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Fumeuse de Haschisch: Emile Bernard in Egypt

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Abstract:

Art historians have largely overlooked Emile Bernard's output during his decade-long stay in Egypt between 1893 and 1904. This essay explores how Bernard came to employ a manner of realism influenced by photography to produce *Fumeuse de Haschisch*, one of the most compelling projects to emerge from the artist's "Oriental" period.

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Fumeuse de Haschisch: Emile Bernard in Egypt
by Paige A. Conley

Emile Bernard was a firmly entrenched member of the Parisian avant-garde in the late 1880's but he left France for Egypt in 1893 and lived in the Middle East for most of the next ten years. While abroad, he immersed himself in Egyptian life and worked to redefine his art. *Fumeuse de Haschisch* (1900; fig. 1), known in English as *Woman Smoking Hashish* or simply *The Hashish Smoker*, is one of the most compelling projects to emerge from Bernard's "Oriental" period. The power of this simple composition lies within its evocative and ambiguous elements: the androgynous qualities of Bernard's female subject and her direct gaze that solemnly invites the viewer to engage with her sizable nose ring and her *narghile*, a pipe designed for the consumption of hashish or other disorienting substances. The tension and confusion that seem to resonate from these elements can be read to reveal an artist wrestling with a number of complex and even contradictory discourses regarding the nature of art, race, gender, power, and modernity—all shifting concepts in Egypt, and most certainly in rapid flux within France, at the close of the nineteenth century.

Fig. 1, Emile Bernard, *Fumeuse de Haschisch*, 1900. Oil on canvas. Paris, Musée d'Orsay. [larger image]

Art historians, focusing almost exclusively on his work from Pont-Aven, have largely overlooked the visual work Bernard produced in Egypt between 1893 and 1904. To date, no extensive critical analysis of *Fumeuse de Haschisch* has been published. This essay proposes to undertake a close examination of this unusual work using three separate, though related, lines of inquiry. First, it will explore how Bernard came to believe he would find an Egypt untouched by modern influences, but encountered a radically different late nineteenth-century Cairo upon his arrival. Bernard's painstaking depiction of certain ethnographic details in *Fumeuse* suggests that he was aware that she belonged to the lowest social classes of late nineteenth-century Egypt and reveals his growing awareness that the social dysfunction and alienation he sought to escape by leaving Europe must also be confronted in Egypt. The possibility that Bernard's representation intentionally invited associations with the *ghawazi*, a social group within Egypt connected in contemporary European literature to public dancing and prostitution, further complicates this ethnographic discussion.

In a second line of inquiry, this article questions whether the gender-ambiguous subject and the strong association of the *Fumeuse* with hashish were deliberate artistic references to two distinct cultural trends found within France at the end of the nineteenth century: a fascination with androgyny and the idea of *extase* or creative ecstasy. As Bernard began to acknowledge his dissatisfaction with life in the Middle East, he found that his journey had led him full circle, back to addressing the same *fin-de-siècle* concerns he had hoped to avoid during his time abroad. Seeking ways to express and order personal as well as artistic concerns, Bernard explored questions of androgyny and experimented with the idea of *extase* to develop new forms of expression and simultaneously represent the contradictory nature of the modern Egypt he encountered. Indeed, the presence of these European cultural references within Bernard's *Fumeuse*, like Gauguin's visual work in Tahiti, confirms the painting was meant specifically for French consumption.

Finally, despite its unusual conflation of race and gender, Bernard's painting can be interpreted clearly through a postcolonial lens. While the indeterminate physical qualities of Bernard's subject depart from typical European representations of the Orient, Bernard follows standard Orientalist practice by linking his subject to the most disenfranchised members of Egyptian society in an artistic effort designed to serve both Occidental pleasures and a European need for self-definition. Paradoxically, Bernard's search for personal rejuvenation and a return to more traditional, if not purely classical forms of artistic representation led him to create a modern image more precisely reflecting contemporary anxieties and the complex colonial legacy found within both France and Egypt in the final years before the end of the nineteenth century.

The Requisite Gambit

Bernard left France in 1893, with an eye toward renewal and regeneration. Dissatisfied with his reception in Paris after the years spent in Pont-Aven, and struggling with Gauguin over who might claim to be the true creative originator of Symbolism,[1] Bernard sought the "civilizations of antiquity and refinement"[2] he assumed could be found in the Middle East and particularly in Egypt. Abhorring the rise of modernization and industrialization occurring throughout France, and desiring an escape from late nineteenth-century life, Bernard left Europe to find more exotic, more natural, if not more primitive circumstances for personal and artistic inspiration. This utopian undertaking, the pursuit of the "tropical journey" as a means to achieve "personal liberation through unfettered sexuality and aesthetic refreshment" became a familiar "avant-garde gambit" for a number of Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly Gauguin and his fellow Pont-Aven artists. [3] To distinguish themselves as recognized members of the French avant-garde of the late 1880s, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Bernard, and others undertook a series of personal and artistic gambits to secure a stable position within that wide-ranging and talented group.

Like Gauguin, searching for both a new identity and a new artistic aesthetic, Bernard planned to return to France after his travels abroad with a distinctive style that would establish him as the leading contemporary artist.[4] Visiting the Exposition Universelle of 1889 with Gauguin, Bernard toured displays along the Esplanades des Invalides designed to generate interest in distant territories and to celebrate a revival of French expansionism after the humiliating collapse of the Second Empire in 1870.[5] Two major attractions, the partial reconstruction of the temple found in Angkor Wat and the "street from Cairo"

assembled from fragments of dismantled Egyptian buildings, held tremendous appeal for Bernard.[6] The Egyptian exhibit, built by Frenchmen intending to replicate the "haphazard, chaotic" atmosphere of a typical bazaar found in the older sections of Cairo, was carefully crafted to ensure that even "the paint on the buildings was made dirty."[7] Featuring stalls selling perfumes and pastries, the exhibit's main draw may well have been the imported façade of a mosque behind which the French had installed a coffeehouse.[8] Venturing beyond the mosque's façade into its darkened interior, one could view a place where "Egyptian girls performed dances with young men and dervishes whirled."[9] Later, breaking with Gauguin but still determined to compete with him and replicate Gauguin's own, earlier decision to leave the West, Bernard renounced his plans to travel to the Pacific islands and planned instead to visit the nearer exotic world of Egypt and the Levant.

In *Colonizing Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell draws upon Heidegger's work to remind us that popular symbolic representations of the world's cultural and colonial order, like the 1889 Exposition with its staged Egyptian display and similar exhibits presented throughout Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century, established a paradoxical view of the world for contemporary observers. As Mitchell notes, in this new, artificial universe constructed as an ordered, logical display or "world picture," most objective truths about the nature or the type of representation at issue became displaced by the "certainty of representation"[10] such displays presented. The consumable qualities of these exhibits, with their bites of exotic pastries and rare glimpses of exotic dancing girls, further enhanced the appearance of the "real" or the dynamic of certainty applied to this form of representation.

In this respect, attending the 1889 Exposition, or any of the world exhibitions staged during the second half of the nineteenth century, also became a kind of pilgrimage that glorified an ever-growing transformation of many world markets to capitalism. As Walter Benjamin observed, the world as "exhibit" manifested a "commodity fetish" or a form of misrepresentation first identified by Karl Marx where ordinary objects no longer represented actual labor or particular social experiences and became instead a kind of "social hieroglyphic" for commodities perceived to originate from an imaginary productive process.[11] Nineteenth-century ethnographic displays with the "certainty of representation" they manifested as well as the consumptive practices they promoted, became an object-world, an artificial exhibit mistakenly and paradoxically perceived as an actual, external reality. Intimately connected to a great historical confidence gleaned from two previous centuries of imperialism and empire-building, Europeans, adopting a view of the "world-as-exhibition,"[12] often undertook a subsequent journey to the real geographical lands depicted by these chimera-like productions. Such journeys must have become particularly problematic as many Europeans did not realize they had left the exhibition behind and entered an entirely different realm of experience with a complexity that far exceeded the limited, static, imaginary social constructions they falsely believed they were certain to encounter, if not consume.

