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Mediterranean Vistas: Producing the Touristic Gaze of Coastal Space

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During the 19th century, the Mediterranean Sea witnessed a significant increase in the mobility of people and goods, due in part to advancements in transportation technologies. This newfound access to regions surrounding the Mediterranean coincided with the rise of a distinct tourist class and its accompanying industries. In this process, guidebooks played a pivotal role in orchestrating touristic encounters across the region. As a genre, tourist guides also experienced a rapid growth, offering vivid descriptions of various Mediterranean destinations, ranging from the Ottoman Middle East to the South of France. However, it was not until the 1880s that guidebooks encompassing the entirety of the Mediterranean emerged. These comprehensive guides were instrumental in cultivating a panoramic perspective of the Mediterranean, its cities, and its architecture, effectively connecting the region into a cohesive whole, the sea becoming a conduit for delineating, choreographing, and experiencing the Mediterranean and its built environments.

Keywords: Mediterranean; tourism; guidebooks; panoramic vistas; geographical imagination

Introduction

The Mediterranean Sea has long served as a space of encounters through periods of intensified interaction. The French historian Fernand Braudel describes the Mediterranean as 'a thousand things at once. Not one landscape, but landscapes without number. Not one sea, but a succession of seas. Not one civilization, but a number of civilizations, superimposed one on top of the other' (Braudel 1985: 4). Yet the Mediterranean, often portrayed today as a place of sun-drenched shores, azure waters, and white-washed houses, was largely a product of the 19th- and 20th-century geographical imagination, closely associated with an emergent practice: tourism.

The unprecedented increase in mobility during the 19th century, partly attributable to advancements in transportation technologies, led to the emergence of 'the tourist' (MacCannell 2013). This development was accompanied by a proliferation of tourist industries. Guidebooks, perhaps more than anything else, served to orchestrate touristic encounters with places. The production of guidebooks expanded rapidly, with many focusing on the lands surrounding the Mediterranean. Yet only in the 1880s did comprehensive guidebooks covering the *entirety* of the Mediterranean emerge. Two such guides, published by arguably the most popular publishers of touristic literature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, enable us to diachronically explore how the Mediterranean, with its diverse landscapes and urbanscapes, was delineated, choreographed, and practiced via the sea. *Handbook to the Mediterranean*, compiled by Robert Lambert Playfair and published by John Murray in 1881, was the first comprehensive tourist guide to the Mediterranean published in English. In 1911, thirty years after Murray's *Handbook to the Mediterranean*, Karl Baedeker published *The Mediterranean: Sea Ports and Sea Routes,* following an earlier German edition of 1909.

These guidebooks were preceded by and simultaneously existed with a multitude of guidebooks to destinations that promoted regional, land-based exploration of the Mediterranean basin. Murray's and Baedeker's volumes about the Mediterranean, however, promoted a maritime approach by which the tourists could view the Mediterranean landscapes and urbanscapes from the deck of sea-going vessels, with brief interludes at select destinations on land. This mode of engagement also distanced the viewer — the tourist — from the object of their gaze. Thus, these guidebooks, which are narrated as panoramic vistas from afar, meld disparate parts of the Mediterranean into one imagined geography at the expense of the diversity and the nuances of the cultures and peoples inhabiting its actual shores.

Geographical imagination as a concept refers to the ways in which individuals and societies perceive and conceptualize spatial relationships and places. It shapes how humans understand, interpret, and interact with different geographical settings influenced by cultural, social, and political contexts (Gieseking 2017; Gregory 1994;

Said 1978; Harvey 1973; see also McAleer and MacKenzie 2015). Derek Gregory, who defines geographical imagination as 'the complex of culturally and historically situated geographical knowledge and understanding that characterizes a certain social group', in particular assigns agency to travel writing as an important component in the production and reflection of geographical imagination (quoted in Gieseking 2017: 2; Gregory 2001; see also Teng 2004). Such imaginaries 'matter because they reduce complexity and shape identities', say Riccardo Bavaj, Konrad Lawson, and Bernhard Struck, a reduction achieved by 'homogenising space' (2022: np). At the same time, as Maria Todorova demonstrates, geographical imaginations are not static, and they often overlap (1997).

The Mediterranean as we understand it today is the result of one such evolving cultural and historical construction that took hold within touristic imaginaries. The panoramization of Mediterranean from sea-going vessels, along with the ensuing homogenization of the Mediterranean spaces, contributed to the emergence of the Mediterranean as an imagined geography, as did the reduction of direct bodily engagement between tourists and the local people and places.

