to be playing on and inverting the discourse on culture which frames much debate on morality and social responsibility in the Egyptian public sphere. The idea of becoming cultured is central to both state and non-state Islamic attempts to promote morality. What I intend to focus on in this thesis is the emphasis on individual morality and the need to become cultured which are central to contemporary Islamic trends espoused by the affluent middle classes and often termed Islamic revivalism.

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[1] Ziada Ahmed, *Nisa` al-Khalij: Asrar wa hikayat muthir (Women of the Gulf: Secrets and provocative Stories),* (Markaz al-raya lil-nashr wa al-I'alam, Cairo, 1994)
[2] Khaled Nabil, *Fatayat al-bai' (Women for Sale)*, (Dar al-Shabab al-arabi, Cairo, 1996)
[3] Kamal Majda, *Auham al-jins (Delusions of Sex)*, ('Arabia, Cairo, no date of publication)
[4] al-Sid Ahmed, *Al-Mamnua' wa al-Margh'ub fi shahr al-'asal (The forbidden and the Coveted on the Honeymoon)*, (Dar al-Amir, Cairo, 2003)

These themes inform debate both in the National context and the supra-national Arab and Muslim contexts. Therefore, I intend to look at the way these issues play out both in contemporary Egyptian society as a form of discourse propagated by the state and by non-state Islamic actors and also in an international context through the internet website Islam On-line. It is an obvious but essential point to emphasise that the national and international spheres are not separate but inform and play off each other in a variety of ways. A conception of Islam as a pillar of culture in the national context is not necessarily different from that conception in an international and universal context. Indeed, the notion of culture itself has the potential to be shaped by the influence of 'international' or 'global' Islam. Furthermore, I hope that what may so far have been implicit becomes clearer as we progress; namely that the notions of morality and culture espoused by the state and by actors in the so-called Islamic revivalist trend are on some levels similar and seem to come to similar conclusions.

It is difficult to define what exactly constitutes Islamic revivalism, however, I aim to look at some of those individuals and groups who actively espouse the idea of revival and those who absorb and use their ideas in various ways. This does not mean that such individuals and groups necessarily align themselves or associate themselves with each other. It cannot be seen as a coherent movement but more as a discernible phenomenon. However, there is a common consensus that there is a move away from Islamism as a political project to a concern with social issues. This phenomenon also seems to be concerned with issues of personal piety and morality which appears to have manifested itself most clearly amongst the upper middle class. Therefore, my research is mainly

focused on these ideas in relation to a small group who are defined by their wealth and social position. Moreover, I will be largely discussing these issues in relation to Egypt as many of these trends and ideas originate and have received the broadest expression in this country.

However, this is only half the story. If we return to the bookseller in Mohandiseen for a moment, it will become evident why the notion of culture is so central to this thesis. His throw away comment suggests that there are other ways of looking at culture. It is an ambiguous term. He may have been essentially reiterating a notion of culture premised on morality and social improvement through his humorous inversion of this paradigm, however, his bookstall is testimony to the fact that this vision cannot be imposed. Many state and non-state actors seem to view culture as something that is attained, this bookstall, on the other hand, suggests that culture is something that can be bought. Culture, and consequently morality and religion, are to a certain extent commodities. The consumer has a right to choose between the writings of Sheikh Sharawi or a book by a relatively unknown journalist who talks of the moral degradation of society by describing in fine detail the very acts he rails against. Therefore, both physical religious commodities and the religious ideas of men and women in the Islamic revival compete, not only in the marketplace of religion and morality but also in the general marketplace of culture. Therefore, I aim to see culture not only in the terms of a modernizing agenda but also as what can loosely be termed “popular culture”. Islam is not only appropriated as a central component of the modern man and modern society on a moral or abstract

level, it has also found a home amongst the physical goods and commodities of this society.

These potential tensions are nicely illuminated in the film, *Film Saqafi*.[5] It tells the story of three unemployed Egyptian men approaching thirty, Effat, Ashraf and Alaa, who spend their days dreaming of women. Full of sexual frustration, which is charged by the sight of Egyptian women dressed in 'western' clothes, (knee length skirts and blouses, for example), they have recourse to pornographic magazines like *Playboy*. The plot of the film revolves around the attempt of these men to watch a pornographic movie, supposedly starring Salma Hayek. The euphemism for the movie is *as-saqafi* (the cultural or educational film). Much of the humour revolves around this notion of culture or education. Bayarez, who is portrayed as a talismanic figure helping the lonely males of Cairo see these sexual images, is referred to as cultured or educated. The implication is that these men, who have a conventional education, have been failed by a repressive society and have come to view culture and education as something which is directly opposed to the official rhetoric. Relations with women, which are shown to be natural through the presentation of Ashraf's brother's relationship with his girlfriend, have taken on a certain mythic and noble quality for these men because they are not allowed to see it as a normal everyday event. It illustrates the potential conflict and tension between such a discourse of education and culture and the actual reality. This is played out in a scene in a mosque complex where the protagonists have gone to watch their video out of sheer desperation. They tell the *muhajjiba* (veiled) receptionist that they are medical students

[5] *Film Saqafi* dir. Mohamed Amin, (2000)

from Al-Azhar University trying to revise medical procedures on a video for an exam that afternoon. She allows them to use the video room but before they have seen much of the movie, they are interrupted and told they have to go to midday prayers. Whilst performing ablutions, Alaa says, "I'm ashamed of myself, we were just watching an educational film, now we're off to pray. Isn't that hypocritical?" Effat responds, "Please God…don't make us stay this way" and in unison they all exclaim, "Please God". However, things go from bad to worse for them when the Shaykh suggests that they should all watch the video together. Therefore, the whole congregation, of mainly bearded men in religious dress, cram into the video room to watch this educational film. The Shaykh asserts, "Today, brethren, we'll watch an important film of an entire surgical operation and we'll see the Creator's power and miraculousness in creating the human body…The doctors will explain." Effat stammers that this will not be possible because it is an operation of a woman and it would be rude to see the exposed body. This does not deter the Shaykh who proclaims, "As long as it's educational and in a scientific conference, there's no harm at all…..I'm responsible for this fatwa." Effat, Alaa and Ashraf look horrified but eventually extract themselves from the situation by turning the power off and suggesting there is a power cut. Although disappointed the Shaykh says to them as they are leaving, "Promise to get us tapes like this important tape so we can show them here in our educational conferences."[6] This scene highlights the potential ambiguities of being cultured or educated. The shaykh sees it as an important part of the process of developing the individual. The human body is seen as a reflection of God's creation. Such aspirations of culture and education could potentially become hollow

[6] Ibid

though. In this scene, there is a discrepancy between such high-minded notions and the reality. Becoming cultured and educated can be viewed in other ways. The actual content of the tape is more concerned with earthly pleasures and earthly knowledge. The idea of 'becoming cultured' can work as a metaphor for the tension between a spiritual or high-minded vision and its potential for corruption and inversion. Furthermore, notions of culture can be envisaged in different ways by different people. As forms of constructing identity and authenticity, they can create tension and contest.

I, therefore, aim to look at how Islam and notions of culture interplay in different contexts. I will begin in chapters 1 and 2 by looking at how notions of culture and the role of Islam are constructed in the national Egyptian context. In chapters 3 and 4 I will discuss how this relates to a broader global conception of Islam and illustrate the tension when such global or universal conceptions of Islam and culture return to local settings where there is an established religious tradition. In the final chapter, I will argue that seeing Islam as part of a process of becoming cultured, which derives from and interacts with a global notion of Islam, potentially alters the appropriation and character of Islam amongst the Egyptian middle-class.

Chapter 1: Managing Islam: the State and Religion in Egypt

In 1994, the Egyptian film *The Terrorist* (*al-Irhabi*) was released.[7] Although it was privately funded, it was released as part of a government propaganda campaign which included the television serial *The Family* (*al-A'ila*) and the broadcast of a 'repentant' terrorist.[8] This film has been cited as a tool used by the Egyptian state to define Islam in an attempt to influence perceptions of it. The protagonist, played by Adil Imam, is depicted as a simplistic, rural, irrational and largely immoral figure. He emerges from the countryside where he is portrayed as the lackey of an old opportunist village man who is the mastermind of several terrorist activities. There is also the suggestion they are being influenced by mysterious figures abroad. What is clear is that the terrorist is being manipulated and used by this man with offers of arranged marriage amongst other things. Once he enters the urban space of Cairo, he is bewildered and his frustrations and fears become even clearer. This is depicted most sharply in his sexual frustration which is a constant source of doubt, but also of motivation. Therefore, the director Nadir Galal paints a picture of the terrorist as a sad, laughable figure. Indeed, at one point in the film a wealthy family are listening to a tape their daughter brought home from University given to her by a friend who had veiled and turned to 'extremism.' At first the family listen attentively to the firebrand preacher, but as the tension builds to breaking point it is suddenly dissipated by the family breaking into laughter at the absurd sounding preacher.

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[7] *Al-Irhabi*, dir. Nadir Galal, (1994)

[8] Armbrust Walter, "Islamists in Egyptian Cinema", *American Anthropologist* 104, (3) (2002), pp.922-31

Abu-Lughod Lila, *Dramas of Nationhood: the Politics of Television in Egypt*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005)

The terrorist or extremist is not someone to obey and fear but someone to laugh at and disparage.

This caricature of a terrorist which the government sought to appropriate illustrates one way in which the State tries to define and delineate Islam. The Egyptian government continually attempts to draw a line between acceptable and unacceptable interpretations of Islam. Abu-Lughod demonstrates how this was the case with the broadcasting of the 'confessions' of repentant terrorists and their dialogues with religious scholars from al-Azhar. The minister of Information justified these broadcasts as follows:

> There are repenters who speak with remorse and provide an essential critique of their errors in understanding Islamic doctrine and participating in terrorist crimes. They discuss how it was that they came to understand the truth and lost their faith in those erroneous ideas that had led them to commit deviant terrorist activities. As such, they demonstrate, through their experiences what constitutes false and sound thought.[9]

This suggests that understanding truth is based less on faith than on thought. Indeed, a rational interpretation seems to be at the centre of 'official Islam' in Egypt. *The Terrorist* likewise depicts Islamists as impulsive and simple. The film seems to suggest that morality can be attained through sound thought and education. The protagonist himself is shown to be uneducated and overcome by carnal and violent desires. The film further implies that extremism is the product of backwardness and an inability to engage with modernity.

[9] 'Abd al-Sattar al-Tawila and Jailan Jabr, "Interview with Sawfat al-Sharif," *Ruz al-Yusuf*, June 13, 1994, pp.12-13 cited in Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, p.172

However, such assertions seem to run counter to the reality. The terrorist activities carried out in Egypt in the nineties were largely enacted by educated university students from urban centres. Moreover, as Armbrust states, "the film left no space for representing the activities of Islamists inside the state's own institutions. One could not imagine the Islamist radicals of *The Terrorist* as schoolteachers, lawyers, or doctors. It was precisely through such professions that the Islamist ideology was growing."[10] The state, by distorting the perception of such individuals and groups, was attempting to position itself as the legitimate authority on issues of religion and morality. The state, therefore, constructed itself as the arbiter of orthodoxy, but as Talal Asad says of the concept of Orthodoxy, it "is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship-a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy."[11] The Egyptian state is, therefore, attempting to posit itself as the disseminator of orthodoxy by discrediting other actors who see themselves as more authentic than the state. This development seems inevitable and natural, according to Asad, because of the very nature of the modern nation state. However, the Egyptian state should not just be seen as a force condemning and discrediting certain groups and actors. Indeed, the Egyptian government has not only attempted to marginalise certain aspects of Islamism, but has also through many of its related organs had to engage with Islamic discourse. It has both promoted its own vision of Islam and also bent under the pressure of the demands of non-state actors.

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[10] Armbrust Walter, "Islamists in Egyptian Cinema", p925

[11] Asad Talal, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," Occasional Paper Series, Georgetown University Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, (March 1986)

The State, Moralism and Intellectual Freedom

There have been several cultural flashpoints in Egypt over the past decade that illustrate the State's inability to posit itself as the sole moral arbiter. For example, court rulings against Nasr Abu-Zayd and Salah al-Din Muhsin, which sent the former into exile and the latter into prison, demonstrate the ability of Islamist-orientated lobbyists to affect state functions. Perhaps the most interesting case is that of Haydar Haydar's *Banquet for Seaweed*. In April 2000 the work, originally published in 1983, caused controversy after it was attacked as blasphemous in the Islamist-leaning labour party newspaper *al-Sha'b*. The cause of the controversy was a particular line: "In the age of the atom, space exploration, and the triumph of reason, they rule us with the laws of the Bedouin gods and the teaching of the Qur'an. Shit!"[12] The biggest cause of outrage was the juxtaposition of the word shit next to that of the Qur'an. The target of this newspaper attack was the Ministry of Culture for allowing the books re-publication in a series of cheap reprints, *Afaq al-Kitabah (Horizons of Writing)*. The newspaper called the ministry of Culture "the instrument of Satan in the land of al-Azhar and Saladin".[13] The situation escalated when the Public Prosecutor was called in to investigate the three officials from the Ministry of Culture involved in the publication of the novel. Furthermore, the State Security Department referred the novel to al-Azhar which declared it to be blasphemous. Students from the university demonstrated, resulting in clashes with riot police. The result of this incident was that the Ministry of Culture publications department ceased to

[12] Haydar Haydar, *Walimah li-A'shab al-Bahr (Banquet for Seaweed)*, (Dar Ward, Damascus, 1998, 6th edn.)p.73 cited in Hafez Sabry, "The Novel, Politics and Islam: Haydar Haydar's Banquet for Seaweed" in *New Left Review* 5 (Oct 2000), p.133
[13] 'Abbas Muhammad, *Al-Sha'b*, no.1460, 28 April 2000 cited in Hafez Sabry, "The Novel, Politics and Islam"p.134

continue reprints and *Banquet for Seaweed* was no longer published. Although no members of the Ministry of Culture were found guilty or imprisoned, they had charges hanging over their heads. Such an incident illustrates the difficulty of controlling discourse on morality. The state did attempt to shut down the Labour party and its newspaper *al-Sha'b*; furthermore, it also had to withdraw the book *Banquet for Seaweed* as a means of calming the situation. Yet this situation seems to confirm the argument of Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen who has stated that: "What is considered true Islam is to a certain degree decided by the media, where partisans of the various viewpoints strive to persuade the readers through argumentation and rhetorical skill. In this process the complex jurisprudential tradition of Islam is bound to become simplified and ideological."[14] The state, therefore, has to compete with other non-state actors to position itself as the purveyor of true Islam.

However, as the above incident demonstrates, it often has to compromise. This also seems evident in the decision in January 2005 to make Egyptian television dramas subject to review by a panel of religious censors at al-Azhar.[15] These measures often seem to be the result of pragmatic security concerns rather than as a consequence of an ideological or considered policy. Indeed, the emphasis on 'National Unity', as a euphemism for Coptic-Muslim relations, which is believed to have spurred the above measure, seems to be the result of a combination of desire for religious tolerance and

[14] Skovgaard-Petersen Jakob, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State*, (Leiden, Brill, 1997), p.316

[15] Abu Awad Ryad, "Egyptian Television Censors Sharpen their Knives", *The Daily Star14/01/05 (http://dailystar.com.lb/prinatble.asp?art_ID118000&cat_ID=4)*accessed 11/02/05

pluralism, on the one hand, and desire for internal security and stability on the other. All this is to say that religion is an issue that the state cannot fully control.

There is, according to Muhammad Ibrahim Mabruk, a moderate Islamist writing in *al-Sha'b*, a tension between secularists who "wish to cantonize religion in places of worship and refuse to allow it to enter all aspects of life" and Islamists who "wish to follow the understanding and principles of Islam in all aspects of their life".[16] This view is supported by Saba Mahmood in her study of the piety movement amongst women in different mosques in Cairo. She believes that these women participated in the movement or became more overtly religious because they believed there was an increasing tendency in Egypt to reduce Islam to the "status of an abstract system of beliefs" that was not applicable to how one lives their life on a daily basis. In essence, they felt that this reduced Islam as a set of beliefs and a code of conduct to no more than "custom and folklore". Usually, they referred to this process as "secularisation" or "westernisation".[17] Both the above assertions seem to suggest a clash between two different worldviews; one in which religion is a private, individual matter which has no public role, and the other in which religion should have an active and public role not only in the inner beliefs of the individual but also as an expression of public conduct which governs everyday life. The question here must be where does the Egyptian government fit into this scheme? Perhaps

[16] Ibrahim Mabruk, Muhammed, "Musalsal al-a'ila…….wa ish'al nar al-fitna bayn al-muslimin" (The serial *The Family*…..and inflaming sedition among Muslims), *al-Sha'b*, March 22, 1994, p.9 cited in Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, p.170
[17] Mahmood, Saba, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005), p.44

the expected answer would be as a secularizing force aiming to reduce Islam to "custom and folklore". However, in truth, the answer does not appear to be that simple.

Cultivating Morality and Culture: The State, Media and Education

According to Salvatore, "As was known to earlier Islamic reformers, the metanorm that governs public discourse is the common good to be argued about, and not the articulation of a cosmological order."[18] It is in this context that the Egyptian government can be seen to attempt to articulate an Islamic discourse. Questions of public morality and the good for society and the nation have increasingly been framed in the terms of Islam. An interview with Mahmoud Zaqzouq, the Minister of Awqaf (Religious Endowments), in the magazine *Egypt Today* in January 2005 illustrates this point. He asserts, "We have to take a good hard look at ourselves and ask, are we productive members of our community? Growing a beard and wearing a white galabeya and flip flops does not make a good Muslim…A hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) says, 'God does not look at your appearance but rather your heart and your deeds.'"[19] Although the state line deployed in *The Terrorist* is evident here, it is also supported by an alternative framed within Islamic terms. There is still an attempt to discredit those who display overt piety in their dress. Indeed, the description that Zaqzouq gives here mirrors the attire Adil Imam wears in *The Terrorist*. However, he does not rule out a public role for Islam. He would not fit happily into the camp of 'westernizers' or 'secularizers' that Saba Mahmood's participants talk

[18] Salvatore, Armando, "Social Differentiation, Moral Authority and Public Islam in Egypt", *Anthropology Today*16:12-15 (April, 2000)p.15
[19] Zaqzouq Mahmoud, "Mahmoud Zaqzouq: Faces and the Stories behind them", *Egypt Today* (January 2005), p.63

about or the secularists that Muhammad Ibrahim Mabruk describes. Mahmoud Zaqzouq emphasises, rather than denies, the public role of Islam. He does not try to limit it to a private expression of faith. Rather Islam is a tool enabling the individual to engage with the community in a productive manner. He believes this understanding has been lost and seems to draw a distinction between this true Islam and the overriding misconceptions within Egyptian society:

> Our own understanding of Islam has become warped. We are obsessed with external symbols of piety while the real essence of our religion is being ignored. People are under the false impression that if they fast, pray, pay *zakat* (almsgiving) and go on pilgrimage they are guaranteed a place in paradise. The purpose of performing these rituals is to create a better citizen. They are meant to enhance a person who can more effectively deal with his fellow citizens in a decent and responsible fashion so as to complete a sound and moral society.[20]

Therefore, Islam goes from the personal and individual to the public and communal. Far from undermining a public place for Islam, this vision implicitly gives it a central place in creating a better society. It would appear that the framework for this society is the nation, as Zaqzouq is concerned with creating moral and effective 'citizens' rather than believers or members of a broader *Umma*.

