

## Staging ethnicity: Edvard Munch's images of Sultan Abdul Karim

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The rise of the ethnographic exhibition in the late nineteenth century created a new form of spectacular entertainment in *fin-de-siècle* Europe and America. As an integral part of World's Fairs and traveling circuses, these exhibitions provided European audiences the opportunity to view people from faraway cultures. In these displays, exhibition participants donned native costumes, sang songs, and performed dances, all in a display that was a re-creation of their homeland. These exhibitions created a full-scale fantasy, an immersive entertainment that surrounded the spectator with the paraphernalia of another culture—its people, its objects, its traditions, and its architecture—creating a panoply of sensory delights and transporting the viewer to another part of the world, all without having to leave one's own country. For many, this was their first encounter with people of other races and ethnicities, and these exhibitions were instrumental in shaping and reinforcing the perception of foreign cultures in European minds. Despite the show organizers' claims at authenticity, these exhibitions were highly staged. From the clothing to the participants' surroundings, each aspect of the ethnographic exhibition was carefully selected and choreographed.

Circus Hagenbeck, which traveled throughout Europe, was one of the première presenters of ethnographic exhibitions, and the troupe made its way to Oslo in November 1916. The Norwegian painter Edvard Munch and his cousin, Ludwig Ravensberg, attended the circus to sketch, and it was there, according to Ravensberg, that Munch had met and "hired a fine and attractive negro, Sultan Abdul Karim, as a servant, driver, and model."<sup>1</sup> Although Munch had hired models steadily since the turn of the century, this was his only attempt at depicting a person of African origin. These images remain under-examined, overshadowed in the critical literature by his 1890s Symbolist imagery. Munch executed seven canvases and one lithograph featuring Karim.<sup>2</sup> The largest and best known is *Cleopatra and the Slave* (Plate 7a, Figure 8.1; Plate 7b, Figure 8.2), a large-scale work depicting a clothed, light-skinned woman lounging on a bed and a nude African man standing alongside it.



8.1 Edvard Munch, *Cleopatra*, 1916. Oil on canvas. Munch Museum, Oslo MM M 307 (Woll M 1218).  
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8.2 Edvard Munch, *Standing Naked African*, 1916. Oil on canvas. Munch Museum, Oslo (Stenersen Collection), RES A 8 (Woll M 1219). © 2014 The Munch Museum / The Munch-Ellingsen Group / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

A bed, covered in multiple layers of boldly colored cloth, stretches horizontally across the front of the picture plane. Cleopatra lounges on the bed, and she, too, is swathed in layers of heavily patterned green and blue fabrics. In depicting the bedroom with richly colored decorations, Munch portrays Cleopatra and her slave in a generic “exotic” interior. Standing near the foot of the bed is a nude African man, whose unnaturally rigid posture is only heightened by the contrast between his pose and that of Cleopatra. Munch models the contours of his musculature in cool blues and greens, as well as touches of white and magenta. In the background of the composition, Munch has rendered, in sketchy black brushstrokes, approximately five figures wearing only loincloths. One of these figures appears to be inside the bedroom with Cleopatra and her slave, but Munch places the remainder outside, visible through a doorway at the back of the bedroom. At least two of these figures are dark-skinned; Munch realizes the figure inside the room and another who approaches the doorway holding a spear almost entirely in black paint, while the rest are merely outlined. The painting was inexplicably split in half within a few years of its completion, dividing the woman from the man. At first glance, *Cleopatra and the Slave* is a scene of the famed Egyptian queen and an African slave, evoking allusions both to French nineteenth-century Orientalist painting and contemporary political unrest in colonial Africa.<sup>3</sup>

During the same year in which Munch produced *Cleopatra and the Slave*, he also painted several images of Karim dressed in modern Western clothing, including three half-length portraits. In creating such wide-ranging depictions of Karim, Munch went beyond presenting his model in the guise of the exotic “other.” Munch’s paintings of Karim are ambivalent in their endorsement and rejection of colonialist stereotypes of Africans. Each composition presents an amalgamation of varying sources and references, responding to historical events, artistic tendencies, literature, and other works in the artist’s own oeuvre. Rather than voicing a single, straightforward message, Munch’s images of Karim present conflicting points of view. The compositional structure of *Cleopatra and the Slave* evokes the orchestrated nature of interracial interactions at ethnographic exhibitions, and was made more apparent when Munch showed both *Cleopatra and the Slave* and one version of *African with a Green Scarf* (Figure 8.3) in 1918 and 1921 exhibitions at Blomqvist, the most prominent gallery in Oslo. Neither condemning nor endorsing a single perspective, Munch capitalizes on the tension inherent in these images, accentuating the mutability of identity and the staged nature of encounters with other races in this period.

### The 1914 Jubileumutstilling

The long-standing Western stereotype of the “uncivilized” African was well engrained in the Norwegian psyche by the time *Cleopatra and the Slave* was first exhibited in 1918. The Congo display at the 1914 Jubileumutstilling,



8.3 Edvard Munch, *African with a Green Scarf*, 1916. Oil on canvas. Munch Museum, Oslo, MM M 261 (Woll M 1212). © 2014 The Munch Museum / The Munch-Ellingsen Group / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

or Jubilee Exhibition, reinforced the exoticized fantasy of Africa and its people in the Norwegian imagination. This exhibition, which celebrated the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Norwegian constitution, was similar to a World's Fair, showcasing the best in Norwegian culture and industry from all over the world. In addition to sections devoted to art, religion, athletics, shipbuilding, and outdoor recreation, the exhibition organizers created a *Kongolandsby*, or "Congo village," complete with people in native costumes and reproductions of indigenous dwellings. The 80 village inhabitants also held singing, dancing, drumming, and cooking demonstrations.<sup>4</sup> On view were various types of craft, particularly metalwork in gold, including weapons and jewelry, and many of these objects were for sale.

Although the Scandinavian countries had no official presence in the Congo, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, nearly two thousand citizens from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland spent time there in varying capacities. While some were in the Congo serving King Leopold II of Belgium's efforts at colonization, others were there actively opposing such developments. Some Scandinavians traveled to the Congo as missionaries, and others worked in the Belgian colony as explorers, tradesmen, and doctors. The Scandinavian involvement in the Congo held great interest for those back home.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it comes as no surprise that the Congo village was one of the most popular displays at the exhibition. Approximately 1.4 million people visited the *Kongolandsby* at a time when Norway's population numbered around 2 million. Many of the attendees later recalled that it had been their favorite attraction, and it was there that they first saw people of African heritage. The exhibition was also widely covered in the press. The reactions were varied, yet all of the newspaper accounts focused on the spectacle of the *Kongolandsby*, reinforcing widely-held early twentieth-century stereotypes about Africans. Some journalists commented on the inhabitants' bad hygiene, eating habits, and "grotesque" dances.<sup>6</sup> *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*, the two largest newspapers in Oslo, reported on the exhibition from different angles. *Dagbladet's* article on the village took on a distinctly prejudiced tone, using the term "barbaric" repeatedly when describing the Africans on display, and likening their visages to those of grinning apes.<sup>7</sup>

*Aftenposten's* coverage of the Congo village was more positive, taking note of the realism of the exhibition: "the entire village seems so strikingly realistic that visitors will feel as though they have been transported to Africa's interior."<sup>8</sup> In a longer article from May 21, 1914, the reporter took note of the Africans' appearance, observing that, "[t]here are, by the way, many beautiful people. The grayish complexion of their dark skin gives them a warm tone. They have bright eyes, brilliant smiles."<sup>9</sup> Evidently awestruck by the Africans' physiognomy, the author's exoticizing point of view is far less virulent and strident than that of the reporter from *Dagbladet*, yet it still emphasized the Congo village inhabitants' "otherness"; the African participants in the *Kongolandsby* became figures of fascination. The media made a clear division

between “us” and “them,” emphasizing the differences between the residents of the Congo village and their audience. Even those who did not see the exhibit in person would have been influenced by the portrayals of Africans in newspaper reports through the duration of the Jubilee Exhibition.

