Civic Visions: The Panorama and Popular Amusement in American Art and Society, 1845-1870

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Program in Art and Architectural History

University of Virginia
May, 2018

ABSTRACT

Though now often overlooked, moving panoramas were one of the most viewed forms of American visual art in the middle of the nineteenth century. Whether it was across the Atlantic, down the Mississippi, or into the Arctic Circle, moving panorama exhibitions relied on the effect of virtual travel to engage the viewer in what was typically a two-hour performance, intent on edifying its participants. When viewed as a collection of static images the painted panorama appeared with many of the same formal conventions of contemporary landscape painting, but as a spectacle it allowed for its audience to consider any political or social tensions evoked by the showman. The group experience of public amusements, along with their associated ephemera—pamphlets, engravings, and notices in the press—framed the panoramas in a variety of conversations: about religion, scientific discovery, national expansion, and the viability of slavery within the United States. Their adaptation in domestic settings allowed for a disparate and unsure audience to coalesce around shared values. These works have often been examined as marginal forms of popular entertainment that were simply emulative of the interests of landscape painting. Instead, this dissertation argues that the consumption of these exhibitions by the American populace allowed them to publicly declare their values through the didactic entertainments they embraced, as well as those they eschewed.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation and my graduate work at the University of Virginia would not have been remotely possible without the steadfast, honest, and kind support of my advisor Maurie McInnis. Her patience in listening to untold hours of potential dissertation topics, editing early drafts, and honing my thought is an absolute inspiration to me about what it means to be an educator and scholar. Moreover she never failed to remind of the bigger picture and where this relatively small project fit into my much larger and meaningful life. Joining her on my dissertation committee were Carmenita Higginbotham and Sarah Betzer. They challenged me in my graduate coursework and my academic experience was far richer because of their enthusiastic work. Additionally, I was fortunate enough to work under other great educators, each of whom left an indelible, if not always visible, influence on me. I thank Matthew Affron, Sheila Crane, Douglas Fordham, Lawrence Goedde, and Louis Nelson.

Outside of Charlottesville, I found an incredibly diverse and welcoming group of scholars, researchers, and educators. At the Newberry Library, James Ackerman and Diane Dillon helped me consider this project within a cultural field of mapping the continent. At Winterthur Museum & Library, the seeds of this dissertation blossomed during conversations with Rosemary Krill, Tom Savage, and Brock Jobe. Those high-minded thoughts were tempered with deep dives into the library collections, assisted by Emily Guthrie and Jeanne Solensky. Similarly, the American Antiquarian Society overwhelmed me with its astounding holdings. Thankfully, Lauren Hewes offered well-informed advice about where to look. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Elizabeth Kornhauser was an amazingly accomplished and supportive mentor who helped me shape

this project, while also reintroducing me to curatorial practices. I owe great thanks to Kevin Avery, who was generous with his thoughts and scholarship. Additionally, Barbara Weinberg, Morrison Heckscher, Thayer Tolles, Karen Lemmey, Beth Wees, Medill Harvey, Adrienne Spinozzi, and Nicholas Vincent each shared with me insights about how to be a great colleague and curator. At the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, my inspiration and sagacious mentor has been for fifteen years, Elizabeth O'Leary. She introduced me to American art history as an undergraduate intern and continues to offer compassionate advice and insight while consuming both art and hamburgers. Sylvia Yount and Leo Mazow have been far more than my supervisors; they are inspirations and role models.

Equally important to any professor or curator that I encountered, were my graduate school colleagues. Now, they have transitioned into those august roles themselves. I could not have made it through the anxieties, disappointments, and triumphs without my good friends. I offer special thanks to: Katherine Baker, Jared Benton, Kevin Cole, Leslie Cozzi, Krista Gulbransen, Dan Weiss, and Anne Williams.

Of course, all other notations are minor in comparison to the special acknowledgement of my family—particularly my mother Jo Anne Oliver. There is no way to express my gratitude for over thirty years of support of an academic goal. She is an amazing mother and unrelenting advocate. Neil Howard and Elizabeth Carter Oliver join her in forming my bedrock. I am blessed with an amazing family, though I miss those not with us today, including my father Charles Oliver, and my grandparents, Josephine Kearney, and Warren and Barbara Parker. Thank you for your constant support. I promise that I am finished with school.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'panorama' holds such a wide range of meaning that its utility is often undermined by its ambiguity. Authors, artists, critics, and philosophers have applied 'panorama' to a view that is entirely encompassing. The term contains a hubristic tinge of a complete and total representation that was rarely achieved in the visual arts. However each work dubbed panoramic is by its very nature an edited creation, full of purposeful selections and omissions. Despite all of this, scholars and lay audiences alike have applied its connotation of all-inclusiveness to nearly every manner of publication, entertainment, and academic discipline. As easily in the nineteenth century as in the twenty-first, one can find the word used to denote the all-encompassing nature of a product—a children's book *The Panorama of Professions and Trades* (1837), the BBC's news program *Panorama* (1953-present), and more recently *Panorama* (2015-present), the scholarly journal of the Association of Historians of America Art. The word, panorama, whose derivation was likely influenced by the popularity of classical languages in the eighteenth century (from the Greek 'pan,' meaning all and 'horama,' view), was first printed in a 1791 advertisement for Robert Barker's *Panorama of London* that appeared in that city's Leicester Square (figure i-1).[1] For a word that seemed to offer the entire world before a viewer, the first recorded appearance of the word was decidedly hyperlocal and almost inward gazing.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, 'panorama' continually appeared in the titles and descriptions of a gamut of different entertainments. These theatrical productions, artistic creations, and popular amusements offered, through various

[1] The most extensive study of panoramas and specifically the moving panoramas can be found in a recent publication by Errki Huhtamo: Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving and Related Spectacles* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013): 1.

technological means, visions of landscapes both distant and local, as well as subject matters that were historic, contemporary, and imaginary. Inevitably, and not surprisingly, successful ventures ultimately spoke to myriad desires and interests of specific audiences. Occasionally, some entrepreneurs marshaled the popular medium to engage with an audience's desire to consume social and political issues, including most prominently in the United States, temperance and the anti-slavery movement. The moving panorama is uniquely situated as topic for scholarly investigation as it had distinct era of popularity, allowing for a chronologically limited investigation that probes the powerful interplay of art, entertainment, and visual culture as a social discourse in the antebellum era.

This dissertation examines the subject and method of display of art and a specific manner of panorama—the moving panorama— in order to demonstrate not only their shared subjects, but also how they marshaled these subjects in a mode of exhibition reliant upon a viewer's investigation of the production. The moving panorama operated as a theatrical entertainment that only shared its name with Robert Barker's three hundred and sixty degree London panoramas. Rather than an enclosed space in which paying customers entered and observed a painted scene around them, the moving panorama was a long stretch of canvas (often near one thousand feet in length and eight to ten feet high)

that was rolled onto two cylindrical spools (figure i-2). The spools were placed on a mechanism that allowed for them to be rotated thereby transferring the canvas from one scene to another. A proscenium, often constructed to resemble a painting's frame, covered the mechanical device onstage (figure i-3). The width of the proscenium would define separate painted scenes within the painted journey. For example, a moving panorama of a river journey could contain scenes of embarkation onto a boat, a scene of a

shoreline as viewed from the imaginary vessel on which audiences imagined themselves seated aboard, and finally an arrival at a port. The proscenium also served to cover the mechanics that held and moved the canvas as well as the workmen who manually cranked the cylinders. The workman's cues to move the panorama were issued by script, read aloud in front of the proscenium by a lecturer who addressed the audience. Audiences in turn not only followed the performance by watching the moving panorama and listening to the presenter, but many viewers followed along with brochures presented in the guise of travel itineraries that could be purchased in the theatre in addition to one's admission (figure i-4).[2]

Moving panoramas experienced an explosive rise in popularity in the United States in 1846 and 1847, transforming from a well-known but little regarded theatrical device to a staple of midcentury urban entertainment, and then to a fading fad that completely disappeared by the early 1860s.[3] Its relatively short lifetime as major form of American entertainment coincided with a period that extended from the beginning of the Mexican-American War (1846-48) through the close of the American Civil War (1861-65), a volatile era marked by the nation's most profound social and political upheavals. From artists buoyed by a sense of near boundless American expansionism in the 1850s through those whose careers would never recover from dramatic changes in taste resulting from the trauma of the Civil War, the era was equally transformative for the

[2] Chapter I examines additional objects that lent authenticity to the tales sometimes also accompanied the lecture and brochures and claims laid forth in the panorama and texts. These objects could include flora and fauna captured during the artist/lecturer's own journey through the area.

[3] The antecedents of the moving panorama from Robert Barker to John Banvard's debut of the moving panorama in December of 1846 are discussed in Chapter I.

history of American art.[4] The creation and exhibition of moving panorama painting in this era was inexorably linked with contemporary artists and tastes. As such, a study of moving panoramas, one of the most pervasive forms of visual entertainment, reveals important artistic conventions and social tensions within one of the most turbulent periods in American art history.

Importantly, the rise and demise of the moving panorama in the decade and a half preceding the Civil War also coincided with significant clashes over the definition of taste, between Americans of different classes, northern and southern, as well as urban and rural. Moving panoramas, which arose out of a theatrical tradition, joined similar cultural phenomena (including affordable art engravings, and civically minded art galleries) of the era in an attempt to offer art and culture to newly financially empowered swathes of urban American. This dissertation builds on previous American cultural historians who have studied the so-called "democratization" of culture in the antebellum period. Simultaneous to the rise of American art history as a distinct field of academic study in the middle of the twentieth century, American social historians identified the antebellum era as one of distinct confrontation over the role of taste how it was used to mold and discipline American society.[5] In *The Tastemakers* (1954), cultural historian Russel Lynes laid an early and compelling groundwork to address this era. This was redressed by the massively influential */Lowbrow* by Lawrence Levine (1988) that appears as a scholarly

[4] This complex era and its profound effect artists and their production is discussed in myriad publications, though most recently in: Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Civil War in American Art* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2012): 225-42.

[5] Yet this is a form of scholarship not unrelated to midcentury developments in art history, particularly the rise of a nationalistic promotion of Abstract Expressionism as a uniquely American school of art in conflict with popular culture, see the highly influential Clement Greenberg, "Avant Garde and Kitsch." *Partisan Review* 6 (Fall 1939): 34–49, and its influence even on early American art history scholarship, Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience* (New York: Praeger 1969), as noted in John Davis, "End of the American Century: Current Scholarship in American Art," *The Art Bulletin* 85, no. 3 (September 2003): 559-60.

influence in each chapter of this dissertation.[6] Levine's scholarship outlines the fractious role played by urban entertainment in the decades preceding the Civil War, when there was little coherence as what could be defined as high or low art.

Yet, through an examination of the similarities in design, presentation, narrative and reception of both moving panoramas and art exhibitions this dissertation rejects a prevalent notion formed by twentieth-century cultural historians that antebellum art exhibitions and entertainments existed in distinct cultural spheres. Rather, this study builds upon previous scholarship to argue that antebellum urban exhibitions relied on a specific, interrogative manner of interaction between the audience and the art. This shared mode of exhibition, between both popular panorama performances and fine art exhibitions, allowed artists and presenters to further social goals, specifically in the exhibition of anti-slavery panoramas that transgressed popular expectations of a voyage along the Mississippi River.

The moving panorama, in particular, offers a unique subject for study of the arts and entertainments in the United States. The subjects chosen for moving panoramas spoke to the importance of contemporary social and political movements. It is no surprise that the first popular and hugely successful moving panorama was John Banvard's *Panorama of the Mississippi River*. It was near constantly toured and exhibited in both the Unites States and abroad between 1846 and 1863. In this era, the panorama, which took as its subject the western landscapes of the nation, spoke to the nation's crises over

[6] Additionally, many of these same ideas are presented in my own master's thesis, Christopher Oliver, "'Elevated Pure and Public Taste:' The Membership Prints of the American Art Union, 1840-1851," (Master's Thesis, University of Virginia, 2008).

expansionism and slavery.[7] Critics and abolitionists noticed the omission of these themes in both fine art easel-painting and popular exhibitions. Twentieth-century art historians have previously examined antebellum artists' seeming reticence to engage with ongoing debates about slavery in the most popular genre of the period, landscape painting, but little has been noted about moving panorama painting.[8] The medium lent itself to depictions of the American landscape and these works similarly erased controversial aspects of the ongoing debate about slavery. Rather, popular Mississippi panoramas principally promoted national unity through the picturing of commodities produced by the slave economy (cotton and sugar that could be turned into manufactured goods) without the provocative inclusion of enslaved people.[9]

Still, dissent in fine art painting and popular entertainment existed. Three major moving panoramas produced between 1850 and 1855 sought to correct the exclusion of slavery and its ill effects on the America landscape by producing and touring anti-slavery exhibitions. These panoramas sought to upend popular narratives of life in the agricultural south by depicting and narrating the life of an American slave, including enslavement, punishment, escape, and freedom. As such, an examination of the overarching history of the medium that can not only enrich an understanding of American art history, but also the study of specific subjects and their relative popularity and

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[7] During the Civil War Banvard updated his scenes along the banks of the Mississippi River to show skirmishes between Union and Confederate troops; John Francis McDermott, "Banvard's Mississippi Panorama Pamphlets," *Bibliographical Society of American Papers* 43 (1949): 57-58.

[8] Earlier studies include: Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), John Michael Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), and Angela Mack et al., *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

[9] Dissent over the future of American slavery was wildly variant even across the northern United States, particularly between the abolitionist centers of New England and the economically dependent institutions in New York City. As such, even though the artists and proprietors of the moving panoramas that dealt with slavery were largely from northern states, the productions struggled to project a unified message to northern audiences.

criticism. Rather than a survey of the history of the moving panorama, including its creators and audiences, this dissertation uses the medium as a lens with which to explore profound changes in American art and visual culture, both as exhibited in popular, commercial venues as well as in the academy and museum.

It is difficult to estimate how many moving panoramas existed in the United States between 1845 and 1870, but there were certainly somewhere between 500 and 1,000. The poor survival rate of these objects was due both to the low quality of materials often used to make them and the difficulty of caring for the massive canvases after their popularity waned. Additionally, many of the panoramas were part of the trans-Atlantic trade in which European panoramas received a second run in the United States, and then returned after their tour. Multiple works of the Mississippi River appeared in the wake of Banvard's blockbuster *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers*. Additionally, travel-oriented panoramas took viewers on exotic trips to the American West, the Arctic Circle, Peru, and the Middle East, among other locales. Further, two of the most popular panoramas were adaptations of religious themed texts, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.[10]

Despite the rarity of its inclusion in mainstream American art historical texts, the moving panorama was not a newly discovered historical fact. As early as 1948,

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[10] The most comprehensive survey of moving panoramas in the United States can be found in Kevin Avery, "The Panorama and Its Manifestation in American Landscape Painting, 1795-1870;" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1995); additionally, more in depth studies appear in scholarship such as: John Francis McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Angela Miller, "'The Soil of an Unknown America': New World Lost Empires and the Debate over Cultural Origin," *American Art* 8, no. 3 (Summer-Autumn 1994): 9-27; Russell A. Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-century American Art and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): 53-72; The panorama of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* survives and is preserved in the Dyer Library in Saco, Maine: Kevin J. Avery and Tom Hardiman, *The Grand Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress* (Montclair, NJ: Montclair Art Museum, 1999).

Wolfgang Born's seminal book, *American Landscape Painting*, suggests popular panoramas and the country's supposedly first national school of art, the Hudson River School, shared a common aesthetic.[11] Beginning the late 1940s, American cultural historians John Francis McDermott and Joseph Arrington have published a series of articles on a gamut of different moving panoramas, from the most popular iterations of the Mississippi through more unique subjects, and including a Mormon temple and the California Gold Rush.[12] While each of the articles and the several book length publications on moving panoramas remain invaluable resources for the primary documentation of these fugitive and scantly recorded entertainments, they stop short of offering interpretations on the phenomenon's relationship to developments in American cultural history, let alone art history specifically. Indeed the medium's notable absence from histories of American art furthers a false narrative of divide between the popular entertainment and refined artistic production such as oil painting. Indeed, consideration of the medium in conjunction with larger and highly similar cultural developments in art, theater, and literature is rarely and cursorily examined.[13]

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[11] This is further examined in Alan Wallach, "Some Further Thoughts on the Panoramic Mode in Hudson River School Landscape Painting," *Within the Landscape: Essays on Nineteenth Century American Art and Culture,* Phillip Earenfight and Nancy Siegel, eds. (Carlisle, PA: Trout Gallery at Dickinson College, 2006): 99.

[12] Among these many important articles: Joseph Earl Arrington, "The Story of Stockwell's Panorama," *Minnesota History* 33, no. 7 (Autumn 1953): 284-290; Joseph Earl Arrington, "Panorama Paintings in the 1840s of the Mormon Temple in Nauvoo," *Brigham Young University Studies* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 193-211; John Francis McDermott, "Gold Rush Movies," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (March 1954): 29-38; The culmination of the much of the early work on the Mississippi panoramas was published in the still highly useful, McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi*; A later publication on Henry Lewis' panorama is invaluable for its illustration of the German lithographs made after his work: William J. Petersen, *Mississippi River Panorama: The Henry Lewis Great National Work* (Iowa City: Clio Press, 1979).

[13] A recent and ambitious exception to this is Erkki Huhtamo's *Illusions in Motion*, which attempts to understand the advent and influence of moving panoramas in a new adjacent scholarly field of "media archaeology." While Huhtamo's text serves admirably as an update of documentation of moving panoramas, its interpretation is teleologically based on the later advent of lantern shows, film, computers, and the internet; Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion*.

In the course of the following chapters, the moving panorama is understood as a preexisting form of entertainment that became popular at a moment when the subject it most readily lent itself to, a Mississippi River voyage, was a widespread form of domestic tourism, relevant to expressions of social strife. The form itself arose from theatrical productions but shared many modes of exhibition, including contemporary art displays and the manners in which one was expected to experience them. Leading artists including Frederic Church, Jasper Cropsey, Daniel Huntington, and likely Robert Seldon Duncanson, were not only influenced by the popularity of the panoramas' subject matter and manners of exhibition, but also directly participated in the design of moving panoramas. In the antebellum era moving panoramas were never understood as a form of entertainment distinct from 'high art' production, and as such, this dissertation disposes an inaccurate anachronistic divide between high and low art, in order to examine the period in a more holistic manner. How Americans enjoyed and engaged with art and entertainment changed vastly over the course of this study. From the great, urban large-scale exhibitions of the 1840s, which fluidly mixed art and entertainment, through the sacralization of art in the nation's first generation of permanent art museums in the 1870s, Americans of this era experienced a dramatic shift in how art was exhibited and consumed.

In Chapter One, the rise and triumph of the moving panorama between 1846 and 1860 is examined within the context of its exhibition in America's urban centers. One of the central conceits of this study is that the exhibition of panoramas and art took place in large American cities because these were the primary settings for these popular

spectacles. This chapter establishes "spectacle" an important term for this study.[14] This dissertation defines the term spectacle to describe the exhibition of art or entertainment in which the viewer experiences the artwork as part of his or her own critical engagement. Critical to this chapter is an examination of the reception of similarly themed works, including Frederic Church's romantic landscape *Heart of the Andes* (1859) and ways in which the moving panoramas also offered imaginary journeys to exotic locales. The chapter also builds upon important American art scholarship, particularly that of Michael Leja who examines the popularity of deceptive exhibitions and art of the nineteenth century.[15] This experiential mode of exhibition rejects an audience's preexisting possession of taste or culture that supposedly was available only to those of certain classes. The reevaluation of panorama and easel painting exhibitions in the antebellum period along with an understanding of the audience's requested engagement with the art reveals the participatory nature of the experience. While the similarities in the presentation of the so-called Great Picture exhibitions (such as those mounted by Church and his contemporaries) and panoramas have been well discussed in earlier literature, this chapter posits that it was the audience's critical evaluation of the art or performance enlivened the subject matter.

While the first chapter establishes the environment in which the moving panorama arose and was understood, the second and third chapters deal specifically with its subjects and performances. John Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River* not only created great demand for more moving panoramas, but also inspired many

[14] While there is vast and important scholarship, most notably that of Guy Debord, which uses the term in a very specific manner in relation to the consumption of illusory mass media within capitalist society; Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).
[15] Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

imitative panoramas that took a southward journey along the Mississippi River as its subject matter. No other subject in the near twenty years of the medium's popularity was as often repeated as a voyage down the Mississippi River. From the untamed wilderness of the Upper Mississippi through the great commercial gateway of New Orleans, the narrative and performance of these panoramas reinforced the triumph of the American commercial empire. The nation's painters had long been fascinated with the frontiers of the United States, depicting the fertile, purportedly virgin territories of the expanding nation, and both panoramas and easel paintings were explicit demonstrations of the impermanence of the natural landscape and its native people. The reception of these panoramas also reveal what tensions were inherent in their performance, but not revealed in the painted panorama itself or the accompanying descriptive texts. Contemporary remarks reveal the conscious exclusion of representations of slavery. While the institution's western expansion in the era was increasing sectional divide, these highly popular panoramas largely avoided the contentious issue.

It was precisely in response to this omission that three anti-slavery panoramas were created and toured in the early 1850s. Chapter Three examines two different moving panorama paintings toured by former slaves, William Wells Brown and Henry "Box" Brown, as well as a third toured by a freeborn African American photographer James Presley Ball. These three moving panoramas are not only explicit rejoinders to the vastly more popular Mississippi River panoramas toured by white men, but also the works reversed the entertainment's purported viewer. Notably, they replace the viewpoint of a white pleasure cruiser with that of an enslaved person sold into slavery in the south who then escapes north. These panoramas relied on an audience's familiarity with the standard

narratives of the popular Mississippi River panoramas in order to create a subversive narrative.

The final chapter examines the fracture in American art and entertainment, during and immediately after the American Civil War. As other cultural historians have examined at length, it is in this era that there is a demonstrable separation between what could be understood as high and low art forms.[16] While high art forms found themselves enshrined in hallowed halls of the museum and more exclusive theatrical performances, the participatory elements of the spectacle, characterized as bawd, moved away from public life into the domestic sphere. These perceptual and physical movements also assisted ongoing efforts in the 1860s to further restrict the movement of lower class people in urban environments. Though moving panoramas experienced a precipitous decline in popularity during the Civil War, entertainments meant for the home, specifically the newly significant space of the Victorian parlor, were in great demand. Early parlor entertainments, including tableaux vivants, theatrical productions, and even small-scale recreations of the moving panorama mean for the home, adapted the modes of spectacular performance that belonged to the public entertainment of the previous decade. The arrival of parlor entertainments in the manner of earlier large-scale public spectacles, now packaged as a small private performances, signals the greater cultural shift that removed art and entertainment from a democratic sphere of the commercial center, to exclusive institutions that limited access to certain audiences.

These four examinations of American art, popular culture, and their fluid intersections demonstrate the importance of this unique medium to understanding the

[16] This is examined throughout Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

very experience of antebellum exhibitions and entertainment. Moving panoramas were not merely a footnote in the nation's cultural history, but an unprecedentedly popular form of urban entertainment that reveal as much about what subjects drew the attention of contemporary Americans as how they consumed them. Americans' interests became increasingly far-flung and seemingly global, their social and political relevance remained decidedly close to home. The Mississippi River and New York City's great commercial thoroughfare, Broadway, were linked conceptually in the manner in which the consumption of both the river's commercial goods and the avenue's entertainment could unite or divide its citizens. This dissertation reveals not only how these spectacles compelled antebellum urban audiences to interrogate the art on exhibition, but also they specifically recalled national social concerns. It reveals both the importance of this lost medium to antebellum artists and urban audiences as well as how moving panoramas were marshaled for reform.

CHAPTER I:
Spectacular Amusement and Art in the City

In the late fall of 1848, attendance swelled at the American Art-Union's New York gallery in anticipation of the organization's annual lottery of paintings. The year proved to be the organization's most successful by far in part because of the recent death of Thomas Cole in February and the acquisition of his four-painting series *Voyage of Life*. The four works were set to be raffled off to any member of the organization who paid the five-dollar annual dues. These well-known paintings created a swell of attendance to the free gallery. Additionally, this was the first year in the Art-Union's newly constructed galleries at 497 Broadway in the heart of New York City's burgeoning commercial district (figure 1-1). The four-story building opened the previous year in 1847 to provide offices for the organization's members as well as studios and a large picture gallery that stretched 115 feet through the rear of the lot to Mercer Street.[1] Adorned with new skylights and gas lighting, the long gallery was accented with fashionable furniture that created a parlor-like atmosphere for its guests (figure 1-2).[2]

Each day and evening, all strata of New York society made an appearance at the gallery, "from the millionaire of the 5th Avenue, to the B'hoy of the 3[r]d, from the disdainful beauty of Fourteenth Street…to the belle of the Bowery." In the parlance of 1848, the year when John Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River* attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors to New York City, an author described the crowds at the Art-Union's gallery as a "shifting panorama of dress, action, expression,

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[1] Charles E. Baker, "The American Art Union," *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1953): 208.

[2] "The Fine Arts: The Art Union and Its Friends," *The Literary World* 3, no. 95 (Nov 25, 1848): 852-53; the creation of a parlor atmosphere in commercial spaces, including galleries, photography studios, and steamboats is discussed in: Katherine C. Grier, *Culture & Comfort: People, Parlors, and Upholstery, 1850-1930* (Rochester: The Strong Museum, 1988): 29-58.

and character." Indeed the position of the American Art-Union building, on the west side of Broadway between Broome and Spring Streets, placed it in the city's most active commercial and entertainment district that stretched from the recently reconstructed Trinity Church, at Wall Street to the newly built Grace Church at Tenth Street, both of which were consecrated in 1846.

Similar to the description of the American Art-Union gallery, a cartoon from the *New York Illustrated News*, "A Photograph of Broadway," depicts the vast variety of types that are visible on the vast throughway. Aligned in four strips, the cartoon shows the variety of passersby that could be seen on any given day. The illustration is arranged like earlier panoramas that appeared in the popular press, including "Panoramic Views" of Washington and Tremont Streets in Boston, and Broadway in New York (figures 1-3, 1-4, 1-5).[3] The idea of the spectacle of the crowd is again referenced in the first section of the "Photograph," when "At 7 A.M.—Laborers, Soap Boys, and Factory Girls Begin the Moving Panorama of the Day."[4] Fashion, commerce, art, and entertainment all met in the busy corridor of New York City. The theme of people, clothes, and other material goods as a matter of spectacle mimicked the store windows, theaters, and other diversions they passed.

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[3] "Grand Panoramic View of the West Side of Washington Street, Boston, Mass, Commencing at the Commencing at the Corner of Court Street, and Extending to No. 295, above Winter Street," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 4, no. 20 (May 14, 1853): 312-13; "Grand Panoramic View of the East Side of Washington Street, Boston, Mass, Commencing at the Corner of State Street, and Extending to No. 206," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 4, no. 21 (May 21, 1853): 328-29; "Grand Panoramic View of Tremont Street, Boston, East and West Sides, from Court Street to the Common," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 5, no. 5(July 30, 1853): 72-73;"A Panoramic View of Broadway, New York City, Commencing at the Astor House," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 6, no. 11 (March 8, 1854): 168-69.

[4] "A Photograph of Broadway," *New-York Illustrated News* (January 21, 1860): 148, reproduced in Mona Domosh, "Those 'Gorgeous Incongruities': Polite Politics and Public Space on the Streets of Nineteenth-Century New York City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 2 (June, 1998): 217.

Broadway was widely recognized as the city's main corridor of commerce, entertainment, and place for civic demonstration. Grand hotels like the Astor House, monuments to consumerism like A.T. Stewart's Marble Palace and his second department store built in 1862 at Tenth Street next to Grace Church were symbols of the city's prosperity at midcentury. They not only sheltered and clothed the city's increasingly affluent population but they were also public demonstrations of the city's vitality. Similarly, institutions of amusement, entertainment and art crowded Broadway. Amid the hotels, stores, theaters, and other galleries the Art-Union drew in crowds from "the drifting current of Broadway" because unlike other exhibitions it was completely free. It had removed "that ancient landmark of '25 cents admission' which had existed so long, a perpetual barrier between spectacles and spectators." As a welcome addition to the cityscape of Broadway at midcentury, the Art-Union hoped to foster the public's interest in American art by exhibiting its most recent purchases as well as special exhibitions throughout the year. As one of the most popular attractions in the city as well as the largest distributor of engravings made after paintings, the American Art-Union was a defining populist institution of midcentury New York.[5]

Writing in November of 1848, a correspondent for the *Knickerbocker Magazine* wrote, "the Gallery is no longer a superfluity; it has become a necessity. It is party of the public property as much as the fountains, the parks, or the City-Hall." Though the author was specifically commentating on the gallery's policy of free admission that led to a similar display of the spectra of New York life described in the *Literary World*. It is also a bold indication of the role that cultural institutions played in antebellum civic life.

[5] "The Fine Arts: The Art Union and Its Friends," *The Literary World* 3, no. 95 (Nov 25, 1848): 852-53; Expanded histories of the American Art-Union can be found in Baker, "The American Art-Union," 95-240.

Spectacular amusement was not only light entertainment but was integral to the fabric of nineteenth-century civic celebrations. In his later years the panorama painter and museum owner John Banvard remembered his youth in New York City:

> I remember in the celebrations of the Erie Canal opening [in 1825] … the semi-centennial and the welcoming to Lafayette [in 1824] and other old times celebrations that beautiful paintings and transparencies formed one of the most notable features on these occasions. As a youth I took much enjoyment in going round the city and looking at those, in some instances, really capital works of art, for I remember some of them were painted by Vanderlyn, whose works decorate the Capitol in Washington, and Quidor, whose masterpieces hang in many of the parlors of our wealthy citizens.[6]

Banvard's reminisces were prompted by the celebrations that feted the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in May of 1883 and accompanied by a general disappointment in the availability and quality of art as public spectacle. Art not only entered into the daily lives of those who called upon a gallery or studio on Broadway but also all those who attended massive public celebrations.

In the era preceding the Civil War, art and entertainment increasingly relied on lavish spectacle as a means not only to attract patronage, but also to engage pertinent public social and political concerns. Public art and entertainment not only allowed for local cohesion around certain ideas, but also demonstrated deep fissures within contemporary society. While twenty-first century narratives of American art history highlight canonical works like Frederic Church's *Heart of the Andes* (1859) or Albert Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* (1863) as touchstones of Hudson River School painting, nineteenth-century audiences held less rigorous distinctions between these painted spectacles and other entertainments (figures 1-6,1-7). Paintings by Church,

[6] Undated Clipping, John Banvard "The Bridge and the Muses, An Old Painter's Complaint—Memories of the Past," John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.

Bierstadt, and their contemporaries participated in a realm of competing and complimentary public amusements that included moving panoramas, theatrical productions, minstrel shows, and the curiosities to be found at Barnumesque museums. While moving panorama exhibitions were just one of many amusements available to the antebellum urban American, they are a linchpin in a study of art and spectacle in this era because they were only popular for less than twenty years and were a bridge of art and entertainment. They came to prominence in 1847 alongside the populist institutions like the American Art-Union, and they largely disappeared in urban centers by the end of the Civil War.[7] Critical to each of these institutions and artists was the importance of spectacle. As a particular mode of exhibition in this era, its display, marketing, and intended narrative create a directed, normative mode of interaction between the viewer and object. In cities like New York the urban setting enhanced and reflected the spectacle of its arts and entertainments.

Urban centers not only became desired locations for the display of art, but also directly affected the reception of such works. American artists had long been exhibiting their paintings and sculptures in the most highly trafficked and public venues. Yet it is in this era that popular entertainment and high art pretensions are the most similar in subject matter, presentation, and shared didactic or moralizing goals because of a disintegration of academic hierarchies of the earlier generation and an ineffectiveness of national art

[7] In 1847 the Art-Union President Prosper M. Wetmore issued a complete rebuke against the idea that "Republican Institutions are unfavorable to the cultivation of the Arts of design; that the influences of a free public opinion must of necessity be indicated in something 'savage and wild,' rather than in graceful form and gentle outlines;" an idea that would largely be dormant by the end of the Civil War; "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting," *Transactions of the American Art-Union* (1847): 14.

institutions like the National Academy.[8] The nation's most prolific artists in the generation following the sudden death of Thomas Cole in 1848 included his student Frederic Church, the German-American painters Emanuel Leutze and Albert Bierstadt, and the expatriate sculptor Hiram Powers. Each of these artists achieved fame in their own time because their works engaged with popular social and political discourse and did so in a manner that relied on spectacular exhibition. They each engaged with popular demands. Neither the popular panorama nor easel painting imitated the other in its adaptation of subject matter, but both were born of the same demand for contemporary concerns depicted in popular exhibition. Topics that achieved great popularity in this era—the Mississippi and Western expansion, Arctic exploration, and the Holy Land—were not only topical but engaged viewers in a specific dynamic of exhibition that allowed them to be active participants.

Though there may have been greater fluidity between exhibitions of high art and popular culture than is generally realized in much of the art historical scholarship of the past fifty years, the tension was acknowledged during the period. Many influential art collectors and critics saw the tension between the two and identified it as the element which most stunted the growth of American art as a distinctive national school. Some critics attacked those artists who relied on public spectacle. James Jackson Jarves was one of several advocates to encourage artists to turn away from a reliance on associations with spectacles and instead to strive for an ideal in painting, something wholly apart from the quotidian associations of popular amusement. For many critics in this era, it was the open discourse between high art ideals and popular art modes that compromised much of

[8] Alan Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradictions: Essays on the Art Museums in the United States* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998): 18.

American art. These critics preferred the French Barbizon-inspired works of painters like George Inness. The criticism of antebellum landscape painting imbedded in the writings of period critics reveals that many of the now canonical works of American art like Church's *Heart of the Andes* were so successful because of their reliance on a mode of exhibition already established by spectacular entertainments. The concurrent disappearance of moving panorama exhibitions in the postwar period and the dynamic shift away from the Great Picture exhibitions championed by Church in the 1850s and 60s marks a definitive change in the mode of interaction between public art and audience.

While it cannot be applied to neither the whole of American art production at midcentury nor the whole of art exhibited in the nation's urban centers, 'spectacle' remains an important and undervalued facet of the exhibition of art and entertainment in this period. The term is most easily applied to those works of American art that continued the tradition of Great Picture exhibition, the display of a single monumental easel painting in a paid exhibition, with its reliance on dramatic settings, monumental appearances, and grand civic or moral motives. The presentation of spectacular American art differed little in its appearance than some of the extravagant displays of showmen like P.T. Barnum or traveling exhibitors of moving panorama paintings. Indeed, similar modes of exhibition allowed for an audience that was comfortable and familiar with the object on display. As Joy Kasson has previously discussed, those that attended exhibitions of ideal sculpture received pamphlets that suggested a normative interpretation of the objects of view. In addition to pamphlets, marketing and notices in the press often advised "how an audience *should* behave rather than telling us how

spectators actually did view art [her emphasis]."[9] These exhibitions were deeply interconnected with their urban neighbors. A visitor to the see Hiram Power's *Greek Slave*, one of the most successful art exhibitions of the era, was just as likely to visit Barnum's museum and contemplate his humbugs (figure 1-8). Contemporary accounts reveal that antebellum audiences interacted with art and spectacle in a manner that appreciated the guiding of normative texts like pamphlets, but were not defined by them.

The idea of the spectacle was also a holistic idea that applied to much of urban life. Banvard lamented the passing of the great civic spectacle that united local pride and art. Contemporary commentators referred to the spectacle that urban centers offered audiences—from the vast panoply of dress and ethnicities to the increasingly dominant modes of visual and textual advertising in broadsides and newspapers, which proliferated as a common sight within the city. When describing Broadway, literary and art critic H.T. Tuckerman referred to it as "a spectacle … and wonderfully prolific of life-pictures. With a fountain at one end, and a chime of bells at the other, like a German city, the intermediate space is as representative a rendezvous as can be found in the world."[10] Antebellum audiences viewed art, entertainment, and the visual culture of the urban scene as a unified whole. Often adapting and shifting modes of interaction from one to other with little or no distinction between what may now be considered high or low culture.

1847 and 1848 were highly important years in both the history of American easel painting as well as its counterpart in spectacular entertainment. By February of 1847 Frederic Church had moved from his boyhood home in Hartford and took up a studio in

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[9] Joy S. Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives, Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990): 31.

[10] The fountain Tuckerman refers to is the one built in 1842 to celebrate the opening of the Croton Aqueduct, and the church referred to is Grace Church at Broadway and 10th Streets; Henry Tuckerman, "Through Broadway," *Atlantic Monthly* 18 (December 1866): 718.

the new studios of the American Art-Union building on Broadway. A year later his mentor Thomas Cole died and the American art world immediately began to memorialize its late leader. The Art-Union's exhibition of Cole's art and the distribution of an engraving his *Voyage of Life-Youth* were widely considered by critics to be huge successes. Unlike the reticent Cole who painted most of his works in his Catskill studio, Church seemed to recognize the importance of establishing his career in New York City. There was unquestionably no better place for Church to be in touch with the latest in American art than by taking a studio in the epicenter of the American art world, the Art-Union's building.

Just before Christmas 1846 John Banvard displayed his panorama at Boston's Amory Hall in the city's center of commercial activity along Washington Street. When the panorama moved to New York in late 1847 he exhibited in a building beside Niblo's Garden's that was temporarily dubbed 'Panorama Hall,' less than two blocks north of the Art-Union building.[11] The situation of Banvard's panorama in the commercial and amusement heart of the city is not surprising. The more centrally located to other business and entertainments the higher the attendance to the exhibition. Yet, the exhibition of the panorama and the subsequent one-off exhibitions of painting and sculpture demonstrate a keen interest in the idea of spectacular entertainment.

From Barnum's American Museum at Ann Street and the south end of City Hall Park stretching increasing northward an antebellum resident of, or visitor to, New York City could find a vast array of such entertainments. In 1841 P.T. Barnum bought Scudder's American Museum from the recently deceased museum owner's creditors. The

[11] "The Wonder of the World," *Home Journal* 51, no. 107 (December 18, 1847): 107.

museum had originally been situated in City Hall Park next door to John Vanderlyn's Rotunda, which continued to exhibit panoramas and the artist's collection of art until 1829 (figure 1-9).[12] The appearance of the both privately-owned Rotunda and Museum on the city-owned square was not an uncommon occurrence in American cities in the early part of the century. Charles Willson Peale's museum, which operated in the rear of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, may be the most famous example of a similar arrangement. James Warrell opened his Virginia Museum on Capitol Square in Richmond in 1817.[13] The following year Rembrandt Peale opened his Baltimore Museum on Holiday Street, and when the museum closed in 1829 the city purchased the building and used it as its first City Hall. The Peale family then reopened the museum near the Battle Monument on Calvert Street. [14] In Boston, Ethan Allen Greenwood opened his New England Museum in 1818 on Court Street close to Old City Hall.[15] When Greenwood's museum was bought by Moses Kimball, he would establish the Boston Museum on Tremont Street abutting the rear of Old City Hall. Early American museums not only attempted to establish a narrative of national identity but also one that was closely tied to local civic institutions. While civic patronage would eventually give out to the organization of local museums by private groups, these examples were a precedent for a close link between art, entertainment and local identity.[16]

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[12] Kevin J. Avery and Peter L. Fodera, *John Vanderlyn's Panoramic View of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988): 29.
[13] James Warrell, *Sir, the Building for the Virginia Museum in this City is Now Nearly Completed* (Richmond: s.n., 1817):1-4.
[14] For a history of the Peale Museum in Baltimore see: Charles Sellars, *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: Norton, 1980): 222-23, 304.
[15] Georgia Brady Barnhill, "'Extracts from the Journal of Ethan A. Greenwood': Portrait Painter and Museum Proprietor," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 103 (April/October 1993): 96, 118.
[16] Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow*, 146-49.

By the late 1840s, Barnum's American Museum was recognized as one of the city's and the nation's, most prominent and most provocative institution of public amusement. In his 1852 reminisce of the British Museum in London, Henry Tappan compares it with Barnum's, citing the latter as only "a place for some stuffed birds and animals, for the exhibition of monsters, and for vulgar dramatic performances—a place of mere popular amusement."[17] While not all commentators of Barnum's Museum had such a negative viewpoint of the ostentatious collection of both authentic and fabricated objects and animals, it seemed precisely Barnum's point to provoke such comments. As has been previously discussed by both Neil Harris and Michael Leja, the humbug, or the intentional deception made to engage the active judgment of the viewer was critical to his own aesthetic. Most famously Barnum's American museum once exhibited the Feejee Mermaid, a fabricated skeletal remain of a mermaid caught near the Fiji islands (figure 1-10). Barnum leased the object from his Boston counterpart Moses Kimball who had been previously exhibiting it at the Boston Museum. Though the Feejee Mermaid was ultimately disavowed by Barnum after a public battle of its discourse, the idea of deception, investigation, and humbug were essential to his operation and many more such exhibits continued to appear at his museum.[18]

Of course, Barnum's museum was not the only locale in New York where audiences were actively encouraged to participate. Famously, nineteenth-century theater was a highly contested arena where performances at lower class theaters were often satirized for their raucous audiences. Perhaps the most important and famous example of

[17] Henry Tappan, *A Step from the New World to the Old, and Back Again* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1852): 100.
[18] Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973): 79-83; Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 46-58, 130-32.

the role of public spectacle that influenced civic life was the Astor Place Riot that occurred on May 10, 1849. A watershed moment in the pronounced divisions between New York's working and upper classes, the Riot arose from a dispute between two conflicting supporters of Shakespearean actors. Lower class and largely nativist supporters of the American actor Edwin Forrest were largely associated with the Bowery Theater, which stood on the Bowery below Canal Street.[19]

The association of the Bowery Theater with a more working class audience than other prominent New York theaters dated as far back as 1828 when the Bowery's managers commissioned William Dunlap to produce his farce and moving panorama *A Trip to Niagara.* The managers intended the commission to rival the more upper class production of *Paris and London or, a Trip to Both Cities* that was at the Park and included a similar mid-play moving panorama entitled, "Moving Panoramic View from Calais to Dover."[20] In tune with the Bowery's audience, Dunlap's farce included a John Bull character to satirize English travelers and included specific references to the recently published James Kirke Paulding novel, *John Bull in America, or the New Munchausen*.[21]

The opening of the Astor Place Opera House in 1847 on Broadway and Ninth Streets quickly made that locale the most prestigious in the city. The new Opera House coincided with the openings of Trinity Church, Grace Church, and the American Art-Union Building the same year, and just preceded the opening of A.T. Stewart's Marble Palace the following year in a period of rapid improvement along Broadway between

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[19] An expanded history of the Riot is detailed in: Nigel Cliff, *The Shakespeare Riots: Revenge, Drama, and Death in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Random House, 2007).
[20] Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978): 204.
[21] William Dunlap, *A Trip to Niagara; or, Travelers in America, A Farce, in Three Acts* (New York: E.B. Clayton, 1830).