This interpretation of Islam as functional is something that Starrett emphasises in his book *Putting Islam to Work*.[21] He looks at the Egyptian Education system and how the state consciously 'puts Islam to work' in an attempt to mould useful citizens. He argues that the school textbook manifestly alters the recipient's approach to Islam: "In

[20] Ibid, p.63
[21] Starrett Gregory, *Putting Islam to Work: Education, politics and religious transformation in Egypt*, (Berkley, University of California Press, 1998)

textbooks, the derivation of additional moral or political lessons from the Qur'an or Sunna is accomplished in part through the transformation of sacred text into *durus* or 'lessons'".[22] Therefore, the implication is that the spiritual or sacred is transformed into the mundane. It becomes a practical, functional force. This seems to be reflected in the current thinking of the Minister of *Awqaf* who envisages Islam as a set of lessons to improve the moral stature of the individual and subsequently society. This is further borne out by Starrett's study of Children's religious literature. He cites a first grade primary level religious text which asserts: "Religious education is not material restricted to the classroom, but rather is a complete life curriculum, including the classroom milieu with all its activities and information and knowledge. It also includes the home environment, and society as a whole." This suggests that Islam is a life system and can be "put to work" as Starrett would say. Indeed, he states that the purpose of these books is to "create new generations of Egyptian Muslims dedicated to the interlocking goals of practicing a 'moderate' brand of Islam, and to working for the economic, political and social advancement of Egypt."[23]

The basis of these textbooks and the ideas of Mahmoud Zaqzouq are a rational engagement with Islam. Morals and ethics are derived from the religion but only in so far as they have a useful and rational purpose in the service of society. Zaqzouq, indeed, emphasises the need for this intellectual engagement: "We cannot ignore that Islam has

[22] Ibid, pp.137-38
[23] Starrett Gregory, "The Margins of Print: Children's Religious Literature in Egypt" in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol.2, No.1 (Mar.,1996):117-139 p.121

given us a special tool for renewal, *ijtihad*, which means using your mind and intellect to come up with answers to issues that are no longer clear in our body of religious doctrine."[24] Zaqzouq is clearly positioning himself within an established tradition of Islamic Modernist thinkers stretching back to Muhammad Abduh. *Ijtihad* is a central concept in the argument for the compatibility of reason and Islam. Abduh believed in *ijtihad* as the use of reason to arrive at essential truths. Furthermore, some of his ambitions seem to mirror those of Zaqzouq. He believed that the purpose of his work was,

> the removal of the mistakes which have crept into them (Muslims) through misunderstanding of the basic texts of the religion, in order that, when once the beliefs have been made free of harmful innovations, the activities of Muslims may, as a result, be free from disorder and confusion, the conditions of the individual Muslims may be improved…..and wholesome traits of character developed; and that this desirable state may communicate itself through the individuals to the nation as a whole.[25]

There are, thus, obvious similarities between what Zaqzouq and Abduh assert. The idea of Islam as a powerful force of renewal which reforms the individual and consequently the society is a recurring theme of Islamic modernism and one which Zaqzouq presents here.

Mahmoud Zaqzouq also fits into the wider approach of the state to Islam in the last decade. His emphasis on rationality is also implicitly evident in *The Terrorist*. The laughable protagonist is derided because he singularly fails to use his "mind to come up with answers to issues that are no longer clear in our body of religious doctrine." This

[24] Zaqzouq, *Egypt Today*, p.62
[25] Abduh Muhammad cited in C.C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1933), p.110

film suggests that 'true Islam' requires a rational approach to the religion which will create a moral being as opposed to the sex-crazed, violent and immoral terrorist. This approach to Islam is also reflected in the production of television serials according to Lila Abu-Lughod. She cites Mamduh al-Laythi speaking as the director of the Egyptian Union of Radio and Television's Film and serial production centre in 1990. He asserts,

> Egypt is a developing nation, and we as a country are very concerned with the cultural education of our people……Our most important goal in relation to the citizens is to help individuals become cultured. We must educate them, teach them the basics of morality and religious duty. The individual needs guidance. He needs information, and we need to inculcate the spirit of patriotism, morality, religion, courage and enterprise.[26]

Morality and religion are seen to be a vital component of creating "cultured" citizens. They are also seen to be compatible with, and complimentary to, patriotism and enterprise. This suggests a vision of the modern nation state which incorporates religion as a vital component for its growth and strength. Starrett derives a similar conclusion from his study of the Egyptian education system. He asserts that the notion of the "functionalization of religion" contradicts the traditional conception of modernization in which religion is either conceived of as harmlessly irrational or dangerously obstructive. He concludes, "many Muslim states have followed a different course to modernity, insisting explicitly that progress requires a centrally administered emphasis upon moral as well as economic development."[27] This suggests that to be cultured or educated entails a moral and religious element and that the state has an interest and responsibility to cultivate this within the individual citizen. Furthermore, it suggests an attempt to define religion for the nation. It should be viewed in terms of the nation state rather than in the

[26] Mamduh al-Laythi cited in Abu-Lughod, Lila, *Dramas of* Nationhood, p.11
[27] Starrett, *Putting Islam To Work*, p.10

terminology of the *Umma* or community of believers. Abu-Lughod believes that through the use of television serials the Egyptian state has achieved this. Although their conception of religion may not be accepted unequivocally by everybody, the debate they provoke leads to the construction of Islam as a set of beliefs and practices that can be wrong or right based on how it relates to the nation and ideas of social responsibility. She says, "The media campaign surely reinforced a construction of religion as something distinct that pertains to the nation, a somewhat peculiar and historically specific version of religion that gives body to the nation as the basic ground of experience and the measure of truth."[28]This is, indeed, true to a large extent. Religious reformers who espouse Islamic revival usually view society in terms of the nation state because such a notion has become so entrenched as the frame of reference for the community. However, it will become evident that people still imagine communities that transcend national boundaries. Furthermore, the result of this discourse shapes the way individuals conceive of Islam and being a Muslim within Egypt itself.

[28] Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, p.175

Chapter 2: "Official Islam" and Islamic Revival

Currently, the idea of Islamic revival and the piety movement in Egypt is often associated with one man, Amr Khaled.[29] According to Asef Bayat, "Amr Khaled exemplifies a transformation of Islamism into a post-Islamist piety" which is defined by "a change from Islamism as a political project with a contentious agenda into an active piety concerned with personal salvation and culture".[30] Amr Khaled is a former accountant turned lay-preacher who has built up a wide following through his various television programmes. He dresses in a suit and is clean shaven except for a finely cropped moustache. His first programme, *Kalam min al-Qalb* or *Words from the Heart* took the form of an informal talk show and he is often compared to American "televangelists" such as Billy Graham.[31] The figure he cuts seems diametrically opposed to the Islamist caricature so reviled by the Egyptian government. He does not wear a galabeya or flip flops. He does not have a beard and his style of preaching is less firebrand than sympathetic and engaging. He would seem an unlikely figure to be castigated by the Egyptian government. However, in November 2002 Amr Khaled left Egypt claiming he had been banned from continuing his preaching activities there. This assertion was supported by the producer of his television programme, Ahmed Abu Haiba.[32] Such a move caused speculation as to its cause and truth. It is undoubtedly true that the state had

[29] See Wise Lindsay, *Words from the Heart: New Forms of Islamic Preaching in Egypt*, M.Phil Thesis, St Antony's College, Oxford 2003
[30] Bayat Asef, "From Amr Diab to Amr Khaled", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 22-28 May (Issue No.639), *http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/639/fel.htm* accessed02/11/04
[31] Bayat Asef, "Piety, Privilege and Egyptian Youth", *ISIM Newsletter* 10, July 2002
[32] Ahmed Abu Haiba, Personal Interview, 30/01/05

already made life more difficult for him, moving his preaching activities from Mohandiseen in central Cairo to Sixth of October City in the outer reaches of Cairo. Perhaps the most persistent rumour, which became an urban legend, was that Khaled was banned because one of his tapes had inspired Mubarak's daughter-in-law to take the veil. The suggestion was that Khaled's message had affected the most powerful symbol of Egypt's secular elite. The reasoning behind Khaled's departure from Egypt is hard to ascertain precisely. Perhaps on some points, such as the *hijab*, Khaled's message was too dogmatic for the government. As Mahmoud Zaqzouq says, "there is an inherent flexibility in Islam. It is not a rigid religion as some people today are making it out to be."[33] However, it is unlikely that it was the substance of his thought that led to government action. As Ahmed Abu Haiba pointed out, the government is wary of allowing people to gather together on a large scale.[34] The government probably envisaged the "Amr Khaled Phenomenon" as a 'movement' outside of its control. Amr Khaled was considered unwelcome for his ability to energise people in a cause which the government had not actively promoted itself. As Asad says of the nature of the state: "Because the modern nation state seeks to regulate all aspects of individual life – even the most intimate, such as birth and death – no one, whether religious or otherwise, can avoid encountering its ambitious powers."[35] Therefore, he believes that an attempt to act religiously in a public and social way risks the charge of "political illegitimacy". Any attempt to provide a service or regulate public life that does not stem from the state itself presents a challenge to that state. It acts as a direct challenge to its all encompassing

[33] Zaqzouq, *Egypt Today*, p.62
[34] Abu Haiba, Personal Interview, 30/01/05
[35] Asad Talal, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003), p.199

power. In this sense, Amr Khaled did, and still does, pose a direct threat to the Egyptian state. Furthermore, this challenge has forced the state to react and effectively 'play catch up'. Such black and white oppositions between bad and good Islam, as presented through images such as *The Terrorist*, no longer ring true. However, what this incident seems to obscure is the similarities between the state's conception of Islam and that of Khaled and other figures espousing Islamic revival. Even in 'exile' Khaled's message seems to come very close to that espoused by the state.

The Message of Islamic Revival

Amr Khaled stresses the importance of being cultured in an episode of his *Sunaa' al-Hayah* (Life Makers) programme, entitled 'Culture, Art, Media….and Making Life':

> There is a huge difference between culture and education. It is possible that the best educated person; a university professor for example, is not an intellectual person. His knowledge is limited to his books, he knows nothing about life issues, he is not capable of using his knowledge in life, or fulfilling the needs of his country and Muslims. In other words, he is not intellectual. Also, a person could be pious but not intellectual. If you try to speak with that person about things other than legitimate sciences, you will discover that he does not know anything about life or about Muslims' conditions. He has no plans for the revival of his country, and apart from religion, he knows nothing.[36]

Khaled is suggesting that being cultured is the fullest expression of being a Muslim. Piety and education are not enough unless you have the intellectual outlook to use them as tools in "fulfilling the needs of your country." The further implication is that the revival of religion is inextricably linked to the revival of one's country. This suggests a framework of the nation-state, but it is universal in the sense that it is not only applicable to one particular nation-state. There is evident here a functional and rational bent similar

[36] Khaled Amr, *Sunaa' al-Hayah*, (cited from, *www.amrkhaled.net/articles/articles406.html)* accessed 02/11/04

to that which seems to define "Official Islam." Amr Khaled seems to be performing a role that Mahmoud Zaqzouq says he requires of government trained Imams: "We tell them not to spend too much time speaking about the Afterlife and Judgement Day. We are in need of more practical sermons. Work ethic, time management and education are all very relevant topics that need to be addressed in our mosques. I want the Imams to give people a message of hope so that they may ultimately lead a better life and become more productive."[37] Concern with the Afterlife and Judgement day was a conspicuous obsession of non-government religious discourse in the mid-1990s. Khaled has moved the discourse away from this to the issues that Zaqzouq says are necessary such as work ethic and education. These are issues that Khaled addresses directly in his assertion of the need for a *Nahda* (renaissance/revival). This does seem to be a challenge to the government though because his appropriation of this term is to suggest that it is yet to happen. The government, on the other hand, defend its integrity as something that began in the nineteenth century and which can be contrasted with the darkness of Islamism.

Nevertheless, the core principles of Khaled and the government seem to be similar. Islam forms the basis for discussions of morality, social responsibility and culture. Likewise, morality and social responsibility often form the basis for discussions of Islam by the State and in the public sphere. This stress on inner piety, ethics and good works seems to be reflected by other non-state actors concerned with Islamic revival. For example, Ahmed Abu Haiba, the director and producer of Amr Khaled's television programme "Words from the Heart" and the current television programme "Mona and her sisters"

[37] Zaqzouq, *Egypt Today*, p.64

told me that the West fails to understand Islam. He said that the West perceives of Islam as a religion when in reality it is a "lifestyle." It goes beyond belief and understanding the cosmos; indeed, it prescribes how one should live life and regulates what one should and should not do. Abu Haiba said that this has always been the case as is borne out by the extensive tradition of Islamic law.[38] Abu Haiba positions this emphasis on ethics and lifestyle as an inherent part of Islam. He locates it within the Islamic tradition. He believes that what he and other intellectuals are doing with their Islamic works are re-emphasising the true meaning of Islam for the public. Islam has always been a lifestyle; he is simply demonstrating this clearly in innovative ways. However, unlike Starrett's thesis which suggests that the functionality of Islam is a product of modernising trends in which Islam is "put to work" for the State, Abu Haiba firmly places his efforts within Islamic tradition. In essence, he believes Islam has always been a system of regulations and directives that put the individual to work for the good of society. This is not to say that modernity has not sensibly impacted upon Islam, nor is it to undermine Starrett's argument. It is simply to acknowledge an awareness of the legacy of tradition and how contemporaries who espouse "revival" see themselves within this tradition.

This, however, is a very abstract formulation. Amr Khaled does not explicitly or rigorously associate himself with any particular Islamic tradition, certainly not to the body of Islamic legal tradition. He has no classical training or background in *fiqh* and he refuses to issue fatwas. As a result of this, he has received criticism for being simple and insubstantial. Hany Bashr, one of the founders of Islam Online, the popular Internet site,

[38] Abu Haiba, Personal Interview, 30/01/05

sees him as a product of the Muslim Brotherhood with an unnuanced and unintellectual approach. He contrasts the work of Khaled to that of the al-Azhar-trained preacher Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Islam Online.[39]

However, Khaled's approach can be seen to be derived from the approach of Islamic Modernists in the twentieth century such as Muhammad Abduh. This is evident in his textual approach which focuses truth, values and ethics directly on a reading of the Qur'an. He does not historicize Islam but sees it as an evident, present force. It is from these core Islamic values that he believes a transformation of society can take place. He alludes to his goal as follows:

> We want to change our painful reality from one of humiliation to one of great dignity; from economical devastation to economical prosperity; from unemployment to work and production; and from loss of identity to pride in being Muslims. We want to trigger a new age in success for universities and systems of education, non-profit organizations, social organizations, and in the field of translation. We want to turn our culture from a cheap and tasteless one to a leading, refined, culture.[40]

This echoes the sentiments of Abduh a century before: "The Muslims, if their characters are disciplined by their religion, can compete with Europeans in the acquirement of the sciences and education, and equal them in civilization."[41] Although Khaled does not frame his message in the context of western society, the modernist agenda of intellectual and technological empowerment is still there. This is to be achieved through a true

[39] Bashr Hany, Personal Interview 08/02/05
[40] Khaled Amr, *Sunaa' al-Hayah*, *http://www.amrkhaled.net/acategories/categories42.html*, accessed 02/11/04
[41] Abduh cited in Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, p.135

embrace of Islam. Furthermore, although the loaded term of civilization has been replaced with culture, the idea of a certain attainable common value is present. To become cultured is to embrace the values of Islam as the basis of an educated, rational, technological and socially aware community.

Amr Khaled demonstrates his intellectual legacy by his emphasis on a particular Qur'anic verse. In an episode of the *Life Makers* (*Sunaa' al-Hayah*) series about the *Hijab*, Khaled asserts one of his beliefs in why women should wear it. He says of those who don't wear the *hijab*,

> They say 'Allah has not guided me yet. I will put on the *hijab*, but Allah hasn't guided me to do so now. So when I am 50 years old and enjoyed my life, I'll put it on". No sister, this excuse is totally wrong. Allah says what can be translated as, "**Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)**. You will not put the *hijab* on until you change what is within yourself and work towards putting on the *hijab*.[42]

In pre-modern thought this verse had often been used to demonstrate God's support for His people unless they moved from the path of Islam. However, modernists have used it in an active sense, as Khaled does here. People must change their own lives and conduct if they want God's support. This activist stance is evident in much modernist thinking. Its centrality for Khaled is undeniable. One of his most recent shows, for the Saudi-owned *Iqra* satellite channel, which aired during the Iraq war, was called *Until They Change*

[42] Amr Khaled, *Sunaa' al-Hayah, http://www.amrkhaled.net/acategories/categories42.html*, accessed 02/11/04

Themselves. Therefore, he believes that problems of wider significance for society and for the Islamic community must be resolved initially through a personal reformation.