For these reasons, Bernard's departure from Europe for Egypt was predicated on inherently contradictory aims from the very start. Bernard's avant-garde gambit began with the idea of traveling to the world of Egypt made more real to him by the 1889 exhibit. Thus, Emile Bernard, like many other Europeans—most notably, fellow artists—believed he would find

in Egypt this world-as-exhibition; a place of primitive beauty, the unspoiled center of antiquity, and an escape from the pressures and tensions of modern life. In Bernard's case, this misperception became dangerously intermingled with a very avant-garde desire to synthesize an "exoticism" that could secure the necessary difference from other avant-garde productions to catapult him into a position of artistic and critical prominence.[13] Bernard's travels were complicated not only by the "world-as-exhibition" view he had adopted previously in Paris; their very undertaking required that he find a successful way to consume and then translate for European audiences the "otherness" he needed to encounter in the Middle East to achieve his personal and professional goals.

Letters from Vincent Van Gogh to Bernard dating from 1888 reveal that each artist associated Egypt with visions of "calm and great simplicity" and each is certain Bernard would find, in this birthplace of civilization, a way to satisfy his growing artistic interest in a return to classicism.[14] Bernard's patron, Antoine La Rochefoucauld, also encouraged this tour in the belief that an acquaintance with ancient traditions found in the East would grace a painter with "enduring aesthetic laws of the kind which modern French artists would need to rediscover after rejecting their own debased education."[15] Bernard's correspondence confirmed he was determined to observe (or construct) the very "otherness" he set out to find. In a letter to his mother, Bernard described Egyptian *fellahs* or peasants that give him "grand visions": "These people, almost nude, powerful muscles, tanned by the sun, covered in material that is heavy with folds, but also majestic, they have revealed to me what life can be in its nobler and simpler aspects."[16] In them he finds the "allure of freedom" far from a "false civilization" where life is both "natural and divine." He was moved by the "beauty that emanates from the simple, primitive life of the desert...the beauty of men and women naked under the sun."[17] Indeed, most of his visual work from his nine-year period in the Orient focused on people rather than landscape.

Shortly after his arrival in Cairo in November of 1893, Bernard completely refashioned himself. He dressed in "Egyptian" style (figs. 2 and 3) and quickly married a Middle Easterner, Hanenah Saati, in June of 1894.[18] Hanenah spoke little French and Bernard's view of Hanenah as "dignified, introverted and shy" indicated his real attraction may have been to the self-contained mystery of the Orient he believed she embodied, rather than to Hanenah's individual nature.[19] This view seems to be confirmed in the demure, subservient pose Bernard assigned to Hanenah in their dual portrait, which Bernard completed in 1894 (fig. 4). The first two stanzas of a poem written by Bernard this same year and dedicated to Hanenah echo similar sentiments:

Fig. 2, *Emile Bernard at home in his garden*. Undated. Black and White Photograph. Cairo [Reproduced in Marie-Amélie Anquetil and Olivier Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d 'Emile Bernard 1893-1904*, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Yvelines Musée Départemental du Prieuré, 1983] [larger image]

Fig. 3, *Emile Bernard with his wife, Hanenah and his son, Otse*, 1896. Black and White Photograph. Cairo [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard Catalogue Raisonné de L'Oeuvre Peint*. Paris Editions Side, 1982] [larger image]

Fig. 4, Emile Bernard, *Portrait de l'artiste au turban jaune*, 1894. Watercolor. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard Catalogue Raisonné de L'Oeuvre Peint*. Paris Editions Side, 1982] [larger image]

> You, you come from the Orient, you bring me the palms,
> The roses and the incense of your profound palaces;
> Your brow is always serene with tranquil voluptuousness,
> And your eyes have the tepid blue of your skies. Me, I am the Occident, its dreams, its chimeras,
> And I bring a potent spear to holy combat;
> My plume is of blood and bitter tears
> On my helmet struggles a large proud eagle[20]

Bernard invested Hanenah with an exotic natural beauty and a calm, seemingly unself-conscious sensual temperament, qualities viewed by Bernard to be the salve he needed for his modern anxieties. At the same time, Bernard entered into this intimate, cross-cultural relationship from an obvious position of dominance and power; he was the ancient warrior, the helmeted conqueror of old poised with his potent spear, an uncompromising spirit of antiquity. Such an unrealistic fantasy based on dominance and appropriation would seem unstable at best. Bernard's final departure from Egypt for France in February of 1904 did not include Hanenah and their marriage dissolved shortly thereafter.

While not a poet of great renown, Bernard was a prolific essayist, novelist, playwright, and art critic. He continued to write while living abroad, considering his painting and his written work to be intimately connected undertakings.[21] If his initial fascination with Egypt and its perceived ability to influence his personal aspirations precipitated a hasty marriage to Hanenah, published material and private correspondence dating from this early period in Egypt gave further evidence of a continuing search for personal and artistic revitalization.[22] Despite his distance from Paris, Bernard's publications maintained a strong dialogue with the avant-garde and continued to address the "chess-like moves" required for participation in this European movement. In these works he continued to *reference* the popular theme of a restorative "tropical journey," *defer* to stylistic preferences of the day, particularly classicism, and finally, present encounters with an "exotic" Egypt he believed could establish enough *difference* to secure his position as best contender for leader of the Parisian avant-garde.[23] Nonetheless, this gambit, this attempt to secure both personal and

artistic revitalization in Egypt by breaking from the contaminating influences of Europe and immersing oneself in the "primitive exoticism" to be found in a foreign location, became increasingly threatened by Bernard's actual experience abroad.

Nineteenth-Century Life in Egypt

Late nineteenth-century Cairo, a city of deep contradictions, found itself divided between its traditional roots and the modernizing influences of Europe. Stanley Lane-Poole, visiting Cairo in the late 1890's, observed, "There are two Cairos, distinct in character, though but slenderly divided in site. There is a European Cairo, and there is an Egyptian Cairo."[24] Bernard himself complained to his mother in a letter dating from November 1893 that the streets, boulevards and large avenues of Cairo reminded him of Europe.[25] With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Egypt became the key to European imperial and economic interests in the region. Great Britain's subsequent occupation, designed primarily to protects its interest in the canal, culminated in Egypt's status as a "veiled protectorate" in 1882, despite the strongly entrenched influence of France in Egypt throughout most of the nineteenth century. British management of its protectorate aimed primarily at generating revenue for European creditors and opening markets for British investors, emphasizing the construction of railroads and other transportation infrastructures to service these new markets while deemphasizing housing for those urban dwellers not a part of the foreign-born community or the wealthier Egyptian population.[26] Consequently, most of the older parts of Cairo rapidly deteriorated under British rule.[27] Tensions between old and new Cairo continued to build while an uneasy alliance between France and Egypt festered throughout this period.

French influences, which had begun with Napoleon's foray into Alexandria in 1798, continued to prevail in Cairo throughout the late nineteenth century despite Britain's subsequent territorial dominance established in 1882. Notwithstanding England's political control, French citizens living in Egypt in the decades before 1900 outnumbered English citizens in the protectorate by two to one.[28] As historian Joseph J. Mathews noted, France had "blazed the Egyptian trail, only to step aside in a moment of great indecision and permit Great Britain to forge ahead. The error was irremediable, but the French could and did cling tenaciously to any possible footing."[29]

As a further destabilizing social factor, Cairo's growing population of more than six hundred thousand residents in 1900 included approximately one hundred thousand foreign-born residents.[30] These French, English, Greek, Armenian, and American inhabitants of late nineteenth-century Cairo competed for limited urban space with an ever increasing number of Egyptians displaced from rural communities. Driven in large part by a substantial rise in private land ownership and an increase in capitalist markets replacing traditional cooperative associations without concurrent social support, constant internal migration from outlying villages to the city of Cairo became the primary socio-economic phenomenon of late nineteenth-century Egypt.[31] Cairo received thousands of internal immigrants each year from 1882 through 1887, resulting in substantial urban overcrowding for the poorest sections of the city and further stratification of the community.[32] While Stanley Lane-Poole observed "(t)he blessed conservatism of the East has happily maintained much of the old city in its beautiful ruinous unprogressive disorder,"[33] in truth, an urban elite benefiting from the processes of modernization and industrialization led in large part

by investors from England and France felt it unnecessary to consider the needs of the increasingly disenfranchised local population.

