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Ways of Seeing / Self (and) Otherness

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“À mon avis, vous ne pouvez pas dire que vous
avez vu quelque chose à fond si vous n’en avez
pas pris une photographie.”

Émile Zola

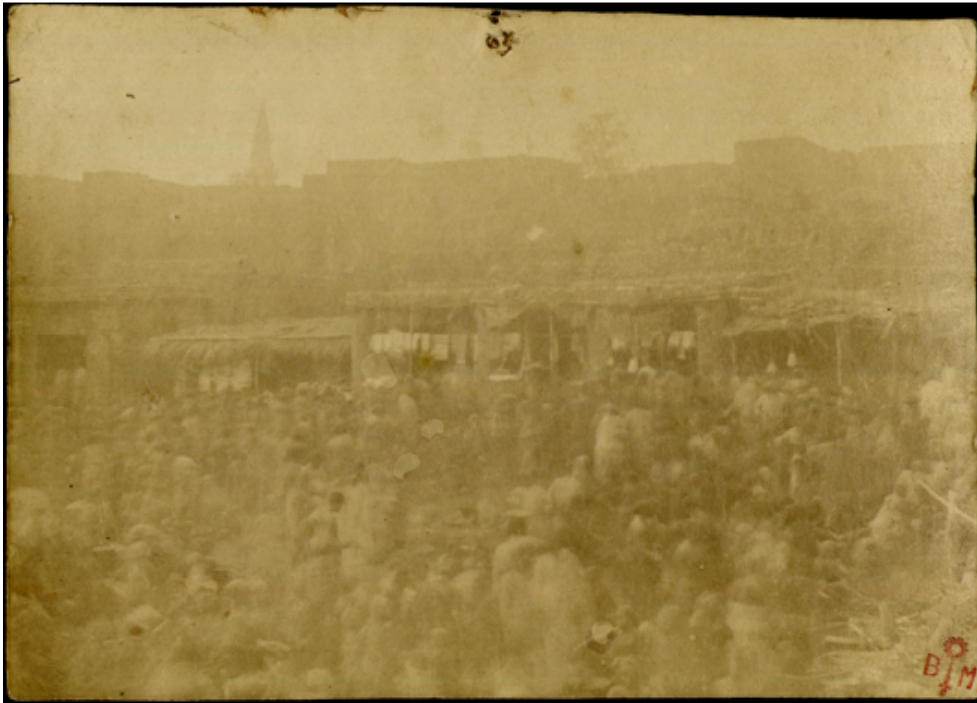
- 1 The end of the nineteenth century shows an impressive trend of writers turning to photography, as if the developing genre were a natural next step for the creative processes of literature. The new visual techniques and resources available thanks to the discoveries of Daguerre and Talbot opened up avenues of exploration for adepts from many schools of expressive practice. The expansion of optical technologies into the realm of reproducibility offered new ways of representing, framing, and memorializing the daily world. At the same time, the colonial projects of European empires expanding into Africa and the East offered new sights, and new sites, to represent, frame, and memorialize: new worlds to capture on glass and illuminate for a viewing public back in the familiar metropolis.
- 2 My article addresses two contrasting figures in the literary-photographic crossover: Émile Zola and Arthur Rimbaud. Each turned to photography after having accomplished the majority of his literary production; each experimented with the photographic praxis in order to supplement his written words. Most importantly, each took photos that recorded the processes of daily life – whether in Paris, Harar, or London. Yet the two photographers could not be more different. Rimbaud’s adventure with the camera was short-lived, and produced mainly stylized photos, of which only a handful remain. Zola, on the other hand, dedicated years to learning the art of photography, and produced thousands of images in the seven years he practiced it. Rimbaud created mainly portraits, while Zola captured street scenes, monuments, national events, and cultural phenomena.
- 3 I will argue, however, that the two writers’ photographic repertoires actually serve a far less disparate purpose than appearances would suggest: in both cases, they situate

the photographer within a landscape either foreign or made so by circumstance, and paradoxically offer the comfort of familiarity through the illusion of strangeness. As such, we can question the role of their photographs in the creation of national identity at the end of the nineteenth century: are these images witnesses, artifacts of colonialism and a preciously shifting political system? Or are they *artifictions*, participants in a continuum of representation that recreates the constructs of subjectivity and nationalism despite a superficial mimesis of otherness? I propose that the photographs these two writers left behind invite a new way of seeing their literary work as well: a new poetics of subjectivity and a new politics for interpreting the framing gaze.