It may be assumed that such views which premise reform on personal piety conflict with that of the Egyptian state. The state is seen as secular; yet, as has been demonstrated it has premised its vision of a modern community on a moral as well as an economic and technological basis. It seems evident that the division between "Official Islam" on the one hand, and that espoused by Islamic revivalists on the other, is not as large as is often assumed. An analysis of contemporary Islamic trends that call for 'revival' must take account of a background in which Islam is the context for discussions of social problems and social regeneration both from the point of view of "Official" modernising rhetoric and from the point of view of non-state Muslim actors who place themselves within an established tradition. Both adopt an approach based on a rational engagement with Islam and as will be argued later, leave the potential for an abstract interpretation of the religion based less on spiritual and cosmological concerns than on a set of ethics and morals concerned specifically with the mundane.

Global Islamic Revival and the State

It is evident that this discourse is often carried out with reference to the nation state. Amr Khaled said of the Life Makers programme (*Sunaa' al-Hayah*), "this is not a program but

a project to revive our nations".[43] He, therefore, sees the project in terms of various states and a revival of these individual states. However, it must be made clear that the idea of Islamic revival does go beyond the confines of the nation state. The work of Khaled and people like Shaykh al-Qaradawi at Islam Online aims to inspire the global *Umma* and includes Muslims in minority contexts. As Khaled says on another episode of Life Makers, "The final goal of the program is to achieve a revival of Islam and Muslims all over the world."[44] This does suggest that he sees no contradiction between the nation state and the worldwide Muslim community. Perhaps whereas the terminology and ethics of Islam are used in support of the nation state by the Egyptian government, the nation state serves simply as the viable framework within which to work for Islamic revivalists. As the statement from Khaled above illustrates, there is the possibility to imagine two communities which are mutually compatible. Moreover, as will be argued below, the reality of a global Muslim community affects the national interpretation of Islam. Through different media and communities Islam travels and then returns to be appropriated in its altered form. Egyptian expressions of Islam amongst the affluent are affected by how Muslims in other countries appropriate and express religious belief and identity. Therefore, although there is a sense in which the Egyptian government appropriates Islam as a set of ethics and morals which are culturally authentic, Islamic revival is a global phenomenon which impacts on several different levels. I will now deal with the issues that notions of Islamic revival provoke through the framework of a study of the internet site Islam Online. This will illustrate that the ideas of revival work on both

[43] Amr Khaled, *Sunaa' al-Hayah, http://www.amrkhaled.net/acategories/categories42.html*, accessed 02/11/04
[44] Ibid

a national and international level and demonstrate how they interact. Although the internet site has a global reach, it also has a local relevance. It will become clear that global conceptions of Islam, which take into account the position of Muslims in minority contexts, have the potential to cause tension when they are reappropriated in a Muslim majority context with an established religious tradition.

Chapter 3: Islam Online, the Internet and the Global Muslim Community

The website Islam Online was established in October 1999 and has been described as the leading Islamic website and the most popular independent Arabic language website.[45] Exact audience figures are hard to establish. According to Mutiullah Tayeb, website co-ordinator, the site was receiving about 250,000 page views a day in 2002.[46] Hany Bashr, one of the founders of the site believes it is second in popularity only to the al-Jazeera website which receives approximately 8 million visitors a year.[47] Bunt, on the other hand, has gathered information to suggest that it received 118,286,989 hits with 26,856,884 page views in its first year.[48] However, what cannot be disputed is that it is extremely popular. The website was the idea of a Qatari student, Marim al-Hajri and was then taken on by her professor Doctor Hamed al-Hamed who managed to persuade Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi to support and become involved in the project. Although the website is registered in Qatar, it is largely staffed and run out of Cairo. It has a number of services and pages which aim to spread the Islamic message around the world. These include news reports, cultural pieces, fatwa-issuing and counselling services staffed by Islamic scholars from around the world. The page is accessible in English and Arabic. Although

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[45] Bashr Hany, "How the website Islam Online works on the Internet", *Al-Ahram Strategic File*, no.101, May 2003, p.57

[46] Wakin Daniel, "Online in Cairo, With News, Views and 'Fatwa Corner'", *New York Times* 29/10/02 (*http://query.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F30A1FF93F5B0C7A8EDDA909*) accessed17/02/2005

[47] Bashr, Personal Interview 08/02/05

[48] Bunt Gary, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*, (London, Pluto, 2003), p.147

there are some differences in content, the majority of the issues and news are the same in both languages. The web page has the look of a news website. (See Appendix, **Fig.2**) There is a scrolling text with the latest updates on world events and how they relate to the lives of Muslims. For example, there was coverage of the death of the Pope and how he envisaged the Muslim community. It is more common though to see coverage of Iraq. Below the news is a list of the features which are discussed in more substantial articles such as "Islam and Muslims in Cyberspace" or "Pro-*Hijab* campaign in the EU Parliament."[49] There is also a list of issues discussed in "Shariah Corner" which relate directly to religious issues such as "Towards understanding the Qur'an."[50] Apart from these religious and political pages, there are pages relating to art and culture and health and science. The advisory services that the site offers are listed to one side. This conception of an Islamic way of life that underpins everything that the website does is confirmed by adverts for charitable campaigns that it supports and also a directory for Islamic banks and television channels.

Shaykh al-Qaradawi envisages the website's purpose as follows:

> This is what this major, global project – Islam Online – is doing. It carries the message of Islam to the world. It addresses non-Muslims to help them understand the creed, law, ethics and civilization of Islam. It addresses Muslims as well, to help them understand correct Islam, explain the realities of this religion, answer the questions, and correct the misconceptions they picked up through the faulty inherited culture or through the invading imported culture.[51]

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[49] Islam Online, *http://www.islamonline.net/english/index.shtml*, accessed29/04/05
[50] Ibid
[51] Qaradawi Yusuf, "The Importance of Islam Online", *http://www.islamonline.net/english/qaradawi/index.shtml*, 20/02/05

There is, thus, an attempt to create a global orthodoxy, or normative understanding of Islam. Islam Online is setting itself up as an authority outside the traditional channels of learning and power. It creates a different setting in which to delineate and define the boundaries of "correct" and "incorrect" Islam. It is, therefore, like the Egyptian state, attempting to narrow the discourse and practice of the religion to establish a "reality". This however is played out on a global scale. Islam Online tries to create a global orthodoxy which is equally applicable for a Muslim in a minority context such as Britain and for a Muslim in a majority context such as Egypt. As Roy says, "The blurring of the borders between Islam and the West is not just a consequence of immigration. It is linked with a more general phenomenon: deterritorialisation. Islam is less and less ascribed to a specific territory and civilisational area."[52] Islam becomes something beyond a tradition with roots defined by geography, language and culture. Islam Online's conception of Islam seems to be premised on the condition of migrant Muslims and yet its formulation is appropriated by and affects Muslims in majority contexts with established Islamic traditions and histories. This is evident, to a certain extent, in the use of both Arabic and English for the site. For many Muslims, English, as a 'global' language, is more accessible than Arabic and can be used practically. The choice of language perhaps signifies a difference in condition, both physical and material, which could potentially affect the sensibilities of the user. However, the content of the Arabic and English sites are fairly similar and certainly draw on a single spirit and conception of what Islam is and what it does. As will become clear this has the potential for tension.

[52] Roy Olivier, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a new Ummah*, (London, Hurst, 2004), p.18

Islam Online has attempted to establish itself as an intellectual authority 'on Islam' through its use of legal interpretation. However, as Skovgaard-Petersen asserted, the very nature of the modern media reduces the technical and complex to a simplified, easily digestible sound bite.[53] It is undeniable that Islam Online does present different scholars and attempts to frame its arguments within an established tradition; nevertheless, the very nature of the medium and the scope of the project limit the ability to present nuanced argument. Moreover, there is undoubtedly a concern with presenting a certain worldview, and presenting this view as 'true' Islam. This is evident in the way Islam Online attempts to be the complete authority on life and lifestyle. As John Espositio says, "There's a desire to make it a one-stop shop…But obviously no single Web site can do that for anything, let alone the Islamic world."[54] Its popularity does suggest, though, that it is a source of knowledge and support for many Muslims throughout the world. It is the reasons for this success and the impact that it has on Islamic discourse and practice that will be analysed in this thesis. It is necessary to begin by looking at the significance the medium of the internet has for spreading and receiving an Islamic message.

Islam and the Internet

It is very difficult to establish precise figures for internet use in the Arab world. Alterman alludes to some of the difficulties in ascertaining numbers of users. It may be possible to

[53] Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State*, p.316, (see above p.11)
[54] Esposito John cited in Wakin, "Online in Cairo, With News, Views and 'Fatwa Corner'"

establish the number of people with private internet connection, but what about people using semi-public or public internet access? Figures for e-mail account owners could be attainable, but what about people who simply surf the web or have a shared account?[55] Moreover, it is impossible to establish "Muslim" internet users. What seems beyond dispute is that in the Arab world at least the number of users is low. According to the 2004 United Nations Human Development Report, the highest number of internet users per 1000 people in the Arab world was in the United Arab Emirates where the figure was 313.2. However, the figure in Egypt was 28.2 and 12.9 in Syria. The figure in the United States was 551.4.[56] What these figures suggest is that users in countries such as Egypt and Syria are certainly a minority. Thus, it is not possible to draw larger conclusions about the reception of Islamic discourse in Egypt from the content of websites such as Islam Online. However, it can be argued that it is possible to draw these conclusions about a particular group or groups. What will become evident is that the idea of Islamic revival and the piety movement is a particular phenomenon. It is not broad but has taken hold amongst particular people in particular circumstances. At a certain level, it is possible to argue that Egyptian Muslim internet users have more in common with American Muslim internet users than with fellow Egyptian Muslims. As Eickelman and Anderson assert, "New media refigure audiences as communities, because senders and receivers have far more in common, not just in interests but also in cultural style and

[55] Alterman Jon, *New Media, New Politics?: From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World*, (Washington, Washington Institute for Near East Policy,1998), pp.35-6
[56] *United Nations Human Development Report 2004*, (*http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/pdf/hdr04_HDI.pdf*) accessed16/04/05

social position".[57] They have the potential to associate, move in and identify with different communities at different times and in different circumstances.

It is evident that internet users share certain capabilities and characteristics. Alterman draws attention to the two main factors that distinguish internet users in the Arab world. Alluding to the expense of using the internet, he asserts, "Whereas such a price may appeal to highly Westernized elites, it is beyond the resources of most residents, especially considering the steep learning curve that non-computer literate users must confront."[58] Internet use requires a certain degree of wealth and a certain degree of technical accomplishment. Consequently, it may well be assumed that the users of the website Islam Online fit this profile. Such attributes necessarily affect individual disposition and thus one would assume religious expression. A useful, if rather black and white, example of the impact technological ability has on the individual is Peter Berger's description in his book *The Heretical Imperative*. He uses the example of the telephone to illustrate how a piece of external technology can be internalised and modify ways of thinking and ways of interacting with others. He concludes, "Do these internal habits carry over into other areas of life, such as nontelephonic relations with other persons? The answer is almost certainly yes."[59] Such an assessment could equally be applied to computers, e-mail and the internet. The technical skills acquired for these activities

[57] Eickelman Dale & Anderson Jon, "Redefining Muslim Publics", in Eickelman Dale & Anderson Jon (eds), *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, 2nd edn, (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2003),p.9
[58] Alterman, *New Media, New Politics?*, p.38
[59] Berger Peter, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*, (London, Collins, 1980) pp.6-7

require a certain ability to form new habits not only in using the technology but also in dealing with other people. Furthermore, it requires new ways of accessing and processing knowledge. Even more so than the telephone, the Internet affects the individual and the communal. It induces new habits in the individual but it also creates new communities and notions of authority and knowledge. Berger's example of the telephone illustrates how the individual is affected by machinery. His following example demonstrates how groups of people are set apart by their financial capability to use machinery:

> "The jet traveller in the Third World is a pretty good metaphor of modernity. He moves on the same planet as those villagers, and yet he moves in an altogether different world. His space is measured in thousands of miles, theirs by the distance a bullock cart can go. His time is expressed in the controlled precision of airline schedules, theirs by the seasons of nature and the human body. He moves with breathtaking speed; they move in the slow rhythms set long ago by tradition."[60]

Such a sharp binary distinction may be simplistic in this context, however, the notion of travel and its impact is fruitful for the internet. The internet user can instantly access information about a vast range of issues. They do not have to be concerned with the physical process of locating and trawling through books. Furthermore, they can instantly be in contact with people in other parts of the world. These two processes can be combined so that accurate and detailed information on any number of topics can be sent to a personal friend instantly anywhere in the world. All this is to suggest that the internet has the capacity to not only change individual habits and dispositions but also notions of knowledge and authority. This could potentially help to foster a sense of shared knowledge and experience.

[60] Ibid,pp.1-2

The above discussion aimed to illustrate that for a particular group the internet allows discussion and interaction on different issues in a new context. This has certain implications for Islam and traditional modes of Islamic learning. Anybody who has the money and the technical ability to access the internet can appropriate Islamic 'knowledge' piecemeal. Moreover, they can also propagate Islamic 'knowledge', to a certain degree, anonymously. Olivier Roy makes a pertinent point regarding intellectuals and the use of the media which perhaps rings even truer with regard to internet users: "The new intellectual is a tinkerer; he creates a montage, as his personal itinerary guides him, of segments of knowledge, using methods that come from a different conceptual universe than the segments he recombines, creating a totality that is more imaginary than theoretical".[61] This suggests a move away from reliance on certain established authorities such as '*Ulama* or even authoritative textual sources. It suggests a level of choice that allows the individual to create his own worldview and reality. This seems magnified by the internet which provides various sources of information to choose from and assess. This process is equally applicable to notions of Islamic knowledge. The ability to use technology to access Islamic sources of information and knowledge becomes more important than religious training or qualification. Hassan al-Turabi, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan, also calls into question the notion of a hierarchy of knowledge. He affirms, "Because all knowledge is divine and religious, a chemist, an

[61] Roy Olivier, *The Failure of Political Islam*, (London, Tauris, 1994), pp.96-97

engineer, an economist, a jurist are all ulama".[62] The internet is a prominent tool in this process. Individuals with the right capabilities can create their own realities and truths. In this sense, they 'construct' Islam.

Jon Anderson labels these processes, discussed above, "creolization". He witnesses this in "mixed discourses" and "mixed intellectual techniques".[63] This is evident, to a large degree with the Islam Online website. It takes news stories from other sources and puts them on its site. There is an evident mixing of sources bringing together diverse stories to present a worldview. This is also evident in its use of intellectual techniques. The site incorporates both fatwas and modern counselling methods to deal with issues of both a social and a personal nature. There is often an overlap in the topics discussed using different means. These different practices and pieces are supposed to add up to a whole which represents true Islam. Indeed, as Esposito said, it is supposed to act as a "one-stop shop" rather than one source of knowledge amongst many. The site and al-Qaradawi are eager to present their traditional Islamic credentials. They are, therefore, trying to assert a traditional framework of authority within a new context. The above processes are, thus, not acknowledged. The site effectively says "this is Islam and so it has always been." It obviously recognises it is applying 'Islam' to new, modern problems and in this sense sees itself as innovative. Shaykh al-Qaradawi states,

> Muslims are obliged to use any medium and technology to convey their concepts and call to people. Other reformers have been using these technologies as they appear:

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[62] al-Turabi Hassan cited in Piscatori James, *Islam in a World of Nation-States*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.19

[63] Anderson Jon, "Globalizing Politics and Religion in the Muslim World", *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, (*http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/archive/Anderson.html*), 08/02/05

> when radio was first invented, they used it; when television came along, they used that, and now in the age of the internet, they are using it too. We must use whatever medium possible to bring our message to people.[64]

However, the media and technology as the physical materials of modernity inevitably affect the nature of that belief. Islam Online is popular as a source of Islamic knowledge. Users do access it because they see it as guiding them in the correct ways of Islam and helping to give them identity as true Muslims. It is perhaps defined by its global nature constructing a notion of Islam applicable to Muslims in different physical spaces and in different conditions.

