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Mark Sealy

Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time

By

Mark Sealy

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

Durham University

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Mark Sealy

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Abstract for Thesis

Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time

By Mark Sealy 2015

This thesis argues that photography is tainted with ingrained racist ideologies that have been present since its earliest inception in 1839. It considers the act of photographing the Other as a site of Western violence, myth, fantasy and disavowal. It examines archival images through the prism of race, representation and human rights with the aim of extracting new meanings that bring the Other into focus. This is done by reading the images both against the politics of the time in which they were made and as contemporary objects at work in the political and cultural present. The thesis makes the case that photography is burdened with ideological fault-lines concerning race and rights. The fault-lines have been forged by cultural and colonial violence resulting in Western scopic regimes that have dominated and fixed the Other within an inescapable set of Western epistemologies that have been used to serve and enhance imperial perspectives on race. I argue that these perspectives are still active within the Western mindset manifest as benign acts of photographic empathy that work to ultimately bolster Western hegemonies and economies.

This thesis is based on 25 years of experience as a researcher and curator of international photography exhibitions, direct research into archives in different continental settings, the presentation of papers in a variety of national and international contexts, and interviews with photographers, curators and academics.

My hypothesis is that the history of photography can only be complete if the voice of the subaltern is made critically present within it, so allowing us to engage with important political racial memory work that can help us re-read the past and reconfigure different meanings concerning history, race, rights and human recognition in the present. I argue that photography requires decolonising work to be carried out on its history. I propose that if we do not recognise the historical and political conjunctures of racial politics at work within photography and the effects on those that have been culturally erased, made invisible or less than human by such images, then we remain hemmed within established orthodoxies of colonial thought concerning the racialised body, the subaltern and the politics of human recognition.

Introduction

This thesis examines how Western photographic practice has been used as a tool for creating Eurocentric, violent, visual regimes. It explores issues of race and cultural erasure within photographic history through the direct analysis of photographic works. This analysis is done through lines of enquiry that are informed by two underlying questions. Firstly, has photography been a liberating device, or an oppressive weapon that holds the viewer/producer and citizen/subject in a violent system of continual exposure? And secondly, what epistemic value has photography brought to our understanding of difference?

This thesis considers whether photographic works concerning visualisations of the ‘Other’ can produce different or new meanings when they are read critically through the prism of colonialism, its inherent forms of human negation, its temporalities and its violence. This is done with the aim of locating and reading the photographs discussed here within the ideologies of colonial time, space and place. Decolonising the camera in this context is an invitation for an analysis of photography to be made within and against the political and violent reality of Western imperialism. The central concept of decolonising the camera functions as a critical dialogue with colonial and imperial photographic histories, and the social and visual spaces they occupy. Through the photographs discussed, I argue that it is within these types of racialised photographic spaces that we can analyse the variant levels of violence done in photography concerning the making of the Other and from that perspective consider how these forms of violence worked in the service of Western colonial and imperial powers.

‘Colonialism has been a dispossession of space, a deprivation of identity’ (Barlet 2000, p.39), and it created a system of image production that maintained and disseminated its dehumanising ideologies. At the centre of this thesis lies the proposition that it is only in recognising photography as an active agent of Western colonising authority at work on the body of the Other, both in the past and in the present, that we can begin to fully recognise the complexities and political impact of photographs in visualisations of racialised subjects. Throughout this thesis I suggest that a photograph of a racialised subject must be both located and then de-located from the racial and political time of its making and not solely articulated by its descriptive (journalistic) or aesthetic (art) concerns. I maintain that it is only within the

political and cultural location of a photograph that we can discover the coloniality at work within it and that it is only then, through this understanding, that a process of enquiry can begin into the nature of its colonial cultural coding. A key function of decolonising the camera is to not allow photography's colonial past and its cultural legacies in the present to lie unchallenged and un-agitated, or to be simply left as an unquestioned chapter within the history of the medium. Decolonising the photographic image is an act of unburdening it from the assumed, normative, hegemonic, colonial conditions present consciously or unconsciously in the moment of its original making and in its readings and displays. Decolonising the camera is therefore a process of locating the primary conditions of a racialised photograph's coloniality and as such it works within a form of black cultural politics to destabilise the conditions, receptions and processes of Othering a subject within the history of photography.

The notion of destabilising photography's historical past works through the prism of Stuart Hall's critical writing on race and representation, especially that concerning the British black subject's construction within photography that he produced in the 1980s and in particular his essays titled 'Reconstruction work: images of post war black settlement' from 1984 (S. Hall 1984) and 'New ethnicities' from 1988. (S. Hall 1988) Hall is referenced in key parts of this thesis to aid some of the conclusions from the arguments I present. In 'New ethnicities', for example, Hall theorises a decisive turn against the stable and negative Eurocentric representations of the black subject within Western visual culture. He also articulates a politics in which the 'unspoken and invisible' (S. Hall 1988, p.27) subjects in post-World War II Britain have challenged the spaces of representation, and marks the moment that black subjects begin to contest their historically fixed image. Building on the notion of the 'unspoken and invisible' black subject within Western culture and by analysing a series of complex photographic episodes drawn from various archives of Western photography, I make the case that such archives in their myriad representative ways are loaded with unspoken and culturally invisible subjects, and that the photographs within them work politically and aggressively as active agents locked within a colonial photographic paradigm.

Hall claimed that the 1980s was a 'critical decade' for black British photography. I assert here that the 1990s should also be read as a transformative period that heralded the arrival of the Other as photographer within mainstream Western cultural institutions. In the final chapter of this thesis, I consider the political and cultural conditions of both these decades as

decisive periods in which the black subject entered both the domain of representation and its international art markets.

Throughout this thesis I examine the visual and structural complexities at work within a given photograph's social and political formation, which I refer to as its 'racial time'. Racial time enables us to consider a photograph's function as a sign within the historical conditions concerning the 'relations of representation' (S. Hall 1988, p.27) that Hall discussed in 'New ethnicities'. I employ the idea of racial time to signify a different but essential colonial temporality at work within a photograph. In 'New ethnicities', Hall also presented the notion of the 'end of the essential black subject' (S. Hall 1988, p.28). My concern here is that, if this is the case, then it marks an important conjuncture in history and photography where the Other is brought into focus. Hall's notion shifts the cultural landscape in the understanding of the black subject within Western visual culture and I enquire here, as an undercurrent to these chapters, how the cultural landscape in the making of race has been historically constituted and how that landscape might be read today and in the future to produce new meanings. My enquiries are not limited to the context of British black cultural politics in the 1980s referred to by Hall but also extend back through the histories of the medium so that we can begin a process of understanding race at work in photography. Critically if, as Hall suggests, the end of the essential black subject was a political reality by the 1980s, then something must have passed on or died. If this is the case, then that ending affords us in the present the opportunity to do new forensic work on the historical sites and bodies of photography that concern its essentialising and racialising nature. This thesis aims to locate, excavate, extract and expose the slippery, ghost-like nature of the colonial in photography so as to make the essence of the colonial legacy within photography and its dark epistemes more evident and more visible.

The images discussed here have been assembled on the basis of extensive research in key photographic archives, such as those at Anti-Slavery International, the Bodleian Library, the Black Star Archives at Ryerson University, Getty Images, Magnum Photos and the Imperial War Museum. By analysing this primary material, I undertake a critical examination of how Western regimes of scopic violence can be understood in the context of the racialised body, human rights and photographic history. The thesis thus addresses the concept of cultural erasure against the Other, and is informed by enquiries into history, photography, and racial and cultural politics in the works of, for example, Paul Gordon Lauren, Emmanuel Levinas, Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Sven Lindqvist and Stuart Hall. Hall's work on

representation provides a lens through which to engage some of these wider philosophical works on rights, race and the Other.

Levinas invites us to look into the face of the Other as a duty of obligation and as a sign of our infinite and fundamental responsibility for the individual human Other. For Levinas, taking responsibility for the Other is the ethical site where we locate our own humanity and morality. (Levinas 1987, p.108) Using Levinas's philosophy of ethical responsibility I argue that photography made through the prism of the colonial gaze has created such a wholly dehumanising legacy of images of the colonised subject that it may be impossible to rectify. Fanon's thoughts on decolonising the mind of the colonised have been applied to assist in my arguments relating to decolonising photography's history concerning the representation of the Other, and to support my arguments relating to the internalising damage to the colonial subject of being bombarded with dehumanising representations of blackness. Applying Fanon's thoughts on colonial violence, in which he suggests that violence generated by the oppressor is rejected with an equal force, (Fanon 1963, p.28) I present the notion that analysing photographs of the black subject from the perspective of a decolonising critic works as a process of political rejection of Eurocentric photographic practices and, as a process, opens up such photographs to different possible readings that unlock them from the fixity of the time of their making. This enables us to read, for example, Wayne Miller's photographs as a form of black performativity to white colonial privilege rather than simply as empathetic documentary work. Power, for Foucault, is a function of panopticism, according to which the threat of permanent visibility causes subjects to become self-regulating and 'docile'. (Foucault 1975, p.211) Applying this theory to the dynamics of race and violence against the black body, I analyse the power derived from controlling the black body through the assumed cultural authority of white rights to observe and display blackness. Sven Linqvist key book, *Exterminate All the Brutes*, (Linqvist 2007) has had a direct influence throughout the thesis. Lindqvist's approach to writing the history of genocide as a travelogue through colonial time works as reminder of the role technology has been played in Europe's domination and formation of its colonies. By presenting the tragic consequences of those technological developments on colonised subjects, he reminds us of the importance of revisiting and decoding the historical narratives that sanitise the colonial conquests. In the final chapter of the thesis, Hall's influence re-emerges through the essays 'Reconstruction work: images of post war black settlement' (S. Hall 1984) and 'Vanley Burke and the "Desire for Blackness"' (S. Hall 1993). The latter, on the Birmingham-based photographer, is

employed as a reminder of the rarity of visual moments concerning black intimacy and tenderness within the history of photography.

The research presented here has, wherever possible, been brought into the public realm through curatorial practices and exhibitions, through public platforms and keynote presentations, and through publications and direct engagement with audiences in open discussions. These methodologies have been used to inform each stage of the development of the thesis. Reading photographic images through the politics of race, time and Western colonisation functions within my curatorial work as an ongoing operational mode of practice. My practice as a curator aims to contribute to a form of image liberation work concerning the historical and contemporary representations of the Other within photography. This liberation work is produced by an analysis of the socio-political conditions that operate both externally and internally on the production of racialised photographs and their possible receptions when they enter the public realm. The process of bringing the majority of the photographic works discussed here into the public realm has been done primarily through my role as the director of Autograph, the Association of Black Photographers (Autograph ABP), a post that I have held since 1991. This curatorial operation involves an ongoing critical engagement with questions concerning race, rights and representation within photography. It also encompasses building cultural platforms on which marginalised voices can be heard so that the missing chapters of photography's history can be inserted and its grand narratives culturally repositioned.

The legacies of colonialism and racism worry the history of photography. They enable the fractures of enlightenment and humanitarian thought to haunt the present. Photography, when read within the context of European imperialism, has the capacity to function as a morbid reminder of the intense level of cultural violence that was aimed at the Other over centuries. Examining the photographs discussed here not just as historical documents but as images open to different interpretations of key moments in Europe's history, such as King Leopold II's violent regime in the Congo, for example, or the complexity of agendas surrounding race at the end of World War II, allows us to read the nuances and gauge the power of the cultural and political forces at work within the history of the genre, and to assess how these forces have impacted on photographic constructions of race, the politics of human rights, identity formations, national narratives and cultural memory.

I analyse photographs and photographic practices in which issues of race, human rights and identity politics are paramount. A key aim is to investigate the extent to which the humanitarian ideals that have often animated the discourse and practice of photography have impacted on the historical conditions of race, and to examine whether those ideals have supported or hindered human understandings across race within photographic regimes and to gauge how photography's dominant regimes have assisted, maintained and made possible the creation of a racialised world. My fundamental contention is that the historical work that has been done in photography on constructions of race, human and civil rights has, through the ongoing institutional hegemony of European photography, failed to alter the colonial consciousness within Western thought concerning theories of and cultural attitudes towards race, even when these are wrapped within the context of a humanitarian concern. I explore this directly through, for example, the images circulated by the Congo Reform Association, which was a powerful humanitarian organisation working at the beginning of the twentieth century on religious, political and humanitarian fronts, and also particularly through images made during and in the immediate post-World War II periods that feature the colonised or black American subject.