The inclusion of ethnographic displays at European World’s Fairs or at exhibitions such as the *Jublieumutstilling* served to highlight the importance of the other achievements on view. The politics of display enacted at the *Kongolandsby* reinforced the power disparity between those being viewed and the audience: the Africans were there for the entertainment of those attending the fair; the people, their culture, and their way of life became spectacularized and objectified by the audience and the exhibition organizers. Furthermore, the Africans’ tribal costumes stood out against the garments worn by the exhibition attendees. Placing Africans in the exhibition in huts and displaying their lifestyle at an event that celebrated the newest innovations and achievements in European (or specifically Norwegian) science, culture, and technology made the contrast even more apparent—their rudimentary weapons and tools seemed only more antiquated in comparison. Difference was emphasized by the physiognomic variances between the Africans on display and the European viewing public, as well as by the perceived inferiority of their culture.<sup>10</sup> The *Kongolandsby* and its message to its viewers would have resonated with those who saw *Cleopatra and the Slave* on display four years later.

### Carl Hagenbeck’s *Völkerschau*

The ethnographic displays included in Carl Hagenbeck’s traveling circus were also integral to shaping the public perception of non-Western cultures. When the Hagenbeck circus arrived in Oslo in 1916, the ethnographic exhibitions reinforced what Norwegian audiences had seen at the Jubilee Exhibition two years earlier. Today, Carl Hagenbeck is best known as the father of the modern zoo, pioneering the concept of what is now known as the wild animal park. He sought to keep and display animals in surroundings that mimicked their natural habitat. His belief in the benefits of the exhibition of animals in a recreation of their native environment, both for the animals and the viewers, was derived from his success in showing native cultures in a simulation of their own local surroundings.

Hagenbeck came to the animal trade through his father, who was an amateur animal trainer. The young man established a thriving business in the 1860s, providing wild animals for zoos, circuses, and private collections throughout Europe. In 1874, at a time when ethnographic displays of people from far-flung

locales were gaining popularity, Hagenbeck expanded his business to include the procurement of individuals from numerous countries and regions including Egypt, Somalia, Sri Lanka, India, Siberia, Mongolia, North America, Chile, Cameroon, and Australia. He contacted his business associate and directed him to import, in addition to the shipment of reindeer he requested from Lapland, a group of Lapps, whose native land lies in the northernmost region of Scandinavia, near the Arctic Circle. Not only did Hagenbeck bring a family of Laplanders to Hamburg, but he also imported the accoutrements of their daily life. Visitors were charged a fee to watch them go about their daily activities, including the breast-feeding of the family's child and the milking of the reindeer.<sup>11</sup> In his memoirs, Hagenbeck noted, "Our guests, it is true, would not have shone in a beauty show, but they were so wholly unsophisticated and so totally unspoiled by civilization that they seemed like beings from another world."<sup>12</sup> It was the Lapps' lack of sophistication and their unfamiliarity with European culture, or their presumed inferiority, that made them worthy of public display.

Although the Lapland exhibition was not a financial success, its popularity inspired Hagenbeck to pursue the creation of other ethnographic exhibitions. Hilke Thode-Arora observes that the circus impresario had several criteria when selecting an ethnic group for a show: "the group must be strange in some way; it must have particular physical characteristics; and it must have picturesque customs."<sup>13</sup> In essence, the more "exotic" a particular culture was to European eyes, the greater appeal it held for Hagenbeck. As the renown of these shows grew, he took them on tour, beginning initially in Germany and then expanding into other countries within Europe. By the mid-1880s, Hagenbeck's *Völkerschau* had grown from a single, small show in his backyard in Hamburg to multiple, large-scale productions that toured the major European capitals and drew hundreds of thousands of visitors. Even though Hagenbeck's exhibitions were not unique, he was adamant in differentiating his *Völkerschau* from those of others. He emphasized his show's "authenticity," implying that those of his competitors were highly theatricalized performances and that the participants were well acquainted with the vices of the Western world, including cigars, alcohol, and German currency.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, Hagenbeck claimed that the individuals that he displayed were merely going about their everyday activities, and that audiences were witnessing a genuine representation of a particular culture. Although Hagenbeck asserted that visitors were privy to the everyday activities of the exhibition participants, Thode-Arora argues that the shows were highly staged:

By 1895 at the latest, the performances were no longer a series of unconnected parts, but were turned into dramatic narratives with a peaceful opening scene, a dramatic incident and climax (for example, an abduction or an attack on the village), which allowed a fight to be staged, followed by a happy ending (for example, a peace treaty or a marriage ceremony) which provided the opportunity for singing, dancing, and the animal procession.<sup>15</sup>



Undoubtedly, the ethnographic exhibitions were scripted spectacles, despite their appearance of genuineness. This heavily orchestrated aspect was also common in ethnographic displays other than Hagenbeck's.<sup>16</sup> Although some of the individuals who were recruited were novices, others had worked on Hagenbeck's shows on several occasions over a long period of time. Eric Ames notes that "[t]rained performers such as acrobats, snake charmers, and elephant drivers had often been recruited for Hagenbeck's troupes," thus populating some of his shows with seasoned performers.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, it was common for the groups to sign contracts with their employers, including stipulations as to how often and under what conditions they were to perform, their salaries, the types of props they were to wear and carry, and their medical coverage.<sup>18</sup> "By the early 1910s," observes Ames, "the process of collecting foreign peoples had indeed become a form of casting, with recruiters looking not for 'anthropological types,' but for actors to fill scripted roles that would literally be assigned to them."<sup>19</sup> As troupes moved from city to city, they were sometimes asked to "perform" as another culture in a different venue, so that the same group of individuals could be billed as, for example, from Dahomey during a performance in Berlin and from Somalia at a Parisian show.<sup>20</sup> Despite the clearly orchestrated performance that masqueraded as the inhabitants' "everyday life," most viewers were sufficiently persuaded by the authenticity of the shows' participants, architecture, costumes, and ethnographic objects. It is the staged and performative nature of these cultural displays that perhaps Munch sought to evoke in *Cleopatra and the Slave*.

### Cleopatra and the stage

Munch utilizes a number of unusual compositional strategies to heighten *Cleopatra and the Slave's* artificiality. Rendered in different styles and with discrepancies of scale, the image as a whole appears disjointed. Many of the choices that Munch made are similar to those employed in theater designs that he executed in 1906. The artist had a long history of working in the theater; his interactions with the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* began in 1896, when he designed playbills for productions of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and *John Gabriel Borkman*. Munch and another Norwegian painter, Frits Thaulow, also collaborated on the design for the stage sets for *Peer Gynt*.<sup>21</sup> Munch did not have the opportunity to participate in theater projects again until he was living in Berlin nearly a decade later. In 1906, Munch was commissioned by Max Reinhardt, the founder of the Deutsches Theater, to create decorative murals for the theater foyer, as well as set designs for a production of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. The similarities between the visualization of the stage and Cleopatra's bedroom perhaps indicate that Munch felt that his experimentations with the expressive potential inherent in a performance space were appropriate for his rendering of the Egyptian queen and her slave. Both Cleopatra and the slave are pushed far into the foreground, leaving a large empty space between the two protagonists and the group in the distance.