Islam Online: Creating a Global Islam

In his book, *Transnational Muslim Politics*, Peter Mandaville asserts, "Migration is hence a rupture, an important break which can lead to changes in the significance of Islam and of being Muslim."[65] He argues that when Islam 'travels' it inevitably changes. It comes into contact with other systems and other forms of the religion. In this scheme, in a global context, Islam undergoes a certain reformulation in its new localities. As Eickelman and Anderson state, "In an intellectual world of systems and subjects, Islam becomes approachable in different ways, one system in a world of systems".[66] Therefore, confronted with new situations, both physical, emotional and intellectual, the Muslim

[64] Al-Qaradawi Yusuf, Interview in *Transnational Broadcasting Studies,* (*http://www.tbsjournal.com/interviewsheikhqaradawi.htm*) accessed11/02/05
[65] Mandaville Peter, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma*, (London, Routledge, 2001), p.115
[66] Eickelman and Anderson, "Redefining Muslim Publics", p.12

traveller engages with Islam in different ways. This notion of travel is not simply physical though. In a certain sense, internet users are travellers. The sense of difference, dislocation or challenge may not be as real but they still have the potential to be present. They are like the third world jet travellers of Berger's conception, set apart by their command of technology, travelling to places that other believers do not. In this context, they can be seen as a community separated by physical space but joined by their engagement with Islam as a system in a world of systems. For Migrants, Islam can become "a memory-aid, something with which to remember who one is".[67] Or as Starrett says it may not be a case of remembering but of constructing in the first place:

> for African-American Muslims, who have not experienced Islam in the context of comprehensive institutional orthodoxies, issues of counter-hegemony so important in the Arab world are often less significant than creating a Muslim identity in the first place through forming a community with its own body of knowledge and interpretive traditions.[68]

The construction or reformulation of Islam rests on its relevance for the individual in placing him or herself in a new setting. It is a means of self-definition but also a programme for conduct in a foreign environment. Mandaville illustrates how the issue of being Muslim can take on special resonance in minority contexts: "The diasporic Muslim ever aware of his otherness comes to see other Muslims in a special light, as participants in a similar predicament. 'Back home I could relate Islamic thinking in a religious manner,' one Muslim told me, 'but in diaspora I gained a greater sense of Islam's social relevance'".[69] Islam, in a sense, becomes functional and objectified. It is a set of markers

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[67] Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics*, p.117
[68] Starrett Gregory, "Muslim Identities and the Great Chain of Buying" in Eickelman and Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World*, p.80
[69] Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics*, p.115

and rules which gives the individual a framework and roots to lay down in their physical place of residence. The above quotation suggests that Islam has the capacity to become less about the spiritual and cosmological and more about the social and the mundane structuring of life. The Muslim youth wants to 'apply' Islam to the situation in which he finds himself. Mandaville suggests that this marks a departure from former generations of Muslims who rely on established forms of authority and notions of community. In that context, Islam is marked by its differing sectarian interpretations and communities based around former localities or national affiliations. He cites Dr Ataullah Siddiqi, a British Muslim research fellow at the Islamic foundation, who asserts,

> These Ulama often seem to be living in a different world; they have very little sense of the important issues of the day. They have fixed minds and are very fixed in their views. In terms of politics they have created their own internal politics concerning different institutions and traditions, but they aren't dealing with the larger political issues. No questions are being asked and there is no reasoning.[70]

There is, thus, a rejection of traditional interpretation which leads to a desire to engage intellectually with Islam as a tool in social and political regeneration. It can be 'used' and its use is premised on a rational undertaking. This is partly the result of the physical and intellectual environment in which they live. It is one defined by technology and by a plurality of options. This plurality is not only at the level of material objects or goods but also at the intellectual level. As Mandaville confirms, "Today's young diasporic Muslims are trying to build their lives in a highly urbanised and often cosmopolitan environment. They require an Islam to match this setting. The traditional frameworks of their parents

[70] Siddiqi Dr Ataullah cited in Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics*, p.123

and the associated institutions of religious scholarship are perceived to be in need of transformation."[71]

It is within this context that Islam Online operates. As Shaykh al-Qaradawi says, it is a global project aimed at disseminating 'correct' Islam. Unlike the *'Ulama* that Dr Siddiqi complains about, the website attempts to engage with Islam as an applicable system in a modern world. It deals with issues that are directly raised by diasporic Muslims. It is a vehicle for 'travelling' Islam. Islam Online addresses Muslims whose Islamic identity is no longer based on their physical location or the result of being born into a certain tradition. Olivier Roy concludes that this leads to particular needs and consequences: "Deterritorialisation of Islam leads to a quest for definition, because Islam is no longer embedded in territorial cultures, whatever their diversity" [72] When Islam ceases to be defined by the countries in which it predominates, there has to be a reassessment of what Islam means. However, the process is not simply one way. The website Islam Online will demonstrate how Islam can travel back. Mandaville stresses, "Travel is hence a condition in which 'local' knowledge becomes relativised and subject to transformation through entering translocality."[73] The reformulation of Islam, in translocality, by migrant communities does not necessarily remain with those migrant communities. It can travel to other communities where it is appropriated. Therefore, elements of these different communities come together through their shared idea of Islam to form their own

[71] Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics*, p.126
[72] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p.20
[73] Ibid, p.117

community which is less physical than intellectual and supra-national. Islam Online is one such community. It will become clear how its formulation of Islam is premised on the concerns of migrant minority communities but how its construction permeates parts of Muslim majority communities with established traditions.

The clearest expression of the relationship between user and website on Islam Online is to be found in the advisory sections of the site. 'Ask the Scholar', 'Fatwa Corner' and 'Cyber Counselling' illustrate how Muslims engage with and perceive the site. They seem to act as a source of information and support for Muslims trying to make sense of a complex world and their position in it. This service, therefore, performs a similar function to that of the fatwa throughout Islamic history. Masud, Messick and Powers suggest that the formulation of the fatwa as a pronouncement on the correct interpretation of Islam has its roots in the Qur'an itself where it asserts, "When they ask you concerning…say…."[74] Furthermore, they illustrate how the fatwa has been a fluid system for legal interpretation and defining what is and is not Islamic. As they state, "To issue a fatwa all that was required of a person was religious knowledge and piety….Acting in a private capacity, muftis provided authoritative advice for Muslims unfamiliar with the detailed provisions of Islamic law or uncertain that their behaviour conformed to what was considered to be properly Islamic."[75] This was particularly evident in the first century (*hijra*) when the success of Islam depended on providing a definition of Islamic and non-Islamic activities.

[74] Masud Muhammad Khalid, Messick Brinkley, Powers David, "Muftis, Fatwas, and Islamic Legal Interpretation", in Masud, Messick and Powers (eds.), *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and their Fatwas*, (London, Harvard University Press, 1996),p.5
[75] Ibid, pp.8-9

Hallaq goes even further than this suggesting that throughout Islamic history the fatwa has been a dynamic force in the Islamic legal tradition. He argues that the blossoming tradition of fatwa-giving is evidence of the fact that there was no consensus on the closing of the gates of *Ijtihad* (independent reasoning to arrive at legal interpretations of relevant issues). He believes that even after the fifth century (*hijra*) *Ijtihad* and the use of fatwas as a function of this, were a necessary component of Islamic society : "newly arising problems were inevitable even in a slowly developing society and *ijtihad*…constituted the only method through which such problems were solved."[76] This suggests that the fatwa has always played an important role in providing solutions for Muslims to problems that have no precedent in Islamic tradition. Therefore, Islam Online should be seen within this dynamic tradition. It attempts to find solutions to newly-arising problems that are a product of different modern societies.

On the other hand, this website alters the role of the fatwa in some ways. It becomes more individualised and the potential for complete anonymity allows questions to be posed on a greater range of topics. It also perhaps allows for more questions from female petitioners because the medium depersonalises the process in one sense. Furthermore, Islam Online does not appear to make much distinction between its different advisory services. For example, similar topics arise both in the counselling and fatwa sections. Moreover, the site often directs the user to one or the other section to provide a precedent or similar response to their question. This suggests that there is a blurring of the lines between the fatwa, which is part of the Islamic legal tradition, and counselling services,

[76] Hallaq Wael, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.16, No.1, (March 1984), 3-41, p.32

which are often construed as a secular form of support. There is a development of the fatwa so that is part of a process that does not simply pass judgement on Islamic and non-Islamic activities but that also posits Islam as a form of resolving emotional and personal difficulties.

The 'Ask the Scholar' section frequently receives questions from people wanting to know the 'Islamic' approach or answer to an issue of contemporary relevance. For example, the site recently received a question from a Muslim, named Mariam in the United States of America wanting to know the Islamic line on euthanasia in the wake of the 'Terri Schiavo affair'. She asked:

> Since the Terri Schiavo's case, came in the news, there is a lot of discussion on the issue of life and death. Can you please answer these questions. What is the Islamic position on euthanasia? Is it permissible to prolong life artificially and at what point it is allowed for doctors to "pull the plug"? In case of a dispute, who makes the final decision—doctors, parents, spouse, children, patients, or government? When does death occur? How important is it for Muslims to prepare a living will explaining our position on these matters?[77]

The question is concerned with philosophical intricacies to a certain extent. The questioner wants to know what constitutes death islamically. However, the question is largely marked by a practical bent. She is interested to know how to live islamically rather than abstract truths. For example, Mariam wants to know whether preparing a will is advisable presumably so that she can die in accordance with Islamic precepts as well as live in accordance with them. Furthermore, it is interesting that she should turn to a

[77] Islam Online (http://www.islamonline.net/fatwaapplication/english/display.asp?hFatwaID=123231) accessed18/04/05

source of support registered in Qatar and staffed out of Cairo for an answer to a debate which has taken on national significance in the United States. The affair has polarised American public opinion and become a battleground for the main political parties and other interested groups. Nevertheless, Mariam sought an Islamic interpretation of the incident which could be placed alongside the other arguments stemming from other worldviews. However, what marks it out is a concern with certainty. It seems she is addressing Islam Online as an authority rather than for an opinion. The implication is that the answer will be 'what Islam states', not simply the interpretation of Islamic sources by certain scholars. Islam Online is trying to posit itself as Islam and, what is more, that 'Islam is the solution' to all modern problems. However, to achieve this, the site has to create its authority which no longer can simply rest on lineage or religious training. The relationships that the internet produces are horizontal rather than vertical. What is at stake is not simply the transmission of knowledge from a learned authority to a compliant supplicant. The relationship is horizontal in the sense that there is pretension to equality in the relationship and a blurring of the lines between transmitter and receiver.[78] It must position itself as able to engage with the problems of everyday modern life in a rational manner. This is evident in Islam Online's response to this particular question. It engages with and uses the language of science and technology:

> An individual is considered dead in one of the following two situations:
> **a.** Complete irreversible cessation of respiratory and cardiovascular systems **b.** Complete irreversible cessation of the functions of the brain including the brain stem. This should be confirmed by the accepted medical standards. In case of brain death it is required to have the presence of a reliable medical specialist well experienced in the

[78] see Anderson Jon, "The Internet and Islam's New Interpreters", in Eickelman and Anderson (eds), *New Media in the Muslim World*, pp.45-61

> clinical diagnosis of brain and brain stem death and the various implications of such diagnosis.[79]

This suggests that Islam and modern medical science are not mutually exclusive fields but that they are complementary. This is a line long promoted in Egypt and elsewhere in the Muslim world. Talal Asad has asserted that historians tend to believe that religion "was gradually compelled to concede the domain of….public truth to natural science".[80] Such questions and answers would suggest that amongst a certain group of Muslims public truth can be measured by both science and religion. They are not seen as incompatible. Islam and science are being used to provide answers to the questions and doubt that the modern Muslim experiences in different places and situations. This is also illustrated from the response to the question of a living will. The website responds,

> It is always good to have an Islamic will. The way the situation is changing and the increasing involvement of the governments and courts in this matter make it even more urgent and necessary that we carefully think how to prepare our Islamic will, not only for the distribution of inheritance, but also for our medical treatment in case of coma or other complications (a living will) and also for our proper Islamic burial. May Allah keep us on the right path and save us from difficulties in this life and in the life to come.[81]

There is, thus, a clear message that Islam should be the source of inspiration and authority guiding the individual. The questioner is led to think that the institutions of the state (the government and the courts) cannot be trusted to cater for the individual's moral and spiritual welfare. This is to be achieved through Islam. Indeed, the implication of the

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[79] Ibid
[80] Asad Talal, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p.207
[81] *Islam Online* (*http://www.islamonline.net/fatwaapplication/english/display.asp?hFatwaID=123231*) accessed18/04/05

final invocation is that Islam has the potential to solve difficulties and provide stability in this turbulent world.

Islam Online does not just address such contemporary issues of general concern. It also attempts to engage in providing solutions and answers for the individual. The concern with the self and self improvement is a distinctive feature of the site. For example, recent questions submitted to the cyber counsellor include those relating to appearance, adolescent love, and homosexuality. The site seems to act as a support network for young people who need advice, potentially because this is not available from other traditional support networks such as the family. For example, Miriam from Jordan wrote to the site introducing her problem with the following sentence: "You truly offer an amazing service, especially as I live in a small Western town where to seek Islamic guidance is not easy and where I don't really want to resort to non-Muslim counselors."[82] Furthermore, the nature of the medium means that a level of anonymity is guaranteed. Individuals may well use the internet because it allows them to pose embarrassing questions without actually being exposed or made to feel that personal embarrassment. It also allows people to ask questions of 'global' importance – questions that formerly would have only been asked by rulers. The response to these questions often only introduces Islam as a supporting factor. An engagement with the question in a rational and non-religious

[82] *Islam Online* (*http://www.islamonline.net/QuestionApplication/English/display.asp?hquestionID=18371*) accessed19/04/05

manner is often evident. In response to a submission about looking ugly, the counsellor responded as follows:

> your assessment of yourself is based largely on how you perceive yourself in comparison to others in society. How boring the world would be if everyone looked exactly alike. Each of us is unique in our own special way, and the challenge is really to discover what makes us unique. Of course, family and friends can be mean sometimes and say hurtful things about one's appearance or comment on specific physical features. The goal should be to remind oneself that Allah hears these comments and is aware of the pain you feel. Do your best to not let yourself become overly conscious to the extent that your life becomes dysfunctional.[83]

The counsellor does allude to God as a source of comfort and strength but this is only to support an argument which begins from a non-religious premise. The burden is on the individual to rationalise the situation and change his condition himself so that he can live a fruitful life. Islam Online attempts to give practical advice for the individual so that he can act upon it. This is evident in the counsellor's conclusion to this problem:

> Work on aspects about yourself that you can change. You can take measures to improve your speech but you cannot change the shape of your nose for example. At least, you should not attempt to change your physical features purely for aesthetic reasons. Take heart in the fact that Allah loves you for who you are and do your best to strengthen your relationship with Allah![84]

Once again there is comfort in God's love and support but the onus of the advice is on the individual's capacity to change himself. The website, therefore, aims to use Islam as a tool for self-improvement and as a means of addressing issues of contemporary concern in different environments. A counsellor responding to a question about doubts over Islam seems to capture the aim of the site and how it perceives Islam:

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[83] *Islam Online* (*http://www.islamonline.net/QuestionApplication/English/display.asp?hquestionID=18450*) accessed18/04/05

[84] Ibid

> I would like to say that what you are going through is not so uncommon, especially in these times when so much is happening to make us doubt even ourselves. We all need to have faith in something, and Islam is no less than anything else because it encompasses everything that pertains to balance in this life on ours. The problem occurs when our environment seems to undermine who and what we are, and when we are uncertain about who and what we are to those in our lives, it makes us question everything. After all, what is life without meaning?[85]

Therefore, Islam provides meaning in a world of doubt. When everything is relative and when our environment challenges our assumptions, a fruitful and intellectual engagement with Islam can provide the solution. The counsellor concludes, "Islam is a form of cognitive therapy—cognitive therapy spiritualized".[86] Therefore, Islam cures the mind and the soul. The emphasis here seems to be on the challenges presented by a different environment. Such counselling often seems to be aimed at Muslims in a minority context. Indeed, this question was from a Muslim in the United Kingdom. However, this site is not just aimed at Muslims in the west or in minority situations. It answers questions similar to those posed above from questioners spanning the Muslim world. The reaction to this form of Islam in majority Muslim situations is interesting.

Islam Online and Muslims in Majority Contexts

The website receives many questions from Muslims in the Middle East and other majority Muslim countries who raise precisely the same sort of issues that Muslims living

[85]*Islam Online* (*http://www.islamonline.net/QuestionApplication/English/display.asp?hquestionID=18381*) accessed18/04/05
[86] Ibid

in the west ask. The majority of questions addressed to the cyber counsellors pertain to personal issues that the website categorises as self-esteem issues or dating and marriage issues. For example, a Muslim woman from Saudi Arabia wrote a question to the site entitled, "A Carer with a Desire to Marry".[87] A young woman from Afghanistan also recently wrote to the site to ask for advice about marriage when she still loved somebody else. The response of the counsellor to her question illustrates in what way the site addresses all questions regardless of the nationality and cultural background of the questioner. The counsellor advises: "Do not jump from one relationship to another, as this would be very damaging to your wellbeing….. In fact, your predicament is one of the reasons why extramarital relationships are forbidden in Islam. You were involved in a fruitless relationship in which you were tossed aside with intense feelings that are one sided."[88] Therefore, the advice is premised primarily on the welfare and feelings of the individual. Indeed, the counsellor is keen to demonstrate the rationality of religious injunctions. There are solid reasons behind religious rules. The religion is dictated by ethics and values not vice versa. The importance of self is paramount. Islam is shown to be a means of preserving self-dignity and esteem. As Roy says, this conception of Islam demonstrates that, "faith is a face-to-face encounter not between God and individuals, but between individuals and themselves".[89] Islam, in this context, encourages the individual to develop inner strength through a set of values, morals and ethics.

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[87] *Islam Online (http://www.islamonline.net/QuestionApplication/English/display.asp?hquestionID=18421) accessed19/04/05*

[88] *Islam Online (http://www.islamonline.net/QuestionApplication/English/display.asp?hquestionID=18370) accessed19/04/05*

[89] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p.185

This conception is sought and disseminated to Muslims all over the world. Muslims in very different contexts conceive of Islam in these terms. Such a "deterritorialised" conception of Islam can gain credence in Egypt just as it can in the United States. Indeed, Islam Online has produced a series of books, derived from the Website which are sold throughout the Arab World. They are easily available in Egypt. The series has reproduced examples from the website page "Problems and Solutions for Youth" and brought them together in books on different themes. Titles include, *Al-Hub wa al-Khatiyi`a (Love and Sin)*, *Ikhtiyar sharik al-hayat (Choosing a Life Partner)*, *Al-'Alaqat al-hamima bana al-zowjayn (Intimate Relationships between a Married Couple)*, *Awaqib al-taharrush al-jinsi (Consequences of Sexual Interference)* and *Al-Shabab….al-hikayat wa asrar (Youth….Stories and Secrets)*.[90] Such titles illustrate the intention of Islam Online to offer support and guidance for young people through Islam. As Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi says in his introduction to the series, "We present to the youth a guidebook which helps them and takes them through support to the world of men without any difficulties."[91] These books are specifically aimed at an Arabic audience in Arab countries suggesting that issues of dislocation and a need for identity are not confined to the Muslim diaspora. Al-Qaradawi assesses it as follows:

> a lot of other youth are confused: stuck between what they inherited from the values, ideas and traditions descended from Islam and what invaded from the triumphant West, values, ideas and traditions which descend from another civilization: Which of these two supports should they choose? If they choose the way of Islam – as is natural and logical to represent them – what should they do in the face of these continual

[90] Islam Online, *Silsilla Mushakil wa Hulul lil-Shabab*, (Series Problems and Solutions for Youth), (Beirut, Arab Scientific Publishers, 2004)
[91] al-Qaradawi Yusuf, in *al-Shabab…Hikayat wa Asrar*, (Youth…Stories and Secrets), (Beirut, Arab Scientific Publishers, 2004),p.5

> temptations, in that which they read, listen to and watch, that excites their impulses, stirs greed and urges temptation?[92]

This suggests that the challenge posed by other systems and other ways of living is not confined to Muslims who travel. Muslims in the Middle East are equally exposed to the difficulties of 'modern' or 'western' life. Furthermore, this implies that Islam has to be defined anew and made relevant for youth in the face of such challenges. Therefore, Roy's notion of "deterritorialised Islam" is equally applicable in a land where Islam is still associated with the territory. Islam still has the potential, in this context, to be something different from and beyond the culture and the environment in which it has grown and become established.

