eventually married pianist Elizabeth Goodnow after she was hired to play waltzes during the performance).[64] Entering a darkened auditorium, the audience would find their seats while incidental music played. At eight o'clock the curtain would rise to reveal the first scene of the painting, illuminated by footlights; standing at its side was Banvard, who, using a long pointer, would direct the audience's attention to scenes passing by on the moving canvas (figure 13).[65] According to Hanner, it was Banvard's showmanship over and above his knowledge of the geographical, social and

64 Information found in John Hanner, 'The adventures of an artist: John Banvard 1815–1891', PhD dissertation, Michigan State University, 1979, p. 60.

65 Ibid., p. 61. Newspaper clippings from the Banvard scrapbook describe his lecture as containing 'racy anecdotes' and 'short pithy remarks'.

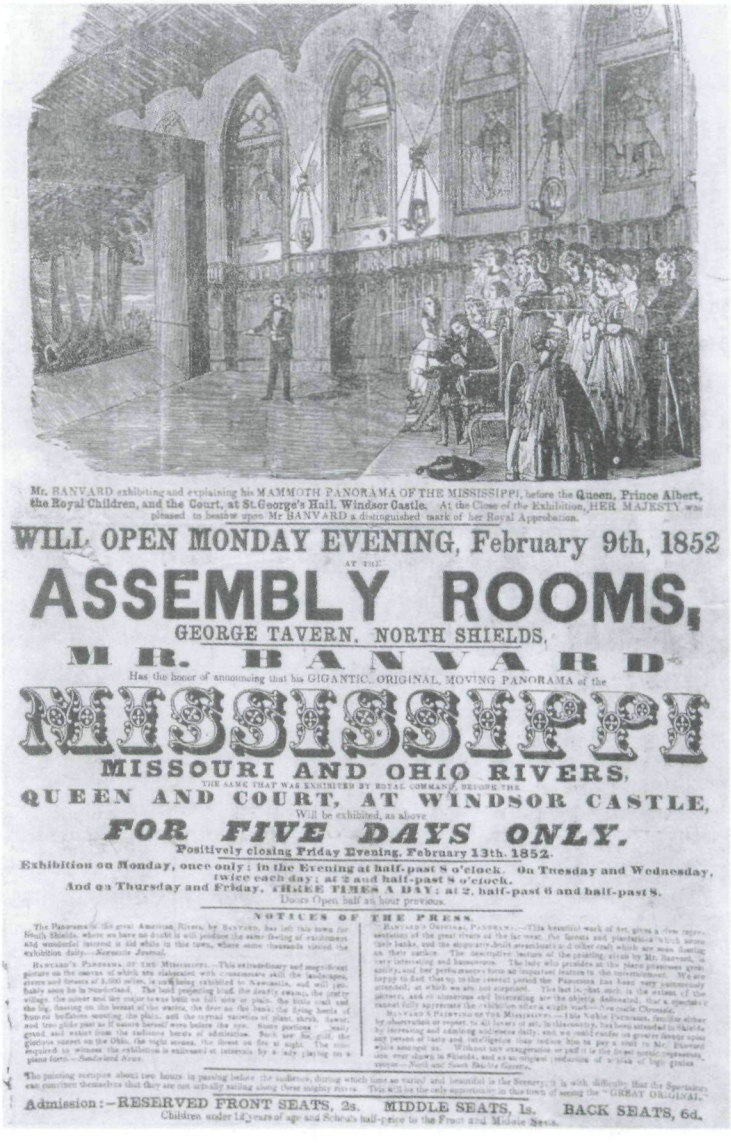


Fig. 13. Banvard exhibiting his Mississippi panorama before Queen Victoria in 1852.

scientific aspects of the Mississippi delta that was the biggest draw with audiences (Banvard apparently told a much-embellished story of riverboat pirates who terrorized the West, even though this gang had disbanded before he painted the panorama).[66] A critic for the *North of Scotland Gazette* remarked that Banvard proved 'a very pleasant companion in this long voyage', introducing 'some sly jokes . . . in true Yankee style', while another concluded that 'in short, Mr Banvard is a considerable part of the exhibition itself, but without the least varnish or paint'.[67]

As one of the most popular genres of panoramas in the early to mid nineteenth century, the river panorama differed considerably in presentational style from the 360-degree panorama.[68] In order to hold the interest of audiences and 'relieve the monotony of the long, continuous river banks', in the words of panorama historian Joseph Earl Arrington, river panoramists often included scenes of vessels, Native American life and, in the case of John Stockwell, views of the river 'under various aspects, by moonlight, at sunrise, during storms, and in fogs, and with the most picturesque effects'.[69] While the spectator of the circular panorama would be quite literally surrounded by the painting, viewers of the moving panorama sat before an ambulatory painting in reception conditions that strongly resembled cinemagoing.