The exotic images of Cairo Bernard first sought to paint belie any of this social, economic, or political tension. Bernard initially favored scenes depicting local female *fellahs* or peasants seen from a distance and posed with water jugs along the banks of the Nile River (fig. 5). His generic, faceless human subjects wearing traditional robes resembled the inhabitants of classical antiquity, and indeed, the image of women carrying water jugs on their shoulders or heads was a common motif in European paintings and photographs of the Middle East after 1860.[34] Employing these images, Bernard avoided referencing the presence of modernizing influences and the colonially-imposed social divides that actually existed within Cairo. Bernard's early constructions are *pastiches* combining elements from both modern and ancient art that reveal a "troubling distance between his pictorial imagination and his physical environment."[35] Given Bernard's lack of clarity regarding his subject matter, a stilted artificiality and vagueness both in form and color, are particularly evident in the few oil paintings he completed at this time (fig. 6). An unresolved tension permeates these constructions and, as Peter Rudd notes, "(t)he sense of historical memory which Bernard extracted from his Egyptian subjects underlined their function as a medium through which he sought to evade his modern identity."[36] Underscoring the tentative nature of these compositions, Bernard used pen and watercolor rather than oil for most of his work during this period.

Fig. 5, Emile Bernard, *Femmes Arabes au bord du Nil*, Undated. Watercolor. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Marie-Amélie Anquetil and Olivier Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d'Emile Bernard 1893-1904*, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Yvelines Musée Départemental du Prieuré, 1983] [larger image]

Fig. 6, Emile Bernard, *Puiseuses d'eau au bord du Nil*,1895. Watercolor. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard Catalogue Raisonné de L'Oeuvre Peint*. Paris Editions Side, 1982]
[larger image]

Bernard's ill-fated quest for the ancient Egypt he envisioned in Paris became derailed well before 1900, the year he completed *Fumeuse de Haschisch*. Certainly his world-as-exhibition view of the Orient, a garden of Eden, a place more natural and, in some undefined fashion, more "pure" than the despoiled West, could not be sustained over time.[37] Bernard spoke out against the Egyptian urban elite for he believed they had betrayed the values of their country by adopting Western dress as well as Western attitudes and would ultimately be incapable of successfully embracing industrialization and modernization.[38] Upset by the destruction of some of the old gardens in Cairo to make way for modern housing, Bernard also noted these changes would destroy the "authentic" Egypt he needed for his own artistic projects.[39] His frustration led him full circle, back to a peevish kind of malcontent over the crumbling façade of his consumable Orient. He chose to belittle Egyptian culture rather than develop a more open and sophisticated understanding of the social, economic, and political complexities at play around him.

Bernard's melancholy and disenchantment grew when his beloved sister Madeleine died in Cairo after contracting a fever while visiting in November 1895. Bernard responded to this loss by leaving Egypt with Hanenah and his small son Otse for Grenada and Seville during the summer of 1896.[40] His time in Spain spent reflecting upon the work of Venetian masters such as Veronese, Titian, and Tintoretto also resulted in an encounter with the portrait work of Ignacio Zuloaga whom he met in Seville at the end of 1896. Bernard eventually abandoned the watercolor technique he practiced in Egypt for oils, and completed *Musiciens Espagnols* (1897), while he traveled in Spain, as a work influenced not only by Zuloaga's solemn technique, but also by the modernism of Manet's early Spanish works which Bernard had observed when he visited the Exposition Universelle of 1889 with Gauguin.[41] Well-received when later exhibited in Paris, *Musiciens* confirmed that Bernard's search for a new definitive style would continue to incorporate both traditional and modern elements.[42] All of these influences led to a noticeable stylistic change and provided a radical new direction for his work when he returned to Egypt in 1897.

While it redefined his artistic style, the time spent in Spain was not soothing or restorative and Bernard returned to Cairo more disillusioned than ever. Three children, all boys, born to Bernard and Hanenah between 1895 and 1900 died in infancy, Otse in Spain and two others in Egypt.[43] His poetry departed from previous characterizations of the Orient as "a large garden/the last reflection of Eden/...under a pure blue sky," to speak instead of "a sky that is too blue....The scents of flowers that are wrong and guilty./...(places where) only ugliness has a right to reign."[44] Although not as well documented as his French brothel and bordello pictures dating from the 1880s,[45] Bernard's visual work began to reflect images from the cafés and brothels of Cairo that he now frequented.

Timothy Mitchell notes that the great discrepancy between their experiences in the Orient, and their previously held European images of the world-as-exhibition, were destabilizing for most nineteenth-century European travelers. Although these travelers thought they would move from a picture to the "real thing," they nevertheless still interpreted the real encounter as a picture.[46] The discomfort they felt upon encountering a new kind of experience that resisted easy classifications or quick definitions led to another problem, one of trying frame a new picture. The results were inevitably disappointing.[47] It is during this painful period of reframing that Emile Bernard conceived his visual project, *Fumeuse de Haschisch*.

Fumeuse de Haschisch

A photograph of Bernard's Egyptian *atelier* dating from 1898 depicts a nearly finished version of *Fumeuse* hanging on his studio wall. The paintings assembled with *Fumeuse* clearly evidence the great shift in Bernard's artistic style. The perspective of these new canvases has telescoped, moving from the distance found in his earlier works to one of close range and allowing for full frontal views of individuals rather than the distant backs of generically robed figures. As Peter Rudd observes in his discussion of Bernard's substantial stylistic changes occurring at this time, painted figures remain arranged in "groups which recall the orchestrated compositions of earlier history painting," but Bernard's nuanced attention to human expression gives new meaning to this traditional form.[48] Muted colors and shapes are replaced by clearly defined lines and stark color contrasts while the detailed faces appearing in this new work evidence a wide range of human emotions including pain, fatigue, and despondency.

In the final years before 1900, Bernard also worked on three large canvases, *Les fellahs au travail* (1898), *Femmes puissant de l'eau au Nil* (1898-1902) and *Les prostituées du Caire* (1898). Jean-Jacques Luthi surmises that *Les fellahs* and *Femmes puisant* reveal Bernard's new interest in exploring themes related to the contemporary working class in and around Cairo, but the last canvas, or *Les prostituées*, may relate instead to a "theme of distraction" as Bernard came to spend more time in the cafés of old Cairo.[49] Labeling this last canvas a study of "clothes, mores, and morals" Luthi asserts that in its most compelling figure, the woman seated to the left in a dark robe (fig. 7), one glimpses "her true despair" and he wondered whether Bernard intended to present within this picture the "physiognomy of vice" he found himself pursuing.[50] Behind Bernard's odd collection of brothel figures there also appears a cracked, decrepit wall. As a typical theme of decay frequently employed by European artists in their portrayals of the Oriental tableau,[51] this visual element emphasizes new aspects of Cairo's culture that Bernard finally chose to represent.

Fig. 7, Emile Bernard, *Les Prostitutées du Caire*, 1898. Oil on canvas. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard en Orient et Chez Cézanne*, Paris Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1979]
[larger image]

Fumeuse de Haschisch addresses contemporary experience in a manner very different from his historical grouping, *Les prostituées*. Not only is *Fumeuse* an oil painting with lush brush work evoking the manner of the Venetian masters Veronese and Tinoretto, it further echoes Manet's presentation of *Olympia* by presenting a single, exotic subject oddly constructed from elements of nineteenth-century modernism.[52] Like Manet's work, the realism of this visual work by Bernard establishes a "photographic effect" that creates a temporal fiction of immediacy—the "there and then" of the moment becomes the "here and now" of the painting's beholder.[53] The swift engagement this kind of artistic effect can produce, as well as the link it evidences between the developing art of photography and modern portraiture, is significant. As Heather McPherson notes in her seminal work, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth- Century France*:

> While the painted portrait did not abruptly disappear with the advent of photography, its status and credibility as an artistic genre were irrevocably altered. It is the increasingly problematic condition of the modern portrait, in particular its self-reflexive questioning of the premises of representation and its stylistic indeterminacy, that makes it worth examining more closely as an aesthetic and social signifier.[54]

Working within a medium that could remain visually compelling despite its stylistic indeterminacy, portrait painting became the perfect genre for Bernard's *Fumeuse* project. It allowed him to more easily express his own anxieties regarding personal, artistic, and social questions of identity that not only became threatened by modern life in Europe but were thrown into further crisis by his growing recognition that an Oriental journey could no longer be easily re-presented or framed. Bernard employed individual portraiture to conceptualize his *Fumeuse*, but it is the manner in which this stylistic choice intersected with other late nineteenth-century European artistic movements and Bernard's growing dissatisfaction with Egypt that is worthy of closer examination. Bernard's painted image, as late nineteenth-century portraiture, could more readily become a "contested site of

representation"[55] or a locus where self-definition and contemporary socio-cultural constructions would be referenced or perhaps even buttressed, but simultaneously called into question.