That is not to say that such notions are unequivocally accepted. When I showed my Arabic teacher, a moderate practicing Muslim and a professor at Cairo University, these books he replied, "This is not Islam; this is sex!".[93] This illustrates the contested nature of discourse on Islam. Individuals do not passively appropriate Islamic discourse but actively construct it. What is considered Islam by one person is labelled sex by another. My Arabic teacher was not opposed to Islam Online but seemed to believe that publishing these examples in a written text created something public which had essentially been a private interaction between questioner and counsellor. The medium had effectively become unacceptable for the content. In many ways, a book is no more public than a website which can be accessed by anybody with the technical ability.

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[92] Ibid, p.8
[93] Abu Tamir Mustafa, Personal Interview, 14/01/05

Nevertheless, it seemed to confound his conceptions of the function of a book. Perhaps in such a format it could be deemed to be more authoritative and concrete as a point of reference on Islam. Furthermore, it had become a physical reality, an object on the landscape of Egyptian Islam. Whereas the website Islam Online exists in a space beyond Egypt, a global imagined community, the publication of its books firmly places its ideas back within the local context of Egypt and what Islam means within this context. There is, thus, the potential for friction between a global conception of Islam and how it is perceived among practicing Muslims in other contexts. Olivier Roy discusses the concept of "deculturisation" with regards to a global notion of Islam. He asserts, "The construction of a 'deculturalised' Islam is a means of experiencing a religious identity that is not linked to a given culture and can therefore fit with every culture, or, more precisely, could be defined beyond the very notion of culture".[94] Although Roy is coming from a different starting point, there is evidence that notions of Islamic revival try to assert Islam as such, as an ahistorical model beyond culture in some cases. The form of 'enculturation' or becoming cultured is not specifically linked or associated with a sense of Egytpianness or Egyptian values. This is not to say that there is not an implicit assumption that Islam is the religion of Egypt and thus an essential part of one's cultural authenticity. However, there is an increasing emphasis on Islam as a system which any individual can apply to his life anywhere and which consequently helps to reform and reshape society. As an abstract system of values that the individual can strive to attain in any nation, Islam is not viewed primarily as the product or expression of the values of a particular society. The discourse on Islam in Egypt between state and non-state Islamic

[94] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, pp.23-4

actors, therefore, often appropriates an abstracted form of Islam and re-applies it to the local context. Indeed, a vital component of becoming cultured in the rhetoric of figures such as Amr Khaled is an appropriation of this universal Islam. This is evident in discussions of the relevance of Islam and how it can be applied to the individual and society. Khaled undoubtedly sees himself as Egyptian and adopts an Egyptian style particularly in his speech; nevertheless, his message is aimed at an audience beyond simply Egypt. He asserts that revival of the individual and society should happen in 'your nations'. Furthermore, his message has been appropriated throughout the Arab world. It says that Islam is something beyond tradition which is relevant to the lives of all individuals. Roy alludes to the importance of seeking definitions for all those concerned with the revival of Islam: "It is noteworthy that the question 'What is Islam?' is no longer discussed only among outsiders. It is nowadays a cornerstone of all revivalist Islamic movements."[95] There does appear to be a unity of purpose between figures such as Amr Khaled and Islam Online even though the latter in particular sees itself as more authentic and qualified than the former.[96] Ahmed Abu Haiba's conception of Islam as a 'lifestyle' underpins the work of all those concerned with Islamic revival. How to live this lifestyle fully and what the results of this will be are questions of constant concern.

This is not to say that such concerns are not widespread amongst all Muslims or that they come into direct conflict with how Islam is generally perceived in Egypt. Nevertheless, there are potential differences in emphasis and sources of tension. This notion of a

[95] Ibid, p.21
[96] Bashr Hany, Personal Interview, 08/02/05

"deculturalised" Islam has the potential to challenge local cultural sensibilities. The most obvious example of this is the one above. The issue of sexual relations and discussions of sex in the context of Islam has provocative potential. In his introduction to the series Shaykh al-Qaradawi addresses the issue:

> People got used to treating this issue with secrecy and concealment, and they consider that the issue is not authorised in the hadith or discussed in them as it possesses the mark of shame and contradicts public manners….These things were known in society, and practiced with ease without anyone feeling confined by them……It is important to deal with sexual problems and solve them in an atmosphere of seriousness, objectivity, and learning far from an atmosphere of stimulation and temptation. This is what our brothers at Islam Online believe as they strive for this. It is the site that prescribes Islam as it prescribes science.[97]

Al-Qaradawi is placing the discussions of sex within the framework of a rational, objective and scientific approach to contemporary problems. He does cite previous Islamic authorities as a justification for the approach but the main justification is the need to engage rationally with the problems of the individual through Islam and Science. Once again, science and religion are shown to be mutually compatible. They confirm and support each other. However, this 'scientific' approach does not take account of cultural sensibilities. Such an approach may be condoned by 'Islam' from the works that al-Qaradarwi cites. However, in Egypt, for example, it would seem to contradict notions of public manners. These books had the potential to offend my Arabic teacher, who is at ease in the world of science, technology and intellectual debate which Islam Online seeks to inhabit. Therefore, their potential to challenge Egyptians from other backgrounds must be strong. The notion of protecting Islam and the sacred is prevalent in Egypt. This phenomenon is supported by Gregory Starrett's observations of religious commodities in

[97] al-Qaradarwi, *al-Shabab*, pp.9-10

his article "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo". He asserts: "For Egyptians, position is an important *conscious* feature in the spatial placement of religious commodities once brought into the home. Religious objects should enjoy pride of place with respect to other objects. They should be placed in a protective space."[98] This, however, should not simply be viewed as a physical phenomenon, but should also be seen in the light of ideas and thought. There should be a separation out of the sacred and the profane. That is not to say that Islam is not concerned with everyday events and non-religious life but that there should not be an intellectual engagement with specifically and overtly sinful and carnal activities. By engaging with the topic of sex, Islam is in a sense being tainted and brought down to that level.

Therefore, "deculturalised" Islam creates contest as well as appropriation. The notion of 'Islam beyond culture and history' has the potential to attract those who feel dislocated and uprooted, but when it travels back into an environment where Islam has developed certain norms, there is the potential for contest. The Islam Online books do not only create controversy for the above reason. They are not always accepted for other reasons which are symptomatic of a wider trend and which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[98] Starrett Gregory, "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo" in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol.97, No.1, (March 1995), p.56

Chapter 4: Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous: Islam and Consumer Culture

In terms of the Islamic revival, notions of 'becoming cultured' seem to pertain to inner qualities that have the potential to become a communal expression of attainment. Culture is related to morality, education and religion. However, this notion of culture is not embedded within specific territorial cultures. At the supraterritorial level, Roy calls it "deculturalisation." Islam as a means to becoming cultured is a set of abstract values equally real and applicable in Britain as they are in the Middle East. However, the series of books from Islam Online suggest that there are other ways of looking at culture and how it relates to religion. R. Laurence-Moore makes a pertinent point with regards to American religion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but which is equally valuable here: "It had to sell itself not only in the competitive church market but also in a general market of other cultural commodities….Culture became an industry, related both to Arnold's high-minded aspirations and to less high-minded leisure activities that soon defined popular culture."[99] Therefore, both material religious commodities and the religious ideas of men and women in the Islamic revival compete, not only in the marketplace of religion and morality but also in the general marketplace of culture. They have to sell themselves. Therefore, I aim to see culture not only in the terms set out by men such as Amr Khaled and their mass-mediated morality but also as what can loosely be termed "popular culture" or "consumer culture". That is culture as pertaining to entertainment, leisure and the marketplace. These two loose understandings of mass-

[99] R. Laurence-Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), p.11

mediated morality and popular culture are not binary oppositions though. Although I seem to have initially set up a scheme of high culture and low culture, what this thesis aims to demonstrate is that in the sphere of religion there is much interaction between these two supposed oppositions which challenge and confront any neat distinctions.

This is evident with the Islam Online books. Their expressed intention is to guide youth and regulate their behaviour. In a sense, they aim to perform the task of imbuing youth with a sense of culture, that is culture laid out in the terms of morality, religion and education. However, as has been suggested above, they straddle boundaries and borders that are imposed in the minds of many Muslims, boundaries between the sacred and the profane, between the world of Islam, the mind and the soul on the one hand, and the world of the body, sex and temptation on the other. The way the books are marketed and set out seems to blur the lines between supposed oppositions. One of the Islam Online books takes a title which straddles the imagined boundary that separates religious books from 'street literature' such as *Nisa` al-Khalij: Asrar wa hikayat muthir* (*Women of the Gulf: Secrets and Provocative stories*).[100] It is entitled *Al-Shabab…Hikayat wa Asrar* (*Youth…Stories and Secrets*).[101] Such a title challenges expectations of what a "religious book" should be and evinced a strong response from my Arabic teacher in Cairo. This series competes in the marketplace of culture in which books about secrets, or books that adopt a self-help simple psychology approach, sell. They have the potential to scandalise, but they also have the potential to attract consumers who have grown up in this world saturated with such material.

[100] See above p.1
[101] See above p.52

In many ways, Islam Online itself has become recognisable as a reliable and respected brand. This is reflected in the production of these books which derive from the website. The appeal of Islam Online would appear to be that it offers instant access to knowledge on Islamic issues. Anyone can enter the live fatwa sessions to receive answers to questions they have pertaining to Islam. Moreover, they can ask the scholar for advice on social, psychological or sexual problems. The use of the internet also seems to offer a degree of anonymity and this begs the question what function the Islam Online books perform. Ahmed Abu Haiba, the television producer, suggested to me that the book now performs a very limited function. He asserted that nobody reads for pleasure and that people want information in an easily accessible and simple way.[102] Al-Qaradawi himself said in an interview with Trans-National Broadcasting Studies, "How many people read books? They have a limited audience."[103] However, as the bookstalls in Mohandiseen or the Cairo Book Fair demonstrate, there is still a market for certain types of books. The book fair seemed to be comprised of books on religion, books on medicine or self-help books. The latter were particularly prominent. The Jareer publishing house, for example, has translated many of these self-help style books into Arabic including *How to win friends and Influence people* by Dale Carnegie. Some of these translated books start with the *bismillah*. This suggests a perceived connection between reflection on the self and Islam, even if that reflection is manifestly related to the secular world. The Islam Online books, bolstered by the success of the website, seem to fit into a market concerned with the well-being of the individual. With titles such as *Al-hub al-Awal* (*First Love*)*, Ikhtiyar*

[102] Abu Haiba, Personal Interview, 30/01/05
[103] al-Qaradawi, *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*

sharik al-hayat (*Choosing a life partner*) and *Al-Talaq…athar wa awaqib* (*Divorce…Affects and Consequences*),[104] they seem to offer a 'real' Islamic alternative to the overtly secular and materialistic ambitions of American self-help and Management style books. However, as the reaction of my Arabic teacher to the titles of the books in the series suggests, they pose problems for many. The implication is that they are sensationalist and that they are not true Islam. The title of one of the books which plays on the provocative implications of the word secret places it closer to books relating sexual tales than to books discussing Islam. Indeed, my Arabic teacher asserted, "These are not secrets, they are publishing them for everybody to see."[105] There is, thus, a concern not only with the contents of these books but also with the style and the way they are marketed. They challenge conceptions of what is Islamic and what is not; they blur the lines between the sacred and the mundane, the moral and the immoral, between high culture and low culture. Therefore, becoming cultured is a contested process. There are ambiguities and contests facing attempts at Islamic revival. Eickelman and Piscatori see such contests as essentially political:

> In the process of articulating symbolic politics various forces seek to draw lines between public and private, government and civil society, obligatory and forbidden, moral and immoral. The drawing of boundaries is part of the political process, whether it involves the demarcation of decision-making units in society and the enforceable rules for resolving jurisdictional disputes among them, or demarcation of areas open to state control over the production of dominant values and those that are not.[106]

[104] Islam Online, *Silsilla Mushakil wa Hulul lil-Shabab*
[105] Abu Tamir Mustafa, Personal Interview, 14/01/05
[106] Eickelman Dale & Piscatori James, *Muslim Politics*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996), p.18

It is clear that the State does not have a monopoly "over the production of dominant values." It increasingly frames them in terms of Islam. However, it is also true that men such as Amr Khaled and Yusuf Qaradawi do not hold a monopoly over these values either. A consideration of how moral boundaries are imposed and values set must take account of consumerism and its concerns with image and the market.

The following discussion will attempt to illustrate that far from coming into direct conflict with "consumer culture", notions of Islamic revival often implicitly encourage it. As Roy says, "Islamic Revival is at ease with modern capitalism"[107] Abu Haiba's conception of Islam as a lifestyle may be an attempt to posit it as more than a religion concerned with the regulation of the individual's life at all levels. However, the idea of lifestyle requires the provision of a series of choices; it is not black and white. Individuals construct their lifestyles as a result of many influences and factors. Islam, therefore, becomes a lifestyle choice in the same way that going to the gym and getting fit is a lifestyle choice. In this sense, Islam can be one component of an individual's image and way of being. On the other hand, Islam as lifestyle can dominate an individual in the same way as going to the gym can. However, this is usually expressed in a sense of community not solely based on the belief in fitness and health, but also on a certain style. 'Gym Culture' exposes the individual to certain influences in terms of music, dress, and ideas. This is to say that lifestyle is not simply about ideas and values but also about constructing an identity beyond these in terms of diacritics of appearance and the choice

[107] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p.195

of material goods that one associates with oneself. As Lyon says in his book *Jesus in Disneyland*,

> on a personal level, identities are constructed through consuming…..we shape our malleable image by what we buy – our clothing, our kitchens, and our cars tell the story of who we are (becoming). It is no accident that the world of fashion is seen as an "identity industry"; the idea is that self-esteem and our recognition by others may be purchased over the counter.[108]

The idea of constructing identity and constructing the self is not something simply attained through values or spirituality but it is something that is bought. To view Islam as a lifestyle is to bring it into the world of fashion and goods. This is evident in the work of Amr Khaled. Young people who support his causes also buy into an image. They can buy wrist bands and t-shirts derived from his projects and programmes much like the "What would Jesus do?" bands prevalent among young Christians in America and Britain. This need for constructing a lifestyle through consumption is particularly prevalent amongst youth. As Bocock says, "For many young people for instance, the question of who they think they are, or how they would like to live, is as likely to be answered in terms of the kind of consumer life-style they aim for as the kind of occupation they seek."[109]

Such notions of consumption and identity are not simply confined to material goods. For example, Linda Herrera illustrates how commercialisation has affected the provision of Islamic schooling in Egypt. New "five star" Islamic schools are run for profit and market

[108] Lyon David, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000), p.12
[109] Bocock Robert, *Consumption*, (London, Routledge, 1993), p.109

themselves by presenting a certain lifestyle choice.[110] Indeed, for the most affluent sectors of Egyptian society, choice is perhaps the dominant influence on their lives. It is this power and desire to choose that sets them apart. A "consumer culture" predicates itself on the right to choose. However, this right is influenced by certain forces of advertising and the construction of certain lifestyles. Herrera demonstrates how Islamic schools are seeking to present themselves as a good lifestyle choice for a Muslim's children: "Al-Bashaer school, by combining cosmopolitanism, English language training, and emphasis on modern technology, within an Islamic atmosphere, has found an eager market among new groups of affluent urban Muslims."[111] Rather than choose state schools that are considered "secular" or Azharite schools that are considered "traditional", affluent Muslims can choose new Islamic schools that present themselves as compatible with faith, knowledge and wealth. As Herrera says, "The school prides itself on its mission of raising Muslim children for the 21st century, and its axiom is 'Knowledge and Faith.' Its main aim……is to develop in its students 'a personality committed to religious beliefs and values and, simultaneously, to follow up and take part in the rapid progress of science and technology'".[112] However, it is not simply values that the school projects. Herrera alludes to the importance of image: "Apart from the state of the art facilities, the school also projects its elite, cosmopolitan image through the realm of clothing, food and transport."[113] What is evident is that the values and the image are

[110] Herrera Linda, "Islamization and Education in Egypt: Between Politics, Culture and the Market" in Esposito John & Burgat Francois, (eds.), *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in Europe and the Middle East*, (London, Hurst &Co., 2003), pp.167-89
[111] Herrera, "Islamization and Education in Egypt", p.188
[112] Ibid, p.187
[113] Ibid, p.186

inextricably linked; to remove one would be to diminish the other. The five star Islamic school 'brand' relies on a physical and visual projection as well as an ethical and moral underpinning. This illustrates that even in the realm of education, there is a search for difference and identity, something that affirms a particular conception of the world and the self through ones children. As Lyon states, "This is part of a system of symbolic rivalry, in which people construct their selves through acquiring commodities that make them distinct from others, and seek approval through lifestyle and symbolic membership."[114] Indeed, education is only one such commodity.

There does seem to be a wider awareness that religious ideas are competing in a marketplace. R. Laurence Moore believes, with reference to Protestantism in America that religion has always been aware of the need to "sell itself". He affirms, "religion stayed lively and relevant to national life by reflecting popular taste and commanding media coverage."[115] This awareness and ambition also seems to be a concern of those who espouse Islamic revival. Olivier Roy cites a British Muslim, Shahid Athar, who conceives of Islam as a product to be sold and believes reverts are customers who need to be treated with care:

> Muslim preachers are salespeople, smiling and sweet-talking salespersons. If salespersons fight and argue with the customer, do you think people will buy the product. Salespersons are also persistent and never satisfied until they have sold the product. Good salespersons are the one who provides the service for the product after they sell it. Thus, Muslim preachers should continue to look after the customer….As a result of our missionary work and guidance from God, if one

[114] Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland*, p.79
[115] Laurence Moore, *Selling God*, p.275

> becomes a Muslim, do we follow up with that person? Do we help that person and support him or her in remaining a Muslim?[116]

Islam can be sold in many ways, by many different people. It is not simply the preserve of preachers. The notion of selling Islam and making it relevant to popular taste are evident in the work of a British Muslim singer, originally from Azerbaijan, who has become a sensation in Egypt through his blend of piety and pop.