8.4 Edvard Munch, *Stage Design for "Ghosts"*, 1906. Tempera on unprimed canvas. Munch Museum, Oslo, MM M 984 (Woll M 699). © 2014 The Munch Museum / The Munch-Ellingsen Group / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Munch's spatial arrangement in *Cleopatra and the Slave* is similar to that in *Stage Design for "Ghosts,"* which depicts three of the main characters, Oswald Alving, Mrs. Alving, and Pastor Manders, in the Alvings' sitting room (Figure 8.4). This production was set in Reinhardt's new *Kammerspiele*, a new type of theater design that eliminated the orchestra pit, bringing the audience closer to the activity on the stage. In Munch's sketches for the stage design of *Ghosts*, he creates distinct spatial zones, pushing the protagonists to the foreground of the picture plane, forming a wide gulf between the primary activity of the composition and the backdrop. In both *Stage Design for "Ghosts"* and *Cleopatra and the Slave*, Munch creates a clear upstage, center stage, and downstage.

Furthermore, the abbreviated style in which Munch executed the background is at odds with the higher degree of finish he employed to render *Cleopatra* and, above all, her slave. Like the figures in loincloths, the landscape in the background of the stage designs is sketchily rendered, lacking the same level of attention paid to the figures and furnishings in the foreground. In an actual stage production, the backdrop was a painted artificial boundary, meant to provide the viewer with the illusion of the back wall, window, or door of the "room" in which the scene is taking place. In fact, for the stage production of *Ghosts*, Munch created a landscape painting that was inserted into the backdrop as a stand-in for the view out the window. In *Cleopatra and the Slave*, the background's similarity to Munch's stage designs and the artist's division of the space in much the same way he rendered a performance stage, transform *Cleopatra and the Slave* into a *Kammerspiele*-like composition, thus emphasizing the staged nature of the scene, and perhaps referring to the artificiality of interracial encounters in ethnographic exhibitions.

### Mixed messages

*Cleopatra and the Slave* both participates in and rejects art-historical tropes in the portrayal of African men, and this duality also contributes to the composition's staged quality. Munch would have been exposed to the tradition within French nineteenth-century painting of portraying a white woman with a black servant, as demonstrated by the work of Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Jean-Léon Gérôme, and Edouard Manet, during his intermittent stays in Paris during the 1890s. *Cleopatra and the Slave's* place within this discourse remains ambivalent, as Munch simultaneously embraces and rejects some of the visual tropes of Orientalism. In *Cleopatra and the Slave*, Munch has paid a great deal of attention to the bedclothes and Cleopatra's raiment, yet he leaves the rest of the room empty, which runs counter to nineteenth-century depictions of Orientalist harems. Such scenes are typically full of "exotic" decorative objects including patterned rugs, throw pillows, *objets d'art*, and water pipes. The décor often radiates luxury, usually featuring rich fabrics and ornate architectural details, creating the impression of an excess of wealth not present in *Cleopatra and the Slave*. The choice of Cleopatra as a subject evokes references to French nineteenth-century Orientalism, yet Munch did not remain entirely faithful to this aesthetic. In fact, the individuals he has placed in the background wearing loincloths and carrying spears appear more closely related to images of sub-Saharan African tribal groups than to North African or Middle Eastern life, at least as it was perceived by Europeans. This conflation of two very different depictions of Africans in *fin-de-siècle* visual culture further enhances the disjointed nature of the composition.

Munch may have also taken inspiration for *Cleopatra and the Slave* from the fourth act of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, which takes place in Morocco and Egypt.<sup>22</sup> The artist was well acquainted with the play—he had designed the program for an 1896 production at the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* in Paris. He also remarked in a letter to his friend Jappe Nilssen that he was re-reading *Peer Gynt* during his stay at a Copenhagen clinic in 1908.<sup>23</sup> In one of the major scenes of the fourth act, Gynt disguises himself with Bedouin clothing and is mistaken for a prophet by a local tribe. He tries to seduce the chieftain's daughter, Anitra, upon their first meeting, when she and a group of dancing girls are ordered to entertain the visiting prophet. It is this encounter that Munch's images of Anitra depict. He drew several images of this motif between 1911 and 1915, using his model, Ingeborg Kaurin, as a stand-in for Anitra.<sup>24</sup> In the drawings, Anitra appears in a bustier top and flowing harem pants. In one scene, she dances before Gynt, whose face resembles the artist's own. Although Anitra is of Bedouin ancestry, Munch envisions her as a European woman, in the same way he portrays Cleopatra. Anitra's clothing and the heavily patterned décor serve as the only indications of their North African surroundings. Although Gynt falls in love with her, she ultimately betrays him and rides away on his horse, taking the jewelry he has given her.

Although the subject of *Cleopatra and the Slave* is not drawn directly from the plot of *Peer Gynt*, his drawings of the fourth act may have inspired the setting and theme that Munch ultimately chose for the 1916 canvas. Cleopatra and Anitra are both North African seductresses who use men for personal gain. Cleopatra notoriously seduced both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony in order to influence their political decisions, and Anitra romanced Gynt in order to take jewels from him, only to abandon him in the desert. Although both *femmes fatales* were of non-Western ethnicities, Munch portrayed each of them as fair-skinned European women, perhaps to underscore that their deceitful nature was inherent to their gender and not their race.

Munch may have also found inspiration from Congolese sculpture that would have been on view at the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo and at the *Jubileumutstilling* in 1914. Munch seems to have derived Karim's stiff posture in *Cleopatra and the Slave* from wooden sculptural figures from the Congo, rather than a live model. Made all the more apparent in contrast to Cleopatra's languid pose, the slave's posture—with his shoulders thrown back, inert arms at his side—appears uncomfortably rigid, as though he were sculpted from the trunk of a tree. Many of the Norwegians who had returned from voyages to the Congo at the end of the nineteenth century donated the art objects that they had collected while abroad to the Ethnographic Museum's collection. A group of professors at the University of Oslo founded the ethnographic collection in 1857; one of whom was the painter's uncle, P.A. Munch.<sup>25</sup> Although the collection was initially displayed in one of the buildings on campus, it eventually outgrew its space, and moved to a building nearby, where it remains today. The new building opened in 1902 and in 1904, a permanent display of African art was made available to the public, filling the entire third floor. Most of the collection of African art came from the Belgian Congo. Dr. Inge Heiberg, a member of the Belgian colonial administration in the Congo, donated the majority of the African art objects given to the museum in the early twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> It is likely Munch would have visited the Ethnographic Museum either in its early years at the university, or upon its re-opening in 1902, due to his uncle's involvement in the founding of the collection.

The amalgamation of motifs, forms, and ideas from varying cultures into a single composition was the hallmark of many of the artist's contemporaries, including Paul Gauguin and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. They considered these forms and motifs to be "primitive," meaning that they were unencumbered by the trappings of modern life.<sup>27</sup> Rather than taking inspiration from a single source, these artists derived their inspiration from a variety of cultures to create a primitivist "bricolage."<sup>28</sup> Because many of the artists who incorporated imagery from other societies believed that they were reaching a more honest and unmediated level of visual communication, the differences among the cultures from which they appropriated were unimportant. Despite the stamp of authenticity that his sojourn to Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands gave to his Polynesian works, many of Gauguin's compositions drew from visual models as wide-ranging as the famed heads of Easter Island to carved bone

ear plugs from the Marquesas Islands.<sup>29</sup> Although Gauguin sought to live and paint the “primitive” by retreating to Polynesia, Kirchner incorporated motifs from other cultures into the décor of his working space, in an effort to transcend the division between the everyday reality of the room and the realm of his paintings.<sup>30</sup> Most of his decorative objects were derived from Oceanic, South Asian, and African works of art that the artist had seen at the Dresden and Berlin ethnographic museums, as well as photographs in books. The multi-ethnic decorations in Kirchner’s atelier, including batik textiles and wood carvings, made their way into the artist’s studio imagery, serving as the background for portraits of his models and lovers.