Described by art historian Wolfgang Born as a 'pictorial epic', the river panorama's most distinctive feature was its movement, which gave audiences the sensation of viewing a constantly shifting landscape; in the words of one critic, 'you flit by a rice swamp, catch a glimpse of a jungle, dwell for an instant on a prairie, and are lost in admiration at the varied dress, in which, in the Western world, Nature delights to attire herself'.[70] Like panoramas of antiquities or modern cities such as London or Paris, panoramas of landscape or natural wonders such as gigantic rivers solicited a specific mode of spectating in which viewers abandoned the spatial and temporal coordinates of the outside world and, for the duration of the exhibition, entered into an implied contract with the artist: for the price of admission, spectators would be metaphorically transported to the scene of the painting and become enraptured with its inalienable lifelike quality.[71] This contract required that the panorama be seen not necessarily in the same way as a traditional painting or even theatre, but as a *trompe l'oeil* effect that gained in illusionism what it may have lost in attention to artistic detail (according to contemporaneous reviews, the paintings shared more in common with scenic backdrops than traditional landscape painting – hardly surprising given its length). The problem of vision in painting, the creation of perspective and delimitation of a view, had received a great deal of attention in the context of landscape painting since 1800, the landscape sketch becoming in art critic Peter Galassi's words 'a ready vehicle for experiments in realism'. The interest

66 Ibid., p. 62.

67 Unidentified clipping from the *North of Scotland Gazette* featured in a flier advertising Banvard's panorama at the City Hall, Perth, Australia, 1852; 'Banvard's panorama of the Mississippi River', unidentified clipping in BFP.

68 By the mid 1850s, there were at least seven river panoramas on tour in the USA, a clear indicator of their popularity. Lisa Lions, 'Panorama of the monumental grandeur of the Mississippi Valley', *Design Quarterly* (July 1977), p. 32. Only one of these panoramas is extant, the Dickeson-Egan *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*. Rather than a continuous portrait of the river, the panorama, as Lions points out, is a collection of 'vignettes depict[ing] dramatic, idealized river views and quasi-historical events'. Dickeson's panorama consisted of twenty-five pictures of the Mississippi from the mid sixteenth century to the mid nineteenth century'.

69 *Reveille*, St Louis, 29 October 1848, n.p., cited in Joseph Earl Arrington, 'The story of Stockwell's panorama', *Minnesota History*, vol. 33, no. 7 (1953), p. 286.

70 Review of Banvard's panorama, Bristol *Gazette*, n.d., cited in McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas*, p. 14.

71 Between 1830 and 1842, the following places and subjects were represented in panoramic form at the Panorama, Leicester Square: Rome, Damascus, Acre, Lima, Jerusalem, Bombay, Stirling, the Siege of Antwerp, the Cemetery of Père la Chaise at Paris, the Arctic Region of Boothia, and so on. Information from 'On cosmoramas', p. 364.

generated by the landscape sketch (particularly in oil) around the turn of the eighteenth century undoubtedly played a key role in the emergence of panorama painting as a pictorial convention that, like landscape painting, lacked the status of 'high art' but nevertheless drew attention because of its hyperrealism. This argument, of course, has a familiar ring to it, since it was also made in relation to photography. As art historian Angela Miller argues, 'The advancing frontier of illusionistic representation in the nineteenth century provoked concern over the very definition of art and the panorama's contested claims to artistic status, doing so in a manner that anticipates a century of debate over the artistic value of photography, then film, video, and electronic media'.[72] While space precludes detailed analysis of the impact of photography upon panoramas, suffice to say that the panoramic form inspired a number of late nineteenth-century photographers to shoot 360-degree views of cities, and, following in the footsteps of Banvard and his river panorama cohorts, to photograph river banks in their entirety.

Writing about one of the most famous river panoramas of the nineteenth century,[73] Banvard's immense 1848 moving panorama of the Mississippi, Charles Dickens began his review with some important disclaimers about what a panorama was *not*: 'It is not a refined work of art . . . it is not remarkable for accuracy of drawing, or for brilliancy of colour, or for subtle effects of hues and shade'. If the panorama failed to meet the standards of high art, it was nevertheless for Dickens a 'picture irresistibly impressing the spectator with a conviction of its plain and simple truthfulness. . . . It is an easy means of traveling day and night, without any inconveniences from climate, steamboat company, or fatigue, from New Orleans to the Yellow Stone Bluffs.'[74] As in the case of the Windsor exhibition, spectators remained seated as the 1,320-foot painting (an equivalent of 15,840 square feet, not the three miles claimed by promoters) gradually unfurled between rollers over approximately two hours, while listening to Banvard's commentary and music provided by piano and seraphine.[75]

The conceit of armchair travel evoked by Dickens was only one of the ways in which the panorama anticipated the textual forms and critical discourses of the early travelogue film. Striking in the nineteenth-century literature on panoramas is the claim that the panorama could metaphorically reenact the *original* journey experienced by the painter, not merely represent an uncanny likeness of a specific landscape. The river journey offered its audience an infinitely repeatable *exemplary* journey taken by the artist; as spectators retraced Banvard's travels (up or down the river, depending on the direction the painting had been scrolled during the previous performance), they were invited to assume *his* subject position and reenact *his* primary experience of the Mississippi. The corroborating value of (the) reenactment thus resides in the

72 Miller, 'The panorama', p. 43.

73 According to John Francis McDermott, five panoramas of the Mississippi were painted in the 1840s alone, the shortest being 425 yards long. McDermott, 'Gold rush movies', *California Historical Society*, vol. 33, no. 1, p. 29.