Wall and Tenth Streets.[22] These projects were a strong assertion of this thoroughfare as the public center of the city. While civic spaces like City Hall Park were the cultural centers of American cities earlier in the century, commercial and entertainment districts became arenas for contests over cultural authority.[23]

When the working class supporters of Edwin Forrest completely derailed William Charles Macready's performance of *Macbeth* at the Astor Place Opera House through a series of loud objections and projectile fruits and vegetables, they participated in a familiar act of spectacular entertainment to address social tensions. As Lawrence Levine has noted the Astor Place Riots were "an indication and a catalyst for the cultural changes that came to characterize the United States at the end of the century."[24] Shakespeare, whose plays in the first half of the century were embraced in all Americans theaters regardless of class, became sacralized (to use Levine's term). In that manner, the Astor Place Riots represent a violent fissure in American urban culture that occurred roughly between 1845 and 1870—the development of highly prescribed venues and forms of cultural entertainment that was associated with class.

While prominent organizations like the American Art-Union that arose in the early 1840s sought explicitly to bring the highest productions of American art to the masses, they were defunct by the middle of the 1850s. By 1870 urban Americans formed cultural organizations that explicitly rendered the divide between high and low culture

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[22] Though the AA-U gallery did not open until 1848, the offices and studios at the front of the building were open in 1847 as Frederic Church is recorded as having taken a studio there early that year; Gerald L. Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church, Catalogue Raisonné of Works of Art at Olana State Historic Site*, Vol I: Text (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 106.

[23] Dell Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis: Civilization and Urbanity in Antebellum New York," in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-61*, eds. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 36-38.

[24] Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow,* 68.

into fledging art institutions. That year saw the establishment of both the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, as well as the approval of the City of Philadelphia to organize the Centennial Exposition of 1876, which resulted in the founding of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In the antebellum period, urban Americans largely patronized art exhibitions and amusements with little discretion as to its later designation as high or low culture. Yet a postwar economic boom in Northern cities spurred these civic projects, following a antebellum trend away from the democratic consumption of art, now enshrining cultural productions in restricted spaces that limited who could have access to it.[25]

As artists with fine art pretensions and entertainers competed in the same market whose base principal was spectacular entertainment, audiences often drew comparisons between the two and interacted with them in a shared mode. In the years preceding the Civil War, perhaps no exhibition of American painting was as explicit in its exhibition of art as spectacle as Frederic Church's 1859 display of *Heart of the Andes*. The painting was immediately recognized by many of its contemporaries as a hybridization of art and entertainment in a period when notable critics like James Jackson Jarves lamented about the denigration of high art in such a manner.

Twentieth-century art historians immediately recognized not only the massive popularity of the painting in the previous century, but also its status as the artist's masterpiece. *Heart of the Andes* is a touchstone in any study of nineteenth-century American painting imbued with the naturalist teachings of the late Alexander von Humboldt, oblique religious themes, and the widespread travel that defined the painter's

[25] Upton, "Inventing the Modern Metropolis," 26.

career.[26] Art historian Wolfgang Born included Church's ostentatious exhibitions in his "The Panoramic Style" chapter of his 1948 publication of *American Landscape Painting*, yet such discussions were largely quieted for the remainder of the century.[27] Kevin Avery addressed the adaptation of popular techniques of exhibition and marketing and its deep debt to exhibition of panorama painting, yet further discussion of American painting as both, art and entertainment, picture and spectacle has been largely absent.[28] An examination of *Heart of the Andes* and the exhibition of spectacular art in general in the era, reveals a shared mode of exhibition with popular entertainment as well a shared mode of the audience's interaction with the works on the part of the audience. This study will reveal that audience's expectations, movements, and manner of viewing the art was equally important to the creation of a successful exhibition.

Twice in 1859, once in the spring and once in the fall, Frederic Church exhibited *Heart of the Andes* in single-painting exhibitions at the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York. The most ambitious work of Church's career, the painting was the culmination of a multi-year effort in which the artist travelled through Ecuador and then completed the large oil painting in his New York studio based on a series of sketches made during the trip. Building upon the acclaim of his 1857 exhibition of *Niagara*, *Heart of the Andes* was one of the most successful art exhibitions of the era, and in the course of its spring exhibitions, upwards of 12,000 people visited the 1,200-foot gallery. Church hired an experienced press agent, John McClure, to manage the publicity and advertising

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[26] Katherine Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989): 67-89.
[27] Wolfgang Born, *American Landscape Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948): 109-13.
[28] Kevin Avery, "The Heart of the Andes Exhibited: Frederic E. Church's Window on the Equatorial World," *American Art Journal* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 52-72; and Kevin Avery, *Church's Great Picture, The Heart of the Andes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993).

for the show. *Heart of the Andes* was not Church's only Great Picture exhibition. He also showed *Niagara* in 1857 and *Icebergs* in 1861 among others. Additionally, other contemporary works were exhibited in this style, including Emanuel Leutze's 1851 *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, and Albert Bierstadt's 1863 *Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, among many others.[29]

The tradition of the Great Picture exhibition dates back to the eighteenth-century precedents of John Singleton Copley and Benjamin West in England. The Great Picture arose in nineteenth-century England alongside an interest in spectacular entertainments like Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg's eidophusikon, invented in 1781, and Robert Barker's panorama, which appeared in 1789 (figures 1-11, 1-12). Academic painters, including Sir Joshua Reynolds and Jacques Louis David, supported both types of visual entertainment.[30] These popular entertainments have a shared history with the Great Pictures in the period of their popularity and the how the paintings were physically presented to audiences.

The first such Great Picture occurred in 1781 when Copley chose to forgo the Royal Academy's annual exhibition and display *The Death of the Earl of Chatham* in a private show (figure 1-13). Copley padded the receipts for admission to his exhibitions with subscriptions to engravings after his works, an addition that also would appear in later exhibitions. Three years later, Copley followed this trend with the exhibition of *The Death of Major Pierson* in a private room in Haymarket (figure 1-14). For further embellishment of the work, the monumental painting was surrounded by an elaborate

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[29] Avery, "The Heart of the Andes Exhibited," 52-55.
[30] Bernard Comment, *The Painted Panorama* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999): 86; Harold E. Dickson, "Artist as Showman," *American Art Journal* 5, no.1 (May, 1973): 4.

frame designed by the Neoclassical architect Robert Adam (figure 1-15). Carved swags, British flags, and cannons surrounded the painting and the whole display was topped with a portrait of Copley himself, executed by Gilbert Stuart.[31]

By 1791 Copley constructed a tent with Oriental design motifs in London's Green Park for his exhibition of the *Siege of Gibraltar* (figure 1-16). Again Copley filled the large room with a single monumental work encased behind an architectonic frame with elaborate drapery. Adam's frame for *The Death of Major Pierson* not only immediately denoted the importance and memorialization of the subject painted by Copley, but it also bore a great resemblance to the frames that later adorned the Great Pictures of Leutze and Church. Additionally, the use of a proscenium was a crucial component in the performance of moving panoramas. The wooden threshold between the space of the audience and the pictorial space would later become crucial to the audiences' interaction with the paintings, and even a great point of contention for mid-nineteenth-century art critics.[32]

Copley's exhibitions captivated London audiences and while the Royal Academy was initially cautious about such brazenly commercial shows, many other artists eventually followed suit. Amid the burgeoning consumer demands for spectacles such as Barker's panoramas as well as Copley's shows, one London commentator wrote in 1787, "the picture mania rages as strongly as the music mania" and there were at least six exhibitions currently going on in the city.[33] American painter Edward Savage was one of the many who saw Copley's and other exhibitions in England, and upon Savage's return

[31] Emily Neff, *John Singleton Copley in England* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1995): 67-68.
[32] Neff, *John Singleton Copley in England*, 38-43, 66-71.
[33] Uncited quotation in: Dickson, "Artists as Showmen," 4.

to the United States he became the first to replicate the Great Picture exhibition. In 1796 Savage exhibited his *The Washington Family* at his Columbian Gallery in Philadelphia (figure 1-17).[34] Subsequently, artists like John Trumbull, Thomas Sully, Samuel F.B. Morse, and Rembrandt Peale and others would each produce similar exhibitions. By the time Church hired John McClure to manage the affairs of the tour of *Heart of the Andes*, the Great Picture exhibition was already a common sight among the variety of urban spectacles.[35]

Set along the back wall of a two-story gallery with a coved, glass ceiling, *Heart of the Andes* sat in an elaborately carved black walnut frame. Though no known views of the original exhibition exist, an 1864 photograph of the painting installed at the Metropolitan Sanitary Fair shows Church's large wooden frame, ensconced in a dark fabric (figure 1-18). Unlike this 1864 arrangement, in which *Heart of the Andes* appears alongside other works of art, in its 1859 and subsequent Great Picture exhibitions is would have been shown only with the elaborate frame and drapery. This display helped to absorb light and create a strong contrast with the luminous tones of the Andean scenery. It is likely that Church obscured the natural light sources, so that the viewer could not see the glass ceiling, but only the light reflected off the canvas. This was a common practice in the presentation of panoramas, dioramas, and other spectacular displays since the eighteenth century. It also had been commonly used to control lighting in picture galleries, as can be seen in John Pasmore's painting of the Benjamin West

[34] Also at his museum was a "Panorama" that was actually a type of eidophusikon with moving ships and people depicting a harbor scene in an unknown city, see: John Cogdell Diaries, 1787-1847, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts & Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library, Delaware; Savage's collection would later be sold the Ethan Allan Greenwood and become a centerpiece for his New England Museum in Boston, and then when it was purchased by Moses Kimball, at the Boston Museum on Tremont Street; Barnhill, "Extracts from the Journal of Ethan A. Greenwood," 96, 118.
[35] Dickson, "Artists as Showman," 4-17.

gallery (figure 1-19).[36] This would have been familiar to Church from a variety of exhibitions previously on view in New York.[37]

While there is no record of Church doing so in 1859, later notices of *Heart of the Andes* comment on the fact that there were South American palms placed around the perimeter of the painting, an addition that both helped to foster a tropical atmosphere and reinforce the authenticity of the painter's travels and depiction. Some advertisements advised viewers in advance to bring opera glasses to the exhibition as the extent of Church's details was so copious that one could spend hours perusing the painting, visually travelling from vignette to vignette within the work. The glasses also served a practical purpose as they assisted those who had to fight the crowds for a decent view, which during peak attendance took a matter of hours to work one's way to the front of the crowd. Church conceived of *Heart of the Andes* as an ideal landscape, and much of its critical response recognized that.[38] Yet, the exhibition of the painting also operated in a real world of competing and complimentary urban amusements. The presentation of *Heart of the Andes* necessitates an acknowledgement with similar, spectacular exhibitions.[39]

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[36] Alice Barnaby, "Light Touches: Cultural Practices of Illumination, London 1780-1840," Ph.D. Diss. (University of Exeter, 2007): 241-42.
[37] Avery, "*The Heart of the Andes* Exhibited," 61-67.
[38] For other extensive discussions of the painting see: Avery, *Church's Great Picture*; John K. Howat, *Frederic Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture* 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Katherine Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989); Rebecca Bedell, *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology and American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Angela Miller, *Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c.1830-1865* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).
[39] Avery, "*The Heart of the Andes* Exhibited," 52-53.

Heart of the Andes first appeared in New York on April 27, 1859 at a one-night, invitation-only exhibition at Lyric Hall on Broadway, just below Ninth Street. The press lamented that the painting, though magnificently conceived, fell prey to "torture by gaslight."[40] Two days later, the painting was moved to the newly constructed Tenth Street Studio Building, where it was that gallery's first exhibition. Church had just become one of the inaugural tenets of the building, leaving his earlier studio in the Art-Union building. The removal of the painting from a presence on Broadway was odd, as almost every exhibition of importance occurred at one of halls or theaters that lined the street. The change of venue obviously seemed unusual to a *New York Times* reviewer, who wrote,

> The objection that [the Studio Building] lies off the regular Broadway route of business and pleasure can hardly apply in such a case as this, for wherever such a picture as the "Heart of the Andes" is to be found, there Broadway, business and pleasure will rapidly follow.[41]

The subtle indication that Broadway, and all the "business and pleasure" it implied, was an important component to the experience of Church's exhibition was a theme that appeared throughout the run of its two New York exhibitions in the spring and fall of 1859.

Heart of the Andes traveled to London in the summer of 1859 and upon its return it again became one of the most well-attended exhibitions in New York. It was heralded by at least one critic as "the inauguration of this new art epoch."[42] That November, an eccentric review entitled "A Visit to the 'Heart of the Andes'" appeared in the New York

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[40] "Mr. Church's New Picture," *The New York Times* (April 28, 1859): 4.
[41] *Ibid*.
[42] "Wonderful Development of American Art—Uprising of Enthusiasm," *New-York Herald* (December 5, 1859) in *The Heart of the Andes Painted by Frederic E. Church. Notices of the Press* (New York: s.n., n.d.): 8.

journal *Spirit of the Times*.[43] While many notices of the painting explicitly concentrated on the quality of the artist's depiction, or Church's fidelity to nature, this anonymous reviewer wrote a biting critique that elaborated on the exhibition's physical and perceptual relationship with other contemporary urban amusements. This particular account of a visit to see Church's painting allows for an examination of the way in which audiences implicitly approached such exhibitions by highlighting, albeit comically, parts of the exhibitions that diverge from a normative experience.

The review commenced with an imaginary description of the author's route along Broadway from City Hall Park to Tenth Street, and then west to the Studio Building. Though unmentioned in the article, at the time the author supposedly visited the exhibition the author likely passed such amusements as Barnum's American Museum, a variety of theatrical productions, minstrel shows, as well as other spectacular productions that would have been similar to Church's own. At Hope Chapel on Broadway, Samuel Waugh's moving panorama *Italia!* was entering its twelfth week of exhibition. The exhibition, accompanied by an informative lecture and music, depicted locales and recent events in Italy, and finished with a scene of immigration at New York City's Castle Garden (figure 1-20). Like many of the exhibitions of the day, Waugh's panorama relied on the theatrical presentation of a visual object, accompanied by texts in the form of pamphlets and advertising broadsides.[44]

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[43] "A Visit to the 'Heart of the Andes,'" *Spirit of the Times: A Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature and the Stage* 29, no. 42 (November 26, 1859): 500.

[44] "Amusements," *New York Times* (November 25, 1859): 4; "Waugh's Italia," Broadside, 33.169.2, Museum of the City of New York; The final scene of Waugh's panorama is extant and is preserved in the Museum of the City of New York as *The Bay and Harbor of New York*, see: Jan Seidler Ramirez, *Painting the Town: Cityscapes of New York: Paintings from the Museum of the City of New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 137-39.

On Astor Place alone, just a block short of Tenth Street, two other paintings were on view in the manner of a Great Picture in the week before the review appeared in *Spirit of the Times*. At Goupil's New Gallery, *Horse Fair* by the French painter Rosa Bonheur was on exhibition (figure 1-21). The painting was owned by a New Jersey businessman who toured the touchstone painting around the country, enriching the painting's reputation and his profits through the sale of tickets and engravings.[45] On the same block was the temporary home of the National Academy of Design, who leased out a room for the exhibition of Theodore Rossiter and Louis Mignot's *Home of Washington* (figure 1-22). *Home of Washington* was conceived as a grand historical scene, and though it was not as successful it had similar ambitions. Mignot had accompanied his good friend Church to Ecuador in 1857 during the time when the artist was made the studies that would eventually become *Heart of the Andes*. Additionally, Rossiter and Mignot, realizing the potential profit and fame that could come from such a timely and grandly conceived painting as *Home of Washington*, also later hired on John McClure to assist with some of the painting's exhibition.[46]

Another of Church's good friends, Erastus Dow Palmer, had a work on exhibit on Broadway. His *White Captive* of 1858-59 appeared in a solo exhibition at William Schaus Gallery, located just below Bleeker Street (figure 1-23). In the middle of the gallery, the *White Captive* stood on a rotating platform, lit by colored gas light that transformed the pristine whiteness of the marble into flesh tones. Palmer's statue followed the precedent

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[45] For a brief history of Bonheur's *Horse Fair* in the United States, see: Francis Ribemont, and Dominique Cante, *Rosa Bonheur, 1822-1899* (Bordeaux: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, 1997): 66-70.
[46] John McClure is listed as the published of a line engraving after *Home of Washington*, see: *Description of the National Picture, The Home of Washington* (New York: s.n., 1862); "Amusements," *New York Times* (November 25, 1859): 4.

set by Hiram Powers' *Greek Slave* in its spectacular display, itself being in the tradition of the Great Picture exhibition. [47]

While the author's trip along Broadway was certainly awash in delectable offerings for spectacular entertainment and commercial goods, he mentions not one of them. He then states that "at the *ultima thule* of business we found Tenth street, in big gilt letters on the wall of Grace Church; 'Brown, sexton and undertaker,' and farther west, at the corner of Fifth Avenue, sure enough and stuck to a tree, corporation property, in big red letters over the gutter, 'The Heart of the Andes (figure 1-24).'" [48] The comparison itself, between the meager broadside advertising Church's painting—tacked to a city-owned tree and hanging over a gutter—and the gilt name advertising the sexton of Grace Church is a subtle and knowing acknowledgement of the role played by advertisement and presentation along Broadway. Isaac H. Brown served as sexton of Grace Church from 1845 through 1880 and was a well-known figure among the Manhattan elites and those who aspired to that position. Brown organized high society's most fashionable weddings, funerals, and social functions. Despite his humble beginnings Brown's name was a synecdoche for upper class activities on the grandest scale. As a direct comparison with the humble broadside, the author alludes to the role printed notices in public spaces echoed the spectacular nature of the objects they signaled. [49]

The author elaborates on the role played by the printed media as he enters the exhibition hall of the Tenth Street Studio Building and examines Church's monumental painting. Inside, he attributed a particular feeling of ,ness which he attributed both to the

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[47] J. Carson Wheeler, *Erastus D. Palmer* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983): 29; "Amusements," *New York Times* (November 25, 1859): 4.
[48] "A Visit to the 'Heart of the Andes,'" *Spirit of the Times* 29 no. 42 (November 26, 1859): 500.
[49] Eric Homberger, *Mrs. Astor's New York: Money and Social Power in a Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002): 116-19.

building's recent construction as well as to the "advertising mania exhibited even in this sanctum." As he entered the gallery he was beset by more printed notices, one for Rosa Bonheur's exhibition at Goupil's New Gallery as well as a solicitation for a subscription to an unrelated English line engraving. After the author deposited his quarter into "the same till wherein thousands dropped before ours," he entered the gallery and stood before *Heart of the Andes*. Unlike the hordes of people, pressing forward to get a better view that was mentioned in earlier notices, the *Spirit of the Times* author describes a sedate crowd of onlookers either silently examining the painting or reading from one of the two descriptive pamphlets that were available for sale in the gallery.[50] In a lighthearted recitation of quotations from newspapers that he supposedly overheard in the gallery, the author alphabetizes a grouping of buzz words: "aereal perspective, beautifully done, chiaroscuro, frame looking like out of a window, harmony, Herring, mezzotint, Moissonnier, landscape, Landseer, power, Powers, Pouissin [*sic*], school, scholar, Salvadore, softness, stillness, and so on." The incoherence of the audience's muffled speech was not only a jab at the affected sophistication of the crowd, but is an acknowledgement that some of the audience's reaction was mediated by carefully crafted notices in local newspapers, journals, and advertisements, some even undoubtedly orchestrated by the agents of the artist.[51]

The "advertising mania" that the author referred to as seeping into the Studio Building like a damp air from the streets was an ever-present sight in the center of New York. An 1863 stereograph published by E. & H.T. Anthony entitled *The Brigade de*

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[50] These two works were: Theodore Winthrop, *Companion to Heart of the Andes* (New York: D. Appleton, 1859) and Louis Legrand Noble *Church's Painting, The Heart of the Andes* (New York: D. Appleton, 1859).

[51] [51] "A Visit to the 'Heart of the Andes,'" *Spirit of the Times*, 500.

Shoe Black shows a group of bootblacks gathered on City Hall Park, near the city's civic and entertainment center (figure 1-25). Dozens of overlapping broadsides promote a diverse range of theatrical productions, minstrel shows, and exhibitions at Barnum's American Museum. The height and haphazard layering of the particularly vibrant advertisements engulf the figures on the street. Similar broadsides were produced by the promoters and artists of panorama paintings as well as Great Picture exhibitions and displayed about town. The cacophony of the printed word that accompanied such popular exhibitions followed the author from the entertainment center of the city, up Broadway, over on Tenth Street, and into the galleries. There, the recitation of the audience seemed to be just as chaotic as the jumbling of broadsides on an antebellum New York City wall. More importantly, the author's keen allusion to the infiltration of this type of marketing into the exhibition gallery reinforces the idea that each of these spectacular, urban exhibitions were related in their shared forms of promotion and display that then informed an audience's appreciation of the objects on display.

The presence of the printed word in relation to spectacular entertainment was such a staple of urban entertainment in the period that even contemporary artists utilized these objects in their own work. Later in the century, the panorama-painter John Banvard would write,

> We live in an era of art, as the really excellent devices in advertising exemplify upon our street fences and billboards. No new building is erected in the city without the fence enclosing it is seized upon by the artistic painter of pictorial advertising.[52]

Indeed visitors to New York City remarked upon the sheer number of surfaces covered in advertisements for not only the merchant's products, but also the entertainments to be

[52] Banvard, "The Bridge and the Muses."

had.[53] In 1862 a Manhattan lithographer picked up on the long iconography of the 'Artist's Dream' in *The Bill-Poster's Dream* a humorous visualization of both the jumbled text of the broadsides as well as the artistic aspirations of the bill-poster (figure 1-26). The napping workman in torn clothing is a mundane repetition of the sleeping artist figure, which had appeared in paintings by Thomas Cole and Emanuel Leutze, *The Architect's Dream* and *The Poet's Dream* respectively (figures 1-27, 1-28). The trope also appeared in an engraving after George Comegy's *The Artist's Dream*, which was distributed widely by the Apollo Association (the original name of the Art-Union) in 1841 (figure 1-29). When such walls of broadsides appear in paintings and prints, the seemingly incoherent text can usually be reassembled by the viewer to reveal a hidden message. In *The Bill-Poster's Dream* the image is captioned with the subtitle, "Cross Readings, To Be Read Downwards." By following the print's instructions, the layered texts reveal humorous non sequiturs such as "People's Candidate for Mayor … The Hippopotamus," and "The American Bible Society will meet at the … Gaieties Concert Saloon."[54]

Such depictions of textual imagery that was such a staple of urban life also appears in the work of contemporary genre painters. In Lilly Martin Spencer's *Young Husband: First Market* a newlywed is returning home with his freshly purchased groceries spilling out of his basket (figure 1-30). In the background of the rain and wind-blown street broadsides engulf two sides of a fence at the street corner. While some of Spencer's top layer of paint has eroded and made the advertisements difficult to read,

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[53] A brief discussion of this can be found in, Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 679-681.
[54] Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 680.

several recognizable advertisements stand out, including two for Barnum's museum, one for the frequent exhibition of a 'Fairy Grotto' that was frequently included in panorama and diorama exhibits. There is also hand-shaped image that is similar to the broadside for Wood's Minstrels appearing in *The Brigade de Shoe Black*. While in *Young Husband: First Market* there seems to be no narrative to the broadsides at rear, their very inclusion cues the viewer into the fact that the embarrassed husband is standing in a major thoroughfare, on view like the spectacular entertainments behind him, and he receives the sneering glance of the passersby.

Similarly the inclusion of broadsides in the background of urban genre paintings by Thomas Le Clear, Frederick R. Spencer, and James H. Cafferty defines much of their work in this period. The urban poor, who assumed jobs like bootblacks, rag pickers, and newsboys—the type of characters appearing in contemporary genre paintings—were as frequent a sight in midcentury cities as the broadsides that animate their actions in these paintings. Thomas Le Clear's *Young America* and James H. Cafferty's *Sidewalks of New York* each stage a scene where children perform different social roles in an urban setting and are animated by the words visible on the broadsides (figures 1-31, 1-32). Gail E. Husch explores a similar thesis in her analysis of Frederick R. Spencer's *Newsboy* of 1849 (figure 1-33). Painted in the aftermath of the Astor Place Riots of the same year, Spencer's composition overwhelms the staid newsboy in the foreground with broadsides, including one above the boy's head that proclaims in red ink: "RIOT." Additional broadsides advertise the ongoing Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, as well as "model artist exhibitions," in which near-nude women would assume poses of Classical and contemporary sculpture. As Husch notes, the violent clash between high

society and the lower classes that played out in the streets of Astor Place, ostensibly came from the working-out of social issues in a cultural venue. The dichotomy between the ideal art at the National Academy and a "model artist exhibition" is the repetition—albeit tongue-in-cheek—of such a rift in antebellum urban society. [55]

Urban spectacle allowed for the display of social tensions in the guise of commercial and leisure activities. From the viewing of Broadway itself as a moving panorama, to the role of spectacles as vehicles for social differentiation, each exhibition and amusement relied on its setting in an urban environment to help define it. So that, when the author of *Spirit of the Times* review of *Heart of the Andes* visited the painting in 1859, he brought with him all the sense of viewing a spectacle that was primed by one's experience with other urban spectacles. His experience of the painting and the description of the crowd's conversation—the nonsensical repetition of art historical jargon—was dependent on an expectation of how to interact with art presented as a spectacle.

The prevalent style of spectacular exhibition that was shared by both popular amusements and Great Picture exhibitions was classified by much of twentieth-century scholarship as popular culture, and thereby separate and different. Yet many contemporary art critics were acutely aware of this intersection of fine art pretensions and the modes of popular amusement. While some keenly acknowledged it, others found this tension objectionable and a great downfall of the presentations. An article in the arts journal *The Albion* proclaimed Church's elaborate frame "Barnumesque and altogether objectionable." Despite the fact that ornate, decorated frames were part of the tradition of Great Picture exhibition dating back to the eighteenth-century precedents of Copley, the

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[55] Gail E. Husch, *Something Coming: Apocalyptic Expectations and Mid-nineteenth–century American Painting* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000): 49-59.

Albion reviewer could only slight praise for it, saying: "as a piece of furniture, the massive and simple affair is in very good taste." [56]

For the author, the problem with Church's frame purportedly laid in the fact the frame interfered too much in the space of spectator. Rather than simply delineating a line between the imagined pictorial space and the space occupied by the viewer, the window-like frame compounded the two. It did not detract from the beauty of the Andean composition, but it was its attempt to extend the illusion of perspective out of the canvas, and into the space of the viewer that bothered the *Albion* critic. The author wrote, "Everything is in proportion, as Mr. Church painted it; seen through, and to be measured by, this new fangled scale, plants and foliage will not bear the scrutiny. The ideal … is perfect; mix up the real with it, and you spoil the whole." In essence, the intrusive presence of the frame shook the desired illusion of Church's synthetic landscape. The review concluded with the poignant line, "Artifice does not fraternize with Art." The histrionics of Church's exhibition disrupted the reviewer's expectations of an ideal landscape, and resulted in the application of the term "Barnumesque." In explicitly referring to the over-the-top tactics used by P.T. Barnum in his exhibitions of authentic and forged curiosities, the author also indicates the tension that existed between what is expected of an ideal landscape, and the realities of presentation on such a scale. [57]

In a now famous passage from a letter written by a young Samuel Clemens, before he took on the persona of author Mark Twain, he describes to his brother a visit to see *Heart of the Andes* when it traveled to St. Louis in 1861. He wrote "When you first

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[56] "Fine Arts. An Innovation," *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 37 no. 18 (April 30, 1859): 213.
[57] *Ibid*.

see the tame, ordinary-looking picture, your first impulse is to turn your back upon it, and say 'Humbug'—but your third visit will find your brain *gasping* and straining with futile efforts to take all the wonder in—and appreciate it in its fullness [emphasis his, *sic*]."[58] Like others, Clemens was at first disturbed by the theatrical presentation of what seemed an ordinary landscape painting. Its exaggerated appearance must have reminded him of the scores of similar spectacular amusements that toured through St. Louis and other urban centers. Only a few years later Clemens, as Twain, would write a humorous short story, poking fun at the grand pretensions, but disappointing realities of spectacular amusement in "The Scriptural Panoramist."[59]

What is so interesting about Samuel Clemens's brief mention of his visits to see *Heart of the Andes* is his immediate skepticism about the work. Like the author of the painting's review in *Spirit of the Times*, Clemens is inclined to pronounce it a humbug, and then immediately turns to inspect the work. Using his opera glasses, he scours the painting, examining its "beauties minutely." Yet, despite his initial fears of the painting being all show, and no substance, he wrote, "You will never get tired of looking at that picture, but your reflections—your efforts to grasp an intelligible Something—you hardly know what—will grow so painful that you will have to go away from the thing, in order to obtain relief." As the viewer, Clemens performed acts of interrogation. He questioned the showiness of the work, proclaiming it a humbug, before returning to a detailed and meticulous examination of it with opera glasses. Clemens's interaction with *Heart of the*

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[58] Samuel Clemens to Orion Clemens, St. Louis, March 18, 1861, published in Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Letters*, Vol. I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1917): 46.

[59] The story was first published as an inset story to: Mark Twain, "'Mark Twain' on the Launch of the Steamer 'Capital,'" *The Californian* 3 (November 18, 1865):9 and later republished in Mark Twain, *The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches* (New York: C.H. Webb, 1867).

Andes displayed a mode that was common to spectacular art and entertainment in this period.[60]

At midcentury, exhibitions often elicited a response from the viewer that called for a discourse between him or her and the object. The term "operational aesthetic" was defined by Harris as the mode in which Barnum and his contemporaries created their exhibitions, not with the intentions to completely dupe their audiences, but rather to allow them to question it. Barnum's displays and promotional material often bore interrogative names—most famously his 1860 exhibition of a physically deformed African American, entitled 'What is it?' (figure 1-34). The provocative title given by Barnum to the exhibition of a man named William Henry Johnson from Bound Brook, New Jersey, prodded the audiences and asked them to engage with the costumed and mysterious figure renamed 'Zip the Pinhead.'[61] A broadside for 'What is it?' appears as one of the many truncated advertisements in *The Bill-Poster's Dream*, an indication of the exhibition's contemporary notoriety, in the opinion of the artist. While the display of broadsides in New York City at this time was largely unregulated, the only ordnance that existed in relation to the posting of advertisements prohibited broadsides that advertised for any medical "quacks."[62] Advertisements for deceptions that risked one's health were forbidden, but no restrictions were put on advertisements that initially deceived its audiences in other arenas.[63]

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[60] This idea has been previously explored in the scholarship of Neil Harris, James Cook, and Michael Leja; Clemens, *Mark Twain's Letters*, 46.
[61] Marc Hartzman, *American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers* (New York: Jeremy Tarcher and Penguin, 2005): 48-50.
[62] "Ordinance of Nuisances and Noxious Things and Practices §51," *Ordinances of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of the City of New York, Revised 1859* (New York: Edmund Jones & Co., 1866): 436.
[63] Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973): 77-83; James Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

There were also similar efforts like 'The Yeppo,' purportedly captured in Africa and its status as man or beast was even more questionable than 'What is it?.'[64] Also, there was Zalumma Agra, an albino African American woman dressed as a purchased Circassian slave, allegedly saved from a harem by Barnum's intervention.[65] These exhibits not only explicitly engaged the audience in a conversation about the authenticity and identification of his living exhibits, but also demanded that they consider such ponderous issues as blurred racial boundaries. Spectacular engagements often demanded the appreciation of the audience as they were forced to judge what were often described as humbugs.

In his 1866 book, *Humbugs of the World*, P.T. Barnum attempted to explain what precisely was meant by the term 'humbug.' He gives the example of two physicians, both of whom are equally qualified and equally apt at curing the ailments of their patients. While one of the doctors drives about town in a modest fashion, the second visits his patients in a coach drawn by four horses, preceded with a band and with handbills announcing his 'wonderful cures' pasted on both his coach and horses. The second doctor is the 'humbug' in that, "as generally understood, 'humbug' consists in putting on glittering appearances—outside show—novel expedients, by which to suddenly arrest public attention, and attract the public eye and ear." While Barnum's definition of humbug may have been only one of the era, and really only one variant given by Barnum

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University Press, 2001): 80-81; Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 130-32.

[64] "The Yeppo," Broadside,Ephemera AdsF 0325, American Antiquarian Society.

[65] Charles D. Martin, *The White African Body: A Cultural and Literary Exploration* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002): 104-06

himself, the concise explanation is an important clue into how overblown exhibitions not only made spectacular exhibitions more fashionable, but also more effective.[66]

Such ideas of deception and humbug pervaded contemporary accounts of moving panorama exhibitions. To create an air of authenticity and overwhelming realism, stories often appeared in the popular press about audience members mistaking the painted canvas before them for the real thing. One story featured a "little urchin" who pleaded with his mother: "[D]o let me run down by the river side and gather those pretty flowers—I'll not fall in."[67] One story that appeared in multiple iterations featured a merchant from St. Louis that happened to be in Boston. When he attended an exhibition of Banvard's panorama, he saw before him on the banks of the river. The man immediately, yelled out, "Hallo, there, Captain! stop the boat—I want to go ashore to see my wife and family!"[68] Such accounts relay images of contemporary audiences as gullible and naïve, however unlikely. Rather, like Barnum's audiences such manufactured stories allow for the audience's own participation in the spectacular performance. Such an expectation of humbug was part of the midcentury mode expected by the audience. Like Clemens pronouncing *Heart the Andes* a humbug and then returning to inspect it, Banvard's audiences could anticipate the artist's deceptions but hope to authenticate them through geographical accuracy and the presence associated objects and people as part of the performance.

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[66] Phineas Taylor Barnum, *Humbugs of the World: An Account of Humbugs, Delusions, Impositions, Quackeries, Deceits and Deceivers, Generally in All Ages* (New York: Carleton, 1866): 20.
[67] "[The Finest Incident]," *Boston Daily Atlas* (January 19, 1847): 2.
[68] Clipping, "Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi," *Lynn Forum* (July 24, 1847), John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society; a similar story appears in "Banvard's Panorama," *Northern Journal* [Lowville, NY] (February 24, 1848): 1.

The spectacular nature of exhibitions like Great Pictures and moving panorama performances lent themselves to the inclusion of their painted scenes with objects, plants, animals, and persons from the scenes depicted. For instance one widely popular moving panorama of Kentucky's oppressively dark Mammoth Cave supplemented its exhibition with a fish from the cave with no eyes and a performance by a blind pianist.[69] In anti-slavery moving panoramas performed in the United States and England, the presence of former slaves themselves, most notably William Wells Brown and Henry "Box" Brown legitimated the story being depicted. Additionally "Box" Brown displayed an iron slave collar at his performances—a tangible foil for the painted representations of slave life that appeared in the panorama.[70] While Church did not include such items alongside his exhibition of *Heart of the Andes*, it was the materiality of the painting's frame and precise detailing that brought forward details to be scrutinized by the audience.

Additionally, like many of the moving panoramas and Great Picture exhibitions of the day, explanatory pamphlets were available for sale in the gallery. These texts provided not only a description of the painting itself, but information about the artist, his travels, and the locales depicted. For the exhibition of *Heart of the Andes*, two pamphlets were available in the foyer of the Tenth Street Studio Building and were noted in several reviews as being read in front of the painting.[71] Both Louis Legrand Noble's *Church's Painting: The Heart of the Andes* and Theodore Winthrop's *A Companion to The Heart of the Andes* relied heavily on descriptions of the Andean landscape that reinforced the

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[69] "Mammoth Cave at Amory Hall," Broadside, BDSDS. 1847, American Antiquarian Society.
[70] Anti-slavery panoramas are further discussed in Chapter IV of this dissertation, and more information on the presence of former slaves and the material remains of slavery at these exhibitions are specifically discussed in: Daphne A. Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 112-26; Michael A. Chaney, *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image in Antebellum Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008): 139-46.
[71] Including "A Visit to 'Heart of the Andes,'" *Spirit of the Times*, 500.

teachings of the only recently late German naturalist and geologist Alexander von Humboldt, whose writings inspired Church's visit to Ecuador.[72] As Kevin Avery has noted, Winthrop's descriptive pamphlet actually divides Church's painting into ten different zones (the Sky, the Sky Dome, the Llano, the Cordillera, etc….) that essentially align with the different climatic zones established by Humboldt in relation to Mount Chimborazo, which is shown in the rear of *Heart of the Andes*.[73] Incidentally, all descriptions of moving panoramas, which are necessarily a journey through space and time, similarly break up in their journeys in such a manner. In John Rowson Smith's *Leviathan Panorama of the Mississippi River*, he breaks the waterway into areas defined by the dominant agriculture from north to south, the so-called Corn, Cotton, and Sugar regions.[74]

Joy Kasson described the role played by descriptive pamphlets when viewing spectacular art in this period as "normative rather than descriptive."[75] Kasson specifically examines the role played by pamphlets when viewing sculpture of ideal female nudes, yet the idea also applies to other media. The pamphlets did little to describe the reaction to Church's *Heart of the Andes* or a Mississippi panorama, but rather they instructed the reader on how they *should* view it. Whether or not audience members were fascinated by Church's visual treatise on the Andean climate, or whether Banvard really did convince an audience member that his St. Louis home was only a few feet away from him is unimportant. These texts—in descriptive pamphlets, in the press, and in broadsides lining

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[72] Avery, *Church's Great Picture*, 12-22; Aaron Sachs, *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism* (New York: Viking, 2006).
[73] Avery, *Church's Great Picture*, 35.
[74] John Rowson Smith, *Descriptive Pamphlet of Smith's Leviathan Panorama of the Mississippi River!* (Philadelphia: s.n., 1848): 7-28.
[75] Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives*, 31.

the city streets—performed a normative function that guided the viewer into an interaction with a spectacle.

Yet as made clear by non-normative descriptions of these performances, such as that from the *Spirit of the Times*, the experiences proposed by the texts do not align with the actuality. It is thus why, despite the "advertising mania" that the author described in the gallery still only resulted in the nonsensical and humorous recitation of artistic buzzwords, unrelated to the painting at hand. The *Spirit of the Times* is a rare example in the printed media of the day that not only gave a view into these spectacular exhibitions, but pointed out the fissure between expectation and reality. The humbug of Church's *Heart of the Andes* existed not only in its frame, but in its surrounding media from the broadside to the pamphlet.

Perhaps no one noticed this collision between the lofty aspirations of Church's landscape and the manner in which it was presented than his contemporary critics, who distanced themselves from such popular modes of exhibition. James Jackson Jarves was an American art critic and collector who frequently commented on the work of Church and his contemporaries. Jarves was an ardent proponent of the Barbizon inspired works of George Inness and was concerned with the pursuit of an ideal landscape, about which he wrote in his 1864 treatise *The Art-Idea* (figure 1-35). In that work he presented as a corollary to Church's paintings, Albert Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, which made its first appearance in January 1864 in a Great Picture exhibition. Jarves wrote,

> The countryman that mistook the Rocky Mountains for a panorama, and after waiting awhile asked when *the thing was going to move*, was a more sagacious critic than he knew himself to be. All this quality of painting is more or less panoramic, from being so material in its artistic features as

> always to keep the spectator at a distance. He never can forget his point of view, and that he is look at a painting [emphasis his].[76]

His quip about the "countryman" mistaking Bierstadt's painting for a moving panorama, is not only a commentary on the class connotations that came along with the exhibition of an easel painting in a style of popular amusement, but an indication of the supposed difference in the role of the viewer. Indeed, the viewer's role is effected by the materiality of the paintings, something which in popular amusements was crucial for allowing the audience to consider the object before them. For Jarves, it is the viewer's inability to remove him or herself from a discourse with the painting that prevents the achievement of the ideal. In the same passage he continues,

> [T]he effect of high art is to sink the artist and spectator alike into the scene. It becomes the real, and, in that sense, true realistic art, because it realizes to the mind the essential truths of what it pictorially discloses to the eye. The spectator is no longer a looker-on, as in the other style, but an inhabitant of the landscape…He enjoys it with the right of ownership by the divine seisin of kindred thought and desire, not as a stranger who for a fee is permitted to look at what he is by its very nature debarred from entering upon and possessing. [77]

Importantly, Jarves uses an analogy of a visitor to a spectacular exhibition. His comments allude to a conceptual separation between the viewer and a painting by Church or Bierstadt. It is this distinction between audience and object that allows for inspection and discernment that was common to spectacular amusement.

Conversely, 'high art' denies this inquisitive interaction and assumes the viewer into the painting. In an essay on the state of American art, Jarves published a review of Inness's now-lost painting, *The Sign of Promise*. Jarves writes,

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[76] James Jackson Jarves, *The Art-Idea: Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture in America* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1864): 254.

[77] "Seisin" refers to the possession of land, particularly that which is granted by feudal decree; Jarves, *The Art-Idea*, 254-55.