Rimbaud ...

- ⁴ After the tumultuous decade of the 1870s – which saw, along with the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, the publication of all his volumes of poetry – in 1881 Rimbaud, then 27, left France for Africa.¹ He would spend the next decade eschewing poetry, focusing instead on matters of exploration and trade. His absence from the poetry scene was such that his friends and literary peers made a premature announcement of his death (in 1886). Rimbaud, however, did not disappear, from writing or from his self-ascribed position as seer.² He turned rather to other modalities of expression, writing geographical reports on the one hand and, on the other, creating tangible representations of the land around him. In 1882 he purchased a camera and taught himself photography, with the stated goal of commercializing the craft of the image: “[S]i je veux je regagnerai vite les 2 000 francs que ça m’a coûté. Tout le monde veut se faire photographier ici, même on offre une guinée par photographie. Je ne suis pas encore bien installé ni au courant, mais je le serai vite, et je vous enverrai des choses curieuses.”³

Figure 1



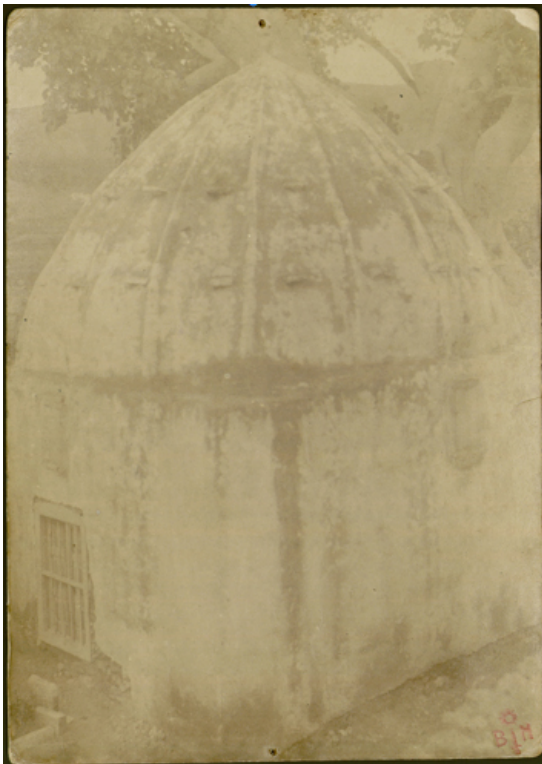
"Marché de Harare"

Figure 2



"Sotiro"

Figure 3



"Maison indigène"

- 5 One photo depicts the open market in Harar, a visual cacophony of motion, the figures obviously human yet indistinct. (Figure 1) In another, an explorer becomes one with the land, black boots rising from the ground parallel with the banana trees behind him, rifle running the dark length of his leg. (Figure 2) A third shows a native house. (Figure 3) In this third photo, we might note the position of the door, the angle of the roof, the tree forking in the background. The lines of composition are all mostly vertical, except for the crossbar on the door, the tiny (pale) window on the right exterior wall, and the mountain ridge in the distance. The place where the house meets the ground has a certain lift to it that suggests verticality as well, a hint of separation from the earth. The angle of the photo makes it seem Rimbaud took it from above. This is not a house seen straight-on, as a house. It is rather a creative *prise de position* about the *idea* of indigenous dwellings, whose points of entry refuse even visual access to the outsider. Bachelard asserts that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home."⁴ If we follow this reading, Rimbaud's "maison indigène" challenges "the essence of the notion of home," showing not just this house but the idea of "home" itself as an exclusionary and elusive concept – probably not far from the truth for an ex-poet living in self-imposed exile. The house appears a closed system, a world unto itself in the midst of an unfamiliar landscape, and Rimbaud's photo of it reproduces European semiotic codes onto an image he doesn't know how to read.
- 6 In his letters home from the photography period (1882-1884, when he had to sell it), Rimbaud repeatedly mentions the "curiosités" he plans to send home from Aden. "Ns faisons venir un appareil photographique et je vous enverrai des vues du pays et des gens, ns recevrons aussi le matériel de préparateur d'histoire naturelle et je pourrai vs envoyer des oiseaux et des animaux qu'on n'a pas encore vus en Europe. J'ai déjà ici

qques curiosités que j'attends l'occasion d'expédier" (letter of 15 Jan 1881). This letter establishes two equations of exotic objects: between the landscapes and people of Yemen and the birds and animals unknown in Europe; and between these "curiosities" and the proposed photos, themselves objects of a curious and novel nature.