In *Cleopatra and the Slave*, Munch creates a pastiche similar to those of Gauguin and Kirchner. Although the title and subject of the painting evokes a North African aesthetic, Munch’s possible use of Congolese sculpture as a model for the slave’s posture and the individuals he placed in the background wearing loincloths and carrying spears are more closely related to images of tribal groups from sub-Saharan Africa, at least as it was perceived by Europeans during this period. This conflation of two very different depictions of Africans in *fin-de-siècle* visual culture underscores the disjointed nature of the composition. *Cleopatra and the Slave* is more than a mere homage to French Orientalist motifs. All of the elements—the stylistic inconsistencies, the slave’s rigid posture, the stage-like use of space, and the heterogeneous non-Western ethnographic references—create a composition that appears unnatural and disjointed. The lack of cohesion within the canvas emphasizes the artificiality of the image; instead of forming a unified whole, *Cleopatra and the Slave* is a mixture of references to non-Western sources.

*Fin-de-siècle* ethnographic exhibitions served to both establish and, more importantly, reinforce cultural stereotypes. When the Hagenbeck Circus featured a group of Native Americans, members of the Bella Coola tribe from British Columbia, Canada, attendance was unusually low. Viewers were more familiar with, and wanted to see, the types of “Indians” portrayed in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show, which was touring around Germany at the same time.<sup>31</sup> One journalist noted, “Well, they are not those proud, red-skinned figures with cunningly bowed eagle noses, dark-black, shimmering bushes of hair, and colorful feathers, which school boys reveling in Cooper and *Leatherstocking* like to dream about.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, the ethnographic exhibition functioned for viewers as a way to fulfill the fantasy of the popular vision of “exotic” cultures. Because *Cleopatra and the Slave* does not conform to a single vision of “African-ness” as Europeans conceived it, its generic rendition of exoticism only highlights its artificiality.

### Cleopatra-mania and interracial sexuality

Cleopatra was a favorite subject of artists: the stories surrounding her many love affairs, extravagant lifestyle, and her dramatic death by poisonous snakebite were also popular subjects among Renaissance and Baroque artists.

In all of their depictions, the Egyptian queen was portrayed as a European woman. It was not until the early nineteenth century, after Napoleon's 1798 entry into Egypt, that representations of Cleopatra began to reflect her Macedonian roots, depicting her with olive skin, kohl-rimmed, almond-shaped eyes, and her jet-black hair styled in a blunt bob at her shoulders, with thick, eyebrow-grazing bangs. Delacroix, Gérôme, Alexandre Cabanel, and Gustave Moreau all created images of Cleopatra informed by contemporary discoveries regarding the culture of ancient Egypt and the history of the queen herself. In addition to emphasizing her ethnic background, painters eliminated the typical neoclassical garb in which she had been previously portrayed. Rather, their sartorial choices reflected the stereotypes that surrounded the myth of Cleopatra's life. She was often scantily clad in vaguely Orientalist clothing that emphasized her overly sexualized persona, and adorned with large quantities of ornate jewelry that denoted her life of luxury. During the nineteenth century, not only did representations of Cleopatra's physiognomy change to correspond to discoveries regarding her ethnicity, but her costume and settings were altered in order to mirror her purported life of excess and sexual abandon.<sup>33</sup>

Munch's portrayal of Cleopatra coincided with a turn-of-the-century cultural Egyptomania and, in particular, a specific vogue for Cleopatra herself. She was the main character in numerous novels, plays, ballets, operas, and films at the turn of the century. Onstage, the *Ballet Russes* performed *Cléopâtre* in 1909 and again in 1918.<sup>34</sup> The iconic actress Sarah Bernhardt also portrayed Cleopatra at least three times between 1880 and 1900.<sup>35</sup> The drama of Cleopatra's story was apparently well suited to the emerging medium of cinema, as at least twenty films about her were made within the first thirty years of film production.<sup>36</sup> The 1901 Pan-American Exhibition in Buffalo featured an entire "Temple of Cleopatra," which housed a large and very realistic image of the Egyptian queen.<sup>37</sup> In addition to appearing in varying forms of cultural production, she materialized in advertisements, including one selling Palmolive shampoo in a 1908 *Vogue Magazine*.<sup>38</sup> Although she had died nearly two thousand years earlier, Cleopatra was a prominent figure in the cultural landscape of the turn of the century.<sup>39</sup>

However *au courant* Munch's choice of Cleopatra as a subject was in 1916, his portrayal of her as a fair-skinned European woman harkens back to earlier conceptions of her ethnicity. By 1916, artists had changed their vision of Cleopatra's appearance, orientalizing her features and placing her in settings that reflected Pharaonic Egypt. Munch's choice to depict her as a European woman highlights the contrast between her and Karim. It is likely Munch intended his audience to identify with his rendition of Cleopatra, thus accounting for her physical similarity to Norwegian women. If Munch had painted Cleopatra as a woman of Mediterranean origin, viewers would have received the entire composition as an Orientalist motif. By portraying Cleopatra as a European woman, Munch changed the scene of one from a fantasy grounded in difference to one focused on the slave's "otherness."

In casting Cleopatra as a European woman, Munch also addresses the taboo of the white female/black male couple. For many white women, African men fulfilled an erotic and exotic fantasy; they were stereotypically portrayed as possessing large genitalia and strong sexual appetites. The “*blanche/noir*” relationship, as described by Roger Little, was a transgression that threatened social isolation and danger, the prospect of which was most likely thrilling for many women.<sup>40</sup> While it was more acceptable for white men to engage in relationships with black women in this period, a black man and a white woman upended the power hierarchy: the black man’s gender dominance challenged the white woman’s racial superiority. Interracial sexuality posed a threat to white masculinity and the perceived dominance of the white race. Late nineteenth-century anthropologists connected the physical appearance of the black to simians, particularly monkeys and gorillas.<sup>41</sup> This purported resemblance led to a correlation between appearance and behavior, and giving credence to the “bestiality” of black men. The myth of the violent, aggressive black man taking advantage of the white woman was a prevalent *fin-de-siècle* social and literary topos and continued well into the twentieth century. Writing in 1935, the French author Henry Champly discussed the phenomenon in his book *White Women, Coloured Men*, noting,

For I am convinced that we are concerned here with *one of the greatest metamorphoses which have taken place in human consciousness, possibly ever since the advent of Christianity, and certainly ever since the Reformation: a metamorphosis heretical, dangerous and sinister. It may even prove a mortal sin. It is, in any case, a tremendously big thing.*<sup>42</sup>

Champly concludes his preface with a call to arms for the white man, stating, “Beware, White race! The Coloured races have discovered your supreme treasure, the White Woman! What are you going to do about it?”<sup>43</sup> Munch’s casting of Cleopatra as a European woman was perhaps meant to evoke in his viewers the same stereotypes and fears associated with a “*blanche/noir*” relationship.