> With [Inness] the inspiring idea is principal; form secondary, being the outgrowth of the idea. His picture illustrate[s] phases of mind and feelings. He uses nature's forms simply as a language to express thought The opposite school of painters are [*sic*] content with clever imitation…The one school of which Inness is as much a type as is Church of the other, *believes*; the other *sees* [emphasis his].[78]

Paintings like *Heart of the Andes* or Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* that made use of the elements of spectacular amusement—the invasive presence of the frame, the close inspection of the painting's details, and accompanying pamphlets that offered a prescribed mode of vision—would have prevented Jarves's goal of the Ideal in painting. His displeasure in the exhibition of over-the-top Great Picture exhibitions indicates a tension about the presentation of art as amusement, or as *The Albion* fretted about in its early review of *Heart of the Andes*, the fraternization of artifice and Art.[79]

In this era, which spanned roughly the years 1847 to 1870, prosperous American cities witnessed the rise of spectacular entertainment as an integral part of the urban experience. Moving panoramas, theatrical productions and museums filled with taxidermied animals, archaeological remains, sideshows, and fine art all vied for the public attention. While art and commercial enterprise during the height of this period seemed to fervently embrace the streetscape of cities, by the end entrenched institutions of higher art removed themselves from ease of availability to the masses. As described by Lawrence Levine, this process was a "sacralization" of culture.[80] Artist's institutions withdrew increasingly from public view as they sought to professionalize their trade into

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[78] James Jackson Jarves, originally published in *Boston Transcript*, n.d., and transcribed in George Inness, "The Sign of Promise," exhibition pamphlet (New York: Snedicor's Gallery, 1863) and later transcribed again in *George Inness: Writings and Reflections on Art and Philosophy*, ed. Adrienne Baxter Bell (New York: George Braziller, 2006): 108.
[79] "Fine Arts. An Innovation," *The Albio*n, 213.
[80] Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow*, 146-51.

an art.[81] In 1858 Frederic Church traded in his studio on Broadway, in the old Art-Union Building for one in the newly designed Tenth Street Studio Building. While as described above the traffic still followed into his exhibitions, the move shows an increasing move towards the studio culture later epitomized by William Merritt Chase at that location (figure 1-36).[82] At the same time, increasingly entrenched standards of taste for 'high art' became more prevalent. As an Alan Wallach has noted, these standards were based on Ruskinian principles (similar to those echoed by Jarves) and called for increasingly more idiosyncratic, smaller-scale, and intimate works.[83] These works were intended for purchase by the individual collector, available only to the wealthy and to be consumed in private, restricted spaces. Similarly, moving panoramas and other examples of public spectacle became rarer in American cities. While their fine art counterparts were sacralized into institutions of high culture, such spectacles fundamentally changed as they became acceptable forms of domestic entertainment, frequently performed in the increasingly charged space of the parlor. Indeed as moving panoramas, once a distinctly urban form of entertainment became increasingly prevalent in the American home their reliance on the spectacle as an urban phenomenon was replaced, allowing for new ideas of domesticity to replace it. [84]

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[81] Upton, "Inventing the Modern Metropolis," 38-40.
[82] Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building: Artist-Entrepreneurs from the Hudson River School to the American Impressionists* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1997): 105-26.
[83] Wallach, *Exhibiting Contradiction*, 20-21.
[84] This is further explored in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

CHAPTER II
Mississippi River Panoramas, Commerce, and the Urban Spectacle

In November of 1849 the New York journal, *Holden's Dollar Magazine*, featured an illustration of the Bluffs of Selma, a rocky outcropping alongside the Mississippi River on the Missouri shore (figure 2-1). The modest depiction of the honeycombed bluff was a translation of a scene that appeared in John Banvard's tremendously well-received 1846-47 *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River*. The moving panorama had been exhibited in Boston and New York before arriving in England in 1848. Banvard's panorama was the first significantly popular panorama in a line of many that offered urban American audiences travel narratives of the American West and South. In remarking about the recent advent and pervasiveness of moving panorama exhibitions, the author wrote,

> The present has become an age of panoramas—We have miles and miles of canvas representing everywhere and everything, and people go of an evening to make a voyage on canvas to Europe, up the Rhine, Round the World, to California, and on a Whaling Voyage. There is much merit in many of these picture voyages, and the multitude get a good deal of information by such means, of foreign countries, and have not the trouble and expense of travel, or the labor of reading. If Defoe had lived in these days, he probably would have painted the adventures of Robinson Crusoe on canvas ten miles long, and Captain Cook would have saved his life by circumnavigating the globe with a palette and paint brush.[1]

While the author's humorous lines are meant to illustrate the massive and immediate popularity of moving panoramas—the first popular exhibition of one appearing in New York in December of 1847—they also indicate the extreme popularity of travel subjects. Down the Mississippi, across the Atlantic Ocean, or through the American western landscape to California, moving panoramas nearly exclusively portrayed voyages. In so

[1] "The Bluffs of Semla [*sic*]," *Holden's Dollar Magazine* 4, no. 5 (November 1849): 643.

doing, they purportedly connected American audiences (mostly Eastern and urban audiences initially) to far-flung locales.

Due to the serial format of the moving panorama, they were most easily adapted to subject matters that were presented as either a series of independent scenes, during which the panorama would scrolled horizontally with intermittent stops, or as a continuously moving image with a single imagined vantage point. Often cited as the first true use of a moving panorama in the United States, a depiction of the voyage from Manhattan to Catskill, NY appeared in the middle of William Dunlap's 1828 dramatic farce, *A Trip to Niagara*.[2] By the 1850s moving panorama exhibitions offered trips to California, South America, the Arctic Circle, Europe, Asia, and locales located only in the artist's imagination like "Fairy Land" and the Bunyan-inspired landscapes of *The Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress*. Steamboats and railroads catered to an increasingly mobile American population at the same time telegraphy allowed for news to travel at an unprecedented speed. This rapidity of information was mirrored in the moving panorama that took the viewer on long voyages within a matter of hours.[3]

Yet, moving panoramas also arose in a period that saw the rise of spectacular manners of exhibition become popular in the increasingly urban nation. Avenues of commerce and entertainment became more prevalent in American cities just at the time that moving panoramas stepped-in to lead this interest in travel and entertainment. While

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[2] The panorama and information related to Dunlap's play are thoroughly researched in, Dorothy B. Richardson, *Moving Diorama in Play: William Dunlap's Comedy A Trip to Niagara (1828)* (Amherst, NY: Teneo Press, 2010).

[3] For more about the relationship between nineteenth-century industrialization and the panorama see: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space* 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014): 60-65.

exhibitions took their audiences alternatively to far off locales, historical events, and imagined lands, they did so within the confines of the midcentury theatrical space. In the history of moving panoramas no subject matter played a larger role than that of the Mississippi River and its adjacent sights. First, and most successfully, pioneered by John Banvard, the subject dominated this type of entertainment from 1847 through the end of the American Civil War. This chapter specifically examines the moving panorama exhibitions that featured the Mississippi River and concentrates mostly on the work produced by Banvard because of its disproportionate importance. In attempting to understand why the moving panorama was so wildly popular in this era, this chapter studies the correlation between the Mississippi panoramas and contemporary political, social, and economic interests. Additionally, these panoramas are understood as urban products designed for consumption by urban audiences. As such, this chapter places the Mississippi panoramas alongside other spectacular, theatrical, and artistic productions of the era that engaged in similar rhetoric. Mississippi panoramas not only reflected the interests held by those audiences that so enthusiastically patronized them, but also reinforced ideas of how consumption of goods and entertainments could further the interests expressed in the exhibitions. The image of the Mississippi River was marshaled in panorama exhibitions throughout the nation not only as a depiction of the far-flung regions of the nation, but as a localized prospect of the nation itself—its political concerns, its social mores, and its future.

The rise of panoramas that mimicked leisure travel corresponded to the increase in the consumption of American travel literature in the first half of the century. Beginning

in the 1820s, the number of Americans engaging in domestic tourism rose each year. The increasing safety and reliability of both railroad and steamboats afforded Americans the ability to travel to destinations that catered to domestic tourism. Tourism boomed along the Hudson River in the 1820s as steamboats and locomotives began to shuttle people from New York to resort towns like Catskill. Indeed, the region of upstate New York that had once been accessible for leisure exclusively to the urban elite had become accessible to more people and hence it became more commonplace in literature, theater, and visual culture. Most prominently, the emergence of the Hudson River School in the period was a direct result of the opening up of region to not only the artists but also a burgeoning class of merchants who preferred the subject matter of idealized American scenery.[4]

Similarly, the 1840s saw a great commercial boom along the path of the Mississippi River. Shipping along the river allowed for great agricultural development in the northern regions of the river, as goods could be transported downriver to New Orleans, from which they could reach the ports in the northern United States or Europe. Banvard and his fellow panorama painters weren't the only artists in the region. George Caleb Bingham, Carl Wimar, Seth Eastman, and John Mix Stanley also sought to use the region as their inspiration. Demand for Western scenery steadily increased throughout the decade and reached its zenith between the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848 and

[4] Richard H. Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790-1830* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008): 125-33; for the Hudson River School see: Angela Miller, "Landscape Taste as an Indicator of Class Identity in Antebellum America," *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850* eds. Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 340-61.

the Compromise of 1850. As the American West became increasingly more important to American politics, so too did it take on a larger role in its popular culture.[5]

In 1844 George Catlin, the prolific painter and proprietor of his Indian Gallery, suggested a "Fashionable Tour," that would begin at St. Louis and go throughout the upper Mississippi Valley. Catlin wrote that, "[it] being a part of the [West] which is now made so easily accessible to the world, and the only part of it to which *ladies* can have access, I would recommend to all who have time and inclination to devote to the enjoyment of so splendid a Tour [*italics his*]."[6] Even though Western America was increasingly thought of as a region for domestic tourism towards the end of the antebellum era, travel literature followed popular texts and images that promoted certain mythologies of the American West. Themes of untamed wilderness, and its equally uncontrollable native populations populated guidebooks that also curiously accentuated the danger of travel through this reason, including from steamboat explosions.[7]

The first true guides to the Mississippi that catered to tourism were not published until the 1850s. These books, such as *Conclin's New River Guide* of 1850 and *Lloyd's Steamboat Directory and Disasters on the Western Waters* of 1856 followed in the tradition of the moving panoramas in that they sought to replicate the viewpoint of a white, moneyed, leisure tourist. Tropes of these guides included accounts of frontier lifestyles and gruesome stories of steamboat explosions that littered the muddy waters

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[5] Thomas Ruys Smith, *River of Dreams: Imagining the Mississippi before Mark Twain* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007): 105-07.
[6] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* 2 (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1844): 129.
[7] Ruys Smith, *River of Dreams*, 106.

with corpses.[8] Even though guidebooks, and for that matter moving panoramas, may not be perceived by modern scholars as having deep cultural significance they do reveal the means by which demand, consumption and conception of certain topics was created. Richard Gassan has previously linked the arrival of guidebooks of the Hudson River Valley to the emerging consumer culture of urban America.[9]

As the nineteenth century reached its midpoint, no region of the nation captivated the political attention and cultural imagination of Americans more than the West. In 1839 George Catlin established his "Indian Gallery." Made up of his hundreds of paintings of Native Americans, clothes, artifacts, and other objects he collected in the West, Catlin's gallery was a traveling exhibition that offered one of the first true visual narratives of the region. The "Indian Gallery" toured the United States and Europe exhibiting not only his views of the American West, but also Native American artifacts including weaponry and clothing, and in some instances live Native American performers. Catlin's activities were a precedent for the Mississippi panoramas of Banvard and others, and demonstrated a burgeoning international interest in the region. Though Catlin mainly concentrated on the way of life of the native tribes, including the Mandan, Comanche, and Seminole, he established a precedent for traveling a multimedia exhibition based on the persona of the artist-explorer. Charles Willson Peale and others had previously exhibited similar artifacts for decades prior, their permanent museums aligned more closely with the Linnean-inspired scientific interests of his eighteenth-century predecessors than with the bombastic shows of the nineteenth century. The popular exhibition of the American West

[8] Ruys Smith, *River of Dreams*, 105-06.
[9] Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism*, 125-33.

may have truly started with Catlin, but was later altered by Barnum, and capped off by Buffalo Bill. By the time Catlin was in London with his "Indian Gallery" in the early 1850s, he was recognized as an expert in Western America but had become passé as the Mississippi panoramas of Banvard and John Rowson Smith dominated. Catlin himself became involved in a feud between the two panorama exhibitors as he publically defended Smith's likely spurious claim that he was the originator of the first panorama of the Mississippi and that Banvard merely copied it.

Nonetheless, Catlin had enjoyed considerable success in the 1840s and other artists responded to the same increasing demand for Western subject matter. Other painters like John Mix Stanley, Paul Kane, and Seth Eastman would follow in Catlin's footsteps by concentrating their Western art on scenes of Native American life, it was the life of the settler that quickly became a favored scene. The painter George Caleb Bingham fostered a reputation as the painter most associated with genre scenes of the American West. His notoriety as such was cemented in 1847 when the American Art-Union distributed an engraving after his *Jolly Flatboatmen* to each of its 9,666 members (figure 2-2). Concentrating on scenes in the Mississippi Valley where he was raised, Bingham produced paintings that cast its figures as mythic tropes of the West—the self-sufficient pioneer, the menacing Native American, and the coarse but genial riverboatmen. Bingham did not claim any authoritative objectivity in his works, but emphasized the national importance of this growing region. Like the Mississippi panoramas that were contemporaneous to most of his production, *The Jolly Flatboatmen* or *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri* utilize archetypal imagery to signal eastern

audiences of their setting. The specific tropes of the gruff river boatmen and life on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers became more engrained in the American cultural vernacular in this era as commerce between the western frontier and the urban East grew rapidly.[10]

Several art historians, Nancy Rash among them, have connected Bingham's paintings to his own activities in the Whig Party during their ascendency in the late 1840s.[11] Indeed his paintings of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers seem to emphasize the national connections made by trade and emboldened by Henry Clay's "American System," which placed an emphasis on government-sponsored improvements of national infrastructure. In the Presidential Election of 1848, the Whig party captured the office with Zachary Taylor on the ballot. The centrist Taylor appealed to both Whigs and Democrats because though he supported many of the former's positions, he was also a significant slaveholder and that allayed many Democrats' fears that he would pursue anti-slavery policies. Given his broad appeal, it is not surprising that his Cypress Grove cotton plantation on the banks of the Mississippi above Natchez appeared in each of the Mississippi panoramas produced by Banvard, Smith, Lewis, Stockwell, and Hudson (figure 2-3). While local responses to the president's inclusion by proxy varied from town to town, the Mississippi was clearly a backdrop for the playing out of national politics.

One additional important Mississippi painting appeared in the era of the moving panoramas. In 1837 Congress, looking to fill the last vacant spot in the Capitol Rotunda, commissioned Henry Inman to paint a monumental scene of *Daniel Boone in the Wilds of*

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[10] Nancy Rash, *The Painting and Politics of George Caleb Bingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991): 66-69.
[11] *Ibid*.

Kentucky. Yet when the artist died in 1846, the painting remained incomplete and Congress contracted Inman's student, William Henry Powell, to paint a new subject. Since a decade had passed since the original commission, the subject was changed in consultation with both Congress and Powell to *De Soto's Discovery of the Mississippi* (figure 2-4). Though Boone's westward emigration may have been appropriate in the late 1830s, by the time Powell was asked to create a new work the story of De Soto's conquest likely seemed more appropriate. Unlike the lone figure of Boone amidst the wild landscape, and the ideas of an uncontrollable nature presented in that narrative, Powell's painting depicts a dominant empire-expanding explorer, who comes to the Mississippi in one fell swoop with all the elements of civilization.[12]

Powell's painting emphasizes the mythic qualities of the region. The Native American civilization is immediately surmounted by the military, religion, and commerce of the European conquerors. *De Soto's Discovery of the Mississippi* is the fourth in the second series of Capitol paintings. The first set of paintings by John Trumbull recreates important scenes of the revolution. Interestingly in the second series—*The Baptism of Pocahontas* by John Gadsby Chapman, *The Embarkation of the Pilgrims* by Robert Weir, *The Landing of Columbus* by Vanderlyn, and Powell's painting—each work is ostensibly about travel from the Old World to the New and the arrival of Western civilization. In a manner similar to moving panoramas as well as the tradition of Great Picture exhibitions,

[12] *William H. Powell's Historical Picture of the Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto, A.D. 1541* (New York: Baker, Godwin, & Co., 1853): 1-3.

Powell showed his work to the New York public at the National Academy of Design on Broadway in 1853.[13]

Yet despite the success of these artists, no visual medium depicting the American West was more widely consumed than that of the Mississippi as seen in moving panorama exhibitions. Indeed, Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi* was likely the single-most viewed work of art of any locale viewed in either the United States or England prior to 1850.[14] An examination of the moving panoramas of the Mississippi reveals not only how these works reflected certain contemporary anxieties about the West, but also how urban Americans reacted to this novel form of amusement both as entertainment and as an engagement with the most prevalent political and social issues of the day.

Led by the tremendous success of John Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi*, five other men debuted popular Mississippi panoramas in 1848 and 1849.[15] Additionally, there is an 1850 panorama extant in the collection of the St. Louis Art Museum, the *Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley* by John Egan. Though

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[13] *William H. Powell's Historical Picture of the Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto, A.D. 1541,* 6.

[14] Angela Miller notes the possible exception of engravings of Thomas Cole's *Voyage of Life: Youth*, which was distributed by the American Art-Union in 1849. Yet the sheer size of Banvard's audiences in Boston, New York and London alone before 1850 totaled over one million. It seems unlikely to have been matched by the Art-Union's edition of 23,000 prints; "'The Imperial Republic': Narrative of National Expansion in American Art, 1820-1860," Ph.D. Diss. (Yale University, 1985): 267; for the attendance numbers of Banvard's exhibition see: John Hanners, "The Adventures of an Artist: John Banvard (1815-1891) and his Mississippi Panorama" Ph.D. Diss. (Michigan State University, 1979): 65, 73, 95; for the Art-Union prints see: Jay Cantor, "Prints and the American Art-Union," *Prints in and of America to 1850*, Winterthur Conference Report 1970, ed. John D. Morse (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970): 311.

[15] John Rowson Smith's *Leviathan Panorama of the Mississippi River* that was first exhibited in 1848 was arguably the second most successful moving panorama and he very publically argued in the English press that Banvard's panorama was only a rude copy of a Mississippi panorama as early as 1839. Yet, Smith's claims are not borne out by any extant advertisements and, as John Francis McDermott points out, his panorama conflicts with other dates of known employment such as when he was a scenery painter for the Park Theatre in New York; John Francis McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958): 53.

unlike other Mississippi panoramas, Egan's was intended to accompany an archaeological and anthropological lecture by a University of Pennsylvania professor, Dr. Montroville Wilson Dickeson. The subjects and locales (including several outside of the Mississippi Valley) differ wildly from the other panoramas, it also contains many of the same tropes displayed in the more popular panoramas.[16]

Mississippi River panoramas were wildly popular not only because of the novelty of the medium, but also because the Mississippi region played such an outsized role in contemporary political and popular culture. While John Banvard's Mississippi panorama was far and away the most popular of the era, the prevalence of the subject in moving panorama exhibitions, as well as other media, demonstrates the importance of this region as a crucible of antebellum political and social turmoil. Visual and textual depictions of the region, its inhabitants, practices, and commerce varied only little between each panorama. An examination of the success of John Banvard's moving panorama of the Mississippi River and the reception of those that followed reveals an interest in the region that transposed local values and interests on a malleable image of the West. As the expansive distemper and muslin versions of the Mississippi were unwound countless times before American audiences, the river continually was re-imagined in the minds of its viewers. It was an emblem of national unity based on collective commerce, but also the representation of deep cultural fissures that grew increasingly more pronounced at midcentury, particularly as national opinions shifted dramatically in the wake of important moments such as at the Compromise of 1850 that further galvanized both opponents and supporters of American slavery. Agricultural products harvested along the

[16] McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi,* 170-72.

Mississippi were manufactured into goods available for sale in the commercial emporiums of both Northern and Southern cities. While the written narratives surrounding the Mississippi River panoramas emphasized how commodities united a disparate nation, the panoramas and accompanying texts largely ignored the realities of a slave society and the existence of those forced to labor therein.

A native of New York City, John Banvard was the son of a second-generation French Moravian master builder, Daniel Banvard. After the death of his father when John was fifteen, he moved west to Louisville, Kentucky to live with his brother. After taking a few odd jobs that included portrait painting, in 1833 John took a position as a theatrical scene designer aboard William Chapman's Floating Theatre. The first of its kind, Chapman's theater was built upon a large flatboat that descended the Ohio River from Pittsburgh, and met up with the Mississippi River below St. Louis before it traveled all the way to New Orleans. Along the way, Chapman and his ensemble of actors and performers stopped at various riverside towns to perform dramas and musical numbers. The following year Banvard and some of his friends bought their own boat and began to ply the Mississippi offering not only theatrical performances, but a mobile grocery store as well. His venture proved beset by poor river conditions and waves of illness that hampered their travel.[17]

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[17] Banvard's life and exploits are largely known from his unpublished writings from later life preserved in the John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; His life is also discussed in several other comprehensive secondary sources, Joseph Earl Arrington, "John Banvard's Moving Panorama of the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers," *The Filson Club History Quarterly* 32, no. 5 (July 1958): 207-40; McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi*, 18-46; John Hanners, "The Adventures of an Artist;" and John Hanners, *"It Was Play or Starve": Acting in the Nineteenth-century American Popular Theatre* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1993): 9-22, 35-54, 69-82.

After two seasons Banvard sold his shares in the floating theater and took various jobs designing and painting scenery throughout the Mississippi Valley. An 1841 newspaper advertisement listed Banvard as proprietor of the St. Louis Museum, which that spring featured three panoramas—one of Venice and Jerusalem, one of St. Louis, and a third of the "Infernal Regions."[18] As the advertisements boasted of the panoramas as being "100 Feet in Length, … Largest in the Union," these were undoubtedly mechanical panoramas that relied on a single backdrop image that was manipulated with variant lighting, pyrotechnics, and often automata.[19] Even though Banvard never commented on whether he saw a moving panorama prior to his own production, by the early 1840s his background theatrical scene painting, popular museums, and the nature of life on the Mississippi seem to be the inspiration for the creation of his *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi*.[20]

By 1846 he was back in Louisville, where he leased a large barn in which he could roll out the massive canvas and begin his painting. While the painting of the panorama undoubtedly must have occupied several months, by the time he debuted the panorama at a local hall, he seemed to understand the important elements of a successful showmanship. In addition to the painted canvas and mechanical structures needed to scroll the panorama, Banvard had already begun to cultivate his persona as an authentic riverboat man. During its inaugural run in Louisville, Banvard supposedly gave away tickets to the local boatmen that plied the Ohio River. Their attendance and later

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[18] "Amusements," *Daily Missouri Republican* (March 24, 1841): 2; "Amusements," *Daily Missouri Republican* (April 24, 1841): 2.
[19] *Ibid*.
[20] Unpublished Memoir, John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.

testimonies of the picture's accuracy spurred attendance and improved Banvard's own role not only as mediator between spectator and object but as an authenticating presence. The exhibitors of moving panoramas invariably relied on their own personas to give credence to the objectivity of the panorama.[21]

Banvard himself was aware of the importance of his image and he relayed stories of his experience in the West in a portion of the accompanying text titled "Adventures of the Artist," which was sometimes distributed separately. Additionally, as Banvard's fame grew portraits of the artist reflected his showman's persona. In London, Banvard was depicted in a lithograph by the Anglo-Belgian printmaker Charles Baugniet (2- 5). The image, which later appeared on the cover of the music sheet for "Banvard Polkas," depicts the young artist on a riverbank (figure 2-6). Grasping a pen and paper he makes sketches of the Western scenery, while also cradling a rifle—suggesting ever-present danger on the edges of civilization. Yet despite his rustic setting, Banvard's dress is inspired more by the archetype of a British naval tar than of a Mississippi boatman. While far from an accurate depiction, the image conveys the romantic image of Banvard traveling the wilderness alone as well as the authenticity it brought to the panorama itself.

By the time Banvard was able to bring his Mississippi panorama to the eastern United States, the idea of him as artist and adventurer had begun to set. When Banvard later toured the United States with his most recent moving panorama, *The Holy Land*, public images of the painter-showman emphasized his Eastern travels. Banvard altered

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[21] John Banvard, "*Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River, Painted on Three Miles of Canvas, Exhibiting a View of Country 1200 Miles in Length, Extending from the Mouth of the Missouri River to the City of New Orleans; Being by Far the Largest Picture Ever Executed by Man* (Boston: John Putnam, 1847): 16.

his personas to match his subjects. An 1857 illustration in *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* depicts Banvard dressed in Oriental clothes, with a large open shirt, fez, "and the luxuriance of beard necessary to harmonize with his eastern dress (figure 2-7)."[22] The presentation of Banvard in appropriately related clothing ensured the authenticity of the panorama's originator. Banvard's persona was essential to a reception of the panorama itself.

Banvard brought his *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River* to Boston just before Christmas 1846. By New Year's Eve of that year, the local press was vigorously promoting the panorama to its readers, especially recommending it for school children—a claim that would have vastly separated Banvard's panorama from the supposed moral depravity associated with much of theatrical entertainment. In Louisville's *Morning Courier*, an editorial advised the city's residents to go see Henry Lewis's Mississippi panorama, even if you were someone who would normally abjure the theater. The panorama, the author wrote, was just simply too big to be exhibited in any other venue and the viewer should ignore the common conception of theater as vulgar in order to enjoy this morally appropriate entertainment.[23]

Additionally, Banvard's good reputation was easily buoyed by recommendations from prominent Bostonians including his brother Joseph, who was the pastor of the Harvard Street Baptist Church as well as an author of well-circulated religious tracts. The artist set up his panorama at Amory Hall on Boston's fashionable Washington Street. Its

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[22] "Banvard, the Artist, and his Residence," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 12, no. 20 (May 16, 1857): 312.
[23] Undated Clipping, *Morning Courier* [Louisville, 1849], Henry Lewis Papers, Missouri History Museum Archives, St. Louis.

popularity was such that by February the hall had to be retrofitted with additional seating to accommodate the large crowds that came to see the long painted shores of the Mississippi.[24] Daily trains that ran to Boston added extra cars to support elevated levels of ridership.[25] The popularity of later panoramas, like William Burr's *Seven Mile Mirror*, was so great that they created packaged train daytrips from as far away as Plymouth that included admission to the exhibition.[26]

By August of 1847, the *Christian Secretary* of Hartford, Connecticut reported that Banvard was preparing to move his exhibition to New York. That summer he bought a lot of land on Broadway on which he would build a purpose-built panorama hall.[27] Banvard moved his Mississippi panorama to New York in December and by the eighteenth of that month the *Home Journal* was reporting on the large crowds that came to see that panorama and commented that "the new Panorama Building in Broadway has been handsomely and conveniently arranged for the exhibition of this painting."[28] It is likely that Banvard did not actually purchase the land at Prince Street, but rather leased from either Stephen Van Rensselaer who owned the property or William Niblo, who had been operating Niblo's Garden, a famous saloon and theater, on that site until an 1846 fire cleared it. It was a familiar location for panorama exhibitions, as Frederick Catherwood's Rotunda, a venue for the display of Robert Burford's panoramas and some of Catherwood's own creations, previously stood directly across Broadway from the site of

[24] "Banvard's Panorama," *Boston Daily Atlas* (February 2, 1847): 2.
[25] "Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River," *Boston Daily Atlas* (March 11, 1847): 2.
[26] "Christmas Excursion to Boston," Broadside, BDSDS. 1850, American Antiquarian Society.
[27] "The New York Express, Sunday Evening," *Christian Secretary* (August 28, 1847): 3.
[28] "The Wonder of the World," *Home Journal* 51, no. 107 (December 18, 1847): 2.

Banvard's hall from 1838 until July of 1842 (figure 2-8).[29] Of course, its position had other advantages, including a central location along Broadway near the new American Art-Union Building, as well as the vast array of other art exhibitions and theatrical entertainments that could be had along this corridor. During its run in New York, Banvard competed with other public amusements, including one other moving panorama of General Zachary Taylor's exploits during the Mexican-American War.[30]

One New York advertisement for Banvard's panorama suggested that "a pleasant walk up Broadway on these fine spring days terminating by a view of the Broadway of the Union, as the Mississippi River may be justly termed, is as interesting and instructive a way to pass the afternoon or evening as we know of."[31] The application of the moniker 'Broadway of the Union' bears with it a sense of the importance of the river to the nation as a commercial and entertainment center. It was a thoroughfare that, along with its tributaries, managed to unite north and south, east and west. At the dawn of the nineteenth century it was the farthermost border of the American nation. After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the Mississippi Valley became synonymous with the rich abundant land ripe for cultivation and American expansion. By the Mexican-American War, the Mississippi was a demonstration of American commercial and moral might. The expansion of American territory to Pacific Ocean was necessary to continue the type of empire building that was begun on the Mississippi. Quickly thereafter the Mississippi became the touchstone for examples of sectional difference. A shared river that united

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[29] The rotunda was consumed by fire on July 31, 1842 and resulted in the loss of two panorama paintings, of Thebes and of Jerusalem, Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, *Frederick Catherwood Arch*[*L*] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950): 36-52, 82-84.
[30] George C.F. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* V (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931): 402.
[31] "Banvard's Panorama," *New York Herald* (April 29, 1848): 2.

wildly different portions of a fracturing nation, the Mississippi was a constant index of what the future of the nation could be.

Perhaps even more important to the *New York Herald's* analogy between the Mississippi River and New York City's Broadway was that each thoroughfare was not only a synecdoche for its larger entity, but that it did so through its utility as a vehicle for commerce. Moving panoramas of the Mississippi presented the far-flung river as a spectacle intended to be engaged with by the audience in the mode of urban amusement. As discussed in earlier chapters, antebellum urban entertainment allowed audiences to consume entertainment in an active manner that allowed them to evaluate the exhibitions before them and consider the subjects at hand.[32] In the case of Mississippi panoramas, the river, its environments and its people, were offered to the viewer in a variety of different narratives about its role in the nation. At a time when the river denoted great social anxieties—about expansionism and about slavery—the audience expected to use this mode of exhibition to evaluate the panorama as well as its associated issues.

Undoubtedly, the most prevalent theme in exhibitions of the Mississippi was the role of the river in furthering the extension of American civilization through agriculture, commerce, and industry. Banvard, Smith, Lewis, and others accomplished this in their painted panoramas and in the texts that accompanied them by stressing the correlation between the natural environment, labor, and product. The history of the region, even from the pre-Columbian era was incorporated into narratives and visuals that propagated an American exceptionalist vision of the land that seemed to predetermine the rise of a great commercial empire.

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[32] See Chapter I: Spectacular Amusement and Art in the City.

John Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi* appeared in several iterations from its first exhibition in Louisville and Boston in 1846, to its final performances after the Civil War. Banvard continually added additional portions to his panorama, most notably the Ohio and Missouri Rivers in 1848 and 1849. Originally, however, the panorama began near the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers near St. Louis. Each of the panoramas ended at or near New Orleans, Louisiana. As such, the panoramas read as a progress of civilization—the rise from fertile lands that once held ancient civilizations towards the commercial capital of the South and its economic triumph .

This was not a theme unique to the Mississippi moving panoramas. Perhaps inspired by such themes at midcentury, Asher B. Durand took it up in his painting *Progress (Advance of Civilization)* of 1853 (figure 2-9). Commissioned by the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad financier Charles Gould, the painting compresses many of the themes that play out during the performance of each of the Mississippi panoramas. Moving from the left foreground to the right background of the static painting, a similar progression of civilization based on increased agricultural and industrial technologies is present. At left, Native American figures climb out of the dark wilderness, and perched on an outcrop gaze and the receding narrative of American progress. At far right, a rustic home is passed by a man driving cattle to market and an itinerant salesman marching towards the edge of the work. Further back, a wagon carries shipped goods away from the urban centers in the background, back out towards the wilderness. Then canals, a small town, and a railroad lead to a great city poised at the mouth of a harbor, where

steamships come and go from the port. All of the scenery is connected by the economic infrastructure laid by the commercial interests, not a surprising topic for a railroad executive. Yet, like the Mississippi panoramas, it is a narrative of advancement from the displaced Indian, to the rural cattleman. The whole scene triumphs in the commercial port. Both the panorama and Durand's *Progress* are mapped out over a landscape and contain a narrative naturalized into the figures and industry that inhabit it. Durand encapsulated the overarching themes of the Mississippi panorama into a single image that resolves the role played by commerce and industry amongst the landscape.

Not surprisingly, the first scene that appeared in Banvard's panorama was an illustration of a clash between the natural and manmade. At Rush Island, Banvard illustrated the wreck of the steamer West Wind, which in 1846 became snagged on a sandbar, a sight that Banvard claimed to witness himself. In the accompanying pamphlet, the author, presumably Banvard himself, notes that "[t]his was a very unfortunate boat, having previously blown up, and killing a large number of persons."[33] The perilous nature of travel on the river was a theme repeatedly emphasized by Banvard, his fellow panorama exhibitors, and even early travel guides of the region included a whole genre of surveys of steamboat disasters, including the popular *Lloyd's Steamboat Directory and Disasters on the Western Waters*.

Most of the moving panoramas exhibitions of the Mississippi and its tributaries were intended to replicate a voyage along the waterways as viewed from the deck of a steamboat. One commentator later wrote about the panorama when it was viewed in Wales, "here you have a voyage without liability to shipwreck; travel without its fatigues

[33] Banvard, *Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River,* 21.

or expense. An exhibition …[that] moves by the spectator like a landscape from the cabin window of a steam-boat."[34] Indeed, from auditoriums in New York, Boston, London, and elsewhere viewers were shown a fanciful view of the Western landscape as the shore line was distorted to allow for the exposure of objects, people, and buildings far off the coastline—thereby not replicating a precise translation of the shoreline.[35] Yet this permutation of the space allowed for the artist to further stress the relationship between the people that populated the scenes, and their natural as well as built environments.

These themes also appear several times in the only extant Mississippi River moving panorama, John Egan's *Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*. Egan originally produced the panorama on a commission from the University of Pennsylvania archaeologist Montroville Wilson Dickeson. The panorama was intended to augment Dickeson's popular lectures on his excavations of Pre-Columbian mounds in the region, containing scenes of popular legend, historical contact between European explorers and Native Americans, and contemporary scenes that mimic the predestined industrial triumph of the Mississippi. Egan, who made most of his living as a Philadelphia scene painter, was evidently familiar with many of the tropes of American landscape painting, as they appear in the panorama.[36]

In the first scene of the Egan panorama, "Marietta Ancient Fortifications," Native American figures stand on a high vantage point overlooking an ancient mound burial site

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[34] Undated Clipping, *Cardiff Guardian*, John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.
[35] The distortion of perspective present in each of the panoramas to allow for a more expansive view of the landscape is discussed in Smith, *River of Dreams*, 130-32; Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*, 60.
[36] Angela Miller, "'The Soil of an Unknown America': New World Lost Empires and the Debate over Cultural Origins," *American Art* 8, no. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn 1994): 10-11.

(figure 2-10). Further in the background steamships ply the Ohio River, and a small settlement appears across the river. Although the panorama was billed as a collection of scenes sketched by Dickeson himself, this particular vignette is a near translation of a lithograph that appeared as the frontispiece for the 1848 Smithsonian publication, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (figure 2-11). Yet, Egan has added several commercial steamboats, as well as further indication of European-American settlement. Indeed, the advance of civilization and development is a leitmotif in Egan's panorama. Throughout the panorama, scenes of the burial mounds and Native Americans are interspersed with the history of Western civilization in the region, including the burial of Hernando de Soto, a massacre of French troops, and the arrival of Andrew Jackson in New Orleans (figure 2-12).[37] All of this is combined with the mythic history of the region as explored in the remains of ancient civilizations. While the first scene of the panorama showed a pair of Native Americans looking at both the remains of a past society and the first signs of the one to come, the last scene implied their ultimate fate. The scene, the "Temple of the Sun by Sunset," includes a solitary contemplative Native American male looking at the sun setting behind a burial mound (figure 2-13). The archetype of the vanishing Indian is reinforced by the long lost civilization, and the previous performances of the panorama that undoubtedly reinforce a narrative of natural progression towards a European-American civilization.

Some of the few images that exist of John Banvard's panorama and those of his more popular imitators contain a distinct progressive narrative from the wilds of the Upper Mississippi towards the agrarian and ultimately commercial landscapes of the

[37] The arrival of General Jackson is one of the scenes that are missing from the extant panorama.

Lower Mississippi. Throughout, both in the images and in the accompanying texts, architecture and natural forms are conflated in a gesture that at the same time imbues the natural landscape with a sense of industrial order and naturalizes the built environment. In 1847 John Banvard described the "Bluffs of Selma" near Herculaneum, Missouri as "[resembling] the facades of mighty temples, --the face of them having uniform arches and carved niches, almost as regular and order-like as if they were chiseled out by the hands of man (figure 2-1)."[38] Banvard's description of the river bank, whose deposits of limestone had eroded to create large arches and therefore inspire the classically named town of Herculaneum, elides the landscape of the Mississippi Valley with a sense of past history of development and a potential for productiveness. The classical allusions and the visual and textual presence of architecture, naturalized in the landscape, set up the narrative of the Mississippi as a history of civilization. Themes of classical antiquity and the inherent architecture of the landscape allowed for the rhetorical development of the landscape into agriculture, industry, and most importantly trade in the panorama's conclusion at New Orleans.[39]

By the time Banvard's panorama reached London in 1849, he had added even more scenes so that the panorama began as far west as Yellowstone on the Missouri River. Each of the added scenes allowed Banvard to depict native populations that had largely been pushed out of the Mississippi Valley, and to further extend the theme of a natural architecture that predestined a civilization descended from its European ancestor.

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[38] Banvard, *Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River*, 21.

[39] The rise and fall of such civilizations also had great currency in the contemporary work of painters who gave this cyclical view of history, most notably Thomas Cole in his *Course of Empire* series, Miller, *The Empire of the Eye,* 24-33.

In a depiction of the Assinnaboin Indians, he included the Native Americans as tiny figures in front of large imposing clay domes, which he described as "[resembling] immense domes of some gigantic city (figure 2-14)."[40] Just after that scene, Banvard launched into several descriptions and images of the waning of Indian civilization. "The Village of the Dead," "Prairie on Fire," and "Indian Ruins," each image and description reinforces the idea that the Native civilizations that once inhabited this land are being left behind by not only its new Western European inhabitants but also that it was somehow predetermined. Again, just before joining the Mississippi, Banvard shows one last scene along the Missouri, "The Brick Kilns (figure 2-15)." This subject, the large dome-like natural formations, had previously been depicted in George Catlin's drawings and paintings of the Mandan people, which Banvard explicitly points out are now extinct (figure 2-16). Yet, rather than the more rounded and elegant forms that appear in Catlin's images, Banvard's "Brick Kilns" is an array of pointed shafts, haphazardly grouped and pointing imprecisely upward. Though Banvard's description of the scene is brief, the evocative name of the locale along with its grim representation no doubt reinforced an idea of both the potential for production and the decay of the civilization that once inhabited it.

In describing the length and importance of the Mississippi River, John Banvard lifted a section of prose from Timothy Flint's *A Condensed Geography and History of the*

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[40] John Banvard, *Description of Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi & Missouri Rivers, extensively known as the 'Three-Mile Painting,' exhibiting a view of country over 3000 Miles in Length, extending from the Mouth of the Yellow Stone to the City of New Orleans*, *being by far The Largest Picture ever executed by man* (London: W.J. Golbourn, 1849): 25.

Western States, or the Mississippi Valley and places it in several versions of his description pamphlets. Flint wrote,

> The hundred shores, laved by its waters; the long course of its tributaries, some of which are already the abodes of cultivation, and other pursuing an immense course without a solitary dwelling of civilized man being seen on its banks; the numerous tribes of savages that now roam upon its borders; the affecting and imperishable traces of generations that are gone, leaving no other memorials of their existence, or materials for their history, than their tombs, that rise at frequent intervals along its banks; the dim, but glorious anticipations of the future;—these are subjects of contemplation that cannot but associate themselves with the view of this river.[41]

Flint's text greatly informed Banvard's pamphlet and when it was not quoted wholesale, it was merely paraphrased and reshaped to fit Banvard's narrative. Though Banvard knew the Mississippi well from the many years he spent traveling the river on theater and grocery boats, as well as working in important ports like St. Louis, he derived much of his overarching narrative for the panorama from texts like Flint's. Both the earlier book and Banvard' s panorama overlaid a story of increased settlement, expansion, and industry in this region atop the physical landscape. Limestone bluffs were described as great amphitheaters of the Classical Age and naturally formed domes became brick kilns, ripe for the manufacturing of a new American infrastructure along the thoroughfare.

Indeed as has been previously studied in regards to Banvard's panorama and the prevalence of contemporary art concerning the Mississippi in general, much of it corresponded to ongoing national debates about the westward expansion of a national economy. In her doctoral dissertation, art historian Angela Miller discussed the prevalence of themes of national cohesion based on economic expansion in the region.

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[41] Banvard, *Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River*, 15-16; and Timothy Flint, *A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States, or the Mississippi Valley* (Cincinnati: E.H. Flint, 1828): 131-32.

The Mississippi itself was used as a true symbol of unification because of the trade it facilitated united east and west, north and south. Regional differences were mostly overlooked in the Mississippi panoramas in deference to popular agendas for increased development in the region that would benefit all regional American economies.[42]

As Banvard's panorama continued downriver past St. Louis the sights he depicted and described were increasingly populated and active in either agriculture or trade. Passing through the fertile cotton and sugar field of the Lower Mississippi, the land became increasingly developed as the natural forms of the landscape gave way to more signs of human cultivation—farms and then plantations. Slowly larger cities and increased river traffic came into view. The trip climaxed at the "great commercial emporium of the South." Whereas earlier, the rocky outcroppings at the Northern end of the journey resembled manmade architecture, now in New Orleans commerce is naturalized: "Sloops, schooners, brigs and ships occupy the wharves, arranged below each other of their, showing a forest of masts (figure 2-17)." For Banvard, the Mississippi River was a metaphor for the inevitability of permanent American settlement. Commerce along the river was to be part of the scenery, a natural and salubrious element of the environment.[43]

John Rowson Smith, whose *Leviathan Panorama of the Mississippi River* appeared in 1848, used a similar motif in his exhibitions. His panorama was actually divided into three sections that appropriately reflected the region's most dominant

[42] Miller, "'The Imperial Republic,'" 289.
[43] Banvard, *Description of Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River*, 32.

industries: the Corn, Cotton, and Sugar Regions.[44] At the beginning of the second section, the Cotton Region, Smith diverged from the previous scenes of Native Americans and relatively pristine wilderness to show the audience a cross section of a steamboat. In the social hall and main saloon of the boat, ladies with their male "protectors" are seated while single men remain standing, "thus always securing a proper seat for the ladies, no matter how great the crowd."[45] As Katherine Grier has shown in *Culture and Comfort*, public spaces in midcentury steamboats mimicked the setting of the domestic parlor.[46] Again, Smith's panorama turned both the mode of leisure travel and the objects of commercial consumption into the spectacle itself. The images of the steamboat parlors, replete with fashionable fixtures and safe from vice, mirrored the image of midcentury theaters that wanted to distance themselves from their lascivious reputations.[47] Urban audiences were able to supposedly imagine themselves in the environ of the steamboat parlor because both were understood to be as genteel spaces as indicated by their shared consumption of contemporary goods. The very objects presumably on view in Smith's panorama would be on view and for sale in the same commercial centers of the city were antebellum audiences attended the performances. Additionally, the representation of such familiar and perhaps even aspirational settings in the middle of a panorama of the

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[44] This may have also had a practical purpose as Smith could have then had his panorama divided on there separate sections and switched them during two intermissions. This would have allowed for easier transport and setup.

[45] Smith, *Leviathan Panorama of the Mississippi*, 15.

[46] Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Rochester: Strong Museum, 1988): 43-50.

[47] A culture of "vulgarity" that was perceived to have existed in early to mid-century American theaters helped to urge a split between 'high' and 'low' establishments and is explored in Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow, The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988): 56-60.

