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Nineteenth century Middle East through photographs : examining two photographic albums

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NINETEENTH CENTURY MIDDLE EAST THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS:
EXAMINING TWO PHOTOGRAPHIC ALBUMS

by

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Bachelor of Fine Arts, Ryerson University, Toronto, ON, Canada 2003

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University and George Eastman House International Museum of
Photography and Film

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the program of

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Rochester, New York, United States
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines and compares two nineteenth-century photographic albums of travels in the Middle East from the collection of George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film. The first album, compiled of amateur photographs, illustrates a trip up the Nile River from Egypt to Nubia. The other album is composed of commercial photographs depicting a journey from the Mediterranean to Algeria, with focus on the Holy Land. The commercial photographs are idealized and posed, while the amateur photographs are fresh, realistic, and capture the world as it is. However, these two albums both portray the Middle East as uncivilized, culturally backward, and frozen in antiquity and its people are depicted as primitive and or sexual objects. This misrepresentation is the result of the preconceived notions of the nineteenth-century Middle East created by Orientalist scholars.

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DEDICATIONS

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, especially my mom and dad, who have always stood by me in whatever decisions I have made.

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INTRODUCTION

This essay will examine two photographic albums covering nineteenth-century travel in the Middle East. This comparison and close study of the two albums may help contemporary viewers to better understand nineteenth-century culture and the attitudes of the original collectors of the albums towards the world portrayed in the photographs. The first album, a compilation of amateur photographs, illustrates a trip up the Nile River from Egypt to Nubia. The other album is composed of commercial photographs depicting a journey from the Mediterranean to Algeria, with focus on the Holy Land.¹

“Middle East” is a term popularized in the early twentieth century. The terms “Near East,” mostly used by archeologists in the nineteenth century, and “Orient,” derived from the Latin root for the word “East,” are other expressions that Westerners employed to distinguish the countries or regions in Southwest Asia and parts of North Africa.² These terms are too simplistic; the people in the countries of this region are very diverse, and it is not possible to generalize or homogenize these different nations and cultures into one word. These terms are the legacy of imperialism, and originated from the imperialist perspective of Western Europe, former colonial powers, and how they tried to separate themselves from the “other.” Although this paper discusses the evidence of this romantic notion only in the two photographic albums under study, it is impossible to ignore the current use of these terms with their original intended meanings in

¹ Both albums are part of the photography collection of George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film. The accession number for the Egypte album is 1973:0011:000-0359 and the accession number for the Mediterranean, Jaffa-Algiers Album is 1973:0230:0001-0120.

² Billie Melman, “The Middle East / Arabia: ‘The Cradle of Islam.’” *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Eds. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs. Cambridge University Press, 2002. Cambridge Collections Online.

Cambridge University Press. 23 May 2007

http://cco.cambridge.org/extract?id=ccol052178140x_CCOL052178140XA010 (May 15th, 2007)

the popular media. Therefore, for clarity, I will continue using the term “Middle East” throughout this paper.

In the nineteenth century, the first era of western industrialization and technical development, traveling to exotic locales became even more fashionable than before. As western influence in the Middle East was increasing, the Middle East became a desirable destination for many travelers. Before photography, only books and paintings could provide insights into these unknown places. Photographs, with their documentary nature and wide accessibility, became a very popular souvenir for travelers. At first, commercial albumen prints became available to travelers and tourists to purchase and take home as souvenirs. Although “souvenir” is conventionally referred to as a relic from a trip, these photographs did not depict specific experiences, so travelers would use other means, such as personal notes, to make the pictures resemble what they had personally experienced.³ Later, with the advent of Kodak cameras, it became possible for tourists to take their own photographs to keep as souvenirs.

Edward Said explains: “Later in the nineteenth century, in the works of Delacroix and literally dozens of other French and British painters, the Oriental genre tableau carried representation into visual expression and a life of its own ...”⁴ He believes that as a result of the Orientalist studies, the East was introduced to the West through a series of fabricated views which created the image of the East as being vulnerable and ready for help. He argues that Orientalists, to help justify the deeds of the colonial powers, portrayed the Middle East as being uncultured, backward, and in great need of civilization.

³ Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography & Remembrance* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum; New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), pp.14-15.

⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 368. p. 118

The Orientalists established the preconceived notions of what nineteenth-century travelers would find on their journeys. The East was portrayed as spiritual, static and primitive. Most travelers expected to see and visit only the remains of ancient history and biblical stories; they had no interest in the contemporary life of the region. They believed the people to be biologically inferior and culturally backward. They believed the men to be easily dominated and the women sexually available. These beliefs are the origin of the Western fantasy of the Oriental harem. As far as nineteenth century Europeans were concerned, the Middle East had not changed since the time of the Bible.

Nineteenth-century photography was driven by the same romantic notions in its depiction of the Middle East. With the increase of western influence in the Middle East, the use of Oriental elements in western cultures was also growing. Oriental themes in western decoration increased the demand of Oriental imagery in the nineteenth century; before photography was an established industry in the Middle East many photographers in Europe began making genre scenes with Oriental subjects in their studios.⁵ Even after photography became available in the region, photographers continued the same style of photography. The commercial photographs were idealized and composed to match the western audience's expectation and what the market demanded, while the amateur photographs were supposed to be fresh, realistic and portray the world as it was.⁶ However, after examining both albums, it can be seen that the amateur photographer was under the same Orientalist influence as the commercial photographers. This influence is not just evident in what was included within the frame but also in what is excluded

⁵ Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256. , pp. 100-119

⁶ Yeshayahu Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 294. p. 208

from the photographs. Both types of photographs, commercial and amateur, failed to portray the contemporary life as it really was in the region.

It is my intention to show a relationship between the photographs in these albums and the preconceived notions of the Orientalist scholars in the nineteenth century. It is not in the scope of this essay to detail the socio-political condition of the nineteenth century Middle East but instead to analyze the photographs for signs of collective Orientalist mentality.

This essay will conclude with the importance and effect of these objects. These two photographic albums, although once ordinary personal objects, now have priceless value. In their simplicity, they contain views of cultures they once inhabited, and as time has passed, each addition to their creases and dents has added to their multiple meanings. These albums contain many examples showing how the popular culture of the day affected both commercial and amateur photographers, pushing many of them to depict an alternate reality believed by their audience to be the truth. Studying objects such as these allows one to see and feel the world the way it was seen and felt by their early owners, and also allows one to learn how these objects are seen today.

LITERATURE SURVEY

HISTORY

The Middle East was one of the last places in the world that the Western powers, specifically the French and the British, had begun to influence in the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire, the last large eastern empire, ruled over more than sixty percent of the Middle East and southern Eastern Europe from 1299 to 1922. From the turn of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire began to lose power as different states, such as Egypt, started to seize independence. By the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of bankruptcy, with most of its finances under Western supervision. The Ottoman Empire was soon known as “the sick man of Europe,” and lost its power in the region. The British and the French then started to assert their influence in the different parts of the Ottoman territories. The French increased their hold through cultural activities as well as social and educational services in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. The Victorian British were more concerned with missionary work and disseminating Protestant influence.⁷

Until the nineteenth century, Westerners traveled to the East either for scientific and archeologist expeditions or for trading and commerce, but it became popular in the mid nineteenth century for Westerners to go on pleasure travels in search of truth about themselves in the images of the alien and the exotic. The increasing western influence in the region made it a more desirable destination for western travelers. However, due to the harsh climate and unfamiliar geography, in the beginning only the rich could afford the travel. But as the region became more popular, affordable organized tours became available, which opened the doors to

⁷ Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256. p.

middle-class Europeans as well. Thomas Cook was the first to organize these expeditions in the 1860s.⁸ These travelers, like any others, sought ways to keep memories of the places they visited. Photographs became a popular kind of souvenir for travelers in the late nineteenth century, and photography has been a necessary component of travel ever since.

There is no comprehensive literature dedicated to the history of photography in the Middle East, and no major photographic history texts significantly address this topic either. Paul Chevedden, at the beginning of the exhibition catalogue *The Photographic Heritage of the Middle East: An Exhibition of Early Photographs of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece & Iran, 1849-1893*, writes an overview of the history of photography in the region in relation to the general history of photography, explaining how the beginning of photography in the Middle East coincided with the worldwide development of photography.