The extreme horizontal and vertical polarity present in *Cleopatra and the Slave* relates to the positioning of figures in an earlier series of paintings from 1906–7, with a reversal of the male and female roles. The series, entitled *Death of Marat*, refers both to the French revolutionary figure Jean-Paul Marat as well as to Jacques-Louis David’s 1793 portrait of him.<sup>44</sup> However, the content of the paintings allude to an argument that took place in 1902 between the artist and his former lover, Tulla Larsen.<sup>45</sup> Their tumultuous relationship came to its climax at the painter’s beach house in Åsgårdstrand, a small seaside town south of Oslo on the Oslofjord. Larsen and Munch quarreled, and eventually the pair fought over a loaded revolver. The gun discharged accidentally, wounding Munch in the hand.<sup>46</sup> In *Death of Marat* (Figure 8.5) (1907) Munch lies naked on a bed, the sheets stained red from his injured finger.<sup>47</sup> The redheaded female figure, who resembles photographs of Larsen, is also nude, and stands alongside the bed while holding the male figure’s hand. Touches of red echo throughout the canvas, creating the illusion that Munch’s blood



8.5 Edvard Munch, *Death of Marat*, 1907. Oil on canvas. Munch Museum, Oslo, MM M 351 (Woll M 767). © 2014 The Munch Museum / The Munch-Ellingsen Group / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

is everywhere—on the walls, the table, and Larsen’s legs. In invoking the reference to Marat, Munch casts Larsen in the role of the assassin Charlotte Corday, linking his former lover with a woman who was considered deceitful and conniving.<sup>48</sup> In fusing Tulla Larsen with Charlotte Corday, Munch creates the quintessential *femme fatale*, both seductive and deadly.<sup>49</sup>

Munch was certainly no stranger to depictions of the *femme fatale*; he gained fame in the 1890s for his compositions that showed the pain of heterosexual relationships, often centered on a man at the mercy of a callous female lover. Many scholars, both during and after Munch’s lifetime, link this theme to Munch’s biography, emphasizing his tumultuous relationships with women and the early deaths of his mother and sister. Because his images of hapless men at the hands of predatory women were presumed to be autobiographical, the artist has been characterized in the critical literature as a misogynist. However, as Patricia Berman has noted, it is more likely that previous scholars have conflated Munch’s examination of the *fin-de-siècle* “Woman” with a generic portrayal of women.<sup>50</sup> Although the *Death of Marat* canvases refer to a specific event in Munch’s life, the image of the *femme fatale* had become so closely identified with Munch and his biography that by the time he executed his *Marat* paintings, they were viewed by critics and scholars as the climax of a lifetime of misogynistic beliefs.

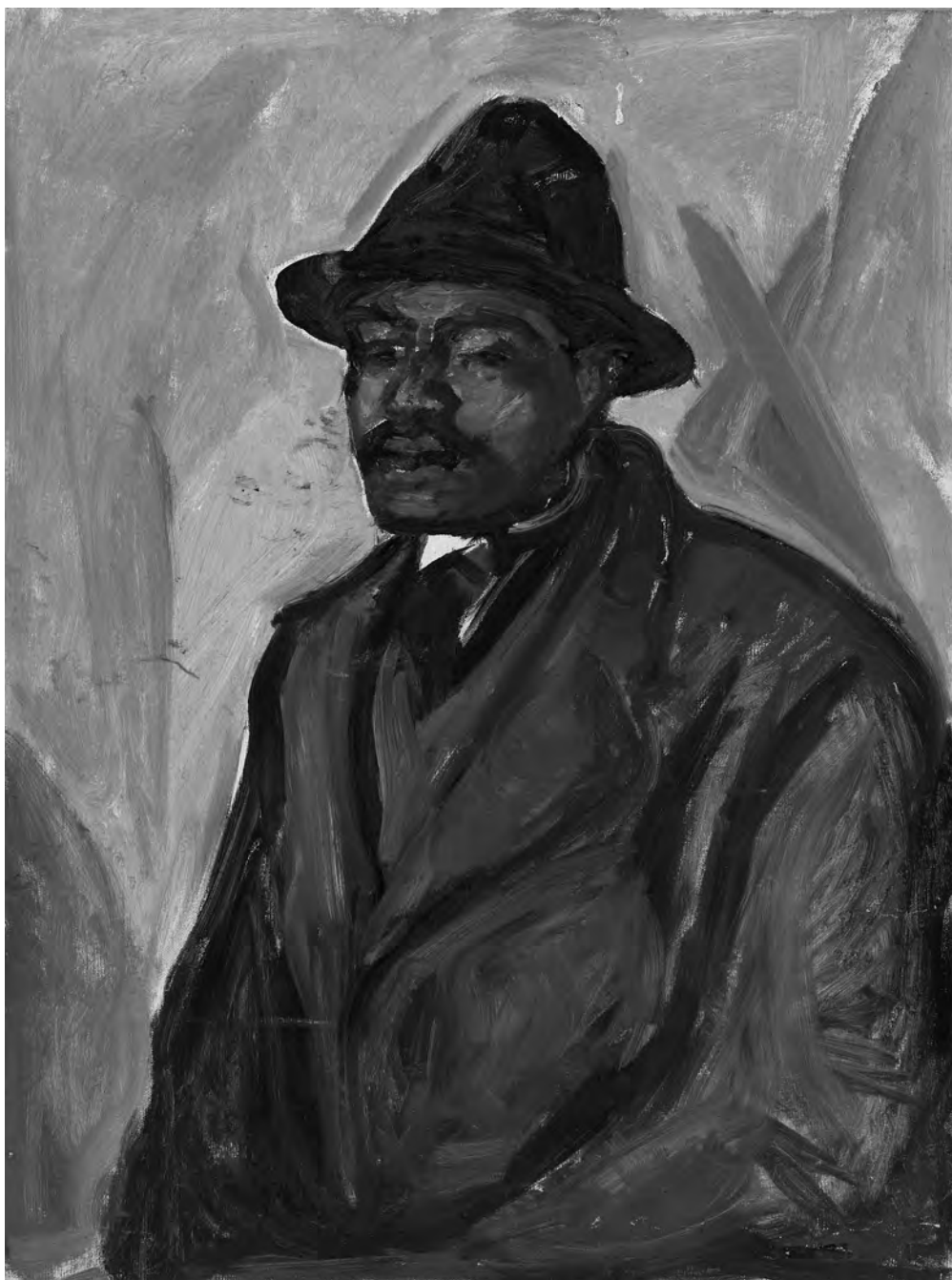


In both the *Cleopatra and the Slave* series and the *Marat* canvases, Munch creates a power dynamic between the two figures, yet in each instance, the female is the dominant one, reversing the hierarchy typical of a “*blanche/noir*” relationship. Munch renders Larsen in a stiff pose similar to that of the slave, yet in this instance, her rigidity accentuates her severity and remorselessness; she stares out at the viewer, with no apparent interest in the prostrate, bleeding figure on the bed. Her pose remains consistent throughout the four canvases and the lithograph, yet she appears at varying distances from the picture plane. Although both groups of works are similarly composed, it is significant that Munch transforms a composition derived from a personal experience to one that is quasi-historical. *Cleopatra and the Slave* moves away from Munch’s biography, instead creating an image of the *femme fatale* that is not grounded in personal trauma but in the myth of a historical figure’s notoriously aggressive sexuality. This reversal of the roles in an interracial relationship between a black man and a white woman undermines viewers’ preconceived notions of African male sexuality.