Mississippi River not only helped to further the narrative of a leisure voyage, but also reinforced ideas of spectacle and consumption.

The exhibition and popularity of Mississippi River panoramas at the midpoint of the nineteenth century was not only the result of an interest in the ongoing social and political struggles of the American West, but also since the region was a burgeoning center of American trade it too was an item for consumption. The prevailing theme in the vast majority of antebellum moving panorama exhibitions was an emphasis on commerce and trade. The American West offered unparalleled opportunities for agricultural and industrial expansion. In addition, other panoramas, such as he heroic voyages of Elisha Kane depicted his Arctic adventures which were direct results of the search for a northwest passage. Whaling voyages to the furthest extent of the southern hemisphere and trips to the Palestine and the Far East each elicited ideas of goods that could now easily be brought to the metropolitan centers of the United States.[48]

On Broadway in New York City and on Washington Street in Boston, Banvard's moving panorama of the Mississippi appeared in the very epicenters of American commerce. As described in Chapter I, moving panoramas participated in a mode of spectacular exhibition that were inherently tied to their commercial environment. Invariably, popular moving panoramas would have been exhibited in locales that offered the closest proximity to the city's commercial centers, themselves innately being spaces for spectacle. Angela Miller has described how even panoramas of New York City itself respond to the same ideas of trade and consumption that are present in the Mississippi

[48] While not explored for their relationship to commercial interests, a substantial overview of the variety of moving panorama exhibitions is explored in, Karin Hertel McGinnis, "Moving Right Along: Nineteenth Century Panorama Painting in the United States," Ph.D. Diss. (University of Minnesota, 1983).

panoramas.[49] As audiences strolled through the commercial thoroughfares of their own cities, the very entertainment that was so popular in this era was a recasting of similar ideas of spectacle and commerce that were on view outside.

In New York, after viewing the panorama, patrons of Banvard's panorama could also shop at the nation's most fashionable stores, where they could buy the very goods made possible by commerce on the Mississippi. In A.T. Stewart's department stores, imports from Europe and the latest domestic products were on display. Northeastern mills and urban stores traded in products that were reliant on imports from the American South. In an era that is typically defined for the rapid increase of sectional tension, some contemporary Americans viewed the trade depicted in Banvard's panorama as being the bond that would preserve the Union. In 1852 the Reverend Kazlitt Arvine wrote, "[Banvard's panorama] proved to be a home production throughout, the cotton being grown in one of the Southern States, and the fabric spun and woven by the factory girls of Lowell."[50] Arvine's insightful comment on the physicality of the panorama itself, created out of the cotton whose cultivation is depicted therein, reinforces the idea of the work as a commodity available for sale across the nation. The steamboats, the plantations, and the workers in the fields harvesting corn, cotton, and sugar were the visual representation of the trade and spectacle that fueled urban commercial centers like Broadway and Washington Streets.

Additionally, Mississippi River panoramas have an unexpected analogue in one of the era's other most popular moving panoramas, Otis Bullard's *Panorama of New York*

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[49] Miller, "The Imperial Republic," 291.
[50] Kazlitt Arvine, "John Banvard," *The Cyclopedia of Anecdotes of Literature and the Fine Arts* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1853): 509.

City.[51] First exhibited in Rochester, New York in late 1850, Bullard's panorama was a virtual trip through lower Manhattan in the same manner that Banvard took his audiences from St. Louis to New Orleans. The *Panorama of New York City* depicted a six-mile trip that started on the docks of the island at the intersection of West and Cortland Streets (figure 2-18). The panorama then took the audience south to the Battery and the immediately north again, following Broadway from its southern terminus to Union Square. Bullard's panorama started off showing the great shipping vessels from the around the world that converged on lower Manhattan.[52] Looping around the Battery, Bullard's panorama ventured north, depicting every structure on the west side of Broadway for the mile and a half stretch between the lower tip of the island and Union Square. In the 154 views that supposedly comprised Bullard's panorama, audiences viewed all of the city's monuments, important centers of commerce and government, and notable residents. Bullard highlighted not only the civic and religious icons of the city, but he also included detailed views of centers of entertainment, including multiple views of Castle Garden, Barnum's American Museum, and the Crystal Palace (figure 2-19). The panorama was apparently such a comprehensive guide to the city that in 1859 Albert Norton, its then proprietor after the death of Bullard, reproduced text and images from the panorama in a guidebook.[53]

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[51] Miller, "'The Imperial Republic,'" v. 2, 291.
[52] Bullard would later paint a second panorama of New York City that concentrated on discrete New York vignettes that were not geographical arranged.
[53] Albert Norton, *Norton's Hand Book of New York City, Containing 44 Engravings of the Most Celebrated Public Buildings in the City* (New York: Albert Norton, 1859).

In advertising the panorama, Norton referred to New York as the "Great Commercial Emporium."[54] Indeed, the panorama stressed the city's role as central urban, economic space of the nation, and those familiar with contemporary moving panorama exhibitions must have recalled Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi*. His panorama reached its triumph in its depiction of New Orleans, which in the accompanying literature was titled, "the commercial emporium of the South."[55] The link between the two panoramas is not only in the manner in which they both highlight the commercial nature of the regions that they depict, but also in how they could be understood as a continuity. The *Panorama of New York City* took up right where Banvard's stopped. The crops that were produced in the Mississippi Valley eventually became available for sale when shipped into commercials centers and displayed in shops on thoroughfares such as Broadway and Washington Street, as well as the storefronts of southern cities including New Orleans.

Though Bullard's panorama never actually appeared in New York City, Townsend and Orr's *Mammoth Panorama of the Hudson River and the City of New York* did appear on Broadway in March of 1849. The panorama was exhibited only a few blocks away from where Banvard exhibited his panorama of the Mississippi the previous year. In the spring of 1849, New York audiences could have sat in Townsend and Orr's hall and viewed a trip down the Hudson that took them to the very doorstep of their theater. Both Mississippi and New York City panoramas expected an interest by the viewer in the spectacular, commercial nature of their urban setting. Mississippi

[54] "Excursion to New York City, Through in Two Hours," Broadside, SY1850 no.75, New-York Historical Society.
[55] Banvard, *Description of Banvard's Panorama*, 32.

panoramas marshaled imagery of the far-off West and made it locally relevant through the triumph of commerce that brought its raw goods and products to the urban environments. As spectacular forms of entertainment they facilitated the consumption of the material goods and entertainments.

Of course in the 1850s, the trade based upon southern and western agricultural production was reliant upon the use of enslaved laborers. John Banvard himself seemed appalled by slavery. In his unpublished memoir written late in his life he described his experience of viewing a slave auction in Louisville, having only recently arrived from New York after the death of his father. During the auction, a slave who refused to leave the auction block after his sale was forcibly dragged to the ground and whipped in front of the crowd. Additionally, Banvard recalls an enslaved female cook who worked next door to his house in Louisville and who would regularly be beaten in the yard, within earshot of the disturbed young Banvard.[56]

Yet despite the perceived discomfort with slavery that appeared in Banvard's writing, and the fact that the majority of his panorama depicted the slaveholding South with working plantations, there seemed to be little commentary either on the part of Banvard or his audience on the institution itself.[57] The vast plantations that lined the Mississippi River were often described only in terms of the raw goods produced there with little commentary on the enslaved workforce laboring there. Banvard's panorama repeatedly emphasized the agricultural commodity over the human presence. One

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[56] Banvard writes about several of these incidents in his memoirs, now in the John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

[57] There are several notable exceptions to this though, which resulted in the creation of anti-slavery panoramas. They were direct responses to the narratives provided by Banvard and others and are discussed in Chapter III of this dissertation.

unknown writer described the Lower Mississippi section of the panorama and acknowledged but demurred from thinking about the very subject at hand. The author, described as the "Family Visiter," wrote:

> He we have a glance at all kinds of society, from white to black, from country to city, from master to slave. Yes, no one can go so far South as New Orleans and not see something of the system so well to prevail there. Yet the artist has wisely kept from our view those horrors so often exciting our most tender sensibilities simply from relation. We see slavery in the cotton fields; slavery in the sugar domains. We see the slave, slave driver, the lordly master, all in their various relations. They *may* be all happy, for they *say* nothing. But I could not help thinking those poor blacks, hard at work as they *were*, were sometimes sighing for friends, from whom they had been roughly torn. I hoped it was not so,—the scene passed, and with new scenes came new impressions. For I had little desire to dwell on painful subjects with so much before me to minister delight to the senses. Methought, "there is a times for everything ; a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to mourn, a time to dance—" and I was quite sure this was the time for joy.[58]

While the Family Visiter's description of the slaves in Banvard's panorama is an anomaly in that the author actually recognizes their presence, it is important to note that he or she made a decision to refocus their interest in the spectacle of the panorama. This quotation is typical of reactions to Mississippi River panoramas by white, urban audiences that shy away from the realities of the scenes presented, even if they do know the truth, and concentrate on the larger themes of the panorama.

Another description of Banvard's panorama that explicitly confronted the realities of slavery in the South with the overarching ideas of commerce and the expansion of American industry was written as a poem. In an undated clipping from the *Roxbury*

[58] Untitled and undated clipping, John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.

Messenger a Mrs. T.P. Smith writes about a visit to see Banvard's panorama and she describes the scenes of the Lower Mississippi approaching New Orleans.

> Another city, beautiful and fair,
> With towers and spires rising in the air—
> And all, that wonder-working genius, *Trade*,
> With its ten thousand busy fingers, made.
> Here is the Cotton Mart—(alas! and slave mart too,
> Which the kind Artist has *not* brought to view;)[59]

Like the 'Family Visiter,' Mrs. Smith was aware of the realities of agricultural and commerce in the Mississippi Valley but was thankful that she did not have engage with the realities of it. Slavery was integral to the appreciation of the Southern landscape, but the realities of slavery and the mythic manner in which it was presented in the Mississippi panoramas was rarely questioned.

Like many of his contemporary painters, Banvard naturalized the presence of slavery in the Mississippi Valley by showing the black laborers as part of the fecundity of the land, thereby also normalizing their coerced labor. Though not a scene of agricultural labor, several enslaved figures prominently in one scene from John Egan's *Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley* (figure 2-20). Eight enslaved laborers work to excavate the burial land with pick and shovel, while three well-dressed white men inspect the scene. One man, possibly meant to depict Dickeson himself, draws the strata of the mound in his sketchbook. In the background a group of well-dressed figures have their backs to the viewer as they gaze out of the Mississippi scenery. In one scene, Egan includes many of the tropes of Mississippi moving panoramas. The enslaved figures are naturalized into the landscape—affecting the look of it itself as they dig through the earth.

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[59] Mrs. T.P. Smith, "Tributary Lines, On Seeing Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River," *Roxbury Messenger* (n.d.), John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.

The supervising white figures makes notes and inspect their progress, expressing interest only in the results of the labor on the landscape.

A group towards background mimes the ideal for a genteel inspection of the landscape. With their backs turned away from the labor and production at the center of the scene, they inspect the supposedly natural state of the landscape. Their view of the landscape follows midcentury modes of the supposed disinterested appreciation of the landscape. As previous scholarship on ideas of the appreciation of landscape have discussed, in this period a viewer should have be able to appreciate a landscape disinterested in the potential use of the land, for agriculture, industry, or otherwise.[60] Indeed, this group of white viewers reinforces the position of the panorama's audience as spectators. Like the group at the rear of the scene, the panorama's audience views the landscape of the Mississippi with supposed disinterestedness in its worldly advantages, but only seeks to learn more about the Pre-Columbian sites. In this effort, the realities of slavery and the production of agriculture or industry are supposedly naturalized. They become part of the landscape and not an actor in it.

The majority of commentators do not specifically note the presence of slavery at all in their descriptions of John Banvard's panorama. Ramshackle slave quarters and rows of black laborers in the fields were presented as part of the rustic South that existed in contemporary lore. Michael Chaney notes how seamlessly the institution of slavery is incorporated into an archetypal Southern landscape.[61] In describing President's Island outside Memphis, Banvard instructs his audience to contemplate the scene before them.

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[60] Miller, "Landscape Taste as an Indicator of Class Identity in Antebellum America, 340-56.
[61] Chaney, *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative*, 120-21

He writes, "[h]ere the voyager will begin to see fine cotton plantations, with the slaves working in the cotton fields. He will see the beautiful mansions of the planters, rows of "negro quarters," and lofty cypress trees, the pride of the Southern forests."[62] One review of Henry Lewis's panorama of the Mississippi described the southern scenery as,

> "particularly interesting to a Northern eye. The fine residences of the Southern planters,--the numerous and picturesque shipping and craft, which are here met with,--the peculiar and rich appearance of the foliage in this almost tropical clime, making scenes fit for the abode of fairies—the somberness that drapes the forest in eternal gloom—the deep solitude through which this night view wanders—all conspire to throng the fancy."[63]

While the decrepitude of slave housing in Mississippi may or may not have been accurate in Banvard's panorama, it nonetheless conformed to popular ideas about the Southern landscape and belied any transgressive ideas about the presence of slavery in the panorama.

While most contemporary landscape painters and illustrators eschewed life on the plantation, the Mississippi River, panoramas recycled urban imaginings of slave life and depicted as them taking place on the plantation itself. [64] Familiar and comfortable images of African American men and women at rest, known mostly from the popularity of the minstrel show, belie the cruelties of the slave economy and the potential discomfort it may cause for white, urban American viewers. An undated oil sketch by Banvard depicts a modest plantation house and its enslaved residents in a moment of leisure along the

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[62] Banvard, *Description of Banvard's Panorama*, 27.
[63] Untitled Clipping, *Baptist Register Utica* (February 21, 1850), Henry Lewis Papers, Missouri History Museum Archives, St. Louis.
[64] According to John Michael Vlach, it was panoramas and minstrel shows that most vividly kept alive ideas of the Southern plantation life and gave them form in the antebellum era.; *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege & Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 25-26.

banks of the river (figure 2-21). Apparently pausing from their tasks near the end of the day, as indicated by the sunset, a male and female slave dance to the tunes of a banjo being played by a seated figure. This archetypical image of Southern slavery relies on its apparently benign nature to reassure viewers that the enslaved laborers of Mississippi plantations lead fruitful and relaxed lives, reminiscent of the Famliy Visiter who did not want to see the "horrors" of slavery actually brought to view.[65]

Typical of such representations, despite the figure's diminutive representation, they act as players in front of a theater. At the end of the antebellum era, Eastman Johnson's *Negro Life at the South* would replicate such a type of scene (figure 2-22). John Davis has described the careful placing of Johnson's figures along the rear façade of a dilapidated townhouse as "though arranged behind a theater proscenium." The theatricality of the figures in Johnson's painting complicated the reception of the painting and led to the popularly attributed title of the painting, "My Old Kentucky Home," itself a minstrel song written by Stephen Foster in 1853.[66]

While the Mississippi River panoramas were ostensibly offered to urban American audiences about the Western portion of their country largely inaccessibly to them, it was the goods produced there and enjoyed in the Eastern cities that received the most attention. An early description of Banvard's panorama, one which no doubt had input from the artist itself, previews the panorama for an Eastern audience while it was

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[65] Untitled and undated clipping, John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.

[66] John Davis, "Eastman Johnson's Negro Life at the South and Urban Slavery in Washington, D.C." *The Art Bulletin* 80, no. 1 (March 1998): 69-70.

still being completed in Louisville. A childhood friend of Banvard from New York, Selim Woodworth wrote,

> As a medium for the study of the geography of this portion of our country, it will be of inestimable value. The manners and customs of the Aborigines and the settlers—the modes of cultivating and harvesting the peculiar crops—cotton, sugar, tobacco, &c.—the shipping of the produce in all the variety of novel and curious conveyances employed on these rivers for transportation, are so vividly portrayed that but a slight stretch of the imagination would ring the noise of the puffing steamboats from the river and songs of the negroes in the fields, in music to the ear, and one seems to inhale the very atmosphere before him.[67]

Representations of commerce and slavery on the Mississippi River appeared in Banvard's panorama, and each of his imitator's, not as depictions of labor and its product, but rather as the visual representation of the expansion of the American plantation economy.

As these exhibitions were urban entertainments, it was the popular image of the minstrel that made its way into moving panorama exhibitions not that of the enslaved laborer. Minstrel shows also responded to these ideas in their evocations of the moving panorama. In an 1850 publication of *De Negro's Original Piano-Rama, of Southern, Northern and Western Songs* the unknown author responded to the idea of the moving panorama exhibition at its very height of popularity. The "Piano-Rama" is described as being a "Grand Original, Local, Locomotive, Dog-matical, Grog-matical, Gold Fever-ical, An Prophetical LECTURE!" [68] The author's satire of the grandiose names often attached to moving panorama exhibitions introduces the text as he proceeds to narrate a virtual tour from France through the United States and eventually to the California Gold Rush,

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[67] "Letters from Correspondents," *Morris's National Press, a Journal for Home* (May 2, 1846): 12.
[68] *De Negro's Original Piano-Rama, of Southern, Northern and Western Songs* (Philadelphia: Fisher and Brother, 1850): 67-69, in *From Traveling Show to Vaudeville: Theatrical Spectacle in America, 1830-1910* ed. Robert M. Lewis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003): 73-75.

which was a popular topic for moving panoramas. Ending his imaginary tour to California, the author gives an eccentric description of the supposedly vast riches to be found out West as well as a warning:

> …de gals wear gold in dar gums, de gemmen tie de demselves fast to dar watches by gold ropes, an de wedder rooster ob dar minds all points toward California, an de great metal physical question dat seems to us, is am wedder de gold bug or de hum-bug will soonest make de human bug come out a big bug.[69]

The *Piano-Rama,* because it so consciously satires the idea of the moving panorama and its virtual travel to lands that promise great trade, ends with the question of whether it this all one great hoax or not. These minstrel shows lampoon the idea of spectacle common to both forms of amusement. In doing so, it highlights how distinctly urban modes of representation replaced more accurate images of the western scenery.

Moving panoramas of the Mississippi River marshaled the pictorial and textual language of the environment in which they exhibited to allow audiences to engage with pertinent social and political issues, but through a manner that did not probe or offend. Trite images of enslaved African Americans, derived from minstrelsy, replaced images of actual conditions of plantation life and allowed for their potentially caustic reception to slip into a mythic background for larger stories to play out. Similarly, the idea that moving panoramas mimicked leisurely travel in a Mississippi steamboat resituated the urban theater onto the river. Furthermore, that the overarching theme that was present in all of these panoramas was the extension and triumph of American trade is fundamentally tied to the panoramas' exhibition in urban commercial centers.

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[69] Lewis, *From Traveling Show to Vaudville*, 75.

Though mid-century Americans may have been living in an "age of panoramas" that offered to take viewers on long voyages all in the course of two hours, what they were viewing on the painted canvas may have more appropriately represented the environment in which they sat than to which they were supposed to travel.[70] In a sermon delivered at the Harvard Street Baptist Church in Boston by John Banvard's brother Joseph during the initial run of John's panorama there, the preacher explained what he viewed as the distinct relationship between country and city. A description of John's sermon appeared in the *Christian Reflector*:

> Cities give character to the country—cities rule the nation. The fashions, the amusements, the conventional customs and the *morals* of the cities are soon imitated all over the country. The influence of cities has been greatly increased since the introduction of steam for purposes of travel. By railroads and steamboats, facilities of communication between city and country have been multiplied, by means of which acquaintances and familiarity between them increase, a knowledge of city practices rapidly spreads, the corrupting literature and even *daily city* papers are scattered far and wide opportunity is furnished to the denizens of the country to attend the theatres, operas and circuses of the city, so that the cities furnish evening amusements to a wide extent of country, all of which gives them tremendous influence [emphasis his].[71]

While Joseph Banvard may have been concerned with the dissolution of cities being so easily spread to the rest of the nation, his conception of the relationship between the two is important. If John Banvard's Mississippi panorama, as well as those produced by others, were comprised of distinctly nationalizing themes that emphasized unified trade and commerce, then these works too were reflecting urban ideas of urban spectacle like panoramic entertainment. Moving panoramas, like other urban spectacular amusement,

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[70] "The Bluffs of Semla [*sic*]," 643.

[71] Joseph Banvard's sermon calls for the increased presence of Christian morality in urban entertainment, so that it thereby can spread to the rest of the nation, "Immoralities of Cities," *Christian Reflector* 10, no. 20 (May 20, 1847): 78.

were intended to appeal to urban audiences. Yet, like the "city paper" that was originally produced for one locale, they eventually made its way into other locales and spread a distinctly urban culture.

The moving panoramas of the Mississippi River functioned like the many other varieties that were exhibited during the height of the medium's popularity. They took on topics that were interesting to audiences because of contemporary events or concerns, but ultimately they expressed ideas that were more couched in localized interests. They were, for the most part, an urban phenomenon, and as such aligned with the commercial and social tensions of the era. Burgeoning American cities like Boston, New York, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and New Orleans became hubs of panorama exhibitions. These populist exhibitions not only had audiences that totaled in the hundreds of thousands, but engaged them in a growing urban culture of spectacle and commerce.

CHAPTER III:
Anti-slavery Panoramas and Spectacles of Race

On the evening of November 22, 1855, a series of lectures on the institution of American slavery commenced at Boston's Tremont Temple. Titled "Independent Lectures on Slavery," the second annual program was dedicated to addressing the nation's ongoing crisis and organizers invited speakers from both sides of the debate. While some abolitionists including William Lloyd Garrison denounced any attempt to allow slavery advocates to have a public podium, this series included such notables as Senator Georgia Robert Toombs, a staunch advocate for the expansion of slavery. Seemingly confident in their cause, Northern anti-slavery activists felt that frank and gentlemanly debates from both sides would demonstrate the starkness in difference between the two causes and the need for continued reform. Yet on that first night, the program consisted only of two speakers: the former Congressman from Massachusetts and education reformer Horace Mann and the Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King. After Mann gave an introductory lecture in which he expounded on the Christian duties of all men to help create equality in the nation, King rose to the podium. He then recited the latest work by the anti-slavery poet John Greenleaf Whittier entitled "The Panorama."[1]

During a night when the speakers attempted to lay before the audience the gravity of the national situation and the stakes for which the two sides fought, Whittier via King evoked an experience familiar to many in attendance, a visit to a moving panorama

[1] "Opening of the Course of Lectures on Slavery," *Boston Daily Atlas* (November 23, 1855): 2; The recently elected Governor of Virginia Henry Wise declined his invitation, Barton H. Wise, *The Life of Henry A. Wise of Virginia, 1806-1870* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899): 227-30.

exhibition. Whittier's poem was set inside a dark hall, where an audience impatiently awaited the unveiling of a moving panorama. "Roll up your curtain!," and "Let the show begin!," shouted the crowd. Finally, the curtain rose, revealing the grassy prairies and rocky mountaintops of the American West, as well as the Pacific Ocean beyond it. The poem suggested a contemporary pristine and fecund landscape ready for settlement and cultivation like those presented in the earlier panoramas of John Banvard and others. A correspondent for the *Boston Daily Atlas* wrote: "The poem commences by introducing the hearer to an exhibition room and a showman, with a panorama of the great West. The canvas is unrolled displaying all the glories of the prairie, forest, lake and mountain scenery which characterize that region in its unsettled state." After allowing the audience to contemplate this "new Canaan of our Israel," the showman dropped the curtain.[2]

Soon the audience in Whittier's poem began to demand of the showman more views of how the land will look in the future, after American settlement. The long and verbose poem, typical of both Whittier and his midcentury colleagues, laid before both the real and imagined audience of the moving panorama exhibition two distinct possible futures for the nation: one where slavery is expanded in the West and one where it had been halted. Whittier's showman then went on to present two alternate views that reinforced the overall stakes of the "Independent Lectures on Slavery" that, too, offer different visions for the nation. Predictably, in the vision of a free West, "the scenery is described as enchantingly lovely—a picture of contentment, thrift and happiness." In the latter view, "the rude negro huts, the vulgar bar-room scenes, the slave auction, and all

[2] "Opening of the Course of Lectures on Slavery," 30; Whittier's poem was published the next year as the headliner in a new collection, John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Panorama, and Other Poems* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1856): 3.

the indications of the degradation and misery attendant on the 'peculiar' institution, are set forth in glowing numbers."[3]

While Whittier's poem presented a fictional account of a moving panorama exhibition of the western United States, the audience could have easily recalled their real-life counterparts. The popularity of John Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River* and that of his imitators may have waned as the decade progressed, but the audience's familiarity with the medium was maintained as various other panormas continued active nationwide tours.[4] The moving panorama continued to be a well-worn literary trope through the 1860s, appearing in a variety of forms of popular culture including several appearances in Mark Twain's early writings.[5] Additionally, the entertainment was so well-known that a series of parlor entertainments marketed by Milton Bradley adapted the moving panorama's modes of performance allowing for its recreation by children in one's own home.[6] The moving panorama became part of an American vernacular, in which it was it was adapted to poetry, literature, and leisure.

Perhaps more important is that the Boston audience would likely have recalled the two different anti-slavery panoramas fronted by African Americans that had previously been performed mere steps from where they sat on that November night. In April of 1850, the fugitive slave from Virginia Henry "Box" Brown debuted his moving panorama

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[3] "Opening of the Course of Lectures on Slavery," 2.

[4] Other panoramas popular moving panoramas of this era that also depicted the West included scenes of California and the journey to Oregon Country such as John Skirving's *Panorama of Fremont's Overland Journey to Oregon and California*, which was in Boston in 1849; Joseph Earl Arrington, "Skirving's Moving Panorama: Colonel Fremont's Western Expeditions Pictorialized," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 65 (June 1964): 146.

[5] Most explicitly is his short story, "The Scriptural Panoramaist," but as Curtis Dahl has examined the medium as whole greatly influenced his presentation of the Mississippi, Dahl, "Mark Twain and the Moving Panoramas," *American Quarterly* 12, no 1 (Spring, 1961): 20-32.

[6] This is a theme that is specifically examined in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

Mirror of Slavery, literally around the corner from Tremont Temple at Washingtonian Hall on Bromfield Street.[7] More recently, in April of 1855, the Cincinnati photographer and freeborn African American James Presley Ball exhibited his *Pictorial Tour of the United States* at Amory Hall in the fashionable commercial and entertainment district along Washington Street. Both of these panoramas told the story of a slave in the United States and followed a similar narrative—capture in Africa, sale and abuse in the American South, and escape to the North—all set amongst the scenery of the American South and the Mississippi Valley.[8]

The anti-slavery panoramas of "Box" Brown and Ball, as well as one produced by the fugitive slave William Wells Brown in 1850 and exhibited only in Britain, were critical reactions to the success of the popular Mississippi panoramas as well as sincere rebukes against their ambivalent treatment of slavery. Moreover, they attacked the institution of slavery and its treatment in popular culture by destabilizing the traditional manner in which it was presented. Prior to the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in serial form in 1851 and as a bound novel in 1852, the Mississippi panoramas provided some of the most popular and frequently viewed representations of slave life in the American

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[7] Throughout this dissertation, Henry "Box" Brown is referred to as "Box" Brown despite that not being his true name in order to distinguish him from his contemporary William Wells Brown; Jeffrey Ruggles wrote the definitive text on Henry "Box" Brown, replete with primary sources and documentation, Jeffrey Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown* (Richmond: The Library of Virginia, 2003): 88.

[8] Ball's panorama was accompanied by a pamphlet that listed and described each of the scenes, [James Presley Ball], *Ball's Pictorial Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States comprising Views of the African Slave Trade; of Northern and Southern Cities; Cotton and Sugar Plantations; of the Mississippi, Ohio, and Susquehanna Rivers, Niagara Falls, &c.* (Cincinnati: Achilles Pugh, 1855); and "Box" Brown's scenes are listed without full description in advertisements such as "Henry Box Brown's Mirror of Slavery," *Springfield Republican* [MA] (May 22, 1850), reproduced in Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 89.

South.[9] The anti-slavery moving panoramas assumed the familiarity of audiences with these types of representations and turned them on their head. Since anti-slavery panoramas changed the race of the implied protagonists of the panoramas from white to black they fundamentally changed how the panoramas navigated the represented spaces. Inverting the conventional travelogues of leisure voyages through the region, the panoramas highlighted the horrors and effects of slavery on the American landscape.

Yet, while the subjects and landscapes of the anti-slavery panoramas were fundamentally different representations of the landscape, the exhibitions themselves relied on the same midcentury modes of exhibition. This mode of exhibition was widely popularized by the earlier moving panoramas, whose incessant touring and multiple variation, especially those of the Mississippi River, implanted expectations for the performance upon the American and British publics. Both the Browns and J.P. Ball engaged with audiences that were familiar with the Mississippi panoramas and how to interrogate the panorama and its presenter. As a this examination shows, "Box" Brown and Wells Brown each met a different reception in Britain as their idiosyncratic performances respectively disappointed and affirmed the audience's interrogation, which was critical to their engagement with the spectacle.

Like the more popular and earlier Mississippi panoramas, these three anti-slavery panoramas effectively utilized the interrogative aspect of the spectacular in order to affect a change. Rather than a narrative that highlighted the commercial growth of the

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[9] This idea is mentioned in Chapter II and has been put forth before by both Angela Miller in "'The Imperial Republic': Narrative of National Expansion in American Art, 1820-1860," Ph.D. Diss. (Yale University, 1985): 267, and John Michael Vlach in *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege & Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002): 25-26.

Mississippi Valley and its ties to urban centers via consumer goods, anti-slavery panoramas showed how the production of these goods were reliant on a previously unseen slave labor. From Barnum's American Museum in New York City to the 1851 Great Exposition at London's Crystal Palace, exhibition and performances engaged with ongoing conceptions of race, especially as related to American slavery. These were understood in a mode of exhibition that relied on the presentation of a performance, including the audience's judgement of its authenticity or merit based on its presenter and accompanying artifacts or documentation. For these antislavery panoramas, the personal experiences of their presenters (Wells Brown, "Box" Brown, and Ball), as well the objects the exhibited alongside the panoramas (a slave collar or a crate supposedly shipped from Richmond to Philadelphia) were integral to this performance and allowed for the transgression of previous narratives about slavery, which were promoted by the popular Mississippi panoramas. An examination of these exhibitions in comparison with other mainstream examples of amusement and art that engaged with slavery demonstrates how panorama exhibitors effectively used this mode of exhibition in the support of their cause, as well as when and why it failed.

When the Boston caricaturist David Claypoole Johnston viewed one of the moving panoramas of the Mississippi in 1847 or 1848, he reacted in his characteristic acerbic manner. His lithograph, "Section of the Panorama of the Mississippi," is a response to the panorama's very lack of brutality and horror that Johnston believed to

have been common to life on a sugar plantation (figure 3-1).[10] Mimicking the view point that would have been seen in the Mississippi panoramas, the river makes a brief appearance in the foreground as an overseer raises a whip, about to strike a prone slave. The figure of the Whig presidential candidate Zachary Taylor at left, and his Cypress Grove plantation at rear complement Johnston's inscription at the bottom, "Genl Taylor's 300 Pledges against the Wilmot Proviso (Old Zack at home)." Criticized by Northern Whigs for being a slaveholder, Johnston places Taylor at the scene of a ferocious punishment. Taylor's plantation was a common sight in the popular Mississippi panoramas, including an appearance in Banvard's as well as Henry Lewis, from which he later produced a lithograph (figure 3-2). Rather than the picturesque depiction of plantation life in Lewis's depiction, Johnston highlighted the brutality of life on a sugar plantation through the vivid depiction of punishment and labor. While the cartoon is a political attack on Taylor himself, the setting of this scene is not simply Taylor's well-known plantation, but rather inserts Johnson's invective into a scene from Banvard's panorama, and similarly criticizes the artist-entertainer's benign representation of plantation life.[11]

In 1850, the fugitive slave turned international abolitionist author and lecturer William Wells Brown debuted his anti-slavery panorama, the *Original Panoramic View of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave* in England. Wells Brown commissioned

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[10] It is most likely that he Johnston is referencing Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River* because of its long run in Boston and fame, but he does not make specific reference to which panorama he is parodying.

[11] Lewis's lithographs after his panorama are discussed in Joseph Earl Arrington, "Henry Lewis' Moving Panorama of the Mississippi River," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 6, no. 3 (Summer 1965): 246.

the moving panorama from a group of unknown English painters while in the country on the popular abolitionist lecture-circuit that featured African Americans. Unlike the two other anti-slavery moving panoramas examined in this study, Wells Brown would never appear with his exhibition in the United States. Taking his cue from the popularity of moving panoramas, especially of the Mississippi, both in the United States and England, Wells Brown decided to offer his own anti-slavery rebuke to the popular moving panoramas. In the accompanying descriptive pamphlet penned by the former slave himself, he offered an introduction that explained his reasons for producing the work:

> During the autumn of 1847 I visited an exhibition of a Panorama of the River Mississippi, which was then exhibited in Boston, United States. I was somewhat amazed at the very mild manner in which the "Peculiar Institution" of the Southern States was there represented, and it occurred to me that a painting, with as fair a representation of American Slavery as could be given upon canvass, would do much to disseminate truth upon this subject, and hasten the downfall of the greatest evil that now stains the character of the American people.[12]

Like Johnston's lithograph, William Wells Brown's moving panorama is a response to the "very mild manner" in which he believed slavery was represented in the popular panoramas of the Mississippi. Additionally, the anti-slavery panoramas assume the audience's general familiarity with Banvard's panorama, as they offered not simply as addendum to the work but a deliberate contravention that plays off many of key themes absent in Banvard's panoramas. The *Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave*, which roughly details the plight of African-American slaves sold

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[12] This was certainly Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River* as it was the only panorama in Boston that year; William Wells Brown, *A Description, William Wells Brown's Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850): 2; transcribed in *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Volume I: The British Isles, 1830-1865*, ed. C. Peter Ripley (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985): 191; a copy of the pamphlet held by the American Antiquarian Society confirms that Brown was indeed the author, Michael A. Chaney, *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008):123.

south from Virginia to Louisiana, their life on the plantation, and eventual escape to British Canada, is not only a response to Banvard's panorama, but also an inversion of the typical voyage (from the South to the North rather than the typical southward journey along the Mississippi), as well as the racial identity assumed by the audience in the journey.[13]

American and British cities that held anti-slavery and abolitionist sentiments in the 1850s were just as awash in moving panoramas as they were in exhibitions, theatrical performances, and lectures that similarly railed against the enslavement of millions of African Americans. While the anti-slavery panoramas of William Wells Brown, Henry "Box" Brown, and James Presley Ball receive the most attention, and are discussed exclusively in this examination, there were others. Yet due to scant and almost nonexistent evidence in relation to the majority of these panoramas, any thorough consideration of them is impossible apart from mentioned their existence.

Two other panoramas, each titled "Panorama of Slavery," were reportedly painted by a "Mr. Hays" in Indiana and the second toured by a Tablos Gross in Buffalo.[14] The famous fugitive slave Anthony Burns briefly toured a panorama, *The Grand Moving Mirror* in 1858.[15] *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the most popular subjects in the period, with several separate panoramas, including one by the Brooklyn painter John N. Still, as well as one painted by John L. Leslie and toured by Malone Raymond in Ohio.[16]

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[13] Wells Brown, *A Description*, 191-214.
[14] "Panorama of Slavery," *Liberator* (August 5, 1853): 122; Ginger Strand, *Inventing Niagara: Beauty, Power, and Lies* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008): 125.
[15] H.G. Garcelon, "Anthony Burns—Colorphobia," *Liberator* (September 3, 1858): 143.
[16] Wells Brown, *A Description,* 217n.1; "Leslie, John L." in *Artists in Ohio, 1787-1900, A Biographical* Dictionary eds. Mary Sayre Haverstock, Jeannette Mahoney Vance, and Brian L. Meggitt (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2000): 520.

Additionally, H.J. Conway's production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that played at both the Boston Museum and P.T. Barnum's American Museum in New York City included a moving panorama of the Mississippi River in the middle of the second act.[17] Perhaps most suggestively, there appeared a notice for a triple billing at Concord's Phenix Hall that included panoramas of the Mississippi, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as well as the relatively recent Rendition of Anthony Burns.[18] Though it may be difficult to ascribe an anti-slavery agenda to any of these productions, as works like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were immediately reworked to conform to pro-slavery viewpoints as well. Additionally, judging by the extant documentation, each of these works paled in comparison to the popularity and longevity of the three exhibitions discussed in this chapter. Throughout the decade prior to the Civil War, these three anti-slavery panoramas fronted by African-Americans toured the US and Britain in an effort that leveraged spectacular entertainment to promote a social cause. Even though the three anti-slavery panoramas by William Wells Brown, Henry "Box" Brown, and James Presley Ball are often lumped as one group of anti-slavery responses to the popularity of Mississippi River panoramas, they each emphasized different elements of the anti-slavery narrative particular to their own personalities.[19]

Born a slave on a Kentucky plantation, William Wells Brown escaped north at age 20. He spent the next several years aiding fugitive slave escape from the South into British North America, as well as organizing abolitionist societies and meetings. In 1847

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[17] "Uncle Tom at Barnum's," *The New York Times* (November 10, 1853): 4.
[18] "Pearson & Warren's Three Great Panoramas," *New Hampshire Patriot* (February 7, 1855): 3.
[19] Allan D. Austin, "More Black Panoramas: An Addendum," *The Massachusetts Review* 37, no. 4 (Winter, 1996): 636-639.

he moved to Boston and began a lecture tour on behalf of the Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society, which published his *Narrative of William Wells Brown, a Fugitive* the same year.[20] In 1849, Wells Brown traveled to England to continue lecturing following the publication in London of his narrative. The next year Wells Brown conceived of and commissioned his *Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave*.[21]

In Boston at the same time, Henry "Box" Brown was also working on his own anti-slavery panorama, the *Mirror of Slavery*. Henry Brown was born into slavery in Louisa County, Virginia. In the spring of 1849, he convinced two of his friends in Richmond to help package him inside a purpose-built crate and ship him to Philadelphia. One of those associates, a free African American man named James Caesar Anthony Smith, would later become Brown's partner in his moving-panorama exhibition.[22] After a perilous twenty-four hour journey, Brown arrived in Philadelphia. His escape became an immediate sensational topic in both northern and southern presses. Images of his "resurrection," as it was labelled, in Philadelphia were immediately circulated alongside song sheets in the popular print trade (figure 3-3). Within a few months Henry Brown, who by now had been given the moniker "Box," was working with a Boston abolitionist printer named Charles Stearns to write and publish his own narrative. By the close of the

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[20] William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave* (Boston: The Anti-Slavery Office, 1847).
[21] *Black Abolitionist Papers*, ed. C. Peter Ripley, 191.
[22] Brown would also later feud bitterly with Smith in England and apparently attempt to deprive him of his entire stake in the venture; Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 132-137; a letter of Smith's to an abolitionist friend is preserved in the Boston Athenæum; J.C.A. Smith, letter to Benjamin F. Roberts, n.d., Robert Morris (1823-1882), Papers, Boston Athenæum.

year "Box" Brown, or his allies in the abolitionist community, began to formulate ideas for the creation of an anti-slavery panorama based on his life and other popular sources.[23]

Josiah Wolcott, a Boston sign painter that may have also enlisted the help of the caricaturist David Claypoole Johnston, painted the *Mirror of Slavery* in the spring of 1850. In April of that year, the moving panorama debuted in Boston before embarking on a wide tour of New England and upstate New York. While in Providence to exhibit his panorama, "Box" Brown was beaten in public during an attempt to kidnap the former slave and return him for a reward in compliance with the recently enacted Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Though his would-be captors were stopped and arrested, "Box" Brown and J.C.A. Smith were both concerned for their safety and made plans to take their panorama to England. [24]

The third major anti-slavery panorama was produced in Cincinnati five-years later than the others. In 1855 James Presley Ball owned and operated one of the most successful photography studios in the West. The previous year, popular Boston magazine *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* ran a full-page article on Ball's studio complete with an engraving of the elegant and refined parlor in which patrons could relax and peruse his photographs as well as the paintings of Robert Scott Duncanson (figure 3-4).[25] Situated in the heart of Cincinnati's commercial district, Ball's gallery was similar to those in other cities, such as Brady's National Gallery of Daguerreotypes in New York.

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[23] Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 27-65.
[24] "Attempt to Kidnap Henry Box Brown," *Boston Daily Atlas* (September 6, 1850); Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 112.
[25] Duncanson four-year association with Ball and work on the panorama is addressed in, Joseph D. Ketner, *The Emergence of the African-American Artist: Robert S. Duncanson, 1821-1872* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993): 101-04; "Daguerrian Gallery of the West," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 6, no. 13 (April 1, 1854): 208.

Both offered the exhibition of the photographer's work in a setting that emulated the comfort and sociability of the most fashionable parlors.[26] Like entertainment halls and even the description of the imagined steamboats parlors in many of the Mississippi River panoramas, Ball's Daguerreian Gallery created fashionable spaces through the display of commercial goods to allow for the consumption of his products. It is not surprising then, that the descriptive pamphlet that accompanied his panorama included a lengthy description of his studio and the products offered as well as the same engraving from *Gleason's* prior to any description of the panorama.

In 1855 J.P. Ball debuted his *Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States* at the Ohio Mechanic's Institute in Cincinnati before touring the east coast. It was in Boston later that year for a major exhibition at Amory Hall before it apparently fell in obscurity appearing at least once more in Worcester Massachusetts in 1859.[27] Unlike either William Wells Brown or Henry "Box" Brown, Ball was born a free African American and lived and worked in Virginia prior to opening his studio in Cincinnati in 1851. Additionally, rather than glossing over any mention of the how the panorama was physically produced (as was typical), Ball proudly advertised that his panorama was "gotten up by colored men who have lived over twenty years in the South."[28] Ball's chief studio painter and likely the major contributor to the panorama was the African American landscape painter Robert Seldon Duncanson. He, like Ball, was an artist that was

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[26] Katherine C. Grier, *Culture and Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Rochester: Strong Museum, 1988): 29-58.
[27] "Mammoth Pictorial Tour from Africa to Canada!," Broadside, BDSDS. 1859, American Antiquarian Society.
[28] "Ball's Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States," *The Liberator* (May 4, 1855): 71.

disgusted with slavery, but did not necessarily identify himself with the plight of those who endured it.[29]

Indeed, the *Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States* did not include personal narratives of times spent in slavery or escape, but rather Ball reproduced large quotes about the geography and cultivation of the regions depicted alongside narratives of slave life without citation. Ball's panorama seemed only to borrow information available from other published sources, and though the panorama is now lost it also reasonable to assume that images in it were also inspired by other printed images since neither Ball nor Duncanson travelled to many of the locales that appeared. Nonetheless, Ball's panorama like the others met a demand for spectacle that brought the most divisive political issue of the era to the locales of the nation's most fashionable commercial and entertainment centers. If the fine furnishings, sophisticated landscapes, and muse statuary that decorate Ball's studio were any indication of the appearance of one of his panorama performances, than he and Duncanson ensconced the visual effects of slavery on people and land, as seen in the panorama, in the middle of the nation's burgeoning consumer culture—an inversion of the expectations of African American as linked to the production rather consumptions of fine goods. [30]

Scene by scene, anti-slavery panoramas continued to invert viewer's expectations, moving through imagined space in a direction opposite to the more popular Mississippi panoramas. Whereas those exhibitions gave a fairly regular narrative that stressed the

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[29] For Duncanson's complicated legacy with regard to racial politics see: Margaret Rose Vendryes, "Race Identity/Identifying Race: Robert S. Duncanson and Nineteenth-Century American Painting," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 82-89.
[30] Grier, *Culture and Comfort,* 50-53.

advance of American civilization and the triumph of American commerce, the anti-slavery panoramas of Wells Brown, "Box" Brown, and Ball each inverted the geographic journey (changing it from roughly North to South, to an escape from the South to the North). While Wells Brown's panorama begins in Virginia, both "Box" Brown and Ball's panoramas begin in Africa and depict the Middle Passage prior to sale of captured Africans in the United States. The disruption of the familiar narrative of Mississippi River travel (or even that of an Arctic expedition, European travel, etc…), is dramatically shifted so that the audience no longer enjoys a privileged point of view from a presumably relatable experience, but rather examines illustrations of the horrors of slavery as a spectacle, one where the audience serves as interrogator and judge of the exhibition's authenticity.

