

**Stillness and Motion:
Depicting the Urban Landscape of Palestine in the 19th Century**

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Abstract

This paper aims at offering valuable insights into the complex encounter between 19th-century Western travelers and the urban landscape of Palestine. The first part shows that, despite their efforts to distance themselves from the religious overtones of their predecessors, visitors tended to shove aside what they considered as 'inauthentic' or the product of acculturation in favor of a more conventional portrayal drawing on biblical imagery. This idealized vision was bound to struggle with disappointment, and the second part of this paper looks at how the representations of the city moved in the course of the 19th century from a purely pictorial transposition to a more practical and informed understanding of otherness. Travel writers began to devote considerable portions of their narratives to various aspects of life in the oriental town, while still predominately focusing on what they viewed as exotic and remote in comparison to European, and to a larger extent, Western culture.

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Introduction

The present study aims to explore the complex encounter between 19th-century Western travelers and the urban spaces of Palestine.¹ The first part shows that, looking at the city from a distance, visitors were inclined to resort to descriptions drawing on biblical imagery and pictorial representations of its holy sites and scenes. However, as will be illustrated at length, the mere *marvelous* quickly receded but not vanished altogether as they got a closer view of the settlement. The second part deals with the ambivalence of travel writers towards the beginning of modernization in Palestinian towns and with the widening gap between authenticity and modernism, including the question of Western political intervention in the Holy Land.

¹ As far as 19th-century Western travelers were concerned, and disregarding the Ottoman administrative divisions at the time, the names Palestine and Holy Land together made up a region bounded on the Northeast by the Golan Heights, on the South by Beersheba, on the West by the Mediterranean Sea and on the East by Bethany beyond the Jordan.

All in all, this paper will try to demonstrate that contrary to the notion of an *absolute* binary division between the West and the East, which has been popularized by Edward Said's *Orientalism*² there is no single and homogenous narrative about the 'Oriental city' in the 19th century. Instead, there is a multitude of contradictory, shifting, evolving and sometimes overlapping discourses, which, taken together, serve as a means to create self-identity and define otherness. In this regard, this study converges with some of the arguments developed by other literary theorists who challenge Said's approach to alterity, such as David Kof and Bernard Lewis.³

Hundreds of Western travelers reached Palestine in the 19th century. The introduction of faster and cheaper transportation made it possible for obscure clergymen, rootless journalists and audacious women travelers⁴ to share the stage with prominent public figures, including the British Premier Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881). Although religious motivations continued to play a major part in their interest in the Holy Land, those forerunners of mass tourism, strongly influenced by the Enlightenment and Romanticism, also attempted to shed light on the physical and human dimensions of the country. Yet, their search for 'truth', after years of idealizing descriptions in spiritual writings and travel literature, generally led to feelings of frustration upon arriving in Palestine: where travelers expected to see the holy city of Jerusalem, they discovered a small Mediterranean town 'polluted' with European buildings and shops; where they contemplated wandering amid the tall trees on the banks of the mighty Jordan River, they found a narrow tortuous stream, impossible to navigate by boat.

Many, upon their return home, published accounts of their excursions in Palestine. This study will present a selection of these sources,⁵ representative as

² Edward Said (1935-2003) states that the concept of the 'Orient' is a fabrication, an artifact, an unrefined clay modeled by Western hands in the late 18th century, gaining importance during the subsequent colonial era (and used from then on) and proclaiming the inherent hegemony of the West over the East in terms of cultural, economic and military achievements – a superiority upon which the legitimacy of colonialism rested. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 10, 41.

³ David Kof, "Hermeneutics versus History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 39/3 (1980): 495-505; Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 99-118.

⁴ It is interesting to note that 19th-century travel narratives about Palestine produced by women accentuate the dangers of the voyage – real or fancied – and the subterfuges on which their authors had to rely in order to make their way in patriarchal societies. For example, see Isabel Burton, *The Inner Life of Syria, Palestine, and the Holy Land* (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1876), 223-225. They also offer a deeper, though not necessarily a more compassionate, look on the female inhabitants of the country, whereas male travelers were usually forced to supply the defect of actual observation by hearsay or conjecture. See Cristina Trivulzio-Belgiojoso, *Oriental Harems and Scenery* (New York: Carleton, 1862), 121.

⁵ Please note that unless otherwise stated, all quoted passages from non-English or non-American travelogues are my own translations from the original language.

possible of 19th-century Western *notions* about the Holy Land, pushing beyond temporal frontiers and confessional divides, while bearing in mind their subjective nature.⁶ Emphasis will be placed on the travelogues of Fredrika Bremer (1801-1865), William Hepworth Dixon (1821-1879) and Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888), which captured a broad readership (running several editions throughout the 19th and the 20th centuries), thence attaining a position of potential influence on the actions and opinions of others, and devoted much room to the blend of excitement, fascination and contempt that visitors held for the Oriental city.

Before turning to the main body of this paper, one last point needs to be stressed. It is of critical importance when examining 19th-century literary representations of the urban landscape of Palestine, that they be placed in the broader context of the advent of Romanticism and Orientalism in the West in which – regardless to some variations between countries – the celebration of nature over the constraints of urban life, the firsthand experience, the emotional, the dramatic, the imaginative, as well as the delight in the Exotic dominated the scene.⁷ Artists of the period, especially those of the first half of the 19th century, have indeed been accused of denigrating contemporary Palestine society while glorifying the grandeur of its panorama and the grace of its ‘long-dormant, unalterable’ biblical sites to satisfy the public’s taste.⁸

The Oriental City Viewed from afar: A Mosaic of Reminiscences

In the 19th century, the two major coastal towns in Palestine were Jaffa and Haifa. The first, a green oasis on the doorstep of the Plain of Sharon, was an amphitheatre-shaped city, built upon a hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. During the second half of the 19th century, Jaffa underwent a period of significant demographic growth. One of the sources (1860) gives a figure as high as fifteen thousand souls, consisting predominately of Muslims.⁹ The second, located at the foot of Mount Carmel, on the Western side of the Bay of Acre, formed in the 1850s a community of less than four thousand people.¹⁰ None of the two seaports had proper docking facilities and rocks made navigating treacherous, forcing ships to anchor a mile off the coast.

While waiting to go ashore, Western travelers enjoyed the opportunity to take a closer look at the Palestinian city. This first impression was usually consistent

⁶ Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (London: Routledge, 2002), 13.

⁷ Valérie Berty, *Littérature et voyage, Un essai de typologie narrative des récits de voyage français au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001), 35-50.

⁸ John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 47-50.

⁹ Charles Berton, *Quatre années en Orient* (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1860), 363.

¹⁰ Liévin de Hamme, *Guide indicateur des sanctuaires et lieux historiques de la Terre sainte* (Jerusalem: Imprimerie des pères franciscains, 1869), 593.

with their *biblical expectations*, since the physical distance from mainland enabled them to momentarily shove aside what they considered as ‘inauthentic’ details. Indeed, as has been noted in the Introduction, many visitors experienced disappointment when sojourning in Palestine: suddenly reality was separating itself from imagination derived from the Scriptures and centuries-old literature and art. This unfavorable impression drove them, and even more so during the critical disembarkation phase (when the object of their desire was still looming safely and passively on the horizon), to try “to control, manipulate, even to incorporate”¹¹ what was a manifestly different Palestine from that of biblical times through a discourse relying on a net of textual references and theatricality to create a new image compatible with the spiritual conception of the Holy Land.¹²

Of particular interest is how the British historian William Hepworth Dixon, who traveled in Europe and the East in the early 1860s and helped to establish the Palestine Exploration Fund (1865), describes Jaffa. When the curtain rises, the narrator is on board of a vessel approaching the coast of Palestine: “The light of dawn is opening on a long dark line of hills, standing back about eighteen miles from the shore; the stars are filming out of sight; the sky is paling to a thin blue; and a grey sea goes lapping and parting round the keel with a sullen sigh.”¹³ The houses and minarets of Jaffa begin to appear: “High above the rugged rocks and whitening surge stands a cone of houses – a town, having a low-lying beach, dark walls, and on either side of these walls a clump of wood.”¹⁴ From his safe position on the bridge, Dixon puts the emphasis on what he is only too eager to recognize as the *immutability*¹⁵ of Jaffa: “unlike cities which have been made of the toys of kings, it has undergone no change since the remotest times. Destroyed in war, rebuilt in peace, it has remained the same in aspect and in site.”¹⁶ At this stage, the modern world is kept at bay: “Though it has always been the sea gate of Jerusalem, it has no docks, no quays, no jetties, no landing-stairs, no lights. No road leads into it,

¹¹ Said, *Orientalism*, 12.

