

THE ORIENT ON THE VICTORIAN STAGE

EDWARD ZITER

New York University



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Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
Introduction: “real sets,” geography, and race	1
1 Spectacle and surveillance in orientalist panoramas	22
2 Fantasies of miscegenation on the romantic stage	54
3 The built-out East of popular ethnography	94
4 The biblical East in theatres and exhibitions	131
5 The geography of imperial theatre	164
<i>Notes</i>	198
<i>Select bibliography</i>	218
<i>Index</i>	230

Illustrations

2.1	Tinsel of Edmund Kean as Othello	<i>page</i> 60
2.2	Edmund Kean in Huron costume	62
2.3	Print of Phillips's portrait of Byron in Albanian costume	63
2.4	Print of Phillips's "cloak" portrait of Byron	68
2.5	Print of Edmund Kean in cloak	69
2.6	Grieve's maquette for harem scene in <i>Le Corsaire</i> , 1837	76
2.7	William Porden's Royal Stables and Riding House from John Nash's <i>Views of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton</i>	77
2.8	Grieve's sketch for unidentified Egyptian setting	80
2.9	Luxor from Vivant Denon's <i>Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte</i>	81
2.10	Grieve's sketch for Ascalon in <i>Oberon</i> , 1826	91
3.1	Snake-charmers at Regent's Park Zoo from the <i>Illustrated London News</i> 15 June 1850	100
3.2	Visitors to the Crystal Palace from Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank's <i>1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family</i>	106
3.3	Tunisian Court from the <i>Illustrated London News</i> 31 May 1851	109
3.4	Algerian family at Vauxhall Gardens from the <i>Illustrated London News</i> 12 July 1851	112
3.5	Moorish conservatory at the Colosseum from the <i>Illustrated London News</i> 3 May 1845	120
3.6	"A Turkish Dinner Party" at the Oriental and Turkish Museum from the <i>Illustrated London News</i> 14 August 1854	123

4.1	Grieve's maquette for the temple scene in <i>Azaël the Prodigal</i> , 1851	142
4.2	Detail from Grieve's maquette for the Memphis setting in <i>Azaël the Prodigal</i> , 1851	144
4.3	Dayes's setting for <i>Sardanapalus</i> , 1853	152
4.4	Throne Room from Austen Henry Layard's <i>The Monuments of Nineveh, From Drawings Made on the Spot</i>	153

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Spectacle and surveillance in orientalist panoramas

In the first half of the nineteenth century, scores of panoramas, dioramas, cosmoramas, and other optical entertainments presented Eastern terrains and architecture to London audiences. These entertainments reportedly recreated a painter–traveler’s encounter with the East, celebrating his mastery of a foreign topography at the same time that they delighted in that topography’s power to induce vertigo. Audiences, like the painter–traveler that preceded them, took possession of the discovered landscape while also being possessed by its expansiveness. Individual entertainments carefully delineated a wide range of terrains and architecture and then asserted that this variety overwhelmed the senses. These images seemed both to narrate centuries of immigration and dynastic change and to reveal an underlying timelessness. They provided access to the complexities of history, geography, and race – all of which were summarized in cycles of “sack and slaughter.” These contradictions are much more than conceits or an emerging stylistic convention; I will argue that they speak of a new mode of being in the world and in time that was generated out of modernization and new colonial realities.

The sheer number of vistas housed in London contributed to both their authority and their disorienting effect. Most venues changed their views regularly, some venues housed multiple views, and a stunning number of venues were springing up all over London. From the privileged vantage point of the panorama platform, audiences looked upon a dizzying succession of locales. In 1851, the apogee of panorama production, there were nearly thirty views on display at various panoramas and optical shows. Nine of these featured Middle Eastern locales.¹ While the actual displays were dispersed throughout London, the places they represented were carefully organized in the popular consciousness along commercial and military routes. The year 1851 also witnessed the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, a mammoth undertaking amassing goods and raw materials from around the world. Such ambitious collecting relied heavily

on the movement of soldiers and seamen, as was demonstrated in numerous panoramas depicting military routes to the East.

FROM LANDSCAPE TO GEOGRAPHY

The panorama maintained a tension between visual surrender into disorienting landscapes and a sense of mastery produced by commanding views. Art historians such as John Barrell and Jonathan Crary have argued that in the eighteenth century vision was increasingly seen as a subjective faculty.² Panoramas reflect a continuing ambivalence towards vision's authority and the value of spectacle. Panoramas were, of course, visual entertainments par excellence in which pleasure was produced by the medium's ability to fool the eye. However, over the fifty years of the panorama's popularity, panorama spectacle was increasingly inscribed in abstract relations. Souvenir pamphlets provided panorama patrons with information on the region's topography and ethnic breakdown, as well as other natural and cultural features. Entertainment innovations such as the moving panorama and accompanying performances, travel narratives, and lectures also attempted to infuse a geographic sensibility into panorama landscapes. More importantly, panoramas drew upon the growing geographic knowledge of their patrons. If the visual offered a dubious authority, geography – manifest in a growing number of exchanges between London and peripheral regions but never directly perceptible – discovered a new and distinctly colonial authority in the contextual. Meaning did not exist in objects, but in the relation between objects (whether this relation was defined by geography, ethnography, or history).

The history of London's panoramas and optical entertainments in the first half of the nineteenth century reveals the increasing dominance of a geographic sensibility (focusing on abstract contextual relations) over a landscape sensibility (in which artistry and subjectivity informed the apprehension of the visible). In a corresponding development, new entertainments developed that more effectively conveyed a sense of authority while minimizing disorienting effects. The tendency of reviews for optical entertainments to provide lengthy discussions of the depicted region's history, ethnic breakdown, or role in the current power balance, indicates that these entertainments were taken as informative, rather than disorienting, spectacle. Paradoxically, presenters assuaged concerns for topographical accuracy by directing attention away from the visual. Increasingly, these entertainments became lessons in geography, ethnology, and history, realms that avoided the anxieties of vision in their abstract nature. Invariably, this

non-visual information was directed back to specific features of the image – transforming these features into markers of abstract relations. The obsessive amassing of informative detail became a means of obscuring the visual nature of these obviously visual entertainments. They became opportunities to see past the visual into the incontestable authority of scholarship. The rise of geography was indicative of this process; however, this is not to imply that geography eventually vanquished landscape or that a landscape sensibility ever existed independent of a geographic framework. Rather, the two sensibilities were dialectically linked.