- 7 The letter also represents a certain colonial mindset, a "capitalist view of the world as a reservoir of products, raw materials, and experiential pleasures" in which "the learned pleasures of the touristic [are] defined by the visual objectification or the conversion of the cultural Other into spectacle."⁵ Rimbaud goes to Africa during the "boom" period when France discovers the "cultural Other" – and discovers as well the possibility of exporting it back home.⁶ The diverse elements that constitute life on the "dark continent" are turned into *clichés*, snapshots for Western cultural consumption, native peoples and resources exploited and *chosifiés* (in Memmi's terminology⁷) as if they exist only in relation to Europe. Rimbaud, despite his ambivalence toward France and his well-documented scorn for European explorers who come solely for the purpose of appropriating the African landscape and make no effort to understand or emulate local customs,⁸ nonetheless sees no difficulty in working for a European export firm himself, using the trade to his own advantage whenever possible, including the dubious ethics of owning and overseeing slaves and a brief stint as a gun-runner. Even his letters home to his family reiterate a certain tone of cultural imperialism. Is he a trader, a translator, or a traitor?
- 8 Rimbaud's relationship to the African "curiosities" he mentions is troubled by his own position within his photographic repertoire. Of the seven surviving photographs Rimbaud took during his eighteen-month photographic experiment, three (and possibly four – about which, more in a moment) are self-portraits. He situates himself in various attitudes and in association with various backgrounds, and represents himself in Africa in photos he sends home to his family. His letter explains the images:

Ci inclus 2 photographies de moi même par moi même ... Ces photographies me représentent l'une debout sur une terrasse de la maison... l'autre debout ds un jardin de café, une autre les bras croisés dans un jardin de bananes. Tout cela est devenu blanc à cause des mauvaises eaux qui me servent à laver... Ceci est seulement pour rappeler ma figure et vous donner une idée des paysages d'ici.
(letter of 6 May 1883)

Figure 4



"moi même dans un jardin de café"

Figure 5



"moi même sur la terrasse"

Figure 6



"moi même dans un jardin de bananes"

- 9 The images captured by Rimbaud's camera are full of both visual contrast and contextual paradox; he situates himself *within* the African landscape, in such a way as to blend into it. He looks almost native: hair cropped close to fit under a fez, skin darkened by sun or photographic exposure, dressed in thin white cotton against the heat. He is also nearly invisible in the image. In the "jardin de café" photo (Figure 4), his face is the same color as the plant in the immediate background. In the "terrasse" photo (Figure 5), his face is at the center of what appears to be a water stain, with a dark blotch over one cheek. And his hand, even in its possessive attitude on the railing, disappears into the wood. In the "jardin de bananes" photo (Figure 6) – the best-preserved and best-realized of the self-portraits – we see a confident, even posturing Rimbaud, a study of contrasts: his skin has gone dark, his clothes white. The lines of his body mirror the lines of the landscape, even the little bend in the tree trunk. The photograph shows him as a transplanted hybrid object, a living negative. When Rimbaud takes his own photograph, a decade after declaring himself a Seer (Voyant), he becomes, literally and doubly, *voyant* and *autre*: establishing a frame to represent the seeing subject's desire, and then positioning himself within that frame. The camera is the eye, and the eye is other.