Following the introduction of the Daguerreotype by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, François Arago, in his introduction of the medium to the French Academy of Science in January 1839, suggested the use of Daguerreotypes for art and scientific studies. Soon after, a group of Daguerreotypists were sent to Egypt and the Holy Land to bring back images of these exotic and religious places. Few of these Daguerreotypes have survived, but among the ones that have are several depicting hieroglyphs in Egypt, as well as some of popular monuments. When the Calotype process, invented by William Henry Fox Talbot, was introduced in the same year as the Daguerreotype, the two processes were in direct competition. Eventually, the Calotype triumphed due to its reproducibility. Maxime Du Camp was the first person ever to use the Calotype process in the Middle East. He was sent with his friend Gustave Flaubert on an official mission by the French Ministry of Education in 1849 to photograph Egypt and the Holy Land.

⁸ *ibid.* pp. 42-47 and Alan Sillitoe, *Leading the Blind: A Century of Guidebook Travel, 1815-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 246. pp.151-186

Yeshayahu Nir, in *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899*, gives a detailed history of photography in the region, although it is more focused on the photography in the Holy Land. “The preconception and the European expectation are what formed the history of photography in the Holy Land.”⁹ Nir explains that it was not until the introduction of the collodion wet-plate process that photography became publicly accessible in the Middle East. As the demand for photographs of the region increased both in Europe and in the Middle East, photography became an accessible industry. Until the 1850s, all the photographs from the Middle East were made by photographers from the West. It was only later in the 1850s that the first local photographers set up practices, but their products were not any different from their Western counterparts, as they all supplied the same market. By the 1860s, some commercial photographers had established studios in the major cities of the Middle East, such as Istanbul, Beirut, and Cairo.¹⁰ There were two types of commercial photographers: those who resided in the Middle East full time and supplied the photographic market there, and those who traveled between Europe and the Middle East, supplying the European market as well as the local market.¹¹ These commercial photographs were usually albumen prints made from collodion wet-plates, and were available for purchase in different formats in many venues around the world, as well as in the Middle East.

Nir also discusses the way these photographs represent the Holy Land. Nir believes that the Bible was the catalogue for religious travelers, and that the photographs could serve as

⁹ Yeshayahu Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 294.

¹⁰ Paul E. Chevedden and University of California, Los Angeles. Library. Dept. of Special Collections, *The Photographic Heritage of the Middle East: An Exhibition of Early Photographs of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece & Iran, 1849-1893* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1981), 36. pp. 1-3 and

Perez, Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885), 256 pp. 15-17

¹¹ Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256. pp. 87-98

illustrations. The Bible created the preconceived understanding of the Holy Land; it was not only a dogma but could provide the traveler with detailed knowledge of the country and the way of life there. Depending on which sites were chosen by the traveler, there would be a different interpretation of the Biblical sites, resulting in an incomplete perception and a therefore distorted image of the Holy Land.¹²

Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885) by Nissan Perez is also a valuable source for the early history of photography in the Middle East. The book is divided into two sections. The first section covers the history itself, with examples of photographs including people, cultures, and ruins. The second section offers a brief profile of early photographers in the region. Perez divides the Middle-Eastern photographers into four groups: first, the amateur photographers, beginning with the gentlemen photographers — individuals who had a scientific background and picked photography as a hobby. Their numbers grew as the number of travelers rose by the late nineteenth century, coinciding with Kodak's manufacture of its first commercial camera, the Kodak #1. The second group was similar to the first but smaller in number, consisting of artists, especially painters and writers. They produced photographs to document their trips, or in the case of the painters, to use as templates for their canvases. The third group was made up of pilgrims and missionaries, who used photographs to document what they had read in the Bible. The fourth group, and by far the largest, was comprised of commercial photographers who were mostly from the West. Some resided in the region, and most of them traveled frequently between the Middle East and Europe.

¹² Yeshayahu Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 294. pp.12-13

Perez believes that writing, above all other sources, influenced the western image of the East. Famous writers such as Gustave Flaubert, Chateaubriand, and Mark Twain traveled to the Middle East and wrote their personal impressions. These highly descriptive travel accounts were widely read and very influential. On the one hand, the writers praised the beauty of these countries and offered detailed descriptions of the sites and landscapes, acknowledging their biblical connotations; but on the other hand, the writings painted negative and somewhat racist portraits of the local inhabitants.¹³

The *Real Hieroglyphics: Photography and Egypt, 1850-1900* exhibition, curated by Geoffrey Batchen, examines the representation of Egypt during the nineteenth century through photographs. This exhibition created an opportunity for visitors to survey the enduring obsession with the Orient, an important aspect of European culture. At the beginning of the exhibition catalogue, Batchen writes of the travelers, “They looked ... to find what they already knew — the Orient represented in the Universal Exposition, the travel book, the Romantic novel ... the Paris Opera, the paintings of Gros and Delacroix, the lithographs after David Roberts.”¹⁴

Batchen explains that the widespread commercially-made photographs can tell us a lot about nineteenth-century European attitudes. The commercial photographs excluded the contemporary life of Egypt; the photographers preferred to dwell on the past. These images informed travelers of the notions of traditional Egyptian life and culture. These images were what they expected, or, as Batchen states, “indeed, demanded” to see when they visited Egypt.¹⁵

¹³ Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256.
p.39

¹⁴ Geoffrey Batchen, *Real Hieroglyphics: Photography and Egypt, 1850-1900* (San Diego: University Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego, 1994). p. 6

¹⁵ Geoffrey Batchen, *Real Hieroglyphics: Photography and Egypt, 1850-1900* (San Diego: University Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego, 1994). p. 12

Dean MacCannell, in *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, describes the tourist experience. He explains how, "... self-discovery through a complex and sometimes arduous search for an Absolute Other is a basic theme of our civilization,"¹⁶ and how the tourists' craving to experience the authentic in the world of the "other" was the origin of alternatives and the feeling of freedom in modern society. MacCannell also believes that creating "differentiation" between one's own world and the world of the "other" is what satisfies the tourist desire.¹⁷

Although he focuses on the twentieth-century tourist, MacCannell's study can easily be applied to nineteenth-century travel and tourism, as the attitudes and main characteristics of tourists are universal. "Usually, the first contact a sightseer has with a sight is not the sight itself but with some representation thereof."¹⁸ As MacCannell explains, tourists usually have some prior knowledge of a sight to be visited, whether through written text, photographs, or word-of-mouth. This knowledge may cause disappointment if the sight visited does not match the expectations created in the tourist's mind. This is the same experience that Nir explains in *The Bible and the Image*. The pilgrims and the early tourists used the Bible as their guide to the Holy Land, but their imaginations may have frequently surpassed what really survived at these Biblical locations. Therefore, early tourists and pilgrims might have both faced a sense of disappointment when first visiting the Holy Land.

MacCannell also argues that tourists don't really see the cities they visit; instead, they see a set of elements which define the city. These elements, often the iconic sites, are what tourists must see, the way they "ought" to be seen, otherwise they fail as tourists. This was likely the

¹⁶ Dean MacCannell, *Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976). p. 5

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 11

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 110

same impulse for nineteenth-century tourists — the desire for specifically portrayed exotic and ancient places. No tourist traveling to Egypt would have missed visiting the Pyramids (this is usually true even to this day); the Pyramids and the Sphinx of Gizeh are what define Egypt from a tourist standpoint, and what prove the tourist's presence there. These preconceptions of the "other" places strengthen the idea of their primitive and unchanged nature. The photographs seen in the albums under study represent the same iconic places and help to continue the frozen image of the "other" world.

METHODOLOGY

Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Malek Alloula's *The Colonial Harem* are the intellectual and inspirational background to this thesis. The application introduced in these two books of the Orientalist representation of the East and its people in the two photographic albums under study is the methodology upon which I have endeavored to construct my thesis.

The term for the study of the eastern cultures and societies in the west is "Orientalism." Orientalism concerned not only the study of the Orient, but also the political intent of Europe in the East. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains the difference between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the "Orient." Western culture classified the Orient as the "other," a prejudiced view that presented the region as backward and passive. The western powers believed that a truly effective colonial conquest required knowledge of the conquered people. The Orient became the studied, the observed, and the object, while the Orientalist scholars were the students, the observers, and the subject.¹⁹

Said writes that, "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable

¹⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 368. Introduction

experiences.”²⁰ Using the old and rich history of the region as a weapon against them, Orientalists portrayed the East as passive, backward, and in need of civilization. He believes any conclusions from Orientalist studies were inaccurate throughout because of the constant differentiation made between the scholars and the Middle Eastern people.