Emergence of Modern Tourism

Practices approximating tourism emerged around the Mediterranean long before the modern era. Under the unifying influence of the Roman Empire, for instance, people traveled with increasing intensity, making time for sightseeing, buying souvenirs, and consulting guidebooks (Popkin 2022; Beard 2022). The sociologist Loykie Lomine provocatively and humorously explains that

> the sophisticated Augustan society offered everything that is commonly regarded as typically modern (not to say post-modern) in terms of tourism: museums, guide-books, seaside resorts with drunk and noisy holidaymakers at night, candle-lit din-ner parties in fashionable restaurants, promiscuous hotels, unavoidable sightseeing places, spas, souvenir shops, postcards, over-talkative and boring guides, concert halls and much more besides. (Lomine 2005: 69)

Similar claims have been made for pilgrimage practices. Victor and Edith Turner have famously claimed that 'a pilgrim is half a tourist' (Turner and Turner 2011: 20). While this is applicable to most pilgrims, from Buddhist monks to Muslims on their way to Mecca for the Hajj, Christian pilgrims in particular affected the regions surrounding the Mediterranean. Sacred sites from Santiago de Compostela in Spain to the Holy Land and beyond attracted these pilgrims (Fleischer 2000; Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003).

From a penchant for collecting souvenirs to a dependence on guidebooks, these earlier practices undoubtedly shared certain characteristics with tourism as we understand it today. However, tourism as a mass phenomenon did not emerge until the modern era. In fact, many theorists of tourism have associated tourism with modernity. Dean MacCannell, in his seminal work *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, defines the tourist as 'one of the best models available for modern-man-in-general' and considers 'the empirical and ideological expansion of modern society to be intimately linked in diverse ways to modern mass leisure, especially to international tourism and sightseeing' (MacCannell 2013: 1–3). Similarly, John Urry, in his *The Tourist Gaze*, argues that 'acting as a tourist is one of the defining characteristics of being "modern"' (Urry 1990: 2; see also Wang 2000). While both MacCannell and Urry find tourism to be a condition of modernity, their theoretical frameworks differ in many other aspects. According to Rudy Koshar, while MacCannell's tourists search for 'authenticity', Urry's tourists look for 'novelty' (Koshar 1998: 325). Accompanying the rise of the tourist class was the growth of tourist industries, from guidebook publishers to postcard manufacturers, that supplied the consumerism associated with touristic behavior. Guidebooks in particular became an essential part of a tourist's arsenal, guiding touristic encounters whether in pursuit of knowledge or fun. Guidebooks, as Jan Palmowski observes, 'professionalized travel for the middle classes, and rationalized — and in this way directed — essential components of the tourist experience: the anticipation, perception, and memory of travel', making guidebooks a unique and valuable source of historical information (Palmowski 2002: 106).

While earlier guidebooks existed, the real boom in guidebook publishing only occurred after steam-based travel increased the mobility of the middle classes (Zuelow 2015: 77; Barton 2011). In Europe, two publishing houses, John Murray's and Karl Baedeker's, dominated the guidebook industry with each putting their own spin on the organization and presentation of information, and mediating touristic experiences of distant lands. Because they were probably the most popular purveyors of guidebooks of their time, their publications on the Mediterranean provide insights into how the 'connecting sea' came to be 'packaged' for the touristic gaze. While travel for leisure often involved sea passages, the development of maritime tourism followed a trajectory of its own. Prior to the mid-18th century, the sea was seen as an unruly, chaotic, and fearsome place. In his influential work *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750–1840*, cultural historian Alain Corbin discusses the transformation of the seaside from a place of contemptible wilderness first to a therapeutic and then into a hedonistic setting for 'a life-style full of obscure joy' (Corbin 1994: 95; see also Walton 2005: 12). Corbin's study of the seaside ends with the arrival of the railway era, the socio-economic broadening of leisure, and the birth of the 'modern beach' (Corbin 1994: 295).

While the railway has received significant attention as a catalyst for tourism, the role of steam-based technologies of the sea in the development of tourism has not been explored as extensively. Yet scholars such as John Armstrong and David Williams argue that 'the case of the railway in promoting popular recreational travel, introducing excursions and encouraging resort development has been overemphasised and in some instances wrongly credited with a pioneering role. That role, in fact, was played by the steamboat' (Armstrong and Williams 2005: 61; see also Cerchiello and Vera-Rebollo 2015 for an account of Spanish steamship tourism). Although it is beyond the scope of this article to determine whether the train or the steamer wins that contest, maritime tourism is significant, and as John Walton emphasizes, 'the sea, as destination, transport medium and basis for pleasure journeys, has, after all, been one of the key components of the explosive growth of tourism' (Walton 2014: 110). Building on this notion, and considering the fact that the guidebooks produced by Murray and Baedeker both focused on maritime journeys as the defining experience of the Mediterranean *as a whole*, this article turns to how seabound voyages have affected our understanding of the built environments of the Mediterranean.

The rise in sea voyages on the Mediterranean, beyond advancements in transportation and circulation technologies, was also directly linked to the expanding involvement of European powers throughout the Mediterranean basin. Napoleon's 1798 campaign to Egypt was a watershed event in igniting an interest in Egypt, in its history, and its people (Gregory 2001; Reid 2002; Behdad and Gartlan 2013). The Greek War of Independence, which began in 1821, led to the formation of an independent Greece and the strengthening of a discourse that connected European cultural roots with ancient Greece (Mazower 2021; Dritsas 2006). French colonization efforts in North Africa, starting with Algiers in 1830, gave the French a foothold in the North African shores of the Mediterranean (Young 2018). The unification of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 catapulted Italy into the scramble for Africa and resulted in the colonization of Libya in 1911 (McLaren 2006). More broadly, the struggles of the Ottoman Empire during the 19th century resulted in the British, French, and Germans exerting fluctuating but increasing influence on the Ottoman and formerly Ottoman territories. Such geopolitical shifts in the Mediterranean basin had a direct correlation with the changing tourism landscape of the Mediterranean (Gordon 2003).