The immediate legacy of John Banvard's panorama of the Mississippi River was not only a great explosion in the popularity of the medium, but also in the number of viewers who took exception to Banvard's benign treatment of slavery during a time of flared tensions. The Mississippi panoramas repeatedly emphasized the burgeoning commerce and industry of the West and South as a vital part of American growth and unity. Yet as many viewers noticed and commented on, it was each of the artist's idyllic representations of slavery, based more on urban ideas of the institution than the reality, that irked them. Indeed as discussed earlier in this dissertation, several reactions to John Banvard's *Panorama of the Mississippi River* appreciatively mentioned the fact the painter had not depicted the sale, trafficking, or abuse of the slaves. Rather, at least two authors noted that they knew of the reality of slavery, but only wanted to see the passivity

of enslaved labors as they worked as part of the Southern economy, or as one put it, "that wonder-working genius, *Trade*."[31]

In the remainder of the panorama, Wells Brown illustrated scenes that challenged central tenets promoted by American ideologies of freedom and justice. Poignantly, he included the forced march as chattel of enslaved men and women in front of the United States Capitol as they were taken out of Washington. The marching of slaves in eyeshot of the Capitol was a popular image in both rhetoric and art of the period.[32] A similar scene appeared in the famous broadside *Slave Market in America* produced by the American Anti-Slavery Society (figure 3-5). Like Wells Brown's description, here a slave driver leads a group of manacled men while the caption caustically reads, "Hail Columbia." Wells Brown's scene is embellished by a group of people gathered in support of the French Revolution of 1848, who also look uncomfortably at slaves unaware of their own hypocritical support of liberty, which Wells Brown denounces as a "gross inconsistency."[33]

In the next scene, the slave gang is marched across the Potomac to the infamous Franklin and Armfield auctioneers in Alexandria, where it was legal for them to be sold. The sale of slaves within the District of Columbia recently had been outlawed because of the Compromise of 1850, the same compact that enacted the Fugitive Slave Act and prevented Wells Brown's repatriation. Wells Brown also pointed out the sale of "two

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[31] This is discussed in Chapter II; Mrs. T.P. Smith, "Tributary Lines, On Seeing Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River," *Roxbury Messenger* (n.d.), John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society; Untitled and undated clipping, John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.
[32] Maurie D. McInnis, Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 150-51.
[33] Wells Brown, *A Description,* 194.

Slaves being nearly white…as white as their masters."[34] The identification of the men and women sold into slavery was a common theme in anti-slavery exhibitions and rhetoric of time. Later, Wells Brown included a scene titled "Tanning a White Boy," which showed a white child being tanned by slavers in order to darken his skin before being sold south to New Orleans. Wells Brown claimed to have known the particular boy, who is then shown laboring on a plantation, rendered immobile as he wears an iron collar as he works. A similar iron collar was produced at the end of each of Wells Brown's shows and served as an important material mediator between the consumption of the slave's goods and the immobility of its producer, with whom the audience was intended to sympathize because of his own racial ambiguity.[35] Again, like the reversal of direction from the leisure route of southbound travel onboard a Mississippi steamboat to what Daphne Brooks termed a "route of terror," anti-slavery panoramas elided racial identities not only to incite its audiences but because its anti-slavery messages could be best understood in pre-conceived models of travel via the moving panorama.

While each of the anti-slavery moving panoramas, much like the majority moving panoramas in general, are lost, there are some clear indications of the subject matter. Unlike the Mississippi River panoramas of John Banvard or Henry Lewis, for which we have some secondary engravings, the anti-slavery panoramas did not attempt to illustrate their journey from a relatively consistent imagined vantage point, the deck of a riverboat. Instead, these panoramas consisted of individual scenes that would be presented one at time, likely with little visual transition between them. Many of the panoramas' scenes,

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[34] *Ibid.*.

[35] The iron collar plays a central role of in the scholarship of Michael Chaney, some of which is abridged here, Chaney, *Fugitive Vision*, 139-47.

such as depictions of New Orleans, would have seemed fairly similar to how they appeared in the panoramas of Banvard and others (figure 3-6). Viewed from a boat on the river, the city would have been obscured by the masts of the docked ships, with the hint of the city's skyline behind it. Yet, extant pamphlets and advertisements reveal that anti-slavery panoramas took the viewer into the city itself. In displaying the activities of the city's busy cotton and slave markets, the panoramas further strengthened the connection between agricultural good and human slavery (depicting both commodity and corporeality) as it existed in the landscape of the Mississippi.[36]

Some scenes from the panoramas are known to modern scholars because of their apparent similarity to other published works. Historian Jeffrey Ruggles argues that six scenes from Henry "Box" Brown's *Mirror of Slavery* were copied directly from an illustrated version of Charles C. Green's poem, *The Nubian Slave*.[37] Since "Box" Brown's panorama was apparently presented without an accompanying descriptive pamphlet, the only source for knowing which subjects he included are from terse advertisements. While it cannot be certain that the scenes in the panorama mimicked *The Nubian Slave* illustrations, they do provide an important approximation for the types of images that would have appeared in the anti-slavery moving panoramas.

The six engravings that accompany *The Nubian Slave* likely had close parallels in "Box" Brown's *Mirror of Slavery* as they feature a single African family at home, then captured and sold at auction, brutalized by their owners, and then eventually escaping. *The Nubian Slave* was a visually rich poem that created vignettes throughout the short

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[36] Ball, *Ball's Pictorial Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States*, 24-29.
[37] Charles C. Green, *The Nubian Slave* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1845), The American Antiquarian Society.

narrative and easily lent itself to its accompanying illustration. Unlike any of the anti-slavery panoramas where the fleeing slaves escape to the North, Green's poem ends with the family being killed in their attempts—the child and mother attacked by hounds and the father shot. In first scene, "The Nubian Family in Freedom," which would correspond with "Box" Brown's "Freedom," a family is seated in front of an African hut as slavers approach from the background (figure 3-7). The Nubians physical appearance is described as in "a middle place between the Arab and the common African."[38] Surrounding the figures are the implements of hunting, music, and productivity. The forms of the bow, gourd stringed instrument, and the spindle and distaff lend a classical air to the figures. Indeed, the unnamed artist of the illustration seemed to be consciously eschewing the well-worn contemporary ethnographic stereotypes that designated 'blackness' in favor of a Classicizing style. The Nubian family is introduced as living in a Rousseauan primitive state. Not surprisingly the iconography of the illustration borrows heavily from neoclassical imagery.[39]

The remaining scenes from Charles C. Green's *The Nubian Slave* mainly concentrate on violence perpetrated on the bodies of the Nubian figures (figures 3-8 through 3-12). Their bodies are sold at auction, whipped, scourged, branded, attacked by dogs, and finally shot. Only in the fifth scene, their escape to the north at night, do they regain some autonomy and are united as a family.[40] While each of the panoramas

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[38] Green, *The Nubian Slave*, 2.
[39] Jeffrey Ruggles first made the connection between "Box" Brown's panorama and Green illustrated poem and extensively compares the two, Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 93-109.
[40] These scenes used the common Biblical motif of the Flight into Egypt from traditional Christian art, and was equally present in the work of American painters, most notably Eastman Johnson's 1862 painting, *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves* (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts).

featured some variation on the themes of separation from family and corporal punishment, it is perhaps only in these images that modern audiences can understood what the panoramas may have looked like, blown-up to a monumental size and displayed on a dramatically lit stage. The final illustration, "Nubian Slaves Retaken," shows a scene that occurred in each of the panoramas, the death by mauling of fleeing slaves by attack dogs. Though each panorama would eventually depict some slaves delivered out of bondage in its final scenes, they also invariably included accounts of such deaths. Indeed, since "Box" Brown's moving panorama omitted the death of his escaping slaves, he did insert a scene from the life of the famous fugitive slave Henry Bibb, who survived such an encounter with his family (figure 3-13). Contrary to the more popular Mississippi River panoramas by Banvard, Smith, Lewis, and others, the anti-slavery panoramas had a distinct focus on the corporeality of the characters it depicted. In the popular panoramas, enslaved laborers only appeared as adornments to plantation landscapes, while the anti-slavery panoramas relied on the evocative narrative of single people and families, carried through the tragedy of enslavement. This was a present theme not only in the painted panorama itself, but also in the performance of it. Indeed, the representation of bodies in the painted figures as well as those of the exhibitors were crucial to the reception of the moving panoramas.

Particularly vivid scenes appeared in both the panoramas of Henry "Box" Brown and J.P. Ball that described in detail the Middle Passage as well as the conditions aboard a slave ship. There are no known descriptions of how the scene appeared in "Box" Brown's version, but in Ball's descriptive pamphlet the author relates the cramped and

restrained laying out of bodies and gives quotations without reference from several nineteenth-century anti-slavery texts about the conditions. Ball's panorama depicted African slaves being driven into the ship at harbor, while "Box" Brown's depicted the cramped and horrid conditions for the slaves inside the vessel. It is possible that "Box" Brown's panorama reused the most famous image of a slaver's interior, the eighteenth-century *Plan of an African Ship's Lower Deck* (figure 3-14). In this era, moving panoramas of all subject matter copied or borrowed their designs from published images. It is plausible that the image of the slave ship, which was well known amongst the abolitionist crowd that supported these panoramas, was included. The image, first published in England in 1788 by the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, was widely reproduced internationally as a broadside in the nineteenth century. In the schematics of the slave ship making the middle passage, repetitive and undifferentiated black bodies efficiently inhabit the space of cargo hold. As Marcus Wood points out, the passivity of the figures belies their personhood and the actual trauma of the passage. In essence, the abolitionist image reduces the captive Africans into a commodity. While the texts emphasized the squalor and horrid conditions of the slave ship, the bodies continued to be conceived of in states of passivity. Ball's pamphlet repeated the descriptions of many other earlier and contemporary texts, which stressed the restriction of movement, poor ventilation, and discarding of the dead and dying into the sea. Yet, it also repeated the language of earlier descriptions, such as in a scene that visualized a slave ship "throwing cargo over board."[41] The disposal of captured Africans,

[41] Ball, *Ball's Pictorial Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States*, 17-18.

dead, dying, or alive, over the side of a slave ship was one of the most notorious and oft-repeated scenes in anti-slavery literature and art. [42]

The possible inclusion of the schematic of slave ship on its transatlantic journey would have been a marked difference, and another poignant inversion, from the descriptions of the steamboats that carried passengers and cargo on the Mississippi. In John Rowson Smith's *Original Gigantic Panorama of the Mississippi River* (1848), the audience is presented with a fifty-foot wide longitudinal section of the steamboat Magnolia. The painted view highlighted the "ladies' cabin, social hall, and the main saloon." The fashionable gentlemen and ladies who are partaking in their leisure cruise sit in the social hall, prepared for that night's entertainment. Yet, what unites the two scenes, that of the African ship and the Mississippi steamer, is a definite sense of order and industry. Smith assures the viewer that in the social hall the gentlemen remained standing until all women have arrived to assure them all of seats. In the diagram of the lower portion of the boat, the cabins, boilers, and pressure engines are all accurately rendered. Yet "Box" Brown and Ball's inversion of the role of the passenger, from above-deck guest to below-deck harnessed and ordered tool of labor reflects the ongoing interjection of discomfort and identity reversal of narrative common to the anti-slavery panoramas. Potentially, this also heightened the emotional impact of the panoramas, as the imagined experience for the viewer transformed from pleasure to pain.[43]

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[42] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory, Visual Representation of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 19.
[43] John Rowson Smith, *Great National Painting: Professor Risley's Original Gigantic Moving Panorama of the Mississippi Riverl Extending from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico* (Philadelphia: Brown's Book, Card and Job Printing Office, 1853): 17.

Additionally, each of the anti-slavery panoramas contains at least one scene of a slave auction. Both "Box" Brown and Ball's panorama shows an auction at Charleston, South Carolina of a recently abducted West African family. Whereas "Box" Brown's protagonists are sent to the Charleston Workhouse before being enslaved on a Lowcountry sugar plantation, Ball's family is sold further south where they are auctioned again at New Orleans. Wells Brown's panorama is similar in its depiction of a slave auction in Alexandria, Virginia, that sends his protagonists further south to New Orleans for auction. This important first leg of each protagonist's journey echoes the popular panoramas north to south voyages, however with a horrific theme completely absent from the Mississippi panoramas. It would only be in the fugitive slaves' northward escape, across the Ohio River or into Canada, that the protagonists, and thereby the audience, find relief.

In reversing the imagined course of the trip, as well as the role of the viewer, presumably from a white leisure traveler to an enslaved person, the three anti-slavery panoramas do not remove the role of commerce and industry from the focus of these Mississippi panoramas, but rather heightens its visibility. While the panoramas of Banvard, Smith, Lewis, and others may have been principally understood as a paean to American trade, they deliberately obscured the principal mechanics behind its rapid growth in the American South and West—slave labor. Revising language that appeared explicitly in other Mississippi panoramas, J.P. Ball describes the city of New Orleans as "the great emporium of the Domestic Slave Trade."[44] Indeed, whereas Banvard

[44] John Banvard referred to that city as "the great commercial emporium;" see Chapter III in this dissertation for more discussion, John Banvard, "*Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River, Painted on*

naturalized the environment of the Crescent City, into "a forest of [ship's] masts" and "a splendid spectacle," the anti-slavery panoramas dove into the inner workings of the city's economy.[45]

Sites like the Calaboose, the old jail where slaves were sent for punishment, and Bank's Arcade, where slave auctions occurred, were highlighted in Wells Brown and Ball's panoramas respectively. Ball describes Bank's Arcade as a "splendid palace" and marketplace offered a bar and a cigar saloon amidst stalls occupied by "dealers in men."[46] Bank's Arcade was one great antebellum arcade buildings derived from European models (figure 3-15). Built in 1833, the Greek Revival façade was pierced by a long central three-story, glass-plated arcade that was lined with all the latest consumer goods available, as well as fine lodgings, and the human traffickers to which Ball referred. The structure bore the style of commercial arcades that were popular throughout major American cities. Ball's description of the fashionable marketplace resurrects a trope of the moving panorama exhibition, an emphasis on the sale of commercial goods especially those that can be found in settings like Bank's Arcade. The setting of Ball's slave auction in the fashionable arcade building highlights the theme of slavery being intimately intertwined with the commercial empire so celebrated in other panoramas.[47]

Three Miles of Canvas, Exhibiting a View of Country 1200 Miles in Length, Extending from the Mouth of the Missouri River to the City of New Orleans; Being by Far the Largest Picture Ever Executed by Man (Boston: John Putnam, 1847): 32; Ball, *Ball's Pictorial Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States*, 26.

[45] *Ibid*.

[46] Ball, *Ball's Pictorial Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States*, 26.

[47] Mary Louise Christovich, Roulhac Toledano, Betsy Swanson, and Pat Holden. *New Orleans Architecture, Volume II, The American Sector (Faubourg St. Mary), Howar Avenue to Iberville Street, Mississippi River to Claiborne Avenue* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1972): 183; Mary Cable, *Lost New Orleans* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980): 47-50.

The theme of commerce and consumption was nothing new in such panoramas of course, it was the dominant theme in the Mississippi River panoramas of John Banvard and his contemporaries. As such, it is especially highlighted in J.P. Ball's *Mammoth Pictorial Tour*, where the theme of southern commerce is undercut with the realities of human bondage. Ball's panorama was unique for its explicit discussion of the economy of slavery in relation to the amount of consumable items produced. In a scene of "Madame Beaujoie's resident and Sugar House," Ball relays statistics about sugar production in Louisiana. He wrote that according to the 1850 census, the state produced 91% of the nation's sugar, and by the time the panorama was exhibited, it was producing over 350,000 hogsheads per year. Additionally, Ball took the unprecedented step of including in his descriptive pamphlet a table that was also compiled from the most recent census and illuminated "in a startling manner the destructive effects of the sugar culture upon the slave population of Louisiana." The table compared the amount of hogsheads produced with the number of slave births and death in three Louisiana parishes (figure 3-16). Ball uses the statistics to show that Lower Mississippi plantations like Madame Beaujoie's fueled the domestic slave trade by having a net loss of slaves due to death.[48] As a nearly universally consumed commodity, sugar was an important connection between the geographically separated audience of Ball's panorama and the enslaved laborers that produced it.

Like other spectacular entertainments of the era, the moving panorama exhibition relied on ideas of authenticity to establish the veracity of its material.[49] Authenticity was

[48] Ball, *Ball's Pictorial Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the United States*, 31-32.
[49] This is more thoroughly discussed in Chapter I.

typically reinforced by things as diverse as the presence and persona of the exhibition's showman, additional people or performances in the exhibition hall, or tangible objects that the audience could examine. Such interactions were integral to what Neil Harris and Michael Leja have coined as the "operational aesthetic" of the era.[50] In Ball's panorama, his invocation of statistics, as opposed to sympathy or horror, to convey the nature of slavery was a relatively new phenomenon in the 1850s. Ball's panorama coincides with a widespread use of statistical data, including the visualization of it, in the later antebellum years.[51]

Of course Ball was not the only one to engage in this exhibitionary mode. Rather, William Wells Brown and Henry "Box" Brown each provided their own authenticating ideas through their own presence and personas, but also through objects and performance. In Wells Brown's *Original Panoramic Views of the Scenes in the Life of an American Slave*, he concluded his performance with the exhibition of a supposedly authentic American slaver collar. As Michael Chaney has discussed, Wells Brown's introduction of the iron collar into the exhibition of the moving panorama disrupts the inherent mobility of the medium and counters with an idea of subjugation and the inability for free movement at one's will.[52] This is especially true in Wells Brown's narrative of a slave, who for the first half of the narrative despite being enslaved is constantly in motion as he

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[50] Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973): 77-83; James Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001): 80-81; Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 130-32.
[51] This idea is summarized and expounded upon in Susan Schulten, *Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012): 119-56.
[52] Chaney, *Fugitive Vision*, 114.

is sold from Virginia to a Louisiana sugar plantation, and then becomes a fugitive slave, fleeing north.

Yet the introduction of the iron collar as part of the performance is important as the tangible object that served as an authenticating medium between the panorama and the viewer.[53] As discussed earlier in this dissertation, antebellum modes of exhibition, including those present in exhibitions by Frederic Church or John Banvard, relied on the viewer's ability to inspect and judge spectacular exhibitions. The very idea of the panorama, with its wide scope of vision and reliance on both meticulous detail in painting and description demanded truthful representation. Panorama exhibitions frequently touted the long history of the painting's creation, inevitably because of the artist or exhibitor's personal travel and delineation of the scenes illustrated, as well the personal story of the man who presented the painting. Banvard and Smith each promoted their own carefully crafted identities as Mississippi boatmen as did the two Browns and J.P. Ball reminded the audience of the unique perspectives on slavery based on their racial experiences.

While the term 'humbug' has continued into the twenty-first century as shorthand for dime museum fakeries of P.T. Barnum's exhibitions, it related to an important part of the appreciation of art and entertainment. Audiences did actively evaluate the authenticity of whose performances and often took delight in exposing fakery or pretension. In his travelogue of the United States, the English writer J.E. Hilary Skinner relayed a visitor's reaction to myriad displays at Barnum's American Museum. Skinner wrote, "'Is it real, or is it humbug?,' ask[ed] an astonished visitor, and Mr. Barnum

[53] Presumably the collar used by Brown would be exhibited at the end of the performance, but many other panoramas that relied on tangible objects as part of their performance made them available before or during the exhibition as well.

replie[d] with a smile, 'That's just the question; persons who pay their money at the door have a right to form their own opinions after they got up stairs.'"[54] It was not Barnum's position that he should offer any notice about whether his exhibits where authentic or forgeries, but rather it was specifically the duty of the viewer to engage in an interrogation of the exhibits, and decide for him or herself.

While subject matter as seemingly grave as the anti-slavery crusade may seem too important for the shock inducing and over the top exhibitions of Barnum and his contemporaries, it was a common subject of the era. An 1851 advertisement for the Boston Museum, the New England counterpart to Barnum's American Museum, promoted a new display of waxwork that included life-size figures depicting Christian religious scenes like the Last Supper of Christ, as well as incendiary scenes like the murder of Jane McCrea and the ill effects of alcohol modeled after contemporary temperance plays. Moses Kimball, the museum's director intended each of the waxwork groupings to function as a moral lesson that stressed both divine and worldly horrors.

Included in Kimball's one-hundred-foot-long Hall of Wax Statuary, was a monumental group entitled the "Horrors of Slavery (figure 3-17)." Like *Panorama of the Mississippi* by the Boston caricaturist Johnston, the group shown a black overseer in the process of whipping a female slave, while a white owner overlooks the scene (figure 3-1). Manacles sat at the foreground of the display—similar to Brown's iron collar—in front of the figures as an index of the bondage and physical restrictions as well as injury that was visited upon the enslaved. As with many contemporary exhibitions, instances of violence

[54] John Edwin Hilary Skinner, *After the Storm: or Jonathan and His Neighbours in 1865-6*, vol 1 (London: R. Bentley, 1866): 9.

and race were presented to the popular museum-going public in arrangements that demanded their interrogation. The museum billed the statuary as "actual likenesses of a slave-owner, a slave-driver, and their victims."[55] While the museum claimed fidelity in its exhibition, the visitor none-the-less was forced to confront the violence of the scene on a scale relative to their own within the confines of the Boston Museum. While there is no remaining evidence of how people would have examined such a display, the idea that it occupied the same role of art and education that was common to antebellum exhibitions demonstrates the manner in which spectacle was mobilized in the anti-slavery effort.

At the American Museum in New York, Barnum held a variety of exhibitions that inherently questioned racial status quos. Amongst the stuffed animals and portraits that the showman had purchased from his predecessor John Scudder as well as from the Peale Museum in Philadelphia, Barnum interspersed highly racially charged exhibitions. A composite woodcut broadside from 1864-69 was commissioned by Barnum himself to highlight his twenty-five years of showmanship (figure 3-18). At the center is a view of his museum on Broadway, surrounded his famous exhibitions. Near the center of the broadside, adjacent to the portrait medallions of himself and his most famous act the Swedish opera singer Jenny Lind, are two such exhibitions. Labeled "Negro Turning White," and "What Is It?," the two images are portraits of living men who were exhibited alongside the taxidermies and exotic objects that lined the packed halls of Barnum's multistory museum. Additionally, at the bottom center of the print is an image of the

[55] "Boston Museum," *Barre Patriot* [MA] (January 17, 1851): 4.

"Albino Family," a Dutch couple and their child employed by Barnum as a living exhibit and billed as of "black Madagascar lineage." [56]

Northern institutions consistently included scenes, objects, and at Barnum's most notably even people, in the matter of fact presentation of the myriad objects of art, science, and history that made its way into the glass cases and on the pedestals of antebellum museums. The walls of Barnum's seven great 'saloons,' or galleries, were lined with glass cases and paintings that alternatively displayed taxidermied animals from around the world as well famous American personages (figure 3-19). Many of the objects were purchased from the estate of the originator of such a display in the United States, Charles Willson Peale. At the Peale Museum in Philadelphia, the painter and museum proprietor carefully organized his specimens and art around the long gallery of Independence Hall to reflect a rational system of Linnaean taxonomy. The immobile and highly organized exhibits reflect an enlightenment-era vision of the worlds of man and animal. Also, the inclusion of nationalistic scenes and artifacts solidified the republic's birth and growth within a context of a natural science. Peale's designs were largely reflected in other early nineteenth-century museums including John Scudder's museum in New York and Ethan Allen Greenwood's New England Museum, each later purchased by Barnum and Moses Kimball respectively[57].

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[56] Uncited quotation in Philip B. Kunhardt Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt, *P.T. Barnum, America's Greatest Showman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995): 113.

[57] The organization of Peale's museum and its role in relation to the new nation is discussed throughout, David R. Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and Its Audience* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1995); descriptions of Greenwood's museums can be found in, Georgia Brady Barnhill, "Extracts from the Journals of 'Ethan A. Greenwood': Portrait Painter and Museum Proprietor," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 103 (April/October 1993): 91-178; for Barnum's museum see: Kunhardt, *P.T. Barnum*, 32-44.

As such, when the overt racially charged exhibits appeared in the antebellum era the audience's demands for entertainment were equally fulfilled with entertainment in typical Barnum fashion. The Albino Family and the more famous "What Is It?," which first appeared at the American Museum in 1857 and 1860 respectively, demanded consideration of the questions of what defines race and humanity in an era when Darwin's theories were starting to gain broader currency. "What Is It?," also known as "Zip the Pinhead" was one Barnum's most successful exhibitions (figure 1-34). William Henry Johnson, an African American from New Jersey with an oddly formed head stood amidst Barnum's animal displays in the museum and dressed as savage "man-monkey" that spoke in an incomprehensible language.[58] Photographs and engravings of Johnson in his costume garb were widely circulated and were even included in a political cartoon for the 1860 presidential election (figure 20). While African Americans continued to tour as anti-slavery lecturers, and a few kept touring moving panoramas that offered alternative views of the American South, conceptions of racial hierarchies continued to be dominated by such popular exhibitions.

In what was perhaps the single most famous exhibition of the nineteenth century, the 1851 Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London, there was a convergence of moving panoramas, objects of the American slave trade, and the epitome of high art production. It was frequently noted that many of the objects on display, especially those from the United States were the commercial and industrial goods made possible by slave labor. Indeed as Suzette Spencer has noted, "['Box'] Brown's panorama scenes indicate a phenomenology of commodity production in the New World, the inverse of the

[58] Kunhardt, *P.T. Barnum*, 149.

phenomenology of consumption that the Crystal Palace promoted."[59] That is, there was an amnesiac relationship between consumer and goods at the exhibition that was targeted by exhibitors and activists like Henry "Box" Brown. Curiously, one of the last scenes of his moving panorama was a scene titled the "Grand Industrial Palace, which was not a prescient view of the English exhibition since it was painted a year before it opened, but rather a utopian vision of African American life post-emancipation. Supposedly inspired by the writings of the French philosopher Charles Fourier, the scene depicted an ideal working township.[60] The inclusion of the utopian community as the finale of the *Grand Moving Mirror* also suggests that it was the painter Josiah Wolcott, not "Box" Brown that had the most sway in planning the panorama. Wolcott himself was a follower of Fourier and was even involved in the Brook Farm commune.[61] In contrast to the product and commerce-oriented spectacles of the Mississippi River panoramas, exemplified in the extreme at the Crystal Palace, the utopian Grand Industrial Palace highlighted cooperative labor for local consumption, rather than forced labor for consumption on a mercantile or imperial scale.

Indeed, while "Box" Brown's conception of an ideal product-consumer relationship was only played out on the canvas of his panorama and in his speech, William Wells Brown took the opportunity to make a disruption of normative ideas at the Crystal Palace exhibition itself. In the second month of the exhibition, the English author

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[59] Suzette A. Spencer, "Henry Box Brown, an International Fugitive: Slavery, Resistance, and Imperialism," *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place* eds. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2007): 129.
[60] Fourier's writings concentrated on social and civil equality and the creation of utopian communities; Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 103.
[61] Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 95.

William Farmer wrote a letter to the American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and related to him the story of Williams Wells Brown's visit to the exhibition. 1851 was the height of popularity for the antislavery panoramas in England as both Wells Brown and Henry "Box" Brown's exhibitions were regularly touring the country, alongside a host of other antislavery events. That July the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* reprinted a letter from the English author William Farmer concerning the slavery exhibitions, or lack thereof, at the exhibition. Farmer wrote:

> Side by side with the specimens of cotton, sugar and tobacco, ought to have been placed the human instruments of their production, whose appearance and verbal testimony would, if Southern statements be true, have triumphantly refuted the charge of cruelty and oppression, which all the world now believes the Southerners guilty of.[62]

As Farmer denounced the conspicuous absence reference to the United States' three million slaves and the 600,000 free African Americans, three former slaves did make a remarkable appearance at the fair. The Georgia-born former slaves William and Ellen Craft joined William Wells Brown, who was still touring his moving panorama through England. Each of them joined with a white companion and moved through Crystal Palace inspecting each American exhibit. In a particularly apt turn of phrase, Farmer wrote: "[they] resolved that they should be exhibited under the world's huge glass case, in order that the world might form its opinion of the alleged mental inferiority of the African race, and their fitness or unfitness for freedom."[63] While Farmer's comment invoked the colossal glass-plate structure that soared over the heads of the exhibition's attendees, the term "glass case" also referenced a certain type of spectacular exhibition such as those

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[62] William Farmer, "Fugitive Slaves at the Great Exhibition," *The Liberator* 21, no. 29 (July 18, 1851):116.
[63] *Ibid*.

where racially-charged specimen would be exhibited alongside one of Barnum's stuffed oddities; set into a neatly organized display.

The actions of Wells Brown and the Crafts were akin to the performances of the anti-slavery panoramas themselves as they intended to reverse expected racial identities. In the panoramas, white leisure travel on the Mississippi was replaced with the products and ill effects of enslaved labor. While in London, the former slaves themselves become those who were appreciating the products of America's slave economy. Promenading through the exhibition the trio approached the most popular of the American entries, Hiram Power's *Greek Slave* (figure 3-21).[64] The marble statue depicts a manacled white nude woman. The figure represented a Greek Christian captured by Ottoman Turks about to be sold into slavery. By her side a locket and cross infer the figures fidelity to a lost love and resilient Christianity, that as some viewers pointed out clothed her nude body in righteousness.[65]

The sculpture was an extremely popular exhibition, touring both the United States and Britain and drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors. Despite the title of the work and heavy narrative that stressed the woman's impending slavery, American audiences seemed to have no problem reconciling their appreciation for the work with the continued existence of slavery in the United States. Indeed, the appreciation for Powers' statue seemed to eschew the overt connections to American slavery, even as the statue toured through cities like New Orleans and St. Louis. In a review of the statue's exhibition in the latter city, one commentator remarked,

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[64] McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale*, 181-89.
[65] Joy Kasson, *Marble Queens and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990): 46-72.

> "It is true…that within a few steps of the spot which thy presence is consecrating, maidens as pure and as sensitive as thou art are weekly bought and sold in a place as public as the Turkish market-place where thou was exposed under the cry of the auctioneer…I am gazing upon an image as white as the driven snow, and in view of the wrongs of the kind she represents, contemplating the complete emancipation of all the white people of the earth, under the general influence of Christianity; and I cannot have my thoughts perturbed by the intrusion of such black and thick-lipped images as these I see flitting before my eye of imagination. Away! away! I can not to think of ebony maidens or men…"[66]

As this review, the link between the scene before the viewer's eyes and the link between American slavery was not wholly lost on audiences, but rather it could be ignored based on race. This commentary bears a striking resemblance to a published poem describing New Orleans from John Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River*, "Here is the Cotton Mart—(alas! and slave mart too, / Which the kind Artist has *not* brought to view;)."[67] It is precisely this dissonance between the portrayal of slavery and willful eschewing of its effect that the anti-slavery panoramas and performances in general attempted to disrupt.

When William Wells Brown and company encountered *The Greek Slave* as the centerpiece of the United States' exhibition at the Crystal Palace, he produced an illustration from a recent edition of the English satirical magazine *Punch*, titled *The Virginian Slave* (figure 3-22). He placed the engraved print inside the velvet-ensconced enclosure of the Powers' sculpture, and spoke: "As an American fugitive slave, I place

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[66] "Power's Greek Slave in St. Louis," *National Era* 5, no. 3 (January 16, 1851): 9; also discussed in McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale,*183.

[67] Mrs. T.P. Smith, "Tributary Lines, On Seeing Banvard's Panorama of the Mississippi River," Roxbury Messenger (n.d.), John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society.

this Virginia slave by the side of the Greek Slave, as its most fitting companion."[68] For another six or seven hours the group continued to tour the exhibition, despite what the author believed were silent and begrudged protests from the American Southerners. After concluding his description, Farmer wrote: "[their] object was triumphantly effected … [they] exhibited fugitive slaves at the World's Exhibitions."[69]

Farmer's language again reinforces the notion that through the performance of a spectacular exhibition there is an element of role reversal where the white body of the *Greek Slave* becomes the black body of the *Virginian slave*, and the fugitive slaves themselves become participants and consumers of the exhibition. Underneath both the proverbial "glass case" of the spectacle as well as the physical one of the soaring Crystal Palace, Wells Brown and his compatriots acted in a counter-performance to the lack of recognition slavery played in the Great Exhibition. This of course mimicked his introduction to his moving panorama, where he stated the inspiration for his exhibition from the curious lack of slavery represented in John Banvard's *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River*. Furthermore, as Marcus Wood states, "[Wells Brown chose] to enact this union in the most intensely cosmopolitan and socially charged space of public performance on the planet—the Crystal Palace."[70] Spectacle and exhibition were not only one of the most visible and popular forms with which Americans (and Britons) engaged with issues like the anti-slavery movement, but rather spectacle allowed for a

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[68] William Still, *The Underground Rail Road* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1872): 375-376, quoted in Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010): 157-58.
[69] Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom*, 156-60; This occurrence is also examined as an act of racial performance in Elizabeth Merrill, "Exhibiting Race 'under the World's Huge Glass Case': William and Ellen Craft and William Wells Brown at the Great Exhibition in Crystal Palace, London, 1851," *Slavery & Abolition* 33, no. 2 (June 2012): 321-36.
[70] Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom,* 158.

mode of understanding the issues particularly suited to urban Americans that were familiar with the burgeoning consumer cultures that produced such events.

Of course this did not always go over as well as Farmer implies Wells Brown's exchange did. Between the summer of 1850 and the end of the American Civil War, "Box" Brown toured the United Kingdom nearly nonstop. His performances varied in their reliance on the *Mirror of Slavery,* as he would pepper his performance with minstrel songs, especially those hymns that were associated with the moment of his resurrection in Philadelphia. At least one account reported his partner Smith joined "Box" Brown on stage for dancing and singing some "negro songs."[71] He shortly became associated with outlandish presentations that continually separated him from the polished invectives of William Wells Brown who was touring at the same time. Most notably in May of 1851 "Box" Brown performed his moving panorama in Leeds. Several hours before his exhibition he was packaged into crate in Bradford and traveled nearly three hours in a box that was made to mimic the one that delivered from Richmond. When he arrived in Leeds he was met by a raucous parade that escorted him to the theater, where he once again emerged from his crate to exhibit the *Mirror of Slavery*. "Box" Brown's ostentatious performances apparently riled many English critics who found them "too showman like."[72]

Much of the criticism surrounding Henry "Box" Brown's performances occurred after his acrimonious split with his partner J.C.A. Smith, who had previously been integral to his escape from Richmond. In 1851, "Box" Brown added musical acts as well

[71] Cited in Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 107.
[72] Ruggles, *The Unboxing Henry Brown*, 128.

as his own performance, which included him singing both the published melody he supposedly sung upon his arrival in Philadelphia, as well as several other "Plantation Melodies."[73] The scholarship of both cultural historians Audrey Fisch and Daphne Brooks demonstrate how Henry "Box" Brown quickly received a sour reception in England as critics and audiences began to attack the veracity of his exhibition because of shortcomings in the persona of "Box" Brown himself. For many in the English press, "Box" Brown's portly figure emerging from his box both in real-life recreations and in the panorama itself, just before bursting into song belied the serious nature of its purported subject. After the *Wolverhampton & Staffordshire Herald* printed a scathing review of "Box" Brown's *Mirror of Slavery*, the former slave turned performer sued the rural paper for libel. In March of 1852 the review read in part:

> If the best and most authentic descriptions of American slavery are to be credited; if the pictorial illustrations of the Southern states, given us by Banvard, Ripley, Smith, Russell, and other artists; if the evidence of travel in the slave States is to be relied upon; and lastly, if the statements of even former slaves themselves are to be accepted and credited—then is Mr. Box Brown's panorama without a feature of resemblance, and his so-called 'eloquent and poetical address' a jumbled mass of contradictions and absurdities, assertions without proof, geography without boundary, and horrors without parallel. The representation to our thinking, instead of benefitting the cause of abolition, is likely, from its want of vraisemblance [a theatrical term for the believability of actions in a drama] and decency, to generate disgust at the foppery, conceit, vanity, and egotistical stupidity of the Box Brown school. To paint the devil blacker than he is is, *certes*, a work of supererogation [*sic*].[74]

Daphne Brooks understood this peculiar instance as a response to the saturation of the English market with touring American abolitionist acts that in combination with the

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[73] *Wolverhampton & Staffordshire Herald* (March 10, 1852), quoted in Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 139.
[74] "Panorama of Slavery," *Wolverhampton & Staffordshire Herald* (March 17, 1852), quoted in Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 95.

excess of "Box" Brown's panorama and performance revealed an anxious association between 'blackness' and 'excess' that undermined social or moral imperatives.[75]

The review also described the *Mirror of Slavery* as "a jumbled mass of contradictions and absurdities, assertions without proof."[76] Indeed, the reviewer finds fault with "Box" Brown's performance precisely because it offered an over-the-top, Barnumesque visual and verbal description of the horrors of American slavery without evidence that did not satisfy a need for authenticity. The author's assertions also implicate the same underlying modes of exhibitions seen elsewhere, which for this author "Box" Brown has either ignored or transgressed. Eventually, "Box" Brown won his libel lawsuit against the newspaper. In a *Times* report of the trial, the defense argued that, "It was part of the duty of the press to guard the public, and especially the young and ignorant, from such exaggerated, preposterous, and, to a certain extent, indecent exhibitions, as this panorama evidently was."[77] Yet before the jury left to consider their decision, the judge reminded them,

> … that the question was whether these two publications came within the limits of reasonable and fair criticism; and he advised them…not to scan too nicely the language used with regard to the panorama itself, because it was important that the right of public criticism upon books or other works should not be fettered or restricted; but when they found observations made upon personal character they must weigh them with more rigour, because no man ought to attack the character of another without taking the utmost care to ascertain he was right [*sic*].[78]

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[75] Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 94-98; Audrey Fisch, "'Negrophilism' and British Nationalism: The Spectacle of the Black American Abolitionist," *Victorian Review* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 27.
[76] Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*, 96.
[77] "Summer Assizes, Midland Circuit. Warwick, July 28. (Before Mr. Baron Alderson and a Common Jury.) Brown v. Smith," *Times* (London) (July 30, 1852): 6.
[78] *Ibid*.

Indeed, in the legal proceedings that ultimately netted "Box" Brown one hundred pounds in recompense, the judge laid out the innate ideas that were used to judge the *Mirror of Slavery*. The criticism that the moving panorama consistently encountered during its later tours came from what was perceived as an overbearing presence of Henry "Box" Brown himself, which ultimately negated the legitimacy of the panorama itself.[79]

The expectation of authenticity, denied by either "Box" Brown's flamboyant style of presentation (which was confirmed by other viewers) or a saturated market which held little interest in African American performers, nonetheless the reviewer's condemnation of the exhibition's showmanship and bluster aligns with other common complaints of the time and one example of when the contemporary mode of spectacular exhibition failed. The writer, whose interrogative presence is necessary, was not convinced by Brown's assertions of authenticity. Indeed, the author directly compares the "Box" Brown's moving panorama to the earlier popular exhibitions of John Banvard and John Rowson Smith, a comparison that again indicated that anti-slavery panoramas worked in a model previously established by the Mississippi panoramas. Rather, because "Box" Brown's exhibition seemed to align more with popular minstrel shows than the more sober exhibitions of William "Wells" Brown (as well as Banvard and Smith) that "Box" Brown's moving panorama exhibition was so vehemently dismissed, even to the point of questioning the veracity of the former slaves description of the middle passage, and slave life in the American South.

In returning to the necessity of an authenticating presence in a spectacular exhibition, it seems that much of the reason Henry "Box" Brown's exhibitions received

[79] The trial is also discussed in Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*, 139-46.

extensive criticism in the English press whereas William Wells Brown's did not is because of the personal role played by "Box" Brown in the exhibitions. Indeed, the commonality between the performances of the anti-slavery panoramas, as well as other spectacular exhibitions including Barnum's living specimens and William Wells Brown's performance at the Crystal Palace is the exposure of a fracture between spectacle and claims of authenticity. P.T. Barnum and his displays of supposedly non-human, or at least non-Caucasian, living exhibitions relied on the exhibitor's bluster and a veil of pseudo-science to engage an audience member in judging the validity of his spurious shows. The disruption of a familiar, popular narrative serves to create the effect of novelty, or spectacle.

Anti-slavery moving panoramas did not create new modes of exhibition with which they were able to bring their social message to larger audiences. Rather, anti-slavery activists saw an existing vogue of exhibitions that retold familiar narratives of American expansion and commerce without mention of slavery's toll. The popular Mississippi River panoramas heightened urban American's exposure to visual representations of the American South, its plantations, ports, and economy, while at the same normalized a benevolent conception of American slavery. As William Wells Brown stated in his introduction, this necessitated a response that truly addressed the "Peculiar Institution."[80] Such a widespread and immediate interest in depictions of Southern plantations in the North was unprecedented in the years just prior to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Anti-slavery moving panoramas not only rebutted their more popular counterparts because of their picturesque treatments of slavery, but also did so in a manner that

[80] Wells Brown, *A Description,* 191.

specifically embraced the spectacular mode of exhibition. Each of the moving panoramas tweaked the standard narrative in a manner that created a fissure between expectation and appearance. Rather than a leisure journey down the Mississippi, the anti-slavery panoramas were an escape from the labor and terror of the Lower Mississippi towards the relief of the North. A view of a fashionable steamboat, complete with parlors for sitting and staterooms, was replaced with scenes of the slave ship making the middle passage. "Box" Brown and Wells Brown replaced tales of personal journeys as a boatman and artist on the Mississippi River with ones that emphasized their personal journeys through slavery and escape. The iron collar produced by Wells Brown at the end of each exhibition cemented his tales of it use to restrict the movement of laboring slaves. The materiality of the collar breached the void between the Wells Brown's words and visuals and allowed for the audience to examine and judge the authenticity of the exhibition based on a tangible object and the corporeality of the presenter, both absent from more popular panoramas.