Although Said does not specifically discuss the visual representation of the Orient, it is not difficult to find evidence of his theory in even a small group of photographs from the Middle East, such as the photographs in the two albums under study. These photographs only depict the ancient and historic locales; there is no sign of the contemporary or the advanced world. The people in the region are depicted as either primitive or sexual objects.

In *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula has collected and annotated the picture postcards of Algerian woman produced and sent by the French in Algeria in the early twentieth century. These postcards are indicative of the French colonial presence in Algeria. The colonial influence that started in the 1830s deformed the Algerian social order rather than dominated it. Alloula analyzes the photographs depicting Arab women in the harem, presented as merely sexual objects. Alloula believes that the photographic subjects are degraded as soon as the photographer positions the model and the props. The photograph becomes a representation of a scene that does not exist outside its own frame. Alloula describes the three visual components frequently used in the photographs to shape the harem as it was seen from the western perspective: the presence of coffee as a metaphor for sweetness; the presence of the hookah, associated with hashish that creates a feminine dream-world — welcoming with no reserve; and the presence of the Odalisque (the sexual entertainer) that supports the impression of the truthfulness in the images

²⁰ *ibid.* p. 1

of the harem. It was important for the photographer to capture the pleasure that the Odalisque provided in the harem.²¹

Fatema Mernissi in *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems* attempts to clear up the Orientalist fabrications of the harem by providing an insider's perspective. She compares the two types of harem: the Islamic harem and the Western harem. She explains that in the Western harem, passive and obedient women replace the active and intellectual women of an Eastern harem.²² This way of thinking, as she states, goes as far back as 1704 when first the stories of *Scheherazade* were translated into French by Galland under the title *The Thousand and One Nights*. Soon, these stories were translated into many languages, but each translator due to the cultural differences took the liberty of cutting out aspects of the stories that would likely shock a Western audience. By the 1800s, there were more than eighty different versions of the *Scheherazade* tales in existence. Mernissi states that in all of these translations the intellectual Scheherazade was lost because the Westerners were only interested in two things: adventure and sex.²³

²¹ Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 74-78

²² Fatima Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001), pp. 15-26

²³ *ibid.* pp. 61-74

THE ALBUM DESCRIPTIONS

These two photographic albums have been chosen as examples of different trends of nineteenth-century travel photography: commercial photography and amateur photography. Both albums are held in the photography archive of George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film (GEH).

Along with this paper, these two albums have been catalogued and digitally photographed. The catalogue records for the Mediterranean album are broken to item level of description, although, only the English inscriptions have been entered for each record. The catalogue records for the Egypt album are broken down only to page level of description and only the overall per page characteristics and inscription have been entered for each record.

THE EGYPT PORTFOLIO ALBUM

OVERVIEW

The Egypt portfolio album depicts a journey from Italy to Egypt and Nubia in 1903. All of the prints in this album are amateur photographs of monuments, landscapes, street scenes, and local people. The album's origin is unclear. What is known from the GEH catalogue is that this album, along with other materials, came to GEH as a result of an exchange in 1970s.²⁴ The photographer is unknown; all that is known is that he or she was French speaking, as the handwritten inscriptions are in French. There are also several photographs portraying a man and a woman in western clothing (Figure 1 & Figure 2). These are the only hints about the people who went on this expedition and took these photographs who are also probably the album originators. There are inscriptions on each of the portfolio leaves, both on recto and verso, which made it possible to restore this portfolio to its original order. The album can now be viewed as the creator intended.

Figure 1 Egypt Album - 46 - 1973:0011:0336-0342 - Egypte, Desert

²⁴ In The Museum System (TMS) database, the field of album credit says: "Exchange with Michel Auer." There are no other details available regarding what materials were exchanged in this transaction. After inquiring about Michel Auer, I have been told by the archivists that he is a private collector.

Figure 2 Egypt Album - 16 - 1973:0011:0150-160 - Egypte, Madinet – Abou

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Egypt portfolio album is still in its original housing. The leaves are placed in a 36 x 51cm portfolio box that is hinged on one side. The hinges allow the top to fold open and lie flat, providing a space to stack the viewed leaves in. The portfolio box is cream colored with a leather texture. There are three embossed gold borders on the lid. The words “EGYPTE” and “1903” are imprinted diagonally on each of the top corners within the borders. The initials “M.A.V.” are also imprinted in gold at the bottom center of the lid above the borders. There were forty-nine leaves originally, but the portfolio came to the museum with two leaves missing.²⁵ There are forty-seven 35 x 50cm leaves, to which the photographs are attached. Each leaf consists of two layers: a stiff two-ply cream-colored board as a support, and a gray or neutral green- or blue-colored paper as window mattes. There are 359 photographs in total; on average there are six to ten photographs per page. The photographs are mounted using clear tape, which can be seen where the matte paper is torn or has come apart from the two-ply board. The mattes are

²⁵ The handwritten numbers on the verso goes up to 49, but the leaves corresponding with the numbers 22 and 39 are missing.

customized for each photograph: there are square, circular, and rectangular window openings on each leaf. These portfolio leaves are not put together very elegantly: there is evidence of scissor cuts on the edges of all the window mattes, and in many cases the matte paper is larger than the support board, which means that many of the leaves have torn or dented corners. There is no discernible system in the size or shape of the window mattes, though each page has a unique combination of window openings that were put together symmetrically. The photographs on each page depict related subjects or are all from one location (Figure 3)

Figure 3 Egypt Album - 4 - 1973:0011:0026-0033 - Environs de Caire Pyramides

All of the photographs are contact prints. Based on the format and the relative date of the photographs, they must have been made using two early Kodak cameras. The panoramic photographs were likely produced with the Kodak #4 Panoram, which was first introduced in 1899 (Figure 4). The Kodak #4 Panoram could pan 142 degrees and subsequently produce an 8 x 25cm image using the Kodak 103 size film. The rest of the photographs were likely produced with a Kodak Bulls-Eye camera (Figure 3), possibly the #4 as well. This camera also used the Kodak 103 film size, which would have allowed the photographer to carry only one kind of roll-

film for the two cameras. However, since many of the photographs have been trimmed or cropped with the customized window mattes, it is difficult to judge their original size. The photographer may have used the Bulls-Eye camera #2, which used Kodak 101 film size.

Figure 4 Egypt Album - 18 - 1973:0011:0172-0176 - Egypte, Edfou

The photographs are gelatin or collodion Print Out Paper (POP). These two processes superseded the albumen print process, and were used from the late 1880s to the late 1920s. The POP process involves sensitized paper put in contact with a negative and developed by the action of light, usually sunlight, without any chemical development. After developing, all the print needs is to be washed, fixed, and toned based on the photographer's preference. It is often difficult to tell the difference between a collodion and gelatin POP as they share most of the same visual characteristics. The only major difference between collodion and gelatin POP is the transparent binding agent for the light-sensitive silver salts; in one case this is collodion and the other gelatin. This presence can only be detected through chemical treatment. The POP prints usually have a high sheen and soft surface, and are normally a reddish-brown color, unless they

are gold toned. In this case, the print would have a purplish-brown color.²⁶ The photographs in this album are mostly gold toned; the print colors vary from very dark eggplant-purple to dark reddish-brown.

Although the album's originator did not deal very delicately with the album's presentation, the album is still very organized. The photographs are not random photographs of monuments and landscapes; they are thoughtfully composed and framed, and they are aesthetically pleasing. It is clear that the photographer had artistic abilities and put the camera with all its capabilities to good use. Using the camera vertically or horizontally was no accident: the photographer used the camera and its lens to best portray the subjects photographed. Each photograph, aside from sharing the same subject with the rest of the photographs on the page, is placed carefully to create a continuous horizontal line shared with the photographs in its row. This allows the viewer's gaze to flow easily from one photograph to the next. As none of the cameras likely used to make these photographs had the ability to take very close shots, ordering creates interest with different views and angles of similar subjects.