If it is the case, as I maintain, that photography is dominated by the legacy of a colonial consciousness repressed in the present, then the result of this ongoing imperial mindset means that the colonial visual regimes historically active within photography remain inherently intact as the making of photography, its translations and articulations, its distribution networks and knowledge formations continue to be critically dislocated from the perspective of the subaltern and the marginalised. To realign photography to include a reading from subaltern or 'different' (Hall and Sealy 2001) perspectives, I argue that we have to engage in a form of decolonisation work within photography concerning the Other or consider the history of photography from within a politics of representation with the primary objective of revealing the specific or latent political implications of a given photograph's production, especially its reading and its reception when the face of the racial Other (Levinas 1979) is brought into focus.

The photographs by Alice Seeley Harris and the work of the Congo Reform Association form the subject of Chapter 1. They are an acute reminder of the complex layers of horrific violence that was directed at the African body in the Congo at the turn of the twentieth century. Across Europe and the United States of America, Seeley Harris's early humanitarian

photographs highlighted the outrageous abuse and killings that were taking place throughout the reign of King Leopold II in Belgium's Congo Free State. They constitute some of the most politically charged images of colonial violence taken in the twentieth century. Their display in public still has the capacity to inform, educate and appal, as was evident in the exhibition titled *'When Harmony Went to Hell' Congo Dialogues: Alice Seeley Harris and Sammy Balaji*, which I curated for Autograph ABP at the Rivington Place galleries in early 2014. Overwhelmingly, visitors to the exhibition expressed limited or no knowledge of the levels of violence that had been acted out on the bodies of the Congolese people. Fewer still understood the role Seeley Harris and the photographs she took played in the downfall of Leopold's regime. However, like all photographs, they carry a multiplicity of meanings according to the cultural perspective from which they are read. Seeley Harris's photographs afford us now the opportunity to enquire as to why they were, until fairly recently, absent from the dominant narratives of photography's history, and they enable us to address why Seeley Harris, an innovative missionary photographer, has been pushed into the background of the history of photography. As photographs taken in Africa at the turn of century they are critical to the politics of understanding the European presence on the continent. They also allow us to consider the dramatic work these images performed as documents employed at home for political and humanitarian reform in Africa. Locating these photographs back within the context of their original display and reception as theatrical lantern slides, which functioned within a specific set of scripted performative narratives that worked to service and expand the objectives of British Protestant missionaries based in the heart of the Belgian Catholic Congo, deepens their significance. This enables us to consider missionaries with cameras as being people uniquely situated on the front line of the British empire fuelling with their 'knowledge' the wider enterprise of British colonialism. On the surface these ostensibly benign photographs 'humanise' the African subject by exposing King Leopold II's regime of violence. But they can also be read as rallying calls, not for the liberation and freedom of African subjects, but for the construction of a higher morally colonising authority that was uniquely British, explicitly Christian and therefore just.

Alice Seeley Harris's work and the photographs employed by the Congo Reform Association provoke questions of colonial disavowal and disingenuous imperial agendas as Catholic and Protestant missionaries fought for pole position in the race to convert the natives, a battle that mirrored the wider European conflicts across Africa for territorial gain and control. Through an analysis of the way these images were used by Seeley Harris and her colleagues I make

the case that essentially the Congolese were left with three choices – be converted to Christianity, become slaves, or be killed – none of which guaranteed their human recognition or advanced the case of humanity for the African subject in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century. The camera in the Congo may well have highlighted the plight of the Congolese under the control of King Leopold II; however, it also contributed to the increased security of the British Protestant missionary presence. Photographs displayed by the Congo Reform Association were evidently a factor in the elderly King Leopold II being pressured to sell his stake in the Congo to Belgium in 1908, just one year before his death, but the king's deluded sense of benevolence lived on through the agency of the Belgian state for at least another 50 years and the racist, dehumanising, violent ideology of Belgium's rule remained intact for decades up to and beyond the country's independence in 1960.

While Seeley Harris's work was produced almost half a century before World War II, it raises questions and problems that continue to haunt the post-war moment. Sven Lindqvist's *Exterminate All the Brutes* reminds us that 'Europe's destruction of the "inferior races" of four continents prepared the ground for Hitler's destruction of six million Jews in Europe' (Lindqvist & Tate 2007, p.x). The deliberate refusal to see those regarded as Other as human subjects in their own right defines a dark literary and visual legacy that is now firmly part of the Eurocentric construction of the making of world history and has marked through photography those whose lives and cultures have a value and those whose do not. The photographs taken at the Nazi death camps, discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, have had a profound effect on the consciousness of the modern world. They now count among the most iconic images of man's inhumanity to man ever recorded or shown in public. Many of them first appeared in *Life* magazine on 7 May 1945 and have been discussed at length by historians of both human rights and photography (Lauren 2003; Linfield 2010). However, the specific detail and complexities of the work they do editorially is easily overlooked due to the grotesque nature of what they depict, and can slip by due to the way in which they have been encoded (Hall 1973) for public presentation within larger circuits of communication. If we accept the emergence of these photographs published in *Life* and other Western news media in May 1945 as the origins of 'irrefutable evidence' concerning acts of mass extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazis, then it is important to read them within a wider racial context as 'irrefutable evidence' not just of Nazi horrors but as images that should remind us of the Allied forces' disavowal concerning the plight of the Jews, the Roma, the disabled, the

mentally ill and the many others who died in the death camps: we know that photographs and testimony were available long before Allied soldiers liberated the camps.

The lack of recognition of different indigenous cultures through managed misrepresentations of their alterity in the West is a defining marker of the colonial and post-colonial eras: eras that in various guises continually scrutinised the ‘dark races’ and dismissed their capacity to rule themselves and, by extension, to fully engage with the politics of their own lives. By the end of World War II, Europe’s preferred political agenda was simply to maintain and rebuild its empires. Through an analysis of racially charged photographs produced in the West during and after the war, I present the case that this agenda was also played out in the realm of photographic representation. Despite the significant contribution of colonial forces to Europe’s liberation, freedom for the colonial subject was not going to be forthcoming. Western attitudes to race in the late 1940s were resoundingly retrogressive, as was confirmed by the implementation of the Apartheid regime in South Africa in 1948 and the newly formed United Nations’ inert responses to it, and by Europe’s desire to maintain its old colonial stranglehold.

Among the images discussed in Chapter 3 are those taken by the celebrated British photographer John Deakin at the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester in October 1945, which appeared in *Picture Post* magazine on 10 November 1945. They are significant because, used in an editorial context, they allow us to take the pulse of British journalistic attitudes towards colonial subjects immediately after World War II and they represent the only visual account of this significant moment within British colonial politics.

The article that Deakin’s photographs accompany focuses on miscegenation rather than African liberation, recalling nineteenth-century European obsessions with racial purity (Lindqvist & Tate 2007, p.100). The text unashamedly advocates ‘white hostility’ towards black subjects should the demands of the colonised carry any meaningful threat. What therefore begins to surface is the arrogant cultural assumption that the status quo concerning the empire and its subjects would be maintained violently as a European right. Within this small body of photographs, their captions and the text, we can see the early signs of a preferred national story emerging as to where the boundaries of global freedom in late 1945 – territorially, politically and racially – started and finished. In analysing the article, we can observe a subtle set of wider communications aimed at the British public that, when

deconstructed through the prism of race, sends a distinct message that World War II is over and therefore there is no further need to embrace or tolerate the colonial black subject soldier or worker as a colleague in arms, equal in the fight against fascism. The article works as a reminder that, just six months after the end of the war in Europe, Africans could ‘speak’ regarding their desire for freedoms but only according to the terms of the old empires’ agenda. The article also critically inaugurates a process of cultural amnesia relating to the political promises and new images concerning colonial contributions to the war effort that were put into mass production and circulation. Moreover, it ignores the global significance of the transatlantic agreements that had been signed between the Allied forces.

George Padmore, the Trinidadian Pan-Africanist, is quoted in the *Picture Post* article as summing up the mood of the delegates in Manchester when he stated that ‘a negro’s skin is his passport to an oppression as violent as that of Nazi Germany’s oppression of the Jews...we don’t need yellow armbands in Africa – just black skins.’ As far as racial politics was concerned, across the pages of *Picture Post* in November 1945 the black colonised subject was petrified in colonial time. However, the images belie the new face of radical African liberation and highlight just how out of step the British were with the political mood and determination of their African subjects, many of whom had been hardened by their experiences of war in Europe. The presence of W.E.B. Du Bois in Manchester, probably the most influential black man on the planet in 1945, should have been a clear indicator that the political tide had turned against Europe’s empires. Deakin and the editors of *Picture Post*, however, failed to recognise him in the photographs, giving his name to the face of a different delegate at the Congress.

A young German photojournalist, Robert Lebeck, was in the Congo on 29 June 1960, the eve of independence for the newly formed state of the Republic of Congo. On that day he took what has now become an iconic photograph of African independence struggles. The image shows the ceremonial sword of the Belgian King Baudouin being stolen and held aloft by an African spectator of the ceremonies. As the thief turns to run away with the sword, Lebeck, being fortuitously placed, takes advantage of the scene and makes a photograph that helps establish his reputation as one of the leading photojournalists of his day. In Chapter 4 I discuss the complete sequence of photographs taken on 29 June by Lebeck, which were published in his recent monograph titled *Tokyo Moscow Leopoldville*. By examining the images that were taken before and after the sword was stolen, I attempt to reveal the intensity

of colonial rule through the imperial signs of Belgium's symbolic order, thus directing a reading of Lebeck's work away from the traditions within photography that desire the location of a universal punctive moment within a given photograph. I argue that the images are visually saturated to a claustrophobic degree with the signs of Belgium's colonialism. Regarding Belgium's monuments and other colonial tropes that appear in the photographs as signs of historical violence, colonial grandeur and indulgence, the aim here is to offer an analysis of Lebeck's series not as a filter that works towards the making of a single decisive moment, but as images that act today as turbulent reminders of the past and visual precursors to the violence that was to befall the Congo just a few months after its independence. When read now, from the perspective of the known political realities of the Congo, the photographs are important not just as moments that capture African independence but as a record of the degrees of colonial oppression that were still present at the time of the formation of the new state. The sword thief may well have grabbed the symbol of power from the Belgians briefly but the white Belgian military presence, which was managing the path to independence, rapidly restored colonial order. Lebeck's photographs from 29 June 1960 have become a unique register against which we can begin to deconstruct the damaging totalising effects of Belgium's colonial rule on the minds of both the Congolese and the Belgians.

In Chapter 5 I examine one of the first post-World War II documentary photography projects that was funded and produced with the specific objective of changing white perceptions of black America. As a World War II photographer working in the South Pacific for the US navy, Wayne Miller was by the end of the hostilities sickened by the devastation he had witnessed. His experience of being on board a racially divided ship and what he saw at Hiroshima affected his perspectives on race and humanity so much so that on his return home to Chicago he decided that the most pressing contribution he could make was to try and bridge the cultural and political fault-lines that divided American society racially.

Miller's ambition was to bring the American Negro closer to the hearts and minds of white society by presenting a new vision of black humanity. His project was not a self-financed endeavour; it was funded by two Guggenheim awards, giving a clear indication of how important and relevant the Guggenheim Foundation thought Miller's work on race was. The funding enabled him to work among Chicago's black community for three years. Miller's photographs taken from 1946 to 1948 therefore represented at the time of their making an unprecedented view of the lives of black Americans taken by a white photographer. Since

their publication in 2000, these images have been celebrated as powerful examples of documentary photographs employed as a vehicle for building empathy between different people. However, given the intensity and history of racism in Chicago in the mid to late 1940s, it is pertinent to consider Miller's privileged status as a well-financed white photographer photographing black Americans, and to examine the possibilities and forms of cultural reciprocation between him and his subjects in such a racially tense environment. What cultural commentators of Miller's work have tended to ignore is that it was made from within a dominant regime of representation, and the fact of blackness that Miller attempted to make visible was constituted solely from a white perspective in which Miller positioned himself as the interpreter of a form of black humanity, classically aestheticised within the photographic documentary tradition. Miller does not provide any wider social context against which to gauge the levels of white oppression under which these people lived. Therefore, to read the value of the work one has to literally look outside the frame.