The tension between landscape and geography was especially pronounced in the depiction of Eastern terrain. Britain's long-standing fascination with an Orient imagined to be lawless and lascivious contributed to a tendency to imaginatively engage the depicted terrain. At the same time, Britain's burgeoning sense of cultural superiority, intensified by military interventions and a trend towards economic domination, found its corollary in commanding views. As the Eastern Question prompted Britain to more direct involvement in the region, the region became Britain's to delineate, arrange, and analyze. However, this was far from the case at the start of the century when the panorama craze first erupted in London.

In 1794, Robert Barker opened a large circular building in Leicester Square for the exhibition of giant topographical canvases depicting 360-degree views. Barker had been exhibiting giant canvases since 1788, which he began calling "panoramas" on the advice of one of his "classical friends" in 1791. However, it was not until the Leicester Square Panorama was in operation that the full illusionary capacity of his display was realized. Though not the first view to completely surround the spectator, the scope and illusionistic lighting of the Leicester Square Panorama provided an unprecedented experience. Spectators entered through a dimly lit narrow passage and then mounted to a 30-foot (9-metre)-wide viewing platform in the center of a 90-foot (27-metre) rotunda (known as the Large Circle). From this platform, spectators looked upon a brightly illuminated cylindrical canvas. The image was hung at the uniform distance of 30 feet (9 metres) from the edge of the platform. A second smaller panorama rotunda (the Upper Circle) was built directly above the viewing platform. Central skylights cast sunlight onto both canvases, but the floor of the Upper Circle prevented spectators on the viewing platform in the Large Circle from discerning the source of the light. A canopy in the Upper Circle produced the same effect. In the Large Circle, false terrain was built into the floor to prevent the appearance that the landscape terminated in a bottom frame. Moreover, the spectators in the Large Circle were unable to see the top edge

of the canvas because the floor of the Upper Circle blocked their view of where the image met the roof.³ The Leicester Square Panorama retained this configuration (with the exception of a short-lived third circle) even after it passed to Robert Burford, who operated the business from 1826 to 1861.

The panorama did not strive at realism, but produced an illusion of the real. The panorama erased any reminders that the spectator examined a work of art separate and apart from their position. The image had no frame (thanks to the false terrain and the floor of the Upper Circle). Instead, the image appeared to extend endlessly, enveloping the spectator. At no point could the spectator break from the image and examine the surrounding reality; the panorama completely filled the field of vision, blotting out anything that might reveal its artificiality. The indirect light ensured that the spectator's shadow would not be cast on the image, destroying the illusion. Moreover, the diffuse light recreated the experience of outdoor lighting. The darkness of the corridor leading to the viewing platform further undermined the spectator's awareness that they were still indoors; once emerging and stepping onto the platform, the depicted terrain "appeared as bright as the remembered daylight outside," in the words of one historian.⁴ Spectators attested to the disorienting effects. Queen Charlotte reportedly grew seasick when attending Barker's first panorama in the Leicester Square building, *The Grand Fleet at Spithead in 1791*.⁵ Spectators at other early Leicester Square panoramas complained of "dizziness and nausea" caused by the "impossibility of withdrawing from the delusion," and attributed the effects of the panorama to its lack of a frame or "any object that could serve as a comparison."⁶

The panorama's pronounced effects on spectators diminished with its novelty, and it is in this context that Robert Barker quickly turned to foreign subjects. As early as 1799 Robert Barker's son, Henry Aston Barker, traveled to Turkey to make sketches of Constantinople. It was his first sketching trip and the success of the resulting two panoramas secured a life of travel. *View of Constantinople from the Town of Galatea* was exhibited in the Large Circle from 27 April 1801 until 15 May 1802, and *View of Constantinople from the Tower of Leander* was shown in the Upper Circle from 23 November 1801 to 14 May 1803. Notices for the larger panorama drew attention to the fact that it was only through the intervention of Lord Elgin, British envoy to the Ottoman Sultan, that Barker obtained an "Order from the Porte" to execute his sketches. Moreover, these notices explained that an Ottoman Janissary attended Barker while he made the sketches.⁷ The image of Barker under the surveillance of a member of the elite war corps, combined with the fact of Lord Elgin's intervention with

the Porte, underscored the danger and exoticism of his sketching expedition. Constantinople would become one of the most frequently reproduced cities at the Leicester Square Panorama; new Constantinople panoramas were exhibited in 1804, 1846, and 1853–1854, the last two panoramas being based on new sketches by William J. Smith. In addition, the Strand panorama, which, like the Leicester Square Panorama, was owned by Robert Burford after 1826, exhibited a Constantinople panorama in 1829 based on Henry Aston Barker's original sketches.

While none of these canvases are extant (Barker began painting over old works soon into his career) their souvenir pamphlets, which contained an illustrated key and descriptions, suggest that a sense of geographic mastery came to overshadow the panorama's disorienting effects. The key for the 1801 Larger Circle view of Constantinople is anamorphic, whereas the keys for the 1829, 1846, and 1853 panoramas convert the panorama into two rectangles. The switch from anamorphic to rectilinear keys underscored the legibility of the panorama. Rectilinear keys are designed to be read from left to right; important features are numbered beginning at the left as are their corresponding names. Anamorphic keys are harder to read; the circular view produces distortions, there is no clear order to the depicted features, and there is not an obvious place to list the names of the numbered features. Anamorphic keys emphasized the sensationalism of a 360-degree view. There is no clear route into the image. Instead it is all available at once and yet inaccessible precisely for its overwhelming simultaneity. The spectator's position is marked at the center of the image, emphasizing the spectator's inability to separate from the terrain and make a picture of it. By contrast, in the rectilinear keys the spectator is outside the frame and the terrain is neatly organized. The fact that, according to Stephan Oettermann, most European panoramas switched to rectangular keys after 1815⁸ underscores how quickly the sensationalism of a 360-degree view waned.