Similar performances occurred elsewhere. At the Crystal Palace, William Wells Brown's declaration that he was "an American slave" and his interjection of *The Virginian slave* disrupted the familiar narrative of *The Greek Slave*. Spectacular exhibitions and performances were not limited to exhibition halls and theaters. Instead they became an important manner in which anti-slavery activists publically confronted seemingly benign representations of slavery. In an era where images and conceptions of the American South and slavery were being shaped by popular spectacle, anti-slavery activists did not simply denounce the popular entertainments, but rather they engaged

with them and in so doing created a separate understanding of the same subject matter in the fissures between reality and representation.

CHAPTER IV:
Into the Parlor and the Museum

By the close of the Civil War in April, 1865, moving panorama performances had all but vanished in the commercial and entertainment centers of American cities. Even though they had been a mainstay since their advent in the late 1840s, a decade later their popularity began to wane. While some moving panoramas continued to perform on a circuit of secondary markets of smaller, more remote cities like Utica, Troy, and Lowell, but on the whole the traditional travel narrative panoramas disappeared from larger cities. Even though the monumental panoramas fell out of favor in the realm of public exhibitions, in 1866 the Milton Bradley Company introduced a new type of moving panorama that moved the spectacle from venues that lined urban commercial centers to a domestic setting. *The Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion* was a popular toy recreation of a moving panorama exhibition that mimicked their larger counterparts and asked children to take on the John Banvard-like role of exhibitor in an at-home performance (figures 4-1 and 4-2).[1]

The subject matter of *The Myriopticon* was a history of the recent Civil War from the evacuation of Fort Moultrie by the Union Major Robert Anderson in Charleston Harbor (December 1860) through the evacuation of Richmond by Confederate troops (April 1865). Twenty-four different scenes from the Civil War appeared on a single long roll of paper that mimicked the canvasses of a moving panorama exhibition. Additionally, the instructions that accompanied *The Myriopticon* advised its owners to perform it exactly like its monumental counterparts. Complete with a broadside for advertising the

[1] James Marten, "History in a Box: Milton Bradley's Myriopticon," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 2, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 3-7.

exhibition, a sheet of tickets to distribute to the panorama's intended audience, and a booklet containing the exhibition's script, which itself mimicked the accompanying pamphlets commonplace at moving panorama exhibitions, *The Myriopticon* repeated each of the important elements of the spectacle, adapting it to a new use (figures 4-3 and 4-4).

The Myriopticon was one of three Milton Bradley miniature moving panoramas, later joined by the similarly historically themed *The Historiscope, Panorama & History of America* and the holiday-themed *Panorama of The Visit of Santa Claus to the Happy Children*. Each of the toy panoramas employed the same general elements in asking a child to recreate the spectacle of a moving panorama exhibition. Each of the broadsides mimicked and parodied the bravado of midcentury illustrated advertisements of the type that wallpapered urban streetscapes. *The Historiscope* proclaimed its exhibition to be, "Art Sacrificed to the Public!," while The Myriopticon extolled its massive work as being a full 1000 square inches of surface.[2] In addition, the replica broadside for the latter toy actually depicted a billposter in the process of affixing a poster (figure 4-4).

Word play and humor were also quite common in these toy exhibitions. Its humor not only lightened the atmosphere of the performance, but also its punch lines serve as evidence of the relationship between these toys and larger phenomena. *The Myriopticon* broadside advertised the name of the lecturer who would describe the panorama's illustrations as a "[Brigadier General] B.R. Stadt, From the Rocky Mountain Rangers."[3]

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[2] Milton Bradley Co., *The Historiscope, Panorama & History of America* (c.1866), Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts & Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library, Delaware

[3] Milton Bradley Co., *The Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion* (c.1866), Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts & Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library, Delaware

The allusion to the monumental landscape *The Rocky Mountain, Lander's Peak* by Albert Bierstadt conveys the implicit link between these intimate, domestic recreations and the large-scale, spectacular exhibitions such as Bierstadt's one-painting shows. The exhibition of *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* in 1863 followed in the tradition of similar Great Pictures of Frederic Church as well as moving panorama exhibitions, each of which relied on the grandiosity of the artwork in compliment with the narrative provided by a text or lecturer.

Milton Bradley's *Myriopticon* and *Historiscope* are just two examples of a much wider adaption of the vernacular of public spectacle for use in domestic settings, particularly parlor entertainment that emphasized the didactic intentions of such displays. In 1872 Milton Bradley advertised its toys and entertainments, including the panoramas, in lengthy catalogue that highlighted the redemptive value of their games, which could improve the moral and intellectual development of its participants. The catalogue *Home Amusements* repeatedly stressed the value of play as particularly beneficial to a healthy home environment and particularly in the development of children. The author of the catalogue wrote, "it is not wonderful that so many children of most exemplary parents are ruined by the wicked associations contracted in their search after the society and entertainment they should have found in the purest and most natural forms at home."[4] Again later in the text the author stressed the duality between the public sphere and the domestic one writing: "Hence in just the proportion that the temptations of the street

[4] *Work and Play Annual of Home and Social Sports containing directions for Various In-door and Out-door Games, Parlor Tricks, Atching Charades, &c., with A Collection of Illustrated Rebuses, Puzzles, Riddles, Enigmas, Charades, and Curious Bible Questions, complied from Nearly One Thousand Published I Work and Play for 1870 and 1871* (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley and Company, 1872): 3.

increase around the outside of our homes, so should every parent multiply the attractions within until the HOME becomes the pleasantest place on earth to every member of the family…"[5] While the exhibition of moving panorama paintings had largely ceased by the later half of the 1860s, their cultural relevance continued in a new form—that of the domestic entertainment.

Moving panoramas did not disappear from the public's imagination, but rather their association with didactic entertainment was repurposed for new intentions. As cultural historians Lawrence Levine and Louise Stevenson have previously discussed in their own scholarship, the 1860s were a transformational decade in which loosely organized, commercially based urban culture was slowly institutionalized.[6] While at the advent of the moving panorama vogue around 1848, popular art institutions like the American Art-Union and public curiosities like Barnum's American Museum dominated the urban entertainment and culture, by 1870 they had completely disappeared. Coalitions of urban Americans began to reorganize a demand for institutions that enshrined cultural productions in the first great generation of art museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, among others. [7]

For many Americans, changing perceptions of the urban environment in this period prompted a retreat to more secure venues for education, entertainment, and moral rearing. The upscale domestic interiors that appeared in many of Eastman Johnson's

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[5] *Ibid*.

[6] Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow, The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988): 146-60; Louise Stevenson, *Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880*, 2nd edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001): 61-62.

[7] In the 1865 the sites of Barnum's original American Museum on Ann St. and Broadway burned to ground. A second location further uptown also succumbed to fire in 1868, after which Barnum decided not to rebuild citing a need for adaptation to a new type of museum; Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T.* Barnum (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973): 169-181.

works of the 1860s and 70s mimic this move and stress the domesticity of his subjects. While the large-scale exhibition of moving panoramas no longer appeared as a popular entertainment, their essential mode of exhibition—the spectacle and didactic intentions—became a staple of domestic entertainment. A popular conception of moving panoramas as a public didactic enterprise remained in the period, and the medium was reconceived in various manners including as a didactic tool for children and as device for parody. Additionally, though popular art previously had enjoyed a relatively fluid relationship with fine art painting and sculpture, critics and patrons began to more sharply divide the two in the years immediately following the Civil War.

Among the founders of one such institution, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was Eastman Johnson, a painter from New England who trained in the studio of Emanuel Leutze in Dusseldorf before settling in New York City in 1858. Johnson painted a variety of subjects during his first few years in the city—drawing on subjects as varied as the urban poor, scenes from the ongoing Civil War, and commissions from wealthy patrons. In 1864 Johnson painted the family portrait *Christmas-Time, The Blodgett Family* for William T. Blodgett, a wealthy New York merchant (figure 4-5). As has been previously examined by art historian Suzaan Boettger, the work is a synthesis of Johnson's styles of portrait and genre painting in a manner that evokes the compositions of eighteenth-century Anglo-American conversation paintings. Set in the Blodgett family parlor during the holiday, the businessman's young children gather around the performance of a toy, dancing mannequin, apparently dressed as an African American soldier.[8] William

[8] Eleanor Jones Harvey has more recently argued that this is certainly a figure of an African American soldier being marched by young William Blodgett, Jr. Yet the occupation of the figure in the painting

Blodgett, Jr. entertains his parents and sisters by moving the wooden figure's legs in torso, perhaps in an emulation of the type of minstrel performance that was one of the most popular forms of urban entertainment in the period. [9]

As Boettger rightly points out, though the manipulation of a black figure by the young Blodgett child now appears to be an overt stereotype of African Americans and a reinforcement of an absolute power wielded by white superiors, its unlikely it would have been perceived as such in the period. Rather, both Johnson's own body of paintings that focus on African Americans offer empathetic depictions during the great crisis of the Civil War. Additionally, Blodgett's own staunch Unionism and support of both the creation of African American military regiments as well as relief for those effected by the 1863 Draft Riots, which particularly targeted New York's black community.[10] Blodgett additionally was a member of the Committee for the Fine Arts, which organized the exhibition of American art at the 1864 Metropolitan Sanitary Fair that sought to provide financial relief for the Union war effort.[11] Eastman Johnson along with several other artists was also on that committee.

What remains as the most unusual part of Johnson's portrait is not the pro-Union sentiments that the artist included in the painting, but rather it is the manner in which domesticity is used in the painting to evoke the cohesiveness of the Blodgett family. Indeed *Christmas-Time, The Blodgett Family* is a nexus of American culture, both high

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remains largely ambiguous. What is certain is it is being performed and as such, this examination argues much more closely allies it with a minstrel figure, perhaps in the martial dress, which would have not been uncommon on the contemporary stage: Harvey, The Civil War in American Art (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2012): 207.

[9] Suzaan Boettger, "Eastman Johnson's 'Blodgett Family' and Domestic Values during the Civil War Era," *American Art* 6, no. 4 (Autumn 1992): 50-67.

[10] Boettger, "Eastman Johnson's 'Blodgett Family' and Domestic Values during the Civil War Era," 58-64.

[11] Blodgett himself leant eleven works to that exhibition including Frederic Church's *Heart of the Andes*.

and low, as well as an example of how a mode of public spectacle was adapted in the period into a convention for family portraiture. An examination of this painting reveals a rich confluence of events and people in 1864, a pivotal year not only in the history of the nation as a whole, but also how art was understood and displayed in urban centers. While it is not one of Milton Bradley's moving panoramas that William Blodgett, Jr. has set up in his family's parlor for the evening's entertainment, the painting reveals the parallels between the adaption of the moving panorama to the domestic setting and the role played by the Blodgett children in Johnson's painting.

William Blodgett himself was one of the most active art collectors in the period. By the time of his death in 1875, his collection included works by Hudson River School painters Jasper Cropsey, Asher Durand, and John F. Kensett. Additionally, Blodgett frequently purchased works during his travels in Europe, including works by Rosa Bonheur, Adolphe-William Bouguereau, and Gustave Doré in his private collection. Unquestionably though, his prized possession was Frederic Church's *Heart of the Andes*, which Blodgett had purchased from the artist in 1859 for $10,000.[12] Blodgett's purchase was the largest single amount ever paid for a single work of art by an American at the time. Though *Heart of the Andes* continued to tour for two years under the supervision of Church's agent John McClure, it returned to New York and Blodgett's mansion, in 1861. It would only leave Blodgett's personal gallery once more before the patron's death, when he lent it for exhibition at the 1864 Metropolitan Sanitary Fair.[13]

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[12] Howat, 89; painting could have been sold for 20k in Europe.
[13] Katharine Baetjer, "Buying Pictures for New York: The Founding Purchase of 1871," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 39 (2004): 162.

Unlike the four intimate pictures that hang in the parlor depicted in Eastman Johnson's *Christmas-Time*, *Heart of the Andes* would have been an overwhelming presence in any room in the Blodgett household, if indeed that were where it was displayed. When it did appear at the Metropolitan Sanitary Fair it was exhibited in its original black walnut, cabinet-like frame. So, it is possible that Blodgett himself continued to exhibit the painting in his home in the same manner. While the large frame would not have been intended to be included amongst a wall of other pictures, its inclusion in the 1864 fair perhaps shows that Blodgett had not commissioned a second frame and continued to display it in the bulky case. Church himself would have preferred for a more traditional gilt frame of the variety that he designed for other paintings of a similar size that were intended for group shows.[14]

Eastman Johnson sets the intimate family portrait in the parlor, which was increasingly becoming a standard convention of group portraiture. Indeed, as ample scholarship of the period has thoroughly examined, in the wake of the Civil War the parlor became the metaphorical heart of the home. The parlor provided a space for the family to spend private time together, but also one in which the family expressed and developed its social and moral bearings. That the Blodgett family appears in the parlor is not a break with convention, but it is their portrayal as being actively engaged in an activity within that space that makes Johnson's painting so remarkable. One contemporary critic, who remarked on the painting's exhibition at the 1865 Annual

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[14] The author acknowledges the input of Elizabeth M. Kornhauser, whose conversations about Church's role in the design of Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt's private art gallery spurred this insight into how Church would have used frames, which he often designed himself; Kornhauser, "Samuel Colt: Arms, Art and Invention," in *Samuel Colt: Arms, Art, and Invention*, ed. Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006): 242-44.

Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, described it as, "beyond all question the most successful attempt to make a group of portraits picturesque which has ever been made in this country."[15] Indeed, despite the grandeur and availably of Church's spectacular *Heart of the Andes*, it is in front of the young Blodgett boy's mechanical minstrel that the family gathers.

This chapter argues that despite the disappearance of moving panoramas, Great Picture exhibitions, and Barnumesque curio museums from public arenas in this era, the ideal of the spectacle continued. Pantomimes, parlor games, miniature moving panoramas, stereographs, and other amusements all rapidly grew in popularity in the late 1860s. Simultaneously, public and commercial institutions, once considered a vital life force of the city were viewed suspiciously. A counterpoint to Johnson's group portrait of the Blodgett Family is his 1863 *The Young Sweep* (figure 4-6). Rather than a depiction of a wealthy family ensconced in a private space of their own making, *The Young Sweep* sets its sole figure alone on the hostile, public streets. Johnson depicts an African American sweep, cautiously leaning back against a latched door. In muddled tones of mustard, sienna, and black, the barefoot boy glances sideways avoiding the viewer's gaze, and holding his jacket close to his body he obscures what possessions—likely tools of the trade—he may have. Produced after the New York Draft Riots of 1863, *The Young Sweep*

[15] *New York World* (May 16, 1865): 4, quoted in Boettger, "Eastman Johnson's 'Blodgett Family' and Domestic Values during the Civil War Era," 51.

reworks a standard depiction of an urban archetype into a contemporary reflection done on the city's urban center.[16]

Bootblacks, newsboys, sweeps, and other common jobs held by the disenfranchised youth of American cities were common subjects for American genre painters of the era. Henry Inman's *News Boy* from 1841 shows a similar tramp-like figure leaning against the stairway of the Astor House Hotel (figure 4-7). Immediately adjacent to City Hall Park and Barnum's American Museum, Inman places the young boy at one of the most recognizable intersections in contemporary New York City, as well as its cultural center.[17] Unlike Johnson's *The Young Sweep*, Inman's newsboy inhabits a definite part of the city and the role of one of City Hall Park's most frequent sights. The boy hawks his wares to the viewer, indicated by his direct gaze, open mouth, and grasping of *The Sun* newspaper. Inman's figure, like so many others by contemporary painters, exudes a roguish ease that doesn't threaten the viewer entrance into his space.

Conversely, Johnson's *The Young Sweep* portrays the young boy in a cornered space and in a more defensive position. Indeed, Johnson's 1863 painting serves as a meditation not only on the plight of the young African American boy, but also as an engagement with the space of the city itself. Typical of Johnson's paintings of the period, especially those that dealt with African American subjects, the figure of the sweep is imbued with a distinct sense of humanity that surpasses the archetypal character suggested by the painting's title. As pointed out by Claire Perry in her discussion of the

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[16] Claire Perry discusses this is in her examination of the 'Ragamuffin' type in American painting of the period, *Young America: Childhood in 19th-Century Art & Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006): 111-15.

[17] The movement of the city's cultural and commercial center from City Hall Park, slowly northward along Broadway during the antebellum era is discussed in Chapter I of this dissertation.

work, Johnson's inclusion of this work in the 1864 Metropolitan Sanitary Fair served as a "sobering reminder of the vast, disparate rabble outside the exposition gates."[18] While three monumental paintings--*Heart of the Andes*, *Rocky Mountain, Lander's Peak*, and Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware*—anchored the Picture Gallery, it was perhaps only the small, one-foot high painting by Johnson that spoke most directly to the effects of the war on New York City.

William Blodgett would have been aware of Johnson's painting and his cause, not only because he was actively involved with charitable relief that followed the destruction of the Colored Orphan Asylum in 1863, but also because he was one of the organizers of the Picture Gallery. So when Blodgett commissioned his family portrait the following year, the effusive sense of domesticity is particularly noticeable because of the ongoing urban strife that would have kept the young Blodgetts largely separate from scenes outside their home on 25th Street. Yet, the central focus of *Christmas-Time, The Blodgett Family* is the manipulation of small wooden minstrel figurine by the William Blodgett, Jr. as he entertains his family. Indeed, the painting is united compositionally by each figure's turned attention to the moving toy (the youngest daughter has dropped the rope to her toy dog, and the mother lowers her book) as well as a statement about the family's cohesiveness expressed through the enactment of a small-scale performance.

Eastman Johnson reinforces the idea of play within the home through the inclusion of another one of his own paintings in *Christmas Time—The Blodgett Family*. Johnson's *Corn Shelling* of the same year was also in the collection of William Blodgett

[18] Perry, Young America, 113.

and hangs on the far wall, directly to right of the patron's head (figure 4-8).[19] The grouping of the family around the wooden minstrel creates a pyramidal shape that extends through the taut hanging wires of the paintings at rear. William Blodgett's gaze passes through *Corn Shelling* as he watches his son perform. Johnson's small genre painting depicts a father in the process of gathering the dry corn kernels in a basket, as he looks down upon his son stacking the spent cobs. Scenes of farm work dominated Johnson's genre painting of the era. The nation's urban collectors collected New England maple syrup camps, and groups of corn huskers as notions of a rural work ethic and simplicity were increasingly valued. William Blodgett's lavish New York mansion bears no resemblance to the simplicity of the workspace in *Corn Shelling*, yet it echoes Johnson's theme of the father's hard work that has provided leisure for his family. Like the young boy that stacks the corncobs, William Blodgett, Jr. manipulates the product of his father's work in a manner that is both entertaining and constructive.

Christmas-Time, The Blodgett Family shows merely one of hundreds of parlor entertainments whose popularity rose dramatically in years immediately following the Civil War. The use and popularity of devices such as Milton Bradley's Myriopticon demonstrates the lingering cultural resonance of the moving panorama in particular, as many forms of spectacular entertainment were adapted for strictly domestic use. Whereas earlier, the moving panorama paintings of John Banvard, the exhibition of Western curiosities by proprietors like George Catlin and P.T. Barnum, and the paintings of similar subjects by George Caleb Bingham all operated conversationally, during the 1860s a concerted rift opened up between what would be classified as 'high art' and

[19] Boettger, "Eastman Johnson's 'Blodgett Family' and Domestic Values during the Civil War Era," 54.

entertainment. In the case of William Blodgett, some of his own prized possessions including *Heart of the Andes* would have been considered ineligible for the museum that he, along with Frederic Church, helped to found. It was in this period that the spectacle moved into the domestic sphere, and the grand pretensions of art were carefully curated in the museums.

One of the luminaries of American painting of the later half of the nineteenth century was inadvertently featured in the moving panorama's quick adaptation into home performance. Indeed, when Milton Bradley published its *Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion* in 1866, its designers clearly turned to one of the broadest and readily available visual sources of the late war, *Harper's Weekly*. Homer's 1862 wood engraving *Army of the Potomac—A Sharp Shooter* on Picket Duty was the inspiration for one of the twenty-four illustrations that comprised the moving panorama (figures 4-9 and 4-10). In the short descriptive pamphlet for the exhibition, the Milton Bradley moving panorama continues its combination of description and wordplay: "This interesting young man is a sharp-shooter that has ensconced himself in a tree and fires whenever he sees the head of an enemy. He is probably a relative of one of our celebrated poets, as he is evidently a very long fellow."[20] The words were meant to read aloud by the child in the guise of a lecturer (in this instance: "Gen. B.R. Stadt"), and in so doing provided entertainment and education within the guise of the family parlor.

Alongside the Myriopticon, Milton Bradley's *Historiscope* illustrated the history of the founding of North America as well as the Revolutionary War. Similarly the Milton

[20] "Myriopticon Lecture," in *Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion* (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley Company, 1866): 5-6, Winterthur Museum & Library.

Bradley Company reused well-known images that would have been accessible, as well as recognizable. Though some of the visual sources may have been lifted form popular magazines or histories, the *Historiscope* was unique in the number of times it drew its inspiration from works of original American easel painting. In the broadside that accompanied the panorama, the *Historiscope* is described as, "painted entirely from the most vivid imagination of the OLD MASTERS." In this instance, the lecturer is supposed to assume the identity of "Prof. Easel Pallett." Among the artists represented, though never credited, are George Catlin, John Vanderlyn, William H. Powell, Benjamin West, John Trumbull, and Asher B. Durand (figures 4-11 through 4-16).[21] Whereas the moving panorama of the very recent Civil War utilized the journalistic imagery of Winslow Homer and the Western-explorer persona of Bierstadt, the *Historiscope* cloaked itself in references to the America's artistic production. The movement of these now iconic images into vernacular shorthand for the events depicted reiterates the consistent link between the production of easel painters and panorama performances through the antebellum and Civil War years.

In Milton Bradley's third moving panorama, *Panorama of the Visit of Santa Claus to the Happy Children* the historical themes are forgone for undoubtedly what was

[21]Each of the painting's that Milton Bradley reproduced in the *Historiscope* was previously published and distributed on a national market, either in books, magazines, or as a stand alone engraving: George Catlin's "Medicine Man in Curing Costume," appeared in George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* Vol 1 (London: Published by the Author, 1841): 19. H.B. Hall engraved Vanderlyn's *Landing of Columbus* in 1858. Johnson, Fry, & Co. of New York engraved W.H. Powell's *Discovery of the Mississippi* in 1858. Benjamin West's *William Penn's Treaty with the Indians* was engraved as early as 1775 by John Hall of London and made its way into American visual culture shortly thereafter. Trumbull's *The Death of General Warren* was similarly engraved in 1785 by the Bostonian John Norman. Asher Durand's *The Capture of Major André* was engraved in 1846 by Alfred Jones and became widely available because it was the free annual engraving offered to thousands of members of the American Art-Union that year.

intended to be a holiday entertainment. The description of how the moving panorama was to be performed shares many of the elements that Eastman Johnson includes in his Christmas-Time, The Blodgett Family. While William Blodgett, Jr. does not conceal his presence and operated his apparatus from behind a curtain, as the Milton Bradley panorama suggests, it is the playful entertainment that unites the family. Additionally, it is precisely in this period that the Christmas-time role of Santa Claus becomes prominent in American households. The rise of the now-iconic images of Santa Claus and the boom of Christmas related imagery from this period points to a focus on the unification of the family in the home. Indeed shared company and activities in the parlor were one of the most commonly depicted themes in art and literature of the period.[22]

In art, literature, and amusement there was a distinct interest in the performance of children in the home as distinct indicator of the healthy home. It was not only a signal of the health of the family and good child rearing, but it was also a distinctly anti-public gesture. Minstrel shows, moving panoramas, tableaux and other entertainments all gained new relevance as didactic enterprises for children to perform inside the home. Moving panoramas were just one of the several, previously public forms of public spectacle that found new life in domestic setting. The medium's appearance in popular literature and entertainment was the last vestige of the form's widespread popularity. Though no longer regularly performed in urban centers, their memory continued to hold sway particularly with the generation who were raised on them, but now turned their children away from public spectacle. In the *Work and Play Annual* distributed by Milton

[22] Karal Ann Marling, *Merry Christmas! Celebrating America's Greatest Holiday* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000): 292.

Bradley as an advertisement and instructional manual, the author plays off the reader's nostalgia for the moving panoramas made popular by John Banvard over two decades in the past:

> Ever since the time, in the childhood of many of the parents of the present day, when the panorama of the Mississippi river was exhibited through the country to the delight of the crowded houses, it has been the highest ambition of boys with any natural or acquired taste for drawing and coloring to construct famous panoramas and set up exhibition in the drawing room, attic, shed or tent; with an admission fee proportioned to the circumstance of the audience whose patronage is to be solicited. In order to encourage this very innocent and instructive ambition several small panoramas have been published with all the appurtenances of a complete exhibition, and a short lecture to be committed to memory and repeated in explanation of the scenes as they are passed before the audience [*sic*].[23]

Indeed, while older generations of Americans may have interacted with moving panoramas and other spectacles as the audience, in later domestic amusements children are asked to assume the role of the artist-lecturer. As one period guidebook stated:

> As an educational agent, the amateur drama can hardly be too highly esteemed; for it teaches the young performer elocution, gesticulation, ease of manner, and a certain knowledge of the emotions and passions of humanity, which rarely can be acquired elsewhere.[24]

In stepping into the role of lecturer, the didactic intentions of earlier, commercial moving panorama shift from the audience to the speaker. The subject of the exhibition is no longer the driving force behind the recreation of a moving panorama, but rather it is ability of the child to mimic the performances that would have been far more familiar to the older generation than any of the children.

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[23] *Work and Play Annual of Home and Social Sports*, 36.
[24] George Arnold, *The Socialable or One Thousand and One Home Amusements* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, Publishers, 1858): 1.

Such instances of children being asked, or unilaterally deciding to partake in a moving panorama performance appeared in contemporary literature as well. In Jacob Abbott's series of highly successful children's novels, making panoramas was one of the author's favorite activities in which to engage his protagonists. Both in *Mary Gay; or, Work for Girls* (1865) as well as in *Mary Osborne* (1870), characters engage use the shared creation of a panorama, as well as an implied performance, to resolve differences. In *Mary Gay*, Abbott's precise description of how two young girls craft their panorama undoubtedly doubles as an instructional tool for the reader. Abbott even included precise warnings about how to be careful and neat with certain substances such as paste. Rather than a painted panorama, as appeared in other Abbott texts, the panorama of *Mary Gay* was a hand-colored collage of images from magazines and other sources that were pasted onto a long roll of paper. Abbott's imaginary panorama must have held a great similarity to the Milton Bradley panoramas, which began production the year following the publication of *Mary Gay*. Nonetheless, Abbott represented the creation of panoramas as a learning activity and one that could easily be recreated by an adolescent reader.[25]

In an earlier publication *Dialogues for the Amusement and Instruction of Young Persons*, Jacob Abbott stresses the importance of memorization and performance in the

[25] Additionally, Abbott's awareness of moving panorama performances by the number of time he included them in his works, but also his reputation to sway public opinion especially on such matters of public matters is evidenced by a letter written to John Banvard thanking him for an invitation to a private viewing of the artist's *Holy Land*, Letter, Jacob Abbott to John Banvard, January 6, 1853, John Banvard and Family Papers, 1752-1985, Minnesota Historical Society; Jacob Abbott, *Mary Gay; or, Work for Girls* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1865): 18-39; Jacob Abbott, *Mary Osborne*, 1870 (Reprint, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1883): 185-98; The author acknowledges helpful conversations with Patricia Crain in finding these sources, and Patricia Crain, "'Selling a Boy': Lost Children, the Literary Contract and Contract Literacy," Lecture, Department of English, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, November 18, 2010.

development of literacy and elocution for children.[26] Theater historian Amy E. Hughes has previously examined how Abbott encouraged staged performances in both his fictional characters as well as his real readers. Hughes connects Abbott's texts with the use of spectacular performance in support of reform causes such as abolitionism and temperance. In each instance a reader or viewer is asked to engage in a form of analysis in which one recognizes important ideas, such as the effects of drunkenness or the cruelty of slavery. Similar to instances in which Abbott's characters create or perform tableaux or panoramas, the reader becomes a spectator to an exhibition in their own imagination.[27]

Hughes points to an article from *The Emancipator* that asks the reader to imagine the scar-marked body of fugitive slave as the author leads them through a tour of the man's body—a process that transforms the reader into an imaginary spectator. Of course the emphasis on the corporeality of slaves and of the physical punishment endured by so many was a trope of antebellum literature, art, and drama. Yet this article also echoes the immense importance of the presence of the former slaves William Wells Brown and Henry "Box" Brown in their own moving panorama exhibitions. Indeed, the idea of some sort of authenticating presence was crucial to the operational aesthetic of most antebellum spectacles. Yet in their recreation as domestic parlor entertainment, the role of presenter as authenticator (Wells Brown as slave-lecturer, or Banvard as explorer-artist) is absent. In asking a child to memorize a lecture, to perform a tableau, or to even know how the exhibition of miniature exhibition that is complete with broadsides and tickets should run,

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[26] Jacob Abbott, *Dialogues for the Amusement and Instruction of Young Persons* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857): 7.
[27] Amy E. Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-century America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012): 34-36.

a didactic presence comes not from the lecturer but from the emulative mode of exhibition.[28]

While the idea of fostering elocution and presentation were not unique to this era, that they were clothed in a guise of spectacular entertainment was peculiar since these very activities were largely proscribed as a proper public entertainment. Increasingly through the late antebellum era and through the years of the Civil War, public entertainment became increasingly less suitable for certain members of society, most notably women and children. Theatrical entertainment was the subject of severe condemnation from many members of American society dating back to the eighteenth century. Yet didactic entertainments, like moving panoramas, art exhibitions, and museums made conscious and successful efforts to procure exemptions from such proscriptions. The proprietors of such spectacular entertainments almost always contacted local civic and clerical leaders when new exhibitions appeared in a town. Indeed, amongst the variety of operas, plays, and minstrel shows that populated every American city, moving panorama exhibitions routinely attempted to distance themselves from such entertainment through their ability to inculcate virtue or knowledge.

Perhaps one of the most frequent commentators on the status and role of art and amusements in the 1860s was the author and lecturer Charles Farrar Browne, who wrote under the penname Artemus Ward. Known as one as one of the greatest humorists of his day, Ward's folksy tales of his Western travels inspired the budding author Samuel Clemens to adapt his persona of Mark Twain. In 1863 Ward began a lecture tour of the Western United States that took him on a steamer ship from New York City to San

[28] Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform*, 36-37.

Francisco via Panama, then back eastward through Nevada, Utah, over the Rockies, and into Kansas. Supposedly inspired by the advice of P.T. Barnum, Ward began to formulate the idea for a moving panorama exhibition about his travels.[29]

Initially Ward's decision to mount a moving panorama exhibition in 1863-64 may have seemed an odd decision judging from the fact that demand for such shows seemed to have dried up in the money-making centers like New York and Boston. Yet the choice makes sense in the context of Ward's previous publications in which he constantly is assuming the role of a showman-entrepreneur that incorporated the larger than life personas of showmen like Barnum and Banvard. In his first major publication of 1862, *Artemus Ward: His Book*, Ward adopts the identity of a proprietor of a waxwork statuary hall. Amongst his purported displays were "wax figgers of G. Washington Gen. Tayler John Bunyan Capt. Kidd and Dr. Webster in the act of killin Dr. Parkman, besides several moral wax statoots of celebrated piruts & murders [sic]."[30] The absurd scene conjured by Ward's imagination references a highly publicized Boston murder trial of 1849 in which Dr. John Webster was convicted of the murder Dr. George Parkman. The inclusion of iconic American figures like Washington and Bunyan echo both the perceived circus-like nature of the trial, as well as perhaps the practice of reusing wax mannequins in different scenarios that could lead to such fantastic arrangements. Though Ward's imagined waxwork scene was not too far from the truth as Ephraim Littlefield, the key witness for

[29] Curtis Dahl, "Artemus Ward: Comic Panoramist," *The New England Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Dec., 1959): 476-85.
[30] Artemus Ward, *Artemus Ward: His Book* (New York: Carleton, 1862): 17.

the prosecution, used reward money garnered from his experience to tour a wax recreation of the murder scene in the early 1850s.[31]

Ward's outrageous waxwork scene is described in a comical letter that he is supposedly writing to a local newspaper editor. Though Ward's prose is garbled with the strong dialect of an illiterate showman, it is through the letter's supposed purpose to solicit positive press, moral praise from local leaders, as well as the distribution of his handbills that Ward again demonstrates the level at which contemporary Americans understood the operations of such spectacular entertainments. For without the understanding of why a showman like this would be writing such a letter, Ward's jokes could not be received. Indeed he writes:

> Now Mr. Editor, scratch orf a few lines sayin how is the show bizniss down to your place. I shall hav my handbills dun at your offiss…I want you should git my handbills up in flaming stile. Also git up a tremenjus excitement in yr. paper 'bowt my onparaleld Show. We must fetch the public sumhow. We must work on their feelins. Cum the moral on 'em strong. If it's a temperance community tell 'em I sined the pledge fifteen minits after Ise born…[sic][32]

Like Milton Bradley's miniature moving panoramas that appeared just a few years after Ward's publications, part of the set up of the humor of each is the knowledge of all the component parts of such exhibitions. Ward's huckster personality is all the more appropriate because he is publishing his parody after such entertainments' height of popularity—especially for waxwork exhibitions which were largely passé by 1862.

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[31] "The Parkman Murder of 1849: The Commonwealth v. John White Webster," *Famous American Crimes and Trials: Volume I: 1607-1859* eds. Frankie Y. Bailey and Steven M. Chermak (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004): 274.
[32] Ward, *Artemus Ward: His Book*, 18.

Much of Artemus Ward's writings that bring up the theme of the hapless showman reinforce that waxwork exhibitions and moving panoramas still held relevance in his audience's imagination, since they had become targets for lampooning. Indeed, part of Ward's humor stemmed from his ability to embrace and mock different forms of amusement. Undoubtedly, his most successful venture was the creation and touring of a moving panorama based on his 1863 tour in the western United States. The panorama debuted in 1863 at New York's Dodworth's Hall on Broadway near Union Square. In a gesture towards the theatrics of contemporary showmen like Barnum, Ward promoted his initial performance with a procession of "Bowery Irishmen" up Broadway, each in Native American garb and carrying large white umbrellas that advertised his show.[33] Humor and extravagance pervaded Ward's exhibition. Yet during his initial exhibitions in New York and his following ones in Boston, the painted panorama that illustrated Ward's journey was a straight panorama that depicted scenic views of San Francisco, the Mormon Tabernacle, and other sites from the author's journey. Consequently it seems, that his attendance was disappointing and in 1865 he commissioned a new panorama that combined comic images with Ward's spoken humor.[34]

Ward's new panorama was intentionally crudely painted and exhibited behind the familiar gold frame that appeared in so many of the earlier panoramas. Much of Ward's performance relied on the audience's familiarity with similar, serious moving panorama exhibitions. It was not only the Mississippi panoramas of John Banvard, John Rowson Smith, and Henry Lewis that Ward referred, but more specifically to ones that were

[33] Dahl, "Artemus Ward," 476.
[34] *Ibid*.

produced in the wake of the 1849 California Gold Rush. Several panoramas depicted the overland route between St. Louis and San Francisco, each showing different landscape views along the way. John Skirving's 1849 *Panorama of Fremont's Overland Journey to Oregon and California* was the most successful of this group of panoramas, as it toured the United States and England.[35] This panorama competed with other exhibitions, notably George Tirrell's *Panorama of California* (1860) and John Wesley Jones' *Pantoscope of California* (1852), which had the unique claim of basing its depictions off daguerreotypes taken in the West. Like the Mississippi River panoramas, the California examples stressed national narratives that ignored the sectional strife of the time in lieu of the economic and moral ties that bound the nation.[36]

Yet these were not the themes replicated in Artemus Ward's comic panorama. Rather, Ward stuck to recurring jokes about Mormon life in the West, which itself was a recurring subject of fascination in earlier, serious panoramas. The admission ticket to Ward's first exhibition in New York bore the stipulation that admitted "the Bearer and ONE Wife."[37] By the time his panorama reached London, the title has become *Artemus Ward among the Mormons*. Mostly, however, Ward's moving panorama poked fun at the presentations of moving panoramas themselves. After the author's unexpected death in 1867, friends and colleagues of Ward published a book in 1869 that both described the execution of the panorama itself in London and gave clues to how the panorama's self-referential humor. In the pamphlet that accompanied Ward's panorama, the author

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[35] Joseph Earl Arrington, "Skirving's Moving Panorama: Colonel Fremont's Western Expedition Pictorialized," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (June, 1964): 133-172.
[36] Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002): 57.
[37] Dahl, "Artemus Ward," 477.

proclaimed, "the Panorama used to Illustrate Mr. Ward's Narrative is rather worse than Panoramas usually are."[38] Ward's parody pamphlet came complete with fictional recommendations at the back of the pamphlet just as would appear in any serious productions. Of course Ward's recommendations spoke alternatively to his lecture's ability to heal the invalid as well as to its soporific powers.

Perhaps what is most interesting in the publication of Ward's actual London lectures were illustrations that depicted the onstage appearance of the exhibition (figs X-X). Small wood engravings interrupt the text and give illustrations not only of the Western scenery depicted in Ward's panorama, but also of the exhibition mode itself. As if to conjure the performance within the reader's mind, the first illustration depicts the panorama covered by heavy cloth, set inside a gold frame (figure 4-17). This becomes particularly poignant in Ward's scene of his voyage over the Rocky Mountains, which in its crude wood engraving depiction bears at least some compositional similarity to Albert Bierstadt's famous 1863 painting (figure 4-18). An editor's note to Ward's lecture describes the scene at Egyptian Hall:

> The panorama was to the left on entering, and Artemus Ward stood at the south-east corner facing the door. He had beside him a music-stand …The proscenium was covered with dark cloth, and the picture bounded by a great gilt frame. On the rostrum behind the lecturer was a little door giving admission to the space behind the picture where the piano was placed. Through this door Artemus would disappear occasionally in the course of the evening, either to instruct his pianist to play a few more bars of music, to tell his assistants to roll the picture more quickly or more slowly….[39]

Throughout the published lecture illustrations and notations attempt to enliven the performance with the necessary presence Ward. When Ward would refer to his painted

[38] Ward, *Artemus Ward: His Panorama*, 204.
[39] Ward, *Artemus Ward: His Panorama,* 59-60.

panorama, an illustration of an outstretched forearm and hand grasping a pointer appeared on the page to literally point the reader back to the engraving that repeatedly featured the gilt frame and footlights (figure 4-19). Their inclusion as well as the gesture reiterates the ideas of performance as vital to the reception of Ward's spectacle.

Towards the end of Artemus Ward's performance a scene of "The Prairie on Fire" appeared. The subject matter was a staple for moving panoramas of the previous decade and allowed a chance for the use of dramatic lighting the mimicked the licking of flames across burning fields. Though in Ward's humorous presentation the imagined flames would die out, only to dramatically reignite just as Ward began to continue with his lecture.[40] At the London performances of the comic panorama, it appears from the transcription of the accompanying pamphlet that is was the final scene. However, when it was first performed in New York in 1864 and in the published version of 1869, its ends with an illustration of "Brigham Young at Home (figure 4-20)." The chaotic parlor scene is out of order geographically as Ward's travels had brought him steadily eastward from San Francisco through the plains.

Yet it was an entirely appropriate conclusion for Ward's panorama. Ward and his audiences were clearly fascinated with Mormonism and Brigham Young in particular. His polygamous family was the butt of many of Ward's jokes and the Hogarthian scene is a comic antipode of the type of parlor scene seen in works like Eastman Johnson's *Christmas-Time, The Blodgett Family*. As several of Young's children covet their own toys and the others climb atop their father and mothers, seems almost a direct response to Johnson' s painting of domestic cohesion. "Brigham Young at Home" is the only

[40] Ward, *Artemus Ward: His Panorama*, 192-93.

illustration in Artemus Ward: His Panorama that is identified as being from Ward's own hand. It seems likely that the author would have seen Johnson's painting in 1865 when he returned to New York with his comic panorama during the same summer that the National Academy of Design held its annual exhibition in its brand new and much publicized building. Johnson's painting was singled out by New York press as one of the finest in the exhibition.[41]

Whether or not Ward did know of Johnson's painting, nonetheless, the comic distress in Young's home would have signaled very real problems to the lecturer and his audience. Ward spoke about Young:

> His family is large—and the olive branches around his table are in a very tangled condition. He is more a father than any man I know. When at home—as you here see him—he ought to be very happy with sixty wives to minister to his comforts—and twice sixty children to soothe his distracted mind. Ah! my friends—what is home without a family: [sic][42]

Ward's facetious statement about how he perceives happiness in Young's home emphasizes the chaos of the actual scene. Ward concludes his entire performance in a short paragraph following this scene in which states that he does not believe the Mormon church will be able to survive after the death of Brigham Young, precisely because it is only through "his power of will" that he maintains order in the religion.[43] Lack of discipline in Young's parlor is an overt sign of the disorder that Ward sees lurking in the prophet's larger household of the Mormon Church.

As discussed earlier, parlor games like the Milton Bradley Myriopticon or the presentation of tableaux grew in popularity in this era as entertaining tools for

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[41] Boettger, 51.
[42] Ward, *Artemus Ward: His Panoram*a, 193-94.
[43] Ward, *Artemus Ward: His Panorama*, 194.

educational and moral development. These parlor activities mimicked the modes of once popular exhibition in order to allow for children to engage in the refinement of their own knowledge, morals, and comportment. It is not surprising, therefore, that Artemus Ward's own popularity led towards an adaptation of his presentation for parlor entertainment. In 1866 Frank Bellew, a caricaturist for *Harper's Weekly*, published a guidebook for parlor theatrics and entertainments, *The Art of Amusing*. The book described in detail and with illustrations how to perform a variety of parlor tricks and games, including puppet shows, magic tricks, and small dramas.