74 *The Examiner*, 16 December 1848: n.p., cited in Altick, *The Shows of London*, p. 327. Interestingly, the same article is published as 'The American panorama', in *Littel's Living Age* the following year, vol. 20 (January-March 1849), p. 314, this time authored by an E. Little.

75 That Banvard's panorama became the subject of satirical attack in famous humorist Artemus Ward's Mississippi-style panorama that opened at Dodworth Hall in New York City in October 1861 is a clear indication of Banvard's national reputation as a panorama exhibitor. Ward's lecture parodied all the cliched panorama conventions, including Ward's brandishing of a dilapidated umbrella instead of a pointer; as Curtis Dahl notes, '[Ward] used and abused all the customary tricks, submitting his audience in turn to fictitious autobiographical allusions, teary sentiment, blatant flag-waving, and mournful pathos'. Dahl, 'Atriums Ward: comic panoramist', *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 4 (1959), p. 483.

audience's foreknowledge that Banvard did in fact navigate his boat up and down the Mississippi; the very act of retracing Banvard's voyage thus lends it weight as an experience, even authorizes it as an event with sufficient national significance to warrant being reenacted in the first place. The yoking of the experiential to the performative – the fact that one is invited to both step into Banvard's shoes for the duration of the exhibition *and* to appreciate his showmanship – is a constituent feature of the reenactment. As texts that frequently signal their authored status in overt and self-conscious ways, so as not to deceive audiences (like the television news and crime shows which signal the constructed nature of the footage with the cautionary title 'reconstruction'), reenactments are highly reflexive speech acts. Moreover, by drawing attention to the very idea of an action or journey as a reprise of the 'original', Banvard's performance seems to anticipate the internal logic of the early cinema travelogue, especially Hale's Tours's patented 'Pleasure Railway', with its blurring of the signifying practices of the amusement park ride and travelogue. As distant cousins of the 'high-class' film lectures given by Burton E. Holmes, Lyman H. Howe and Frederick Monsen, moving panoramas merged 'high' and 'low' amusements and created the conditions that made possible the explosion in travel cinema in the early 1900s. Whether or not the success of Banvard's panorama was more or less dependent on the novelty of the panoramic apparatus as opposed to his evocation of a simulated journey on the world's longest river is difficult to determine. It also becomes something of a moot point when we consider how phenomenally successful Banvard's panorama was with mid nineteenth-century audiences. Banvard exhibited his panorama to over 400,000 people in the USA alone, and over the course of several years earned at least $200,000 on tours to Europe and at a command performance before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in 1848.[76] Promoted as 'by far the largest picture ever painted by man', Banvard's panorama was conceived as a 'gigantic idea' that would reflect something of the vast scale of the 'prodigious river [that] is superior to the streamlets of Europe'.[77] Just as the 360-degree British panorama made famous by Robert Barker served nationalist interests, so too did the moving panorama. According to Miller, 'it did not merely allow space to be imaginatively inhabited; it also put this space in the service of a specific historical ideology. Visual appropriation was a step toward the conceptual control which accompanied the extension of America's and Europe's emerging urban-industrial order over increasingly wide areas of human experience.'[78]

However, it would be misleading to imply that *all* moving panoramas were viewed in the same way as Banvard's. Spin-offs of 360-degree and moving panoramas, such as the Mareorama, located on the *Champ de Mars* at the 1900 Paris Exposition, a hyperrealist

76 Banvard's panorama was enormously popular for two years in the USA following its initial exhibition: it toured New Orleans, Boston, New York and Washington DC. For more on Banvard, see McDermott, *Panoramas of the Mississippi*; John Hanna, 'The adventures', and BFP.

77 *Description of Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River Painted on Three Miles of Canvas Exhibiting a View 1,200 Miles in Length Extending from the Missouri River to the City of New Orleans* (Boston, MA: John Putnam, 1847), p. 7. This is a useful primary resource for information on the construction of panoramas; it also contains a detailed description of the views represented along the length of the painting.

78 Miller, 'The panorama', p. 47.

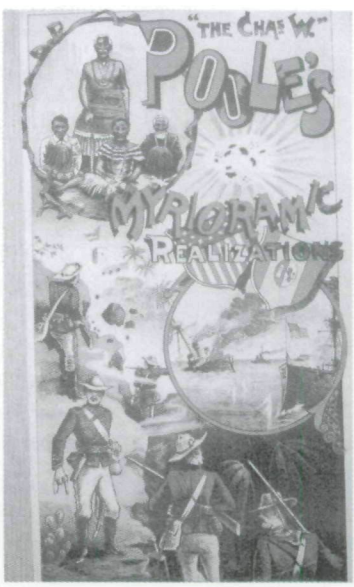
spectacle conjoining illusionist stage effects with theatrical narrative, was organized around a slightly different idea of virtual travel. Standing on the decks of an enormous steamer that employed the Cardan suspension system gave visitors the sensation of a rolling and pitching motion, the Mareorama was less a reenactment of a singular journey than a commodified touristic *experience*.[79] Premissed upon a similar idea of a virtual cruise, '*Chas. W. Poole's Myrioramic Realizations*' (figure 14) and '*New Myrioramic Route Cairo to the Cape*' (figure 15) were explicitly organized around the idea of undertaking a journey for the first time *yourself* (metaphorically of course) rather than reenacting a journey from the (celebrated) point of view of an artist.[80] As discussed above, most panoramas were accompanied by booklets which contained pull-out maps identifying the panorama's topographic points of interest. Combining a general introduction to the artist and subject with a legend which detailed each of the identified locales, these booklets, a cross between a conventional map and a tourist guidebook, often represent the best surviving records of the nineteenth-century panorama.