What emerges out of enquiries into Miller's humanitarian project is that the photographs became virtually invisible for decades. Instead of being agents for social change in 1940s' America they became a closed personal archive. They did not surface collectively as images in any meaningful cultural curatorial context for at least another 50 years, apart from some minor usage by the American black press to support arguments relating to the success or failure of black progress in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the two photographs that were included as part of Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man* exhibition, one of which portrays a black man being serviced by a prostitute, and the other a depressed-looking black man dressed in his denim work clothes sitting on the edge of a double bed while a black woman lies fully clothed on the same bed with her back to the camera contemplating the condition of a finger nail.

I present an analysis of Miller's photographs, from the time of their making against the historical background of racial politics in Midwest America and through the period of their emergence in the public domain, highlighting the fact that they were never released into a place where they could perform the work they were funded to do. Crucially, both Miller and the Guggenheim allowed the project to effectively disappear for over half a century. Therefore, the core purpose of their making became politically redundant or at least a failed photographic humanitarian exercise, regardless of how aesthetically successful the images are deemed to be. By not being brought into the public domain at the time of their making, the

project became discharged of its original social intent and therefore its meanings became culturally relocated into an archival story of discovery rather than photographs that can be read through the work they may have performed in their own time.

The emergence of black British and African photographers throughout the late 1980s and 1990s is discussed in the final chapter. Here, work that was produced in Britain by black photographers to act as counter images to the stereotypically negative ways in which the racialised body had been positioned within the mainstream cultural institutions and the media is considered. A focus is placed on the practices of the first wave of black British documentary photographers and is followed by analyses of a younger generation of British photographers whose production moved purposefully away from the documentary tradition to create scenes where ‘new ethnicities’ (S.Hall 1988) could be imagined. Within this context I discuss the hybrid and transgressive nature of the work of Rotimi Fani-Kayode from Nigeria, who was displaced in London on several counts, and I situate his practice in contrast to the cultural business of ‘discovery’ and display of the Malian photographer Seydou Keita and other African photographers who came to the attention of Western curators through the 1994 Bamako photography festival. I explore the constructions and receptions of African photography in the West and assess how African photographers and their works have been placed culturally and critically, or abstracted from their original context, to fit within Western frames of reference.

By considering the cultural and political conditions in which these photographs emerged and through an examination of both public and private agencies such as the Greater London Council and Jean Pigozzi’s Geneva-based Contemporary African Art Collection, we can begin to recognise how agency and cultural intervention change the course of photographic history. These and other powerful European and North American institutions have worked in different ways to bring for example, black British and African photographers into the mainstream, but at what cost and for whose benefit, especially when we consider work produced from ‘different’ (Hall and Sealy 2001) locations, either geographically, culturally or politically, within the context of an increasingly globalised art world economy. An economy that is essentially managed by European art world elites who end up, as in the case of Seydou Keita, in legal conflicts over ownership of African artists’ rights and authenticity of the work. Within these critical new domains of representation, we can assume that progress is made towards a less Eurocentric photographic discourse but the process of control and commerce

raises concerns about and echoes the historical exploitative, competitive, colonising encounters of extraction and consumption of the image of the Other, how it is managed and how it is made real in the West.

This thesis aims to present an argument in which we recognise the colonial presences active within and across the reading and making of photography. Consistently through the various bodies of work discussed here I put forward the notion that the colonial discourse within photography remains a damaging and dehumanising discourse. The thesis puts forward the case that it is only once the colonial presence in photography is made evident that we can begin read the cultural undercurrents active within it. I argue that this is part of a politics decoloniality that helps us unpick and displace the ‘universalist nature’, (S. Hall 1988, p.29) of photography.

The six chapters presented within this thesis work towards establishing a case for a decolonial contestation to made more present within the contemporary discourses and historical narratives of photography. I argue that this is essential cultural work that needs to be addressed if we are to fully understand the work photography has done concerning race and power. This thesis therefore functions as part an ‘unfinished conversation’ (S. Hall 2012) concerning the production of cultural difference and ethnicity within photography. The overarching theoretical position this thesis adopts is that it is imperative for the history photography to be unsettled and critically reappraised from within a discourse of race, if not I suggest we are in danger of leaving the history of photography culturally and politically incomplete frozen in colonial time.

Chapter 1: *The Congo Atrocities, A Lecture To Accompany a Series of 60 Photographic Slides for the Optical Lantern.* By W.R. (Revised by Mr E.D. Morel and Rev. J.H. Harris.) Price 6d.

‘De las Casas also saw, with rare insight, the ulterior motive of many conquistadors. Though the Spanish carried the Requerimiento – a royal document that outlined Spain’s divinely ordained right to sovereignty – into every battle, de las Casas believed that spreading the word of God was largely a ruse: an expedient mask. Ambition, not altruism, was the driving force; gold, not God, was their goal. He believed that the conquistadors slashed and slaughtered their way like “ravening wild beasts” across the “New World” not solely in homage to Christ, but to “swell themselves with riches”. He suspected they had crossed the Atlantic not only to spread the word of the Lord, but to find the gold that washed through the rivers of Amazonia and the minerals that lay beneath their rampaging feet. “Our work,” de las Casas said, “was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy.” The conquistadors destroyed lives and lands, and they told the Indians that to save their souls, they would need to become Christians.’ Joanna Eede (Survival International 2013)

Bartolomé de las Casas (c.1484–1566), ‘protector of Indians’, was a sixteenth-century Spanish missionary with a passion for social justice.

Three and a half centuries after the death of de las Casas, in the early 1900s, the married missionaries John Hobbis Harris (1874 –1940) and Alice Seeley Harris (1870 –1970) produced what was probably the first photographic campaign in support of human rights in Africa. This was done in the form of a dramatic lantern slide show that was staged throughout Britain and the United States of America. The Harrises had been stationed in the Congo Free State since 1898 and during their time there had witnessed the atrocities that were being carried out in the name of King Leopold II.

On returning to England a few years later they were keen to educate and inform the world of the outrages they had seen. They did this by working with the Congo Reform Association. The CRA was an organisation formed in 1904 by Dr Henry Grattan Guinness, Roger Casement and Edmund Dene Morel. Their aim was to highlight to the international community the levels of inhumanity towards and exploitation of the peoples of the Congo.

The CRA and the Harrises collaborated to produce a dynamic lecture that was accompanied by photographic images detailing the violence being inflicted on the Congolese people.

By reconfiguring the original organisational structure of the lantern slide show that was produced and performed by the Harrises in the early 1900s and where possible re-reading the images in the order in which they first appeared in public, along with the scripted text written by the Harrises, this chapter offers a critical analysis of both the lecture and the images that made up the show. By means of an extended commentary on selected slides, I discuss the complexities of the missionary messages deployed in this particular and extraordinary humanitarian campaign.

The lantern slides, notes Christina Twomey, were seen at

‘hundreds of mass meetings in Britain and the United States, the Harrises’ lectures validated the photographic lantern slides they discussed through their presence as white witnesses to African suffering. In this way photographs were incorporated into much older and established methods of activism and consciousness raising’.

Twomey also states that ‘the images of mutilated Congolese entered the culture as relatively novel representation of the suffering body, but they were incorporated into existing cultural practices that required the authenticating presence of whiteness which relied as heavily on the word as they did the photograph’ (Twomey 2012, p.50).

The Harrises’ lantern slide show consists of 60 slides that are divided into four distinct categories. Part 1 is titled ‘Philanthropy in the Making’ and comprises 11 slides that provide a wide political context for the show, including the geo-specific location of the Congo Free State and an outline of the resources found there: palms, rubber and ivory. Different slides focus on the terms under which King Leopold II (1835–1909) was given charge of the Congo by the international community: ‘not for the accumulation of rubber at an infinite cost of human life and suffering, but the protection and civilization of the natives of Africa’. They also address the native people in their uncivilised and reputedly cannibal states. The narrative for the slides presents us with ‘a closer view of the executioner’, the ‘native warrior’, and details of ‘appearances’ that are ‘calculated to send a thrill through most of us even at this distance’.

Part 2 is titled 'Philanthropy in Operation' and constitutes slides numbered 12 to 49. The intention of the narrative in this part of the lecture is to build a more damning picture of King Leopold II. Framed as a pirate, he is accused of recruiting child soldiers and employing 'cannibal soldiers' to force the natives to work. As the slides progress, the narrative reveals in detail the disturbing horror at play in the Congo. A chaotic scene of blatant disregard for African life and a brutal, imperious attitude towards the death of the Congolese people is presented. Peaceful villages are flattened, children are hacked to death and eaten, and women are cut in half.

Part 3, 'Philanthropy Exposed', focuses on the revenue that King Leopold II received from the Congo and his lack of legitimacy as a ruler, and returns the audience to the idea that he is indeed a pirate.

Part 4 concludes the lecture and is titled 'Philanthropy That May Be'. The narrative accompanying the final slide is effectively a plea for armed intervention from the British government:

The Great Powers have been grossly deceived and they ought to decline any longer to recognise King Leopold's flag as the emblem of a civilised administration ... And if our legal and reasonable requests are refused, then let us send a man of war to the mouth of the Lower Congo, with orders to prohibit the entry or departure of steamers or craft of any kind until they are granted.

What is evident is that,

until photographs of mutilated Congolese were shown to the world, doubts still remained in some circles that reports of violence in the Congo were overblown. However, after Alice Harris circulated photos in late 1905 with dates, names and other details, Leopold found it more and more difficult to refute the charges of abuse against him. (Nault 2012, p.7)

The case against King Leopold II was critically reliant on the display of atrocity photographs from the Congo, but we can, through the analysis of the context in which these photographs

were displayed, examine the complexity of meanings that these images produced and consider the other political purposes and work that they may have served and indeed serve now. It is important, then, that we attempt to unfix these photographs from the dichotomy of good and evil colonial acts in Africa, with the Harrises representing good and Leopold representing evil. Reading the photographs across historical time allows different meanings to surface and conclusions to be drawn if we stop looking at them as strictly historical records. ‘This is the power and purpose of an archive. It preserves and provides the stuff on which histories are based, even if it necessarily and always delivers a partial and particular view, based on availability, choice and chance.’ (Amkpa & Garb 2013, p.27). In what follows I work through both the detail of the original text in the lecture and the detail of some of the key lantern slides that made up the lecture. This is done in order to bring the lecture and images back into dialogue with each other so as to demonstrate part of the cultural work these images performed in the past and meanings they produce in the present.

Slide 1. Map Showing the Position of the Congo Free State

‘Ladies and Gentlemen,

For some time past the eyes of an increasingly large number of people in Great Britain and America have been turned upon that immense tract of country in the heart of Africa, known as the Congo Free State. Ever since the formation of the state there have been some who have suspected the intentions and good faith of its founder; but during recent years suspicion has developed into certainty, and the revelations which are now made public surpass in horror the wildest dreams of the prophets of evil. It is high time that the conscience of this country was thoroughly aroused; and I therefore beg you to follow me closely, as I endeavour to lay before you, briefly but clearly, the startling indictment against the sovereign of this so called Free State.’

Mr E.D. Morel and Rev. J.H. Harris

The photographs taken at the turn of the twentieth century by Alice Seeley Harris and her missionary colleagues are important for our understanding of the dark side of European cultural and commercial encounters across central Africa (Young 1995, p.92). As archival photographs they sit in a unique but complex place, namely at the intersection of the two deadly theatres of European encounter in Africa: commerce and religion. These important aspects of colonisation cannot be uncoupled from the history of European cultural violence, ‘the process where one culture subordinates another’ (Spurr 1993, p.4) to the extreme where

the subordinated become cultureless, and Western ideals at work in Africa dictate all forms of 'development' (C. Hall 1992, p.214) and articulation.