There are handwritten inscriptions in black ink on the back of each page, indicating the number of the page and the main location of where the photographs were taken. There are also handwritten captions underneath most of the photographs, explaining their subjects. It seems that all of the inscriptions were written in one pass, because the handwriting on early pages is very neat and legible, and as the album progresses the inscriptions become less and less tidy.

By following the inscriptions, the plan of the journey may be mapped out. This plan may be the original route of the trip or a virtual route created using the photographs in the album. The album shows the journey beginning in Naples, Italy, leaving by ship and traveling across the

²⁶ James M. Reilly, *Care and Identification of 19th-Century Photographic Prints*, ed. Eastman Kodak Company. (Rochester, N.Y.: Eastman Kodak Co., 1986). pp. 11-12

Mediterranean Sea to Egypt. From Cairo, the journey continues on land and water down the Nile into Nubia, then returns north by the Nile to Port Said.

The album's organization easily leads the viewer through the pages like an exact travel account. The album is book-ended with photographs of harbors and ships, conveying the way the trip began and ended. While the album includes many inscriptions, it is not especially intimate. There are no personal details, and the handwritten inscriptions concern the architectural subjects and locations solely. Only in one instance, a photograph depicting a man is given a personal name: "Mustapha." Perhaps the man portrayed in the photograph was a native guide. The photographs depicting the Western couple remain unnamed (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Egypt Album - 6 - 1973:0011:0042 – Myl Rabyneh – Memphis – (Mustapha)

This album may have had a number of different purposes, which cannot be known for sure. It may merely be the evidence of the trip and a souvenir kept at home to show the visitors. The album is hard to handle due to its format and size so it cannot have been shelved, because the box must lie flat; it has also remained in relatively good condition, indicating that it has not been handled frequently. There are some signs of fading on the edges and some discoloration in the denser parts of certain prints, but overall these prints are in good condition and have kept a

wide range of color tonality over the years. The mounting materials are what put these prints in danger of deterioration. There is evidence of mold in some of the album leaves, which endangers the prints. The acidic base of the tape that was used to mount the prints is the component that requires the most attention. The edges underneath the tape are yellowed; without treatment the deterioration will eventually spread and damage the image area of the prints.

THE MEDITERRANEAN, JAFF-ALGIERS ALBUM

OVERVIEW

The Mediterranean, Jaff-Algiers Album depicts a journey to the Mediterranean region, the Holy Land, Algeria, and Tunis in 1895. This album is attributed to Charles Wilder Gorton, a former Rochester, New York resident. He was born in 1855 and graduated from the University of Rochester in 1876. He worked in banking and furniture retail throughout his life, and resided in Los Angeles, California from 1908 onwards. He died in Los Angeles on December 29, 1930 at the age of 75.²⁷ This album, along with a similar album of a journey to Europe, was given to George Eastman House by the Fine Art Department of the University of Rochester in October 1964. Both albums have the same structure and the same information on the cover except for their titles.

All of the photographs in the Mediterranean album are mass-produced commercial Albumen prints. Although these commercial photographs could have been purchased at any shop in the Middle East, Europe, or the United States, there is evidence throughout the album that shows that Mr. Gorton may have gone to some or all of the locations featured. Among the handwritten inscriptions beneath the photographs are a few specific dates. These may either be the dates he visited the location of the photograph, or the dates the photographs were purchased.

The photographs in this album cannot be dated easily; however, the dates may be estimated between the years 1860 and 1895, the latter being the date inscribed on the album cover. This date may indicate the year of the travel or the date the album was assembled.

²⁷William Farley Peck, "History of Rochester and Monroe County," *Rochester City Directories*, (p. 928) and University of Rochester Alumni Review, April/May 1931

Commercial photographs in this format had become available in the Middle East in the 1860s, having been either reprinted from their original negatives, or re-photographed and printed from an older print. This reproduction of early negatives and prints was continued until the final years of the nineteenth century.

In the photograph by Abdullah Frères, Turkish photographic studio active in Constantinople and Egypt from 1858 to 1899, a group of soldiers is shown marching towards a mosque (Figure 6). Several preceding photographs depict the same scene. The handwritten inscription reads, "Constantinople, – The Ceremony of the 'Selamlik' (Friday, March 22nd, 1895)." In Turkish, the Friday visit of the Sultan to the Mosque is called "Selamlik."²⁸ This photograph, although a generic photograph of this event, is given a specific date, March 22nd 1895, which makes it possible that Mr. Gorton had actually witnessed it. Adding personal annotations is how a photograph such as this one, which is not one of a kind and can be found in other collections, becomes a unique representation of a specific experience. The commercial photographs might be a more idealized image of what the travelers may have witnessed personally, but by including the photographs in the album and adding captions, they are personalized, and therefore resemble a unique memory that the travelers may have once experienced.

²⁸ "Selamlik" also means "the men quartet" in Turkish.

W. M. Sloane, "Turkey in Europe," *Political Science Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Jun., 1908), pp. 297-319, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00323195%28190806%2923%3A2%3C297%3A%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>.

Figure 6 Mediterranean Album - 73 - 1973:0230:0073 - Constantinople, – The Ceremony of the “Salemlik”

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Mediterranean album is 28.5 x 39cm and has brown leather morocco binding with elaborate decorative gold borders on the front and back covers. The spine has five raised bands; the areas in between contain decorative gold ornamentation. In the second and fourth divisions, “Charles W. Gorton” and “Rochester N.Y” are embossed in gold. On the front cover, the gold imprinting reads “THE MEDITERRANEAN, JAFF-ALGIERS, 1895.”

This album consists of sixty heavy card-leaves with one photograph affixed on each side. All of the photographs are contact prints from full-plate collodion glass negatives. Most of the prints are trimmed; therefore the thumb-marks have generally been cut out. The images vary in orientation; most of the prints are horizontal and a few are vertical. The photographs are usually centered on the pages.

Most of the album leaves have been cut loose, except for several at the beginning and the end of the album. There is no evidence as to when the album leaves were separated, though they were likely separated for selling purposes by a dealer or for exhibition by an archive. This album's original holder, the University of Rochester, like many other archives and libraries, used to dismantle albums for housing and exhibition.²⁹ However, there is no evidence as to whether they had separated the album leaves, or if they had received it this way. This separation means that the album has lost its original ordering forever. The album is currently arranged by subject matter.

This album includes works by different photographers, some of whom became active in the Middle East earlier than others. However, only a quarter of these prints still carry the photographer's signature. The remaining signatures were likely lost when the prints were trimmed. There are examples of the works of several well-known photographers in this album, such as Abdullah Frères, Zangaki, Bonfils, Sebah and Joailliar, and Gulmez Frères. This shows that the negatives of the photographs in this album may be from as early as the 1850s (The Abdullah Frères studio started in Istanbul in the 1850s), or as recent as the last decade of the nineteenth century (Gulmez Frères' studio was active to the end of the 1890s).³⁰

²⁹ History of Photography lecture at the University of Rochester, Rare Books Collection of Rush Rhees Library, Fall 2006

³⁰ Paul E. Chevedden and University of California, Los Angeles. Library. Dept. of Special Collections, *The Photographic Heritage of the Middle East: An Exhibition of Early Photographs of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Greece & Iran, 1849-1893* (Malibu, California: Undena Publications, 1981), 36. pp. 1-3

Figure 7 Mediterranean Album - 89 - 1973:0230:0089 - Tunis, – A Dancing girl (Arab Café)

As well as the occasional print title and the photographer's signature, there are handwritten inscriptions in black ink underneath most of the photographs. The in-print inscriptions are usually in French, and the handwritten captions are a direct translation of the French titles. In the case of no French title, the caption is a direct description of the image. One rare instance of an inscribed date reads, "Tunis, – A Dancing girl (Arab Café) (Feast of Irun[illegible], Mch. 26, 1895)." The print is a studio photograph of young woman in front of a painted backdrop (Figure 7). This caption adds a level of intimacy perhaps indicating where the traveler may have bought the photograph (at an Arab café), or maybe where he/she saw a dancing girl similar to the girl in the photograph.