¹² On the role of sacred texts shaping expectations for Palestine, see Stephanie Stidham Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land: American Protestant pilgrimage to Palestine, 1865-1941* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 23-26.

¹³ William Hepworth Dixon, *The Holy Land* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1869), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ A characteristic of most Western travelers to Palestine at the time was a frantic longing for *primitivism* in the face of a ‘ruthless’ century of unparalleled materialism and technological advances: their journey into the Holy Land was not just about moving in space from one area to another; they were also toying with the idea of traveling back in time to an *earlier world*, to a supposedly *immutable* society of archaic customs. To put it differently, it seems that through a direct encounter with contemporary Palestine, a large number of visitors thought they could catch a glimpse of how daily life in biblical times might have been. See Guy Galazka, *À la découverte de la Palestine: Voyageurs français en Terre sainte au XIXe siècle* (Paris: PUPS, 2011), 56-83; John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 44.

¹⁶ Dixon, *The Holy Land*, 8.

not even by the open ways of the sea.”¹⁷ The nature surrounding the ancient town takes an active part in this mythical representation of Jaffa – though the traveler is aware of its fragility, hence his allusion to “mounds and graves”:

On the land side, fields creep close to the walls, and the sand drifts in at the gates. Beyond the line of walls spreads the great plain; a film of creamy-pink sand lying on a bed of black loam, here and there dotted by Bedaween tents and by ruined towns once bright in song and story, though they have passed away, leaving little behind them on the plain except mounds and graves.¹⁸

This marks the shift of the temporal focus from present-day Palestine to the “land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3: 8):

It is the Holy Land on which we gaze: – the country of Jacob and David, of Rachel and Ruth; the scene of our sweetest fancies, of our childish prayers, and of our household psalms. Among yon hills the prophets of Israel taught and the Savior of all men lived and died; that stony hillock of a town is the Joppa to which Hiram sent the cedar wood; this roadstead is the port from which Jonah sailed on his tempestuous voyage; down by the shore to the south hides the flat roof on which it is said that Peter slept.¹⁹

His work done, Dixon can now safely asserts that Jaffa is “the genuine East; a town in which all that is dark and bright in the Syrian genius seem to have met.”²⁰ The arrival to Jaffa of David Austin Randall (1813-1884), minister of the First Baptist Church of Columbus, in 1861, is invested with the same atmosphere of mystery and awe:

In about half an hour, a long, low, dark line was visible, beneath the great bank of fleecy clouds that skirted the horizon. Some said it was land, some affirmed it to be only a bank of clouds. A field-glass was brought into requisition, and the question settled – it was the *Holy Land*. As we approached it, the outlines became more distinct, the hills assumed shape – the whole line of coast was distinctly seen, and the queer looking stone city of Jaffa – the Joppa of the New Testament – with its fort-like houses, rising tier above tier, upon the hill-side, was fully and clearly in view.²¹

The result is that, once again, the city viewed from the ship is in perfect harmony with the traveler’s literary references: “I was about to realize the long anticipated desire of my heart, to walk upon the soil pressed by the feet of patriarchs, prophets and apostles, and visit the localities where they lived and

¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1-2.

²⁰ Ibid., 8.

²¹ David Austin Randall, *The Handwriting of God in Egypt, Sinai and the Holy Land*, vol. 2 (Cincinnati: Randall & Aston, 1865), 17-18.

labored, and communed with God.”²² Upon seeing Haifa, Mary Eliza Rogers (1828-1910), sister of the British vice-consul in Haifa, who had lived in Palestine from 1855 to 1859, romanticizes the general appearance of the coastal scenery:

Haifa is a walled town, in the form of a parallelogram, pleasantly situated close to the sea, on a gently-rising slope. A steep hill, a spur of Mount Carmel, rises immediately behind it, and is crowned by a small castle. (...) On each side of the little town there are fine fruit gardens, where the pomegranates and figs especially flourish. A grove of palm-trees borders the sandy shore on the east of the town.²³

There can be no doubt, as has already been suggested, that those literary representations were consistent with the pictorial depictions of the urban landscape of Palestine in the first half of the 19th century in which the Bible, the history of the Holy Land and the craving for “far horizons and endless spaces”²⁴ played a significant role. In *View of Jerusalem from the Valley of Jehoshaphat* (1825) by Auguste Forbin (1777-1841) (Fig. 1), *Wilderness of Engedi and Convent of Santa Saba* (1836) by William Turner (1775-1851) (Fig. 2) and *Jaffa* (1837) by Antonio Schranz (1801-1864) (Fig. 3), the city, a still and calm cluster of white houses, is dominated by the enclosing countryside; the whole is imbued with a sort of scriptural fragrance, helping to bridge the present with the past.



Fig. 1: August Forbin, *View of Jerusalem from the Valley of Jehoshaphat*.

²² Ibid., 18.

²³ Mary Eliza Rogers, *Domestic Life in Palestine* (Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1865), 99.

²⁴ Gudleiv Bø, “Introduction to Norwegian Romanticism,” in *European Romanticism: a reader*, ed. Stephen Prickett (London, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 45.



Fig. 2: William Turner, Wilderness of Engedi and Convent of Santa Saba.



Fig. 3: Antonio Schranz, Jaffa.

Furthermore, if these engravings are matched to the diaries or travelogues kept by painters during their stay in Palestine, the direct link between literature and visual art is even more explicit, with both media interacting, colliding, adapting

and shaping one another.²⁵ Two examples seem especially relevant in this respect. The first is that of William Henry Bartlett (1809-1854), born and raised in London, who visited Palestine on six occasions, beginning in 1834, and produced travel books about the region as well as influential paintings. In *Footsteps of our Lord and His Apostles in Syria, Greece, and Italy* (1851), he relates the ‘unchanging’ character of Nazareth, seasoned with biblical reminiscences, which clearly could serve as the accompanying text to his painting *Vale of Nazareth* (1850) (Fig. 4):

The secluded valet with its white village lay at our feet, possessing, without any peculiar beauty, a character of sequestered tranquility and pastoral abundance, well suited with its associations. (...) While large towns have grown up around the abiding places of medieval saints, the village where Jesus was born has escaped this disfiguring homage (...). This reflection forcibly struck us as we descended the rock by a winding road into the sunny corn-fields, interspersed with grey and venerable olives, amidst which the reapers were at work, as in the days when Joseph and Mary occupied an obscure house in this obscure hamlet, near two thousand years ago.²⁶



Fig. 4: William Henry Bartlett, *Vale of Nazareth*.

²⁵ The fundamental relationship between literature and painting in the 19th century is perfectly expressed in Joanna de Groot’s article: “Whether one considers the ‘literary’ quality of orientalist painting, linked as it was to orientalist poetry, travel writing, and fiction, or the strong ‘visual’ elements in the literary depiction of harems, odalisques, etc., it is clear that the sexual and exotic elements in the Western concept of the Orient rested on both.” Joanna de Groot, “Sex and race: the construction of language and image in the 19th century,” in *Cultures of Empire: a reader*, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 55.