Sami Yusuf: Selling the Lifestyle

Sami Yusuf envisages his debut album, *Al-Mu'allim*, as a form of bringing Islam to a wide audience. The dedication note on the CD asserts,

> I wanted to remind my brothers and sisters of the message of the Prophet who was sent by God to teach humanity the moral values of justice, kindness, humility, sacrifice and love, he was the best example of everything he taught, which made his students love him and hold him in reverence, and he established with his students or companions the best and most ethical society ever to exist on earth.[117]

In this sense, he is trying to fulfil the role of a preacher through the use of music. He wants to imbue certain values and morals within his audience. Furthermore, he wants to be a personal example of faith. He told *Al-Ahram Weekly*: "Sometimes people's faith seems to fade away, but then they go through an awakening. They find that their faith is back in line, stronger than before. And this gives them the desire to do something. That is

[116] Athar Shahid, *Reflections of an American Muslim*, http://islam-usa.com/r22.htmlpp.177-8 cited in Roy, *Globalised Islam*
[117] Yusuf Sami, dedication in *Al-Mu'allim* (CD), (Awakening, Swansea, 2004)

what happened to me."[118] This conception of the role of Islam seems to largely fit that of figures such as Amr Khaled and Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. There is a belief that the regeneration or reformation of the individual and the self leads to an outward expression of these values in an attempt to work for the regeneration of society. Sami Yusuf believes that his personal awakening has led him to work for society through Islam. Furthermore, he seems to be symptomatic of the notion of Global Islam that Islam Online partakes in and propagates. He asserts, "I am not used to identifying myself with my ethnic origins in Europe. I have lived all my life in the UK, but my parents are Azeri. I would identify myself rather as a Muslim, or a British Muslim."[119] Therefore, he places himself in the global imagined community of Muslims, constructing his identity through Islam and beyond nationality. This notion seems to come close to Roy's terminology which sets out a conception of Islam which is "deterritorialised" and "deculturalised". Islam is essentially abstracted and has no grounding in a particular territorial culture. For example, *Al-Ahram Weekly* says, "After talking with Yusuf for a while, it becomes very clear that he does not pay any attention to differences in nationality, language or culture. 'Living in the UK and performing in many countries around the world, I find it amazing how we share the most comprehensive view of Islam, simple, yet sweet and pure, with millions of other Muslims,' he confides."[120] Such a notion of Islam is facilitated by the potential of media to shrink distances and to create communities of affluent and technically able users who can define their common values. Sami Yusuf is a product of this phenomenon.

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[118] Yusuf Sami in Rashed Dena, "For the love of God" *Al-Ahram Weekly*, (*http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/print/2004/715/feature.htm*), 14/02/05
[119] Ibid
[120] Ibid

However, it is not his message *per se* that seems to have given him such popularity. It is the image and the lifestyle that Yusuf presents which has made him such a star. Indeed, more than anything, Sami Yusuf is associated with his music video. (See Appendix, Figs. 4-6) He has used this medium to attract a following amongst young affluent Muslims who belong to the same 'world' as him. He presents himself as materially successful in the video. He lives in a lavish house and has an expensive jeep. (Fig.4) However, at the same time, he is presented as a pious Muslim who respects his mother, helps others and finds time to lead children in prayer. (Figs.5-6) *Al-Ahram Weekly* alludes to the power of his presentation: "Another cause for the success of '*Al-Mu'allim*' is doubtless the image which Yusuf conveys in the video clip. In it, he manages to reconcile modernity and tradition in his own particular way….Abandoning the traditional *galabeya* of the religious singer, Yusuf has thus become an icon for the many young Muslims who aspire to be simultaneously devout and trendy."[121] He is, therefore, creating the image of a certain type of lifestyle. This identity is based on a comfortable relationship between wealth and religion. In a sense, he uses his wealth to support his religion: he takes nature photos which illustrate the glory of God's creation. Indeed, this affluent form of meditation on the creator results in him seeing a vision of the burning *Kaba'h* at the end of the video. This is pointedly shown to be real as the *Kaba'h* is clearly visible in the picture that he develops. He does not imagine it, God does exist. This is an emphatic rebuttal of a wholly materialist and atheist outlook. Taking nature photography also associates him with established expressions of Islam. Such nature shots are used to

[121] Ibid

introduce and conclude the call to prayer on television. Therefore, as *Al-Ahram Weekly* suggests, Yusuf is straddling the boundaries between worldly and materialist ambition on the one hand, and devotion and the sacred on the other. He presents an image where these supposed opposites sit comfortably and creates a model of consumption for affluent Muslim youth. This model is based on the consumption of values (such as respect for your family and love of children) and the consumption of goods. It creates the notion of a complete lifestyle. This is perhaps the Islamic equivalent of the indirect pressures exerted by companies through marketing and advertising to get the individual to consume. Lyon describes the process as follows:

> Pressure comes from companies who monopolize the definition of the good life, of what our needs are, and how they are to be satisfied…….These pressures are not experienced as oppressive, however. They are the pressures to surrender to something bigger than ourselves and are experienced as pleasure. They are part of social management or of social orchestration….they are the pressures not of coercion but above all of seduction.[122]

Likewise Sami Yusuf's video tries to create the definition of the good life in response to the perceived needs of his audience. The construction of such an image tries to undermine the completely secular music videos that are solely concerned with worldly pursuits and which are, by and large, normative.(Fig.7) Yusuf's video tries to create the need to consume not only the material object of his music CD, but also consume his lifestyle. Like all music videos, it presents a model for consumption. However, this model is based on an Islamic lifestyle.

[122] Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland*, pp.79-80

However, Sami Yusuf's approach has not been unequivocally accepted and appropriated. The attempt to marry such values with material wealth and stardom has the potential for friction and contest. For example, it was rumoured that Yusuf considered giving up his profession because he was dismayed by *muhajjiba* girls screaming at his concerts in adoration. Whether there is any truth to this rumour is less important than the perception it creates of the tension between certain moral values and the lifestyle he espouses. To what extent, can religion sit comfortably with the pursuit of wealth and fame? Indeed, at what stage does Sami Yusuf cease to function as a moral exemplar and become an object of desire? Once again, there appears to be potential for conflict between the sacred and religious and the profane and worldly. His attempt to blur such boundaries has as much capacity for tension as it does for accommodation.

Furthermore, although his video seems to conform to 'traditional' models of Islamic behaviour, his brand of global Islam still has the potential to confront and challenge 'local' conceptions of Islam. As Amina Khairy reported in *Al-Hayat*, "Yusuf and his songs have met with fierce resistance within a number of media circles. Some of these object to a foreigner's daring to sing in Arabic when he does not have full command of the language."[123] This suggests, like the Islam Online books, that there is not a monolithic conception of Islam and that the way it is practised can be contested. It suggests that in Egypt, Islam is firmly grounded in a specific linguistic context and culture. Arabic is the language of revelation and consequently is held in particular reverence. It is often seen as the divine language of God and not as a human construct. The religion is inextricably

[123] Khairy Amina, "Two Entertainment Issues Preoccupy Egyptian Press in Ramadan" *Al-Hayat*, 07/11/04 p.21

linked to the language and vice versa. As Sura 12, (1-2) says, "This is the miracle manifested in the book's revelation, that we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an"[124]. The stress on the recitation being in Arabic has carried great significance historically. Johannes Pedersen alludes to its importance: "Every word found 'between the two covers' is literally the word of God: therefore it is eternal and uncreated, and therefore a miracle of linguistic perfection."[125] This interpretation, grounded in an oral tradition premised on the primacy of the Arabic language, has the potential to come into conflict with an ahistorical and global conception of Islam. Sami Yusuf brings to mind Anderson's theory of 'creolization'. It is not mixed discourse or mixed intellectual techniques that are prominent in this situation but mixed language. Sami Yusuf exists in a space where such 'creolization' is acceptable and to some degree expected. However, in the Egyptian context, his songs challenge the purity of the language and have the potential to cause offence. In the world of Islam Online, English is often the assumed language of debate and discussion. In many countries with substantial Muslim populations, English is the first language or is at least spoken fluently by a large percentage of the population, (for example, Pakistan, Britain, and America). In a context, where discussion of Islam takes place between different nationalities and is envisaged as an abstract system of values, linguistic considerations become less rooted in 'cultural' or 'traditional' concerns and are governed by issues of practicality. Therefore, Sami Yusuf's presentation of a certain lifestyle may be considered to lack authenticity by some in Egypt. However, it also has the potential to appeal to affluent youth who are comfortable

[124] Cited in Pedersen Johannes, *The Arabic Book*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984)p.12
[125] Ibid

in the same milieu as Yusuf. Such a construction of identity should be seen as a means to negotiate the boundaries of acceptable Islam in a consumer culture. In a subtle and implicit way, Yusuf's video, like state religious education, the sermons of Amr Khaled, or the publications of Islam Online, is attempting to define a set of values and a lifestyle that constitutes a 'correct' approach to Islam. All these attempts at definition require the use of symbols and images. As Owen Chadwick states, moulding public opinion requires the use of symbols and stereotypes which are easily identifiable. Individuals have to have some means of breaking down complexities into easily accessible and understood representations. Chadwick concludes, "at the level of social life, what is called the adjustment of man to his environs takes place through the medium of fictions…. Our world is too big and complex to be understood. Yet we cannot move in it without trying to see what cannot be seen, and so we move with the aid of symbols or stereotypes, names or slogans."[126]

The Hijab and Fashion

The *Hijab* is perhaps the most visible and potent symbol of contemporary Islamic trends. The debate and reaction generated by the French ban on the *hijab*, in Egypt itself, illustrates the importance of the issue. Students through out the country demonstrated against the bill. Slogans included, "My veil is my liberty" and "My veil is the way to

[126] Chadwick Owen, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth* Century, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.44

paradise".[127] The arguments expressed against the ban ranged from the purely religious to concerns over human rights and personal freedom. Indeed, many Egyptians not only see the *hijab* as a religious obligation but also see it as a symbol of their right to choose religion. As Waleed Abdel-Qader, head of Helwan University's Student Union, said, "We believe everyone has the right to practise his/her religion freely, and to wear whatever he/she likes. The ban is discriminatory against all religions, not just Islam."[128] The *hijab* is, therefore, seen, in this context, as the affirmation of a lifestyle choice. Although Shaykh Al-Azhar, Mohamed Sayed Tantawi, asserted that the French ruling was an internal matter, many other prominent Egyptian religious figures argued strongly for the necessity of the *hijab*. For example, Egypt's Mufti Ali Goma released a fatwa asserting that the *hijab* is an obligation on Muslim women everywhere and not a religious symbol. This view was supported by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi: "It is a common mistake to call *hijab* a religious sign, as it could not strike the mind of *hijab*-clad women to wear it for declaring their religious beliefs." Instead it is worn for its religious function, which is "to cover the Muslim woman's hair, neck, throat and the upper part of her chest."[129] Therefore, religious figures do not simply see the *hijab* as a symbol or a means of creating an Islamic identity; it has a practical and functional role. It therefore serves a different purpose to the Christian cross or the Jewish skullcap, according to Ali Goma and Al-Qaradawi. In this sense, the French authorities have completely misconstrued the purpose of the veil.

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[127] Shahine Gihan, "Balancing Reactions", *Al-Ahram Weekly,* (*http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/679/eg8.htm*), (02/11/2004) accessed 11/02/05
[128] Abdel-Qader Waleed cited in Ibid
[129] Al-Qaradawi Yusuf, *Islam Online* (*http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2003-12/21/article08.shtml*) accessed 12/03/05

Such assertions seem to fit into an established discourse on the *hijab*. The veil is seen to protect the female body from the passions of man. Ni'mat Sidqi, in her booklet al-Tabarruj (display of the female body) published by al-Jama'a 'l-Islamiyya, asserts: "How can an honourable, chaste woman accept the display of her beauty in the marketplace as a cheap commodity examined by eyes?"[130] In Sidqi's conception, when a woman fails to wear the *hijab* she becomes a product, an object for consumption; she places herself in a marketplace. This is a powerful analogy because adornment is simply seen as a means of packaging, presenting the woman as a commodity among many commodities that a man can choose from. There is a clear distinction between the values and ethics of Islam on the one hand, and the forces of the market and consumerism on the other. To be driven and dominated by the latter is posited as a form of submission. The idea that women have the potential to be morally and socially subversive is pervasive in Egyptian society, not simply in overtly religious discourse. In the film discussed in the introduction to this thesis, *Film Saqafi*, such a notion is implicit. The film is premised on the assumption that gender relations in Egypt are often complicated by the behaviour and dress of women. At one point, Effat and Ashraf are sat in the park in a state of despair because they cannot find anywhere to watch their 'educational' film. A *muhajjiba* walks past them. Her black veil covers the whole top half of her body. Effat looks at her and says, "That's it…if only all women dressed that way, we'd be spared". Ashraf looks up and sees another girl dressed in dark colours, wearing jeans and a short sleeved top and responds, "Or even

[130] Sidqi Ni'mat cited in Hoffman-Ladd, Valerie, "Polemics on the modesty and segregation of Women in Contemporary Egypt", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, (1987), p.33

like the one headed here…elegant, modern, yet conservative not provocative."[131] Therefore, religion in and of itself is not the main reasoning behind female clothing in this exchange. Clothing, and the *hijab* as one expression of this, is discussed in relation to its functional role in regulating gender and sexual relations. The important thing here is not the *hijab per se* but clothing that is not provocative. It suggests that women have a responsibility to dress 'conservatively'. The burden of responsibility is removed from the man who cannot help his 'fiery' nature as Effat, Ashraf and Alaa call it.

The *hijab* is also a crucial component of the notion of the revival of the Islamic nation. This can be seen in the terms above, to some extent, but also for other reasons. As a male researcher I did not have access to women's views on the *hijab* and therefore will not be attempting to deduce or assume the intentions and motives of Contemporary women in wearing the *hijab*. However, I hope that drawing attention to the way the *hijab* is promoted visually through different mediums will shed light on the idea of Islamic revival in relation to the ideas I have discussed above. The way the *hijab* is promoted and marketed does not exist in a vacuum; it must to an extent reflect contemporary belief in relation to tradition and also contemporary concerns of the individual in a world of choice and consumerism. Arlene McLeod in her book *Accommodating Protest* said, "Rather than participating in an overtly religious revivalism, these women express a general sense that people in their culture are turning back to a more authentic and culturally true way of life, and they perceive the veil as part of their cultural reformation."[132] McLeod was

[131] *Film Saqafi*
[132] McLeod A., *Accommodating Protest: Working Women, the New Veiling, and change in Cairo*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1991), p.111

basing her research on lower-middle class women in the 1980s. She believed that veiling constituted a form of protest against the difficulties of modern life in which lower-middle class women found themselves cut off from their traditional sources of respect and identity caught between the world of the house and the world of work. However, the veil was also a form of accommodation as it implied compliance and gratitude "for concessions granted."

The context in which I am looking at the *hijab* is different. I am looking at it in relation to wealthier women with a greater level of choice and mobility. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, I am looking at the *hijab* in a context in which it is increasingly the normative mode of dress. However, the above statement still seems to hold true to a certain extent. The idea of a "culturally true" form of identity retains a persuasive power, if we are to believe that the way the *hijab* is presented is a reflection of the way many people, both men and women, feel about it. In a statement on the reasons for wearing the *hijab* on the website Islam Online Shaykh al-Qaradawi asserts:

> In her choice of clothing she should not imitate non-Muslims, whether they are Jews, Christians, or pagans, for Islam disapproves of conformity to non-Islamic modes and desires its followers to develop their own distinctive characteristics in appearance, as well as in beliefs and attitudes. This is why Muslims have been asked to be different from non-Muslims in many aspects, and why the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has said, **"Whoever imitates a people is one of them."**[133]

[133] Al-Qaradawi Yusuf, *Islam Online*, (*http://www.islamonline.net/fatwa/english/FatwaDisplay.asp?hFatwaID=9965*) accessed 25/04/05

This reflects the views of Ahmed Abu Haiba the television producer whose assertion that Islam is a lifestyle and not simply a religion implies it is also cultural. In this sense, the *hijab* can be seen to stand for a true expression of morals, belief and culture.

I am not intending to be reductionist and to suggest that the call to wear the *hijab* is not elaborated on through a grounding in religious sources. Amr Khaled often refers to the Qur'an and the hadith in support of his argument for why women should wear the *hijab*. This is likewise true of the scholars and Shaykhs on the website Islam Online. However, there are two things that need to be addressed here. Firstly, the *hijab* is seen as a means for the individual to turn to Islam as an ethical and moral system which will in turn improve society. Islam is seen as the choice of morality and hence the choice of cultural authenticity. It is not obedience that is emphasised but rather a decision to improve the self and society. As Khaled says in a lecture on the *hijab*: "Islam came to say: purify your choices and manners. As mankind progresses, their manners and choices have to progress too."[134] What is evident is that donning the veil is seen as an active choice to follow the path of Islam. Khaled himself is said to have rediscovered his faith as a teenager. Islamic revival begins with the revival of the individual. From here he moves to a broader revival of society. The *hijab* is seen to be an integral part of this.