As the effects of the panorama grew less sensational, the subject matter grew more so. The pamphlet for Burford's Constantinople panorama of 1846 provided a description of the baths, which seems largely drawn from orientalist painting. One portion of the description reads:

It may seem that the process of bathing occupies at least one or two hours, but females frequently remain talking, laughing and singing, five or six, yet the price of the bath, exclusive of refreshments, seldom exceeds six or seven-pence, and the attendants are all well skilled in shaving, hairdressing and other necessary arts. A female bath attended by thirty or forty bathers, with their beautiful children and numerous slaves, all sumptuously attired and blazing with jewels, is described as a splendid scene.⁹

By mid-century, Eastern baths summoned images of female dalliance, with refreshments and music. Eastern females were quickly translated into spectacle; together with their children and slaves, they automatically compose a “splendid scene.”

This sensational pictorialism is similarly evident in the pamphlet’s description of the “small chambers” of the slave market, which “are most appropriate to the use of female slaves, and present to the eyes of those privileged to see them, an extraordinary assemblage of frame and beauty of every age and colour.”¹⁰ No longer was the spectacle of the panorama its disorienting 360-degree view, but those small female chambers, normally closed but now opened to viewer’s knowledge through the descriptive materials of the panorama. By contrast, the only mention of female space in the pamphlet for Barker’s first Constantinople panorama was the explanation that that part of the Seraglio “which is called the harem, strictly signifies the apartments of the women, and the enclosures appropriated to their use.”¹¹ The description makes no attempt to open up the harem. Instead it remains one of the countless features that surround but elude the spectator.

The ability to open closed female chambers was only one aspect of comprehensiveness of the view offered at the 1846 panorama. Its pamphlet asserted that from the spectator’s position atop Seraskier’s Tower, “the whole of [Constantinople’s] curious internal economy is at once visible in its fullest extent and magnificence.”¹² The pamphlet then delineated this economy in a somewhat haphazard fashion, discussing the present state of coffee-houses, the prevalence of public and private fountains, as well as providing extended discussions of the surrounding topography and the ethnic breakdown of the city. The spectator’s view was as pervasive as the Western influence, which was evident in the fact that “the Turks possess all the elements of civilization, and time, example and a perfect confidence in their European allies, is working a great revolution.” This new-found confidence in the Ottomans followed Palmerston’s insistence that British interests in the region demanded the protection of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire against incursions by Russia and the growing independence of Egypt. However, the belief in an all-pervasive Western influence is striking even given the political context. Consider, for example, the pamphlet’s assertion that “the habits of industry have made their way into many harems, and have totally changed the habits and feelings of the women.” The same women, presumably, who formed the “splendid scene” at the baths were in fact open to a Victorian ideology of progress and usefulness.

Constantinople’s “curious internal economy” apparently combined Western habits of industry with odalisques. The East would eventually

develop into a somewhat inferior version of Europe, only with a lot more sex. This development would appear to have more to do with Constantinople's receptiveness to British commerce than any moral reform. It was Western *products* of industry (rather than habits) that had actually infiltrated Eastern homes. According to the pamphlet for the 1846 panorama of Constantinople, the real proof of the city's civilization was that the Turks were adopting Western clothing. The pamphlet cites as an example the fact that the turban was being replaced by the red fez, which – the pamphlet need not remind – was manufactured in England. The comprehensiveness of the panorama view was a corollary to the pervasiveness of British industry.

The pamphlet for Barker's first Constantinople panorama describes a strikingly different relation between British spectator and Eastern city. Rather than manufacturing Turkish costumes and shipping them east, the British in 1801 relied on chance events to make indigenous costumes visible. The pamphlet for the first Constantinople panorama explained that if the costumes were accurately rendered, it was only because of a fortunate "display which took place at the time of the drawing; the Grand Signior having passed close by the Tower, with the officers of his household, and a numerous train of barges, &c. as he sailed from Constantinople to one of his palaces on the Bosphorus."¹³ Beyond the curious choice to describe the Sultan as "the Grand Signior" (a tendency to conflate the Eastern Mediterranean with the Western Mediterranean which was also evident in exotic scene painting at this time) the quote is interesting for its acknowledgment of happenstance in the preparation of the image. Sights rise up for the artist without his control, just as they do for the spectator at the panorama.

The 1801 pamphlet describes an active landscape, whereas the 1846 pamphlet describes a landscape that has been, by and large, subjugated. There is a sense of movement in the earlier pamphlet's description of barges making their way to a palace on the Bosphorus, filled with exotically clad officers of the Sultan's household. Unexpected images greet the spectator from a landscape performing its otherness. By contrast, the later pamphlet from 1846 asserts that from the viewing platform "mosques, minarets, palaces, and kiosks, in countless variety . . . spread out like a map." Even here, though, the exotic undermines attempts at its containment. After rather dry descriptions of the above-mentioned mosques, the 1846 pamphlet concludes:

. . . these [mosques] with the towers, ports, palaces, and the vast masses of heavy-looking, party coloured houses, together with the myriads of small domes, intermixed with vast woods of cypress, and groves of stately pines, which meet the eye in strange but pleasing confusion, press an appearance so Oriental, and so different in character from anything European, as to defy description.¹⁴

The pamphlet provides a long and clear list of structures, and then announces that these objects defy ordering and “meet the eye in strange but pleasing confusion.” This active landscape, with its combination of brightly colored and vastly different structures, epitomizes the “Oriental.” This is not the Orient as object of imperial objectivity, but an Orient that confronts the spectator with a character so different as to “defy description.” Mastery folds before an absorbing confusion.