Figure 7

**RIMBAUD BY FANTIN-LATOURE (*COIN DE TABLE*, DETAIL).**

Figure 8

**RIMBAUD BY ETIENNE CARJAT.**

- 10 Ironically, the figure in the photos resembles Rimbaud hardly at all. Gone is the dreamy countenance depicted by Fantin Latour (Figure 7), gone the wild-eyed schoolboy photographed by Carjat. (Figure 8) In his place, we see a tough, wiry, dark-eyed gentleman, a barely discernible character who eludes the viewer visually much as Rimbaud the poet did grammatically in his 1871 *Lettres du Voyant*. Yet Rimbaud insists on his own presence within the photos. He reiterates his intimate participation in their creation and development. Even his emphasis on shared memories, through the verb *rappeler*, proves ambiguous and illusory: he includes no object pronoun to provide direction for the act of calling back to memory, so the verb could apply to the *vous* (his mother, formally; or his entire family) – or else, indeed, to a tacit *me*. This lack of grammatical precision becomes all the more important, and indeed poignant, in the third self-portrait, in which Rimbaud is nearly invisible.
- 11 In a way, Rimbaud makes himself into his own colonial curiosity. The Frenchman has disappeared, swallowed up by surroundings in which he can never entirely belong. In the same, long, letter in which he sends home the photographs, Rimbaud despairs, “qui sait combien peuvent durer mes jours dans ces montagnes-ci? Et je puis disparaître, au milieu de ces peuplades, sans que la nouvelle en ressorte jamais.” Robb describes the poignancy of Rimbaud’s literary silence during the African decade, calling him a “Europhobe” (Robb, 339). But Rimbaud’s “Europhobia” shares a complex psychological network with other impressions, including nostalgia, wanderlust, and Afri-phobia too. His self-portraits provide a glimpse of not just the native landscape and “cultural Other” familiar to the colonial or imperial gaze, but of a different possible reality for the French presence itself as transplanted into this other space. In his poem “Mauvais sang” Rimbaud had written, “les climats perdus me tanneront”: in these self-portraits he is literally tanned (darker of skin, leathern, fatigued). Like the “maison indigène,” the self-portraits show the self as other, a frightening distance from the assumptions of subjectivity.

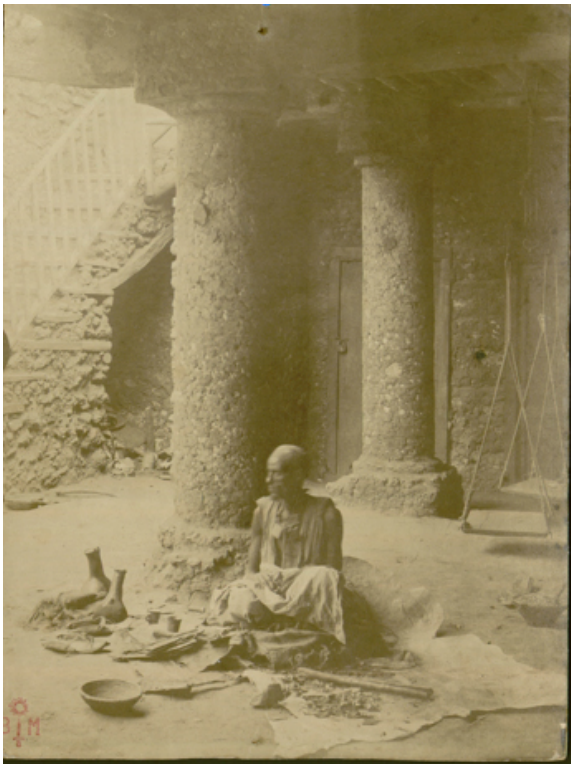
Figure 9



RIMBAUD (SEATED, SECOND FROM RIGHT) AS AN ADULT.

- ¹² In 2010, a pair of antiquarian booksellers in France discovered a previously unknown photo of Rimbaud as an adult (Figure 9), sitting with a group on the porch of the Hôtel Univers in Aden.⁹ This is the only known portrait of the adult Rimbaud taken in Africa before he begins to record his own life and image there. It shows a marked difference with the self-portraits he creates later. Whether this distancing is an effect of *being-outside* (in contrast, perhaps, to Bachelard's "*être-là*"?) – that is, the influence of the space of otherness on the subject – or a modulation in the way the subject views, construes and represents himself in other-space, it reaches its pinnacle for Rimbaud in the contested photo of a market trader.¹⁰ The "magasin de manutention" (Figure 10) has been read as Rimbaud's "autoportrait véritable" – the Rimbaud pictured here, in disguise, described as "plus fidèle assurément que les 'deux photographies de moi-même par moi-même' envoyées par Rimbaud à sa famille" (Arouimi 97). The implication is that Rimbaud, with his history of self-othering and self-otherness, is truest to his other-self when his *francité* – his specific identity as a Frenchman, and by extension therefore as an outsider – cannot be discerned, and he succeeds at blending into the portrait as a (more and less) native.