Designed to reject traditional forms of representation within a painted canvas still limited by the natural constraints of realism, the primary visual elements that comprise Bernard's *Fumeuse* are, by necessity, a study of indeterminacy. The most dramatic of these elements is Bernard's non-gendered subject. Presented with the almost full frontal view found in most late nineteenth-century European portraits and photographs,[56] this image of the *Fumiese* nonetheless radically departs from even avant-garde Symbolist representations of this same period[57] with its dominant figure of an ambiguously-gendered *female* sitting upright with arms outspread, a posture that is not clearly demonized nor found to be demur, subservient, or deferential.[58] Because she is a completely clothed figure, Bernard's *Fumeuse* also functions as an explicit "anti-nude." She is not "obviously naked" like her European counterpart, *Olympia*,[59] or other Oriental representations of women from baths and harems, but completely robed, a *costumed* figure; her femininity and her constructed sexuality derived from a performance, a masquerade, or an implied veiling. This handling by Bernard, a dramatic inverse of the nudity often found in the works of Ingres, Delacroix, Gérôme, or Gauguin, directly disregarded yet still engaged with contemporary representations by these and other European artists.

Equally notable is Bernard's departure from typical European portrayals of hashish consumption set within the Orient. Even though he/she holds a large *narghile* or hashish pipe, the *Fumeuse* sits attentively in a non-lethargic pose. The eyes do not appear to be clouded or disconnected from the moment of Bernard's depiction. Instead, they gaze directly at the viewer with a candid look that is not altered or obscured by the influence of hashish, but is arguably enigmatic and engaging. In a similar vein, the ambiguous setting that surrounds Bernard's *Fumuese* includes a curtained window that speaks of a very private interior space but not one clearly marked as a smoking den, brothel, bath, or harem.

These critical visual ambiguities found within *Fumeuse*, namely, its non-gendered subject, the large, seemingly unused *narghile*, and the painting's indeterminate setting, are further complicated by its very specific European artistic referents that Bernard constructed for his intended audience. The suspended pose of the *Fumeuse*, for example, invites immediate comparisons to those of the substantial, often pornographic European trade in Oriental postcards, as well as the frozen *mis-en-scène* unquestionably promoted by world exhibitions of the late nineteenth century.[60] The *narghile* highlighted in contrasting lighter color against the subject's dark clothes, even if unused, still forges an immediate association in French culture with Baudelaire and his fascination, well-documented in *Les paradis artificiels*, with drug-induced escapes[61] or the drug-induced expansion of perception.[62] The remaining visual elements Bernard employed to portray his particular subject are clear ethnographic markers; they immediately and unmistakably position this robed, head-dressed, henna-stained, and obviously pierced subject within a particular social and ethic class.

The dark, subtly-striped fabric worn by the *Fumeuse* and her carefully assembled accoutrements (bracelet, head piece, and nose ring) signal a clear intention by Bernard to

reference the stratified, segregated world of nineteenth-century Egypt. While suspect, given its orientalist construction[63] and certainly unreliable for interpretive information, Edward William Lane's book, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1860), includes graphic renditions of hennaed hands and feet, as well as nose rings[64] known to adorn women, including the *ghawazi* or women associated with public dancing. Several aquatints and early photographs[65] produced throughout the nineteenth century similarly show nose rings and henna markings, as well as arm bands, leg bands, and black-striped robes, worn by the *ghawazi* and other women from lower social classes. These works thus seem independently to confirm Lane's descriptive information regarding these cultural forms of adornment and their socioeconomic significance within late nineteenth-century Egypt (fig. 8). The simple black robe, the large nose ring, and the henna marks on the left hand of the *Fumeuse* purposefully position this subject within a particular social group commonly associated in European literature with public dancing and prostitution.

Fig. 8, Artist Unknown, *Café Entertainers, Egypt*.1890s. Postcard. [Reproduced in Wendy Buonaventura, *Serpent of the Nile*, New York Interlink Books, 1990] [larger image]

While many references are made in European travel literature to *ghawazi* or *khawals* and their connections to public dancing and prostitution in late nineteenth-century Cairo,[66] it is difficult to confirm the historical accuracy of these references. Egyptian scholar Ehud R. Toledano conducted his own research to find connections between dancing and prostitution in nineteenth-century Cairo and his 1990 work, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth Century Egypt*, confirmed that dancing did indeed serve as an artistic prelude to female and male prostitution with the understanding that after dancing, the performer would be available for a fee.[67] This recent assertion seems more useful for shaping an understanding of the contemporary social milieu Bernard intended to depict in *Fumeuse*.

Establishing this historical nexus between the *ghawazi*, or the *khawals*, public dancing, and prostitution still does not fully explain the strange, paradoxical twinning of clear socioethnic mapping with ambiguous gender construction found within Bernard's work. Watercolors completed by Bernard during his time in Egypt capture a woman sharing many physical characteristics with Bernard's subject, yet we know boys also posed as women[68] in the brothels of Cairo. Bernard's painting presents a fully-clothed figure of indeterminate gender but with noticeably thick hands and ankles. These male characteristics are countered by the work's title, *Fumeuse*, the feminine French noun for smoker, as well as the nose ring customarily worn only by Egyptian women. Not just a keepsake or memento of his encounter with both the *ghawazi* and the *khawals* of Cairo, Bernard's intentional visual

ambiguity in *Fumeuse* clearly spoke more directly to a European fascination with androgyny, and simultaneously incorporated the requisite imperialistic concerns of most artistic endeavors undertaken by the French in Egypt during this time period.

To advance an imperialistic agenda, androgyny and the *narghile* were two important textual constructions within Bernard's painting that needed to become fixed in time and place to particular social and ethnic references. Combining all of these visual elements allowed Bernard to link his Egyptian subject with ease to specific *fin-de-siècle* cultural trends in France and still fit neatly within his avant-garde gambit and the exotic, but clearly inferior counter-image to *Olympia* he hoped to construct. Despite its stylistic indeterminacy, Bernard's androgynous subject rehearses (rather than resists) the same Orientalism practiced by a number of European artists throughout much of the nineteenth century as a means of further ensuring her readability and consumptive potential for the European audience she was intended to address.

Fin- de-Siècle France

European *fin-de-siècle* culture, particularly in artistic circles, embraced the idea that the new twentieth century was certain to bring decay and decline. Central to this movement was the notion that modern civilization would ultimately collapse.[69] Many French artists exploited degenerate aspects of society to draw attention to this perceived fall of Western civilization as well as to subvert the established order. Cafés and brothels figured prominently within this discourse[70] as they were perceived to be the loci of an ever-growing licentiousness and social depravity. Concomitantly, European literary and visual arts gave greater prominence to concepts of androgyny. Artists and writers explored notions of what it meant to be a stable self in a period of modernization and rapid urbanization by experimenting with representations of the self in different forms.[71] The Symbolists, unquestionably including Bernard, embraced the concept of androgyny through the use of more "feminized identities" to "express interiority and emotional release."[72] Symbolists countered the potential "effeminizing" danger of these types of encounters with the feminine by "both embracing and rejecting the signs of woman...[thereby asserting] their masculine forcefulness while creating a space appropriated from the ideology of femininity in which to express emotionally their anxieties and renegotiate their male identity."[73] Bernard's gender-ambiguous *Fumeuse* submits neatly to this artistic and cultural analysis. Her fully-clothed appearance—a black robe covering most of her skin, particularly at the throat, neck and chest—not only departs from standard representations of Oriental women of the time, it appears *mannish*, while at the same time referencing (along with its ambiguous and perhaps brothel-like space and the use of hashish) European perceptions of degeneracy associated with the *ghawazi*. The painting's title, *Fumeuse*, helps lead the viewer back to femininity. This tight juxtaposition of masculine qualities with *degenerate* feminine qualities allows Bernard to expand the boundaries of male expression and create a greater space for personal expression while still maintaining gender dominance and superiority.

This dialogue appears more openly in the frontispiece Bernard prepared for his volume of poetry, *Extases et Luttes Liberté*, dating from this same period (fig. 9). In this untitled illustration Bernard's severed head is held by a man, while a woman (similar, again, in appearance to our *Fumeuse*) seems, laughingly, to be claiming rights to its possession.[74] Jean-Jacques Luthi refers to this illustration as "Salomé et le bourreau"[75] or "Salomé and

the Executioner." Many fears generated by the *fin-de-siècle* crisis of masculine identity and cultural insecurity, particularly in France, were projected onto the figure of Salome who became the most prominent icon of European decadence, the favorite *femme fatale* of *fin-de-siècle* culture.