In fact, one of the major drivers of British imperialism, the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O), played an important role in the opening of the Mediterranean to the tourist classes when the company allowed passengers on their mail boats. Initially established as the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company in 1837, P&O was formally incorporated by Royal Charter in 1840. (On the role company played in British imperialism, see, for example, Harcourt and Palmer (2006).) P&O's 1844

'excursion' to the Mediterranean is often considered as the very first cruise (Crouch and Laing 2008). The novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, who received a free ticket to travel on this excursion, described the undertaking: '[I]n the space of a couple of months, as many men and cities were to be seen as Ulysses surveyed and noted in ten years. Malta, Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cairo were to be visited' (Thackeray 1848: vii). Thackeray was amazed at the speed of this journey, which was to take 'a couple of months'. While slow even by late-19th century standards, for Thackeray, whose point of comparison was Ulysses' ten-year sojourn, it was fast indeed. By the 1880s, however, one could travel aboard a P&O steamer from England to Egypt in thirteen days. With the simultaneous expansion of railway networks, one could also complete the same journey in six days by traveling overland to Brindisi by rail and hopping on a steamer to Alexandria (Pemble 1988: 25). Such developments, whether political or technological, expanded the geographical horizons of ordinary tourists, enabling their access to novel experiences abroad both by land and by sea. Concurrently, the earliest guidebooks dedicated to experiencing the Mediterranean in its entirety and from the sea began to contribute to an imaginary Mediterranean based on viewing it from the sea.

Murray and Baedeker: Guidebooks to the Mediterranean

The preface to the 1881 *Handbook to the Mediterranean* summarizes the motivations behind the creation of the earliest guidebook covering the entirety of the Mediterranean:

> A desire now becoming so general to visit those sunny shores and islands where winter is shorn of half its intemperance, and the facilities of moving from place to place afforded by French, Italian, Spanish and Austrian steam companies, have produced a desire for a Handbook which these pages have been prepared to supply. (Playfair 1881: v).

This passage describes a perceived shift in the tourism landscape in which travelers were flocking to the Mediterranean 'on whose shores rose all the mighty Empires of the world, whose ports and harbours became the most populous, prosperous and magnificent cities' (Playfair 1881: v).

John Murray's foray into the world of guidebooks began in 1836. Initially, Murray took on the task of writing the guidebooks himself. However, as his company grew, he enlisted the expertise of other authors, including Sir Lambert Playfair, who compiled guidebooks on Algiers and eventually the Mediterranean (Murray 1919: 46). Although written and compiled by numerous individuals, they were commonly known as Murray's handbooks. The earliest guidebooks, to the 'Continent', were followed by

volumes covering more distant locations, including Egypt, India, Russia, and Japan. In 1840, Murray published *A Hand-book for Travellers in the Ionian Islands, Greece, Turkey, Asia Minor, and Constantinople*, which covered a large portion of the eastern Mediterranean. This publication was followed in quick succession by other volumes to other destinations around the Mediterranean Sea, including *Handbook to Spain*, *Handbook for Travellers in Greece*, *Handbook for Travellers in Southern Italy*, *Handbook for Travellers in Portugal,* and more. Most of these titles would have several editions, with each edition updating logistics and places to visit. These not only presented the most up-to-date information on hotels, timetables for transportation, and places to eat but also reflected changing perceptions.

Despite extensive coverage of individual Mediterranean locales, a comprehensive guide to the entire Mediterranean, however, remained conspicuously absent from the Murray's catalog until the late 19th century. Playfair suggests that people who had traveled all over Europe had become 'weary of the rail and river-steamer' and were therefore 'flocking in yachts and sea-steamers to that great inland basin' (Playfair 1881: v). While even a brief look at the scope of Murray's publications from the same period reveals that land-based tourism was continuing to flourish, a new demand for sea-based travel through the Mediterranean was also obviously emerging. The company had accurately judged this emerging demand for Mediterranean travel, as the first edition of the *Handbook to the Mediterranean* sold out within a year and a second edition hit the shelves in 1882. This second edition also proved to be an opportune moment to revise and, in the cases of Sicily, Sardinia, and Cyprus, entirely rewrite sections of the book (Playfair 1882: vi). The publication of later editions, such as the ones in the 1890s, attest to an ongoing interest.