Since most of the album leaves have been separated, it is hard to know how the album was intended for presentation. Since the Europe album, which was likely assembled at the same time as this album is still intact, it can perhaps be used to discover the original ordering of the

Mediterranean album. The organization of the Europe album is very conventional: it begins and ends with photographs of ships, and throughout the album the photographs depicting distant views come before the detailed photographs of the same locations. The Mediterranean album also begins with a far view of Jaffa, Jerusalem (a port city) and the second photograph is an overview of the city of Jerusalem. There are several other photographs portraying harbor scenes in other Middle Eastern cities, which were likely used as an introduction to the series of photographs from those cities.

This album, along with the Europe album, was probably assembled as a memento of the trip. They are both quite large, but still suitably sized for a place on a coffee table or bookshelf. The photographs in this album have degraded. There are a small number of gold-toned prints that have preserved their rich tonality, but most of them are extremely discolored. The print edges are quite faded; this may be due to the acidic base in the mounting board used. The album leaves themselves have become very brittle and yellowed, which, without careful handling, can damage the prints. The deterioration has reached such a point that little can be done to salvage the prints physically; all that may be done is to preserve them as they are and either scan or re-photograph them and create digital facsimiles for any further use.

ORIENTALIST THEMES IN THESE ALBUMS

Orientalist ideas, Said explains, were an integral part of the European colonial process. The term “Orientalism” implies the study of the unfamiliar languages and cultures of the East, with the purpose of dominating them. This study was supposed to bring the western world closer to the East; however, it pushed a distance between the two that has yet to be resolved. Perez states that the Orientalists were never able to understand the Eastern way of thinking. Learning the languages and wearing the costumes were not enough to comprehend the Eastern lifestyle and mentality. Orientalism therefore resulted from an incomplete and false interpretation of the East — an interpretation used to guide colonial actions in the region.³¹

Orientalists generally had two main ideas about the East, and the Orient was introduced to western society with these notions. The first idea was that the East was backwards, stuck in the past, and therefore in need of civilization.³² The second was the notion of the East as an exotic entity, where mystery and eroticism existed in harems — places described as being desirable to dominate.³³ Although Orientalism was created in the colonial nineteenth century, the ideas persist to this day.

Orientalist representations began to appear as soon as the first Europeans traveled to the East, but Orientalism as it is known today is associated with the imperialistic expansion of

³¹ Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256. p. 36-37

³² Yeshayahu Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 294. p.19, and Geoffrey Batchen, *Real Hieroglyphics: Photography and Egypt, 1850-1900* (San Diego: University Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego, 1994). p.12, and

Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256. p. 36-37

³³ Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256. p. 100-119 and

Malek Alloula. *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)

Europe into the Middle East, beginning at the turn of the nineteenth century. This new study of Orientalism became exclusively the domain of western European countries, the colonial powers of the time. Some nineteenth-century paintings as well as photographs expressed the views of the Orientalists quite clearly. These paintings represented the one-sided tales from the colonies and created an illusion of the Middle East. Soon, such paintings were enjoyed in Europe as being the truthful depiction of the Middle East. These representations helped to create what Said terms “imaginative geography.”³⁴ Eugène Delacroix was one of the Orientalist-inspired painters who began painting Eastern subjects before he had ever traveled to the East. His early works best define the European perception of the Orient.

THE ORIENTAL HAREM

One of the major visual themes of Oriental paintings is the harem. The word “harem” is Arabic in origin, and is directly related to the word “haram,” which means “forbidden.” The harem is a sacred place in the household, forbidden to male strangers. In her book *Scheherazade Goes West*, Fatema Mernissi compares the notion of the harem in the East to that of the West. In Eastern miniatures, women are portrayed as active participants, while Western painters such as Delacroix and Ingres portrayed women as passive. In Muslim harems, men expected their enslaved women to fight back, not just concede to the imposed pleasure. A Westerner’s knowledge of the harem was primarily taken from the images made by other Westerners, and it was therefore seen as a peaceful pleasure-garden where powerful men reign over obedient women, and where beautiful women are sexually available.³⁵ In the West, the harem is depicted as mysterious, hidden, and voluptuous; the Eastern women were therefore imagined as being

³⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 368. pp. 49-73

³⁵ Fatima Mernissi, *Scheherazade Goes West: Different Cultures, Different Harems* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001), pp. 15-26

weak and ineffective. Both Mernissi and Barbara Harlow (in the introduction to *The Colonial Harem*) point out that the Eastern women are never depicted as the threats they actually were. Harlow cites the movie *The Battle of Algiers* as proof of this claim. The French are shown to have under-estimated the role of Algerian women in the independence movement. The Algerian women were closely involved in smuggling firearms and ammunitions for their resistance groups, while the French army focused only on the men.

Figure 8 The Death of Sardanapalus, oil on canvas by Eugène Delacroix, 1827; in the Louvre, Paris.

Delacroix's *Death of Sardanapalus* (Figure 8), dated at 1827, is a suitable example of a falsely romantic portrayal of the Orient, despite the mythical subject matter. The painting depicts a brutal massacre in a private place, the bedroom, where the naked harem women are subjected to violence. He has used very rich, vivid, and warm colors to create this cruel but sexual scene. It is loosely based on the story of Sardanapalus, the last king of ancient Assyria, who watched the

mass execution of his concubines. Ancient texts portrayed Sardanapalus's empire on the verge of defeat by the Medes, when he prepared for a grand destruction of himself and his treasures: he burns himself along with his treasure, concubines, and eunuchs. Ancient historians presented Sardanapalus as a luxury-loving, dishonorable, immoral character, whose life and death were both cowardly and disgraceful.³⁶

Delacroix's painting is usually associated with Lord Byron's 1801 play, *Sardanapalus*. Beatrice Farwell, however, argues that Delacroix couldn't have based this painting on Byron's play, since Byron had transformed the story into a tragedy, and the character of Sardanapalus into a hero and martyr. In Byron's play, Sardanapalus, feeling the end was close, evacuated his queen, children, and concubines with his treasures before deciding to die alone, though his favorite concubine joins him at the last moment. Farwell also points out that Delacroix couldn't have referred entirely to the ancient writings, because the massacre had not been mentioned in any of the earlier texts. Delacroix's interpretation is the sole version that shows the massacre of Sardanapalus's concubines before he sets himself alight.³⁷ Delacroix has also used Indian architecture and costumes as his visual source for this painting, instead of any sources from the Middle East. This demonstrates how little information was available about the Middle East in the West at the time. This painting can therefore have little authenticity in its portrayal of Sardanapalus.

Delacroix is credited as being the first western artist to open the harem up to view. In 1834, he finally traveled to the East, visiting Morocco, but not the newly colonized state of Algeria, which was politically unstable. In Morocco, he started to study the traditional costumes

³⁶ Beatrice Farwell, "Sources for Delacroix's Death of Sardanapalus," *The Art Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (Mar., 1958), 66-70, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00043079%28195803%2940%3A1%3C66%3ASFDDOS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H>.

³⁷ *ibid.*

of the Middle East. He asked his models to wear costumes found throughout the region, not only those common to Morocco. He continued painting Oriental themes, but adapted a new way of presenting the subjects. Until then, in all French caricatures, the harem women were forced out of their environment; the treasure, another term used for the harem occupants, was shown outside the harem. Delacroix instead portrayed the women in their interior, familiar surroundings (Figure 9).³⁸

Figure 9 Algerian Women in Their Apartments, 1834; Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris

In his work, Delacroix stressed that the viewer be allowed in, not that the harem woman be forced out. His newly educated paintings were less revealing of the female body, but no less sexual. Most of the paintings' subjects were portrayed in the warm magical light of the late afternoon. Delacroix played with light and shadow to hide parts of the women's bodies, to tease the viewer's eye, and to increase the desire to stare. His close study of the Middle East benefited him greatly; he could now paint the clothes on the subject's body in the way most revealing of

³⁸ Beth Segal Wright, *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 81-87

the body's form, forcing the viewer to imagine the flesh underneath. His main subjects were always fair-skinned. In his paintings, the dark-skinned women are always the servants standing in the background or with their backs to the viewer; they are never seated in the foreground.³⁹ Although it might seem that Delacroix's paintings became more accurate in their representations after his travel to the Middle East, they were still mere fictional representations of the Oriental subjects. The props and the surroundings became more accurate, but the subjects were still figments of his imagination. Culturally, people in the Middle East are very hospitable — they would have invited a stranger into their home, but they would never have let them into the women's quarter or the private section of the house, so the chances of Delacroix having witnessed a real harem are quite slim.