One of Bellew's performances entitled "Artemus Ward, parlor edition," recreates a performance of the humorist's moving panorama for children in the domestic setting. An accompanying illustration shows that Bellew even encourages the child to dress up like Ward for the performance (figure 4-21). Certainly the child-like panorama drawing, oversized clothes and prosthetics would have lent more comedy to any domestic performance. Like other domestic amusements, the "Artemus Ward, parlor edition," was intended to educate and refine as well as entertain.[44] Bellew's guidebook appeared three years prior to the publication of Ward's London performances of his comic panorama. It is likely then that Bellew himself composed the speech and narrative that was included in the guidebooks description from seeing Ward's performance in either of his two New York City runs in 1864 and 1865. Bellew's performance, which supposedly would have been largely memorized by the child, largely follows the same narrative of Ward's travel in the western United States and time among the Mormons, interspersed with mild one-

[44] Frank Bellew, *The Art of Amusing: Being a Collection of Graceful Arts, Merry Games, Odd Tricks, Curious Puzzles, and New Charades: Together with Suggestions for Private Theatricals, Tableaux, and all Sorts of Parlor and Family Amusements* (New York: Carleton, 1867): 157-63.

liner jokes. Additionally, successive displays of drawings by the children mimic the rolling scenes of the moving panorama.

In retrospect, the adaptation of Artemus Ward's personality and performance into a domestic parlor entertainment seems perfectly natural and expected. Ward was a persona adapted by Charles Farrar Browne. His role as lecturer of a moving panorama and earlier publications and lectures, in which he adapted the role of proprietor of a fictional wax museum were parodies of the mediums themselves. Common to each of these domestic entertainments was that they adapted almost every feature of a moving panorama exhibition—tickets, broadsides, and lighting—and then used humor that referenced the faults and banality of the mode of exhibition. These parlor entertainments were sold and recreated as activities that not only amused, but also refined. Family cohesiveness was consistently represented via images and activities related to the domestic parlor. Brigham Young's family sprawled all over the scene, while William Blodgett's unified their attention on their performance of their child. Images that featured activities in the parlor attempted to serve an edifying goal in the period, and the adaptation of modes of exhibition derived from formerly popular public entertainments was shorthand for the health of the family.

When the Boston caricaturist David Claypoole Johnston visited John Banvard's performance of his *Geographic Panorama of the Mississippi River* he saw, like many of his contemporaries, a depiction of the Southern land and economy that willfully ignored the presence of slavery. Johnston was a well-known abolitionist and his 1848 *Section of the Panorama of the Mississippi* is an unambiguous attack on what he saw as the

conflicting policies of then presidential candidate, Zachary Taylor (figure 3-1). Johnston's couching of his political cartoon in a popular understanding of a moving panorama of the Mississippi River served as an attack on Taylor more than on Banvard or his colleagues. Its meaning required a level of familiarity with the medium and likely the popularity of Zachary Taylor's Louisiana plantation as a common and topical subject.

Johnston returned to the subject of American repeatedly throughout his career as an illustrator. In 1863 the artist produced a small pen and ink wash drawing that satirized the playtime of Southern children living in the slave states (figure 4-22).[45] The *Early Development of Southern Chivalry* is an image that is both in line with the artist and other's production of imagery that depicted the savagery of the slave system, as well as unique in its placement of cruelty in the hands of children. The setting of the drawing is clearly recognizable as family parlor. High-end, upholstered furniture as well as looking glass and paintings adorn the room. Two of the paintings bear inscriptions identifying their likeness to be of the President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis as well as the Confederate General P.T. Beauregard. The two men serve as patriarchal figures in a disturbing household scene that represents a larger sense a Southern family. The two children that Johnston represents are not localized to simply one boy and girl, but under the supervision of their elders they enact their tableau as William Blodgett, Jr. manipulated his minstrel figure, or another child would assume the persona of Artemus Ward.

[45] The level of finish on this particular drawing suggests that Johnston had intended the images for publication, but it appears that never happened.

Elizabeth Kuebler-Wolf previously discussed Johnston's *Early Development of Southern Chivalry* in the context of childhood imagery used in both the anti and proslavery debates. Kuebler-Wolf identifies the positioning of the stripped and bound female slave doll and the use of a chamber pot to collect imagined blood and other bodily fluids, "suggest[s] the shocking degree to which this make-believe play is based upon real-world observations of slave whippings."[46] Johnston's mordant cartoon espouses the idea that the metaphorical Southern household is poisoned by the brutality of slavery. Like other images of parlor amusement, *Early Development of Southern Chivalry*, represents the salubrity of a family based on activities performed in the parlor. In this instance, Johnston's drawing represents a deeply troubled society that stands in contrast to other well-known representations of Northern domestic life.

While amusements and theatrics became didactic activities for use in the home, exhibitions of fine art were gradually separated from everyday experiences during the same era. Moving panoramas and the Great Picture exhibitions once operated together in a commercial marketplace of public amusement in which viewers attended both types of spectacle. As discussed earlier in the dissertation there was little or no distinction between high art Great Picture exhibitions like *Heart of the Andes* and similar popular amusement. [47] Yet, during the 1860s there was a great anxiety about the relationship between popular amusement and the pretensions of high art. The criticism leveled at Great Pictures was that their mode of exhibition shared too much in common with the

[46] Elizabeth Kuebler-Wolf, "'Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go:' The Image of Idealized Childhood in the Slavery Debate, 1850-1870," *Childhood and Youth During the Civil War Era*, ed. James Alan Marten (New York: New York University Press 2012): 32.
[47] This is discussed is Chapter I.

popular. James Jackson Jarves specifically made this comparison in 1864 between the exhibition of Albert Biertstadt's *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* and the moving panorama.[48] Jarves and many of his contemporaries openly fretted about the mingling of high art with popular incarnations that demanded a similar "operational aesthetic," which demanded an intellectual probing of the object on view by the viewer.[49] Central to the intended reception of moving panorama paintings as well as large-scale easel paintings and sculpture in the antebellum era was that they could in part be understood as a didactic enterprise.

Lawrence Levine in his seminal text *Highbrow/Lowbrow* described the drastic cultural changes that swept American culture in the antebellum and Civil War years as a push towards a "sacralization" of culture.[50] Antebellum urban environment allowed for the free intermingling of classes in its core urban centers that were populated with all of the city's cultural offerings. In the first years of the 1870s alongside the foundation of a new wave of institutionalized cultural centers, local committees of the urban elite in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, and Chicago attempted to establish a distinct canon of high culture. Rather than allow relatively open access to contemporary and historic visual art, as had been the practice at the American Art-Union (and its wave of

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[48] James Jackson Jarves, *The Art-Idea: Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture in America* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1864): 254-55.
[49] This is the phrase used by both Neil Harris and Michael Leja in their scholarship of the period and is discussed in Chapter II; Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973): 79-83; Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004): 46-58, 130-32.
[50] Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow*, 86-168.

imitators across the nation) as well as the National Academy of Design, these new institutions attempted to direct a cultural taste apart from the popular marketplace.[51]

In choosing works to display to their new collections, both the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston largely ignored the productions of local American artists. Even in the case of the Metropolitan, which counted amongst its founding trustees the artists Frederic Church, Eastman Johnson, and John Kensett as well as prominent collectors, including William Blodgett, there was little interest in collecting art by Hudson River School painters. Blodgett himself took advantage of the looming Franco-Prussian War to obtain a hearty collection of 174 European Old Master paintings from three French and Belgian collections.[52] It was not until 1873 that the museum would acquire its first example of an American artist, Henry Peters Gray's neoclassical *The Wages of War*.[53] In laying out parameters for how the museum should judge works for acquisition, the museum's president John Taylor Johnston said in 1883:

> If we should select from the art works of our own period for preservation only such examples as agree with some peculiar standard of present taste and judgment, or even with the several and diverse standards of various minds of educated and cultivated lovers of art, we should deliver to posterity no proper or adequate illustration of the arts of our own day … This important consideration applies to the whole principle of a Museum of Art. Its purposes should be, not to teach what its founders think ought to be admired but to teach what men and women, under the varied circumstances of age, country, education, religion have admired and have utilized. The object is not to illustrate artists or producers of art work, but

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[51] Stevenson, *Victorian Homefront*, 61; Alan Wallch, "Long-Term Visions, Short-Term Failures: Art Institutions in the United States, 1800-1860," *Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United* States (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998): 18-21; Dell Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis: Civilization and Urbanity in Antebellum New York," in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-61*, eds. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 40-45.

[52] Baetjer, "Buying Pictures for New York," 161-245.

[53] Wendell D. Garrett, "The First Score for American Paintings and Sculpture, 1870-1890," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 3 (1970): 313.

> to illustrate the human mind, its wants, tastes, judgments, even its desires and imaginations.[54]

In a statement that expressed the museum's desire to have a museum focused on eternal ideas, which was self-defeating since it was a concept wholly of its own time. The committee embraced a tautology that was popular in the post-Civil War years and was spearheaded by James Jackson Jarves. His writings derived heavily from the English aesthetician John Ruskin and sought not only beauty that defied changes in popular taste, but also that expressed ideas of the divine. His lampoons of the Great Pictures as mere moving panoramas relied on the very idea that they were ephemeral and necessitated the active participation of a viewer, rather than the passive acceptance of the work. This innate ability to understand Jarves' preferred mode of art also presumed education and taste, two qualifiers that were increasingly restricted to upper class Americans.

The champion of Jarves' writings was the painter George Inness, whose ethereal works were meant to create a direct, non-inquisitive connection with the viewer. The museum acquired several of Inness' landscapes in the first formative decades; well-before it accepted its first paintings by either Frederic Church or Albert Bierstadt. It would be in the following decades that these iconic works of the Hudson River School reached their most unpopular critical status. Tinged with the overtones of the spectacle, these works were surpassed by art that established its own supremacy via the independence of a viewer. Though magic lanterns, the resurgence of immersive 360-degree panoramas, and eventually cinema would cyclically rise in popularity, a permanent split between art and entertainment was forged. The fluidity of urban

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[54] James T. Johnson, *Annual Report, 1883*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art): 259, quoted in Garrett, "The First Score for American Paintings and Sculpture," 313.

spectacle was farther stratified as American classes, experiences, and lifestyles became increasingly distinct in the “Gilded Age,” Samuel Clemens’ own term for this unprecedented spectacle of its own.

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Figures

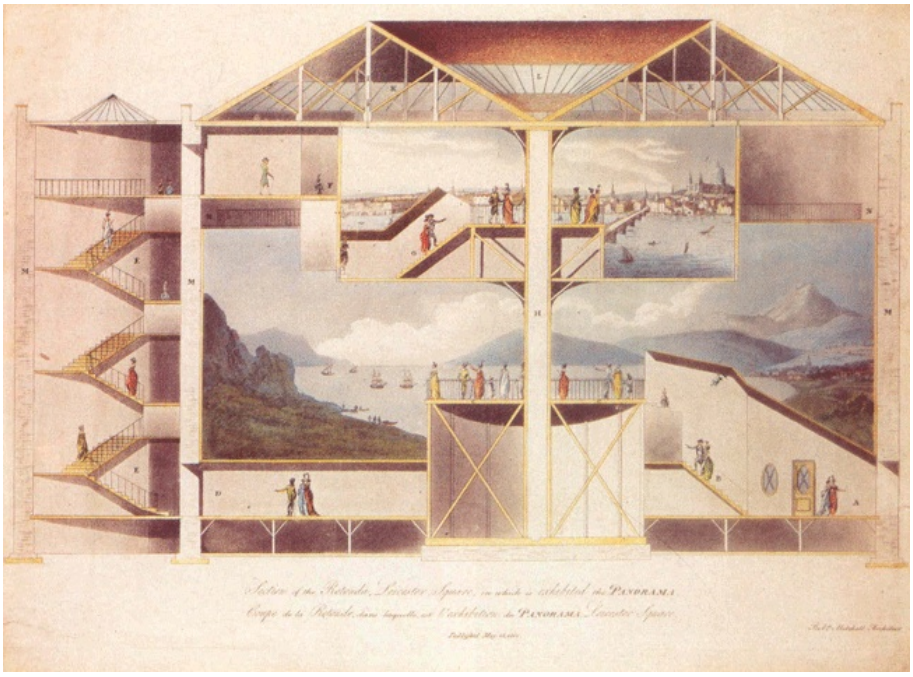

Figure i-1 – Robert Mitchell, *Section of the Rotunda, Leicester Square*, 1801, Hand-colored aquatint, British Museum.

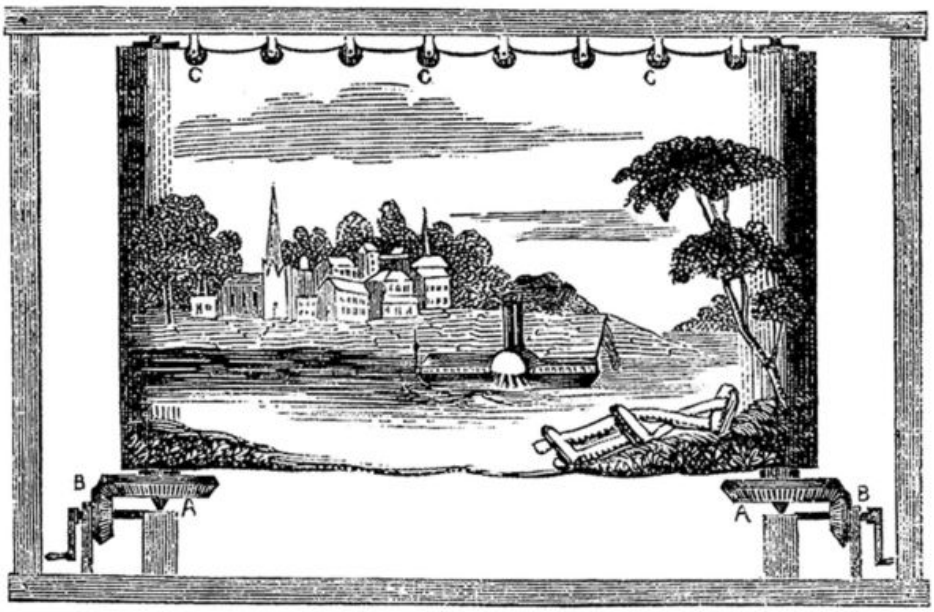

Figure i-2 – Unknown Artist, "Banvard's Panorama," *Scientific American* (December 16, 1848).

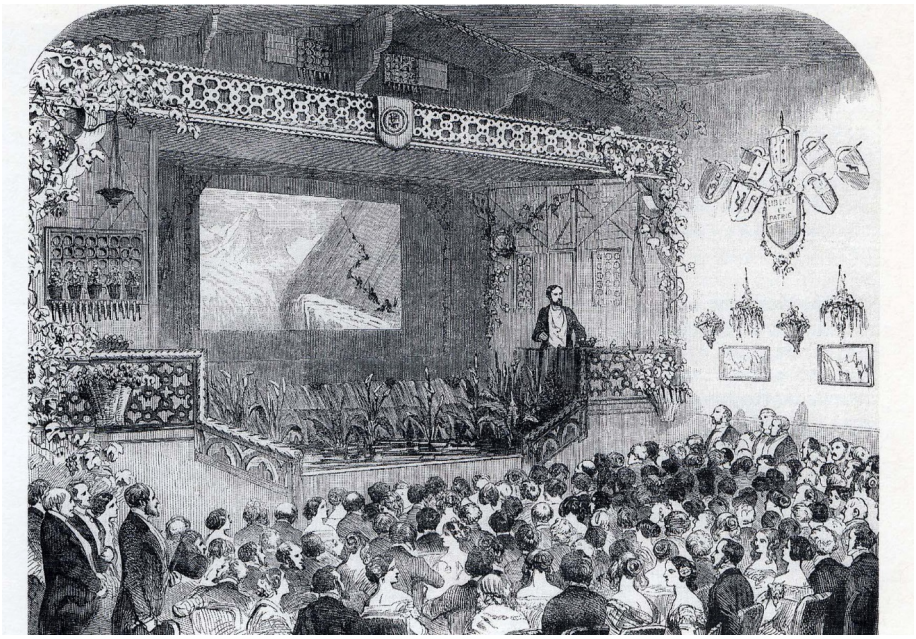

Figure i-3 - Unknown Artist, "Smith's 'Ascent of Mont Blanc'," at Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly" Illustrated London News (December 25, 1862)

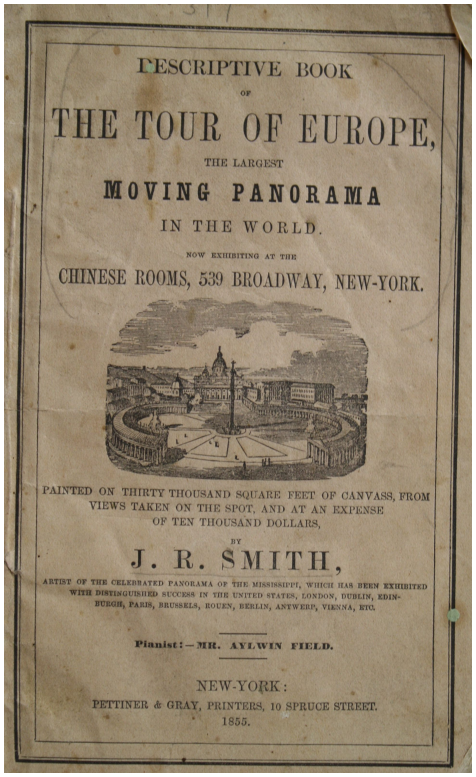

Figure i-4 – J.R. Smith, *Descriptive Book of The Tour of Europe, The Largest Panorama in the World* (New York: Pettiner & Gray, 1855), American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA.

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Figure 1-2 - Samuel Wallin, *Gallery of the Art-Union*, Wood engraving, *Bulleting of the American Art-Union* (May 1849): 6, New-York Historical Society.

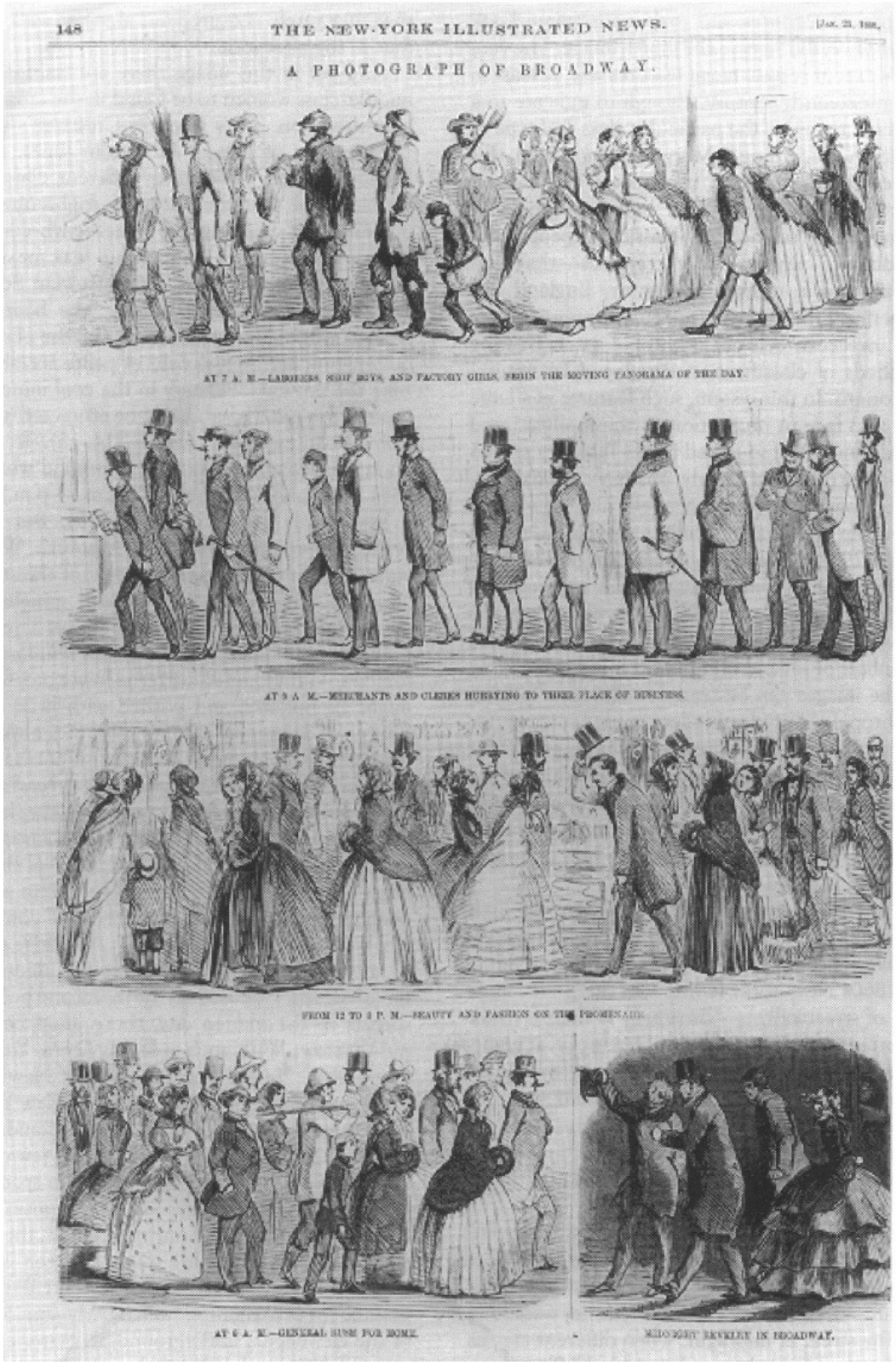

Figure 1-3 - "A Photograph of Broadway," *New-York Illustrated News*, Wood engraving (January 21, 1860): 148, New-York Historical Society.

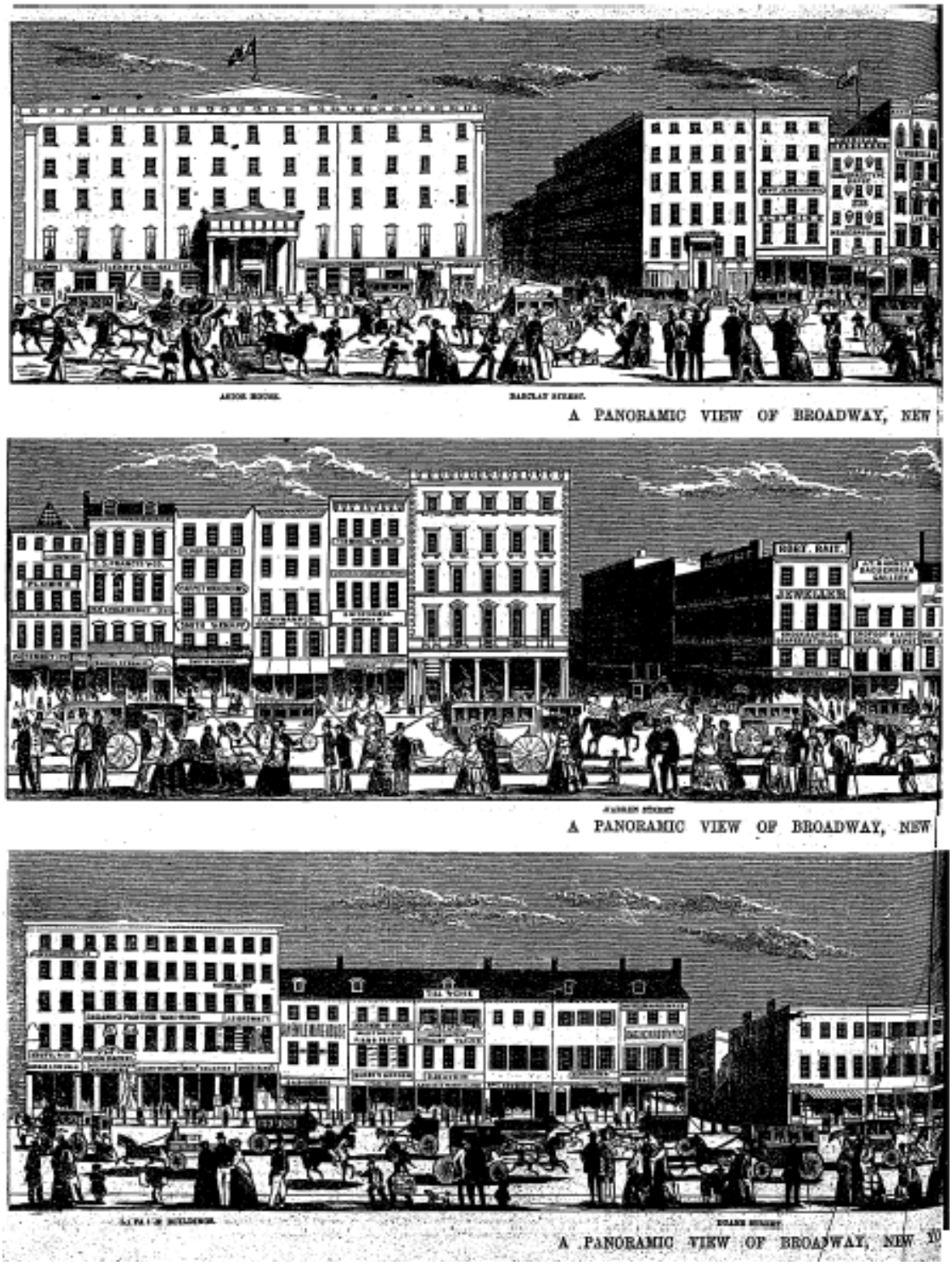

Figure 1-4 - "A Panoramic View of Broadway, New York City, Commencing at the Astor House," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* (March 18, 1854): 168, American Antiquarian Society.

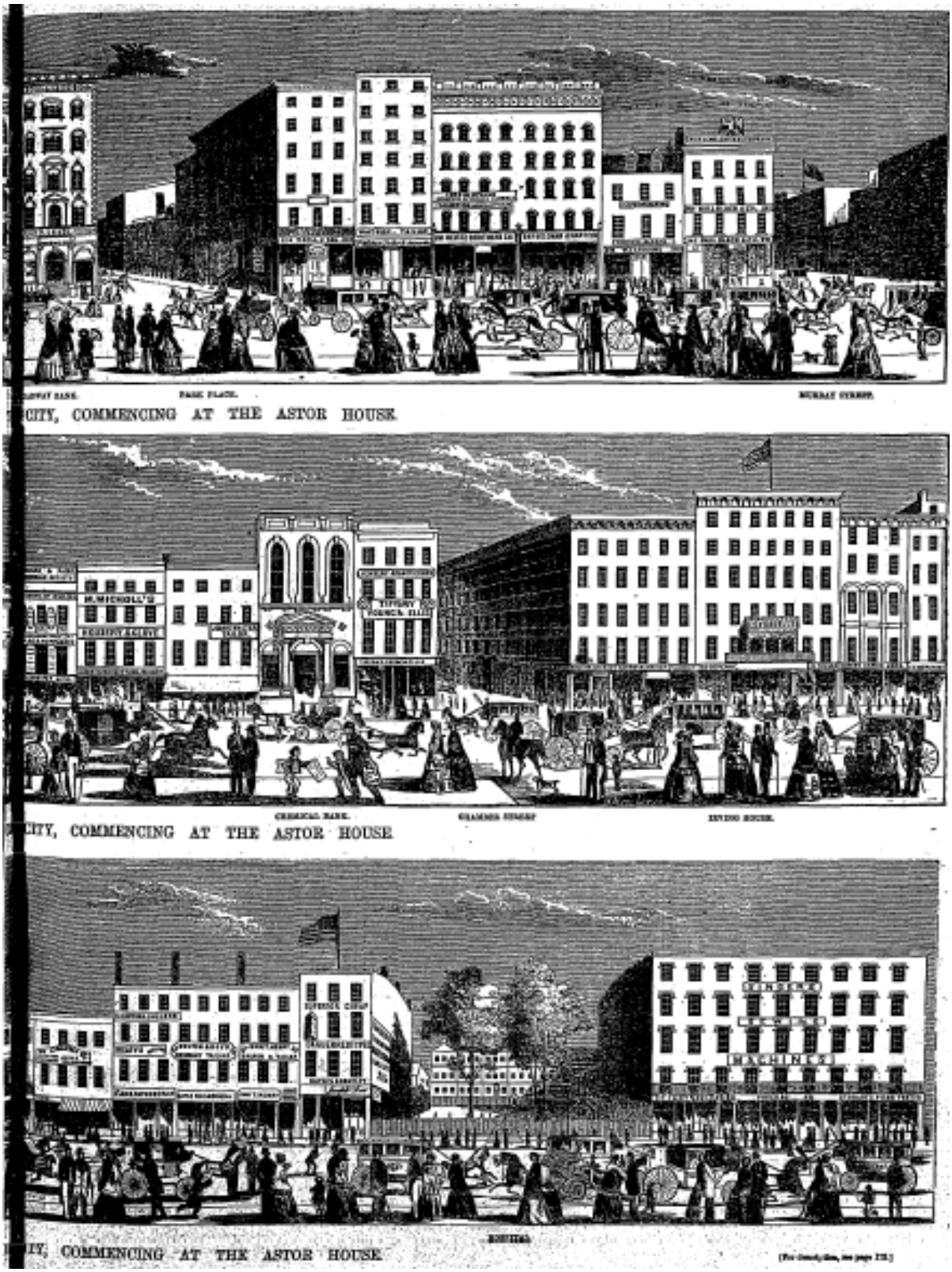

Figure 1-5 - "A Panoramic View of Broadway, New York City, Commencing at Astor House," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* (March 18, 1854): 169, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 1-6 - Frederic E. Church, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859, Oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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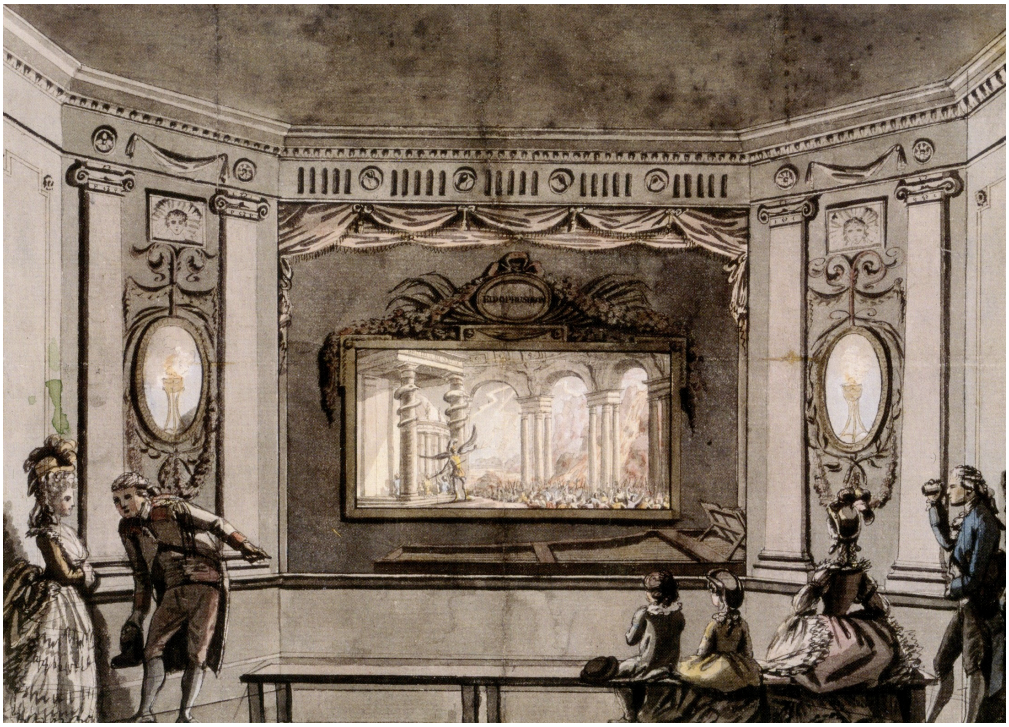
ure 1-12 - Robert Mitchell, *Section of the Rotunda, Leicester Square*, 1801,
lored aquatint, British Museum.



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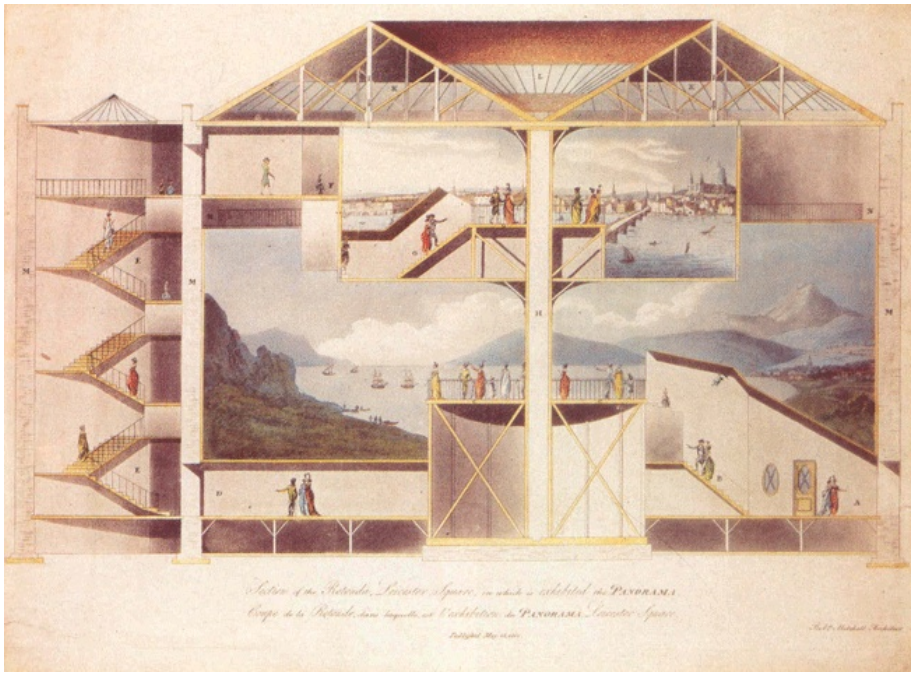

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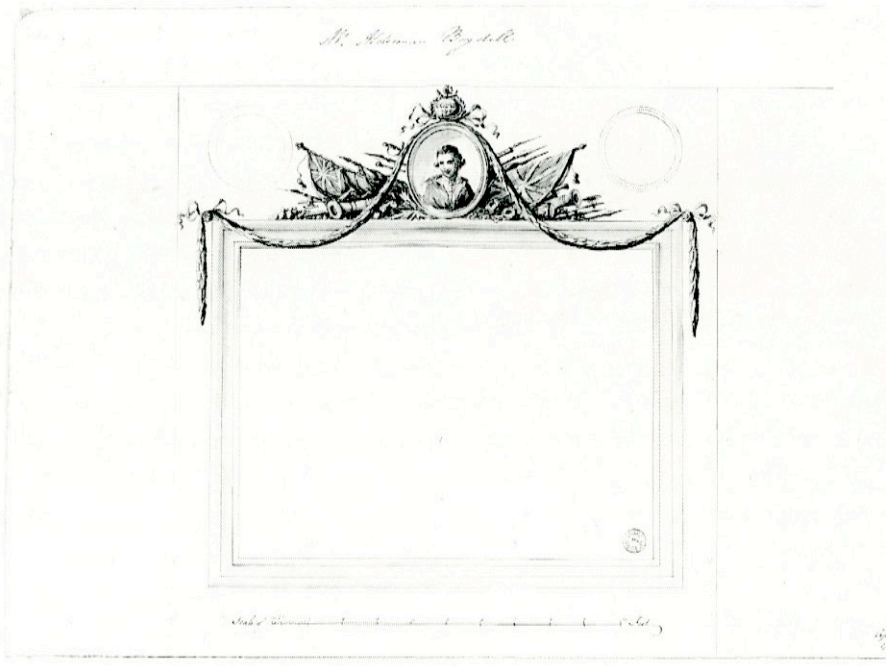
Figure 14 – John Singleton Copley, *The Death of Major Pierson, 6 January 1781*, 1783, Oil on canvas, Tate.



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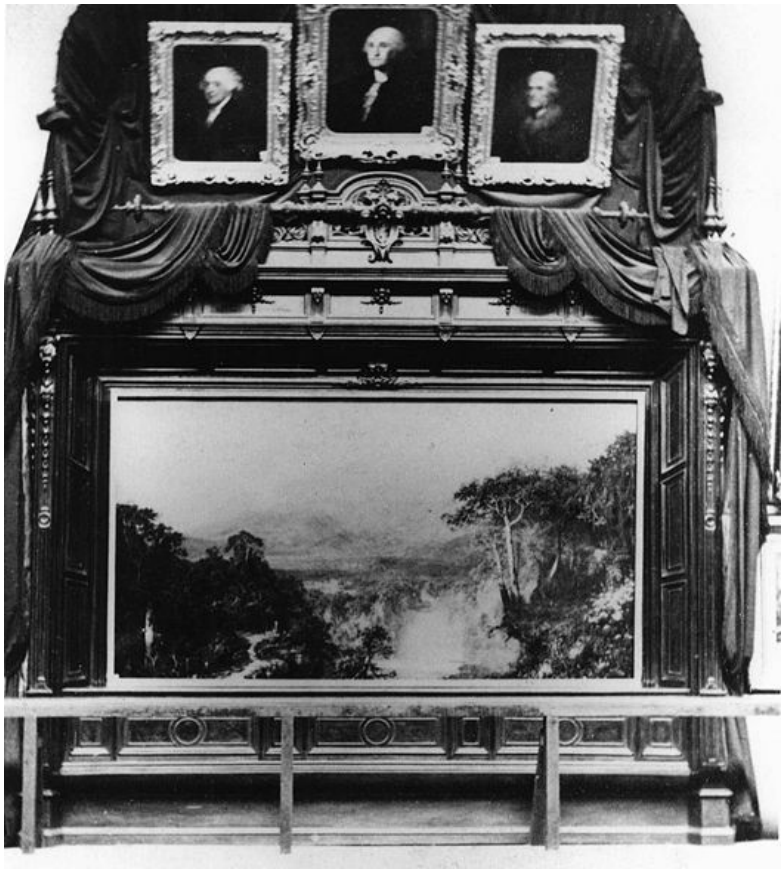

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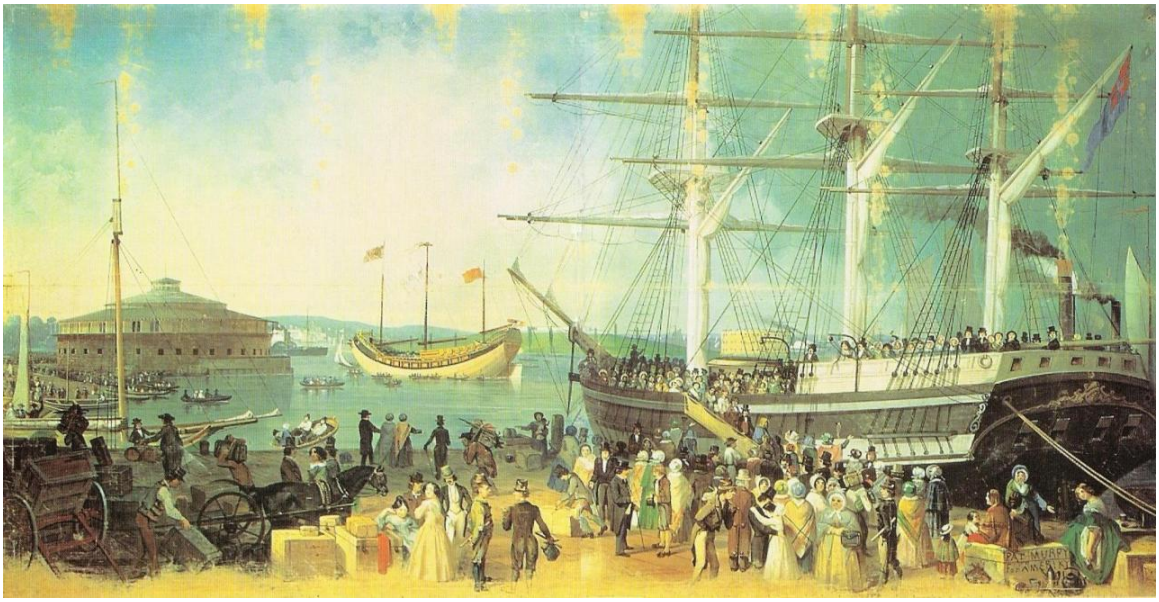
Figure 1-19 - John Pasmore the Younger, *Benjamin West's Gallery*, 1821, Oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum.



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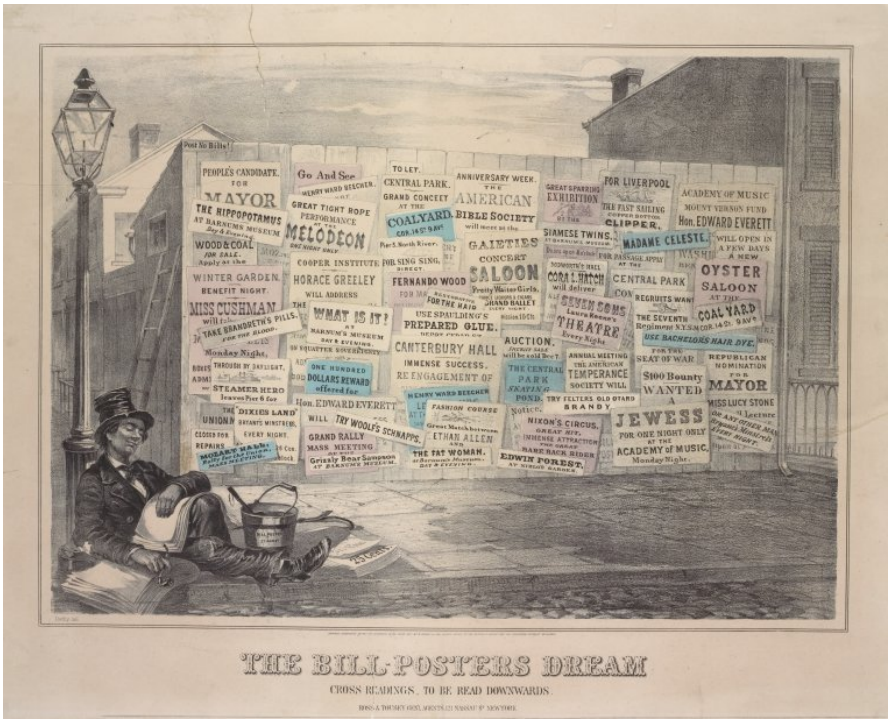

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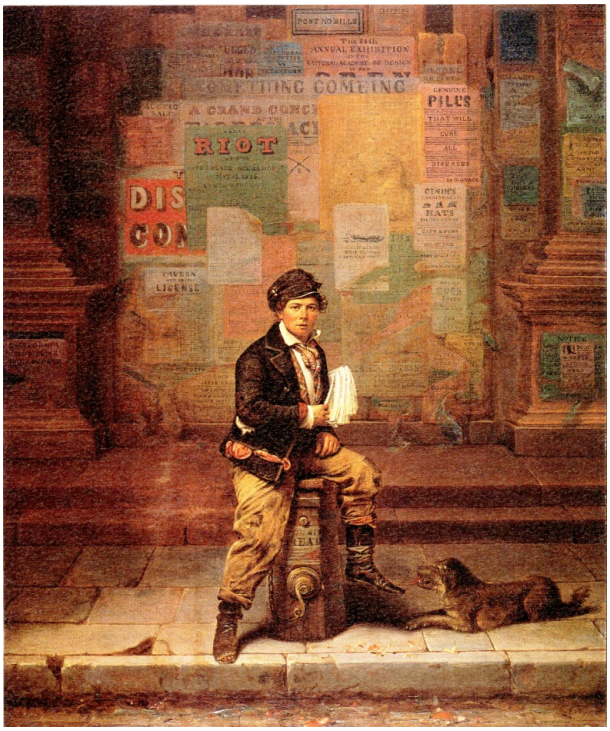

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Figure 1-34 - Currier & Ives, *What is it? or "Man Monkey,"* 1860, Lithograph, New-York Historical Society.