For many critics, panoramas combined just the right amount of stolid respectability with popular amusement; one critic writing in 1867 called the art form 'a demesne that seems to be strictly preserved for the virtuous and good. Those for whom the gaudy sensualities of the theatre are interdicted may here be entertained with the mild and harmless joys of an instructive diorama'.[81] The word 'instructive' is significant here, since panoramas were routinely described in reviews and booklets as having a clear didactic function, separating them from cheap amusements, another trope that would

79 'The Mareorama at the Paris Exposition', *Scientific American*, vol. 83 (1900), p. 200.

80 Established in 1837, Messrs Poole Brothers were successors to Messrs Poole and Young and the celebrated M. Gompertz (self-styled Father of the Panorama who claimed to be the 'oldest established and greatest panorama and dioramic proprietors in the world'). According to the publicity brochure, the company owned six panoramas and kept them up to date by adding new features such as motion pictures: 'In the present go-ahead times each entertainment to be successful must beat its predecessor, and in submitting the present Myriorama, painted by the very best obtainable artists, regardless of cost, and bringing his great practical knowledge to bear upon the Machinery and effects, and selecting a first-class Variety Company, Mr. Chas. W. Poole has no hesitation stating that anything . . . compare[d] with this Entertainment has never been produced in this or any other country'. Publicity brochure on panorama file, Theater Collection, New York Public Library.

81 'Moving dioramic experiences', *All the Year Round*, vol. 17 (23 March 1867), p. 304.



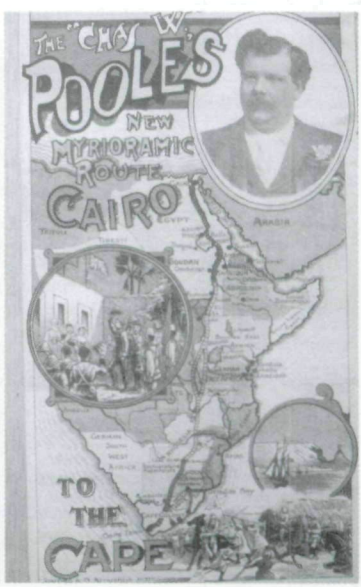


Fig. 14. Poster for 'The Chas. W. Poole's Myrioramic Realizations'.
Fig. 15. Poster for 'The Chas. W. Poole's New Myrioramic Route Cairo to the Cape'.

resurface in the context of early film promotion. Reviewing Philippoteaux's *Gettysburg* panorama in the *Chicago Times* in 1883, one critic was at pains to point out that the panorama had been erected and promoted 'without resort to any of the "circussing" advertising technique so common in our day'. The writer also noted that the 'stimulating influence of such an exhibition on the growth of a general public taste for the higher forms of art [could] hardly be overestimated'.[82]

Promoted as giant object lessons in the higher arts, panoramas anticipated the discursive construction of early cinema travelogues as 'moving geography lessons'; in fact there are such remarkable correspondences between the rhetorical construction of panoramas and early cinema travelogues that early travelogue reviewers seemed possessed by the spirits of panorama art critics when they looked to education, armchair travel and refined entertainment as the cornerstones of the genre. In the 'Descriptive Booklet' accompanying J.R. Smith's 1855 panorama of the Mississippi, advertised as 'the largest moving panorama in the world', outdoing the hyperbolic excesses of Banvard's copywriters, the panorama becomes a

> moving lesson, a pictorial guide, a refined and elegant manner of bringing before the mind of the spectator the appearance and characteristics of different countries; and when properly conceived and executed, forms a means of cultivating a public taste for the fine arts and of directing the attention of many to seek after solid intellectual entertainment instead of light frivolous buffoonery, to view a something that when you shall have returned home you can say, I have added a great deal to my stock of information, I have a better idea of certain things – I am more qualified than before to give an opinion on that subject; the mind has been set to work, an *impression* had been made that will cause you to reflect and to seek further after knowledge.[83]

The word 'impression' here connotes both the perceptual moulding of the experience as it registers in the spectator's mind and Webster's dictionary definition of 'impression' as 'an imitation or representation of salient features in an artistic or theatrical medium'.[84] It thus points to the panorama's close ontological bond with the reenactment. But it also speaks to an argument made by Ivone Margulies about reenactments conflating repetition with moral revision.[85] Panoramas thus fulfilled this didactic function in both their selection of subject matter and in their rhetorical claim to improve upon one's memory of viewing the real thing by providing a more comprehensive, all-embracing view. Though the cinematic reenactments of the 1950s and 1990s discussed by Margulies are far removed from these earlier texts, her argument that what is most at stake in reenactments is 'an identity which can recall the original event (through a second-degree indexicality) but in so doing can also

82 Review of Paul Philippoteaux's 'Panorama of the Battle of Gettysburg', permanently located at the corner of Wabash avenue and Hubbard corner, Chicago, 1884, in *Chicago Times*, 2 December 1883, n.p., cited in brochure for panorama at the NYHS.