### Munch’s portraits of Sultan Abdul Karim

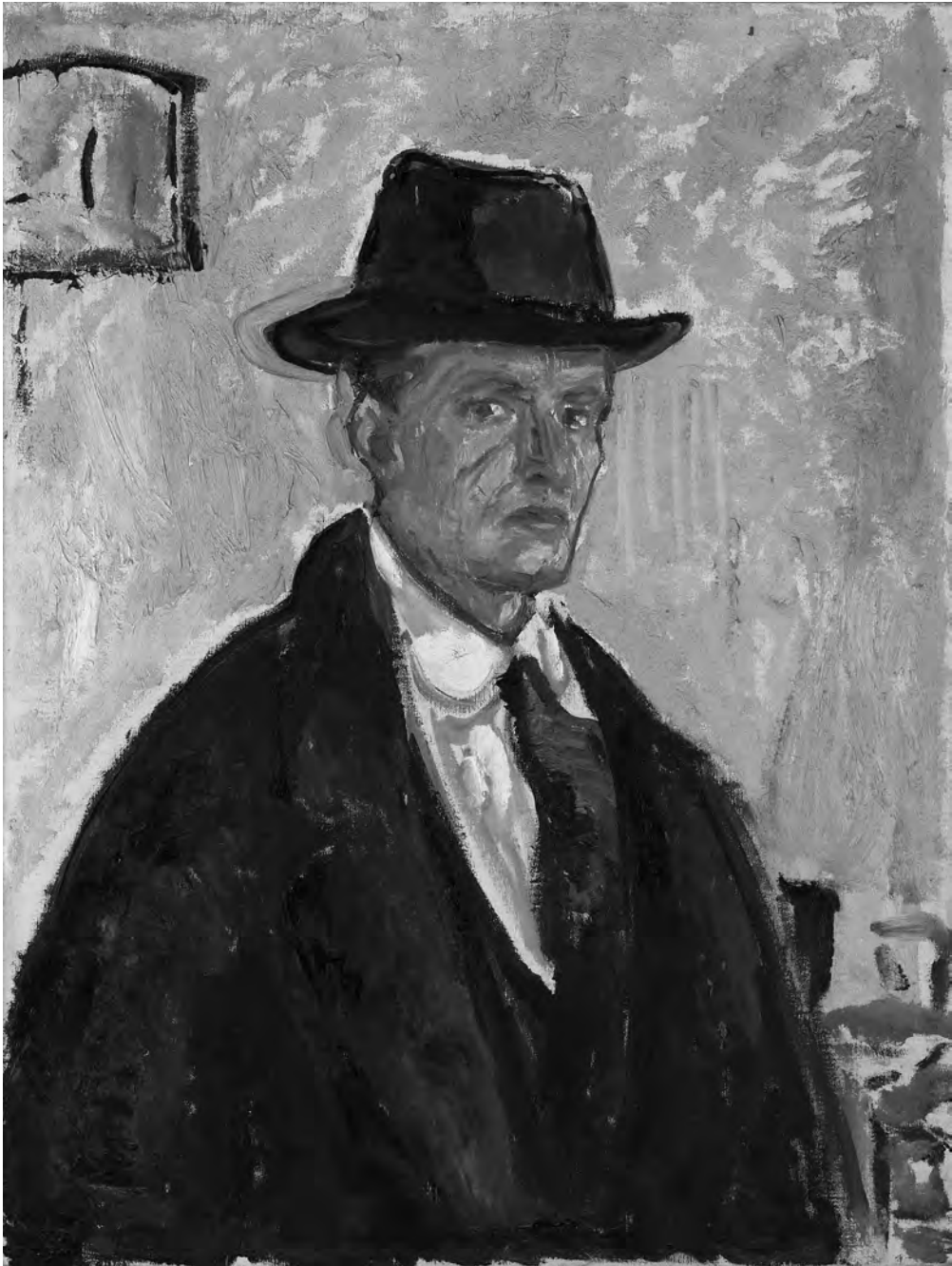
Munch’s three half-length portraits of his model are a significant departure from his depiction of Karim in the *Cleopatra and the Slave* images. In two of the portraits, Karim wears a green-and-black-striped scarf. The scarf, due to its bold color and its size, is the most visually arresting element of the composition, yet closer examination of the brushstrokes shows that Munch exerted the most effort in rendering Karim’s face, using a varied palette to model its contours. This level of detail was not present in any of the *Cleopatra* images; here, Munch transforms Karim from a generic figure, representative of his entire race, to an individual with very clearly rendered features.

Although the same model was used in the portraits and *Cleopatra and the Slave*, they could not be more different in their depiction of an African man. Notably, *African in a Green Coat* (Figure 8.6) resembles a group of four half-length self-portraits that Munch executed around 1915. The four works show the artist in a suit and tie, and in two of them, he also wears an overcoat and hat, possibly the same garments that clothe Karim. In these images, Munch also renders his own face a pastiche of varying hues, modeling the contours of his face with touches of green and mauve, identical to the palette he employed on Karim’s face in *African in a Green Coat*. In particular, *Self-Portrait in Hat and Coat* (Figure 8.7) is practically a mirror image of *African in a Green Coat*. Both half-length portraits depict Munch and Karim in hats, overcoats, a jacket, suit, and tie. Their faces are turned in three-quarter profile; Karim faces to the left and Munch faces to the right. In dressing Karim in similar clothing, modeling his face with the same palette, and employing nearly identical compositional strategies in their respective portraits, Munch effectively casts Karim as a stand-in for the artist.



8.6 Edvard Munch, *African in a Green Coat*, 1916–17. Oil on canvas. Munch Museum, Oslo, MM M 92 (Woll M 1214). © 2014 The Munch Museum / The Munch-Ellingsen Group / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

www.ashgate.com



8.7 Edvard Munch, *Self-Portrait in Hat and Coat*, c. 1915. Oil on canvas. 90 × 68 cm., Munch Museum, Oslo, MM M 601 (Woll M 1143). © 2014 The Munch Museum / The Munch-Ellingsen Group / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

www.ashgate.com

The similarities between Munch's self-portrait and that of Karim in the green coat simultaneously present the African man as a contemporary Westernized figure and evoke the artist's own inner "primitive" nature. When Munch's career began to gain critical attention in the 1890s, the concept of the "primitive" was often evoked in conjunction with his style of painting, his choice of motif, and his own national identity. In 1894, a monograph entitled *Das Werk des Edvard Munch: Vier Beiträge* was published in Germany. The volume featured contributions by the Polish writer Stanislaw Przybyszewski and the art critic Julius Meier-Graefe, as well as two other members of the Berlin bohemian circle *Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*, Willy Pastor and Franz Servaes.<sup>51</sup> These essays began to crystallize much of the critical rhetoric associated with Munch, even today; the authors focused on his sensitivity, his authenticity, and his "primitivism," attributing these traits to his inherent Nordic nature, which allowed him to access his emotions on a more primordial, almost supernatural level. Servaes compared Munch to Gauguin, stating, "he doesn't need to travel to Tahiti to see and experience the primitive in human nature. He carries his own Tahiti with him."<sup>52</sup> Much of Munch's identity as an outsider and as primitive in the nineteenth century was couched in the French and German stereotype of Norway as a primitive land, steeped in its Viking past.