Seeley Harris's photographs provide an important source in helping us to address some of the complexities of this history, especially when we consider the role that photography has played in the dehumanisation of African and other non-European subjects. Her photographic works are usually discussed in the context of human rights and atrocity photography, Christina Twomey's essay titled 'The incorruptible Kodak: photography, human rights and the Congo campaign' (Twomey 2014) being a recent example. However, little analysis has been done on the work that they perform across the wider discourse of racial theory, particularly at the time of their display, or how they may have functioned as a narration on race across their diverse audiences. Few scholars have analysed the actual language of the lectures that accompanied the photographs when they were displayed as lantern slides at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is therefore important that we take into account the context of their display when considering their significance today. By analysing and reconstructing the specific and theatrical context in which these images first entered the public realm, as well as examining in detail the content of the lectures and photographs, we can begin to examine the images within a wider cultural frame of racialised representations of the black subject and the psychology of colonising minds. Seeley Harris's photographs are significant not only as early documents of atrocity but also as pioneering portrayals of the black body as a site of excessive violence in Africa. They therefore allow us to study and interrogate the ideas, images and fantasies of an ostensibly benevolent form of colonisation.

The Harris archive is currently in a fragile state and largely in a condition of disarray. However, there is one facsimile of a document that represents a record of the lecture that the Harrises and E.D. Morel delivered to their audiences. Its full title is 'The Congo Atrocities, A Lecture To Accompany a Series of 60 Photographic Slides for the Optical Lantern. By W.R. (Revised by Mr E.D. Morel and the Rev. J.H. Harris). Price 6d.' This document provides a critical starting point from which to contemplate the photographic archive of Alice Seeley Harris. To date there is no scholarship that locates the images directly within the context of the lecture, yet to ignore this vital element when reading the images dislocates them from the conditions of their delivery because as images they were as much heard as seen.

The lecture enables us to enquire into the undercurrents of meanings that accompanied the presentation of the photographs. It allows us to piece together and interrogate some of the vital aspects of the work that the Harrises and Morel intended the photographs to do. Within the archives of Seeley Harris's photography, there is currently no index correlating the images and text. The archive, then, 'ceases to be a univocal, flat, and incontestable indexical trace of what was, and becomes instead a completely textured artefact (concealing many different depths) inviting the viewer to assume many possible different stand-points – both spatial and temporal – in respect to it.' (Pinney & Peterson 2003, p.5). Through the application of time and distance we can begin to read Seeley Harris's photographs not only as objects of political agitation but also as moments that enable a peeling back of the layers in our understanding of the myriad forms of colonial violence. It is also clear from looking at the structure of the lecture that other visual aids, such as maps and extracts of texts from political treatises, were used, as well as the lantern slides, in order to build an intricate web of meaning.

By analysing Seeley Harris's photographs that were either presented by the Harrises themselves or through an international network of Protestant missionaries and members of the humanitarian CRA to thousands of people across Britain and the USA, we can begin to consider the influential role that Alice Seeley Harris and her photographs played in relation to the history of what Western audiences saw, heard and experienced with regard to interpretations and representations of colonial atrocity in Africa. Her photographs acted both as critical and political images that attracted, mobilised and affected large crowds of people when they were presented in public spaces (Thompson 2012, p.194) and it is their role as agents for change within the European imagination over a period of nearly a decade that make them so compelling as images and objects of enquiry.

Given the role photography played in the campaigns against King Leopold II and the impact Seeley Harris's photographs had on their audiences, it is surprising how neglected her photographic work has been by scholars. 'Considering the long term significance of the Congo Free State controversy for human rights history, leading human rights historians have devoted little attention to the subject' (Nault 2012, p.1). The photographs were clearly critical to the success of the CRA in bringing an end to Leopold's hold on the Congo. We can see from published literature that they had an influence on many prominent figures across Britain and the USA. While they encouraged humanitarians to voice considerable opposition to

Leopold's regime of violence (Nault 2012, p.7), Seeley Harris's legacy as an activist photographer has mostly been omitted from photography's grand histories, an obvious example being *Photography: The Whole Story* (Hacking & Company 2012). Her work has only fairly recently begun to surface in debates concerning the study of atrocity photography and its histories (Twomey 2014) and through growing scholarly interest in the photographs taken specifically by missionaries (Thompson 2012).

Seeley Harris's images hold a unique place within the history of photography. That she was one of the first women photographers to pick up a camera in the cause of humanity represents a critical turn in the history of photography and forces us to rethink how it has been written in relation to gender, religion, race and empire. Her photographs also show important early images of African victims of violent direct colonial rule. The work they perform across the history and visualisation of violence in Africa is fundamental to our understanding of the visual, physical and political pressures to which the African body has been subjected in the course of colonial and post-colonial encounters. Seeley Harris's images open up new epistemologies on European photography at work in Africa and help us trace the genealogy of photographic practices and representations that frame the African subject in crisis. For European photographers, Africa is historically a carnivorous affair. The image that stands out from the Harris archive is that of a young man sitting in front of the remains of his daughter who had been eaten by violent tribes in the service of King Leopold II and it is clear from the vast archives of photographs held in Western collections, for example the photographs taken by the Catholic missionaries Paul Schebesta (1887–1967) and Martin Gusinde (1886–1969) that are owned by the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt, that missionaries and colonial photographers found it difficult to resist the temptation and far-reaching pleasures of capturing African or racialised flesh on film for consumption by audiences at home (Deliss & Mutumba 2014, p.11). The legacy of this visual desire for African flesh is still very much alive and is clearly evidenced today through Western media and charitable institutions that use broken black bodies to raise sympathy and funds for their respective causes. Seeley Harris's photographs encouraged people to take action, to directly or indirectly challenge King Leopold II. In this sense they mark an important visual moment in the photographic framing of Africans. Many of the photographs sit comfortably within the tradition of ethnographic and missionary photography; there are, for example, images of prayer meetings held by the missionaries, of Congolese people working for the missionaries or sitting childlike around them. These types of photographs highlight the fact that many of Seeley

Harris's images clearly conform to traditions of anthropological and missionary ways of producing photographs (Maxwell 2000; Edwards 2001).

However, 'many modern writers on missionaries in the Congo fail even to mention Alice Harris' work' (Thompson 2012, p.184). This may well be because, as works that emerged out of a missionary agenda, they offended the missionary sense of purpose, that is, they represented an archive of missionary failure and can therefore be read as problematic within the visualisation of missionary history. Their portrayal of such raw violence implicates the missionary presence in the scenes of devastation.

Missionary proximity to the violence combined with isolation from home, along with interdependence on aggressive rubber traders and agents for basic survival, would suggest a degree of compliance with and tolerance of the levels of violence being acted upon the Congolese. While W.J.T. Mitchell argues that 'the psychological forces that lead people to be offended by an image are invisible and unpredictable' (Mitchell 2006, p.126), it would nevertheless seem a valid line of enquiry to ask at what point in the theatre of violence in the Congo were the British missionaries offended and what actually constituted the nature of that offence in order for them to begin to act against the atrocities. Mitchell continues:

Offending images do not all offend in the same way. Some offend the beholder, others the object represented. Some offend because they degrade something valuable or desecrate something sacred, others because they glorify something hateful and despised. Some of them violate moral taboos and standards of decency, while some are politically offensive, insults to national honour or unwelcome reminders of an ignoble past. Some offend because of the manner of representation, so that a caricature or stereotype offends not because of *who* but *how* it represents. (Mitchell 2006, p.131)

Seeley Harris's photographs clearly evoke the image of an 'ignoble' British slave-owning past from which the Protestant Church profited, while also violating moral taboos and standards of decorum. As images presented in the context of a religious setting, they also prompt the questions of how long and why British Protestants stayed silent in full knowledge of the atrocities taking place in Leopold's Congo (Hochschild 2000, p.114). As Kevin Grant has argued, 'The missions' problems intensified at the turn of the century on two fronts.

Firstly, the rubber industry in Congo grew rapidly after the mid-1890s and the increasing labour demands of the state and concessionaire companies interfered with the missionaries' access to African communities' (Grant 2001, p.32). Grant also notes that,

more importantly, the State refused to grant new stations to British Protestant missions, at the same time as it encouraged the growth of Belgian and French Catholic missions, which took a more circumspect view toward its brutal practices. It is noteworthy that even under these circumstances the Protestant missions did not establish a closely united front of opposition to the state's policies, nor did the majority of members in any given mission participate actively in public protest against the regime. (Grant 2001, p.32)

Protest against the atrocities in the Congo by the British can therefore be read through the lens of self-serving interest as, 'It was only after years of failed attempts to expand inland that the executive of the Congo Balolo Mission condemned the Congo State in the British press in April 1903, with the Baptist Missionary Society following suit in October 1905' (Grant 2001, p.32).

It is evident that African bodies subjected to brutal violence, torture and death were tolerable to British missionaries as long as their aims in the Congo were being carried out. Only once it was obvious that British Protestant missionaries' progress was being stifled in the Congo did they begin a campaign against Leopold's atrocities.

As noted above, Seeley Harris's photographs are increasingly being referenced in debates concerning atrocity, memory and photography. They surface as part of a growing interest in the study of atrocity by scholars from various disciplines when examining the work that photographs perform in understanding and memorialising past violent events (Sliwinski 2006). However, even within contemporary readings, her photographs more often than not continue to perform 'reassuring symbolic work' (Berger 2011, p.6) concerning atrocity for predominantly white humanitarian-type audiences, which amounts to endorsing a legacy of images of Africa in Europe that maintain the presence of violence and helplessness as acceptable. The photographs produced by Harris cannot be viewed solely as isolated moments of humanitarian Christian benevolence in contrast to Belgian atrocities. Politically and culturally they sit in a more ambivalent location. The work the photographs do now is

unstable, as overall they exist within a dynamic form of British colonisation. Re-positioning these photographs solely within the context of *The Violence of the Image* (Kennedy & Patrick 2014) denies the fact that the Harrises and their presence in the Congo were a component of a violent penetrating phase of aggression that propagated white supremacy (Headrick 1981, p.12). The images were used at home not only to raise awareness but also money to further assist the missionary work in the Congo and therefore have to be read as one of the earliest examples in photography of the black broken body being put to work as part of an economy of display to service and extend a preferred vision of British colonialism.

This visual work has a foundational core in abolitionist images trading in emblems of black suffering and passivity typified by the well-known picture of 'Gordon', which was produced as a carte-de-visite in the USA in 1863. Here, the back of 'Gordon' is presented to the camera showing the mass of his keloid scars, which become symbolic of the violence of slavery in America. The photographs portraying Congolese people with missing limbs came to represent a form of renegade or crazed colonial brutality in Africa. They encourage the viewer to think of these moments in isolation, away from the broader questions of colonisation and cultural oblivion. Seeley Harris's photographs are not deployed as images against Europe's wider colonial enterprises in Africa. They focus on the more singular and intimate forms of violence that were being conducted by the agents of King Leopold II. The Harrises as humanitarian activists were clearly at ease with the manner in which the British conducted their own colonial business. British colonialism was a much more mechanised affair. Its violence was practised through 'the art of killing from a distance' (Lindqvist & Tate 2007, p.46). In 1898, the same year in which the Harrises arrived in the Congo, 'The Battle of Omdurman' took place, where 'technical superiority provides a natural right to annihilate the enemy even when he is defenceless' (Lindqvist & Tate 2007, p.65). At Omdurman, Winston Churchill, who participated in the campaign, noted that the act of killing became 'tedious ... after 5 hours of fighting, 20 Britons, 20 of the Egyptian allies and 11,000 Dervishes lay dead' (Headrick 1981, p.118). The final appeal to the audience at the Harrises' lecture was for the navy to send a 'Man-of-War' to the Congo to act as a blockade and force King Leopold II to comply with the Congo Reform Associations demands.

Seeley Harris's 'Congo Atrocities' photographs help us to understand the social tensions surrounding Europe's conflicting civilising practices at work in Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. They opened up a critical space in which their audiences were able to

voice their outrage. They moved the viewer to a potentially different state of reception of images produced in Africa, away from the securities of benevolence and enlightenment and into an uncomfortable situation of violent abstraction in which blame for the atrocities is easily located. The photographs could be read as traumatic markers situated on a public platform to generate an immediate act of interrogation into the previously unseen violent conditions at work in the Congo. When we read the Harrises' lantern slide show now, we can establish that there is a distinctive ideological Janus-like two-faced aspect to it: one face scorns the violence of King Leopold II; the other wilfully accepts the violence of British imperialism as natural and right. Neither face recognises the human condition of the African as fully equal.