²⁶ William Henry Bartlett, *Footsteps of our Lord and His Apostles in Syria, Greece, and Italy, A succession of visits of the scenes of New Testament narrative* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1851), 191-192.

The second example is that of the Scottish David Roberts (1796-1864), who made an extensive tour of the Mediterranean area in the late 1830s. There are many passages in his journal that allude to biblical episodes, metaphors and symbols. This is particularly noteworthy on account of the prominence of such themes in the lithographs created from the sketches that Roberts executed during his voyage. One of these paintings entitled *The Descent upon the Valley of the Jordan* (1843) (Fig. 5) features the fertile Jordan Valley. Below, in the fading light of sunset, lies the Dead Sea, barely visible, which stretches its salty waters to the right. A few tents are set up on the banks of the Jordan River. The white houses of Jericho can also be seen in the distance. In the foreground to the right, a string of pilgrims dressed in colorful robes follow the narrow road leading down to the valley floor. When Roberts' drawing is juxtaposed with his journal, the similarities are striking: "Proceeding along the road, which has been all paved by the Romans, we first beheld the Dead Sea. Along the whole line, Arab horsemen and Bedouins were stationed. Groups of pilgrims were moving on to the Jordan. On our left is a brawling stream, at the bottom of a deep ravine (...). Farther on is a pool and stream, said to be that sweetened by Elisha. Jericho lies at the base of the hills."²⁷



Fig. 5: David Roberts, *The Descent upon the Valley of the Jordan*.

In other words, the first contact between Western travelers and the Palestinian

²⁷ *The Life of David Roberts, compiled from his journals and other sources*, ed. James Ballantine (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1866), 128.

city is often confined to a *pictorial transposition*,²⁸ i.e. a selection of elements worth mentioning because deemed to be visually striking and, in this case, also biblically accurate, and therefore “fit to be made into a picture.”²⁹

Western Travelers in the Oriental City: An Encounter with a Living Entity

Parallel to the efforts of Western travelers to preserve the Holy Land of their faith and dreams, disillusion is already setting in. Here is an example from *Méditerranée* (1896) by the moderate Catholic feminist Lucie Félix-Faure-Goyau (1866-1913), whose Parisian salon was home to the conservative elites: “Jaffa is a curious conglomeration of houses; the first thing it evokes is a sense of permanence.”³⁰ The use of the words “first thing” suggests that despite being far from shore, the narrator is fully aware of the optical illusion emanating from the Oriental city. William Wilde (1815-1876), the celebrated Irish surgeon and father of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), who in 1837 took an eight-month cruise to Palestine, visiting on the way Algiers and Egypt, is more explicit: “The town of Jaffa stands on a hill that rises abruptly from the sea, from which, at some distance, it has a very picturesque appearance; but, on closer inspection, the streets are found to be dirty and narrow.”³¹

Yet it is the act of landing itself that deals a serious blow to the idealized image of the city when travelers find themselves abruptly confronted with a ‘sonorous’ Holy Land. “Disembarkation is always accompanied by much noise and confusion,”³² says Brother Liévin de Hamme (1822-1898), a Belgian Franciscan friar, who lived in Palestine for forty years, leading Christian pilgrims to the holy sites. The American journalist William Cowper Prime (1825-1905), a graduate of Princeton who in 1874 was elected the first vice-president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, declares: “The din of voices was, as usual, intolerable; and it was for a moment quite doubtful

²⁸ Pierre Rajotte, “La représentation de l’Autre dans les récits de voyage en Terre sainte à la fin du XIX^e siècle,” *Études françaises* 32/3 (1996): 100.

²⁹ *The New Cambridge Modern History: The American and French Revolutions, 1763-1793*, ed. Elliot H. Goodwin, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 106. Malcom Andrews asserts in his book that in the context of the Romantic and Orientalist movements, painters and writers often acted as big-game hunters, “boasting of their encounters with savage landscapes, ‘capturing’ wild scenes, and ‘fixing’ them as ‘pictorial trophies’ in order to sell them or hang them in frames on their drawing-room walls.” Malcom Andrews, *The Search of the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Aldershot: Scholar press, 1989), 67.

³⁰ Lucie Félix-Faure-Goyau, *Méditerranée. L’Égypte, la Terre sainte, l’Italie* (Paris: Félix Juven, 1903), 79.

³¹ William Wilde, *Narrative to Madeira, Teneriffe, and along the Shores of the Mediterranean* (Dublin: William Curry, 1840), 168.

³² Liévin de Hamme, *The Pilgrim’s Handbook to Jerusalem and its Neighbourhood*, translated from the French by Wilfred C. Robinson (London: Burns & Oates, 1890), 29.

whether we should be able to effect a landing.”³³ Norman Macleod (1812-1872), founder of the Evangelical Alliance (1846) and editor of the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, conveys the same feelings of intrusion and helplessness. His Palestinian odyssey opens with the following scene: “On the afternoon of Tuesday we were approaching the Holy Land, and straining our eyes to get a first glimpse of its everlasting hills.”³⁴ The somewhat peaceful atmosphere begins to shift as soon as the boatmen arrive: “The twinkling lights of boats were then seen like stars coming towards us, and soon the port officials stood on deck demanding a clean bill of health; and this being produced, boat after boat came clustering to the ship’s side.”³⁵ Later there comes the first physical interaction with the city or, to be more precise, with some of its representatives:

Then arose an indescribable Babel from the screeching of their crews, (...) until, after a while, amidst the roaring of steam and of voices, we were by degrees carried along over the side and down to a boat in a current of sailors, Turks, Arabs, passengers, portmanteaus, dragomen, and travelers.³⁶

Once duties and charges were paid at the Customhouse, the auditory discovery of the urban spaces of Palestine was far from complete. The Palestinian city turned out to be a noisy place, swarming with men and animals, and as a result presenting a significantly different image from the soundless and reassuring visualizations of Palestine in Western paintings of the first half of the 19th century. When he sets his foot on land, the Free Church of Scotland minister Robert Buchanan (1802-1875), a crusading Evangelical who was instrumental in the creation of several parish schools in the Glasgow area and died in Rome while representing his Church, is startled by the confusion of languages, which extends its ravages throughout the Oriental city, serving as a modern equivalent to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 1-8): “The path that runs along the beach, between the sea and the rock on which Jaffa stands, all the way into the town, was like a bee-hive ready to swarm. (...) It was hard work to fight one’s way through this motley maze of tribes and tongues.”³⁷ And George Robinson, who, “after passing the summer of the year 1828 amidst the most beautiful provinces of Spain, and the winter of the same year in the south of Italy,”³⁸ decided to visit Palestine in 1830, bluntly points out: “The females were veiled, but their tongues were not tied; and from their shrill voices and incessant talking, we gathered, that their influence in social life is not quite of the passive nature, we in Europe, are accustomed to believe.”³⁹

³³ William Cowper Prime, *Tent Life in the Holy Land* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 26.

³⁴ Norman Macleod, *Eastward Travels in Egypt, Palestine and Syria* (London: Strahan & Co., 1869), 131.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 131-132.

³⁷ Robert Buchanan, *Notes of a Clerical Furlough, Spent Chiefly in the Holy Land* (London: Blackie & Son, 1859), 82.