ANTIQUARIAN VISION

Just as the panorama maintained a tension between landscape and geography in its depiction of space, it also maintained a tension between antiquarianism and historicism in its depiction of time. The Orient was conceived of as an antiquary’s haven, not because its past was visible in physical remains, but because past and present were thought to coexist in a kind of always-antiquity. In many examples of romantic orientalism, the region seems to possess its own proper time independent of Europe’s forward historical development. The resulting image is “not a *pre-modern*, but an *anti-modern* Orient,” as Saree Makdisi has written in reference to the East of “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage.”¹⁵ This was especially pronounced in representations of Jerusalem, whose importance in scriptures contributed to its remove from a Western secular timeline. This “anti-modern” Orient came into increasing conflict with the developing imperial world-view, especially once the British began to prop up the Ottoman Empire against the threat of Russian aggression. As we have already seen in the 1846 panorama of Constantinople, once the city was repositioned within Britain’s sphere of influence, it was discovered to possess all the vestments of civilization including proper haberdashery.

Just as the exotic panorama prompted both disorientation and mastery, similarly contrasting attitudes are evident in the panorama’s representation of the exotic past. Stephen Bann describes such contrasting attitudes when he compares the antiquarianism of the romantic period with the historicism that emerged later in the nineteenth century. According to Bann, the development of a historicist outlook entailed the ability to see beyond isolated facts and old objects so as to grasp their relation. Historicism is the attempt to separate oneself from the object of study so as to gain a proper perspective for the writing of history. Bann explains, “writing imposes a regime which is comparable to that of the perspectival painting, in that no detail, or object, is accessible in itself, but is simply an element integrated within the stimulating space of the perspective.”¹⁶ By contrast, antiquarian fascination

attached itself to the ancient object proper. The antiquary sought to surround him or herself with the material of antiquity, regardless of its “real” position in a historical narrative. Antiquarian collections amassed artifacts and fragments from daily life, such that – as a contemporary journalist said of the Musée de Cluny – “you are as if enveloped by the good old chivalric times.”¹⁷ For Bann, this antiquarian envelopment is distinct from historicist perspective, and marks distinctly different attitudes to the past. He explains, “Envelopment is, of course, a concept particularly appropriate to an experience of the senses which is not directional – not subject to the ordering of a visually coherent space.”¹⁸

Bann’s choice to translate nineteenth-century historical consciousness into spatial metaphors (envelopment versus perspective) underscores the degree to which tensions between attitudes to the past and the tensions between attitudes to landscape trace a single dialectic in the epistemological field. Geography, in this sense, can be read as one of the several abstract frameworks (such as historicism) that emerged in the nineteenth century, replacing a classical order organized by resemblance. Geography attempts to include ideas of development and change in its representations of place, examining the distribution and interaction of physical, biological, and cultural features that change across regions and over time. In short, geography attempts to communicate the “whole of an internal economy” (to quote the Constantinople pamphlet of 1846). It examines processes beneath the surface rather than simply enumerating what is already visible.

In this respect, the relation between landscape and geography can be said to parallel the relation between antiquarianism and historicism. While antiquarianism limits itself to the material objects of the past (from chipped artifacts to musty documents), historicism uses such objects to arrive at ideas of succession and analogy. Similarly, only by seeing through depicted features to abstract relations could the panorama spectator remove herself from an enveloping landscape, even though these abstract frameworks were generated out of a physical topography. This was especially pronounced in orientalist depictions, in which “strange but pleasing confusion,” often replete with sexual connotations, drew spectators into a densely material landscape, at the same time that clearly demarcated differences marked the spectator’s mastery over the depicted terrain.

Britain’s antiquarian interest in the East was stimulated at the start of the century by the wealth of iconographic material produced during the French invasion of Egypt. Prior to the nineteenth century, British interest in Eastern antiquities focused on those Egyptian remains scattered in Rome (the principal destination of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour) or those

documented by a handful of Eastern travelers such as Richard Pococke, Frederick L. Norden, and James Bruce. However, this all changed in the aftermath of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. The full effects of the short-lived occupation became evident in the years after the French evacuation of 1801, when reams of documentation and artifacts arrived in Europe. Though Napoleon's ultimate goal of reinforcing French domination of the Mediterranean and obstructing Britain's route to India was foiled when Nelson destroyed the French fleet at Aboukir Bay in August of 1798, the impact of the French occupation on European culture was lasting.

Napoleon's expedition was accompanied by one hundred and sixty-seven scholars from fields ranging from literature to engineering and charged with documenting all facets of Egyptian life. Napoleon returned to France soon after the defeat at Aboukir Bay; however, the French army and his troop of scholars remained in Cairo. Despite their tenuous situation, these scholars relentlessly went about their work recording and cataloguing nearly everything they encountered, from ancient and Islamic monuments, to arts and crafts, to flora and fauna. After the French capitulation, these scholars were allowed to leave with their manuscripts, drawings, and casts (after the French threatened to destroy their work rather than relinquish it to the British). In the years following the invasion, a series of lavishly illustrated French folios documenting Egypt appeared.