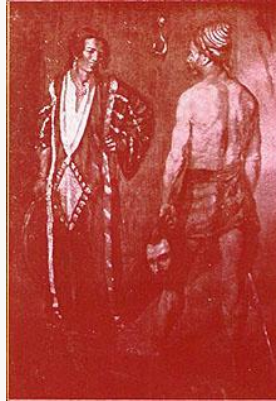

Fig. 9, Emile Bernard, *Salomé et le bourreau*, 1902. Frontispiece for *Extases et Luttes Liberté*, Cairo. [larger image]

While decadence can be a notoriously difficult term to define, in its most essential form it was often used as a pejorative label applied by the bourgeoisie to everything that seemed unnatural, artificial, and perverse. But another important dimension of nineteenth-century European decadence existed as an aesthetic that rejected all that was natural and biological in favor of an "inner life" of art, artifice, sensation, and imagination. This anti-naturalism inevitably led to a prevailing form of misogyny by which women, who intimately connected with nature and biological processes, could only be redeemed by being reworked—stylized, fetishized or turned into icons.[76] The icon of Salome conveniently enhanced this male fantasy regarding the perceived inferiority of women. Salome becomes the favorite scapegoat, "a predator whose lust unmans a man, a purveyor of vice and degeneracy."[77] She became the embodiment of all nineteenth-century forces threatening not only the security and status of European men, but their masculinity as well.

Fumeuse referenced this familiar male/female *fin-de-siècle* drama but rendered it in much subtler fashion through its link to prostitution rather than violence. The prostitute, as the "essential sexualized female" in the perception of most nineteenth-century minds, figured prominently in most European explorations of degeneration because she so clearly embodied female sexuality and all that came to be associated with that sexuality; disease as well as the threat of unbridled passion.[78] Examination of the connections between sexuality and disease in late nineteenth-century European cultures confirms that sexualized female images, particularly images connected to sexualized representations of the "base and foreign female," were intimately associated with anxiety and loss, often the specific loss of male/patriarchal power and dominance.[79] *Fumeuse*, with its obvious portrayal of an *androgynous* prostitute, not only evidenced this loss, s/he began to reclaim it by subverting or replacing this natural female threat with the stabilizing presence of an emerging male form.

Bernard's *narghile*, like the gender of his subject, likewise operated in more than one way. A symbol of degeneracy [80] that aided in opening spaces for male expression, it also invoked, and thereby opened up for its viewer, new means of aesthetic perception, a process frequently explored in French art and intimately connected to *fin-de-siècle* concerns.[81] *Extase*, an aesthetic notion explored primarily within the Symbolist movement, became a process of "inspired revelation," a form of transcendental ecstasy, sometimes verging on madness but generally allowing the artist to comprehend "the inner essence of all things."[82] For certain artists, the aesthetic of *extase* became linked to notions of purity: the very transcendence caused by *extase* allowed the artist to remain unsullied by the deadening monotony or toils of everyday life.[83] While art, and not hashish, operated as the medium of preference to achieve this state of transformation, Bernard's invocation of a perception-altering substance within *Fumeuse* referenced this consciousness-expanding process while also, perhaps, commenting on his failed quest for either *pureté* or the world-as-exhibition he initially believed could be found in the Middle East. His flirtation with *extase*, whether drug or art-inspired, led not to a more sublime or divine state, but to an encounter with much of the same social disruption, decadence, and decay he previously found in France. Situated directly between the search for transcendence from the evils or discomforts of modernism exemplified by Baudelaire's *Les paradis artificiels* and Walter Benjamin's later essay entitled "Hashish in Marseilles," the *narghile* within Bernard's picture invoked all of these tensions.

These strong links forged between *fin-de-siècle* culture and Bernard's "Egyptian" *Fumeuse* reveal the true nature of the artistic gambit Bernard selected to pursue through her representation. The unconventional appearance presented by Bernard's *Fumeuse*, despite its complexity, clearly signaled for its European audience the perceived inferiority of Bernard's subject. At a time when the era of world-wide imperialism seemed most threatened, Bernard's painting must have been designed to provide further support for a colonial agenda directed toward controlling the social, political, and cultural destiny of others.

Bernard and Orientalism

Certain aspects of Bernard's *Fumeuse*, and indeed many of the motivations leading him to seek an experience in Egypt, typify nineteenth-century Orientalism. Adopting the primarily Occidental enterprise of systematically dominating and restructuring the Orient for self-reflection and self-definition,[84] Bernard approached his foray into Egypt as a chance for personal rejuvenation, an opportunity to recapture the *pureté* perceived to be lost during his time in France. His interest in an encounter with the foreign and the exotic as a romantic idea of reconstructive restoration exemplified a typical appropriation of the Orient to serve European or Western purposes.

A careful review of *Fumeuse* provides manifest evidence of Orientalism as appropriation. Like Flaubert, Bernard searched for a visionary alternative now linked to sex: to sexual experience more libertine, less guilt-ridden and perhaps not as easily attainable in Europe. [85] If not seen in the painting's link to the *ghawazi*, this search can be interpreted from its closed, intimate setting and the subject's spread legs. Other technologies of place functioning within this frame, specifically the *narghile*, the nose ring, and the arm and leg bands, helped Bernard to construct a standard Oriental tableau, each item confirming Occidental impressions of the Orient as a place of lassitude, lowered inhibitions, and unbridled release, a place where exotic women (and perhaps, men) were readily available for

a plethora of sexual experiences.[86] By employing these standard technologies, Bernard led his viewer to make similar, voyeuristic conclusions about the subject matter he presented.

With his burgeoning understanding that the reality of Egypt could not possibly fulfill his initial expectations, and greatly disillusioned to find some of the same social problems related to modernity and urbanization he sought to escape by leaving the West, Bernard returned to familiar patterns, both in his personal life and in his approach to art. Like the female subjects of Delacroix's *Femmes d'Algers*, the body of the *Fumeuse* becomes part of the "battleground over which the aesthetic battles of French modernity [are] waged,"[87] a recognizable exercise of mechanical "textual thinking" about the Orient [88] and perhaps finally, a way for Bernard to give form to an Orient intimately identified with his own sexual prowess.[89] While choosing to depart from the standard text of odalisques, baths and eunuchs, Bernard still indisputably invoked routine Oriental representations in his artistic gamble for recognition and greater European acclaim.

Certainly related to Bernard's earlier views that Egypt held the secrets of antiquity and would prove to be the land of classical rediscovery, Bernard invested the Orient, as a locale, with potential not only for personal rejuvenation, but also for European cultural and artistic reconstruction. The opportunity to formulate a belief in such regeneration is intimately linked with colonialism and imperialism, for the appropriation of a locale to fulfill such desires can only arise from a hierarchical power arrangement in which the appropriator is privileged enough to take from the appropriated what it will.

Functioning in a fashion similar to Hadji-Ishmael's presence in photographs dating from 1850 by Maxime du Camp, the many ambiguities of Bernard's *Fumeuse* reflect both the pursuit of an ideal—a search for natural, pure simplicity—*and* confirmation of one's failure to find such purity or innocence; it is an embodiment of Egypt's ambiguous past as perceived by the French who, having "lost" Egypt, attempt to maintain their monopoly on Egyptology and the uncertain, unstable relationship the Occident continued to maintain with the Orient of the present.[90] It captures all of this ambiguity by presenting simultaneously the fantasy of rediscovery that was part of an enterprise both colonial/ imperial and artistic, as well as the loss of this same fantasy. Its very exoticism speaks to Bernard's hope to find a divine "otherness" while, at the same time, its very links to perceptions of degeneracy and depravity echo the despair of a disappointing encounter predicated upon personal subjugation and social domination.

Unlike Hadji-Ishmael, Bernard's *Fumeuse* cannot be immediately identified as Nubian. Bernard's mix of light and dark skin tone blurs all obvious racial markers within this composition. From his work, *The Three Races* (1898), we observe Bernard clearly knew how to negotiate this terrain (fig. 10). As Sander Gilman notes, a late nineteenth-century European tendency to link two female figures, one black with one white, was often employed to signify the perverse and degenerate nature of a sexualized female.[91] If the title of Bernard's painting and its link to prostitution did not sufficiently signal perversity for its European viewers, an infusion of melanin reinforced this message. At the same time, the racial indeterminacy of *Fumeuse* further highlighted the confusing ambiguities and tensions of this

entire colonial/imperial and artistic undertaking, tensions that only became more pronounced in the years between 1850 and 1900.