Photography, under the same Orientalist influences as paintings, continued the tradition of depicting the Oriental harem. Because of the high demand for this kind of imagery, photographers started to create Oriental scenes in their studios in Europe, even before photography became an industry in the Middle East. Similar to the paintings, the photographs displayed the authentic props and costumes, but they could never represent how the harem would actually look from the inside. There were many attempts by different photographers in the nineteenth century to create harem scenes, but since they had never seen one, all they could do was to confirm the old clichés of harem life through their studio-based photographs. In paintings, it is acceptable to have models not authentic to the scene being painted, because painting was never believed to be a medium capable of depicting reality the way photography was believed to

³⁹ Beth Segal Wright, *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 81-87

be capable of.⁴⁰ What is ironic is not only the use of models in the photographs depicting harem scenes, but the fact that only prostitutes and street-women would have agreed to be photographed; the sacred harem has therefore become desecrated with these photographs.⁴¹

Figure 10 Mediterranean Album - 60 - 1973:0230:0060 – Constantinople, – Women of a Pasha's Harem

In the Mediterranean album, the caption underneath the photograph depicting two female subjects (Figure 10) explains the subject matter as being a harem scene. The handwritten inscription reads, “Constantinople, – Women of a Pasha's Harem.” The painted backdrop tells us that this is a studio photograph. There is no doubt that these women were paid to pose for the photographer and that they are nothing close to the women in a “Pasha's” harem. This photograph bears almost all of the characteristics that Alloula uses to describe a harem picture.

⁴⁰ Nissan Perez, *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East (1839-1885)* (New York: Abrams, 1988), 256. pp. 100-119

⁴¹ The religion of the majority of the women in the Middle East was Islam; Muslim women would not appear in front of strangers (men) in their indoor outfits. This is true to even today. Perez and Alloula both confirm about the nineteenth-century photographs with female subjects that the photographers must have hired prostitutes to pose before their cameras.

There are two women: one sitting, which implies that she is a woman of a higher rank, and a woman standing, making her the servant. The woman standing is holding a tambourine, which makes her the Odalisque character, the dancer, and the entertainer, confirming the joyful and playful life of the harem. Although there are not many props in this photograph, the three or four items are all chosen with purpose. The placing of the hookah in the foreground invites the viewer into a dream-like environment where it is as comfortable as the cushion under the sitting lady's feet suggests. Alloula compares the photographer, who through these photographs nourishes the fantasy of the harem, to a voyeur — a voyeur who has yet to imagine what he could have experienced if admitted to a harem; then the position of the voyeur is transferred to the viewer, who is equally excited to glimpse the discreet and the hidden.

Figure 11 Mediterranean Album - 89 - 1973:0230:0089 - Tunis, – A Dancing girl (Arab Café)

Figure 12 Mediterranean Album - 75 - 1973:0230:0075 – A Turkish Lady

If it were not for the title “Tunis, – A Dancing Girl,” the dancing girl in this photograph would be an Arab girl, providing the viewer with the same fantasy that Alloula speaks of (Figure 11). She is not even posed as a dancer and there is no evidence of a musical instrument to maybe hint the fact she might be a dancing girl. It is through the desire of the viewer that this studio photograph and the dancer girl are given life, not in the accuracy of the depiction.

However frozen the pose is in the photograph, it still speaks of a feast and celebration taking place within the imaginary world of the harem. In the photograph titled “A Turkish Lady”(Figure 12), a woman stands by an armchair and coffee table in front of a painted backdrop. The caption given to this photograph indicates that this is an image of a “lady,” not just an ordinary woman. The woman is dressed nicely and is wearing a half-length veil covering all but her eyes. She looks directly into the camera, and there is a sense of invitation in her pose.

There are two cups on the coffee table, implying that she is not alone. Locking gaze with the subject, the viewer is placed in the photographer's position, entering a private room of a household. Apart from the fake surrounding of the studio, this photograph is not a true depiction of Middle Eastern culture, because a stranger (the photographer and now the viewer) is never let into the private parts of a household where the lady of the house is present.

THE BIBLE AS A TRAVEL GUIDE

Figure 13 Mediterranean Album - 32 - 1973:0230:0032 – Bethlehem, “The Grotto of the Shepherds”

The other main factor shaping the image of the Middle East in the nineteenth century was its religious associations. The Viscount de Vogue, a French explorer of the Holy Land, writes on the importance of the Orient in how it helps historians and travelers to come into touch with the world of the past. He calls it “immobile present” and “immutable Orient” and says, “the

University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 294, p. 19
Mark Twain and Brander Matthews, *The Innocents Abroad: Or, the New Pilgrims Progress, Being some account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land*, Vol. 1-2 (New York: London: Harper & Brothers, 1911), p. 243

historians can always find in the retarded races the living types of disappeared societies.”⁴² Also, as Nir explains, the travelers visiting the Holy Land would have employed the Bible as their travel guide; therefore, all they expected to see were the historical locations mention in the Bible, not the contemporary Holy Land. Mark Twain, in *Innocents Abroad*, addresses a similar affect that different texts, such as the travel guides available at the time, had on the travelers experiencing what they already knew or read about rather than what was actually before them: “I can almost tell, in set phrase, what they will say when they see Tabor, Nazareth, Jericho, and Jerusalem — *because I have the books they will ‘smouch’ their ideas from.*”⁴³ Most Westerners traveling to the East therefore went with a preconceived notion of what they would find there. This also affected the photographs made of these regions, both commercial and amateur.

Figure 14 Mediterranean Album - 3 - 1973:0230:0003 - Jerusalem, – Several Views of the City, by Zangaki

⁴²Yeshayahu Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 294. p. 19

⁴³ Mark Twain and Brander Matthews, *The Innocents Abroad: Or, the New Pilgrims Progress, being some Account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land*, Vol. 1-2 (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1911). p. 243

Often, in Eastern expeditions, the Western travelers would discover a site by surveying the landscape already familiar to the native guides who led them. This was the case in expeditions by Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke, who were searching for the source of the Nile River. Mary Louise Pratt in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, uses the phrase “The monarch of all I survey” as a metaphor in analyzing travel texts, such as those written by Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke, in describing the encounter with anticipated destinations. She explains that the act of viewing, usually from a point of elevation like the top of a mountain, gave the authors a feeling of legal justification and ownership, thus their writings convey a sense of conquest. Most of the examples she provides use very visual language, which makes it possible to apply her argument to other visual media such as photography.⁴⁴

This panoramic view of Jerusalem from a height, possibly from the Mount of Olives, falls under Pratt’s “the monarch of all I survey” trope (Figure 14). Although the distance between the viewer and the subject creates separation, this photograph puts the viewer in the power position, looking over the whole city.

This plate bears the photographer’s stamp (Zangaki) and the plate number (No. 1032 Panorama de Jerusalem), printed in black on the negative and therefore appearing on the print in white. There are several other prints in this album that are also by Zangaki, a commercial photographer active in Algeria, Egypt, and Palestine from the 1860s to the 1880s. Zangaki specialized in views of antiquities, city scenes, and ethnic groups. Most of the photographs by Zangaki are panoramic and literal or are taken from a distance, where the position of the camera can be felt; he is definitely not part of the scenes that are being photographed. The distance that

⁴⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Rutledge, 1992), pp. 200-228

can be felt between the photographer and the subject demonstrates the voyeuristic nature of the photograph, and the height demonstrates the overpowering position of the photographer, and consequently, of the viewer. These photographs do not invite the viewer into the subject's world, but keep the viewer afar, observing the subjects. But still these photographs have a sense of truthfulness to them; demonstrated in full framing, there is nothing of the subject left out.

Figure 15 by Zangaki is another view from a prominent location.

Figure 15 Mediterranean Album - 2 - 1973:0230:0002 - Jaffa, – The Bazaars, by Zangaki

In *Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain describes Jerusalem in his 1869 journey to Europe and the Middle East. There is a great similarity between the way he illustrates Jerusalem in words and how this photograph illustrates the city visually.