Murray's guidebooks, as Rudy Koshar explains, were conceived at a time when the travelers had to arrange their time efficiently. Unlike the predominantly upper-class Grand Tourists of the earlier centuries, 19th-century travelers did not have unlimited resources. To respond to the needs of this new tourist class, Murray's handbooks avoided unnecessary details and focused 'primarily on what *ought* to be seen rather than what *could* be seen' (Koshar 1998: 326). The *Handbook to the Mediterranean* would follow this recipe, although the peculiarities of sea travel through a very large geography would necessitate even further restraint. The *Handbook to the Mediterranean*, therefore, included fewer details on hotels, lists of tradespeople, and so on than would be normally included in Murray's handbooks (Playfair 1881: vi). The *Handbook to the Mediterranean* was also a balancing act between yachting and steamer travel. Places for good anchorage, suggestions on purchasing and outfitting yachts and associated expenses, and useful maps and charts constitute a significant part of the introduction to the volume. Even an extensive list of provisions for food, from jams to cans of sardines,

was included. At the same time, steamship routes and timetables were incorporated when and where possible.

Murray's suggested tour of the Mediterranean follows a counter-clockwise loop: from Morocco east along the coast of North Africa — Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria. Taking in Asia Minor and the Greek Archipelago, the route then reaches Greece and Albania, where the first part of the book concludes. The second part begins in the Adriatic, and continues along the coast of Italy, covering the islands of Sardinia, Lipari, Sicily, and Corsica, eventually to reach the southern coast of France and Spain, ending at Gibraltar (**Figure 1**). The decision to commence the tour in North Africa rather than following the southern coast of Europe was likely an attempt to evoke a sense of distance between the perceived 'self' and its 'other'. Playfair hints at this: 'To a stranger who has not travelled in the East, the first view of Tangier is very striking. Although Europe has been left behind but a few short hours, he finds himself transported into a city as thoroughly oriental as a page of the "Thousand and One Nights"' (Playfair 1881: 2).

Figure 1: Map in Murray's *Handbook to the Mediterranean* (Playfair 1881: facing p. 3).

While the route prescribed by Murray's *Handbook* is primarily maritime, it does include inland excursions along the way. Playfair advises that 'a traveler to Algiers would hardly care to leave the country without making a trip through the Chabet el-Akira to Constantine; a cruise on the coast of Syria would be incomplete without a visit to the Holy City; no man would go to Malaga, and abstain from running up to Granada' (Playfair 1882: v). The *Handbook to the Mediterranean* incorporates basic information for the tourists to undertake such inland trips, but it also suggests that tourists travel with

a set of Murray's handbooks, particularly to Spain, France, northern Italy, southern Italy, Greece and Ionian Islands, Turkey in Asia and Constantinople, as well as Algeria and Tunis, attesting to the simultaneity of land-based and maritime tourism.

Murray's 1881 *Handbook to the Mediterranean* was a response to the increase in demand for maritime tourism in the Mediterranean, but composing a book that provided adequate information but was still manageable in size proved to be a major challenge. Murray's strategy to address this difficulty was to limit much of the information on the everyday interactions between tourists and local populations. While crucial for overland travelers experiencing intimate cultural encounters, knowledge of local customs was less vital for sea travelers, whose journeys fostered greater distance from local cultures.

Baedeker's *The Mediterranean: Sea Ports and Sea Routes*, published thirty years later, in 1911, offers a glimpse into how the tourism landscape of the Mediterranean had changed over the intervening three decades. From their commitment to providing independent travel experiences to their distinctive red covers, Baedeker's and Murray's guides shared many common attributes. Given that both Baedeker and Murray targeted middle-class travelers, a certain level of rivalry was inevitable, particularly when Baedeker started publishing his books in English in addition to the original German. The similarities between their productions obviously irked Murray, who on one occasion noted that 'Messrs Baedeker have long ago proved how easy it is with a book ready printed and published to produce another book on the same subject and identical in plan — availing themselves of its information, sending them out in the same Red Cover' (Murray 1919: 48). It is undeniable that both Murray's and Baedeker's guides frequently covered the same geographies, with Baedeker's often following an earlier volume by Murray. Yet they were not the same. For instance, one of Murray's earliest handbooks focused on the eastern Mediterranean, particularly Anatolia, yet Baedeker's *Konstantinopel und Kleinasien* only appeared after the turn of the 20th century, and was published in German (Baedeker, 1905). In their tone and organization, too, there were discernable differences, perhaps indicative of the cultural backgrounds of their publishers. Palmowski, in comparing the two, observes that Baedeker guidebooks are more somber in their descriptions and that while 'both guidebooks carried out their agenda to determine "what ought to be seen", Murray went a step further, showing more clearly not just what ought to be seen, but how it should be appreciated' (Palmowski 2002: 108).

Baedeker's *The Mediterranean: Sea Ports and Sea Routes* was prepared by John Kirkpatrick, an emeritus professor from the University of Edinburgh, following an earlier German edition prepared by Dr. F. Propping, who had reportedly visited most of the places described in the book. A geographical sketch of the Mediterranean

by Theobald Fischer was also included. The intervening years between the publication of Murray's and Baedeker's guides to the Mediterranean would result in two very different volumes covering the same geography. Perhaps most remarkably, while Murray's *Handbook to the Mediterranean* promoted private yacht travel with a sprinkling of steamship routes, Baedeker's *The Mediterranean* depended almost entirely on steamship routes.