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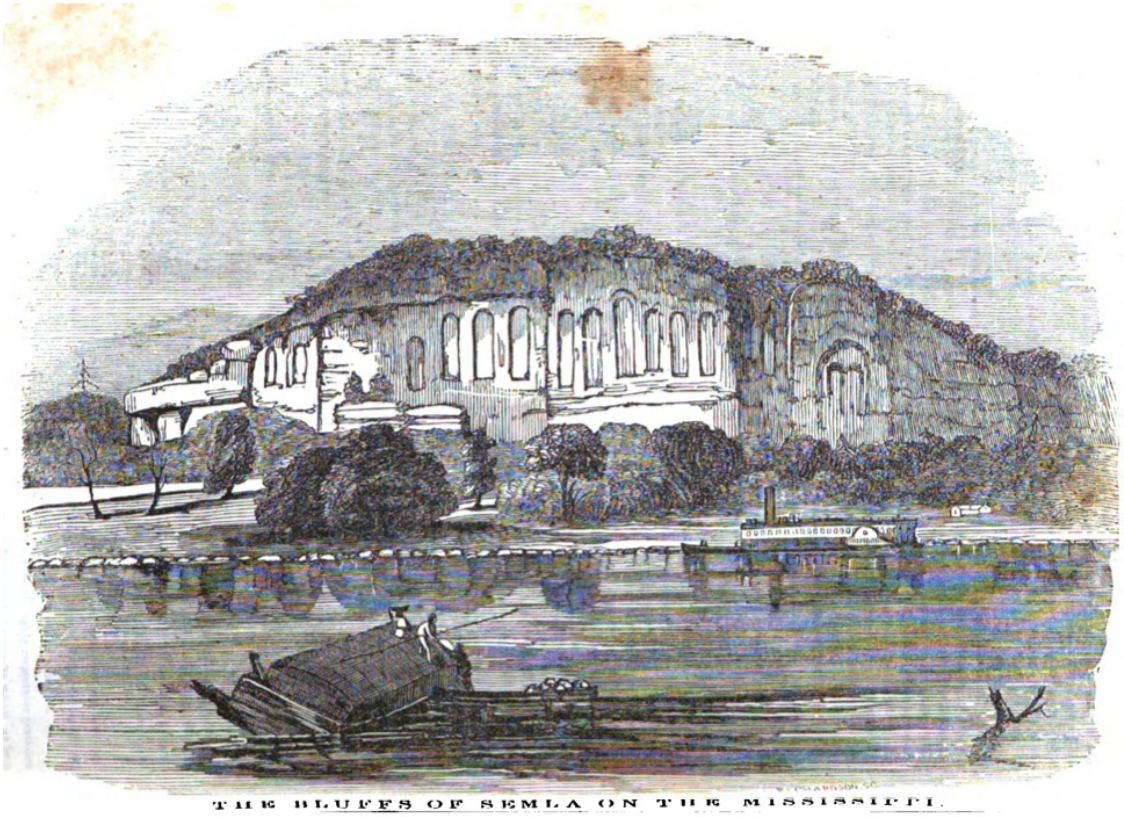

Figure 2-1 – after John Banvard, "The Bluffs of Semla on the Mississippi [*sic*]," *Holdern's Dollar Magazine*, Wood engraving (November 1849): 642.

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Figure 2-7 - "John Banvard," Wood engraving, from "Banvard, the Artist, and his Residence," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 12, no. 20 (May 16, 1857): 312.

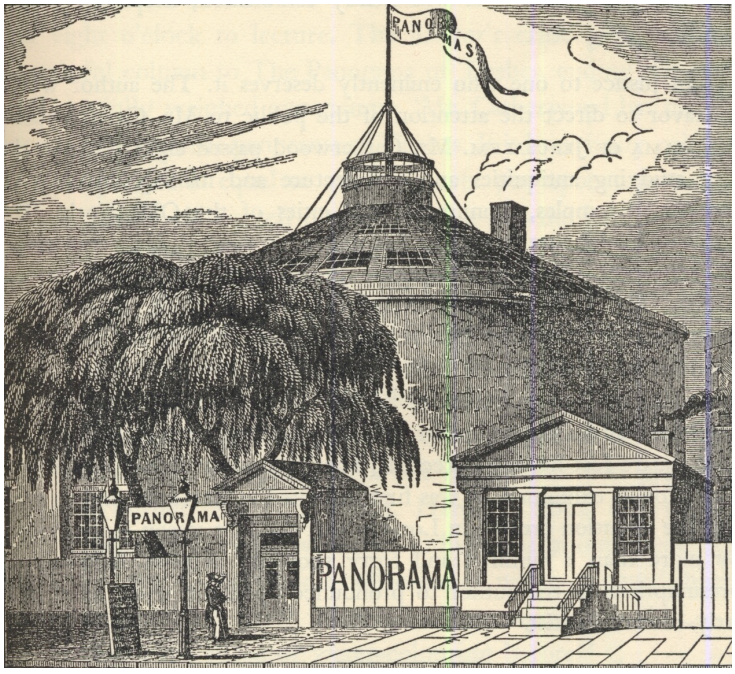


Figure 2-8 - detail from "Will positively close May 18th. The splendid panorama of Jerusalem is now open for exhibition, day and evening, at the rotunda, corner of Prince and Mercer Streets, Broadway, opposite Niblo's Garden." Broadside, SY1837 no. 21, New-York Historical Society.

Figure 2-9 - Asher B. Durand, *Progress (Advance of Civilization)*, 1853, Oil on canvas, Private Collection.

Figure 2-10 - John J. Egan, "Marietta Ancient Fortifications," detail from *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*, c.1850, Distemper on muslin, St. Louis Art Museum.

Figure 2-11 - Sarony and Major after Chas. Sullivan, *Ancient Works, Marietta, Ohio*, 1848, Lithograph, from Ephraim George Squier, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Instituion, 1848).

Figure 2-12 - John J. Egan, "De Soto's Burial at White Cliffs," detail from *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*, c.1850, Distemper on muslin, St. Louis Art Museum.

Figure 2-13 - John J. Egan, "Temple of the Sun by Sunset," detail from *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley,* c.1850, Distemper on muslin, St. Louis Art Museum.

Figure 2-14 - after John Banvard, "Assinaboin Indians and the Domes," *People and Howitt's Journal* (May 19, 1849): 87-89.

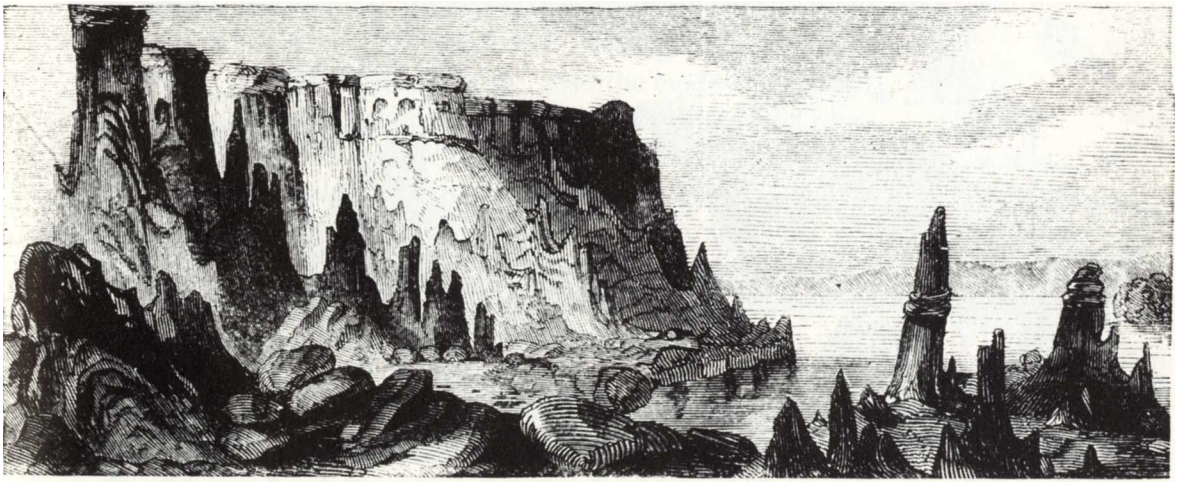


Figure 2-15 - after John Banvard, "The Brick Kilns," *People and Howitt's Journal* (May 19, 1849): 87- 89

Figure 2-16 - George Catlin, *"Brick Kilns," Clay Bluffs 1900 Miles above St. Louis*, 1832, Oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Figure 2-17 - after John Banvard, "New Orleans, from Banvard's Panorama," *The Illustrated London News* (July 7, 1849): 5.

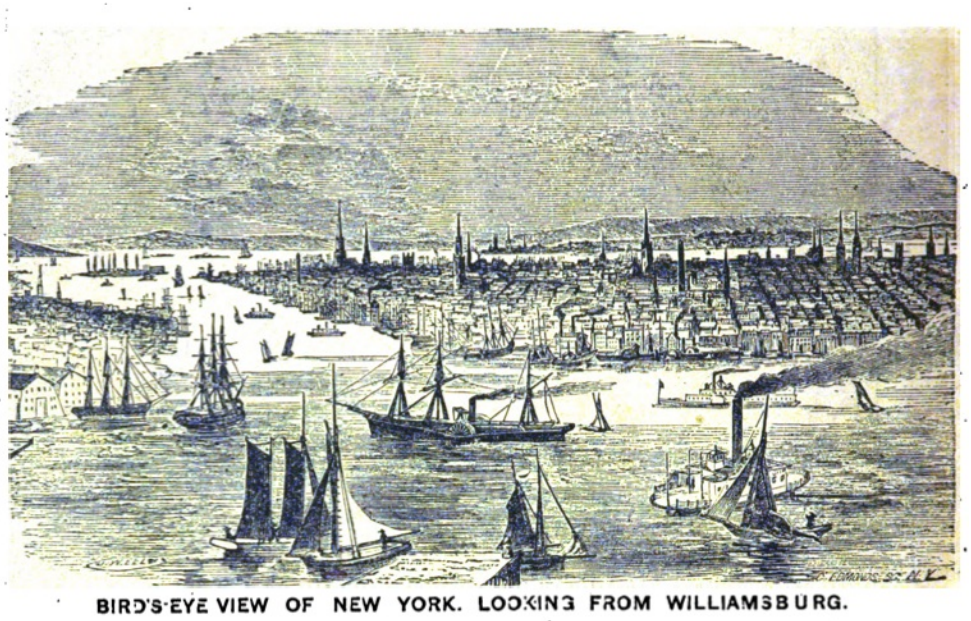


Figure 2-18 - after Otis A. Bullard, "Birds-eye View of New York, Looking from Williamsburg," from *Norton's Hand Book of New York City* (New York: Albert Norton, 1859): 1, Harvard College Library.

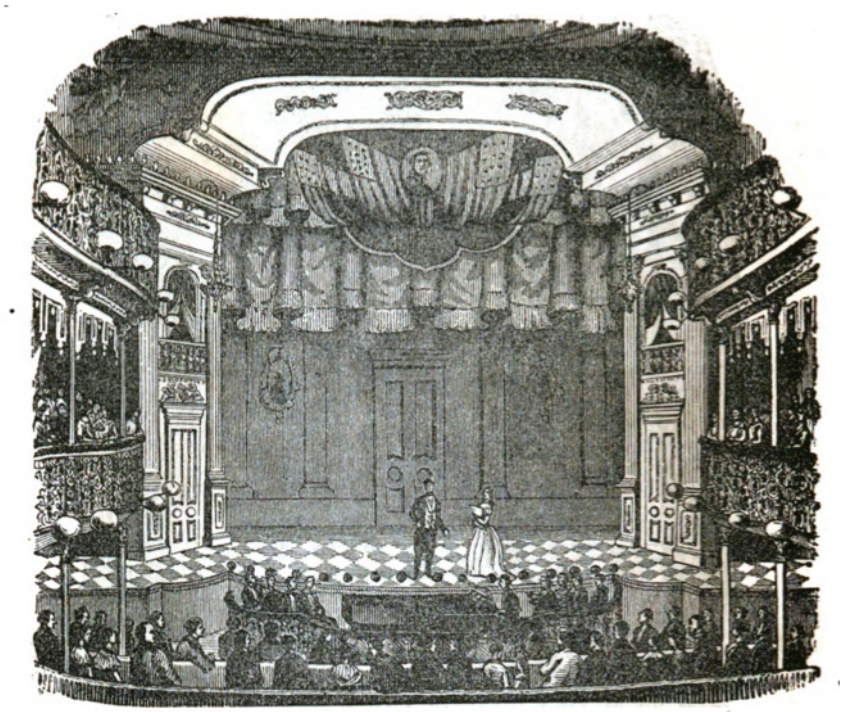


Figure 2-19 - after Otis A. Bullard, "Lecture Room and Stage of Barnum's American Museum," from *Norton's Hand Book of New York City* (New York: Albert Norton, 1859): 10, Harvard College Library.

Figure 2-20 - John J. Egan, "Huge Mound and the Manner of Opening Them," detail from *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*, c.1850, Distemper on muslin, St. Louis Art Museum.

Figure 2-21 - John Banvard, *Mississippi River Plantation Scene*, c.1870, Oil on board, Minnesota Historical Society.

Figure 22 - Eastman Johnson, *Negro Life at the South*, 1859, Oil on canvas, New-York Historical Society.

Figure 3-1 - David Claypoole Johnston, *Section of the Panorama of the Mississippi*, 1847-48,
Lithograph on paper, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 3-2 - Henry Lewis, "General Taylor's Plantation," from Henry Lewis, *Das illustrirte Mississippithal* (Dusseldorf: Arnz & Co., 1858) repr. *The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated*, trans. A Hermina Poatgieter, ed. Bertha L. Heilbron (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1967): pl. 71.

Figure 3-3 - Samuel Worcester Rowse, *The Resurrection of Henry Box Brown at Philadelphia*, 1850, Lithograph on paper, Library of Virginia.

Figure 3-4 - "Ball's Great Daguerrian Gallery of the West," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* 6, no. 13 (April 1, 1854): 208.

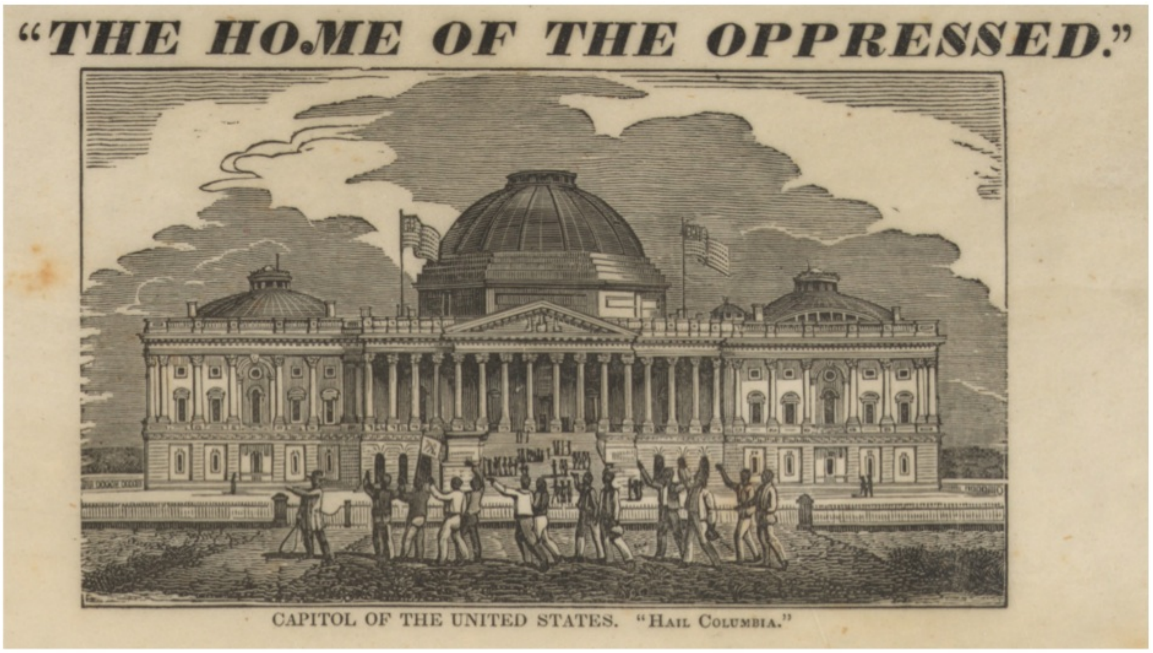


Figure 3-5 - American Anti-Slavery Society, "Capitol of the United States. 'Hail Columbia!," detail from *Slave Market of America*, 1836, Wood engraving on paper, Broadside Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

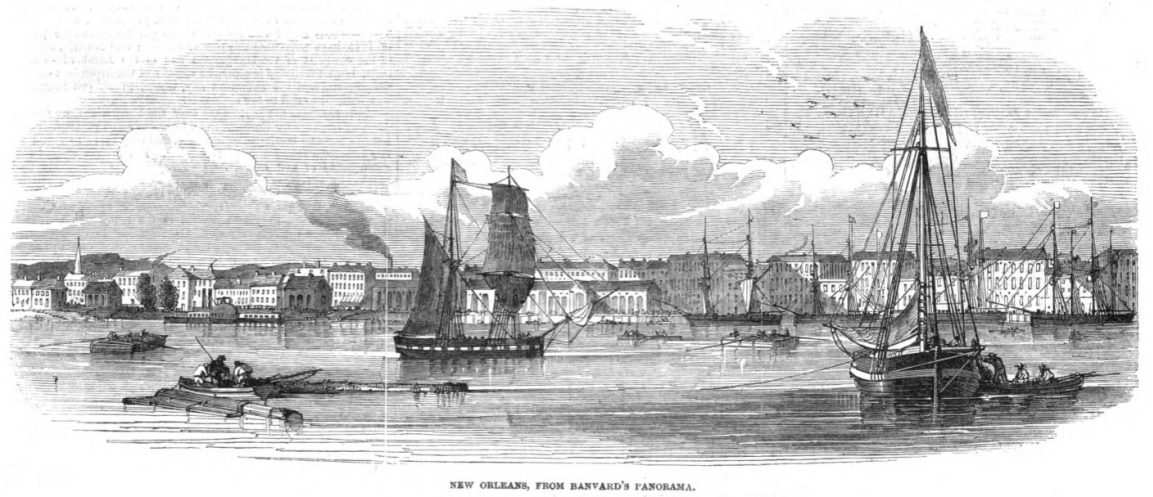


Figure 3-6 - after John Banvard, "New Orleans, from Banvard's Panorama," *The Illustrated London News* (July 7, 1849): 5.

Figure 3-7 - "Freedom," from Charles C. Green, *Nubian Slave* (Boston: Bela Marsh, c.1845): pl. 1, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 3-8 - "For Sale," from Charles C. Green, *Nubian Slave* (Boston: Bela March, c.1845): pl. 2., American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 3-9 - "Sold," from Charles C. Green, *Nubian Slave* (Boston: Bela Marsh, c.1845): pl. 3, American Antiquarian Society.

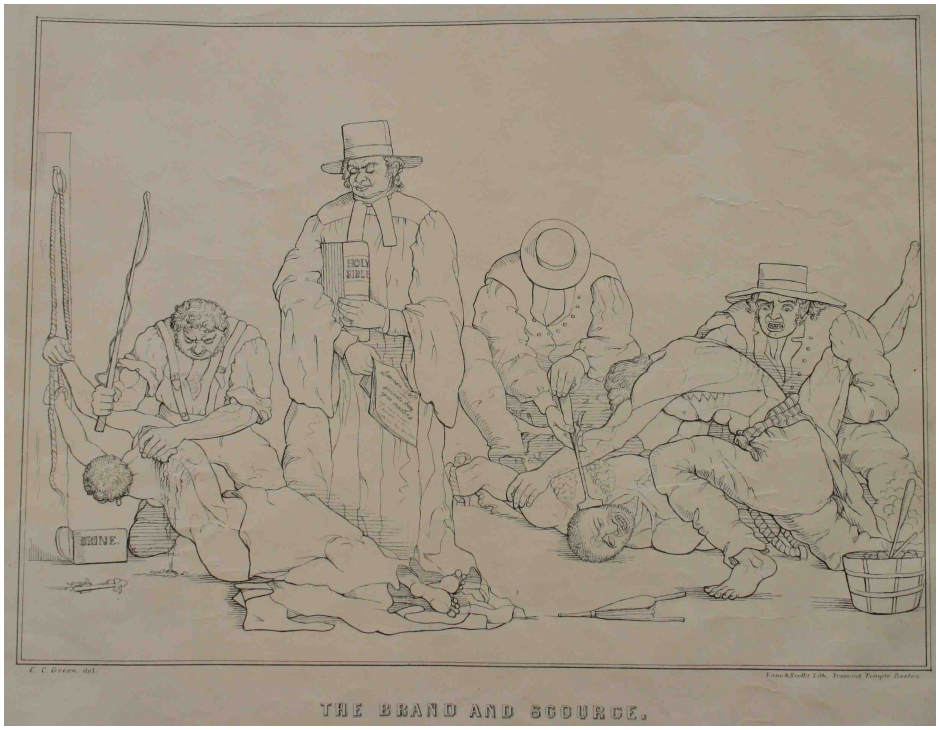


Figure 3-10 - "The Brand and the Scourge," from Charles C. Green, *Nubian Slave* (Boston: Bela Marsh, c.1845): pl. 4, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 3-11 - "The Escape," from Charles C. Green, *Nubian Slave* (Boston: Bela Marsh, c.1845): pl. 5, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 3-12 - "Man Hunting," from Charles C. Green, *Nubian Slave* (Boston: Bela Marsh, c. 1845): pl. 6, American Antiquarian Society.

Figure 3-13 - "The Escape," from Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave* (New York: Henry Bibb, 1849): 125.

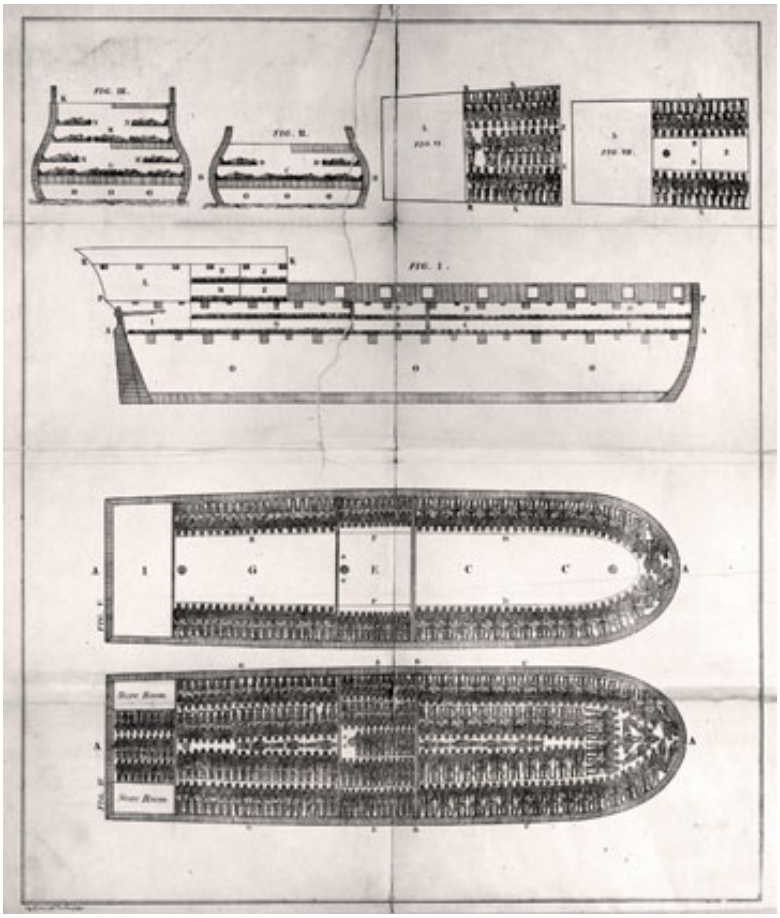


Figure 3-14 - Day & Son, *Plan of the Slave Ship Brooks*, 1850, Lithograph on paper, New-York Historical Society.

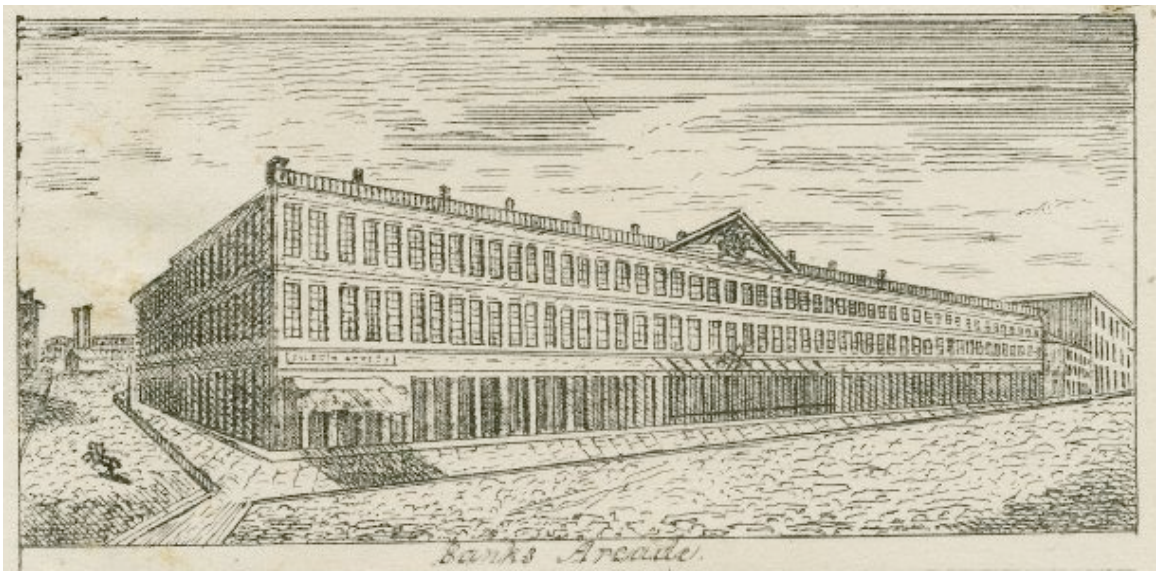
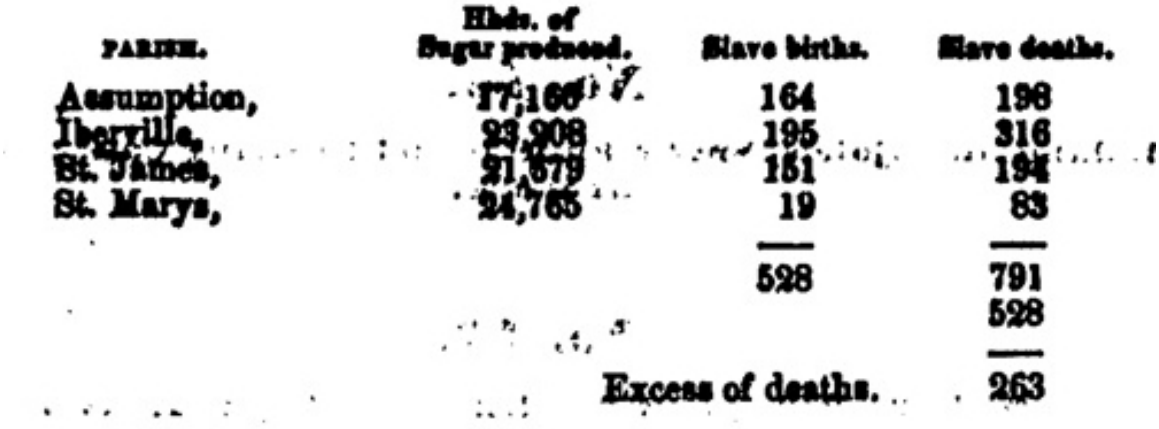


Figure 3-15 – "Banks Arcade," detail from, Unknown artist, *Banks Arcade, Merchants Exchange, Citizens Bank, and City Bank*, 1838, Engraving on paper, Prints and Drawings, The Historic New Orleans Collection.



PARISH.	Hhds. of Sugar produced.	Slave births.	Slave deaths.
Assumption,	17,165	164	198
Iberville,	23,208	195	316
St. James,	21,679	151	194
St. Marys,	24,765	19	83
		528	791
			528
		Excess of deaths.	263

Figure 3-16 - James Presley Ball, *Ball's Splendid Mammoth Pictorial Tour of the Untied States comprising Views of the African Slave Trade, of Northern and Southern Cities, of Cotton and Sugar Plantations; of the Mississippi, Ohio and Susquehanna Rivers, Niagara Falls, &c.* (Cincinnati: Achilles Pugh, 1855): 32, American Antiquarian Society.

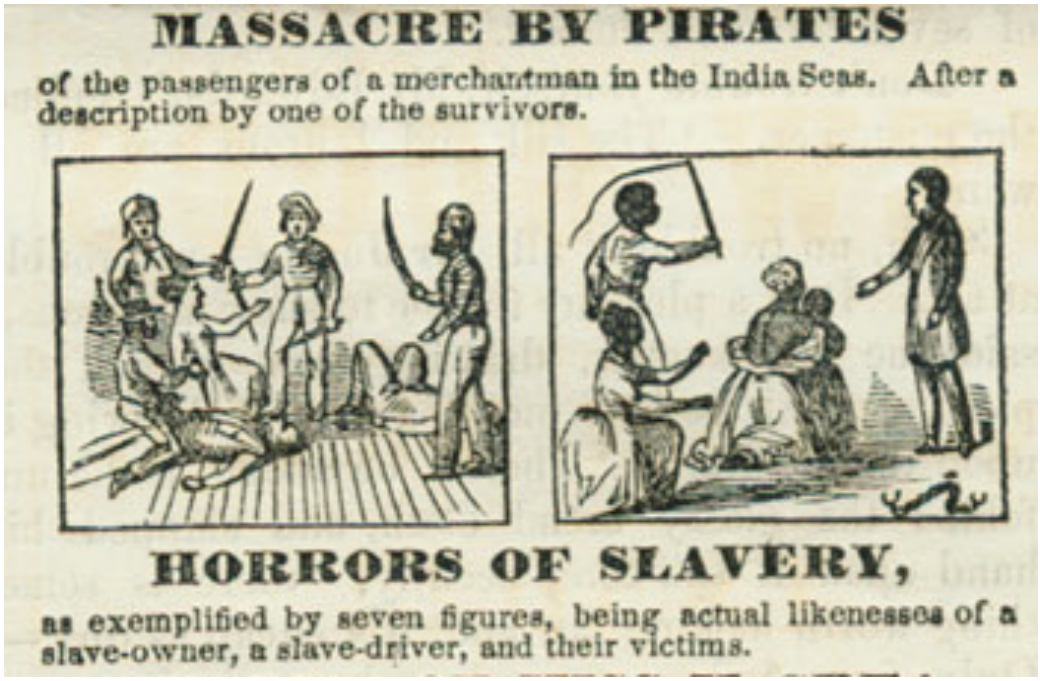


Figure 3-17 - detail from "Advertisement for the Boston Museum," *Barre Patriot* (MA) (January 17, 1851): 4.

Figure 3-18 - Waters & Son, *Barnum's Collection of Curiosities*, c.1864-69, Woodcuts on paper, Shelburne Museum.

Figure 3-19 - "View of the Third Room," from *Barnum's American Museum Illustrated* (New York: William Van Norden and Frank Leslie, 1850): 21

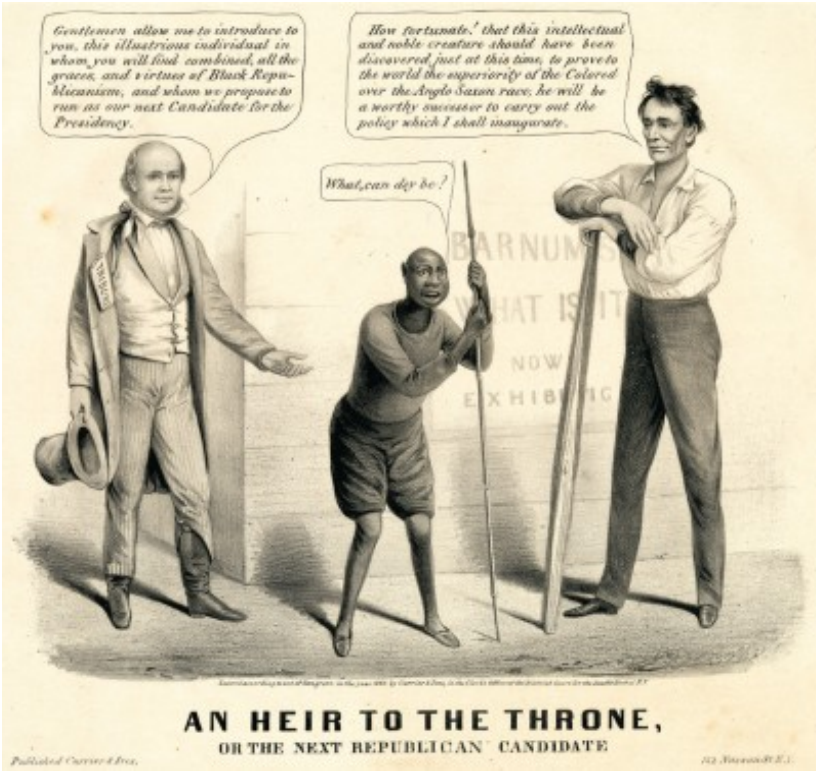


Figure 3-20 - Currier & Ives, *An Heir to the Throne, or the Next Republican Candidate*, 1860, Lithograph on paper, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Figure 3-21 - "Greek Slave," from *Recollections of the Great Exhibition, 1851* (London: Lloyd Brothers, 1851).

THE VIRGINIAN SLAVE.

INTENDED AS A COMPANION TO POWER'S "GREEK SLAVE."

Figure 3-22 – John Tenniel, "The Virginian Slave,"*Punch, or the London Charivari* 20 (1851): 236.

Figure 4-1 - Milton Bradley and Co., *The Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion*, c.1866- 1890, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Newberry Library.

Figure 4-2 - Milton Bradley and Co., *The Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion*, c.1866- 1890, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Newberry Library.

Figure 4-3 - Milton Bradley and Co., Uncut ticket sheet for *Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion*, c.1866-1890, Printed paper, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

Figure 4-4 - Milton Bradley and Co., Broadside for *Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion*, c.1866-90, Printed paper, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

Figure 4-5 - Eastman Johnson, *Christmas-Time, The Blodgett Family*, 1864, Oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 4-6 - Eastman Johnson, *Young Sweep*, 1863, Oil on paper board, Private Collection.

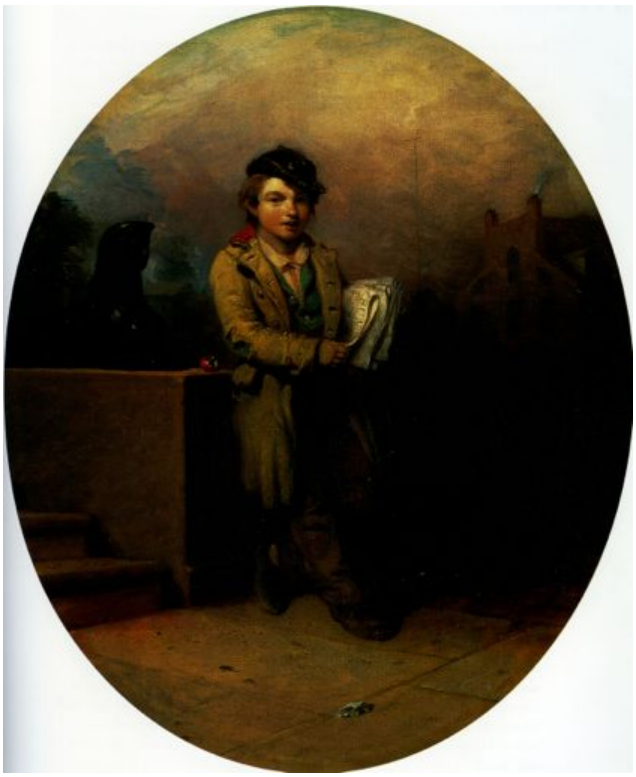


Figure 4-7 - Henry Inman, *News Boy*, 1841, Oil on canvas, Addison Gallery of American Art.

Figure 4-8 - Eastman Johnson, *Corn Shelling*, 1864, Oil on board, Toledo Museum of Art.

Figure 4-9 - Milton Bradley and Co., *The Myriopticon: A Historical Panorama of the Rebellion*, c.1866- 1890, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Newberry Library.

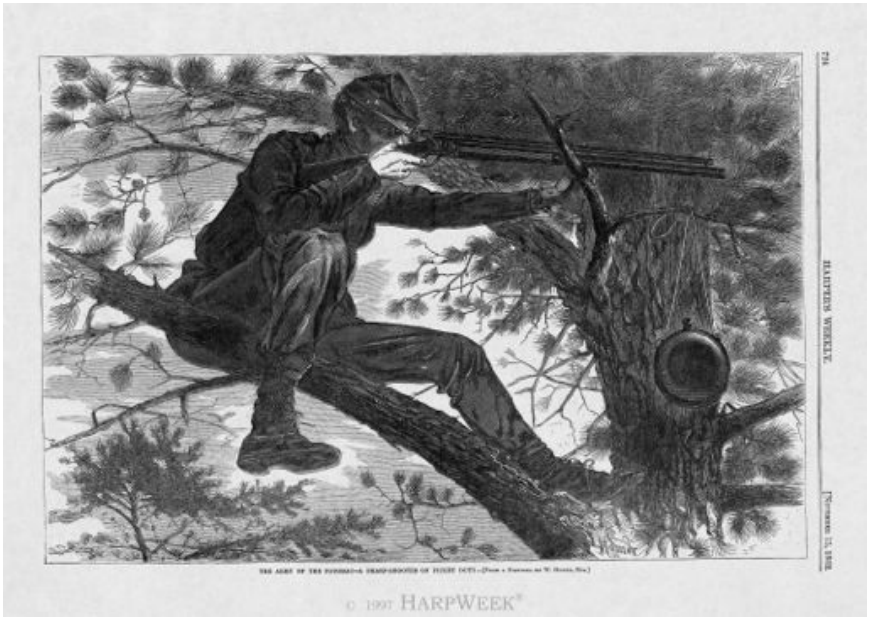


Figure 4-10 - Winslow Homer, "Army of the Potomac—A Sharp Shooter on Picket Duty," *Harper's Weekly* (November 15, 1862): 724.

Figure 4-11 – Milton Bradley and Co., after George Catlin, *Medicine Man, Performing his Duties over a Dying Man*, and other paintings, *Historioscope: A Panorama and History of America*, c.1866-90, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

Figure 4-12 - Milton Bradley and Co., after John Vanderlyn *Landing of Columbus*, *Historioscope: A Panorama and History of America*, c.1866-90, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

Figure 4-13 –Milton Bradley and Co., after William Henry Powell, *Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto*, *Historioscope: A Panorama and History of America*, c.1866-90, Toy cardboard and printed- paper theater, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

Figure 4-14 –Milton Bradley and Co., after Benjamin West, *William Penn's Treaty with the Indians, Historioscope: A Panorama and History of America*, c.1866-90, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

Figure 4-15 – Milton Bradley and Co., after John Trumbull, *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, 17 June, 1775, Historioscope: A Panorama and History of America*, c.1866-90, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

Figure 4-16 –Milton Bradley and Co., after Asher B. Durand, *The Capture of Major André*, *Historioscope: A Panorama and History of America*, c.1866-90, Toy cardboard and printed-paper theater, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Winterthur Library.

THE PROSCENIUM

WITH THE CURTAIN DOWN.

As at Artemus Ward's First Lecture in the Egyptian Hall, London, On Tuesday, November 13, 1866.

This was the appearance of the stage during the prologue of the lecture, before any portion of the panorama was exhibited. The lights in the room being then turned up, the wondrous gravity of the lecturer's face was fully visible at the time that he was uttering his best jokes. The picture was surrounded with a large gilt frame.

58

Figure 4-17 - "The Proscenium, with the Curtain Down," *Artemus Ward's Panorama* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1869): 58.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

The view may recall to those who have seen it Mr. Bierstadt's celebrated picture. Unfortunately for us, when we crossed, every inch of the ground was covered with snow.

Figure 4-18 - "The Rocky Mountains," *Artemus Ward's Panorama* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1869): 175.

Figure 4-19 - "Pointer" used repeatedly in, *Artemus Ward's Panorama* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1869): 75.

BRIGHAM YOUNG AT HOME.

This is, of course, a mere fancy sketch. It was roughly designed by Artemus Ward himself. According to his own statement, made in a very playful manner, it represents that which he saw on an afternoon passed with the prophet at the palace.

Figure 4-20 - "Brigham Young at Home," *Artemus Ward's Panorama* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1869): 192.

Figure 4-21 - "Artemus Ward, Parlor Edition," from Frank Bellew, *The Art of Amusing, Being a Collection of Graceful Arts* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1867): 158.

Figure 4-22 - David Claypoole Johnston, *The Early Development of Southern Chivalry*, 1864, India ink and wash on paper, American Antiquarian Society.