Therefore, Seeley Harris's photographs are important because they changed the field of perception concerning European encounters in Africa. They present an unacceptable outcome of European presences in Africa to the coloniser. The photographs literally brought the violence enacted over there, in that dark continent, back home. It was through their presentation in public spaces that the intensity of King Leopold II's violence became manifest as real, shattering assumptions about Europe's gift of civilisation to the African as being based on a sound civilising mission (Nault 2012, p.5). The photographs offend audiences because they act as representations of the savage face of Europe at work. They also excite viewers because they claim a morally higher ground over the Belgians and reinforce British colonial presences as a pure and more divine form of subjugation. (Fig. 1)

The photographs destroyed the prevailing popular myth that all was well with the programme of modernisation of Africa by Europe. We cannot, however, simply view them as basic evidence of actual violence. They are more than the sum of the victims' stories. They also allow us to see the outcomes of King Leopold II's totalitarian regime. The body, as Foucault noted, is 'directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs' (Foucault 1991, p.25). Monarchies and totalitarian systems, according to Foucault, 'function through the overt exercise and display of punishment for the violation of laws, such as public execution' (Sturken 2001, p.96), while the modernising, post-Enlightenment states of nineteenth-century Europe eschewed such spectacular displays of violence and instead found non-coercive ways to discipline the body. The emphasis on the display of overt violence in Seeley Harris's photographs suggests, though, that the

modernisation process can easily revert to pre-modern forms of the exercise of power, signalling the failure of both missionary Christianity and, more importantly, of the enlightenment as an over-arching concept. They provoked the audience, which, as I discuss later, would have had some knowledge of the violence taking place in the Congo for at least a decade, and as a result could have had an emasculating effect on the missionary community by recalling the memory of failing to act when confronted with the fact of slavery and violence. Also, the photographs rendered the concept of religious conversion of the African subject useless before the very eyes of those with the greatest investment in the idea of 'saving' African souls. 'The incorruptible Kodak' (Twain 1970, p.73) in the Congo symbolically revealed the absence of God, the failure of the European as a civilising force, and the disastrous complacency of the white missionary.

The opposing ideological forces of commerce and religion are exposed in these photographs, which reveal too much of what has been historically ignored. Through these images we can see the evidence of both these regimes at work on the African subject, in different but in equally violent conditions of oppression. For King Leopold II, colonisation was primarily concerned with the continued domination of the African body by the tradition of slavery. His method was to break the African body by any means possible in order to profit. His genius lay in the fact that he did not actually own the enslaved subject. His regime was based on traditional forms of domination, deception and violence, rendering the African ultimately disposable (Bales 1999). In contrast, the British missionary preferred to use a more subtle form of domination to coerce the African subject, focusing on their moral and religious condition, saving their soul or moulding an ontological new African into an imagined Eurocentric being. Seeley Harris's photographs depict the individuals caught in this no-win space of objectification and cultural oblivion. Some of those photographed are named, thus bringing them closer to the idea of a distinctive identity for the audience. However, the naming process only marginally reduces the distance between the subject and the audience, and, in this context, seems to predominantly present the Congolese subjects as docile, dependent simpletons.

The 'Congo Atrocities' lecture assumed that its audience had little or no knowledge of the Congo. The Congolese were presented as having no history and their vast country enters into the audience's imagination as if the beginning of time in central Africa came about by the discovery, presence and absolute mediation of the missionaries. The Congo in this context

has no indigenous perspective, no cultural articulation or expression; it becomes the story of Henry Morton Stanley (1841–1904). Stanley’s discovery gave meaning to the region in terms of assets, time and place. For the missionaries and their audience, even though Seeley Harris’s photographs relayed this as a devastating encounter, what the ‘Congo Atrocities’ lecture marked was the moment of birthing of modernity for the Congo, a most violent introduction to the industrial world. The photographs therefore become representatives of ‘the point at which the West began to universalise itself’; they are ‘connected with the attempt to construct the world as a single place, with the world market, with globalisation, and with that moment when Western Europe tried to convert the rest of the world into a province of its own forms of life.’ (S. Hall et al. 2001, p.18). The key colonising objective was to remake Africa as a form of temporally backward European state, ripe for subjugation and economic exploitation, with a black workforce that was lower in human value than Europe’s peasants, and which would naturally, with the assistance of force and superstition, service white supremacy.

Slide 2. H.M. Stanley

‘Mr. H.M. Stanley was the first to trace the Congo River from the great lakes to its well-known mouth in the Atlantic, and he it was who described with natural enthusiasm the possibilities of this great division of Equatorial Africa. He foresaw quite clearly that under the influence of civilisation the country could be made to yield immeasurable stores of animal, vegetable and mineral wealth, to the mutual advantage of the white and coloured races ... We shall see how the advent of the European, which Stanley naturally encouraged, has “ameliorated the condition” of the “moderately industrious” native.’ The sarcasm in the text accompanying slide 2 allows for the establishment of blame to be apportioned to those that were from the outset employed in the service of King Leopold II. It is Stanley who is identified as Leopold’s agent in the field. Stanley becomes a disingenuous man and a betrayer of good Christian values. Therefore, and by implication, the ‘Congo Atrocities’ were, at their very core, a British problem. This is because it was the great British characteristics of tenacity, invention and endeavour that gifted Leopold his colony. (Fig. 2)

Slides 3, 4, and 5. The Wealth of Country

These three slides share the same main title, followed by the word ‘Palms’, ‘Rubber’ or

‘Ivory’, and each one carries a detailed narrative of the natural resource available in the Congo. Regarding palms, slide 3 relays that ‘in some districts there are entire forests of it and as one tree yields annually from 500 to 1000 nuts it will be seen at once that great wealth was being wasted ... The natives knew nothing of their value in Stanley’s day, but they have learned a good deal since’. Here, Stanley is credited as being responsible for the shift in understanding locally of the value of palm oil in Europe, albeit a value that increased the risk of exploitation of the natives.

Slide 4 discusses the abundance of rubber: ‘But more important by far is the gum of the India-rubber plant; and the great vines which produce the sap which we call rubber grow here in luxuriant profusion. I do not profess that the picture represents the rubber vines, but in forests such this they are found in large numbers’. This slide works as a scene setter to help the audience imagine the density of opportunity that the Congo forests offered. The narrative continues, ‘As great creepers they hang in festoons from tree to tree, and said Stanley, “if every warrior living on the immediate banks of the Congo and its navigable affluents were to pick about a third of a pound of rubber each day throughout the year and convey it to the trader for sale, five million pounds worth of vegetable produce could be obtained without exhaustion to the wild forest production”’. Stanley is once again cited as the main protagonist in the fantasy of the commercial opportunities the Congo offers for trade but with no sense of the exploitation of the local populace.

Slide 5 focuses on ivory and acts as a damning marker of Stanley’s enterprise. The lecture reads,

‘One other source of wealth cannot be overlooked; and the picture shows a couple of young elephants shot at Lomako, will serve as a peg on which to hang the description. Stanley calculated that there were some 200,000 elephants in the Congo basin, each carrying on an average 50lbs weight of ivory on his head, which would represent, when collected and sold in Europe some five million pounds’.

The photograph accompanying the slide sits uncomfortably with the narrative, as the ivory yielded from this kill would have been zero, the elephants being too young. The dead baby elephants are shown in the foreground, laid out side by side on a well-kept path as if they have been trained in a circus to lie down simultaneously. Even in death, they remain cute creatures of curiosity and the fact of their killing becomes a facile representational moment of

European power in Africa. The image presents a critical question to its audience, as it is difficult to understand why the baby elephants would be shot for any other reason than sport. As sporting trophies they make a pathetic display. The photograph reveals a powerful and wasteful culture of destruction rather than industrious cultivation and benevolence. This is the first image of death presented in the 'Congo Atrocities' lecture and marks the transition from the topographic to the evidential use of photographs to show 'real' violence. The wastefulness becomes emblematic of the violent culture of destruction at work in the Congo. It reads now as an unnecessary form of colonial excess. The killing of these two young elephants sets the scene for the critique of violence against the people and the environment that follows. The heroic figure of Stanley is ridiculed through this photograph; he is transformed into an ironic, tragic, Grim Reaper-like figure that brings death and destruction to the Congo. The narrative ultimately positions Stanley as naïve regarding the rich natural resources of the Congo and brings into focus King Leopold II's intentions and greed. The lecture highlights this in claiming that, 'Stanley, however, was keen sighted enough to place Ivory "fifth in rank among the natural products of the basin."' He foresaw its extinction in the most distant future. What he did not foresee was the methods by which this would be brought about. He did not reckon on the vigour of the royal trader.'

(Fig. 3)

Seeley Harris's photographs and the accompanying lecture work within ideological parameters that are concerned primarily with exposing wrongs relating to forced slavery on the African body. The archive builds on the foundational critical misgivings expressed by other missionaries who were attempting to raise public awareness of the existence of forced labour in the Congo. One early opposer of King Leopold II was a French Catholic missionary to Africa, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1825–92), who during a sermon at St Sulpice in Paris in 1888, 'shocked his audience by describing the horrors of the Congo slave trade: villages surrounded and burnt; men captured and yoked together; women and children penned like cattle in the slave markets' (David 2011). Another dissenting missionary voice was that of George Washington Williams (1849–91), who in 1890 visited both King Leopold II in Belgium and the Congo Free State. Williams was an African American journalist, pastor, historian, lawyer and Civil War veteran, who travelled to the Congo to see the benevolent Leopold's regime at work. Horrified by the violence he witnessed, he wrote directly from the Congo a comprehensive open letter to the king, in which he invited the international community to take action against Leopold and to hold him to account for his criminal acts.

Within his long and detailed letter he delivers a profound humanitarian message,

I now appeal to the Powers which committed this infant State to your Majesty's charge, and to the great States which gave it international being; and whose majestic law you have scorned and trampled upon, to call and create an International Commission to investigate the charges herein preferred in the name of Humanity, Commerce, Constitutional Government and Christian Civilisation.

Williams's appeal was circulated widely: 'Copies of which are sent to British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the US Secretary of State, and newspapers and magazines throughout Britain and the United States, commencing the international debate over the Congo Free State' (Nault 2012, p.2). His letter seems to have been well received but without the added weight of photographs did not attract great public attention, and was easily negated as merely the subjective point of view of a disgruntled or ill-informed black missionary. Photographs would have helped Williams to establish an objective distance from his campaign by creating a 'real' picture of the atrocities for audiences to engage with. However, the lack of visual evidence cannot be the only reason why his appeal did not strike an even deeper chord with the political powers in Britain and the USA. We have to consider Williams's appeal within the wider field of contemporary transatlantic racial politics and we have to take into account the position and power of Williams as a black American in Africa offering a damning critique of the royal-blooded European Leopold. Williams's criticism of the king was an extraordinary political act, especially given the circumstances of his racialised political and cultural weakness. He refused to be an accomplice (Levinas 1987, p.109) in this theatre of non-recognition. At the time of his writing the USA was locked into the segregationist Jim Crow laws and a humanitarian appeal of this magnitude from a relatively disenfranchised black voice could not carry the political weight to effect the changes Williams demanded. Unfortunately, Williams died in 1891 in England on his way back to the USA. His contribution to exposing Leopold may well have been more significant had he lived longer (Thompson 2012, p.171). What is certain is that his race would have hindered greatly his protestations against Leopold's blatant disregard for life, culture and international agreements.