Murray's *Handbook to the Mediterranean* presents the traveler with a simpler, more prescribed route that traversed the Mediterranean in a counter-clockwise manner, offering a limited number of land-based excursions. Baedeker's laid bare an entire network of possibilities for the tourist, allowing them to choose their own adventures. This is not to say that Baedeker offered an off-the-beaten track alternative; the places highlighted in the volume were still very much the popular tourist spots of the era. To facilitate a tourist's unpredictable movements in response to the plethora of choices it presents, Baedeker's *The Mediterranean* obsessively reiterates timetables for steamships and trains, whereas Murray's *Handbook,* three decades earlier, was preoccupied more with sites of good anchorage. Changing transportation technologies and an increasing availability of steamship lines operating in the region were obviously at the root of this major shift that had distinct consequences for how tourist experiences were choreographed in the region (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Map provided in Baedeker's *The Mediterranean: Sea Ports and Sea Routes* (Baedeker 1911: facing p. 3).

Seeing the Mediterranean from the Sea

Panoramic Vistas

One of the main points of tourist interest in the Mediterranean was the region's captivating built environment, both ancient and modern. Tourism and the built environment, as Medina Lasansky states, 'have been inseparable since the first pilgrims descended upon Rome' (Lasansky 2004: 1). However, the way in which people engaged with and appreciated the built environment has evolved over time. Judith Adler aptly points out that sightseeing was not always the primary impetus for travel, but by the 19th century, sightseeing had become one of its most prominent motivations (Adler 1989). In this process, guidebooks emerged as 'an essential interlocutor', creating and reinventing different readings of architecture–writ–large (Arnold 2002: 182). Therefore, tourist guidebooks, including those focused on the Mediterranean, played a role in shaping the way tourists viewed and experienced the sights, effectively conditioning their understanding and appreciation of the built environment (Lasansky 2004; Cobb 2017).

One of the earliest descriptions of an urbanscape in Murray's *Handbook* is of Tangier (**Figure 3**):

> The view of the town from the bay is very pleasing, rising from the sea in the form of an amphitheatre, its whitewashed houses glistening in the sun. The minarets of the three principal mosques, and two or three tall palms, break agreeably the monotony of the straight skyline formed by its terraced houses. (Playfair 1881: 2)

The description is similar to how Thackeray described Izmir during his 1841 trip aboard the P&O steamer:

> There lay the town with minarets and cypresses, domes and castles; great guns were firing off, and the blood-red flag of the Sultan flaring over the fort ever since sun-rise; woods and mountains came down to the gulf's edge.

Both descriptions from the sea epitomize the essence of a panoramic way of seeing. Thackeray would even liken his view of Istanbul from the deck of the steamer to a 'Stanfield's panorama'. He was referring to Clarkson Frederick Stanfield, who had started his career as a scene-painter at the Theatre Royal in London, during which time he also created a number of moving dioramas, including one called *A Grand View of Constantinople* (Kennedy 2021: 135).
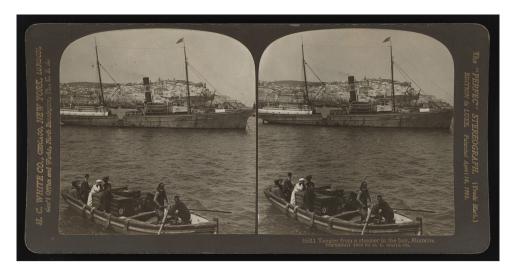
Figure 3: Tangier from a steamer, Morocco, 1908. A stereograph print by the H. C. White Co. of Chicago, New York, and London. Library of Congress, https://lccn.loc.gov/2021636331.

The word 'panorama', while commonly used today, was first coined in the late 18th century to describe a specific type of landscape painting produced in a 360-degree format, surrounding a viewer. Patented in 1787 by Robert Barker, this type of painting fascinated European spectators and immersed them in distant locales. As Stephan Oettermann explains, almost at the same time that the technical term emerged, the word panorama came to be applied 'generally to mean "circular vista, overview (from an elevated point)" of a real landscape or cityscape' (Oettermann 1997: 6).

Not only elevated points but also the decks of ships provided ideal vantage points for obtaining panoramic views, which became a source of inspiration for the panoramic shows of the era. Barker's 1791 panorama, *Grand Fleet at Spithead*, incorporated an observation area that gave visitors the impression of being on the deck of a floating frigate (Oettermann 1997: 104). In 1831, Carl Ferdinand Langhans went on to create a moving panorama where spectators were actually afloat during their immersive experience:

> I have given this designation to a new type of moving imitation of nature, in which the view of the landscape constantly changes, as it does for a passenger carried across the waves by a ship. Visitors to the exhibit will go on board a boat and have the impression (if the display is at all successful) of traveling across a real sea and making a circuit of real islands. (Oettermann 1997: 213)

In addition to the immersive experience of the panorama, visitors were typically provided with guides to enhance their understanding of what they were observing. These guides served as informative companions, offering explanations and context

for the panoramic scenes through both written descriptions and visual diagrams (Ellis 2008; Oleksijczuk 2011). Yet, while the panoramas were meant to reflect an immersive realism, they were in fact representations of an ideal that could be manipulated to serve a multitude of agendas through a re-envisioning of built environments (Garcia-Fuentes 2020).