³⁸ George Robinson, *Three Years in the East*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), v.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

For most Western travelers, landing in Jaffa or Haifa also represented their first acquaintance with the Arab language, which often led to uncertainty and vulnerability, as remarked by the Austrian explorer Ida Pfeiffer (1797-1858),⁴⁰ member of the Geographical Societies of Berlin and Paris, whose travelogues – relating her ‘adventures’ in South America, Tahiti, China, India, Persia, Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt and Palestine – were translated into several languages and were widely read both in Europe and the United States: “I met none but Arabs, whose language I did not understand, and who could, therefore, give me no information.”⁴¹ Some, like the renowned French writer François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) who toured the Near East in 1806 and Léonie de Bazelaire (1857-1926), one of the participants in the seventh Pilgrimage of Penitence to Jerusalem (1888), dismiss Arabic as a “harsh, glottal language”⁴² or as being “only suitable for angry people.”⁴³ Robert Morris (1818-1888), founder of the first Masonic Lodge in Jerusalem, goes even further: “To whisper a prayer in Arabic to a dying man would be as cruel as the method adopted by Hazael to assist his master Benhadad in securing a sound nap.”⁴⁴

Such a perspective of the Arab language was largely rooted in what the American philosopher Norman Daniel calls the “deformed image of Islam”⁴⁵ in Western thought, which reached a climax during the Middle Ages. Indeed, the early Arab conquests (637-827), the collapse of the last stronghold of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (1291) and the fall of Constantinople (1453) all resulted in growing misapprehensions and fear of Muslims in general throughout medieval Christendom. Thus, convinced of their religious superiority, hiding behind their ludicrous interpretations of different verses of the Old and the New Testaments,⁴⁶ dreading the propagation of Islam to the four corners of the world, authors like Isidore of Seville (560-636), John of Damascus (675-749) and Peter the Venerable (1094-1156) denounced Muhammad as the ‘Antichrist’, accusing its disciples of barbarism, violence, heresy, cunning and sexual perversities.⁴⁷ This picture must, however, be nuanced: many writers, some already in the late Middle Ages, other in the 17th,

⁴⁰ See the essay of Jennifer Michaels published in this issue.

⁴¹ Ida Pfeiffer, *Visit to the Holy Land, Egypt, and Italy*, translated from the German by H. W. Dulcken (London: Ingram, Cooke & Co., 1852), 171.

⁴² François-René de Chateaubriand, *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (Paris: Gallimard, Coll. Folio classique, 2005), 330.

⁴³ Léonie de Bazelaire, *Chevauchée en Palestine* (Tours: Alfred Mame & fils, 1899), 39.

⁴⁴ Robert Morris, “Oriental Education,” *The Michigan Teacher*, vol. 6 (Niles: Henry A. Ford, 1871), 177.

⁴⁵ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (London: Oneworld Publications, 1993), 24.

⁴⁶ The following list is by no means exhaustive and mainly comprises passages about the motivations and fate of false prophets: Genesis 21: 14-19; Deuteronomy 18: 20-22; 1 Samuel 17: 46; Jeremiah 14: 14-16; Daniel 11: 31; Matthew 7: 15-23; Revelation 13: 11-14.

⁴⁷ Frederick Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies: The Image of Islam in Western Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37-42.

18th and 19th centuries, tried to temper the anti-Islamic arguments of their predecessors (emphasizing the figure of the Arab as the “noble warrior,” the “hospitable nomad,” the “sage mathematician”),⁴⁸ while simultaneously continuing to charge Muslims with countless flaws, mainly “idleness, apathy, pride, ignorance, and sensuality.”⁴⁹

Despite the religious tolerance promoted by the ruler of Egypt Muhammad Ali Pasha (1769-1849) during his occupation of Palestine (1831-1841) and the dramatic concessions to minorities duly signed by the Ottoman authorities in the aftermath of the Crimean War (1854-1856), such as granting certain rights of property ownership to *dhimmis* (non-Muslims),⁵⁰ the negative medieval perceptions of Islam had persisted, exercising a profound influence on how 19th-century Western travelers portrayed the voice of the Muezzin ringing out of minarets in Arabic. The British Methodist missionary Robert Spence Hardy (1803-1868), for instance, views the daily Muslim call for prayer as a symbol of Islam’s illegitimate dominion over a sacred Christian land: “The cry of the muezzin is always affecting, but when heard in Zion, as it passes from minaret to minaret, at the hour of prayer, and comes in loud accents through every part of the city, and is re-echoed from spots where He once taught who spake as never man spake, there is no soul that can listen to it without tears.”⁵¹ To reinforce his message, Hardy concludes by quoting a poem by a certain Mrs Bulmer, in which the tears of sorrow continue to flow: “Who but must weep? For where, / Above the bulwarks fair, / Once floated Judah’s banners to the breeze, / Shadowing thy fanes and palaces; / Now, with malignant beams, / The lurid crescent gleams, / And chills and blasts the springing sap of life; / O’er hordes of abject slaves, / The bannaret of Mecca’s prophet waves, / And holds with truth and virtue ceaseless strife.”⁵²

Reverend George Fisk, in *A Pastor’s Memorial* (1843), remembers hearing the Muezzin summon the people to the mosques: “As the sun was setting, the sound of the Muezzin bid the ‘faithful’ to prayer; and soon in various parts of the large area, groups of devout Musselmans were seen engaged in their wonted solemnities.”⁵³ Like Hardy, Fisk depreciates the Muslims, although, this time, his heart aches for the Jews, whose imminent conversion to Christianity,

⁴⁸ A. Thomson, “L’Europe des Lumières et le monde musulman. Une altérité ambiguë,” *Cromohs* 10 (2005): 1-11.

⁴⁹ *All Round the World: an illustrated record of voyages, travels, and adventures in all parts of the globe*, ed. W. F. Ainsworth (London, Glasgow: William Collins, 1868), 783.

⁵⁰ Henry Laurens, *La Question de Palestine*, vol 1 (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 59-61.

⁵¹ Robert Spence Hardy, *Notices of the Holy Land, and Other Places Mentioned in the Scriptures, visited in 1832-1833* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1835), 177-178.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵³ George Fisk, *A Pastor’s Memorial of Egypt, the Red Sea, the Wildernesses of Sin and Paran, Mount Sinai, Jerusalem, and Other Principal Localities of the Holy Land* (London: Seeley, Burnside & Seeley, 1847), 169.

he believes, would hasten the second coming of Christ:⁵⁴

How bitter must be the reflection of the thoughtful Jew, when gazing down on the spot in which Jehovah once placed his name; when he beholds on it the symbols of a perverted creed, and knows himself to be banished from its sacred precincts; when he sees the infidel triumphing where his buried fathers once sacrificed and worshipped; and Mahomet completing what Pagan Rome began.⁵⁵

Western travelers who flooded into Palestine in the 19th century also found themselves fascinated by the variety of the ethnic composition in the urban community of the country. We read in *Pilgrimage to the Holy Land* (1835) by the French Romantic poet Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869):

All the costumes of the inhabitants or the travelers who animate the roads are picturesque and strange. For instance, the Bedouins of Jericho or of Tiberias, clothed in immense folds of white linen; Armenians in long robes of blue and white stripes; Jews from all parts of the world, and in the appeal of all nations, characterized only by their long beards and the nobleness and majesty of their features – a royal people, ill accustomed to their slavery, and in whose countenances one reads the remembrance and the certainty of great destinies, under an apparent humiliation of condition and abasement of present fortune; Egyptian soldiers clothed in red vests, (...) Turkish Agas proudly occupying the road mounted on the horses of the desert and followed by Arabs and black slaves.⁵⁶

Inevitably, attention was given to the cultural diversity as witnessed first hand in the bazaar; stalls selling fruits, vegetables, spices, crucifixes, beads and other goods introduced travelers to new sights, smells and tastes, while also connecting them to biblical scenes or verses. Accompanied by one of the sons of a Jewish innkeeper in Jaffa, the Swedish writer Fredrika Bremer, who also traveled to the United States, Switzerland, Italy and Greece between 1849 and 1861, makes an excursion to the *souk* outside the town gate:

And here, in the general thoroughfare from the harbour to Jerusalem, all kinds of Oriental people seem to have come together. [...] You see them of every shade of colour and variety of costume, selling, buying, smoking, walking about, sitting, or lying in the sunshine, or the warm sand or green turf, amidst great piles of golden fruits, sugar-cane, dates, cakes, and many other things, [...] Copts, Abyssinians, and Nubians were here assembled with Turks, Arabs, Jews, Russians, Armenians, and Greeks. In the meantime, caravans with camels, asses, and horses pass along

⁵⁴ On the proliferation of Millenarian theories revolving around the restoration of the Jews to Palestine and their ultimate conversion to Christianity within certain Protestant societies in the 19th century, see Yaron Perry, *British Mission to the Jews in Nineteenth-Century Palestine* (London, Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), 229.