Figure 10



Magasin de manutention.

Zola ...

- 13 Like Rimbaud, who spent the last decade of his life outside France, Zola chose to live in exile in his later years. Unlike Rimbaud (perhaps), Zola's exile was forced by political circumstances – his involvement in what he called “la bataille pour l'honneur de la France,”¹¹ the Dreyfus Affair – and his time in London was haunted by the spectre of a national political agenda that repeated the injustices and inequalities of the Second Empire, this time with a state-endorsed racial vilification. Zola wrote his famous “J'Accuse” in 1898, accusing the president Félix Faure and the French government as a whole of anti-Semitism; stood trial and was found guilty of libel in February 1898; and, rather than face imprisonment, fled to England. He lived in Weybridge, Surrey, for half the time, and London for the rest, returning to France only after Faure's system had collapsed and a new government of “Republican Defense” been formed.
- 14 Before the Dreyfus Affair and his time outside France, Zola had spent at least four years practicing photography – making of it both a science and an art that reflected (and contributed to) his novelistic practice. He developed techniques for portraiture, for example, and documented them photographically, using a white screen for background contrast, a little mannequin to adjust proportions, etc. He even records a self-portrait that might be a model for Facebook profile pictures today (Figure 11).

Figure 11



Zola, self-portrait.

- 15 If Rimbaud's photographs are described as "plutôt brouillées" by his employer (and critic) Alfred Bardey, Zola's are memorialized rather as "boulémique" or "encyclopédique."¹² And indeed, the creator of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, while at Médan, seeks to photograph "tout: le site, les trains ou les chalands qui passent, la rivière qui coule, la maison qui s'agrandit avec ses dépendances, sa femme, les domestiques, les amis en visite ; mais aussi les arbres, les fleurs, les objets inanimés, les tableaux même, ... jusqu'aux chiens dans l'exercice de leurs besoins naturels" (Massin 6). Zola's own great-granddaughter, writing in 1997, adds a poignancy to Zola's camera-obscuromania: Zola, on whom the loneliness of exile weighed heavily during the year following the Dreyfus Affair (July 1898-June 1899, which he spent in London), took "refuge in work, devoting his entire mornings to writing his novel *Fécondité*. To pass the time he also [went] in for photography, an art he [had] taken up with great enjoyment several years before."¹³ He had his equipment sent from France, and took shots of the places he lived and the various neighborhoods of Greater London: "the landscapes..., then Crystal Palace and its surroundings, street scenes, pedestrians, cyclists and carriages. All the swarming life of the city" (Le Blond-Zola, 4). The novelist's great-granddaughter goes so far as to call Zola "the reporter of working life in London" (Le Blond-Zola, 4).
- 16 The year in London represented more, however, than just work and solitude. For Zola the photographer, it also meant a time to deepen and expand his craft beyond the novel, into a whole other realm of naturalist observation. "Mes souvenirs visuels ont une puissance, un relief extraordinaire," he wrote:
- Quand j'évoque les objets que j'ai vus, je les revois tels qu'ils sont réellement, avec leurs lignes, leurs formes, leurs couleurs, leurs odeurs, leurs sons. C'est une

matérialisation à outrance: le soleil qui les éclairait m'éblouit presque. (qtd in Massin, 5-6).