As technologies of photography developed over the course of the 19th century, a desire to capture wider images led to the development of panoramic photographs. Initially composed of several daguerreotypes put together, and later created with cameras specifically designed for the purpose, panoramic photographs recorded detailed views of urban environments and landscapes. While not experienced immersively in purpose-built structures like the painted panoramas, panoramic photography was nonetheless an extension of a way of seeing places panoramically (Vanvolsem 2011; Hannavy 2008; LOC n.d.).

Therefore, when the guidebooks were produced for the Mediterranean, they adhered to an already established mode of representation for observing and describing the Mediterranean as panoramic vistas observed from the sea. The 1881 *Handbook to the Mediterranean* mostly presents its readers with static vistas that resembled paintings or photographic snapshots, as its description of Tangiers illustrates. Algiers is similarly described: 'a succession of dazzling white steps, or terraces rising from the water; which, contrasting with the bright green background of the Sahel, explains the origin of the Arab comparison of Algiers to a diamond set in an emerald frame' (**Figure 4**). The narrative continues with a further glimpse into the setting of the city:

> The shores of the bright blue bay are dotted here and there with white villages, French villas, and Moorish houses, appearing in the midst of the richest and most luxuriant verdure, some placed high up on the slopes of the hills, and others standing on the water's edge. (Playfair 1881: 15)

This depiction showcases a vibrant urban environment, yet it fails to convey the movement and dynamic views one would observe from a vessel in motion.

The narration of Murray's *Handbook* occasionally becomes more evocative, particularly when describing journeys on steamers, and starts to express the sense of movement experienced during these voyages. For example, when describing the Gulf of Patras, the *Handbook* delves into a moving narration of the landscape:

> The land is low on either side at first and the scenery comparatively tame, but near Patras when the mountains on either side draw towards each other as if to bar altogether any further progress, the outer gulf forms a worthy introduction to that inner

one … To the l[eft], as one passes C. Papa is the town of *Mesolongi*, surrounded by extensive flats, lagoons, and marshes, presenting nothing of interest to one viewing them from a ship's deck. But immediately opposite to Patras, Mt Varassova, 3300 ft, a solid mass of limestone bearing a singular resemblance to the rock of Gibraltar, though more than doubling it in height, rises perpendicularly from the marsh and sea. (Playfair 1881: 229)

Figure 4: Algiers, 1901. Poster advertising the steamer service of P.L.M., C[ompagn]ie G[énéra] le Transatlantique, between Marseille and Algiers. Illustration by Fernand Le Quesne. Gallica, digital library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9007965x.

Baedeker's 1911 *The Mediterranean* privileges the narration of the landscape as the steamer moves through the sea. The steamer voyage from Naples to Syracuse via Messina and Catania, for example, starts with the following description:

> Steering across the bay towards the Peninsula of Sorrento, we enjoy a delightful ret–rospect of Mt. Vesuvius and the hills around Naples. Farther on we admire the bold rocky N. coast of the island of Capri. After 1 ¼ hr. we pass through the Bocca Piccola, a strait 3 M. in breadth, between the huge cliffs of Lo Capo, the N.E. point of Capri, and the Punta di Campanella, the extremity of the peninsula of Sorrento. The steamboat now proceeds to the S.S.E. towards the straits of Messina. (Baedeker 1911: 154–55)

The portrayal of the landscape from a steamer, juxtaposed against the descriptions of the views obtained from yachts, evokes an interplay akin to a transition from photography to cinematography (**Figure 5**). Yet both modes continue to adhere to a panoramic way of seeing, but they vacillate between the experiences of stationary and moving panoramas (see Miller (1996) for more on stationary and moving panoramas).

Figure 5: Sorrento by the sea, Naples, Italy, circa 1890–1900. Photochrom print by Detroit Publishing Company. Library of Congress, https://lccn.loc.gov/2001700909.

The panoramic way of seeing has been most closely associated with railway travel. According to Wolfgang Schivelbusch, the advent of this new technology fundamentally altered the way people perceived the landscape. He argues that the railroad, above all else, was the primary catalyst for the panoramization of the world. Panoramic perception, according the Schivelbusch, 'no longer belonged to the same space as the perceived objects: the traveler saw the objects, landscapes, etc. through the apparatus which moved him through the world' (Schivelbusch 1979: 62–64). Like the train, the steam-powered ship also altered the way people saw the world. According to Jonathan Stafford, 'the panorama form also possesses a representational veracity for coming to terms with the new experiences of perceiving space and landscape aboard the steamship' (Stafford 2017: 76; see also Stafford 2023). Although there were differences between what one experienced visually from a train versus a steamer, traveling on a steamer clearly altered how one perceived the passing maritime landscapes. Similar to traveling along a railway,

> the logic of the straight line came to be the dominant mode of conceptualizing the space of the sea ... Furthermore, that a precise route could be reproduced repeatedly and accurately was only possible with the use of steam, remaking the sea as linear rather than open and continuous space. (Stafford 2017: 76; Stafford 2023)