While the most famous and exhaustive of these publications was the twenty-three-volume *Description de l'Égypte*, Vivant Denon's *Voyages dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* published in 1802 was by far the most important for the British entertainment industry. *Voyages*, with 141 plates and accompanying lengthy descriptions, roamed widely over all things Egyptian, inviting readers to an antiquarian immersion into the world of the exotic. In addition to extensive documentation of pharaonic ruins, the book includes images of Arab physical types, Egyptian costumes, interior views of the harem, even scenes from French battles in the region. Several editions of *Voyages* rapidly appeared in England, including a very popular pocket-sized edition with reduced prints. The *Edinburgh Review* asserted that "Few publications, we believe, have ever obtained so extensive a circulation in the same space of time as these travels."¹⁹ *Voyages* was adapted by the theatre almost immediately following its publication and would become, in the words of one historian, "the theatre's major source of Egyptian subjects."²⁰

In the same year as the publication of *Voyages*, Mark Lonsdale – theatre manager, dramatist, and stage mechanic – produced *Ægyptiana* in the upper room of the Lyceum, beginning the entertainment with eighteen

large paintings based on prints by Denon and accompanied by explanatory readings, according to handbills. Charles Dibdin, Jr., the nineteenth-century playwright, was presumably referring to this production when he wrote of Lonsdale's "Egyptiana" in his *History and Illustrations of the London Theatres* (1826). According to Dibdin, the production "consisted of panoramic paintings, mechanical transformations, and recitation; and was illustrative of everything connected with the history of Egypt, natural and philosophical; its inhabitants, animals, customs, and localities."²¹ *Ægyptiana* apparently surrounded the spectator with images, stage effects, and narration. Its scope was as expansive as its source text. In this light, Dibdin's unlikely assertion that *Ægyptiana* illustrated "every thing connected with the history of Egypt" becomes an indication of the production's enveloping exoticism, rather than its thoroughness of subject.

The antiquarian response to the ancient East is clarified by John Britton's description of *Ægyptiana*. Britton, who would later publish extensively on antiquarian and topographical subjects, wrote and delivered accompanying descriptions for *Ægyptiana*. In his 1850 autobiography, Britton explains that "on the publication of Denon's splendid work on Antiquites &c. of Egypt," Lonsdale arranged to have these images "adapted and applied as to produce a moving panorama for the stage."²² It is unclear whether Britton used the term "moving panorama" to mean a series of images painted on a long cloth that was unfurled across the stage on rollers (which is what the term usually meant at the time he wrote) or if he simply intended to suggest a progression of images pulling the spectator into an enveloping (i.e. panoramic) stage world. The latter is most likely the case, as there is no evidence of such mechanical moving panoramas at the time of *Ægyptiana*'s production. Regardless, Britton remembers *Ægyptiana* as a theatrical event, rather than the mere exhibition of Denon's images. The exotic image, in its adaptation to the stage, is either literally or figuratively animated. This is not a static view, not simply a "splendid work on Antiquities," but a moving panorama.

The eclectic resources of this early theatrical orientalism are evident in the full bill for *Ægyptiana*. The images of Egyptian antiquities were followed by an "intermezzo" of readings from Gothic romances "Illustrated by Machinery and Painting in Six Picturesque Changes" which was then followed by "an Embellished Recitation of Milton's L'Allegro" with "Ten Successive Pictures" taken from the work.²³ In juxtaposing images from Denon with scenes from gothic romances and scenes from Milton of pastoral and ancient locales (such as consecutive views of "A Splendid Tournament" and "Ancient Hall, with a Banquet"), Lonsdale

simply complemented the anti-modern with the pre-modern. There was no disjuncture in the move from pharaonic ruins to medieval recreations, both acted as markers of distance, both fulfilled a desire for a space outside modernity.

This antiquarian fetish for the non-modern is even more evident in Britton's account of *Ægyptiana's* strange theatrical combinations. Britton explains that for his benefit night (a performance in which a specified performer or performers received the house proceeds after expenses), he and three friends "made up an evening's programme of the *Egyptiaca*, recitations, songs, &c." The use of the term "*Egyptiaca*," which was already obsolete, suggests the same love of the remote that animated *Ægyptiana*. It was not that the performance fully delineated the Egyptian past or created – to paraphrase Bann – a visually coherent space in which no detail was accessible in itself but only as part of a larger whole. Instead, *Ægyptiana* provided delightfully musty fragments, specimens of "*Egyptiaca*," arranged in the theatre so as to create the effect of antiquity. Songs, recitations, and Egyptology all pleased in themselves producing an atmosphere thick with the old and unusual.

Britton's early theatre career might seem inconsistent with his later renown as a writer on antiquarian and topographical subjects and his position as vice-president of the Sussex Archaeological Society and of the Archaeological Institute at Salisbury; however, he was not alone among antiquarians in his dabbling in the popular entertainment industry. The new theatricality of the early-nineteenth century was entirely consonant with the antiquarian impulse and a surprising number of scholar-travelers doubled as showmen, such as Giovanni Belzoni, Henry Salt, Joseph Bonomi, and Robert Ker Porter. The panorama is the most obvious manifestation of antiquarianism's figurative envelopment in an actually enveloping performance form (though theatre, as we shall see, similarly adapted new scenic strategies to this end). One of the most prolific of these antiquary showmen, both in terms of scholarly and entertainment output, was Frederick Catherwood. Catherwood is probably best remembered as the illustrator for John Lloyd Stephen's Central American travel accounts; however, at the time of their first trip to the region Catherwood was known as the proprietor of Catherwood's Panorama in New York City. Catherwood entered the panorama business in 1835 after three years of travel in Egypt and the Holy Land. According to his biographer, Catherwood was unable to find a publisher for his drawings of Jerusalem, and so allowed Robert Burford to use them at the Leicester Square Panorama. Catherwood assisted in the archaeological details of the buildings. This collaboration was followed by

Catherwood's contribution to three other Middle Eastern panoramas at the Leicester Square Panorama: "Thebes" of ancient Egypt, "Karnak," and the "Ruins of Baalbec."²⁴

Antiquarian writing, like other writing of the romantic period, often sought to induce an empathic relation to the actors and events of the past. Such imaginative projection is suggested by Catherwood's inclusion of himself and fellow traveler Joseph Bonomi wearing Arab clothes in the Jerusalem panorama.²⁵ From the height of the Ottoman governor's house, from which the view was taken, Catherwood places himself and his friend in the ancient city, passing as Arabs. In doing so, he invites spectators to imagine leaving the panorama viewing-platform and entering Jerusalem as well. Such recourse to the imagination is also evident in the souvenir pamphlet's extended selections of poetry by Tasso and Henry Hart Milman. Such poetic invocations of place were repeated in the souvenir pamphlets for other Eastern panoramas at Leicester Square: Byron was quoted in the *Damascus* pamphlet (1841) and Pope was quoted in the *Bombardment of St. Jean D'Acre* pamphlet (1841). Such inclusions implied that poetry is as necessary to make place present and legible for the spectator as ethnic and topographical statistics.