This perception of Norway as one of the remaining "primitive" places in Europe was in part due to its peripheral geographic location. The Scandinavian people were "primitive" in the sense that their connection to nature was unmediated and untainted by industrialization and modernization, making them more in touch with their emotions. Because Norway was a "younger" nation in the early part of the century, at least in comparison to France and Germany, it was perceived as being at an earlier, almost child-like stage of development. The French and the Germans both saw Norwegian art and culture as somewhat crude and rough, but found appeal in it. The French art critic Maurice Hamel noted such characteristics in his review of the Salon of 1889:

Norwegian art does not have this lively allure or this urban grace. In it one sees the backwardness of gesture and the deliberate sensibility associated with countries of scattered populations, the breadth of shoulders of a race cut out by hatchet-strokes, tender under a rude outer skin. This art is sinful and peasant-like, a bit rough, very sincere, imprinted with a brusque cordiality: one senses that it grew up in a virgin nature, in the enchantment of the fjords, [out of] steep cliffs, with glaciers that descend into the ocean.<sup>53</sup>

According to this view, Norway was innocent, pure, and deeply rooted in its rural traditions, allowing Munch to more easily access his own inherent "primitivism" derived from his national identity.<sup>54</sup>

Munch's reference to his own internal "primitive" nature links the latter half of his career with the early work of the 1890s, a body of images that scholars have long viewed as completely separate from the artist's late oeuvre. In creating this dialogue between his own self-portraits and the portrait of Karim in the green coat, Munch emphasizes the mutability of identity and

the performative nature of painting; an African man can be portrayed as the slave of an Egyptian queen or a Western man sitting for a portrait, and likewise, a European man can, too, be the slave (or victim) of a dominant lover and find the “primitive” within himself. Munch uses Karim’s blackness as a vehicle for self-examination during a turning point in his career. After completing a cycle of monumental, nationalist canvases for the University of Oslo’s Festival Hall (Aula), the artist was widely touted as a Norwegian artist, a form of acceptance from his homeland he had never previously achieved.<sup>55</sup> It is perhaps the designing of these murals, a project that prompted a close examination with Norwegian identity and its place within the larger European community, that compelled Munch to reconsider the idea of the primitive and his role within this discourse. In the wake of the nationalist fervor that surrounded the completion of the Festival Hall paintings, Munch embarked upon a reassessment of his career, his legacy, and his future. The images Munch created of Karim, both as himself and in the guise of Cleopatra’s slave, gave the artist the opportunity to simultaneously reflect on the past and at his future, to examine himself and scrutinize the world around him.

The *Cleopatra and the Slave* images draw from a wide variety of visual, cultural, and social references, each of which participates in the reinforcement of stereotypes about non-Western peoples. In creating canvases that resist a clear narrative or a unified composition, Munch’s Cleopatra paintings appear disjointed. The lack of cohesion and consistency in all of his paintings that feature Karim render the images a series of performative acts, not unlike the types of performances staged at ethnographic exhibitions at the beginning of the twentieth century. In *Cleopatra and the Slave*, Karim “performs,” in that he plays the role of a slave, but also in that he comes to embody African-ness and the primitive, through Munch’s fusing of him with African wooden sculpture.<sup>56</sup> This transience of identity was made more apparent when the *Cleopatra and the Slave* images were exhibited with Karim’s portraits.

In a review of Munch’s January 1921 exhibition at Blomqvist Gallery, the art critic Jappe Nilssen wrote one of the few critical responses to the paintings when the two halves of the composition were reunited. He noted, “Directly opposite us on the long wall, is the large, bold figure painting with the odalisque and the nude, animalistic negro, in which the colors are pushed up to the highest intensity, to its greatest yield. It is like the flourish of a fanfare.”<sup>57</sup> Nilssen’s comments take note not only of the bold color palette that Munch employed but also the “animalistic negro,” which was perhaps more a reflection of the wider conception of Africans in Europe at the time, particularly in Norway, than the actual depiction of the man in the painting. Nilssen’s use of the term “animalistic” conjures up the image of a wild, uncontrolled, even predatory being, which neglects the multiple layers of meaning that appear in both depictions of Karim. The ambivalence with which Munch approached this motif is apparent in the individual compositions, the variation with which Munch portrayed his model within the series, and in his decision to exhibit the paintings together. Unfortunately, the complexity of Munch’s

canvases went unnoticed—Nilssen’s review indicates that the painting was received primarily as an exploration of the “primitive,” merely one aspect of these multilayered works.

## Notes

- I would like to thank Christine Poggi, Karen Beckman, Patricia Berman, Gerd Woll, Lasse Jacobsen, Inger Engan, Susan Libby, and Adrienne Childs for their assistance with this essay at various stages.
- 1 LR 566 28.11.1916, Munch Museum archives. “Jeg anbefalede Munch at engagere en rigtig brav og tiltalende Neger, Sultan Abdul Karim som tjener kusk og model.” Unless noted otherwise, all translations are my own.
  - 2 In addition to *Cleopatra and the Slave*, three canvases and the lithograph are smaller versions of the same motif. Three of the canvases are half-length portraits of Karim in Western clothing.
  - 3 Of particular interest to the Scandinavians was Belgium’s colonization of the Congo in 1908. Thousands of citizens from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland traveled to the Congo both to promote and to thwart King Leopold II’s colonization efforts.
  - 4 In celebration of the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Norwegian constitution, two artists, Fadlabi and Lars Cuzner, have proposed a re-creation of the *Kongolandsby* as a way to spur conversation regarding race in contemporary Norway.
  - 5 For more on the Scandinavian presence in the Congo and other parts of Africa, see Peter Tygesen and Espen Wæhle, *Kongospor: Norden i Kongo—Kongo i Norden* (Oslo: Kulturhistorisk Museum, 2007); and Kirsten Alsaker Kjerland and Anne K. Bang, eds., *Nordmenn i Afrika—Afrikanere i Norge* (Bergen: Vigmostad & Bjørke AS, 2002).
  - 6 Olav Christensen and Anne Eriksen, “Kongolandsbyen på Frogner: Fornøvelser på Jubileumutstilling,” *Byminner* 1 (1993): 22–3.
  - 7 “I Babylon og Kongo,” *Dagbladet*, May 19, 1914.
  - 8 “De forskjellige attraktioner ved fornøielseafdelingen,” *Aftenposten*, May 7, 1914. “Den hele landsby vil virke saa skuffende realistisk at den besøgende vil føle sig direkte hensat til Afrikas indre.”
  - 9 “Hvor man morer sig paa udstillingen,” *Aftenposten*, May 21, 1914. “Det er forresten meget vakre mennesker. Det askegraaislæt i deres sorte hud giver dem en varm lød. De har smukke øine, straalende tænder.”
  - 10 The practice of exhibiting “other” cultures as a way to reinforce the exhibitor’s dominance can be traced back as early as ancient Egypt. See Pascal Blanchard et al., “Human Zoos: The Greatest Exotic Shows in the West: Introduction,” in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard et al., (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 4–6.
  - 11 Carl Hagenbeck, *Beasts and Men: Being Carl Hagenbeck’s Experiences for a Half Century Among Wild Animals*, translated by Hugh S.R. Elliot and A.G. Thacker (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909), 20.
  - 12 *Ibid.*, 16.
  - 13 Hilke Thode-Arora, “Hagenbeck’s European Tours,” in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, ed. Pascal Blanchard et al. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 167. Eric Ames believes that these guidelines