The complex position of black missionaries and the realities of their race are clearly defined through the experience of William Henry Sheppard (1865–1927). Sheppard was fully aware

of his designated role as a subordinate to white missionary authority in Africa. He was in no doubt about the disadvantages of being black and how this would impact on his being recognised as a valid concerned voice commenting on the atrocities. In 1899 Sheppard had reported and photographed a massacre in the Pianga region but when pressed as to why he was not more vocal about making public his report he stated that, 'Being a coloured man, I would not be understood criticizing a white government before white people' (Austin 2005). Unlike Williams, Sheppard as an American of African descent was fully aware that his humanity was politically, ideologically and culturally vulnerable, and he recognised his subaltern position in the missionary world. The question of the state of African American humanity and American racism at the time Sheppard was photographing atrocities in the Congo is evidenced most clearly in the photographic and theoretical work produced by W.E.B. Du Bois at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1900, as part of the Paris Exposition Universelle, he displayed his Georgia Negro portraits for the first time as an interventionist cultural act to oppose the archives that registered the Negro as being inferior. Du Bois was deliberately working 'against the scientific archives that constructed a visual racial typology at the turn of the century' (Smith 2004, p.23). 'The Introductory chart that framed Du Bois's social study of "The Georgia Negro" for visitors at the Paris Exposition of 1900 carried his lasting declaration: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line"' (Smith 2004, p.22). For those subjected to King Leopold II's rule around 1900, the problem at this time was not just that of the colour line; it was the age-old chattel slavery, the unstoppable force of European colonialism in all its guises.

As far as the civilised world was concerned, King Leopold II's forced slavery was supposed to be a distant phenomenon firmly locked away in Europe's past: the modern world had abolished it. It is therefore conceivable that part of the effect that Seeley Harris's photographs had on their audience was to return the Western gaze back onto its historic slave-owning past. As photographs 'they represent the past as fully retrievable' (Baer 2005, p.70) and perform as objects of fact against Leopold's discredited fictions of altruism. The memory of Europe's slavery that is evoked in the images may have contributed to the sense of outrage generated against Leopold. The photographs displayed across public sites become a visual force that showed Europe working 'outside of civilisation' (Levinas 2006, p.8) and they provoked in the evangelical viewer a clear sense of having to take responsibility. Slavery as a period of shame across Europe had been put to rest and advocates of the abolition movement well celebrated and honoured. What Seeley Harris's photography did was to produce emotive re-

memory work by reawakening the spectre of European slavery. The images critiqued the Western world's sense of progress and as archival records of Western endeavour allow us to peek into the dark side of enlightenment thought at work.

There has been much discussion about photographs and their capacity to trouble the subconscious, as well as the unfixed nature of their meaning and reception. 'A photograph might be a fixed image but it's meaning is much less stable' (Campany 2007, p.20) and its reception cannot be guaranteed (Hall 1973). The unfixable nature of photography and its capacity to generate multiple meanings are theoretical positions that most of those interested in the medium have accepted. Photographs do not carry universal meanings. 'Rather, an image "speaks" to specific sets of viewers who happen to be tuned into some aspect of the image, such as style, content, the world it constructs, or the issues it raises' (Sturken 2001, p.45). It is important to recognise time, place and emotive voice in the location and reception of photographs, especially when looking at the Other and the cultural positionality of the different people in the imagination of those doing the looking; colonial curiosity had dangerous outcomes and is not to be underestimated as a mild-mannered passive act of engagement. The 'Congo Atrocities' lecture and photographs constructed a politics of visualisation of the Other that was specifically deployed to engage the force of white moral outrage and religious conviction surrounding the knowledge of the atrocities taking place in the Congo, locking these pictures and their subjects into a tight form of visual exchange. The question of a less stable image of visual meaning is suffocated by the narrative descriptions that focus on the deception attached to King Leopold II's political manoeuvrings and violence. The lecture keeps the portrayal of colonial violence coupled with King Leopold II and, by extension, frees the missionaries of any sense of guilt. The photographs within the context of the lecture do two distinctive types of cultural work. They overtly demonise King Leopold II and they covertly erase the timelines of British missionary knowledge and inertia regarding the atrocities in the Congo.

Slide 6. Leopold II from Stanley's Standpoint

Here, the narrative positions King Leopold II as a monarchic magician who cast a spell over the world, stating that 'He captivated everybody by his philanthropic schemes for regenerating and saving the African races ... Stanley fell under the spell of the philanthropic monarch. So did the British Chambers of Commerce. So did the Protestant Missionary Societies. So did everybody – almost everybody, for there were just a few notable

exceptions.’ The lecture does not mention who these exceptions were. Williams’s and Sheppard’s contributions to the knowledge of the atrocities are conveniently absent, marking a closing-out historically of their attempts to raise awareness of the situation in the Congo. Sheppard’s analysis of the futile nature of his expression of concern against the violence of Leopold is validated in this moment. In 1890, Williams in particular acted in the moment of discovery of slavery and reached a wide platform in doing so. Therefore, given the history of public expressions of outrage regarding events taking place in the Congo, the British missionaries could not, with any secure justification, claim the same sense of humanitarian urgency and responsibility that was clearly evident in the work of Williams. The compliant nature of British missionary work in the early years of their presence in the Congo is denied and repressed. The violence of King Leopold II is conveniently presented as the discovery of white British missionaries, a status that places the Harrises in pole position in the race to expose the atrocities of King Leopold II.

The early part of the lecture’s narration and display of photographs would have disturbed Britain’s religious circles’ sense of organisational political confidence, a confidence that would have been present as part of the legacy of the abolitionist movement. Among the merchant classes, there would have been much anticipation with regard to the economic potential that the Congo Free State afforded them as a free trade zone. The Harrises’ lecture can also be read in the context of British religious and commercial opportunities in the Congo that were being denied; that is, the other emotive and real issue at hand was not the welfare of the Congolese people but the welfare of the British nation state. Britain saw itself as being cheated by King Leopold II’s unjust and illegal commercial exploits in the Congo, which clearly broke with the terms and conditions under which he was granted custodianship of the Congo by Europe’s more powerful countries. The unstated subtext of the lecture’s demand for military intervention by the British, then, was that a blockade mounted for humanitarian motives would have decidedly beneficial side effects for British commercial interests.

Slide 7. Extracts from the Articles of the Berlin Conference

This slide reminded the audience of the 1884 conference in Berlin and the narration states that it ‘resulted in the recognition of the new state and the eulogising of its author; and all the powers congratulated themselves and each other on their humanity and self abnegation’. Nowhere in the rest of the lecture is there any mention of the other outcomes of the

conference, in which the foundations for Europe's colonisation of Africa were put in place. The narration continues with a focus on article VI:

All powers ... bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the condition of their moral and material well-being, and help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade. They shall, without distinction of creed or nation, protect and favour all religious, scientific, or charitable institutions and undertakings created and organised for the above ends, or which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessing of civilisation.

The critical point here was to illustrate how completely King Leopold II had broken his agreement with the civilised world. The lecture and Seeley Harris's photographs therefore disrupted the desired benevolent self-image of their intended Western audience, which believed fundamentally that, as Europeans, their governments, religious institutions, charities and their science had a natural right over the African body and African resources. The photographs, then, do much more than just put the mutilated and distressed African body on display. They represent the colonised black body as victim as well as perversely and critically reflecting the colonisers back onto themselves as they display the outcomes and effects of corrupt colonisation at work on the African body. The coloniser as spectator is present in each frame taken and each photograph is taken for the spectators at home. The colonisers in all their forms – religious or commercial – are signified most powerfully by what is absent from the black body. This in turn creates a record against which the coloniser gauges himself as a competent, civilising authority. The black mutilated body on display in Seeley Harris's archive is in fact emblematic of the failed authority that the coloniser has over the black body, for the black body has to be whole in order for the colonising ideal of civilisation to be fulfilled. The colonised must reflect fully his state of conversion to the colonising condition. This is why it was important for King Leopold II to try and create a positive counter image of the black subject to those that were presented by the Harrises. (Fig. 4)

As a broken subject, the image of an African slave serves no real purpose in the post-abolition world; it is an image that must be denied and repressed within the psyche of the European enlightenment programme. The transformation from native savage to enlightened black subject must be done with the body complete. Any mark of violence against the black body becomes inadvertently a mark of violence against the righteous European man. This is a

core emotive space that the Harrises occupied within the context of their lecture. The humanity of the African subject is not all that is at stake when looking at the photographs that accompany the 'Congo Atrocities' lecture; it is critically Europe's idea of itself. The Harrises' campaign was not about the liberation and freedom of the Congolese; it was essentially concerned with eradicating the physical brutality towards a 'recognised' lesser African being. The image of the contented African subject under European rule works as a sign of European superiority, like taming a wild beast, and this as an act of power is much more productive than the act of killing.

What is left of the colonized at the end of this stubborn effort to dehumanize him? He is surely no longer an alter ego of the colonizer. He is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly toward becoming an object. As an end, in the colonizer's supreme ambition, he should exist only as a function of the needs of the colonizer, i.e., be transformed into a pure colonized. (Memmi 2003, p.130)

A broken colonised body therefore suggests colonial failure in an enlightened colonising mind, a mind that denies the presence of violence as being the essence of colonial rule. This is the condition within which the Harrises were trapped.

Through a now well-established photographic colonial gaze and its empirical systems of knowledge exchange (Maxwell 2000, p.9), and despite false European claims to recognise the condition of the African that is clearly evident in the detail of article VI of the Berlin conference, we can gauge from Seeley Harris's photographs the tragic scene and the devastating outcome of this historical and internationally ratified European encounter with Africa. Rather than bringing the African subject closer to Europeans, photography often exploited the European fascination with difference. 'This led to a particular genre of African colonial photography which aimed to contrast European progress with African backwardness' (Thompson 2012, p.34). Much of the work contained within Seeley Harris's photographic archive reinforces a sense of African backwardness; what surfaces is an a cultural being on the edge of life complicit in its own destruction.

The 'Congo Atrocities' images are part of a chain of violent connections that bind the colonising missionary, King Leopold II and the African body together. What we need to be aware of when studying the lecture and its photographs is that the works are capable of

producing ‘an over-determining definition of “context” [that can] obscure readings against the grain and obliterate the space for counter narratives’ (Edwards 2001, p.108). It is important to identify that neither of the European forces present in the Congo offered a space for African wellbeing to develop. The missionaries actively worked to erase that which they considered unholy and Leopold worked to erase that which he thought unproductive. As external forces with core conflicting values, methods and ideologies, which clearly had a different understanding of the nature of benevolence and how it should be applied in Africa, neither the missionaries (Christianity) nor Leopold (capitalism) could accommodate a sense of value in the alterity of the Africans’ humanity. Cultural recognition in the form of European encounters with Africa, as is evident in these two positions, exists only in a hierarchical construct of racial difference.

The African Other when seen from the European standpoint is not met with parity. The African subject is literally faced with forces of persistent conversion, exploitation and brutality. Seeley Harris’s photographs are a critical part of the story of photography in Africa in that they alter our perception of the way colonisers acted on the African body. When Leopold considered the African, he embodied the violence of the colonising gaze, but saw no human presence. It was Leopold’s absolute inability to take responsibility for the humanity of the Congolese that marked him as having no moral qualms concerning his violent actions against the Congolese. If we read King Leopold II’s actions through the notion of taking responsibility, which in the philosophical work of Emmanuel Levinas is an infinite act of humanity towards the Other when we look into the face of the Other, (Levinas 2006) then we can deduce that Leopold culturally and ethically could not recognise the face of the Other and that in this significant racial blind spot both Leopold and the Other were doomed, locked in a violent struggle that would over time, as Fanon states (Fanon 1963), finally end through acts of extreme anti-colonial violence. Leopold was metaphorically doomed to carry on killing, even after his death, via the Belgian state, and the Other was doomed to cultural and physical oblivion as part of a process of liberation. As Levinas states,

The other man commands by his face, which is not confined in the form of its appearance; naked, stripped of its form, denuded of its very presence, which would again mask it like its own portrait; wrinkled skin, trace of itself, presence that at every moment is a retreat into hollow of death with an eventuality of no return. The otherness of the fellow man is this hollow of no-place where, face, he already takes

leave (s'absente), without promise of return and resurrection. (Levinas 2006, p.7).

Seeley Harris's photographs disturbed the coloniser because they revealed his capacity for oblivion: 'colonisation is not merely satisfied with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it' (Fanon 1963, p.170).