83 J.R. Smith, 'Descriptive book of the tour of Europe, the largest moving panorama in the world, at the Chinese Rooms, 539 Broadway, NY. Painted on 30,000 square feet of canvas, from views taken on the spot, and at an expense of $10,000', (Petitioner and Gray, 1855), p. 3. Emphasis mine.

84 *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam, 1977).

85 Ivone Margulies, 'Exemplary bodies: reenactments in *Love in the City*, *Sons*, and *Close-Up*', in Margulies (ed.), *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 217–44.

reform it' is central to our understanding of the origins of reenactments.[86]

This notion of enriched vision, of the panorama enhancing the original viewing experience through a superior form of visuality, is an enduring trope in panorama promotion and, I would argue, an epistemological tenet of reenactments. The idea of the reenactment as an improvement upon the original (inasmuch as it provided more information or perspectives not normally available to the tourist) can be seen in countless reviews of panoramas of Niagara Falls, which, more than any other panorama topic, was subject to the self-aggrandizement and rhetorical excesses of artists and art critics. Godfrey N. Frankenstein's *Moving Panorama of Niagara*, which opened in 1853 at Broadway's Hope Chapel in New York City, offers a fascinating window onto mid nineteenth-century panorama exhibition. For audiences who had actually visited Niagara Falls (Kevin J. Avery points out that 1853 was the year the first railroad line ran to the site),[87] the panorama's multiperspectivalism gave them 'a better conception of it, than they ever had before' for the simple reason, one critic noted, that Frankenstein had spent the last nine years sketching and painting the falls.[88] Reviewing the enormous painting in the *Literary World*, another critic pointed out that 'we see Niagara above the falls, and far below. . . . We have it sideways and lengthways: we look down upon it; we look up at it; we are before it, behind it, in it. . . . We are there in sunlight and moonlight, summer and winter, catching its accidental effects of mist and light, alternately awed by its subliminity and fascinated by its beauty.'[89] One cannot help but notice the implicit cinematic quality of this multiperspectivalism, almost as if a logic of montage was at work in constructing these dramatic views of Niagara. Another reviewer noted that 'looking upon it takes one back to the original, re-awakening the feelings of wonder and delight there experienced', while yet another felt that 'one can almost realize they are standing within the roar of the mighty waste of water, or the cool refreshing vapors of its foamy billow'.[90] Moving away from what Avery calls the 'vehicular, linear conceit' of typical moving panoramas, Frankenstein's *Niagara* gave audiences edited highlights of the falls represented in different seasons; in addition to a tour of the Cave of the Woods and a virtual journey on the *Maid of the Mists*, Frankenstein updated his panorama with topical inserts such as the collapse of Table Rock at the Canadian Falls and a boatman's fatal plunge which dominated newspaper headlines for days, as the sailor clung to the rocks before finally losing his grip.[91]

The reenactment's mnemonic function, its ability to stimulate the memory sensors and transport spectators metaphorically (and phantasmatically) back to the depicted scene, is vividly captured in a review of the painting from the *New York Observer* which states that while the 'same emotions of sublimity which are excited by the

86 Ibid.

87 Avery, 'Movies for manifest destiny', p. 8.

88 According to Joseph Earl Arrington, Godfrey Frankenstein was assisted by his two other brothers (unnamed) and by American panoramist William Burr who in 1848 had painted his own moving panorama of the Great Lakes, Niagara, St. Lawrence and Sergeant Rivers. Information in Arrington, 'John Banvard's moving panorama of The Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers', *The Wilson Club Historical Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 3 (1958), p. 211, and Arrington, 'William Burr's moving panorama', pp. 141–62.

89 Anonymous, 'Review of Mr Frankenstein's panorama of Niagara', *Literary World*, 23 July 1853, n.p., cited in promotional brochure of 'Frankenstein's panorama of Niagara', p. 9, housed at the NYHS.

90 Anonymous and untitled review of Frankenstein's panorama from *U.S. Argues*, n.d., n.p., cited in 'Frankenstein's panorama of Niagara', NYHS, p. 6; review of Frankenstein's panorama from *The True National Democrat*, n.d., n.p. cited in ibid.

91 Avery, 'Movies for manifest destiny', p. 8.

natural scene, cannot, of course, be elicited by a picture . . . [it] serves to *revive the remembrance* of those emotions, and in reality brings before the eye a striking representation of Niagara itself'.[92] This idea of the panorama appealing to audiences both familiar and unfamiliar with a certain locale was a fairly standard rhetorical trope in panorama promotional literature: for example, in a programme advertising Hamilton's *New Overland Route to India, Via Paris, Mont Cenis, Brindisi, and the Suez Canal*, audiences were told that 'those familiar with the scenes depicted will recognize the truthfulness of the representations, and enjoy the reminiscences, while others will form as accurate an idea of the appearance of the various places as if they had been visited in reality'.[93] But while one reviewer claimed that it required 'only the least degree of imagination to believe that our bodies are keeping company with our thoughts, and that we are in person surveying this indescribable work of the Almighty', another was at pains to point out that despite the 'striking naturalness of the scene', the panorama was still 'almost a reproduction' of the World's Wonder, not, we should note, the real thing.[94] Acknowledging that the panorama was never anything more than an illusion, most reviewers tempered their hyperbole with qualifiers, such as this one from the *Penny Magazine* in 1842: 'if the groupings and general arrangement be natural, and if attention be paid to the modifying tint which results from the state of the atmosphere at different times of the day', the author noted, then the eye and the mind would be affected 'nearly in the same way as by the original objects themselves'.[95]