⁵⁵ Fisk, *A Pastor's Memorial*, 169-170.

⁵⁶ Alphonse de Lamartine, *A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land*, translator unknown, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848), 247.

in procession either to or from Jerusalem. It is enough to make one's brain dizzy.⁵⁷

When reading the above quote, the reader can imagine, with fairly little effort, the Ishmaelite caravans that bought Joseph (Genesis 37:25) or the camels loaded with all kinds of goods that Abraham's servant led to the city of Nahor (Genesis 24:10) – an all too understandable retrospective penchant considering the author's intention to present the Orient as the “living embodiment of Europe's childhood,”⁵⁸ as the dying spirit of ancient times: “There exists in every western country a memory of an eastern country, as of its childhood and first youth, as well as a yearning towards it as to a primeval home.”⁵⁹ Elizabeth Finn (1825-1921), wife of James Finn, British counsel in Jerusalem (1846-1863), whose proficiency in Hebrew, Yiddish and Arabic enabled her to work closely with the local population, provides another typical description of the market, in this case the holy city's:

The shops are a kind of cupboards, built upon a stone ledge three feet from the ground (...). Peasantry in striped cloaks; effendis in fine robes; a Bedawee sheikh smoking as he walked along in immense red morocco boots (...); sellers of sherbet, with a jar under their arm, and chinking brass cups in their hands while they sidled along; pale emaciated Polish Jews in fur caps, and stately rabbis in gray turbans; peasant women with squeaking chickens on their heads, and children riding astride on their hip, or slung in a hammock at their back (...) Jewesses, in their white sheet, purchasing vegetables or a bit of calico print; a Turkish officer, in brass-plated fez and blue uniform, at a tobacco cutter's, followed by a black pipe-bearer dressed in a uniform the caricature of his master's, and exchanging gossip with a grinning woman slave, who was buying sweetmeats at the next stall; (...) some screaming, all talking, some cursing, and some saluting.⁶⁰

The overall impression is that of contemplating through the bazaar a miniature version of the Orient, which, notwithstanding unrelenting claims to reliability and accuracy,⁶¹ is fuelled by such Romantic and Orientalist stereotypes as the Babel of confused cries and noises, the humble Arab shopkeepers and sellers of sherbet, the richly-dressed effendi, the mighty Bedouin sheikh and the merry

⁵⁷ Fredrika Bremer, *Travels in the Holy Land*, translated from the Swedish by Mary Howitt, vol. 1 (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1862), 91.

⁵⁸ Michelle R. Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier's Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xxvii.

⁵⁹ Bremer, *Travels in the Holy Land*, 317.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Finn, *A Home in the Holy Land* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1866), 179-180.

⁶¹ For example, the acclaimed philologist and biblical scholar Edward Robinson (1794-1863) says: “My object throughout has been and still is, ‘the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;’ the truth, I mean, as it has come down to us, and is still confirmed to us, through the evidence of recorded history and topography.” Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions: a journal of travels in the years 1838 & 1852* (London: John Murray, 1856), 203. Similarly the French writer and naval officer Pierre Loti (1850-1923) indicates in *Jérusalem* (1895) that his travelogue was written “in a great effort of sincerity.” Pierre Loti, *Jérusalem* (Paris: Nelson, 1937), 5.

black slave.

It ought to be pointed out that in the second half of the 19th century, painters also veered in that direction by gradually turning to drawings of the Holy Land bustling with human activity in which the *souk* held a central position. The German artist Gustav Bauernfeind (1848-1904) became famous for his illustrations of Palestinian street scenes, particularly of the bazaar of Jaffa, where one can find some of the clichés, fantasies and assumptions invoked by contemporary travel writers in their accounts, thus reconfirming the fact that the general aesthetic tendencies of the time found mutually dependent expressions both in literature and painting. (Fig. 6)

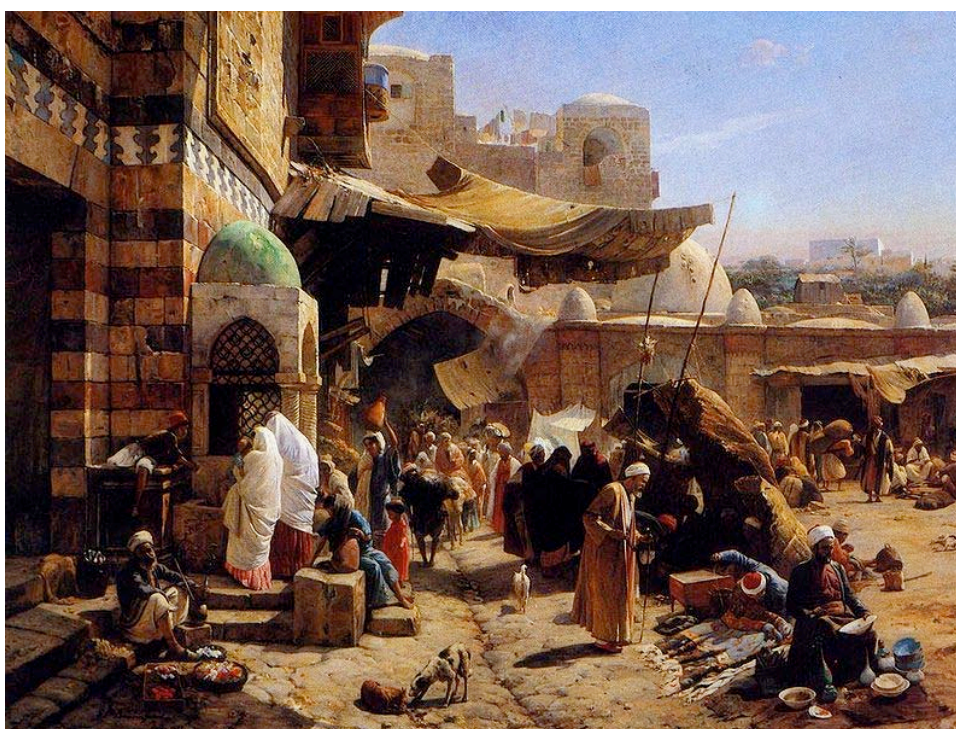


Fig. 6: Gustav Bauernfeind, *Market in Jaffa*.

Another example would be the combination of eroticism and cruelty glowing on *The Slave Market* (1824) by George Emmanuel Opitz (1774-1841), which adhered to the descriptions of auctions in the travelogues of Baron Frederick Calvert Baltimore (1731-1771),⁶² William Hunt⁶³ and others, and in turn inspired painters such as Stanislaus von Chlebowski (1835-1884),⁶⁴ and Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), author of *The Slave Market* (1866). (Fig. 7)

⁶² Frederick Calvert Baltimore, *A Tour to the East In the Years 1763 and 1764* (London: W. Richardson & J. Clark, 1767), 73.

⁶³ William Hunt, *Travels through France, Turkey, and Hungary, to Vienna, in 1792*, vol. 1 (London: J. White & T. Bensley, 1803), 307-308.

⁶⁴ *The Appraisal* (1879).