Slide 8. The Ideal Congo – A Civilised Country

This slide bolsters its critique of King Leopold II by stating that 'The late Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, speaking in the British House of Commons on June 9th, 1904, expressed the international view quite clearly: When the United States first, and European governments subsequently, recognised the existence in the Congo Basin of a government possessed of a national status, that recognition was accorded not to the Congo State, but to an Association professing an international character, and proclaiming before the world as the object of its being, not the accumulation of rubber at an infinite cost of human life and suffering, but the protection and civilisation of the natives of Africa'. The narrative builds a strong sense of international political commitment to 'protection and civilisation' of the Congo natives and provides a powerful appeal to those in the audience who may have been of a more secular persuasion. What was at stake was of global political significance, a treaty defaulted upon, and 'Signatory Powers' needed to be mobilised against Leopold. The civilising mission in the Congo could not be fulfilled without a close alignment between the state and the Church and here the lecture requests a greater degree of state intervention to clear the path for British missionary work to continue, work that was being blocked by Leopold.

The key point at this stage concerning the politics of the presentation of the 'Congo Atrocities' lecture is that the missionaries felt compromised. They had not been allowed to succeed because of the other external colonising forces at work around them. What they failed to recognise, even at the height of this humanitarian moment, was that all of the colonising presences were in part responsible for the conditions that had developed since the Congo Free State was formed. With the intensity of violence being known about for years and tolerated as a necessary evil while Protestant missions up the Congo River were being made possible, British missionary silence regarding the atrocities became a convenient historical revision of the humanitarian concerned voiced in the lecture. The fact of compliance creates the space for an important counter-reading of Seeley Harris's

photographs, which became a double-edged marker of accusation against both King Leopold II and the cohort of British missionaries present in the Congo from 1885 to 1904. The photographs, then, prompt a level of enquiry that is common to much analysis concerning colonisation and extreme levels of violence. Albert Memmi describes the condition of seeing the colonising self from a position of privilege. Although Seeley Harris produced critical work, it was informed from an absolute position of privilege,

for how long could [she] fail to see the misery of the colonized and the relation of that misery to [her] own comfort? [She] realises that this easy profit is so great only because it is wrested from others. In short, [she] finds two things in one: [she] discovers the existence of the colonizer as [she] discovers [her] own privilege. (Memmi 2003, p.51)

The Harrises did not seem to recognise themselves as colonisers and Alice's position as a colonising force complicates the idea that her photographs represent what has been described as the 'Childhood of Human Rights' (Sliwinski 2006).

Images of violence, either as a form of cultural ridicule, titillation or caricature against the African or other indigenous peoples, have a long and well-documented history, as do those produced to generate sympathy for the victims of colonisation and slavery (Wood 2000). In 1905, atrocity in photographs, especially those that focused on violence by Europeans against Africans, was novel. As far as public encounters with photography were concerned, Alice Seeley Harris's photographs were foundational work for a novel way of seeing twentieth-century Africa and marked a new chapter in the visual consumption of Africa in the Western metropolis. When the native was photographically rendered, they became a subject of curiosity, a lower human form, out of harmony with European capitalist ideals or, alternatively, posed on the edge of humanity: a raw savage reproduced for voyeuristic pleasure, staged as ripe for religious indoctrination, primed for hard industrial labour or ready to be tamed for domestic work. These representations add up to the construction of an authentic but lesser human form, primarily put on Earth for European benefit. In 1904, the savage native was very much alive in the Western imagination: 'savages – whatever their supposed racial origins – were said to be characterised by "ferocity" and "treachery", their bodies were self-mutilated, and they lacked language and ate people' (Pinney & Peterson 2003, p.59). Within the realm of the Western public imagination the Harrises' slide show thus

sat within a wider set of dominant colonial narratives that were at work in Europe and the USA that helped shape perceptions of the Other. This phenomenon is tragically seen through the treatment of Ota Benga in 1904. Benga, a Congolese pygmy, was put on display as part of the St Louis World's Fair. Within two years he could be seen at the Bronx Zoo, New York City, sharing a monkey house with an orang-utan. The event was an international sensation making headlines in Europe and across the USA (Newkirk 2015). Effectively, as can be seen in the treatment of Benga, commercial gain dictated the context in which the colonised subject was exhibited.

The context of colonial encounters within the West was dominated by fantasy, display, the rhetoric of discovery and new forms of pseudo-knowledge production surrounding race. The time and place of encounter between the colonised subject and the colonisers at home was primarily through the spectacle of world fairs such as that held at St Louis, which contained human zoos from the colonies, and through the circulation of anatomical or anthropological photographs that focused on 'primitive' races billed to audiences as being near extinction and whose images were sold in the form of affordable and collectable cards. 'Photographs produced for the mass tourist market were wedded even more firmly to the stereotype' (Maxwell 2000, p.10) of the exotic or savage Other, because they were commercially viable commodities, and through commercial outlets they rapidly became the dominant set of visual tropes that created, objectified and distanced the colonised subject from European time. The colonised black body on display in this moment becomes a living relic of humanity. Therefore, with the Harrises presenting mutilated black bodies within a political and cultural climate of extreme fascination with the African body, we have to consider the possibility that part of the work the lantern slide lecture may have performed when shown to its white public was to provide another layer of voyeuristic pleasure generated by the spectacle of fragmented black bodies presented on the edge of life.

Slide 9. Entrance to a Cannibal Village

Bringing forth the image of the savage cannibal, the main narrative of this slide highlights that 'the Congo was not a region of ideal happiness and peace for the negro before the advent of the white man. It was, in fact, a region of isolated tribes and communities, almost the whole of which, except in the south, were confirmed cannibals. In the northern half of the Congo Free State incessant wars and slave raids took place, not with a view to supplying labour, but with the intention of obtaining wives, and above all, victims for the cannibal feast.

But then, where is ideal happiness to be found in this world?’ The accompanying image ‘shows the cage-like entrance to a Cannibal town – an entrance which could easily be made to act as a trap on occasion.’ The African cannibal in the ‘Congo Atrocities’ lecture animated the presence of a base civilisation in the form of men having multiple wives and eating other people. The slide does not actually show an image of a cannibal; this is left to the imagination of the audience. The cannibal presence represented here is through the context of his dwelling’s entrance, which also serves, according to the lecture, as a possible human trap, a powerful emotive context in which to charge the audience’s imagination. The lecture, then, takes a distinctive turn away from the idea of the Congo cannibal back to a place that brings the native closer to the European. The final part of the narrative for this slide contradicts the information previously shared with the audience when it announces that, ‘The missionaries, however, state that many of the native tribes, even in the north, have never been cannibal.’ Clearly, sympathy would not be so forthcoming if an overly strong impression of the native as cannibal was left with the audience. That impression would leave the humanity of the Congo native open to counter-interpretation, the danger being that one could argue that their extinction was desirable because they were non-human and beyond redemption. The construct of the cannibal created the ultimate and most charged justification for colonial presences in Africa and, when required, a cannibal threat would justify the use of violence.

A variant image of the savage cannibal in Africa that was often reproduced by missionary photographers in the Congo

served one of two purposes: either to show aspects of missionary work, including the transformative power of that work on the African converts, or to show various studies of Africans who had not come under the influence of the mission – the purpose here being predominantly one of contrast with the converts. (Thompson 2012, p.13)

Seeley Harris’s photographs portray violence but they also carry an embedded message of the African subject as being a cultureless helpless child who would, with proper guidance and missionary application, become a good hardworking African Christian mirroring the colonising missionary ideals and character ‘to the point where Africans are walking abstractions, inanimate things or invisible creatures’ (West 1987, p.23). The objective was the production of a Christian, industrious, happy African, who was nurtured out of cultural darkness and into the light of modernity or, put another way, the objective was to coerce the

idle African into becoming a profitable productive being through religious enlightenment. 'The mythical portrait of the colonized therefore includes an unbelievable laziness and that of the colonizer, a virtuous taste for action. At the same time the colonizer suggests that employing the colonized is not very profitable, thereby authorizing his unreasonable wages' (Memmi 2003, p.123). Whatever the issue, the outcome is the same: force of some kind must be applied to the African. The success of such colonising work would leave only one remaining cultural marker of difference in place, one that cannot be erased, that is, the irresolvable epidermal scheme of things, 'the fact of blackness' (Fanon 1986, p.109). Everything else regarding African cultural life in missionary and capitalistic terms was scheduled for oblivion. 'Modernity, or at least that component of it represented by economic expansion of the capitalist process of production, produces cultural amnesia not by accident but intrinsically and necessarily. Forgetting is built into the capitalist process of production itself, incorporated in the bodily experience of its life-spaces' (Connerton 2009, p.125). The process of capitalistic production clearly aided King Leopold II's amnesia regarding his proposed and designated position in the Congo.

Few of the thousands of people attending the 'Congo Atrocities' lectures would have doubted that they would have an opportunity to see images of violence. The title of the lecture prepared by the CRA contained the key words 'Congo' and 'Atrocities', which was clearly intended to whet the appetite of those interested in violence or spectacles from Africa. By 1900, lantern slide shows were well established throughout Europe. The earliest reference to something resembling a projection lantern dates from around 1420 ('An Introduction to Lantern History: The Magic Lantern Society' n.d.). From the very beginning, lantern slide shows were used to entertain audiences in darkened spaces and, over time, images projected onto screens depicted biblical scenes, X-rated striptease, and popular horror in shows known as Phantasmagoria. 'The exhibition/performance of magic lantern shows was considered entertainment not much different than the motion picture today' (Peres 2007, p.803). The darkened room allowed for a large degree of 'voyeuristic phantasy' (Mulvey 1975) to be generated in the audiences that attended the Harrises' lantern slide show. This complicates the picture yet further, for it positions the slides uneasily within an erotic economy. The slide show traded in part on the anticipation of seeing naked black bodies, fuelling further European sexual fantasies surrounding Africa and other indigenous peoples, which, at the time, were being brought to public attention through 'the quasi-scientific ethnographic,

presentation [that] excused what would have been unacceptably pornographic under other circumstances' (Maxwell 2000, p.158).

Seeley Harris's atrocity images thus sustain many counter-narratives when read within the wider context of photographic representations from Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. These early encounters with blackness, even those that claimed to champion African rights, are framed through the logic of the time in which they surfaced. This was an ideological framing that was busy constructing and propagating ideas of race and racism, primarily through sciences based on an obsession with empirical evidence, of which photography played a major part, and a desire to dissect the natural world for greater internal knowledge of it and its peoples, of which the African subject was central. This meant that the development of Europe and its advancement could be considered only when pitched against the Other, the Other being the subject against which Europe measured and viewed itself.

The African body within the Harrises' lantern slide show can also be read as being put to work against the industrial and technological developments in Africa that denied the urgency of the missionaries' religious purpose. The images of atrocities highlighted Belgium as a power that not only committed violence against people and the environment but also negated the missionaries as agents of God. Through their work the Harrises prioritised religious conversion over industrial extraction and greed, and within this context the broken African body put on display in the West, through the theatre of lantern slides, became a haunting sign of the absence of God made real through technology. King Leopold II's presence in the Congo was marked by the politics and theories of his time. As Cornel West reminds us, this historical period of white supremacy was constructed out of

a scientific racist logic [that] rests upon a modern philosophical discourse guided by Greek ocular metaphors, undergirded by Cartesian notions of the primacy of the subject and the pre-eminence of representation, and buttressed by Baconian ideas of observation, evidence, and confirmation that promote and encourage [the epistemologies associated with colonialism classically through] the activities of observing, comparing, measuring and ordering physical characteristics of human bodies.

West also states that 'Given the renewed appreciation and appropriation of classical antiquity,

these activities were regulated by classical aesthetic and cultural norms. Within this logic, the notions of black ugliness, cultural deficiency, and intellectual inferiority are legitimated by the value-laden yet prestigious, authority of science' (West 1987, p.23). This form of modernity when put to work against the African subject in the Congo relieved the colonisers of any moral responsibility for violence against the indigenous African because it was merely a result of the natural order that Western science and progress required.

If we focused more sharply on the aspects of religious conversion that were aimed at the Congolese then we could reappraise how we read the work that the Harrises produced. It becomes evident that their lantern slide show was also the first significant international photographic campaign directly in support of Protestant missionary development in Africa. The photographs undoubtedly bring to the fore the issue of Africans caught under intense regimes of violent colonisation. The critical question here, however, is whether African human rights really benefited from these campaigns or rather those of the white British missionaries. History would suggest the latter. Nonetheless, Seeley Harris's photographs can be read as a moment in Western culture that was, in the visual sense, historically groundbreaking: they were an attempt, though problematic, to build a condition of empathy for the African subject from within a difficult Western visual paradigm that was swamped in a culture of racist imagery that commodified African bodies in debasing ways for centuries (Mirzoeff & McClintock 1998).