Nevertheless, as a recursive mode of representation, one premissed upon the idea of the panorama experience as an infinitely repeatable effect, the panorama invites us to share communion with the artist whose 'true' eye, we are told, 'detects much of the beautiful that escapes the common observer'.[96] Through the repetition of place, time and a 'seeing body',[97] our vision is aligned with that of the artist; and yet, in witnessing the scene through the panorama artist's eyes, we are constantly reminded of its status as spectacle, especially in the 360-degree circular panorama, where, as Wolfgang Born argues, we are 'expected to disregard traditional aesthetic standards such as unity of space and pictorial quality in favour of what might be called cosmic effect'.[98] The panorama thus invited suspension of disbelief at the same time as it vividly reminded spectators of its plasticity.

92 'Frankenstein panorama of Niagara', *The Observer*, 18 August 1853, n.p., cited in 'Frankenstein's panorama of Niagara', NYHS, p. 12. Emphasis mine.

93 London Playbills Scrapbook, GLCL, p. 52.

94 'Mr Frankenstein's panorama', *U.S. Argues*, n.d., n.p. cited in 'Frankenstein's panorama of Niagara', NYHS, p. 12; 'Frankenstein's panorama of Niagara', *Evening Mirror*, 25 July 1853, n.p., cited in ibid., p. 10.

95 'On cosmoramas', p. 363.

96 'Mr Frankenstein's Niagara', *Spiritual Telegraph*, n.d., n.p., cited in 'Frankenstein's panorama of Niagara', p. 16, NYHS.

97 Margulies, 'Exemplary', pp. 217–44.

98 Wolfgang Born, *American Landscape Painting* (Westport, MA: Greenwood Press, 1948), p. 86.

Death and illusion: some final thoughts on the panorama as *trompe l'oeil*

In its status as a liminal form oscillating between fiction and fact, absence and presence, now and then, the reenactment seems on some levels to share a certain quality with the moment of death (and thus

invoke Bazin's 'mummy complex' behind cinema's invention), when the body appears in the world, but can no longer be considered a part of it.[99] Of course the reenactment (and panorama) also share a great deal in common with the waxwork; not only were reenactments extremely popular organizational principles of mid to late nineteenth-century waxworks, but the waxwork itself was in phenomenological concert with the idea of suspended or cheated death. The moist, luminous surface of wax shared a similar pallor with the cadaver, and while panoramas and waxworks strove to suppress the moment of death, they could never escape the spectre of death as an ominous referent. Popularized by Madame Tussaud around the same time as the emergence of the panorama, waxworks turned to the day's headlines, especially news about the monarchy and military exploits, for narrative vignettes that could be reproduced in wax. The same pedagogical rhetoric that was used to promote panoramas – uplifting and educational experiences – also surfaced in waxwork publicity.[100] Part and parcel of what historian Vanessa Schwartz calls the 'spectacularization of reality', waxworks created endless opportunities for intertextuality; for example, despite competing for the same public, a wax tableau entitled *Les coulisses d'un panorama* at the Musée Grévin in Paris showed the military painter Edouard Détaille putting finishing touches to his panorama of the Battle of Rezonville.[101]

Many commentators, at the time and subsequently, have evoked the theme of death in an attempt to make sense of the ambivalent appeal of the reenactment, panorama and waxwork. On one level, death seems an apposite metaphor when thinking about reenactments and panoramas, since both still and moving panoramas were obsessed with death in their countless representations of nineteenth-century battle scenes. We should also not forget the fact that in today's world of twenty-four-hour satellite television, the reenactment has found a home in several infotainment genres, including true-crime programmes in which acts of murder are reconstructed using actors in the hope of triggering the television audience's memory of the crime and providing additional leads for investigators.[102]

Beyond its literal representation in many panoramas, the spectre of death seemed implicated in the medium's own mode of representation: like a cadaver, the hyperrealist canvas resembles a living being on the surface, but cannot really be considered alive. And yet there is a paradox in the reenactment's close resemblance to death on the one hand and its seeming ability to shake off death's grip on the other. As a 'moment that nobody can describe, an event that nobody can escape, a process that nobody can narrate', in Mieke Bal's words, death also looks to the reenactment as a way of overcoming its finality, since the reenactment can show what escapes representation or what may be impossible to represent at all as a live event. The panorama thus seems to embody death and deny it at the

99 Andre Bazin, 'The myth of total cinema', in Hugh Gray (ed.), *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), p. 21.

100 While a great deal more could be said about the correspondences between the panorama, reecactment and waxwork, space precludes going into greater depth on the subject. For more on how discourses of realism and spectacle play out in the waxwork exhibit, in particular, the late nineteenth-century Musée Grevin in Paris, see Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities*, pp. 89–148.