However, a second point about contemporary presentations of the *hijab* illustrates that choice and the option to buy culture rather than attain it has the potential to undermine such views. Contemporary male rhetoric on the *hijab* consistently asserts that it is a way

[134] Khaled Amr, *Sunaa' al-Hayah* (*http://www.amrkhaled.net/articles/articlesprint498.html*), accessed11/02/05

for the woman to protect her modesty because she has the power to attract man. She has a duty not to do this and so her modest dress is a virtue. However, current trends to present modest dress as fashion seem to undermine such assertions. There are many shops that present the *hijab* as a fashion accessory in the same shop window as women's lingerie. Therefore, once again like the bookstall in Mohandiseen there seems to be a straddling of imaginary boundaries that separate modest from immodest. In this context the veil and lingerie are both statements about women's sexuality but they are at different ends of the spectrum. Whereas one seeks to display it, the other seeks to cover and 'protect' it. The fashion magazine *Jumanah* produced in 2004 in Cairo seems to undermine efforts by Khaled and others to posit the *muhajjibat* as moral exemplar leading a cultural and religious revival. (See Appendix, Figs.8-12) It calls itself a Veiled Women's fashion catalogue and includes titles such as "Veiled is Beautiful at Lati Fashion" or "Do you think you can only look beautiful on your wedding night with the veil off? Think Again! With Magic touch, your veil will become your crown and you will become the true princess of beauty! Magic Touch…another reason to wear the veil".[135](Fig.9) This is obviously aimed at wealthy women who have the power to choose, not least in the language they use. It seems to completely undermine the teachings of al-Qaradawi and Khaled who emphasise that beauty is an inner quality which should not be displayed physically. Yet within the pages of this magazine there is an advert for the books, tapes and videos of precisely these men. Well-off consumers can pick and choose creating their own lifestyle and straddling boundaries that to many are not flexible. The idea of the *hijab* as fashion raises many interesting points. As Lyon says, "The broader result is that

[135] *Jumanah: Veiled Women's Fashion Catalog*, Issue 1, Winter 2004 (Expressions, Cairo, 2004)

postmodern consumers constantly 'try on' not only new clothes, new perfumes, but new identities, fresh personalities, different partners. This cognitive and moral cast of consumer conduct also holds good, at least to some extent, in the religious sphere."[136] If the *hijab* is seen in this light, it fails to become an obligation. Fashion is seen to be changeable, therefore, to accept the *hijab* as fashion is to accept that it is not a fixed obligation but an impermanent, mutable phenomenon. As a means of constructing a lifestyle, it is disposable. Furthermore, as Asaf Bayat says, "this religious sub-culture…is partly an expression of 'fashion'…in the sense of an outlet that facilitates a simultaneous fulfilment of contradictory human tendencies: change and adaptation, difference and similarity, individuality and social norms."[137] Therefore, seeing the *hijab* as fashion can be considered a form of both protest and assertion of difference on the one hand, and accommodation and the acceptance of social norms on the other. This appropriation of the *hijab* certainly does not conform to the role laid down for it by people such as Sidqi. The separation of religious values from the mundane consumerist world is not evident here. The women who use such magazines may not be setting themselves up as objects of consumption in a marketplace full of male buyers. Nevertheless, they are certainly constructing their identity, not only through the espousal of certain values but through the very idea of consumption itself. As Bocock says, "Consumption now affects the ways in which people build up, and maintain, a sense of who they are, of who they wish to be".[138] Indeed, religious commodities are one amongst many types of commodity that are available to the Egyptian consumer. There is, thus, a clear integration of religion and

[136] Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland*, p.79
[137] Bayat Asaf, "Piety, Privilege and Egyptian Youth", *ISIM Newsletter* 10, (July 2002), p.23
[138] Bocock, *Consumption*, p.x

consumption. However, this is not unequivocally accepted. As Hossam Tammam and Patrick Haenni say, "These 'liberal veiled women' (*al-muhajjibat al-mutaharrirat*) have exhausted the patience of fundamentalists by wearing Paris-designed scarves and speaking to their children in English. They are condemned both by the activists of the Muslim Brothers and traditional preachers trying to invoke the omniscience of God."[139] There is an evident concern that the *hijab* has been appropriated in a way that contradicts the values and function that it is supposed to impart. However, there does seem to be the suggestion that such an appropriation has the ability to challenge because it presents a deculturalised *hijab*, an *hijab* more concerned with image and fashion than the ethics of modesty that are prevalent in Egypt both from a religious and non-religious point of view. The director of the film *On Boys, Girls and the Veil*, Yousry Nasrallah, said of his project, "This is exactly what I'm looking for. How do you construct your image in a society that does not want you to have an image? That does not want to identify you as a person, but simply as part of a mass."[140] He believes Egyptian society wants to suppress identity. Consumer culture, on the other hand, is overridingly concerned with image. That is not to say that it necessarily allows a complete freedom of expression to construct a certain personality. It exerts its own pressures to conform to certain images and lifestyles. However, although Nasrallah seems to go too far in suggesting the subjugation of the individual, his point is pertinent here. Different appropriations of the *hijab* illustrate the tension between a consumer culture based on image and lifestyle and a cultural discourse

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[139] Tammam Hossam & Haenni Patrick, "Chat Shows, Nashid Groups and Lite Preaching: Egypt's Air-Conditioned Islam", *Islam Online*, (*http://www.islamonline.net/English/artculture/2005/02/article04.shtml*), accessed11/02/05

[140] Yousry Nasrallah, in Armbrust Walter, "Veiled Cinema: A Conversation with Yousry Nasrallah", *Visual Anthropology*, vol. 10 1998, p.393

based on modesty and the regulation of gender relations. However, what is evident is that on some level there is interplay between the two. They may be set up in the abstract as binary oppositions, but as this chapter has illustrated religion and consumerism have come together and for certain affluent and mobile sections of society they sit happily together.

Chapter 5: Born Again Islam: Religion, Choice and the Self

The preceding chapters have looked at Islam in relation to the notion of Islamic revival and how this interacts with the Egyptian state, global communities and consumer culture. Although some discussion of how this affects conceptions and practices of Islam has been inevitable, it has not been made fully explicit. It is, therefore, necessary to attempt to characterise what Islam is in the context of notions of Islamic revival. This is not to be reductionist and impose meaning, nor is it to suggest that Islam is uniformly appropriated. It is merely to suggest that amongst the affluent sections of Egyptian society, those who are financially and technologically endowed, those who engage with notions of Islam at a supra-national level, there are discernible tendencies in the way Islam as a religion and a lifestyle is envisaged and practiced.

What becomes evident is that modernity invokes a qualitative difference in the nature of belief. As Peter Berger asserts in his book *The Heretical Imperative*: "one of the elements of modern consciousness that is very hard to think away is…..the multiplication of options. Put differently, modern consciousness entails a movement from fate to choice."[141] Therefore, the idea of religious and indeed moral certainty must confront the reality of choice. The modern Egyptian citizen, particularly in an urban setting, has an unprecedented level of choice and as Berger suggests this does not only affect his material and physical condition but also his mental state or consciousness: "Fate does not

[141] Berger P., *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*, p.11

require reflection; the individual who is compelled to make choices is also compelled to stop and think. The more choice, the more reflection. The individual who reflects inevitably becomes more conscious of himself. That is, he turns his attention from the objectively given outside world to his own subjectivity."[142] Although this condition of modern consciousness is not new, it is particularly pertinent in relation to those who espouse Islamic revival. Muslims operate in a world where consumerism and technological advancement seem to be offering more and more choice to the individual. It is a world where the individual, if financially and technologically able, can appropriate different 'lifestyles', different systems of thought and belief, and different identities. It is in this context, where reliance on established channels of authority has been undermined, that Islam becomes more singularly focused on the self. As Berger states, "The turning inward of religious reflection must be seen in the context of the social and 'ipso facto' psychological weakening of outward authority. Put differently, the quest for certainty on the basis of subjective insights is the result of the frustration of this quest by what is socially available as objective reality-definitions".[143]

Such a 'turning inward' seems to be evident in the work of Islam Online. Ahmed Muhammad Sa'ad, who works for the website in Cairo said, "We all consider this an act of jihad, how to liberate people's minds from ignorance."[144] He, thus, sees *jihad* in the terms of an internal and spiritual struggle, rather than as a physical, external struggle. This attempt to liberate the mind from ignorance is evident in the advisory sections of the

[142] Ibid, p.22
[143] Ibid, p.69
[144] Sa'ad Ahmed Muhammad cited in Wakin, "Online in Cairo, With News, Views and Fatwa Corner"

site. As has been discussed above, they illustrate the way the individual attempts to apply Islam to the self as an abstract system of values. For example, a petitioner recently wrote to the site for help in solving problems of nervousness and fear around people. The cyber-counsellor responded, "A big part of being Muslim is striving hard to not create our own fear and ego-driven realities but striving to be conscious of Allah in all matters, which means essentially, living in His reality."[145] Islam is thus envisaged as a state of consciousness, of how the self and individual relate to a larger reality. Islam leads to an inner confidence and psychological balance. Indeed, the counsellor continues, "if you are living in a state of gratitude, love, and surrender to Allah and whatever He wills, your true self will show through".[146] This suggests an appropriation of Islam concerned with the subjective states. Truth, reality and certainty are realised within the individual. It is the individual's feelings, emotions and state of mind that affirm the reality and power of God. It is from this premise that notions of revival usually start. The individual must become aware and regenerate himself. Consequently, individual revival leads to social and communal revival.

The Born-Again Muslim

These ideas are perhaps most forcefully expressed in the idea of the "born-again Muslim." The notion of being "born-again" raises questions about what Islam means in

[145] *Islam Online,* (*http://www.islamonline.net/QuestionApplication/English/display.asp?hquestionID=18499*), accessed25/04/05
[146] Ibid

this context. The implication is that individuals must find their faith and religion: it is not simply enough to be born Muslim. As Roy argues, such a concept sits comfortably with Islam in a global context. When Islam becomes 'deterritorialised' and is no longer rooted in a specific culture, it has the potential to be reappropriated as a set of values that can be affirmed as a return to true Islam. This all suggests that Islam is not seen as an objective external fact, in the physical fabric of society but that it is, in the social milieu that are the focus of this thesis, taken as a subjective and individual experience. Roy asserts, "born-again Muslims…..consider that too much intellectualisation spoils the faith, and seek a ready made and easily accessible set of norms and values that might order their daily lives and define a practical and visible identity."[147] It is such norms and values that constitute their individual well-being. To be born-again is also to implicitly acknowledge the possibility of different choices. Islam is one option amongst many. Muslims in new or unfamiliar physical, social, cultural and intellectual environments are effectively in a position to choose. They have the opportunity to reject Islam because it is not a social and physical reality. To be born again is to reassert the validity and truth of Islam. Ahmed Abu Haiba's assertion that Islam is a lifestyle seems to confirm an implicit awareness of choice. Indeed, he told me that the regulations and lifestyle of Islam are not holy or sacred in themselves and that you are not living in sin if you do not follow them. They are essentially seen as something to aspire to, something that helps and aids the individual.[148] Therefore, becoming a good Muslim is a process of the affirmation of a series of choices. It is a choice in individual actions, in individual values and in individual appearance and identity. It is the experience of these choices that are

[147] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p.31
[148] Abu Haiba, Personal Interview 30/01/05

increasingly being held up as Islam. Individuals are seen as moral exemplars in the same way that stories from the companions of the Prophet are seen as such. The idea of testimony and real life situations are the frame of reference for discussion of Islam.

This is evident in much of the work of Amr Khaled. He describes himself as born-again and talks about the need for the individual to "break the shackles" that are holding him back and preventing him from rising up.[149] Furthermore, in his programme, *Words from the Heart,* he received testimony from repentant actresses, and other stars, who had taken the *hijab* and turned to Islam. However, this phenomenon is not simply confined to Amr Khaled and predates him. Mustafa Mahmud, a former communist who became a "born again" Muslim in the 1960s, was encouraging actresses to repent and take the veil, through various forms of media, in the 1980s and early 1990s. This has become quite widespread and a source of much interest and debate within Egyptian society. In 1992, the Egyptian publication, *Al-Nur*, led with the headline: "A new slap in the face for the secularists and communists: Meet the retired actresses….in the *hijab*. A new sign that acting is haram (forbidden)."[150] This explicitly suggests that acting is non-Islamic. Furthermore, it is associated with forces that Islamism abhors, namely secularism and communism. Indeed, communism is often considered to be the antithesis of Islam, a brand of complete unbelief that is morally moribund. Therefore, the lifestyle of an actress constitutes a threat to Islam and the idea of an Islamic society. This is connected to the notion that Hoffman-Ladd alludes to: "the preservation of the Islamic nature of society

[149] Khaled Amr, *Sunaa' al-Hayah*, (*http://www.amrkhaled.net/articles/articles78.html*), accessed 11/02/05
[150] Haal Musa, *Al-Nur*, (Cairo) 25/11/92

depends on its women."[151] Thus, the trend towards actresses donning the veil and retiring has great symbolic capital. The testimonies of these women act as moral exemplar and ways of marketing Islam. The book *Repentant Artists and the Sex Stars* illustrates this. The confessions of the artists in this book literally demonise the lifestyles of the Rich and famous and posit a personal union with God as a fulfilling way to lead one's life. Hala Al-Safy, a former famous belly dancer wrote,

> I confess and acknowledge that I, Suhayr Hasan Abdeen and famous as the dancer Hala Al-Safy….left my life in the hands of the devil to play with and to do what he wanted without my feeling the sins of what I did, until God willed and desired to remove me from this swamp…and I acknowledge and confess that the life that they call the life of art….is empty of art and I acknowledge that I lived this life…Just as I acknowledge and confess that I regret…regret…regret every moment that I lived far from God in the world of night and art and parties…I entrust God to accept my remorse and repentance.[152]

The personal nature of this writing is inextricably linked with the public. In a sense, there is evidence of personal turmoil and personal redemption and yet it serves as a very generic public statement. It is obviously meant for public consumption and public education. Indeed, as an actor or sports star might endorse a brand or product, so here the belly dancer is endorsing Islam. She says 'Islam works, try it.'

This phenomenon has not only been hailed by those of an Islamist bent, but has also been criticised by secularists, who argue that these women have effectively been brainwashed

[151] Hoffman-Ladd, "Polemics on the modesty and segregation of Women in Contemporary Egypt",p.28
[152] cited in Abu-Lughod Lila, "Movie Stars and Islamic Moralism in Egypt", *Social Text*, No.42 (Spring 1995), p54

by fundamentalists. The rather black and white distinctions drawn by both camps were a noticeable feature of the debate in the mid-1990s. The articulation of such ideas has certainly progressed and taken on a more subtle expression. However, these earlier examples illustrate that such ideas were certainly in the public imaginary a decade ago. For example, it is evident in the film Kashf al-Mastur released in 1994.[153] (See Appendix, Figs.15,17,18) The title, "Revealing the Hidden", gives a feeling of moral hypocrisy which is the main theme of the movie. The film revolves around a woman who is a former spy. Her job involved sleeping with the enemy and she was compelled to continue to do so by the threat of secret films of her doing this being made public. At the beginning of the film the *Mukhabarrat* (secret police) re-contact her to do another job. Once again, the threat of video footage being made public hangs over her. Before she concedes to these demands, she tries to find her old handler to find out why these incriminating tapes were not destroyed, as they should have been. In attempting this, she has to contact other former spies/prostitutes. She meets them one by one until she comes across Wafa' al-Maghrabi who has become a Shaykha or religious leader. Her apartment is full of *muhajjibat* women.(Fig.13) The veils they are wearing are all full body length and black.(Fig.16) The women listen to a bearded Shaykh talking about hell. The whole event is shown to be intimidating and rather sinister. Half way through the scene Wafa' receives strange phone calls from Frankfurt. The protaganist makes a barbed comment about everyone knowing what Shaykhs from Frankfurt and New York want. The imagery and dialogue suggests that the situation is far from wholesome and that it is conspiratorial. Indeed, as with the film *The Terrorist*, the implication is that these

[153] *Kashf al-Mastur*, dir. Atef al-Tayyeb, (1994)

activities are far from morally sound and that there is a discrepancy between the pious assertions of these people and the reality of their lives. It is particularly pertinent here, because when the protaganist is sitting listening to the Shaykh's lesson, she recognises the woman sitting next to her as an actress. The woman says she has repented from acting. The protaganist responds that she has seen her in something recently and thought she was very good. This refers back to an earlier scene in which the protaganist is watching television in her hotel room. The former actress is shown in the mirror beautifying herself in provocative clothing. Therefore, the idea of actresses 'repenting' and being taken into these mysterious *halqa* (study circles) has been presented to the public. It must however be seen as the view of a certain elite and official discourse that is virulently anti-Islamist and increasingly outmoded. In the 10 years since it was produced much has changed. It does nevertheless undoubtedly raise points of contention and debate.

However, Abu-Lughod illustrates why these *muhajjibat* actresses retain popularity amongst many Egyptians. She asserts,

> the problem with stars is that they represent a nouveau riche westernized elite. Their sexual immorality is often associated with western life-styles, but there is also a general impression that they are different from ordinary Egyptians. The women wear expensive, fashionable clothes, plenty of make-up, and dramatic hairdos, perceived by Egyptians to be 'Western'.[154]

The suggestion is that repentance is not explicitly linked to religion in the minds of many 'ordinary' Egyptians but to issues of morality. It is perhaps seen as a return to an

[154] Abu-Lughod, "Movie Stars and Islamic Moralism in Egypt", p.58

authentically true Egyptian culture. Although the testimonies are framed in very religious and personal terms, it is the symbolism of a return to the values of Egyptian society that seem to resonate with many Egyptians according to Abu-Lughod. Indeed, she concludes, " in the new Islamic consciousness in Egypt, a discourse of morality serves to… mask the persistent divisions of class and life-style. This gives poor and rural women the comforting illusion of equality with their Muslim sisters everywhere, something no other political discourse can offer."[155] Such an argument is similar to that of the film director, Yousry Nasrallah, who argued that the place of the *hijab* in Egyptian society is premised on the idea of negating difference and creating 'masses'.[156] However, as Abu-Lughod suggests, there is difference on several levels. There is an evident difference in their lifestyles but also in their conception of Islam. This will become clear in looking at the repentant actress a decade on. It will illustrate a shift in the appropriation of Islam and the way these affluent former actresses present themselves.

Mona and Her Sisters

The programme *Mona and Her Sisters* is the latest production by Ahmed Abu Haiba, the producer of Amr Khaled's first programme *Words From the Heart*.[157](see Appendix, Figs.13,14,16) It is hosted by Mona Abdul-Ghani, a veiled former pop star who chats with other veiled women, at least some of whom are semi-public figures. The setting is

[155] Ibid, p.66
[156] See above p.80
[157] *Mona and Her Sisters*, dir. Ahmed Abu Haiba, (2004)

fairly similar to that laid out in the film *Kashf al-Mastur* but with an even more polished feel.(figs.14-15) The set has the appearance of a living room in the appartment of a wealthy suburb. However, unlike the representation of a female study group in the 1994 film, the atmosphere is a lot more relaxed here. There is a Shaykh, who does not look dissimilar to the representation in *Kashf al-Mastur*,(Figs.16-17) yet he is slouched back on his sofa, positioned at the same level as Mona and her guests, and in no way physically dominating the situation. Indeed, Mona remains the focus of the room and the discussion, overseeing the debate and bringing the Sheikh in when necessary. This is a far cry from the notions of women turning to fundamentalism in their rich enclaves. The image of *Mona and her Sisters* is very different from Wafa' al-Maghrabi and her sisters in *Kashf al-Mastur*. Whereas the film introduces these women as clad head to toe in black or white with a face veil so that only the eyes are visible, Mona wears a colourful *hijab* and her face is not only visible but also clearly covered in make-up. Mona and her guests are closer to the models in the fashion magazine *Jumanah* than to the presentation of repentant actresses and born-again women in the film.(Figs.12-13 & 18)

It is not only the appearance of the show that suggests a different conception of the famous *muhajjibat*. The themes discussed on the show are far removed from discussions of Hell and damnation that were the themes of the lesson in *Kashf al-Mastur* and of much of the Islamist rhetoric in the mid-1990s. The supernatural or cosmological is very rarely discussed on the show. The themes are usually those that relate to the everyday concerns of these women. Therefore, they discuss child-rearing, keeping love in their marriage, and their relationships with female friends. Islam is only discussed through these issues.

