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Into a landscape of bulbous white sculpture, mostly phallic, or reminiscent of the orifices down which people disappear in Bosch paintings, marches a Victorian lady with notebook in one hand and broly in the other. Miss Amelia Edwards (Sally Gulley) is fastidiously documenting the ruins of Egypt, resolutely keeping pace with the flow of objects brought before her by a grinning, splay-footed Egyptian guide (Heather Ackroyd) who proffers boat tours and shouts 'Panoramic views!' at appropriate intervals.

This is Optik's fourth show since they started in 1981. They excel at creating a surreal environment for their work which establishes a viewpoint of bizarre humour from which they examine reality. Ancient Sights takes place on the banks of the Nile in the declining years of the Empire, with a prologue and epilogue which jumps forward to the twentieth century; a back wall of stepped white rostra doubles as pyramids, interiors and a certain famous attic in 1956. Such flexibility of time and location enables an exploration of imperialism not only of the cultural kind but in the personal terms of male/female relationships and the balance of power between individuals.

Optik's work is group devised, under the direction of Barry Edwards. Since the present company comprises one male and two female performers, the humour of the work and the perceptions of events are very much through a woman's eyes. Often the viewpoint is an inversion of a situation frequently portrayed in theatre or film; the chat-up. At the start, two French girls are dressing up in cotton frocks when a young man, perhaps an American soldier (Martin Brett), parachutes into their field. One gauche provincial belle steps forward, ogles eye-liner at him and receives chocolate and cigarettes. Her friend is too chic; she can manage eye-liner more adeptly.

Later we are reminded of the scene when the Egyptian boat-hirer sits in a desert bar, over-dressed in jewellery she has looted from the pyramids and over-made up in a Cleopatra wig. She fingers a roll-up and waits for the British officer to wander in. Heather Ackroyd manages to evoke a ridiculous parody of movie-star glamour whilst portraying a poignantly real moment of human tragedy; for later Amelia Edwards batters the officer to death with a spade. Who's winning? Is this a symbolic gesture of the end of an Empire and of the birth of female emancipation?

Optik's strength, appropriately enough, is in visual illusion, the entire cast and musicians (Clive Bell and Marjie Underwood) encompassing the pod-like or serpent shapes of Egyptian instruments, their eerie discordant music evoking an ancient civilisation lost beneath the desert sands. It was an unforgettable glimpse of the iconographics that are locked in the pyramids beneath Amelia Edwards' feet, the images of past collective memory and of the subconscious which Optik manage to bring to the surface in their work. I look forward to seeing more of this.