101 Ibid., pp. 90, 104.

102 In the UK, *Crimewatch* is the most notable; in the US, infotainment shows such as *America's Most Wanted* and *Inside Edition* make extensive use of the reenactment in sensationalist ways.

same time, constructing a motionless universe that can stand in as a facsimile of the actual location or event.[103] In the same way that death is a challenge to representation, oscillating 'between a state and an event', according to Bal, the panorama similarly hovers between being a sensation, an experience, and a two-dimensional representation.[104]

If death permeates the panoramic reenactment as a result of its fraught relationship to both the real and the imaginary, there is also a way in which the optical field of the circular panorama, with its arrested motion, gigantic scale, and immersive feel, exacerbated the death-like aura of the form; it swallowed up spectators with a sublimity and breathtaking force in which some found an analogy with an out-of-body, near-death experience. At least one contemporaneous spectator claimed that an 'aspect slightly of death' could be sensed in the viewing of all cycloramas (circular panoramas), particularly when the painting conveyed a great deal of action. Admitting that the same might be said of non-panoramic paintings, the author nevertheless argued that panoramas demanded a great deal more of audiences than gallery works:

> We see the rush of waters, eddying and swirling at our very feet, but we hear no sound, none of the din and roar that accompanies the fall of a great cascade. The foreground has the appearance of being the real rock, ingeniously clothed with moss and grass, and illuminated by the actual daylight; beyond one sees a party of tourists enjoying the grand prospect of the tumbling waters, but all is still; we return to find them *fixed as death*.[105]

In the same way that Maxim Gorky found in the shadow plays of early cinema a ghostly, death-like quality, some panorama spectators reported that the eerie stillness combined with the spectacular scale and illusionism lent a funereal solemnity to the occasion of viewing at least some panoramas.[106] Lending the landscape a static quality reminiscent of the painted backgrounds of museums of natural history dioramas, panoramas placed spectators at the centre of their optically embalmed scene. The effect might at times have been disorienting, if not outright disquieting, for unlike submitting one's gaze to a flat, moving panorama, or a two-dimensional moving picture screen, the spectator stands at the centre of this reconstructed universe, breathing in the ghostly air without any sound, save the hushed murmurs of fellow spectators. While the lack of diegetic sound doubtless added to the death-like effect in both panoramas and very early cinema, not all panoramas were cloaked in silence; like films, moving panoramas were rarely if ever exhibited in silence and there are many instances of music accompanying circular panoramas. Nevertheless, it was not uncommon to walk up the stairs and emerge from the darkened corridor onto the belvedere into a deathly silence, as noted by the above contemporaneous spectator.[107] Describing the

103 Mieke Bal, *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word–Image Opposition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 362, 375.

104 Ibid., p. 375.

105 W. Telbin, 'The painting of panoramas', *The Magazine of Art*, vol. 24 (1900), p. 557. Emphasis mine.

106 Maxim Gorky, 'The kingdom of shadows', originally published in the *Nizhegorodski listok* newspaper, 4 July 1896 and signed I.M. Pacatus (Gorky's pseudonym). Trans. Leda Swan from Jay Leyda, *Kino* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960); reprinted in Kevin MacDonald and Mark Cousins, *Imagining Reality: the Faber Book of Documentary* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 6–10.

107 The Mesdag Panorama in The Hague has a narration that highlights all the salient features of the painting. It plays in either Dutch, German, English, French or Spanish at the request of the tourist groups present. When the museum is quiet, a CD playing ambient sound effects such as bird calls and the ocean substitutes for the narration. Mesdag Panorama director Marijnke de Jong notes that some visitors complain about the narration, finding it intrusive and distracting. While sympathetic to their wish to experience the panorama in silence, the ambient sound is rarely turned off, since the majority of visitors seem to quite like it. Author interview with de Jong, 14 July 2001, The Hague.

spectatorial experience in 1900, long after the heyday of panoramas, W. Telbin claimed that 'the audience . . . in sympathy with this immovable world, speak in undertones; we do not hear the free criticisms and the small talk and general gossip'. Referring perhaps unwittingly to cinema's kineticism – one assumes that Telbin had heard of, if not yet seen, cinema by 1900 – he goes on to argue that 'possibly in the future we may have a pictorial exhibition combining all that art – and artfulness or trickery – can do'.[108] Perhaps more so than battle panoramas, scenes of natural beauty invited a contemplative, reflective gaze that one might associate with a solemn occasion such as a funeral; as Bruno Ernst has pointed out, an encounter with a panorama, in this case, the Hendrik Mesdag panorama in The Hague, is 'an encounter with stillness and peace', a reminder for nineteenth-century audiences of the transitory nature of life and their own mortality.[109]