Fig. 10, Emile Bernard, *The Three Races*, 1898. Oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
[larger image]

While the conflation of race and gender do not seem, under close examination, to essentially depart from Orientalism, the unsettling gaze of Bernard's *Fumeuse* remains a novel element. Like the gaze of Manet's *Olympia*, it is forthright and direct, but also haunting and disquieting. *Fumeuse* is *Olympia* updated, an image reflecting the growing social and political frissons between the East and the West, and the West's crumbling systems of domination and subjugation. Any examination of the tensions accompanying a colonial or imperial enterprise cannot overlook the epistemic violence of such an unequal relationship. From our vantage point in history, we know the constitution of any subject predicated on assimilation results, *a priori*, in a radical transformation of "the other;" changes designed solely to serve the needs of the constitutor.[92] This transformation radically alters the subject, often by trying to annihilate essential characteristics of difference. Bernard's *Fumeuse* was first interpreted, appropriated, and redefined as Bernard's personal subject matter in a process by which Bernard remained dominant. She subsequently became a larger cultural construction, more fodder for the West to consume when defining the Orient in a referent system in which the West remained superior.[93]

And yet, the gaze returned by the *Fumeuse* and the manner in which her direct stare and her upright position on the canvas seem to resist subjugation, submission, or deference is notable. These aspects of Bernard's presentation can be read to evidence a hybridity that "proliferate(s) difference to an excess beyond representation" for their effect is to breed uncertainty and resist definition in a way that destabilizes and decenters colonial authority.[94] The gaze of the *Fumeuse* disrupts Bernard's canvas. The very ambiguity and indeterminacy that critically foregrounds Bernard's work also allows for the creation of a third space, a space where the constituted subject, whether man or woman, *ghawazi* or *khawal*, portrait model or prostitute, is able to engage with viewers in an uncharacteristically frank, if not puzzling manner. Certainly mediated by Bernard, by history, by European artistic developments and by Orientalism, the *Fumeuse* still seems to break through these mediations and further implore us—in the here and now— to more fully appreciate the multifaceted nature of both modernity and alterity.

Conclusion

Setting out for Egypt in 1893, Emile Bernard hoped to escape the modernity of Europe to achieve personal and artistic rejuvenation. Instead he encountered a series of destabilizing paradoxes. A French national, Bernard subjected himself to British dominion in an unstable foreign protectorate to reinvent himself. A man who abhorred modern European life, he remained consumed by a need to be one of its most celebrated figures. An artist seeking inspiration from classicism, he came to employ modern painting styles and a manner of realism influenced by nineteenth-century photography to express the many contradictions his contemporary experience presented. It is these very paradoxes, the tension between the world as it unfolded and his consumption of the world-as-exhibition, or the tension between his Oriental fantasy and an Egyptian society struggling to find its place in the modern world, that ultimately led Emile Bernard to produce a work as complex, as ambiguous, and as startling as *Fumeuse de Haschisch*.

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Notes

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[1] See e.g., Mary Anne Stevens, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941: A Pioneer of Modern Art* (Amsterdam: Mannheim, 1990), 4. Bernard's "boundless admiration for Gauguin settled into embitterment when he felt his role in emerging Symbolism slighted by critics who were enchanted by the elder artist's finely developed sense of publicity."

[2] Marie-Amélie Anquetil and Olivier Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d'Emile Bernard 1893-1904* (Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Yvelines : Musée Départemental du Prieuré,1983), 10. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted, but I must thank Joan Fagan and Rachel Eustache Ney for their careful review of this work.

[3] Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Color of Art History* (New York: Thames and Hudson. 1993), 8. Being a member of the Parisian avant-garde of the late 1880s involved a series of gambits to secure a stable position or critical recognition within that wide-ranging group. As Pollock explains: "To make your mark in the avant-garde community, you had to relate your work to what was going on: *reference*. Then you had to defer to the existing leader, to the work or project which represented the latest move, the last word, or what was considered the definitive statement of shared concerns: *deference*. Finally your own move involved establishing a *difference* which had to be both legible in terms of current aesthetics and criticism, and also a definitive advance on that current position....It is a

structure for the production of art based on a series of chess-like moves: reference, deference and difference." Ibid., 14.

[4] Peter Rudd, "Emile Bernard: The Unwilling Modern" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sydney, 1998), 3, 68. While Rudd carefully documents Bernard's artistic influences, Rudd mentions *Fumeuse de Haschisch* in only glancing fashion, noting: "...Bernard's exotic subject is oddly overlaid with a memory of nineteenth-century modernism...An uncomfortable disparity arises from the prosaic, frozen pose of the model, suggestive of contemporary photography and the lush [brushwork]..." Ibid., 81.

[5] Ibid., 53.

[6] Ibid., 54–57.

[7] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988), 1–7.

[8] Ibid., 1.

[9] Ibid., 7.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 18. See also, Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1986), 146–62. "The world exhibitions glorify the exchange value of commodities. They create a framework in which commodities' extrinsic value is eclipsed. They open up a phantasmagoria that people enter to be amused. The entertainment industry facilitates this by elevating people to the level of commodities. They submit to being manipulated while enjoying their alienation from themselves and others."

[12] Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 1–33.

[13] Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits*, 8–14, 31. Pollock's work casts earlier travels to Pont-Aven undertaken by Gauguin, Bernard, and other avant-garde artists as a smaller scale version of this later gambit to tour abroad. Employing a travel analysis closely aligned with Timothy Mitchell's, Pollock explains: "A variety of discourses—ethnographic, sociological, literary, economic, political—construct certain territories, peoples, itineraries as objects for tourist experience. Through the tourist gaze, the work of other people/s and their accompanying rituals and festivals are refracted through the fictions of the picturesque, the exotic and the primitive. The facts of work, wage relations, commodity production, colonialism or imperialism are made irrelevant to the desired meanings of the scene. What is seen by the tourist becomes modern precisely because the social relations governing the encounter are displaced by the representation of the concrete social scene as a *spectacle*, a spectacle of difference, which is, in fact, a way of fetishizing it." Ibid., 60.

[14] Douglas Lord, *Vincent Van Gogh: Letters to Emile Bernard* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 41. I draw upon discussions found in the following sources to document Bernard's interest in classicism: Anquetil and Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d'Emile Bernard*; Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard: En Orient et Chez Cezanne* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1979); Caroline B. Rachelis, *Emile Bernard and French Symbolism*, unpublished thesis, Case Western Reserve University, 1973; Stevens, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941*.

[15] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 155–56.

[16] Letter from Emile Bernard to his mother as reproduced in Anquetil and Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d'Emile Bernard*, 11.

[17] The entire passage from Bernard's correspondence appears in Anquetil and Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d'Emile Bernard*, 76 as follows, "(T)u n' imagines pas comme la vue de la florescence humaine des fellahs m'a donné de grandioses visions. Ces gens presque nus, puissamment musclés, hâlés de soleil, couverts d'étoffes graves aux plis majestueux, ont été pour moi une révélation de ce qu'est la vie sous son plus noble et plus simple aspect. J'ai trouvé en eux l'allure libre de l'homme et de la femme loin d'une civilisation contrefaite. Voilà la vie vraiment biblique, naturelle et divine à la fois, car rien de plus surnaturel pour nous, aujourd'hui, que le naturel pur. Quand je parle de la santé de l'art, j'entends parler de la beauté qui s' émane de la vie simple et rude du désert ou des champs, de la beauté de l'homme et de la femme nus sous le soleil."

[18] The exact name and true nationality of Bernard's first wife is unclear. Mary Anne Stevens refers to Bernard's wife as "a Lebanese girl, Hanenah Saati" in Stevens, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941*, 101. Other scholars spell her name differently and list her nationality as Syrian. See e.g., Gérard-Georges Lemaire, *The Orient in Western Art* (Cologne: Könemann. 2001), 285.

[19] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 66.

[20] Reprinted in *Aquarelles Orientales*, 79. "A ma femme, Hanenah Saati / Toi, tu viens d'Orient, tu m'apportes des palmes, / Des roses et l'encens de tes palais profonds; / Ton front

est tout serein de tes voluptés calmes, / Et tes yeux ont l'azur tiédi de tes plafonds. / Moi, je suis L'Occident, ses rêves, ses chimères, / Et je porte une lance active au saint combat; / Mon panache est de sang et de larmes amères, / Sur mon casque un grand aigle orgueilleux se débat."