- were never explicitly stated, but implied in Hagenbeck's correspondence with his agents. See Eric Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck's Empire of Entertainments* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 41–2.
- 14 Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 88–9.
  - 15 Thode-Arora, "Hagenbeck's European Tours," 170.
  - 16 Blanchard et al., "Greatest Exotic Shows in the West," 20.
  - 17 Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck's Empire of Entertainments*, 47.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, 50.
  - 19 *Ibid.*, 51. Some of the individuals who were recruited for these shows were domestic workers who were already living in Europe, and one group arrived in Hamburg wearing European clothing, much to Hagenbeck's dismay. *Ibid.*, 53–4.
  - 20 Blanchard et. al., "Greatest Exotic Shows in the West," 33.
  - 21 Patricia Eckert Boyer, *Artists and the Avant-Garde Theater in Paris 1887–1900* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 142.
  - 22 *Peer Gynt* is a five-act satirical play loosely based on the fairy tale *Per Gynt*. The titular character is arrogant, manipulative, and dishonest, and the plot of the play unfolds as he embarks on a series of adventures in varying parts of the world.
  - 23 Joan Templeton, *Munch's Ibsen: A Painter's Visions of a Playwright* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 72. It is noteworthy that in this letter, Munch indicated that he was "reading [Peer Gynt] as me."
  - 24 Munch revisited the motif of Anitra's dance in the 1930s, this time rendering her as a dark-skinned woman. In these drawings, she also dances provocatively in front of her "prophet," although she is nude.
  - 25 P.A. Munch (1810–63) was one of the preeminent scholars of Norwegian history in the nineteenth century. He was the author of an eight-volume history of the Norwegian people, *Det Norske Folks Historie* (History of the Norwegian people) (1852–9), and was also known for his translations of the Norse Sagas.
  - 26 For more on the Ethnographic Museum's collection, see Jostein Bergstøl et. al., *Kulturhistorier i Sentum: Historisk Museum 100 år* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2004).
  - 27 The literature on *fin-de-siècle* primitivism is vast: some of the seminal texts on the topic include Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native," *Art in America* 77 (1989): 118–29, 161. Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighton, "Primitive," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), provide an excellent summary of the topic.
  - 28 Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernism," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Icon Books, 1992), 328. Solomon-Godeau uses this term specifically in reference to Gauguin, but her classification of Gauguin's borrowing of motifs from a variety of cultures, could equally apply to the way in which Kirchner, for example, utilized a variety of non-Western motifs together to create a generic "primitive" aesthetic.

- 29 For more on Gauguin's appropriation of motifs from the varying Polynesian cultures, see George T.M. Shackelford and Claire Frèches-Thory, eds., *Gauguin Tahiti* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004).
- 30 Jill Lloyd, "Kirchner's Metaphysical Studio Paintings," in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: The Dresden and Berlin Years*, ed. Jill Lloyd and Magdalena M. Moeller (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2003), 15.
- 31 Ames, *Carl Hagenbeck's Empire of Entertainments*, 107–9.
- 32 Quoted in *ibid.*, 109.
- 33 Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams, and Distortions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 2–3.
- 34 Juliet Bellow, "Fashioning Cléopâtre: Sonia Delaunay's New Woman," *Art Journal* (Summer 2009): 7–8.
- 35 Bernhardt played Cleopatra in 1880, 1890, and in 1899; the latter two performances were productions of Victorien Sardou's *Cléopâtre* (1890).
- 36 Francesca T. Royster, *Becoming Cleopatra: The Shifting Image of an Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 61. The first film about Cleopatra, Gaston Méliés' *Le vol de la tombe de Cléopâtre*, was produced in 1899. Although Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* was performed on stage relatively few times during this period, four film adaptations of the play were produced: one in 1908, two in 1913, and one in 1929. For more on Egyptomania and early cinema, see Antonia Lant, "The Curse of the Pharaoh, or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 86–112.
- 37 Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 158.
- 38 Reproduced in Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*, fig. 36.
- 39 For more on the cultural phenomenon of Cleopatra, see Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra*; Royster, *Becoming Cleopatra*; and Mary Hamer, *Signs of Cleopatra: Reading an Icon Historically*, 2nd ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008).
- 40 For more on this topic, see Roger Little, *Between Totem and Taboo: Black Man, White Woman in Francographic Literature* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001).
- 41 William B. Cohen, "Literature and Race: Nineteenth-Century French Fiction, Blacks, and Africa 1800–1880," *Race and Class* (1974): 192–5.
- 42 Henry Champly, *White Women, Coloured Men*, trans. Warre Bradley Wells (London: J. Long, 1939), 6. Emphasis in original.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 7. Emphasis in original.
- 44 Jean-Paul Marat was a Swiss-born journalist and politician who played an important role in the French Revolution. He was a member of the radical Jacobin group, and was murdered in his bathtub by Charlotte Corday, a Girondin sympathizer. Corday gained entrance to Marat's home by claiming to have information about a Girondist uprising in Caen. When she saw Marat, who was soaking in a bathtub (a medicinal treatment for a skin ailment), she stabbed him in the chest.
- 45 For more on Munch and Larsen's relationship, see Frank Høifødt, "Kvinnen, kunsten, korset. Edvard Munch anna 1900," (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 1995).
- 46 Munch lost part of the ring finger of his left hand. He was obsessed with his injured hand, calling it his "fatal hand," showing it prominently, with its truncated finger, in photographs.



- 47 Although Munch was shot in the left hand, he depicts himself as injured in his right hand in the paintings, possibly to make the possible consequences of such an injury more dire, since he painted with his right hand. Additionally, in two related works, *Murder* (1906) and *Still Life, the Murderess* (1906), Munch has painted a large red area on his upper torso, insinuating that he was also mortally wounded in the chest, though that was not the case.
- 48 For more on the iconography of Charlotte Corday and the evolution of depictions of the murderess, see Michael Marrinan, "Images and Ideas of Charlotte Corday: Texts and Contexts of an Assassination," *Arts Magazine* 54 (April 1980): 158–76.
- 49 The other two paintings in this group are entitled *Murder* and *Still Life, the Murderess*, both executed in 1906. Each one depicts essentially the same scene as the *Death of Marat* paintings, but the figures are clothed.
- 50 For more on the complex relationship between Munch and women, see Patricia Berman, "Edvard Munch: Women, "Woman," and the Genesis of an Artist's Myth," in *Edvard Munch: Image and Myth*, ed. Patricia Berman and Jane Van Nimmen (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 1997).
- 51 For more on Munch's involvement with *Zum Schwarzen Ferkel*, see Carla Lathe, *Edvard Munch and His Literary Associates* (Norwich: University of East Anglia Press, 1980).
- 52 Franz Servaes, *Das Werk des Edvard Munch: Vier Beiträge* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1894), 37. Translated in Arne Eggum, "Edvard Munch: A Biographical Background," in *Edvard Munch: The Frieze of Life*, ed. Mara-Helen Wood (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 15: "... er braucht auch nicht nach Tahiti zu gehen, um die Primitivität der Menschennatur zu erblicken und zu durchleben. Er trägt sein eigenes Tahiti in sich."
- 53 Maurice Hamel, "Les écoles étrangères," *Gazette des beaux arts* (October 1889): 379. Translated in Kerry Brita Herman, "Modernism's Edge: Nationalism and Cultural Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Europe; Norwegian Painters 1880–1905" (PhD diss., Brown University, 1999), 99.
- 54 For more on this topic, see Herman, "Modernism's Edge," esp. ch. 3.
- 55 Patricia Berman, in her dissertation, "Monumentality and Historicism in Edvard Munch's University of Oslo Festival Hall Paintings" (PhD diss., New York University, 1989), discusses the particulars of the Aula competition in great detail.
- 56 Carol Armstrong elaborates upon the concept of model performativity in "To Paint, To Point, To Pose," in *Manet's Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe*, ed. Paul Hayes Tucker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 90–118.
- 57 Jappe Nilssen, "Edvard Munch," *Dagbladet*, January 19, 1921. "Rett mot oss paa langveggen det store, dristige figurbillede med odaliskene og den nakne dyriske neger, hvor farven er drevet op til den høieste intensitet, til dens ytterste ydeevne. Det virker som en fanfare."