Because guidebooks played a crucial role in mediating touristic encounters, the way that the popular guidebooks of the time frame the Mediterranean was significant. Eric Zuelow's argues that because 'Baedeker and Murray guides represented the "holy scriptures" of tourism',

> questioning the divinely ordained was not done. The tourists' task was to stand where they were told in order to view a site in a particular way, to visit only specified sites/sights, and to understand the cultures they were gazing upon through pre-defined lenses — to consume what was around them in a particular manner. In some ways, a guidebook was as much a catalogue of products as a holy book for a converted faithful. (Zuelow 2015: 79)

Aboard a steamer, traversing predetermined routes, all the tourist had to do was to sit back on the deck and follow the descriptions of places provided by the guidebook as the boat carried the passengers in a moving panorama. Unlike a sailing vessel, a steamer offered a more predictable and reproducible journey, making the descriptions of moving, unfolding vistas meaningful. Therefore, Murray, writing primarily about sailing vessels, typically describes cities from stationary points, capturing the view from the anchorage. Baedeker, in contrast, focused on steamer travel and can thus incorporate the experience of these moving panoramas. In both scenarios, however,

the way the Mediterranean was narrated served to merge the diverse places of the region together where nuances of cultures and peoples were lost and where borders did not exist.

Distanced Encounters

The guidebooks of the Mediterranean, their production driven by the need for books that were portable, placed particular emphasis on the built environments that were visible from the deck of a ship and could be seamlessly integrated into the panoramic views they presented. In the description of the southern coast of Anatolia, west of Mersin (**Figure 6**), in the 1881 *Handbook to the Mediterranean*, this constraint is acknowledged when the ancient architecture that dots this coast is briefly described:

> The ruins of Soli are distinctly seen from the deck of the steamer. Beyond this the coasts of Karamania and Lycia are magnificently fine, full of ancient ruins of the greatest interest and abounding in anchorages where yachts may lie in perfect security, but it is beyond the limits of this work to describe these in detail; we confine ourselves to indicating a few of the points of the greatest interest such as may possibly be seen from the deck of a passing vessel. (Playfair 1881: 80)

Figure 6: Mersin from the sea, circa 1898–1946. Photograph taken either by the American Colony Photo Department or its successor, the Matson Photo Service. Library of Congress, https://lccn.loc.gov/2019698593.

Baedeker's *The Mediterranean* similarly describes the approach to Athens:

> A hill jutting into the sea in front of Mt. Aegaleos now becomes visible. This is the
> Piraeus Peninsula ... We now have a beautiful view of Athens; in the centre rises the
> Acropolis, on the left the monument of Philopappos. The large white building on the
> right is the royal palace, beyond which rises Lykabettos ...The steamer rounds the
> headland of Akte and slowly enters the harbour of the Piraeus. (Baedeker 1911: 494)

While the canonical status of the Acropolis would have necessitated its inclusion in any
guidebook covering Athens, the visibility of the Philopappos monument from the sea
was the likely reason for its inclusion in this panoramic description of Athens. Other
similarly significant monuments of the city that were not readily visible from the sea
were summarily excluded from the description, and those that were visible from the sea,
such as the royal palace, were privileged (see also McNeal (1995) for other panoramas
of Athens).

Just as experiencing the Mediterranean via the sea excised monuments, cities,
and landscapes that were not visible from the sea, this mode of travel also limited
bodily encounters with the people and places of the Mediterranean. In this, too,
guidebooks played a role. Guidebooks not only provided predetermined ways of
sightseeing but also prescribed ways of interacting with people and places. They also
reflected and reinforced the colonial, paternalistic views of their producers and readers.
The Baedeker guides, for instance, infamously included a section titled 'Intercourse
with Orientals' (Reid 2002; Zuelow 2015). This section in *The Mediterranean* gives
much of the same advice present in other Baedeker guides: that a traveler must be
'cautious and firm' in his dealings with the local populations, who are likened to 'mere
children' (Baedeker 1911: xxv–xxvi). Guidebooks to the Mediterranean reverted to
such perceptions for the select few locations they offered more extensive writeups. Yet
a sea-going vessel, whether steamer or sail boat, augmented the level of separation
of on-board tourists from the cities and the landscapes they were exploring from
afar. Considering the limited interaction between the tourists on board a ship and the
lived environments of the Mediterranean and its people, the descriptions of the built
and natural environments were even more significant in transmitting perceptions of
places around the Mediterranean.