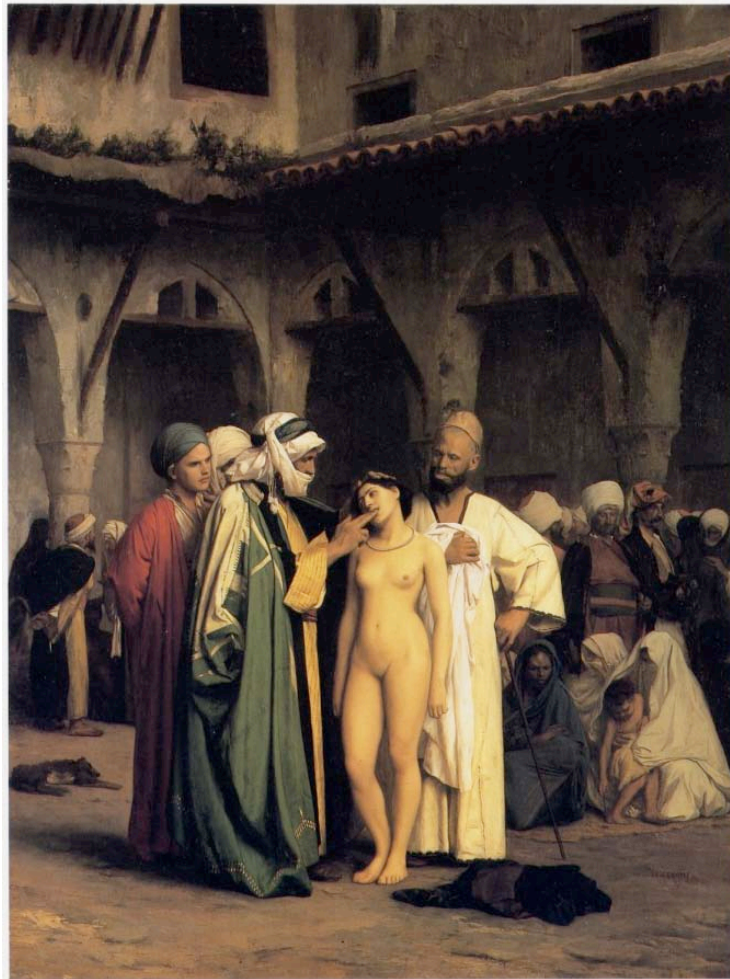


Fig. 7: Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Slave Market*.

When the ‘Other’ Becomes the ‘Self’

In choosing to focus their observations almost anecdotally on their biblical expectations of Oriental towns and on the outlandish aspects of the urban environment of Palestine, it is no wonder - as will emerge from the examples below - that many Western travelers displayed a certain ambiguity towards the first rays of modernization⁶⁵ in the Holy Land. For indeed from the last third of the 19th century onwards, the Ottoman province of Syria-Palestine started to absorb strong influences from the West and successive waves of European

⁶⁵ On the concept of modernization, see *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 2009), 130-132; E. A. Wrigley, “The Process of Modernization and the Industrial Revolution in England,” in *Social Mobility and Modernization: A Journal of Interdisciplinary History Reader*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 93-94.

immigrants,⁶⁶ which considerably altered its way of life. As the Israeli geographer Yehoshua Ben Arie indicates, the telegraph was introduced in Jerusalem in 1865, followed four years later by the opening of the first carriage road between Jaffa and Jerusalem.⁶⁷ The end of the Crimean War and the implementation of the *Tanzimat* reforms in the Ottoman Empire, which started in 1839, led to further industrial and social development in the Holy Land. From the late 1860s, new suburbs and rural settlements, established by Jewish immigrants and Christian Millenarian groups from the United States and Germany,⁶⁸ began to sprawl in the vicinity of Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem. 1882 saw the arrival of a thousand Catholic pilgrims, mostly from France, in what has come to be known as the First Pilgrimage of Penitence to Jerusalem.⁶⁹ Led by the charismatic Father Picard, superior-general of the Assumptionists, they came to Palestine aboard two steamships (*La Guadeloupe* and *La Picardie*) and used throughout their penitential wanderings the services provided by the travel agency Thomas Cook & Son.⁷⁰ With the inauguration of the long-awaited Jaffa-Jerusalem railroad line in 1892, the journey between the coastal town and the holy city was shortened from two days on a horse to five hours in a carriage.

It should first be noted that whether they ultimately rejected or embraced the process of modernization that affected the urban spaces of Palestine, Western travelers were united in condemning the maintenance of buildings, streets and other facilities that had significantly worsened in the eighteenth and the early 19th century before the first noteworthy housing and sanitary measures came into force during the Egyptian rule of Palestine. Not long after arriving in Hebron, Reverend John D. Paxton (1784-1868) remarks: “The town has a very old appearance; the streets are narrow and dirty, and to a great extent arched over, especially the bazaars. Few of the houses look well; they are placed uncomfortably close to each other, and are badly aired and lighted.”⁷¹ Samuel Clemens (1835-1910), alias Mark Twain, who in 1867 sailed on the *Quaker City*

⁶⁶ Based on the Ottoman statistics, Justin McCarthy maintains that the population of Palestine at the beginning of the 19th century was 350,000, against 411,000 in 1860 and 600,000 in 1900 (*The Population of Palestine*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1990], 26).

⁶⁷ Yehoshua Ben Arie, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1979), 192.

⁶⁸ For further information about the establishment of American and German settlements in Palestine during the second half of the 19th century, see Yossi Ben-Artzi, *From Germany to the Holy Land: Templer Settlement in Palestine* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1996), 47-64.

⁶⁹ Galazka, *À la découverte de la Palestine*, 423-505.

⁷⁰ In 1869, Thomas Cook & Son (founded in 1841) began to take parties to Egypt, Syria and Palestine. The majority of the participants were English and American, but the Eastern Tours also attracted a great number of French Catholic pilgrims. See “From Pilgrimage to Budding Tourism: the role of Thomas Cook in the Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the nineteenth century,” in *Travellers in the Levant: voyagers and visionaries*, eds. Sarah Searight, Malcolm Wagstaff (Durham: Astene Publications, 2001), 155-174.

⁷¹ John D. Paxton, *Letters on Palestine and Egypt, written during two years' residence* (Lexington: A. T. Skillman, 1839), 172.

for a tour of Europe and the Middle East, sharply criticizes in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869)⁷² the Galilean village of Magdala: “The streets of Magdala are any where from three to six feet wide, and reeking with uncleanness. The houses are from five to seven feet high, and all built upon one arbitrary plan – the ungraceful form of a dry-good box.”⁷³ In the same vein, Reverend Albert Augustus Isaacs (1826-1903), British historian and fervent advocator of the return of the Jews to their ancient homeland under the patronage of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews (a Protestant missionary organization founded in 1841),⁷⁴ gives a negative image of Tiberias: “Tiberias is a miserable town. About five thousand souls are collected within its bounds, of which about half are Jews. Its walls, which bear the appearance of having been substantial and well-built, are now for the most part in ruins.”⁷⁵ A judgment shared by the American Presbyterian minister William McClure Thomson (1806-1894), whose *The Land and the Book* (1859), boasting numerous illustrations, met with enormous market success: “There is no town in Syria so utterly filthy as Tiberias, or so little to be desired as a residence. (...) Of course it swarms with all sorts of vermin.”⁷⁶

This is where one observes a few cracks in the reciprocal relationship between literature and visual art. Whereas coping with immense disappointment 19th-century Western travelers to Palestine did not hesitate to recourse to various scenes of decay or (as will be discussed in the next section) acculturation in their writings, painters – bound to heed the wishes of their patrons and satisfy the pictorial tastes of the day – strove to maintain the aura of the Holy Land by banishing all indication of the neglected state of urban life. Ben-Arieh, who has thoroughly studied hundreds of lithographs, engravings and prints of Palestine, refers to this phenomenon as “the inclination to beautify and enhance the scenery of the Holy Land.”⁷⁷ This brings him to the conclusion that despite their goal to document “the reality of things witnessed,”⁷⁸ “even the accepted academic painters produced ‘sterile’ works, with none of the prevailing dirt and squalor they witnessed when visiting the Holy Land. (...) Filth and poverty,

⁷² *The Innocents Abroad* was so successful, selling nearly 100,000 copies within the first three years following its publication, that Twain is reported to have said: “It sells right along just like the Bible.” William Dean Howells, *My Mark Twain: Reminiscences and Criticism* (New York: Harper, 1910), 8. On *The Innocents Abroad*, see the essay of Milette Shamir published in this issue.