[21] A detailed summary of Bernard's artistic and literary production can be found in Stevens, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941*, 11–28. For a discussion of the connections between Bernard's poetry and his art, see, in particular, Ibid., 19. See also, Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard: Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint*, (Paris: Éditions Side,1982).

[22] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 58–62. Four essays penned by Bernard in Egypt and published in *Mercure de France* between 1893 and 1895 ("Ce que c'est que l'art mystique," "Les ouvriers et les artistes, "La passion de l'art," and "De l'art naïf et de l'art savant) confirm Bernard's initial view of Egypt as a place of aesthetic renewal, given its perceived seclusion from materialism and the progress of modernity found in France. Developing a theme that dates from his early adulthood in France, Bernard's writing in Egypt continues to meld a form of conservative Catholicism with a "wider kind of spirituality" to conclude that the "expressiveness of modern art had been rendered impotent by materialism and secularism." Bernard's same essays call for a return to the "naiveté of the religious art of the past" and speak of his desire to form a cooperative group of artists who could work to develop a modern style "infused with a spirit reminiscent of the great styles of the past." See also, Griselda Pollock's discussion of the avant-garde's interest in the use of sublimated religious art to articulate the "paradox of a modernist project which is anti-modernity." *Avant-Garde Gambits*, 49–59.

[23] Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits*, 8–14. See also, footnote 3 above.

[24] Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Story of Cairo* (1902; reprint, Germany: Kraus, 1971), 1.

[25] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 58.

[26] Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2002), 27–30.

[27] Ibid., 27.

[28] J. C. McCoan, *Egypt* (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, 1882), 35–36; Joseph J. Mathews, *Egypt and the Formation of the Anglo-French Entente of 1904* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), 8.

[29] Mathews, *Egypt and the Formation of the Anglo-French Entente*, 1–2.

[30] Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern*, 26; Budge, *Cook's Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan* (London: Cook & Son, 1906), 293–95.

[31] Ehud R Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 196, 293–94; Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteen Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1985), 102.

[32] Toledano, *State and Society*, 196–230; Gabriel Baer, "Social Change in Egypt," *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 135–61.

[33] Lane-Poole, *The Story of Cairo*, 5–6.

[34] Susan Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 43.

[35] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 162.

[36] Ibid., 63–64.

[37] See discussion in text at note reference numbers 46 and 47.

[38] Lemaire, *The Orient in Western Art*, 287.

[39] Ibid., 285–88.

[40] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 67–68, 71–73.

[41] Ibid., 71–72.

[42] Ibid., 73.

[43] Stevens, *Emile Bernard 1868-1941*,101–2.

[44] "Un grand jardin/dernier reflet de l'Eden /...sous la pureté de l'azur." Lines excerpted from an undated, untitled poem reprinted in Marie-Amélie Anquetil and Olivier Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales* at 16. "...Le ciel est trop bleu. / Que les parfums des fleurs on tort et sont coupables./...Et que la laideur seule a le droit de régner...." Lines from a poem dated 1898, entitled "Liberté Charnelle" appearing in Emile Bernard, *Extases et Luttes Liberté* (Cairo: Messina. 1902), 333–39.

[45] "Bernard had witnessed Arab men smoking hashish in Cairo's cafés, and described the *voluptés calmes* of their erotic daydreams in an essay of 1908 in terms so vivid as to suggest his first-hand experience of the drug..." Roger Benjamin, *Orientalism: Delacroix to Klee* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997), 153. See also, *Emile Bernard (1868-1941): The Theme of Bordellos and Prostitutes in Turn-of-the-Century French Art*, Exh. cat. (New Brunswick: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, 1988). For a discussion of degeneration and its links to prostitution in late nineteenth-century Europe, see Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: Overlook, 1994).

[46] Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 22.

[47] Ibid., 29.

[48] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 73.

[49] Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard, L'Initiateur* (Paris: Caracteres, 1974), 42: "Et si les deux précédentes toiles représentaient le thème du travail, cette peinture symboliserait-elle celui de la distraction?"

[50] Ibid.

[51] See e.g., Julia Ballerini's "Orientalist Photography and Its 'Mistaken' Pictures" in *Picturing the East, A Hundred Years of European Orientalism, A Symposium* (NewYork: Dahesh Museum, 1996). Photographs dating from the mid-nineteenth century taken by Maxine Du Camp depicting views of modern Cairo in a general state of disrepair followed typical Orientalist representations of the period and legitimized European interventionism. Ibid., 16–18.

[52] Rudd, *The Unwilling Modern*, 71, 81.

[53] Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism, or the Face of Painting in the 1860's* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 1996), 339; Roland Barthes as cited in Elizabeth Child's "The Colonial Lens: Gauguin, Primitivism, and Photography in the Fin-de-Siècle." in *Antimodernism and the Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, Lynda Jessup, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2001).

[54] Heather McPherson, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4–5.

[55] Ibid., 6. McPherson examines cultural and aesthetic intersections between photography and mid-to-late nineteenth-century portraiture by "focusing upon the thematization of the portrait as a contested site of representation: ...(a)rguably, the portrait came to function as 'point man' in the age of mechanical reproduction, an era in which concepts of individual and social identity were profoundly altered by industrial capitalism, rapid technological change, and new modes of sociological and psychological inquiry." McPherson, 6, 204. See also, Harry Berger, "Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture," *Representations* 46 (1994): 87–120; and Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[56] Malek Alloua, *The Colonial Harem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Gordon Baldwin, *Roger Fenton: Pasha and Bayadère* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum Studies on Art, 1996); Graham-Brown, *Images of Women*.

[57] See generally, Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 29–45; Ulrich Pohlmann "The Dream of Beauty, or Truth is Beauty: Beauty, Truth, Photography and Symbolism1890-1914" in *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe*, Exh. cat. (Montreal: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1985).

[58] In Symbolist works, woman is either a pure and ideal being (the "femme fragile") or a creature of the devil (the "femme fatale") while the androgynous figure (generally a young male nude) becomes a symbol of utopia and social protest as discussed in Pohlmann, "The Dream of Beauty" at 439–44. See also, Michael Gibson, *The Symbolists* (New York: Abrams, 1988).

[59] Sander Gilman, *Sexuality: An Illustrated History*, (New York: Wiley, 1989), 287. Certainly aware of *Olympia's* existence, Bernard would have had the opportunity to view Manet's canvas when it was shown during the Exposition Universelle of 1889. Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits*, 16–17. *Manao Tupapau* was exhibited in Copenhagen and Paris throughout much of 1893; its existence foreclosed any opportunity for Bernard to create an exotic or "primitive" painting that might also employ a nude while simultaneously referencing Manet's *Olympia*. Instead, Bernard was forced to employ a different type of gambit. If he could not present *Olympia's* antithesis, Bernard aimed to present her colonially-subjugated cousin: the corrupt, venal, tainted, metropolitan woman of foreign streets whose body is a conduit for not only sexual discharge and the flow of money, but also mind-altering, reason-inhibiting drugs. This type of gambit seemed to fit neatly with the growing frustration and disillusionment Bernard

experienced in Egypt between 1893 and 1900. Constructing a narrative to fit this gambit, Bernard needed *Fumeuse* to both reference *Olympia* and present a difference; an exotic "other" that could be easily interpreted by European viewers as somehow more venal, more corrupt, and arguably more deserving of denigration than her European counterpart.

[60] See generally, Alloua, *The Colonial Harem*; Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, and discussion accompanying notes 1 through 13

[61] As Roger Benjamin notes "[f]ew writers did more to suggest a psychology for European exoticism than Charles Baudelaire." *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of Californa Press. 2003), 11.

[62] See e.g., David Carrier, *High Art, Charles Baudelaire and the Origins of Modernist Painting* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press. 1996),105–25. Carrier proposes that for Baudelaire the use of hashish led not to transcendence but a "space-opening" perception of contemporary experience.

[63] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 166–67. Said specifically discusses Lane's work as a paradigmatic example of Orientalism.

[64] Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 5th ed (London: John Murray, 1860), 36, 38, 377–82, 568–69. Lane's report notes that women wearing nose rings were often unable to eat without using one of their hands to hold these rings aloft. Lane's use of the camera lucida helped to ensure accuracy, precision of line, and detail. See generally, Leila Ahmed, *Edward W. Lane, A Study of His Life and Works and of British Ideas of the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Longman, 1978), 63.

[65] Wendy Buonaventura, *Serpent of the Nile: Women and Dance in the Arab World* (New York: Interlink, 1989), 61, 179.