“A fast walker could go outside the walls of Jerusalem and walk entirely around the city in an hour. I do not know how else to make one understand how small it is. The appearance of the city is peculiar. It is as knobby with countless little domes as a prison door is with bolt-heads. Every house has from one to half a dozen of these white plastered domes of stone, broad and low, sitting in the center of, or in a cluster upon, the flat roof. Wherefore one looks down from an eminence, upon compact mass of houses (so closely crowded together, in fact, that there is no appearance of streets at all, and so the city looks solid) he sees the knoggiest town in the world,

except Constantinople. It looks as if it might be roofed, from center to circumference, with inverted saucers. The monotony of the view is interrupted only by the great Mosque of Omar, the Tower of Hippicus, and one or two other buildings that rise into commanding prominence.”⁴⁵

Figure 16 Mediterranean Album - 44 - 1973:0230:0044 – Constantinople, – The Port at Seraglio Point

Travelers preferred to take back the idealized rather than the genuine. Commercial photographers often avoided capturing the unaesthetic and the contemporary in order to fulfill the Western expectation.⁴⁶ While the Orientalist ideal was supposed to be the study and understanding of the Eastern way of life and culture, what it really accomplished was to transform what was genuine into what Western audiences could understand and find familiar. As Batchen explains, the purpose of the nineteenth-century photographers was to place the Eastern world in order for the West. “...the camera was able to delimit the view, excluding extraneous or

⁴⁵ Mark Twain and Brander Matthews, *The Innocents Abroad: Or, the New Pilgrims Progress, being some Account of the Steamship Quaker City's Pleasure Excursion to Europe and the Holy Land*, Vol. 1-2 (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1911). v. 2, P. 327

⁴⁶ Yeshayahu Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 294. p. 20

unaesthetic detail and showing only that which was of interest. By this means, photography was able to make order of the non-European world.”⁴⁷

There are a few photographs in the Mediterranean album portraying contemporary architecture and life. These photographs are merely from the cities on the west edges of the region or the harboring cities, which were usually more influenced by their western neighbors (Figure 16).

COMMERCIAL AND AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHS

Before photography, travelers would describe their journey in travel accounts, or, if they had artistic abilities, they would sketch the different sites visited. It was not long after the first photographs were taken that photography was established as a good way of capturing a visual memory. “Photography was introduced into this system of attraction, ‘Tourism,’ as a standardizing mechanism fixing sites and viewpoints ... and becoming in general the indispensable ritual and token of trip. Soon tourism was unimaginable without photography.”⁴⁸

By the 1860s, photography was an established industry in the Middle East, and commercial photographs of different sizes became available for tourists and travelers to compile their own albums with (the Mediterranean album is such an example). The commercial photographs taken back as souvenirs did not necessarily facilitate the preservation of the exact memories of the travels; they may not have been from the sights that were actually visited, or

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Batchen, *Real Hieroglyphics: Photography and Egypt, 1850-1900* (San Diego: University Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego, 1994), p. 7

⁴⁸ Peter Osborne, *Traveling Light: Photography, Travel, and Visual Culture* (Manchester, UK; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 217, p. 20

they may have been different views that the traveler did not experience.⁴⁹ Instead, they preserved a fantasy fueled by the composed standardized photographs. Handwritten descriptions would usually be added to individualize these kinds of albums. These descriptions could be further details about the sites, or related anecdotes that would bring back real memories of the trip. These personal annotations made the albums unique; there are no two that are alike.

The introduction of the Kodak cameras in 1890s gave tourists the option of making their own photographs. Using the Kodak cameras did not require any photographic experience; almost anyone could use them, hence the Kodak slogan, "You push the button, we do the rest." The production of travel albums by tourists was something greatly encouraged by the Eastman Kodak Company. Kodak published promotional booklets that were very much like amateur travel books, but they were written in the first person. In these particular booklets, Kodak enforced the same points they covered in their advertisement: practicality and low price, memory and ownership. Through these promotional booklets, they also stressed the importance of albums as a means for public display as well as a means of protecting the photographs. Some of the slogans enforcing these ideas are: "I pride myself on the originality of my collection," or, "An album is as necessary to the real enjoyment of photography as is the possession of a Kodak." The Kodak advertising campaigns were quite successful and increased the use of amateur photography in Western families significantly. Tourists were encouraged to think ahead about how, when, and what they were going to photograph on their trips, while deciding how they would put them together into an album, and how they would later want the photographs be seen by others.⁵⁰ These

⁴⁹ Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography & Remembrance* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum; New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004). pp.14-15.

⁵⁰ Rachel Snow, "Incidental Tourists: Vernacular Photo-Travel Books, 1900–1940" (Ph.D., City University of New York), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1068254621&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. pp. 79-86, Kodak and private travel albums

amateur photographers captured a different vision of the Middle East. They could take pictures of rarely visited sites and regions. They could photograph everyday life and people. They could capture the country as it was at the moment. Though technically inferior, these amateur photographs were fresh and realistic while commercial photographs were forced to follow what the market called for.⁵¹

Figure 17 Egypt Album - 42 - 1973:0011:0309-0316 – Omdurman, Soudan

The Egypt album is such an example of amateur photography. What was mentioned in the previous paragraph is a general rule about amateur photographs of the time, but since every album is unique, we cannot only rely on the general factors. There is evidence of everyday life in this album, but it is only confined to the villages near the historical sites visited by the photographer (Figure 17). This album illustrates a specific journey to the historical sites and ruins along the Nile River. What is missing from this album is the city life. It can be assumed that the photographer passed through the cities going from one site to another, as the city names

⁵¹ Yeshayahu Nir, *The Bible and the Image: The History of Photography in the Holy Land, 1939-1899* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 294. p. 208

are mentioned on the back of each leaf as the general location of each site, but there are no photographs illustrating those cities, even large centers such as Cairo and Luxor. Batchen writes, "For them and their customers, Egypt's present is the past; contemporary struggles and aspirations are of little or no interest compared to the images of Egypt as ruin."⁵² This album can easily lead the viewer to believe that Egypt was frozen in antiquity, and that there was little more to the country than what is depicted. There are several photographs of each site presented alongside photographs of the primitive people, who are surrounded by nothing but the desert.

Though commercial and amateur photographs can differ in their treatment of subjects, both seem either directly or indirectly influenced by Orientalist beliefs. Commercial photographs also influenced amateur photographers; it is only natural that amateur photographers gravitate to the subjects that are familiar to them: historically or religiously important sites, what are now considered tourist attractions. Early amateur photographs were easily spotted not only because of their technical inferiority but also because of their lack of conventional framing and composition: they usually placed the subject directly in the center of the frame.⁵³

Despite technical restraints, amateur depictions are more truthful than commercial photographs. The amateur photographers find the familiar subjects of commercial photographs in their real experience; therefore their photographs depict the reality, whereas the commercial photographs depict an interpretation of that reality. These two photographs both depict Muslims at prayer, but the commercial photograph, because of its studio setting, has doubtful authenticity,

⁵² Geoffrey Batchen, *Real Hieroglyphics: Photography and Egypt, 1850-1900*, p. 7

⁵³ Rachel Snow, "Incidental Tourists: Vernacular Photo-Travel Books, 1900--1940" (Ph.D., City University of New York), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1068254621&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. pp. 68-73: "Individualization and Standardization in Tourist's Snapshots: Subject Matter and Composition"

while there is no question of accuracy in the depiction of the amateur snapshot, because it is not staged (Figure 18 & Figure 19).

Figure 18 Mediterranean Album - 55 - 1973:0230:0055 - Constantinople, – Muslims at Prayer

Figure 19 Egypt Album - 7 - 1973:0011:0054 - Mosquée d'El Azhar, université arab

The similarities and differences between commercial and amateur photography are most evident in the next three photographs (Figure 20 & Figure 21 & Figure 22). They all portray a woman carrying a load on her head or shoulder. In the commercial photograph, it is not only the painted backdrop that signals an unrealistic representation, but also the subject's posture. This photograph is comparable to the photographs of the harem girls; it depicts the workingwoman's body similarly to the Odalisque girls. Based on either the tradition or religious beliefs, a woman from the Middle East will not show off her half-naked torso in public. The curve of the water-carrier's waist is exposed; the photograph is very sexual, which is probably what induced the purchaser to buy it, rather than its truthful depiction. The amateur photographs, however, show women in their real environment with their usual outfits. Both photographers were interested in depicting the same subject, but the commercial photographer dodged the reality and created a romantic representation designed for a foreign audience. Although the amateur photographer pointed his or her camera at the same subject as the commercial photographer, whether because of interest in this culturally different act or simply to portray the people he or she had visited, the women are not subjected as sexual beings.