⁷³ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (Hartford: American Publisher Company, 1869), 503.

⁷⁴ Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 63-77.

⁷⁵ Albert Augustus Isaacs, *A Pictorial Tour in the Holy Land* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh & Hunt, 1862), 135.

⁷⁶ William McClure Thomson, *The Land and the Book* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859), 76-77.

⁷⁷ Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *Painting the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1997), 279.

⁷⁸ *The Christian Examiner and General Review*, vol 24 (Boston: James Munroe & Co., 1838), 31.

they felt, should never be associated with holy sites and places.”⁷⁹

For the Dutch cartographer Carel Willem M. Van de Velde (1818-1898), the matter is clear: the manifest signs of urban deterioration are attributable to the country’s administration by the Ottoman Empire. “Each day I spent in the Ottoman territory,” he writes in his memoirs, “I feel more and more astonished that the Turks should ever have acquired so much power in this part of the world. (...) A nation so enervated, so given up to sensuality, so languid, disorderly, and indifferent as the Turks of the present day.”⁸⁰ No delay should be suffered in the case of Palestine: Van de Velde claims that it is the duty of the European powers to step in and spread the lights of civilization and Christianity among the inhabitants of those dark regions.⁸¹ This seems to lie directly within the much-debated Said’s notion of an Oriental discourse that presupposes the superiority of the West and reads colonialism, whether in its religious (missionary) or secular forms, as a crucial step to redeem the so-called inferior societies.⁸² Others join Van de Velde in expressing the same sentiments – their statements strongly tainted by the proselytizing zeal of European missionaries, which most 19th-century Western travelers encouraged. In a chapter entitled “Inspiring prospects,” Bremer says: “The state of Syria and Palestine at the present time demands in the most urgent manner the attention of the European nations.”⁸³ She urges the Western world to cease all quarrels and speak with one single voice: “May no petty-minded political views prevent the great European powers from uniting to hasten the deliverance of Asia from barbarism.”⁸⁴ The Scottish barrister William Rae Wilson (1772-1849), who visited Palestine in 1820, also calls for Western intervention, perhaps with a deeper religious tone:

Let me further observe how greatly it is to be lamented that the Christian powers of Europe do not co-operate and wrest this country from the hands of barbarians, when the most beneficial effects might be derived not only from an exclusive establishment of the Christian faith, but many important objects accomplished, by the introduction of agriculture, arts, sciences and a discovery of antiquities.⁸⁵

In this “grand march towards Western civilisation,”⁸⁶ the urban transformation that occurred in the large towns of Palestine (mainly in Jerusalem) during the

⁷⁹ Ben-Arieh, *Painting the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*, 279.

⁸⁰ Carel Willem M. Van de Velde, *Narrative of a Journey through Syria and Palestine in 1851 and 1852*, translated under the author’s superintendence, vol. 1 (London, Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1854), 43.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁸² Said, *Orientalism*, 31-73.

⁸³ Bremer, *Travels in the Holy Land*, vol. 1, 336.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ William Rae Wilson, *Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, & Green, 1824), 190.

⁸⁶ Walter Keating Kelly, *Syria and the Holy Land, Their Scenery and Their People* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1844), 53.

second half of the 19th century was regarded as essential to redress indigenous deficiencies.⁸⁷ Testimonies in that sense are abundant, each modern commodity – whose growth and distribution were solely attributed to Western determination (therefore excluding all Egyptian or Turkish involvement) – standing out as a positive contribution to the ‘old Palestine’. Watching the holy city from the balcony of the English Hotel,⁸⁸ Rogers reports in a rather detached manner: “There were a great many new buildings in course of erection outside the city. Large plots of land had been purchased by Russia, France, and Austria, and foreign schools, hospices, and other institutions were being established.”⁸⁹ Finn is on the lookout for signs of improvement in Jerusalem: “There is now a large suburb of new buildings outside the Jaffa Gate.”⁹⁰ She further records in 1871: “Schools have been opened by all the chief sects – who have also now hospitals and physicians (...). Comfortable houses and handsome public buildings have risen up.”⁹¹ The change is worthwhile, she declares, “a change from the extreme fanaticism to political and religious toleration, and from utter desertion and torpor to busy life.”⁹² Closing her eyes to the ameliorations already carried out by Muhammad Ali Pasha, Bremer nurtures the same feelings:

Amongst the many conflicts which are here going forward, one is evidently becoming more general, more increasingly obvious, and that is, between barbarism and civilisation, between the East and the West. Civilization builds hospitals, founds schools and churches, missions and consulates; cultivates fields, and spins silk in the shelter of the fortress-like convents. Yet still the rapacious Arab tribes draw ever nearer to the city, and the inhabitants feel themselves ever more and more insecure.⁹³

Nevertheless, it would be hasty to assume that visitors welcomed the expansion of Western influence in Palestine with unconditional fervor. Notwithstanding his appreciation of modern urban life,⁹⁴ Louis Lortet (1836-1909), Doyen of the Faculty of Medicine of Lyon, treats the future construction of the railway between Jaffa and Jerusalem with suspicion and

⁸⁷ For a classic source regarding the place of the city in the colonial imagination, see David Hammer, *New Towns in the New World: Images and Perceptions of the Nineteenth-century Urban Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 328.

⁸⁸ “Hotels in Jerusalem present but a choice of evils. The ‘Mediterranean,’ or ‘English Hotel’, is the best, but is capable of decided improvement in cleanliness and order.” John Brocklebank, *Continental and Oriental Travels: Being excursions in France, Italy, Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, and Syria* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1865), 196. See also Brian Yothers, *The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing, 1790-1876* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 115.

⁸⁹ Rogers, *Domestic Life in Palestine*, 410.

⁹⁰ Finn, *A Home in the Holy Land*, 295.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Finn, “A Month’s Sojourn on Mount Olivet,” *The Scattered Nation and Jewish Christian Magazine* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1871), 155.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Bremer, *Travels in the Holy Land*, vol. 2, 113

⁹⁴ Louis Lortet, *La Syrie d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1884), 170.

disdain: “I grant that my ears would have been unpleasantly affected by calls such as ‘Five minutes to Ramallah; change for the Hebron line!’ If a country must be spared the vulgarity of the [railway] engine and its whistle, it is definitely this one.”⁹⁵ A similar perspective may be found in *Haifa, or Life in Modern Palestine* (1887) by the British diplomat and Protestant eschatologist Laurence Oliphant,⁹⁶ an active sympathizer of Jewish aspirations in Palestine,⁹⁷ who settled from 1882 to 1886 in the German colony founded on the outskirts of Haifa by the Temple society (*Tempelgesellschaft*) in 1868. He gives a thorough description of the Templers settlement:

Running straight from the beach for about half a mile, and sloping upward for about a hundred feet in that distance, to the base of the rocky sides of Carmel, runs the village street. On each side of it is a pathway, with a double row of shade-trees, and behind them a series of white stone houses, of one and two stories, generally with tiled roofs, each surrounded with its garden.⁹⁸

Oliphant underlines the remarkable results achieved by the new colony: “Some of the colonists are in business, and have stores in Haifa. (...) There is one wind grist, and one steam mill, the latter in process of erection. There is a manufactory of olive-oil soap, the export of which to America is yearly increasing, and now amounts to 50,000 pounds.”⁹⁹ The author thus seems to accept the emergence of urban modernization in Palestine, provided that it does not spoil the panoramic view harmonized with scriptural geography that he enjoys from his residence in the German colony.¹⁰⁰ It is at least partly for the same reason that Oliphant is strongly opposed to the construction of a railway from Haifa to Damascus by “British ship-owners and capitalists.”¹⁰¹ Its consequence - he believes - would be the submersion of the whole Jordan Valley, which he considers to be of a tremendous cultural significance for the Western world (and whose destruction will put an end to the Palestine of his longings), with waters from the Mediterranean: “Even in England and America there would be a strong objection to the Lake of Tiberias, with the historic sites of Capernaum and the other cities on its margin, which were the scenes of some of the most remarkable ministrations of our Lord, being buried five hundred feet deep beneath the sea.”¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Ibid., 360.