Istanbul is a good entry point for exploring this issue. According to Murray's
Handbook to the Mediterranean,

> there is no lovelier scene on earth than that open up before the traveller as he
> approaches Constantinople from the Sea of Marmora [sic]: at once so bright, so

varied in outline, so rich in colour, so gorgeous in architecture. On the left, washed by the waves, the quaint old battlements extend from the Seraglio point to the Seven Towers; and over them rise in picturesque confusion the terraced roofs, domes, and minarets of Stamboul. To the right the white mansions, cemeteries, and cypress-groves of Skoutari run away along the Asiatic shore… In the centre Bosphorus, revealing a vista of matchless beauty. (Playfair 1881: 87)

Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis observes that this description 'is not an informative account of the city's geography, addressed to a pragmatist British traveller, but a picture meant to rouse his emotions, to mould his perception' (Hastaoglou-Martinidis 2004: 56). Minarets, domes, and the cypress groves often associated with Muslim cemeteries serve to narrate this eastern Mediterranean city as a 'vista of matchless beauty', but one that also exists in 'picturesque confusion' (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Istanbul from the sea showing the Topkapı Palace (old Seraglio), 1901. Photograph by Strumper & Co of Hamburg. F.12251/IV, Biblioteka Narodowa (Polish National Library), https://polona.pl/item-view/486cfc44-bfe7-4eec-8d8a-41920bb6e84b?page=0.

Baedeker did not describe Istanbul as a panorama upon a traveler's initial approach to the city. Instead, it was assumed that the traveler would eventually take a ferry along the Bosphorus. Such a trip along the Bosphorus was captured on film by Alexandre

Promio for Lumiere Brothers in 1897 and by British Pathé in 1910. These films provide a good approximation to the depiction included in Baedeker: 'A trip on the Bosphorus affords a highly picturesque and varied panorama of the scenery on its banks, and on the way back we suddenly obtain a striking view of the great city and its suburbs' (Baedeker 1911: 557; Promio 1897; British Pathé 1910). This is followed by a description of what a traveler could see on the eastern and western banks of the Bosphorus, including important landmarks such as the Dolmabahçe Palace. From Ortaköy, with its 'pretty mosque', Baedeker's *The Mediterranean* notes that the city is seen astern for the last time as the ferry traveled northwards. Beyond Bebek, 'above the cypresses of an old cemetery rise the picturesque towers and wall of Rumeli Hissar' (Baedeker 1911: 558). Cypresses and the picturesqueness of the city again emerge as ways of describing Istanbul.

Lisbon and Naples, and indeed many other places explored in the book, are similarly 'picturesque'. Madeira, Corfu, and Tenerife are all abundant with cypresses. Murray's *Handbook*, too, found many locations from Majorca to Messina to be 'picturesque' and extoled the cypresses of Granada and Genoa. Similarly, when describing the country around Cabras in Sardinia, Murray's *Handbook* claimed that 'date palms give to it an oriental aspect' (Playfair 1881: 353). The association of palms with an 'oriental aspect', however, does not hold, considering their ubiquitous appearance throughout the book, from Tripoli, Rhodes, and Cyprus to San Remo and Bordighera, Monte Carlo, the Balearic Islands, and Barcelona.

While one could argue that stereotypical symbols of an 'oriental city' crept into the panoramic descriptions of cities along the eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean, the isolation of the tourist from the lived experiences of these cities, at least while he or she was on the deck of a yacht or a steamer, tempered the narrative. From the deck of a sea-going vessel, the tourist did not have to negotiate the streets of a foreign city, experience its sounds and smells, or interact with the local populations and their different cultural norms. While from a boat the urban environments became devoid of people, of all their noises and scents, the architecture and the landscapes the cities occupied became increasingly important. This attention to setting is one of the ways that set apart how the built environment was mediated in the guidebooks to the Mediterranean. With such strategic inclusions and exclusions, touristic encounters with the picturesque vistas of the cities of the Mediterranean merged into one extended panorama. This extended panorama was part of an emerging geographical imagination, or of an imagined geography, because the Mediterranean coexisted with other geographic imaginations such as the 'orient' (Peckham 1999; Gregory 1994; Said 1978).

While ways of seeing panoramically or visiting certain parts of the Mediterranean were not new —and indeed, many had written about their experiences along the shores of the Mediterranean, the appeal of guidebooks among large swaths of middle–class tourists made the panoramic gathering together of the Mediterranean in these guidebooks significant. In this imagined Mediterranean, cities and architecture, both new and old, became agents of a transformation in perception.

Conclusion

The unprecedented surge in mobility during the 19th century, spurred by remarkable advancements in transportation technologies, gave birth to the remarkable phenomenon of tourism. Accompanying this transformative shift were the burgeoning tourist industries and, notably, the proliferation of guidebooks that curated the tourist experience of diverse destinations. By examining two influential tourist guides published by arguably the most popular purveyors of touristic literature in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Murray and Baedeker, this article explored how the Mediterranean, with its diverse landscapes, urbanscapes, and cultural and political variety, was depicted, choreographed, and experienced.

Guidebooks to the Mediterranean played a crucial role in shaping a distinct perspective of the Mediterranean, one that prioritized observing the region from the vantage point of the sea and at a distance. By presenting the Mediterranean as a series of unfolding panoramic vistas experienced from afar, these guides merged the various landscapes and urbanscapes of the Mediterranean into a cohesive whole. While panoramic vision predates the advent of modern tourist guidebooks, the widespread popularity and influence of these guides allowed them to contribute to framing the Mediterranean as a conceptual unity and to the formation of a geographical imagination of the Mediterranean.

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