[66] Stanley Lane-Poole's diary dating from 1898 notes that the only women who will show themselves unveiled are "those of the lower orders, and the peculiar caste of *Ghawâzy*, or dancing girls." Lane-Poole, *The Story of Cairo*, 142. European travel literature advances the notion that the *ghawazi* never allowed their daughters to be married as virgins, but sold them to the highest bidder for deflowering, with the purchaser-turned-husband later serving as servant, musician and pimp for his dancer/prostitute wife. Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 380; Karin van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas Press. 1995), 27. Recent criticism finds this generalization to be particularly suspect, given the fact it appears to be recycled from previous writing by J .L. Burckhardt published in 1817. See, van Nieuwkerk, *Trade Like Any Other*, 27. It is also the kind of "factual" reiteration that stresses the exotic, the erotic, and the bizarre to create imaginary distinctions between the West and the Middle East and does not necessarily contribute to a scholarly understanding of social customs practiced by the *ghawazi* or the *khawals*.

[67] Toledano, *State and Society*, 232.

[68] Buonaventura, *Serpent of the Nile*, 68–69; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 381–82. Boys and men with cultural affiliations to social groups in addition to the *ghawazi*, performed dances in female attire in Cairo during the late 1890s. These individuals are referred to by Buonaventura as *khawals* and *ginks*. Given that Buonaventura relies heavily on Lane for authentication, all of these terms are invoked here with great caution. But see, Toledano, *State and Society*, 237.

[69] See, Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty* (New York: Overlook Press, 1994).

[70] West, *Fin de Siècle*, 17. See also, Susan Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003).

[71] Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, 29–45. See also, Ian Fletcher, *Romantic Mythologies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967); Robert Rosenblum, Mary Anne Stevens and Anne Dumas, *1900: Art at the Crossroads*, Exh. cat. (New York: Simon Guggenheim Museum, 2000); West, *Fin de Siecle*, 68–85.

[72] West, *Fin de Siècle*, 74–75.

[73] Ibid., 75.

[74] Bernard, *Extases et Luttes Liberté*, frontispiece..

[75] Luthi, *Catalogue Raisonné*, 82–83.

[76] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Viking, 1990), 170. See also, Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits*, 5–49. Pollock's discussion of *Manao Tupapau* notes that Gauguin's painting references the modernity of *Olympia* only to erase it with a racist/sexist fiction about the *desirable* difference represented by a "pre-modern" Tahitian girl. While I argue that Bernard's avant-garde gambit differed from Gauguin's in that Bernard

hoped, with *Fumeuse*, to confirm the denigrating nature of his subject's difference, Pollock's discussion regarding the *manner* in which sexual, racial, and cultural difference becomes fetishized can also be applied to Bernard's work.

[77] Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects* (Baltimore: University of Maryland Press. 2002), 104. See also, Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[78] Gilman, *Sexuality: An Illustrated History*, 297.

[79] Ibid., 307.

[80] See e.g., "Hashish Smoking in Egypt," *Lancet*, Aug 26, 1899, 122, reprinted in "Modern Medicine, Surgery, and Sanitation" (New York: Current Literature Pub. Co.), Microfiche, Reel 689–702, wherein "Dr Warnock, who has been in charge of Egypt's solitary lunatic asylum for some years, regards the smoking of hashish as one of the most fertile causes of insanity in the country."

[81] See generally, Pohlmann, "The Dream of Beauty;" Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*.

[82] Mathews, *Passionate Discontent*, 8.

[83] Ibid.,11.

[84] "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinctions made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'...a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1–15.

[85] For a discussion of the Orient as a fiction that serves to represent the hidden desires of Western culture, see Said, 177–90, particularly Said's review of Flaubert's associations between the Orient and sex, 188–90.

[86] A comprehensive discussion of Orientalist technologies of place can be found in Irvin Cemil Shick, "The Women of Turkey as Sexual Personae: Images from Western Literature," *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*, Zehra F. Arat, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). See also, Joan DelPlato, *Multiple Wives, Multiple Pleasures: Representing the Harem, 1800-1875* (Madison, NJ and London: Fairleigh Dickinson University and Associated University Presses, 2002). DelPlato comprehensively reviews Europeans' use of Oriental props (such as *narghile* pipes and jewelry) as fetishized accroutrements,110–81.

[87] DelPlato, *Multiple Wives, Multiple Pleasures*, 53 citing to Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1988), 54.

[88] Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism, 1798-1836* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998),117–41, 123–30.

[89] Darcy Grimaldo Grisby, "Orients and Colonies: Delacroix's Algerian Harem," in Beth Segal Wright, *The Cambridge Companion to Delacroix* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 69–87, 72.

[90] Julia Ballerini, "The In Visiblity of Hadji-Ishmael: Maxime du Camp's 1850 Photographs of Egypt," in Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon, *The Body Imaged* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[91] Gilman, *Sexuality: An Illustrated History*, 297. See also, Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity*, 386–88 and the accompanying discussion regarding the links between race and gender in late nineteenth-century French art.

[92] Meyda Yeýenoýlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 84.

[93] First exhibited in 1902 and immediately purchased by the Museé du Luxembourg, the canvas remains a part of France's national collection and is currently held at the Museé d'Orsay.

[94] See, Deborah Cherry, "Earth Into World, Land into Landscape: The "Worlding" of Algeria in Nineteenth-Century British Feminism," in Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocuters: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002) at 124–25: "...the mutation of Western artistic forms and framings may also indicate a disruptive force within colonial representation that calls its authority into question..." citing to Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

Illustrations

Fig. 1, Emile Bernard, *Fumeuse de Haschisch*, 1900. Oil on canvas. Paris, Musée d'Orsay. [return to text]

Fig. 2, *Emile Bernard at home in his garden*. Undated. Black and White Photograph. Cairo [Reproduced in Marie-Amélie Anquetil and Olivier Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d 'Emile Bernard 1893-1904*, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Yvelines Musée Départemental du Prieuré, 1983] [return to text]

Fig. 3, *Emile Bernard with his wife, Hanenah and his son, Otse*, 1896. Black and White Photograph. Cairo [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard Catalogue Raisonné de L'Oeuvre Peint*. Paris Editions Side, 1982] [return to text]

Fig. 4, Emile Bernard, *Portrait de l'artiste au turban jaune*, 1894. Watercolor. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard Catalogue Raisonné de L'Oeuvre Peint*. Paris Editions Side, 1982] [return to text]

Fig. 5, Emile Bernard, *Femmes Arabes au bord du Nil*, Undated. Watercolor. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Marie-Amélie Anquetil and Olivier Michel, *Aquarelles Orientales d'Emile Bernard 1893-1904*, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Yvelines Musée Départemental du Prieuré, 1983] [return to text]

Fig. 6, Emile Bernard, *Puiseuses d'eau au bord du Nil*,1895. Watercolor. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard Catalogue Raisonné de L'Oeuvre Peint*. Paris Editions Side, 1982] [return to text]

Fig. 7, Emile Bernard, *Les Prostitutées du Caire*, 1898. Oil on canvas. Paris, private collection. [Reproduced in Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Emile Bernard en Orient et Chez Cézanne*, Paris Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1979] [return to text]

Fig. 8, Artist Unknown, *Café Entertainers, Egypt*.1890s. Postcard. [Reproduced in Wendy Buonaventura, *Serpent of the Nile*, New York Interlink Books, 1990] [return to text]

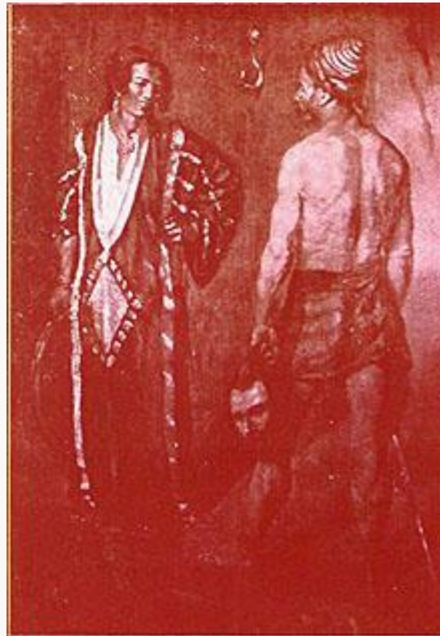

Fig. 9, Emile Bernard, *Salomé et le bourreau*, 1902. Frontispiece for *Extases et Luttes Liberté*, Cairo.
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Fig. 10, Emile Bernard, *The Three Races*, 1898. Oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
[return to text]