⁹⁶ For details regarding Laurence Oliphant and more particularly his stay in Palestine, see Anne Taylor, *Laurence Oliphant, 1829-1888* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 187-230.

⁹⁷ Leslie Stein summarizes Oliphant’s actions by reporting that in 1880 he “had in vain beseeched the sultan to provide what would have amounted to a charter to permit Jewish colonization in a section of Palestine.” Leslie Stein, *The Hope Fulfilled: The Rise of Modern Israel* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 16.

⁹⁸ Laurence Oliphant, *Haifa, or Life in Modern Palestine* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1887), 23-24.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 204.

¹⁰² Ibid., 207.

One could reasonably argue that the discourse fostered by Lortet and Oliphant reflects the inner conflict that resided in most 19th-century Western travelers to Palestine: on the one hand, they paid a tearful tribute to the period when Mount Carmel was still a *terra incognita*¹⁰³ and, on the other hand, in the name of progress they promoted house-building on the Carmel¹⁰⁴ or the establishment of a winter resort for consumptive patients in Jericho.¹⁰⁵ Another traveler equally worth quoting would be the French esoteric writer Edouard Schuré (1841-1929). Although he maintains that he never saw any disembarkation more hazardously performed than the one in Jaffa, he points out: “Once modern industry turns these reefs into a banal port, allowing [ships] to anchor in Jaffa the same way they do in Le Havre or New York, it would be the end, I fear, of the austere beauty of Palestine, already strongly compromised by railroad tracks and travel agents.”¹⁰⁶ A few pages later, Schuré produces a dialogue between a camel and a train, which dramatizes the unresolved tension between authenticity and modernism:

You may run fast and belch forth your worrisome smoke – you iron monster –, you are only filled with curious, bored and helpless people seeking to attain an elusive goal. Whereas we are docile and tireless animals, whose steps are slow but firm; we are the ships of the desert. We brought the patriarchs to the oasis of peace and the prophets to the wells of truth.¹⁰⁷

Such criticism of the urban alterations and the consequences of mass tourism in the Holy Land is also made by the man of letters and keen traveler Xavier Marmier (1808-1892), born in Pontarlier. While stressing the disastrous effects of the absence of modern industries and agricultural practices on the inhabitants of Bethany,¹⁰⁸ he warns the reader against the changes occurring in Palestine due to the rapid pace of development:

The speed of communications has taken away more of the prestige of this city [Jerusalem], the prestige of being far away and unknown. For some it is still the holy and wonderful city of God, but for many it is only a city of curiosity of which one has heard so much that it is worthwhile taking five to six weeks during the summer to visit and be able to say that one knows it.¹⁰⁹

However, it is in the writings of Louis Félicien de Saulcy (1807-1880), French archaeologist and author of notable treaties on biblical antiquities, that hostility

¹⁰³ Ibid., 93.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 162.

¹⁰⁵ Louis Lortet, *La Syrie d'aujourd'hui*, 430.

¹⁰⁶ Edouard Schuré, *Sanctuaires d'Orient* (Paris: Perrin et Cie., 1924), 308.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 314-315.

¹⁰⁸ Xavier Marmier, *Du Rhin au Nil, Souvenirs de voyage*, vol. 1 (Ixelles Lez Bruxelles: Delevingne et Callewaert, 1852), 110.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 90. Jean-Claude Simoën, *Le Voyage en Terre sainte*, translated from the French by Diane Jenkins-Beauroy (Paris: Impact Livre, 2000), 35.

towards the increasing ‘Westernization’ of Palestine finds its most straightforward, if not necessarily elegant, expression. Although he shamefully admits to rejoice in the comfort of the Hotel Hauser,¹¹⁰ he deplores the loss of the poetical charms of Jerusalem, as witnessed during a previous visit, in 1850:

Farewell to the religious and imposing character of the Jerusalem I once saw (...). Again, [modern] innovations have spoiled it all. From the Russian city to the Jaffa gate, the old ways have turned into streets packed with cabarets bearing French or Italian names: *Café du Jourdain. À la mer Morte, on donne à boire et à manger*. Bah! It makes me feel sick.¹¹¹

Conclusions

The materials developed in this paper leads to three conclusions. First, while the present study does not reject the essence of Said’s thesis, namely that the representation of the Orient in the West “derives to a great extent from the impulse not simply to describe, but also to dominate and somehow defend against it,”¹¹² it has highlighted some of the doubts, contradictions, fears, hopes, dreams and fantasies that gripped 19th-century Western travelers, which seriously undermine their supposedly unique (imperial) appreciation of the East. In fact, when one begins to scratch the surface, one notices that many visitors voluntarily distinguished themselves from each other’s positions and, occasionally, were willing to take a critical look at various aspects of their own cultures. Thus, the image of a religious community (the Muslims), a city (Jerusalem) and a landscape (the Jordan Valley) may vary based on the author or the period, or even according to specific passages within one travelogue. To put it differently, the discourse (or, more correctly, discourses), about Palestinian otherness in the 19th century consisted of as many languages, stereotypes, personal observations and national considerations as there were travelers, which nevertheless does not prevent the researcher from discerning some major trends.

Another conclusion that could be drawn from this paper is that 19th-century travel texts about Palestine strongly revolved around the gap between imagination and reality. During their peregrinations in the Holy Land, Western travelers often apprehended the various vistas with a sense of *recognition* rather than *discovery*. And how could it be otherwise for men and women steeped in the Bible since childhood, who were familiar with the works of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37-100) and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and who included in their ranks many ecclesiastics, missionaries and other proselytizing Evangelicals? For those visitors in search of biblical images,

¹¹⁰ Louis Félicien de Saulcy, *Souvenirs d'un voyage en Terre sainte* (Paris: Librairie de A. Eudes, 1867), 75-76.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹² Said, *Orientalism*, 331.

Palestine remained first and foremost associated with the idea of the Divine, even though it largely turned in the 19th century, just as other countries in the region did, into the realm of the Strange and the Exotic. When taken in this context, the ambivalent attitudes of Western travelers towards industrial and technological developments should not be regarded as their rejection of modernization in general, but rather as their fight against its erratic advance in the Holy Land. Indeed, the majority of visitors appreciated and even supported the modern facilities and means of transport resulting from Western penetration of Palestine, if only for colonial and pseudo-civilizing reasons, as long as the Oriental city and its environs went on to provide them with some sort of an *enclosed* space in which the familiar and predictable Holy Land was confined.

Finally, from all of the above, it should be clear that although most 19th-century Western travelers expressed their desire to describe the Holy Land as it really was, “as opposed to the heavenly Jerusalem that inhabited the minds of many [of their countrymen],”¹¹³ they endeavored to employ a series of literary tropes in order to conceal the ‘new’ in the ‘old’, to bury the ‘profane’ in a pile of ‘sacred’ rubble. Hence, in an era where “methodical doubt, rejection of authority, and insistence on the clarity, precision, and accuracy of an idea”¹¹⁴ were gaining ground, readers nonetheless found themselves faced with narratives in which the unavowed distortion and embellishment of reality were not only permissible but necessary in an effort to counter the inevitable disenchantment with the Holy Land of the 19th century, paradoxically rendering the journey itself somewhat superfluous.

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How to quote this article:

Guy Galazka, *Stillness and Motion: Depicting the Urban Landscape of Palestine in the 19th Century*, in “Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC,” n. 6 December 2013

url: www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=341