Jerusalem was thought to exercise a considerable power over the emotions, as is evident in the unusually evocative language of the souvenir pamphlet of 1835. It is worth quoting at length:

... the general aspect of the city and its vicinity, is blighted and barren, the sycamore and cedar are no more, bare rocks present their rugged points through the languishing verdure, the vineyards are gone, and the vine cut off; the Holy Temple is destroyed, and the Sons of Jacob, favoured as no other people were, are driven out, and scattered over the face of the globe; all is loneliness and wildness, where once was every luxury; the glory is departed from the city, and ruin and desolation alone remain, to mark the tremendous power and righteous judgement that smote and so fearfully laid waste; yet there is nothing in antiquity more impressive or wonderful – the most powerful emotions are excited, and the most enthusiastic interest felt; each mouldering ruin recalls a history; and every part, both within and without the walls, has been the scene of some miraculous event.

Looking beyond the glaring anti-Semitism, one is struck by the passage's incessant delineation of loss. While the language cues topographical description, promising "the general aspect of the city and its vicinity," it rapidly becomes a list of what is *not*. Sycamore and cedar are no more, the Temple has been destroyed, even the population has been driven out and scattered. All that remains are mouldering ruins, each of which "recalls a history." What appears to be a space of absence is suddenly filled. The

barrenness is replete with the spectator's own sacred history. The love of antiquity is here conflated with the veneration of relics, for just as the relic is already imbued with holiness, the ruin is already dense with the past.

It is this very sense of veneration that Nietzsche found so contemptible in the antiquarian for whom "the possession of his ancestor's furniture changes its meaning in his soul, for his soul is rather possessed by it." There is no sense of a perspective or narrative that gives meaning to the remnant; instead each object "gains a worth and inviolability of its own from the conservative and reverent soul of the antiquarian migrating into it and building a secret nest there."²⁶ Just as Nietzsche's antiquary projects his own personal history into the old furniture and doorknobs with which he surrounds himself, the panorama antiquary finds a home for the soul in the Eastern canvas, placing himself and his spectators in Jerusalem, dressed in Arab costume. This is an East divested of inhabitants in order to make room for its rightful residents, London spectators. The panorama pamphlet's requisite ethnic breakdown simply describes the squatters. These transients find no home in moldering ruins and are – like the Arabs in Denon's images – oblivious to the past that towers over them. It is not surprising, for it is not their past but the spectators' past (and future) that was depicted in the topography and antiquities at the panorama. As the *Athenaeum* explained when a Jerusalem panorama was mounted in a newly created third circle at the Leicester Square Panorama in 1841, "On the interest of the subject it is needless to dwell, at a time when so many eyes are turned upon the Holy Land, and the Holy City, in veneration of their past, or curiosity as [to] their future destinies."²⁷ While Nietzsche's antiquary found his past in an old armoire, panorama antiquaries found both their past and their future in the ruins of the East.

WARTIME CANVASES

Projecting one's past and future onto fragments lodged thousands of miles away is a much more complicated process than waxing eloquent on one's ancestor's furniture. The former required a host of organizational and technological innovations. New systems of transportation opened the East to greater numbers of travelers, new methods of reproduction facilitated the circulation of orientalist images, and – perhaps most importantly – new military technologies ensured a lasting European presence in the region. Increasingly, orientalist panoramas became imbued with Britain's growing sense of imperial importance. To summon up the East with an illusionistic surfeit of detail seemed indication of Britain's technological advances and ascendancy on the world stage. By contrast, barrow-digging in Wiltshire

hardly inspired the larger public. One need only to recall Gaev's speech on the bookcase in *The Cherry Orchard* or Scott's Dr. Dryasdust to recognize how vulnerable to scorn were the parochial obsessions of antiquarianism. The *Athenaeum* was right, it was a time in which all eyes turned to the East "in veneration of their past, or curiosity as [to] their future destinies," a reference to both biblical narrative and Britain's recent capture of Acre from Egyptian forces.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt prompted depictions of battles at a variety of entertainment venues. Astley's Amphitheatre and the Royal Circus both recreated British victories in Egypt with scores of actors on horseback, while Sadler's Wells reproduced the Battle of the Nile with model ships in a 90- by 20-foot (27- by 6-metre) tank installed in the stage floor. Optical entertainments similarly capitalized on the increased British interest in the East generated by the Napoleonic Wars. In 1799, the Leicester Square Panorama produced a spectacular recreation of the Battle of the Nile prompting Admiral Nelson to thank Barker for "keeping up the fame of his victory in the battle of the Nile for a year longer than it would have lasted in the public estimation."²⁸ In addition, of the six military panoramas that Robert Ker Porter displayed in the Great Room of the Lyceum, two depicted British victories against French forces in the Middle East, the Siege of Acre and the Battle of the Nile.

Porter's panoramas made much of exotic settings and properties. One spectator remarked that in Porter's *The Storming of Seringapatam* (1800), "The oriental dress, the jeweled turban, the curved and ponderous scymitar [sic] – these were among the prime objects with Sir Robert's pencil."²⁹ The descriptive pamphlet for Porter's *The Siege of Acre* (1801) drew attention to sites in Syria, such as "the splendid Mosque of the Pacha, with its Towers and Minarets rising amidst the ruins of a Christian Convent," Mount Tabor, which was "the scene of various events recorded in Holy Writ," and Mount Carmel, which – the pamphlet explained – was named by the Prophet Elijah.³⁰ Moreover, the pamphlet also included extensive historical and topographical information on Acre. The exotic wartime panorama privileged exotic details, placing British victories within the context of biblical history and imperial geography.