108 Telbin, 'The painting', p. 557.

109 Bruno Ernst, 'Perspective and illusion', in *The Magical Panorama*, p. 123.

As a form of mass entertainment that anticipated cinema and, some have argued, was superseded by motion pictures at the end of the nineteenth century, the panorama shared a great many phenomenological features with film: like film, panoramas were hyperrealist representations on vast canvases that resembled cinema's widescreen formats of the 1950s and today's 360-degree domed Imax Solido screens, where spectators stand in the middle of an image which is projected all around.[110] As Miller argues, 'the panorama – like the cinema – manufactured a new reality, condensing time, editing the visual field, amplifying certain aspects of perceived reality while diminishing others'.[111] The panorama revival of the late nineteenth century, as Miller points out, would have clearly inspired early filmmakers, 'both in their pursuit of particular visual effects and in their choice of subject matter'.[112] Just as panorama painters turned to Niagara Falls and topical stories for inspiration, so too did early cinema exhibitors.[113] That panoramas were drawn almost exclusively from actual events and real locations as opposed to literary or mythological subjects imbued them with a special cathartic or therapeutic value, a place to find repose in the rapidly industrialized metropolis, even if this involved a full view of the battle panorama's horrors of warfare. By the second half of the nineteenth century, panoramas may have offered audiences temporary respite from the rush of modernity and, like the early motion picture theatre, provided working-class audiences a place to exercise control over some portion of their daily lives, increasingly ruled by the assembly line and transport timetable. If the visual excesses of battle panoramas in profiling developments in modern warfare were hardly conducive to calming the overstimulated urban mind, the central elevated viewing platform of the circular panorama nevertheless gave cramped urban spectators momentary sovereignty over all surveyed,

110 For more on the connection between panoramas and large-screen imaging technologies such as Imax, see Griffiths, '"The largest picture" '.

111 Miller, 'The panorama', p. 52.

112 Ibid., p. 56.

113 For more on the relationship between landscape painting and early cinema, see Iris Cahn, 'The changing landscape of modernity: early film and America's "great picture" tradition', *Wide Angle*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1996), pp. 85–100.

placing them at the heart of a simulated universe where they looked down upon the world. It was perhaps in this sense of superiority afforded by the downward gaze that the panorama laid claim to a gendered element, reassuring male spectators that their dominion over the world below lay unchallenged. But men were not alone on the viewing platforms, sharing the social space with women who took an equal pleasure in the visual sovereignty that came with surveying the panorama. Indeed, one might argue that it was women's attendance at panoramas that established norms of spectating that would later carry through into the early cinema period.

And yet, as I have argued elsewhere, there was something strange, even disconcerting, about seeing the world in this familiar yet obviously contrived way.[114] Charles Baudelaire, for one, was not a fan of panoramas, arguing in his essay 'The Salon of 1845' that Monsieur Horace Vernet's paintings of a recent French victory in North Africa 'consisted merely of a host of interesting little anecdotes' and were fit only 'for the walls of a tavern'.[115] Baudelaire had even less sympathy for the military and patriotic panorama, a genre that was sweeping western Europe at the time:

> I hate this art thought up to the beat of drums, these canvases daubed at the gallop, this painting fabricated by pistol-shot, just as I hate the army, armed power and anyone who clanks weapons noisily around in a peaceful place. This enormous popularity, which, moreover, will last no longer than war itself, and which will fade away as nations find other ways of amusing themselves, this popularity, I repeat, this *vox populi, vox Dei,* simply oppresses me.[116]

Needless to say, Baudelaire was probably not alone in despising the jingoistic appeal of panoramas and recoiling at any claim for the artistic merit of the panorama reenactment. The panorama's success in exploiting the reenactment form was inevitably the result of a confluence of factors, ranging from the aesthetic and ideological demands of the era to the tireless efforts of individual panorama promoters who struggled to keep the genre alive.

Panoramas aimed to evoke the sublime through both the eye and body of the spectator; size really did matter in this era of colonial and technological expansion, and panoramas offered spectators vicarious identification with the players of history and a privileged vantage point on some of nature's most prized beauty. As Fruitema and Zoetmulder have argued, 'the forceful way in which the panorama turned out to meet the visual needs of the public explains its resounding success as the cinema of the nineteenth century'.[117] At the same time, early cinema audiences would have been thoroughly familiar with the cinematic idea of the reenactment long before the emergence of motion pictures; given the longevity of the panorama as a mode of visuality – they were around for a good hundred years

114 Griffiths, '"The largest picture"'.

115 Charles Baudelaire, 'The Salon of 1845', *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. and ed. P.E. Charvet (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), pp. 87–8, cited in Paret, *Imagined Battles*, p. 80.

116 Ibid.

117 Fruitema and Zoetmulder, *The Panorama Phenomenon*, p. 30.

or so before the invention of cinema – it makes perfect sense that audiences had few problems understanding reenactments when they saw them in the cinema. Panoramas thus trained the nineteenth-century spectator to make sense of the large-scale circular or moving viewpoint, and in so doing, helped pave the way for the emergence of cinema. While panoramas are certainly not the only significant aesthetic and ideological precursors to motion pictures, their legacy can be felt today in our continued desire to represent our world with perfect illusionism, especially those experiences which lay outside the realm of normal human events, such as ascending the heights of Mount Everest, being on the space shuttle Discovery, or scuba diving off the coast of the Galapagos Islands, to cite just a few recent Imax titles. Popular fascination with the 360-degree view has never been exhausted, but rather ebbed and flowed throughout the two hundred years since Barker first patented his *coupe d'oeil* in 1787. As Imax and 360-degree internet technologies become enduring features of our cultural and commercial landscape, we should not lose sight of their giant, painterly ancestors.

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