Figure 20 Egypt Album - 14 - 1973:0011:0033/34

Figure 21 Egypt Album - 10 - 1973:0011:0084

Figure 22 Mediterranean Album - 97 - 1973:0230:0097 - A Bedouin Girl with Water Jar

²⁴ Alison Davies Nordstrom, "Voyages (Per)Formed: Photography and Tourism in the Gilded Age" (Ph.D. diss., The Union Institute), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=728118871&Page=7&clientid=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>, pp. 55-80. Albums as Objects, Chapter Five.

THE ALBUMS

Compiling photographs into an album is one of the most common ways of organizing and storing photographs. Apart from storing them in an archival or museum setting, the book form helps best in preserving the photographs in natural environments. In addition to physically protecting the photographs, the album helps to create a relationship or, in some cases, a narrative among the photographs. This connection between the photographs in an album is produced through the sequencing and placing of the photographs on the album pages. It is through the means of ordering the photographs that an album is seen and understood as a whole object.

It is not possible to know whether the travelers themselves put the albums together or not. There are many different ways that such photographic albums came into existence. Most such albums were made and kept by the people who visited the places depicted in the photographs, but some of these albums might have gone to a new home as a gift to a friend or relative from the travelers who put it together. Others were made by people interested in the foreign places but who did not travel to those locations; they simply bought the photographs in their own country and compiled the albums.⁵⁴ They might have then been passed down to the next generation, or have been left behind in a basement, or gotten lost in a move and then found their way into a flea market or into a dealer's hands, and finally come to the library or museum. Each of these albums might have gone through many hands before they reached the museum. This change of context alters the way these photographic albums have been looked at and used over time. Early viewers once looked at these albums as a representation of a place once visited or desirable to visit, but

⁵⁴ Alison Devine Nordstrom, "Voyages (Per)Formed: Photography and Tourism in the Gilded Age" (Ph.D. diss., The Union Institute), <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=728118071&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>. pp. 55-80. Albums as Objects, Chapter Five.

today they are looked at as objects that can give the observer information both about the early users and how the places depicted were seen.

While each individual photographs contains meaning and information, it is through their compilation in the albums that they gain their higher value. Many people might have traveled to the locations and sites, but the commercial photographs they picked to include in their albums or the views they chose to photograph was what distinguishes each experience and albums. For example, the excessive number of photographs depicting various religious scenes in the Holy Land in the Mediterranean album shows the importance of the Holy Land to the album creator. In the Egypt album, a relatively equal number of photographs is dedicated to each location, which almost makes the album seem to be a scientific study of those locations.

Figure 23 Egypt Album - 14 - 1973:0011:0309-0316 – Egypte, Louqsor

The sequencing in both albums appears to have been done in such a way as to create a sense of completeness and totality in resembling the locations depicted in the photographs. On more than a few occasions in the Mediterranean album there are several views of a single site,

which it can be assumed were put in sequence to create a full three-dimensional portrayal of the specific location. This multiple depiction of the same location is quite common in the Egypt album; the photographs on each single page or the photographs in a row are usually from one location. In this album page, it can be seen that the photographs in each row depict different views of a single subject (Figure 23). The photographs in the second row depict different views of the temple of Karnak: the first and the last photographs show the temple from afar, while the photographs in the middle depict closer views of the temple. This method of putting the distant images at the beginning and at the end of the series of photographs of one location is used repeatedly throughout the album, conveying the sense of approaching and leaving each sight, the way the photographer/traveler actually did.

There is a sense of homogeneity in the Mediterranean album, even though the pages have lost their original order. This feeling of sameness in the album is due to the standard subjects and composition of the photographs as well as the use of the same photographic process and format. Since there is only one photograph per page, the photographs are centered on each page. However, the photographs in this album are from different parts of the Middle East — from Constantinople to the Holy Land, and Tunis and Algeria — and even though different photographers made them, it is quite difficult to distinguish between the different countries. But in the Egypt album, although one photographer probably took all the photographs, the sense of formal repetition is diminished due to the various compositions of the photographs on each page.

“Tourists came looking for what they had read about and seen in earlier representations and they reproduced it in their own albums and travel records.”⁵⁵ This is evident in both albums; although the photographs in each album are from different parts of the Middle East, they both

⁵⁵ Dean MacCannell, *Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), pp. 41-48

iconic locations and monuments along with the people of the region. This limited set of imagery attests to what Dean MacCannell discusses: the tourists only see the set of elements defining the cities they visit, not all that are before them. The compiler of the album of commercial photographs was limited only to the photographs available in the market for him or her to choose from. The amateur photographer was not limited to the same boundaries yet the amateur photographer still chose only to direct his or her camera at iconic subjects. This shows that how “Orientalist” thinking influenced both album creators and directed their decisions to the images they selected to represent their travels.

CONCLUSION

Having thoroughly studied the two photographic albums created by the amateur and commercial photographers of the day, it is fair to say that much like some of the writers and painters of the nineteenth century, they too were influenced by romantic notions of the Middle East as formulated by the Western Orientalist scholars.

It is clear that the photographers in question directed their lenses towards images of antiquity. Paying little attention to contemporary life in the Middle East, they chose to focus their sights on ruins, reminds of the old civilizations and in having done so portrayed the Middle East as an ancient and unchanged place. In both albums, the commercial and amateur photographers selectively captured the religious and historical locations and monuments. The commercial photographers did so because there was an already established western market for such imagery. The amateur did so because he or she was influenced by Orientalist theories, which would have already prescribed that certain iconic locations defined each place and were the obvious images that a tourist was meant to see. These photographs therefore categorized a vast and complicated culture into a classified visual cliché that simplified the eastern world for a western audience.

Even though the work of the amateur photographers might be assumed to be a more accurate portrayal of the people of the day and the world around them than that of the commercial photographers, the photographs in the Egypt album show that assumption to be not completely true. The amateur photographer, probably already influenced by a colonialist perspective and Orientalist motives, pointed his or her camera at only the ancient and historical subjects, and showed no interest in contemporary life.

Although the photographs depicting harem scenes in these albums are not as graphic as the examples discussed by Alloula, they still portray the same fabled Oriental Harem he

introduces. These eroticized images would allow the viewer to gain access to a very private part of a household, usually dedicated only to the women, and were therefore highly desirable. The desire for such imagery, portraying harem scenes with exotic, sexually available women, caused the photographers in the Middle East to continue to produce photographs that would suit the Westerner's expectations and hopes. Since Westerners would not have been admitted to see a harem, images of such scenes were therefore fictionalized constructions — fabricated images created out of specific saleable motives rather than representations of fact.

Although unique, when they were first produced these photographic albums might not have had the value that they have today. These albums are more likely to have been a token of memory from a trip, and functioned as a souvenir or a visual travel account. Today, the importance of these photographic albums and other objects such as these is not in their commercial value, but rather in the amount of socio-political information that they hold. The pages of these albums, although brittle, reveal many insights into their collectors' minds and how they saw the subjects portrayed in the photographs.

The amount of degradation, the structure, and the way they are put together, help us to understand how these objects were used over time. It is therefore important to mention the relevance of the archives and museums that house such fascinating collections — glimpses into the history of rich cultures. The examination and analysis of these carefully kept photographic albums can help us to understand not only the circumstances and political influences that contributed to their production during the nineteenth century in the Middle East, but also how popular media and information is created and disseminated today. It is therefore relevant to us, as contemporary media consumers, to be aware of how mass-perception and misperception of the Middle East can be generated by the political motives of the day.

This paper is only the beginning of what can form an extensive research on the nineteenth-century photographs of the Middle East and the influence of the Orientalist views on the photographs made at the time. Although these photographs were once accepted as truthful representations of the world they depicted, this is no longer true. This change of attitude is what makes these objects even more important for us to study, to further understand how our system of thinking has changed over time.

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