Entertainment venues continued to reproduce British military intervention in the East following the Napoleonic Wars. The British fleet's bombardment of the Algerian coast in 1816 prompted a spectacle at the Royal Circus, a panoramic depiction of the battle inserted into a pantomime at the Adelphi Theatre, and two other privately displayed panoramas – in at least one of which individual scenes painted sequentially on a

long canvas were slowly advanced on rollers.³¹ These “moving panoramas” were frequently inserted into pantomimes from the 1820s onward and were also displayed independently. When a European fleet defeated Ottoman forces at Navarino, ultimately forcing Ottoman withdrawal from the Greek city, moving panoramas depicting the victory were quickly inserted into at least three Christmas pantomimes.³² Venues such as Astley’s and the Royal Coburg followed with dramatizations of the battle.

Moving panoramas often foregrounded the military’s use of geographic knowledge, transforming terrains into transport routes. However, this is not to say that these panoramas undermined the imaginative appeal of the exotic. For example, when the Russian government took advantage of Ottoman weakness to secure a route to the Dardanelles in 1828, Covent Garden inserted a moving panorama into that year’s Christmas pantomime that transformed the Russian march on Constantinople into a showcase of exotic iconography. Charles Farley’s libretto for *Harlequin and Little Red Riding Hood* describes the fancifully titled panorama:

‘Poreibasilartikasparbosporas’ Or the Northern Ruler’s Route to the Dardanelles: Comprehending the following scenery: St. Petersburg at the time of a grand festival. Mountains and Fortresses. The Night-Watch – Soldiers Bivouacking, &c. Ambuscade and Battle. The Halt of the caravan in the Desert, at sunset; the approach through the Dardanelles to the Castle of the Seven Towers; and the General View of Constantinople.³³

A desert caravan would be an unusual sight on the western coast of the Black Sea; however, the desert vista had proved a popular attraction at such early shows as the Leicester Square Panorama’s Cairo of 1809 and so found its way into a surprising number of productions. The panorama for *Harlequin and Little Red Riding Hood* was roundly criticized in the press for its alleged plagiarism of artists such as John Martin, Francis Danby (himself an imitator of Martin), and Horace Vernet.³⁴ The fact that so much of the panorama felt familiar to its critics is testimony to how quickly exotic topography had been disseminated. If the panorama artist plagiarized, it is just as likely that he adopted the now increasingly familiar imagery of theatrical orientalism as that he borrowed from any one gallery artist.

Under Robert Burford’s management, the Leicester Square Panorama gave increased attention to the sites of British military intervention. At the same time as theatres were displaying their panoramas of Navarino, the Leicester Square Panorama was hurriedly mounting its own depiction of the battle from drawings made at the scene and plans lent by the Admiralty.³⁵ Following the Russian invasion of Turkey, Burford mounted a view of

Constantinople at the Strand for audiences wishing to revisit the area that was arousing the interest of the world's most powerful nations. When England next interceded in the region, Burford responded with two new panoramas. The continuing weakness of the Ottoman Empire enabled the Governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, to extend his power over Syria, Crete, and Adana, and to declare independence from the Porte. Fearing that the further weakening of the Ottoman Empire would increase French or Russian influence in the region, a combined British–Austrian fleet landed troops at Beirut and captured Acre in November of 1840. The English then forced Muhammad Ali to accept a compromise that granted him hereditary governorship over a smaller region. Burford quickly mounted panoramas of both Damascus and the Bombardment of Acre at the Leicester Square Panorama.

Burford's *Bombardment of St. Jean D'Acre* provides a vivid example of how he allied his Panorama with the military, stressing the patriotism of his presentation of imperial and religious subjects. The speed with which Burford mounted the panorama was itself a source of some amazement. The *Mirror of Literature* marveled, "little more than three months have elapsed since the brilliant deed and scarcely have Parliament voted thanks to the conquerors, when here we have a perfect pictorial representation of the brilliant deed."³⁶ Burford's souvenir pamphlet expressed "sincere thanks to Capt. [sic] Stopford for the very important and useful information, and various details he kindly furnished, also for his polite attention during the progress of the painting, to which he is indebted for its accuracy."³⁷ In addition, the pamphlet included the text of the letter from Admiral Stopford announcing the victory to the Lords, as well as the Admiral's own description of the thick of battle. Certainly warfare was good business for Burford. As the *Athenaeum* explained, "The military contests in which England is engaged have fallen in good time for Mr. Burford,"³⁸ referring to the fact that the Acre panorama replaced a view of Macao, an important base in the ongoing Opium War.

The pamphlet for *Bombardment of St. Jean D'Acre* moves with striking ease from citing the city's biblical significance and elaborating its beauty to glorying in its destruction. The panorama depicted the moment at which the city's principal powder magazine and arsenal ignited, "spreading dismay and desolation in every direction," presenting it as a marvelous spectacle (2). Shortly after quoting the Admiral that "the state of devastation was beyond description" (4), the pamphlet explains that "there appears little doubt that [Acre] was the Accho of Scriptures, Judges i. 31" (5). The pamphlet even quotes Pope to properly convey the beauty of Mount Carmel, though a

very different sense of beauty emerges from the pamphlet's explanation that "at the back of the spectator is seen a great portion of the city; the citadel, mosque, and minaret, the most prominent objects, just emerging from the sublimity, a perfect volcano" (3). The pamphlet explained that such beautiful cataclysm had long been a feature of this landscape:

It is most probable that it was on the eastern side [of Mount Carmel] near the river, that the people were assembled when Ahab "Gathered all Israel into Mount Carmel," 1 Kings xviii. 19, and where the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifices which Elijah had prepared; a situation admirably chosen for the display of the wondrous miracle, for to the people assembled on the plain of Esdraeldon, and even on the hills of Samaria, and Gilboa, the whole must have been distinctly visible. (10)

It is as if destruction were inherent in the beauty of the region, and Britain's bombardment simply a repetition of a wondrous and picturesque miracle. God, no less than the British, dropped fire from the sky with an eye to the most compelling landscape.