- 17 Still, where Rimbaud evokes the diversity of life-forms and ways of living he will record in his photos – the “curiosités” he plans to send home – Zola remains curiously silent. He proves most voluble about the process of exile itself, reticent about its artifacts. “Le 18 juillet restera dans ma vie la date affreuse, celle où j’ai saigné tout mon sang. C’est le 18 juillet que, cédant à des nécessités de tactique,... j’ai dû m’arracher à tout ce que j’aimais, à toutes mes habitudes de cœur et d’esprit” (*Pages d’exil*, qtd in Massin, 39). After nearly six months of legal appeals and debates, Zola leaves France by night, from the Gare du Nord. “Quand j’ai vu, du bateau, s’éteindre les lumières de Calais dans la nuit, mes yeux se sont remplis de larmes. Ah ! l’abominable chose, je dirai un jour tout mon déchirement” (*ibid.*, 40).
- 18 If we return to Rimbaud for a moment, we might remember the language of his 1871 *Lettres du Voyant* (to Georges Izambard and Paul Demeny): “J’ai résolu de vous donner une heure de littérature nouvelle. Voici un peu de prose sur l’avenir de la poésie ... Je veux être poète, et je travaille à me rendre voyant ... Il s’agit d’arriver à l’inconnu par le dérèglement de tous les sens” (15 May 1871). Rimbaud’s “dérèglement de tous les sens,” this Romantic declaration par excellence, might be said to find its adult echo in Zola’s “je dirai un jour tout mon déchirement.” What the youthful rebel celebrates, the battle-scarred Zola mourns. Leaving France in the wake of a sociopolitical disaster whose aftershocks will continue to be felt for another half-century at least (if not all the way to the present day), the novelist ‘arrives at the unknown’ by train and boat, alone and travelling incognito for fear of legal reprisals – indeed, the police of Paris have already begun searching for the fugitive (Massin, 39). He flees in grief the France that Rimbaud fled years previously in a kind of urgent wanderlust.
- 19 Rimbaud’s pre-African poetry and his correspondence from Abyssinia emphasize his external appearance (clothes, skin). Zola’s notes about his time in exile focus rather on his eyes: what he sees, while fleeing, and the physical fact of his ocular capacity, which becomes compromised during the voyage, his eyes filling with tears as France dims into darkness. But where Rimbaud quits both poetry and photography, concentrating his efforts on commerce and exploration instead, Zola turns back to the work of becoming ‘a seer,’ in the most literal sense: training a gaze on city life and capturing hundreds upon hundreds of London stills.

...Voyageurs avec Bagages...

- 20 Linda Rugg suggests that “photographs, which can display many views and variant versions of the same person, simply supply a visual metaphor for the divided and multiple (‘decentered’) self.”¹⁴ Rimbaud’s self-portraits might be read as a *performance* of exile: a deliberate self-positioning explicitly (if unconsciously in reaction to the demands of the colonial machine. Following Judith Butler’s ideas, I propose we read the photographic representations of writers in exile similarly along the lines of performativity. For Butler, the Freudian notion of melancholia (“the unfinished process of grieving”) extends to the ways in which gender identity is established and represented. Butler takes up the subject of lost objects and what it means to “let an object go,”¹⁵ to detach the self from a source of grief.

- 21 [M]elancholic identification permits the loss of the object in the external world precisely because it provides a way to *preserve* the object as part of the ego and, hence, to avert a the loss as a complete loss. Here we see that letting the object go means, paradoxically, not full abandonment of the object but transferring the status of the object from external to internal. (Butler, 134)
- 22 “How is the phenomenon of gender melancholia to be related to the practice of gender performativity?” Butler asks (Butler, 145). For the purposes of my study, let’s change the vocabulary of the question: how is the phenomenon of exilic melancholia to be related to the practice of identity performativity? I propose that a Butlerian reading shows us how the photography of these two “grands hommes de la patrie” functions in the context of imperial (im)positions.
- 23 Along the lines of this theory of melancholia, Rimbaud’s visual self-representation through self-erasure acts as its own performativity. Where Rimbaud’s early imagistic explosions (in poetry) extol the manifold possibilities of a life outside the strictures of French dailiness and bourgeois reality, his later photographs appear almost as a response to that exalted mindset; fading, as if deliberately, the corporeality of the subject who once declaimed “Je est un autre” (letter of 15 May 1871) and making himself literally an Other, a colonial artifact delivered in altered form back to France.

Figure 12



Zola, ladies cycling.

Figure 13



Zola, house across from the Queen's Hotel.

Figure 14



Zola, Westow Street, London.