It forms the backdrop and support to the debate but it is certainly not the starting point. What becomes evident through the appearance of the show and the dialogue, is that these women do not fit into the role of moral exemplar that the average Egyptian woman would associate with. They not only defy notions of the 'fundamentalist woman' but also of the 'authentic moral Egyptian'. This is not because they lack a set of morals and values. Indeed, the discussion on the show constantly centres around the idea of *Hudud* (limits, boundaries) in an everyday, and not a legal, sense. Mona says of personal relationships, "Even if you are very close friends with someone and brought up together, Islam puts over these relationships some controls (*zuwabit*)."[158] What makes the discussion distinct is its context. Essentially, the debate relates to what can easily be termed 'bourgeois Islam'. The culture within which Mona and her guests live is clearly distinct from that of the vast majority of Egyptians. For example, in an episode on the theme, "What are the limits in the relationship between a woman and her friend?", there is a discussion of the importance of privacy. The Shaykh, Muhammad Mustafa Kamal, who offers the women advice, says that "Too much friction will spoil life."[159] He continues by saying that two families should not be too close to each other and that you should not have too much contact with your neighbours. He compares wearing the *hijab* to keeping privacy within the family, suggesting there has to be a *hijab* over the family as well as the individual. This notion of private space and the idea of enclosed family units does not reflect the reality of living for the vast majority of Egyptians. Indeed, the implication throughout the programme is that the problems and solutions they discuss are premised on small nuclear families which remain a largely 'Western' and 'Westernised' concept. This is perhaps

[158] Abu Haiba Ahmed, *Mona and her Sisters*, (2004)
[159] Ibid

also reflected in the use of western words in the middle of arabic sentences such as "system", "intime", "combination" and "make-up". Although it is not necessarily uncommon to hear such words in an urban setting, in the heightened self-consciousness of a television show,it does deliberately invoke a connection with a cosmopolitan culture. Therefore, it seems evident that Islam and the affluent middle classes do increasingly come together and sit comfortably together. The adoption of the veil or the renunciation of the life of the actress does not necessarily signal a rejection of wealth. It does not necessarily signal a rejection of choice in aspects of lifestyle. It does not even necessarily signal a rejection of the public familiarity that comes with fame, as Mona's well-known persona testifies. She perhaps best personifies the Islamic discourse of concern to my thesis. I examine Islam in relation to those in positions of wealth and power, whether it be state actors, famous actresses, or those with access to the global Islamic community through new technology. Moreover, I look at Islam in public culture. Mona and her Sisters are popular culture, even if they are presented as cosmopolitans. As a reflection of this *Mona and Her Sisters* suggests that applying Islam in and to these contexts is not only distinctive of itself but creates a distinctive form of Islam.

The Islamisation of Society or the Secularisation of Islam?

The appropriation of Islam by former secular elites such as actresses, amongst other things, has led to the discussion of the increasing Islamisation of society. For example, Abu-Lughod has argued that television has increasingly given way to discussion and

treatment of Islam because it is increasingly seen as "the ideological hub of the public sphere".[160] Asaf Bayat has also asserted that the active adoption of Islam by the privileged elite is a signal of an increasingly Islamic society.[161] It is undoubtedly true that Egyptian society is increasingly being penetrated by conventionally Islamic symbols. The *hijab* is perhaps the most prominent example of this. Furthermore, a notion of Islam does seem to inform debate and hold a persuasive power within the Egyptian public sphere. This is evident in the way the state has tried to use the discourse of Islam. Furthermore, much has been made of the idea of a shift from Islamism as a political project to Islamism as a social project. Roy says, "Islamic symbols are penetrating the society and the political discourse of the Muslim world more than ever. The retreat of political Islamism has been accompanied by the advancement of Islam as a social phenomenon."[162] Nevertheless, as Roy himself concedes this could potentially be on a very superficial level. In his new book, *Globalised Islam*, he argues, "Islamisation of society led to the Islamisation of secular activities and motivations, which remain secular in essence: business, strategies of social advancement, and entertainment (like five star Islamic resorts in Turkey, where the real issue is fun and entertainment, not Islam). When everything has to be Islamic, nothing is."[163] This could also be said of the *hijab*. When it becomes normative, it loses its symbolic weight. This suggests that a saturation of Islam provides a form of legitimation and acceptable symbolic markers but that it does not necessarily perceptibly alter the function or inherent meaning of an object or action. As a Cairene interviewed by Gregory Starrett argued, "It's like I said, just wearing the veil

[160] Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood*, p.190
[161] Bayat, "Piety, Privilege and Egyptian Youth"
[162] Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, p.78
[163] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p.40

makes people think that they can continue to do everything just as they did before, but now with an 'Islamic' content. It's very much on the surface, commercialized." He continues,

> It's getting so you can't talk about anything these days without dropping religion into it….I mean, I believe in some religious values, but it's *so* commercialized now, all over everything, and the more it spreads, when it gets so commercialized, it has a dwindling moral value, really. It becomes part of the background rather than something you really pay attention to.[164]

This is not an uncommon criticism of supposedly 'bourgeois Islam'. It is concerned with consumer society and therefore jeopardizes its spiritual and moral value. This is a criticism that the Islam Online books, veiled fashion and followers of Amr Khaled face. They appear to extend Islam beyond its sphere of relevance and it is thus diminished. However, if, as Islamists argue, Islam is a complete lifestyle and is concerned with society, then it inevitably will be concerned with the mundane, the profane and the commercial. The above criticism could be viewed as the argument of a secularist who fundamentally believes in the separating out and division of religious and non-religious activities into different spheres of influence. The implication is that religion has no relevance when it is concerned with public and commercial activity. Lyon argues against this suggesting that an active choice to embrace religion could potentially signal a fuller experience of, or engagement with, that religion: "while much in consumer culture may well be transient, ephemeral, inconsequential, this does not necessarily mean that those qualities feature prominently, let alone exclusively, in the religious decisions confronted in the course of accomplishing individual self-identities."[165] Lyon is therefore suggesting

[164] cited in Starrett, "The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo", p.64
[165] Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland*, p.77

that an individual who embraces consumer culture as a set of choices for constructing identity may well enjoy a more intense religious experience because they have explicitly chosen a certain manifestation of religion as being compatible with their life and lifestyle. They are not accepting it blindly as a social reality or as an established tradition but are affirming it in a personal way as a conscious choice. However, it does still seem evident, on some level, that Roy is right. Identifying something as Islamic as a means of creating credibility and support does not necessarily mean that such an object does truly possess an Islamic character. Roy's example of the Islamic theme park does appear to be pertinent. Another example could be the potential of Qur'anic recital to become a commercial industry that turns the Qur'an into a form of music. This is not to suggest everybody envisages it this way, or that it is objectively the case, but that it has the potential to be appropriated less for its spiritual and moral value and more for the sensory pleasure that the human voice can bring.[166]

However, the main thrust of this argument is not focused on the wider Egyptian society. It is concerned with the espousal of Islamic revival by a small affluent elite within and without this society. Furthermore, it seems foolish to suggest a secularisation on a broad societal level. There is no intention to argue as Giddens does that: "most of the situations of modern social life are manifestly incompatible with religion as a pervasive influence on day-to-day life."[167] This conclusion seems to fly in the face of the situation in Egypt and the Middle East. I do not aim to suggest the 'death' of religion or its decline in social

[166] see Nelson Kristina, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'an*, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1985)
[167] Giddens Anthony, *Consequences of Modernity*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990), p.109

significance as the secularisation theses of disappearance and differentiation assert. Nevertheless, there does appear to be the potential for what is called 'inner secularisation' at the level of the individual in relation to how Islam is presented by those who espouse Islamic revival. Indeed, how does Islam alter when it becomes the basis of notions of culture that are less associated with a territorial culture and are more associated with 'becoming cultured' as a state of being and a set of values that are applicable in various settings? Although as has been suggested above the rhetoric of Islamic revival does have the potential to encourage a personal relationship with God, the main emphasis is on a set of values and ethics that are not usually directly linked to any cosmological scheme. Indeed, as has been argued for the state of religion in general, there appears to be less reliance and emphasis on the metanarratives and notions of absolute truth.[168] For example, *Mona and Her Sisters* deals with the ethical regulation of life for middle class women in Cairo. However, the authority for their assertions is not grand narratives of divine truth but their own experiences. The show works through the guests and Mona discussing their own stories which essentially serve as moral exemplar for the conduct of life. In one episode, Mona says that there is a lot of concern about how the programme looks before they go on air, but what really makes it work is an air of piety and an air of friendship. She does not attribute the show's success to God or any grand scheme but to very personal and human values. It is the small personal stories that are invested with meaning. As Lyon says,

[168] Lyotard Jean Francois, *The Postmodern Condition*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984)

> The grand narratives of modernity….may in some respects be fading. But does this really mean that no narratives, no stories are available any longer, or that what remains has no sacred aspects? I think not. Rather, the available stories are much more fluid, malleable, and personalised.[169]

Indeed, I am not attempting to suggest that grand narratives and absolute truths have disappeared in general or specifically within the Islamic revival movement. There is substantial evidence to suggest that prominent figures such as Amr Khaled and Yusuf al-Qaradawi tie their discourse to the 'narrative' of the Qur'an. However, even here in the projects that they support, there is an evident shift in emphasis from how the individual relates to a notion beyond and greater than himself, to a concern with how the individual relates to himself and to other individuals. As Lyon asserts, "A careful sociological listening to contemporary voices reveals a trend towards the more general sacralization of the self."[170]

This is true of the notion of the repentant actress, the born again star or the petitioner and counsellor on the Islam Online website. They all seek to use media to produce public examples of personal experience. Indeed, as was noted above, Mustafa Abu Tamir was concerned that the Islam Online Books were not 'secrets of youth' because they were presented in a most public way. In effect, these books, like the programmes of Amr Khaled or Mona Abdul-Ghani are all concerned with self-help for themselves and others. All these examples as texts are essentially self-help manuals. As Olivier Roy says, "Islamic Revivalism goes hand in hand with a modern trend: the culture of the self. As we have seen, a return to Islam is also equated with a sort of worldly salvation: to be at

[169] Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland*, p.85
[170] Ibid, p.18

peace, to feel good, to regain self-esteem and dignity." [171] It is this emphasis on 'worldly salvation' that seems to be changing the shape of Islam in these contexts. It is less a religion, in the sense of a belief in some kind of supernatural power, and more a lifestyle in the sense of a set of values for daily living. This is not to say that Islam has not always been concerned with the regulation of individual and collective human relationships. Islamic law would seem to be testimony to this. However, what seems to be new is that this regulation is now premised on a concern with the self and individual well-being. It has become disconnected from living in accordance with God's wishes and commands to be relocated as a set of universal values that bring 'peace, self-esteem and dignity'. The truth of Islam is thus borne out by personal experience, not through a belief in concepts and objects beyond the individual whether physical or supernatural.

This is not to assert boldly that we are witnessing the secularisation of Egyptian society. It is not even to suggest that figures such as Khaled, al-Qaradawi and Abdul-Ghani are secularising Islam. It is to posit that such an emphasis on moral and ethical values have the potential to be appropriated in a non-religious, secular way. The notion of 'becoming cultured', that was primarily discussed in chapter 1, centres on the appropriation of moral values, education and technological ability. This concern with a modernizing agenda has not only been espoused by the Egyptian State but also by those who call for Islamic revival. 'Becoming cultured' can also be a euphemism for learning about sex. Although the notion of Islam espoused by those who call for revival does not engage with sex as eroticism, discussions of sexual matters do not contradict a general orientation toward a

[171] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p.193

self-help ethic. This sense of culture is not rooted in traditional Egyptian Islamic concepts of culture. It is universal in the sense of its general applicability and particular in its relevance to the minutiae of the individual. This has the potential to alienate those who envisage culture in different terms. However, it is not simply a culture or class conflict that has led to criticism of this affluent form of Islamic revival. It is perhaps also criticised because of its potential to be less to do with the spiritual and more to do with the mundane. It is often seen as superficial, potentially because a conception of Islam based within a notion of becoming cultured can be appropriated in a wholly secular manner. Islam can simply be seen as a set of moral values that helps the individual to attain culture. It can be a form of cultural authenticity. When Islam becomes solely about values that can be applied to everyday life for the regeneration of the individual and the society, it is essentially a secular system. To appropriate it in this manner is to continue to live a secular life. Ethics and religion do not amount to the same thing. As Berger states,

> Ethics can, indeed must, be stated in secular terms – that is, in terms that refer to the empirical world in which human beings relate to each other. To strive for justice, to be compassionate, to have a concern for the poor or oppressed – or more specific ethical concerns, ranging from sexual codes to the abolition of violence – all these need not have anything to do with any supernatural definitions of reality. If it can be maintained that what Christianity (or Judaism, or Islam, and so on) is really all about is a certain attitude with regard to these moral problems, then the translation into secularity has been accomplished.[172]

This translation is potentially evident in the presentation of Islam by individuals who espouse Islamic revival. The appropriation of Islam can be envisaged as a 'certain attitude' to the problems of modern life for the individual and for society. Becoming

[172] Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, p.114

cultured which appropriates the ‘values’ of Islam is a means of reconciling the individual with modern society through an acceptance of certain ethics and morals. This has the potential to be a wholly secular process.

Conclusion

This thesis has set out to illustrate the ways in which notions of Islam and Islamic revival are affected by their interaction with other trends, currents and ideas. One of these ideas is that of 'becoming cultured or educated'. Such rhetoric positions Islam as a central component of creating the modern man and modern society. It is concerned with the construction of the individual. This concept is articulated within the national Egyptian sphere, but it also seems to be evident in the work of Islam Online. This website aims to reform and cure the individual of the problems of modern life through the construction of an Islamic way of living. The notion of Islam as a 'moral', 'true' and 'authentic' lifestyle is therefore not simply confined to Egypt or Muslim majority countries of longstanding. Indeed, such a vision potentially gains greater resonance amongst minority communities where problems of integration and identity exist. Yet they are shared concerns, particularly amongst those who share similar lifestyles in terms of choice, wealth and technological ability. The Egyptian affluent elite, who are largely the focus of this study, inhabit a world which straddles boundaries between the local and the global. They can participate in debate on the nature of Islam and society at both the national Egyptian level and the international level, articulated through such projects as Islam Online. It is true that global trends do not only affect elites. There are many ways in which Egyptians of all social standing are influenced by such trends and ideas. The increasing permeation of all forms of media throughout Egyptian society is making this ever more apparent. Nevertheless, I have argued that such elites are particularly disposed to embrace these

trends and actively engage with these ideas at a supranational level. This is primarily because of their ability to access these ideas as and when they want them.

However, as *Film Saqafi,* with which this thesis opened, suggests, there is often a disparity between such modernising rhetoric of 'becoming cultured' and the actual reality. When Islam is envisaged as part of an ideal 'lifestyle', it has the potential to be appropriated in ways less based on high-minded values and more focused on a certain image, in essence, to become entrenched in trends of consumerism. For example, the presentation of the *hijab* as a fashion accessory, which helps to beautify the female figure, seems to be an inversion of a discourse in which taking the *hijab* is part of a process of appropriating certain moral values that 'veil' the female body.

Such an argument brings into question the assumption of the wholesale Islamisation of Egyptian society that suggests a movement of Islam from the bottom upwards and that implies a single monolithic interpretation of Islam amongst all Egyptians. There is much evidence to suggest that public discourse by both state and non-state actors is increasingly framed in the language of Islam. However, the appropriation of 'Islam' by such affluent Egyptian elites is particular. It serves a specific functional purpose. These 'shared communities' seek to construct identity and definition through Islam. It can also be argued that a process of Islamisation does not dramatically affect the lifestyles of these social classes. Islamisation cannot be seen as a process of social equalisation. As Abu-Lughod argues, attempts to mask class differences do not actually close these gaps. The affluent Egyptian Middle classes inhabit a different sphere. Indeed, there is the potential

for tension and contest over the perceived role of Islam as the result of the implications it suggests for legitimate lifestyles. As Islam penetrates the world of consumption, the disparities in wealth and social standing once again become more and more apparent.

This is not to suggest that the notion of Islamisation as the appropriation of certain Islamic symbols and markers by an increasingly large number of Egyptians is not evident. In this sense, the increasing Islamisation of society is undeniable. But is that all we are witnessing? At the fringes are we not also witnessing a reduction of Islam to ethics and culture, selling itself in a marketplace largely dominated by secular symbols and ideas? That is not to say that in the main attempts at Islamic revival do not engage fully with a religious worldview. I have tried to illustrate how Amr Khaled in particular but also Shaykh al-Qaradawi and others use the Qur'an and can be clearly placed within the Islamic tradition, particularly with reference to twentieth century modernist thought. Yet an emphasis on Islam as a lifestyle can be consumed in many ways. Perhaps many contemporary Egyptian Muslims' concerns with elements of 'bourgeois Islam' lie here. It not only adopts and transforms elements of a materialistic consumer society but it has the potential on some levels to promote an identity less based on belief than on individual ethics and well-being. This is not to reduce the idea of Islamic revival to a cultural phenomenon or to deny that an increasing islamisation of society is not an indication of belief. It is simply to suggest that this is a two way process. That society is not only affected by Islam but also that Islam is affected by society. Al-Qaradawi has asserted of Islam: "We should teach it as a creed, a way of worship, a set of behaviours and ethics, as a law and as an ideal civilization that connects the earth to the heavens, finds a place

between the heart and mind, balances between rights and obligations and between individual rights and communal interests."[173] However, if that connection between heaven and earth is broken, if Islam is simply seen as a way of 'becoming cultured', a way of living morally in the creation of an ideal society, it is nothing more than a secular ideology.

[173] Al-Qaradawi, "The Importance of Islam Online", (http://www.islamonline.net/english/qaradawi/index.shtml), accessed 20/02/2005