Not all spectators thrilled at the depiction of "dismay and desolation." Two Bombay naval architects residing in London attended the panorama and recorded impressions that show little of the pride in the military's destructive capacity that marks Burford's souvenir pamphlet:

We observed some of the Egyptian troops lying here and there killed, and wounded, while others were busy firing at the ships. The blowing up of the powder magazine, which was supposed to have taken place by one of the shells from the steamers finding its way into it, and which killed nearly three thousand Egyptians, it was a terrible sight as we saw hands, legs &c., of these unfortunate beings flung into the air. The town of Acre also presented a galling and heart-rending spectacle, it was a mass of ruin and every house was shattered to pieces.³⁹

The Bombay naval architects were in a decided minority.

The following year the bombardment of Acre was a prominent feature in Charles Marshall's Kineorama. This moving panorama cut a broad swath, illustrating "the leading characteristics of history, manners, customs, and coercive powers, combined with events of the late war, with delineations of the most interesting portions of landscape and architecture of the associated districts of Turkey, Syria, and Egypt, constituting the Ottoman Empire."⁴⁰ The Kineorama took audiences on a full tour of Ottoman provinces – maintained by the grace of the English military. The Kineorama included such standard sights as the Sublime Porte, the Sultan's Barge, pyramids, and Arab encampments. However, unlike many previous moving panoramas, the Kineorama was not framed by aerial views of cities but by aerial views of

military reviews. At the opening, the audience saw the Sultan surrounded by Ambassadors of the Allied European Powers as the “newly-organized Troops of Turkey pass[ed] under Review.” At the close, the audience saw “Aspects of the Modern Egyptian Army.” The defining features of this new East were not monuments and landscape features, but native modern armies under European tutelage. It was further evidence that the empires of Europe had spread their influence to distant regions.

GEOGRAPHIC MASTERY

The new power balance between Europe and the Ottoman Empire facilitated Europe’s growing presence in the East, contributing to an outpouring of orientalist analysis, art, and literature. These works were marked by a growing emphasis on the European observer’s complete mastery over the details of Eastern life. Similarly, panoramas at mid-century depicted an East that could be completely surveyed, detailed, and known. These later panoramas purported to present not just topography, but the processes and distributions that distinguish regions also.

By the end of the panorama’s popularity, surprising claims were made for its ability to see beyond topographical details to grasp the hidden nature of a place. In 1861, for example, *The Times* lauded Burford’s panorama of the Bay of Naples, explaining that

there are aspects of soil and climate which neither engraving nor photograph can represent, but which, in great panoramas such as those of Mr. Burford, are conveyed to the mind with a completeness and truthfulness not always to be gained from a visit to the scene itself.⁴¹

From the heights of the panorama platform even features of soil and climate revealed themselves in a “completeness” denied travelers (and inhabitants) of the region.

This seemingly magical ability of the panorama view to grasp the totality of a region, while still revealing minute details lost even to observers on the ground, is especially pronounced in discussions of orientalist panoramas at mid-century. Burford’s Cairo panorama of 1847 presented, according to the souvenir pamphlet, “a complete view of the city and suburbs, and of the surrounding country, to an immense extent.”⁴² A review of the panorama speaks of an amazing array of sights, ranging from “the great Libyan desert, in some parts bounded by the mountains of Libya and Upper Egypt” and “majestic pyramids of Dachoor, Sakkarah, and Geezeh” to the “narrow crooked streets [of Cairo] . . . crowded with a motley throng

of Turks, Copts, Armenians, Arabs, Franks, and Jews in every variety of costume and completely embodying the vivid descriptions of the Arabian Nights.”⁴³ This magical panorama presented Egyptian topography in its entirety as well as delineating the racial breakdown of the old city.

While the inclusion of the *Arabian Nights* as proof of the ethnographic accuracy of the panorama might surprise modern readers, it was perfectly logical in an age that interpreted these fourteenth-century tales as a record of the unchanging customs of the East. In fact, in 1839 when Edward Lane, the noted linguist and ethnographer, translated a new version of the tales, he presented it to the public as a travel guide to Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad, and deleted sections that contradicted his experience of Arab life. The panorama not only catalogued the monuments and races of Egypt, it revealed the fantastic sensuality that Europe had ascribed to the East since the *Nights* were first translated in 1704. In addition to deserts, pyramids, Turks, and Copts, panorama patrons discerned females in the Cairo streets, “closely enveloped in black garments, their eyes alone visible” as well as the “wild and lascivious dances” of the “Ghawa’zee, or public dancing girls.”⁴⁴ The panorama view recorded the entire surface of the East as well as its racial and sexual interior.

In truth, the Cairo panorama was simply a collage of the Egyptian imagery made available to British audiences. Like the comically abridged productions of “The Complete Works of Shakespeare” that provide all the famous quotes in one evening’s entertainment, the Cairo panorama was filled with every familiar image of the East. If, as Jonathan Culler argues, “the proliferation of reproductions is what makes something an original,”⁴⁵ then the panorama was central in the creation of an “authentic” East that exceeded the grasp of the panorama. It was this very proliferation of Eastern images that convinced patrons that the “true” East lay elsewhere even as the panorama redoubled its efforts to insist that the East had been captured in its entirety.

This new sense that the growing number of British reproductions had obscured the authentic East inspired several Victorian artists to travel to the Levant. In fact, the artist who supplied the sketches for Burford’s Cairo panorama of 1847, David Roberts, had been inspired to make his journey East because of assumed inaccuracies in the authoritative collection of Eastern images, *Description de l’Egypte*. The notice that prefaced Roberts’s *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt and Nubia . . .*, the first of two multivolume collections of Middle Eastern lithographs, explained that Roberts considered “the drawings of the French Commission in Egypt very incorrect.” Roberts apparently knew the reproductions to be false before