- 24 Zola, on the other hand, never claimed to be simply a lump of brass; he knew he was a clarion when he published the letter that condemned him. His own otherness, the estrangement from a France he had spent the better part of forty years representing critically and lovingly and cynically and acutely, as a thing alive, an organism, came as a wound which he could only survive through images. "Je suis ici au désert," he writes early in his time in London (qtd in Massin, 40). But the street scenes (Figure 12), and buildings (Figure 13), and local activities (Figure 14) he photographs do not reflect London as a forbidding *terre d'exil*; instead, it is a living city, and the seeming

omnipresence of the photographer's eye indicates that he indeed saw himself within the urban environment. Where Rimbaud's photographic gaze sets him apart as Other, Zola's *incorporates* him into the surroundings, offering yet another aperture for social or civic belonging in a time and place of exile.

Figure 15



Zola, *Le Printemps à la fin du siècle*.

- 25 In fact, the estrangement we can glean from Rimbaud's photos might appear in Zola's from the few years he lived in France after the term of his political exile, for example in this view of *Le Printemps*, one of the models for the fictional department store *Au Bonheur des Dames* in his 1883 novel of the same name. (Figure 15) Much like Rimbaud's "maison indigène" photo, Zola's view of the fabled department store shows a place that keeps the photographer at a distance – much more so than the London houses viewed from the window of his "incognito" hotel room on Church Street. The lines are vertical and even the non-shuttered windows do not hold reflections; the people appear blurred, as if hurrying into and away from the commercial monster; the angle is distant and distancing, almost showing a process of moving backward away from the subject of the photograph. (Even the shadows of people at the bottom left corner swerve away from the camera lens.) To my reading, this photo shows not the satisfaction of a novelist who brought the generation of the "grand surface" to life, but rather the loneliness of an illuminator whose artwork has gone on in his absence – an absence enforced by the power of his own words. I find it significant that scenes of foreign identity take on familiarity in Zola's camera gaze, while this scene in particular conjures exclusion and strangeness. The familiar, in Paris, is closed to him, while the Other allows him to be a passerby, a participant in the practice of daily life. As Benedict Anderson has studied, quoting Michelet on the Revolution of 1789, "those whom [the

historian] was exhuming were by no means a random assemblage of forgotten, anonymous dead. They were those whose sacrifices, throughout History, made possible the ... selfconscious appearance of the French nation, *even when those sacrifices were not understood as such by the victims.*"¹⁶

- 26 In Chapter One of his famous study Anderson includes an equally famous quotation from Ernest Renan, from the 1882 volume *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* Renan claims, "[L']essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses" (Anderson, 6). Later, Anderson quotes this passage again and examines it more closely, pointing out the irony of the fact that Renan does not demand that "every French citizen is to 'have already forgotten' the Paris Commune. In 1882 its memory [is] still real rather than mythic, and sufficiently painful" (Anderson 201). Anderson ultimately makes the point about the role of history in nineteenth-century national identity that "nationalism in the age of Michelet and Renan represented a new form of consciousness – a consciousness that arose when it was no longer possible to experience the nation as new, at the wave-top moment of rupture" (Anderson 203).
- 27 Renan's question – what is a nation? – haunts the two writer-photographers I study here throughout their time in exile from France, whether self-imposed or state-mandated. The self-positioning of a subject outside the imagined community, as Anderson discusses, represents a radical shift into the space of Otherness: an alternative model for conceiving, understanding, and propagating subjective and national identity alike. Rimbaud's photographs suggest a new way of reading the French presence in colonial space, and a different self-conception for the subject participating in the colonial effort. Zola's reflect the progress from a steady recording of daily life in a familiar surrounding to the surprising comfort of foreignness, and then back to a familiar city made strange. Through the camera's eye we see not just a world beyond France but a way of interpreting selfhood and otherness, in a visual language that outlasts the vocabulary of nation-states.

NOTES

1. Charles Nicholl's *Somebody Else: Arthur Rimbaud in Africa, 1880-1891* (London: Vintage, 1998) offers an encyclopedic study of Rimbaud's years of exploration and trade between Yemen and Ethiopia.
2. In May of 1871, Rimbaud composed two letters, which have become known as the "Lettres du Voyant." These are the celebrated communiqués in which he established his ideas on the future of poetics.
3. Rimbaud discusses the artistry and economics of the photographic adventure in his letter home, written 6 May 1883.
4. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 5.
5. Ellen Strain, "Exotic Bodies, Distant Landscapes: Touristic Viewing and Popularized Anthropology in the Nineteenth Century." In *Wide Angle*, Vol. 18:2 (1996), 70-100.

6. We might consider, for example, Maxime Du Camp's photos of Egypt, or Flaubert's introduction of the "Oriental scent pastilles" that Emma Bovary buys at a shop run by "an Algerian native," or indeed the Algerian native himself, as more evidence of this metropolitan attitude toward "curiosités."
7. Memmi develops the term in *Portrait du colonisé, précédé par Portrait du colonisateur* (Paris: Payot, 1973). I use the vocabulary of post-colonial studies, including Memmi, despite the fact that neither Rimbaud nor Zola lived in a French-colonized region. Nonetheless, Rimbaud's experiences in Africa both reflect the European colonial project (at its most and least noble) and play a role in perpetuating colonial stereotypes.
8. Rimbaud is particularly harsh in his assessment of the Italian explorer Sacconi, who was killed along with all but two members of his expedition to map the course of the Webi Shebele in 1883. Rimbaud writes to Alfred Bardey, his employer during this period, that Sacconi was "slaughtered through his own fault and needlessly." Quoted in Graham Robb, *Rimbaud* (New York: Norton, 2000), 344.
9. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/7594130/French-booksellers-discover-first-adult-Rimbaud-picture.html>
10. Michel Arouimi describes this photo as "plus fidèle sûrement que les 'deux photographies de moi-même par moi-même' envoyées par Rimbaud à sa famille," and suggests an anthropometric reading of the portrait in which he establishes the physical possibility that Rimbaud himself posed as the African subject. See Arouimi, "La passion photographique de Rimbaud," in *Parade Sauvage, revue d'études rimbaldiennes*, Vol. 9 (February 1994), 91-110.
11. Zola's astringent remarks are taken from his *Pages d'exil*, a diary he kept while living in London. Edited and annotated by Colin Burns; *Nottingham French Studies*, Vol. 3 (May 1964), 2-46.
12. Massin, *Zola photographe* (Paris: Musée-Galerie de la Seita, 1988), 6.
13. Martine Le Blond-Zola, *Emile Zola, Photographer* (London: Norwood Society and Association du Musée Emile Zola, 1997), 4.
14. Linda Haverty Rugg, *Picturing Ourselves: Photography and Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1.
15. Butler, "Melancholy Gender," in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 134.
16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 198.

ABSTRACTS

This article considers the photographic adventures of two expatriate writers at the *fin de siècle*: poet Arthur Rimbaud and novelist Émile Zola. Rimbaud's experiment with photography occupied two years of the decade he lived in East Africa, and ended in disenchantment. Zola's photography held a much more central role in his later years. Rimbaud's remaining prints show him almost in disguise in a foreign land, while Zola's represent a welcoming, charming London (the city that housed him during his exile from France after the publication of his controversial *J'accuse !*). Still, I argue that the two writers' photographic repertoires actually serve a far less disparate purpose than appearances would suggest: in both cases, they situate the photographer within a landscape either foreign or made so by circumstance, and paradoxically offer the comfort of familiarity through the illusion of strangeness. As such, we can interrogate the role of photography in the

creation of national identity at the end of the nineteenth century: are these images witnesses, artifacts of colonialism and a preciously shifting political system? Or are they *artifictions*, participants in a continuum of representation that recreates the constructs of subjectivity and nationalism despite a superficial mimesis of otherness? I propose that the photographs these two writers left behind invite a new way of seeing their literary work as well: a new poetics of subjectivity and a new politics for interpreting the framing gaze.

Cet article discute de la pratique photographique de deux écrivains de la fin de siècle : Arthur Rimbaud et Émile Zola. Chacun a quitté sa France natale pour vivre un exil soit politique soit voulu, à Harare en Abyssinie (Rimbaud) et à Londres en Angleterre (Zola). Chacun s'est mis à la photographie, et a capté des images de l'espace étranger qui l'a accueilli. Leurs trajectoires, tout en signalant leur diversité, laisse pourtant ouverte la possibilité d'un champ de rencontre où elles témoignent d'une même expérience, d'un même enjeu. La représentation visuelle d'un ailleurs, formé par des sentiments d'accueil ou d'exclusion, mène à une réinterprétation de l'idée de l'identité nationale, de la "francité", de la subjectivité même à cette époque.

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