The photographs marked a shift in the West's understanding of itself as a presence in Africa that could no longer be constructed as mutually beneficial. By working through the power structure of the CRA, the Harrises' became key players in Western audiences' realisation of the violent events that were taking place in the Congo. The significance of Seeley Harris's photographs is that through their production we can gauge the power inherent in photography to affect social attitudes at the turn of the twentieth century. This campaigning use of photographs is a clear example of what can be achieved politically when graphic images of violence are presented directly to audiences who are willing to engage with the violence and to take responsibility for what is shown. The horror of the photographs obviously worked an influential spell not just on the general public but also on wealthy captains of industry. In 1905 William Cadbury of the cocoa company Cadbury Brothers Ltd donated £1,000 to the CRA; this is the equivalent of around £100,000 today. This massive act of support from Cadbury, along with the Harrises direct participation in lecturing, changed the course of the

CRA. Money was of course needed to fund the campaign but so were influential individuals. It was through Cadbury that the CRA gained access to thousands of people via his influence over the Society of Friends, 'whose long-standing antislavery committee embraced the issue and, in turn, mobilized local Quaker structures.' (Stamatov 2013, p.6). Cadbury, though, was a controversial figure. The charge of hypocrisy was levelled at him in a newspaper editorial in 1908 and led to a famous court case in which Cadbury Brothers won a libel suit but the jury awarded derisory damages of one farthing (Satre 2005, p.127). This left doubt over the credibility of Cadbury as an ethical business that still had connections with slave labour.

With Seeley Harris's photographs in circulation across Europe and the USA in such a progressive way, it is evident that the atrocities they portrayed were the central component in the CRA's message, which was 'to secure for the natives inhabiting the Congo State territories the just and humane treatment which was guaranteed to them under the Berlin and Brussels acts' (Grant 2001, p.39).

One has to consider the visual impact of exposing Western audiences to King Leopold II's brutalities and to question to what extent such audiences understood the scale and scope of violence being carried out across the Congo Free State. The CRA's campaign was maintained for eight years mainly through direct public engagement with Seeley Harris's photographs and other associated publications.

As I have noted, Seeley Harris's photographs served primarily as new documents of critical visual evidence to support claims of atrocities happening in the Congo. Their radical nature as photographs was that they introduced to the British and North American audiences a visual dynamic that disturbed the normal flow of images produced in Africa. They created a seismic shift in the Western viewers' perceptions of Africa, moving past the staged fantasy of the cannibal, shifting away from the exotic or pornographic postcards and towards a new domain of visual pleasure that engages in the spectacle of horror and violence enacted on the black body as a form of consumption. Seeley Harris's images introduced a degree of pathos within the photographic rendering of the African subject; they aimed to generate in the viewer sympathy above curiosity. However, we need to consider the work these images performed in relation to other historical renderings of colonial atrocities and the results they achieved. A comparison with an earlier phase of European colonialism is instructive. Writing of the humanitarian activities of Bartolomé de las Casas, Stephen Eisenman notes:

The engraved illustrations by the Flemish artist Theodore de Bry for the *Brevissima relacion de la destruycion de las yndias* commissioned by the Spanish humanitarian priest Bartolomé de las Casas, such as his print of ‘Punishments met out by the Spanish upon unruly slaves’, were indictments of the *encomienda* systems of New World plantations and were instrumental in establishing the ‘black legend’ of brutal and superstitious Spain. But there is no reason to believe that his extravagant images of tortures and atrocities engendered sympathy for Indian victims so much as stimulated hatred of Catholic Spain. (Eisenman 2007, p.69)

In light of Eisenman’s statement, we have to question how much sympathy for the African victims the ‘Congo Atrocities’ lecture produced, as a parallel and equally dominant reading works as a direct assault on the greed of King Leopold II and his support of the Catholic missions. More importantly, the photographs revived centuries of religious conflict in Europe being played out in Africa and on the African.

Slide 10. Execution of Slaves

This slide provides a graphic description of

‘the execution of slaves on the occasion of the death of a chief, and Mrs Harris’s photograph strikingly depicts the scene. The doomed men were made to sit or kneel, their arms and legs being securely bound. A young tree was bent like a bow and a rope was lashed to the top. The rope was then passed round the man’s head, drawing up his form and straining his neck, and almost lifting the body from the ground. Then the executioner advanced with his short broad-bladed falchion, and after measuring his distance, severed the head clean from the body. The spring of the released tree sent it bounding several yards away. But whilst this is revolting enough, we must not forget that this is no worse than what took place in Europe in the Middle Ages; and the condition of those people is, naturally, one of primitive barbarism.’

This detailed account pushed the audience back in time. It established a fictional temporality between the Congo and the Middle Ages in order to help the audience locate themselves across the place in discussion. It also served to remove King Leopold II’s regime from the age of civilisation and put it in the past. The critical accusation here is that Leopold held the

Congo back in a place from which the missionaries wanted to progress, therefore locating the site of progress in the Congo within the work of the British missionaries and not with King Leopold II's preferred paths of development within the region.

Shirley Samuels, on discussing the lynching photographs from America, states

when, more specifically, the act of seeing is presented as an act of witnessing violence, and, most specifically, witnessing the conversion of bodies into objects, viewers become parties to a reverse anthropomorphising. Here those who were previously human have lost their humanity, and the very staging of viewers within the frame reinforces the violence of a dehumanising that does more than make impossible the category of the human. (Samuels 2006, p.126)

Seeley Harris's photographs worked to establish and make real the dehumanisation process at the hands of the European colonisers. The central moment is to acknowledge not just the shock of the body present but also the incriminating nature of the power absent. The photographs bring forth that which is invisible or denied. Here within the context of the Harrises' slide show the power of incriminating presence can also be aimed at the missionary.

Slide 11. An Executioner and a Warrior

The lecture at this stage provides a short but detailed description of an executioner 'and their appearance is calculated to send a thrill through most of us, even at this distance'. We are presented with a fantastic image of a native man and the thrill for the audience is having the opportunity to come face-to-face with a savage. The distance between the viewer and the subject in the frame represents a space in which there is no form of recognition. The face of the savage symbolises all that is threatening in the indigenous, tribal culture of the Congo. The image deployed in this context drives a wedge between liberty (the ending of slavery) and equality (a recognition of shared humanity) (Gilroy 2007, p.23). The photograph also creates for the European a superior image of the self. It becomes part of a process of 'remaking the world according to the timeless order of the Ideas' (Levinas 2006, p.19) that translate into Eurocentric fantasies of philosophical and humanitarian progress through ideas of enlightenment that have an imagined or real genealogy within classical Greek scholarship. The photograph therefore acts as a tool to sweep away Europe's violent past because in this moment in time, when confronted with the image of the savage, nothing else is rendered

more barbaric in the mind of the coloniser. Here both the image and the text induce a form of amnesia of Europe's dark past. The narrative on the uncivilised executioner and the warrior concludes Part 1 of the lecture.

In Part 2, titled 'Philanthropy in Operation', the level of violence intensifies for the audience.

Slide 12. Village Scene and Chief's Compound

The lecture builds on the case for King Leopold II being duplicitous and untrustworthy. 'By the stroke of the pen nearly a million square miles of country and all its produce became the personal property of one man.'

Slide 13. Types of Congolese Warrior

This slide introduces the hidden force with which Leopold was able to take control of the Congo: 'A large number of troops recruited from the most savage tribes in the Upper Congo, and were equipped with modern rifles of precision. Imagine this native warrior instructed in the use of the Albini Rifle!' It is made clear that this modern weapon in the hands of primitive soldiers would naturally have disastrous consequences. The act of giving natives rifles served to underline further the madness of Leopold. The narrative continues, 'A little later, when it became known what a good time the soldiers had, recruiting presented no more difficulties. Many of these savage men preferred, and not unnaturally, to be the hunters rather than the hunted.'

Slide 14. Types of Irregular Cannibal Soldiers

At this point, the lecture presents us with a greater sense of the conditions in which the cannibal soldiers emerged. 'These cannibal soldiers (types of whom you see upon the screen) were required to force the natives to work for the philanthropic King.' The text builds to describe the 'fiendish' methods used by King Leopold II to dominate the natives by force. Photographs of the 'cannibal soldiers' are not prominent throughout what remains of the archive and the one that may have illustrated this narrative has become among the more widely used of Seeley Harris's works. It shows four standing men, three of whom have rifles and wear well-worn European clothing, including hats. Two of the men wear the same type of clothes: wide baggy trousers and sleeveless crew-neck pullovers. The soldier on the far right wears a pullover bearing a five-point star, which was the central motif of the Congo Free State flag. The two men on the far left and far right are in what could be described as the

uniform of the Anglo-Belgian Indian Rubber Company, which transforms them so that they no longer belong to the world of the native, but have made the journey into colonial service. They now represent a different kind of colonised subject: one that acts out violence on behalf of the colonial masters. Through their makeshift uniforms, which are a symbol of the disorderly violence present in the Congo, and their framing as ‘cannibal soldiers’, they have become neither native nor soldier but a hybrid of the two. In this state, they lose all sense of identity as they can no longer be viewed as the pure natives that they were before their conscription into service for Leopold; at the same time, they cannot be fully recognised as ‘real’ (i.e. European) military men. The violent acts they performed in these uniforms became abstracted as they belonged to a construction of the native savage and Leopold. As perpetrators of Leopold’s will, they visually fulfil the image of both the savage native and the colonised subject. The image then reads as an analysis of power and an illustration of the ‘mechanisms of repression’ (Foucault & Gordon 1980, p.90) at work in the Congo. (Fig.5)

From the moment of their presentation as objects of scrutiny, the men in the photograph and the violence they represent are no longer native in nature, but European by design. ‘The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official instituted go-betweens, the spokesman of the settler and his rule of oppression’ (Fanon 1963, p.29). The other soldier central to the image wears a more tailored jacket and trousers; he also wears shoes suggesting that he is of higher status than his fellow barefooted soldiers. The soldiers on the left of the frame are leaning in a relaxed and confident manner on their long rifles, which here become the ultimate symbol of their transformation into agents of violence ‘that speak the language of pure force’ (Fanon 1963, p.29). The third soldier, on the right of the photograph, stands with his rifle held close to his side in a more formal pose, possibly in recognition of the white authority behind the camera. All three soldiers stare directly back at Seeley Harris’s camera in calm but inquisitive contemplation of the photographic moment.

The central player in the photograph is the man held captive. He is nearly naked apart from a piece of cloth just visible around his waist. Around his neck hangs a bunch of ropes, which although not physically restraining him, work as a sign of his bondage. His hands are clasped together and held under his chin in a prayer-like or begging gesture. Looking at the detail of his body we can see that he has considerable scarification or self-mutilation across his torso and shoulders. His expression is one of distress, generating sympathy in the viewer as he

stands powerless between his captors. This image is temporally and symbolically charged as it pulls us back into the consciousness of a more famous image and slogan that were made popular by the British abolitionist movements from the late eighteenth century onwards, ‘Am I Not A Man and Brother’, in which a slave is seen kneeling begging for his freedom. Seeley Harris’s photograph of the native captive offers the audience a disturbing face-to-face confrontation with the great historical abolitionist and humanitarian question that was at the heart of evangelical concerns.

The Anglo-Belgian Indian Rubber Company soldiers in the photograph become symbolic characters in King Leopold II’s benevolent civilisation mission, in which the indigenous people were encouraged to become active players in their own exploitation and destruction. ‘Colonialism pulls every string shamelessly, and is only too content to set at loggerheads those Africans who only yesterday were leagued against the settlers ... Sometimes American Protestantism transplants its anti-Catholic prejudices into African soil, and keeps up tribal rivalries through religion’ (Fanon 1963, p.129).

Slide 15. A Savage ABIR Sentry

Here, E.D. Morel is introduced into the story of the atrocities for the first time, highlighting his work in proving that 85 per cent of the rubber ‘has been forced out of the Congo native in the last seven years at the point of the bayonet’. The focus, though, is still on the savage, ‘When they come to a town no man’s property or wife is safe, and when they are at war they are like devils.’ The orchestration and demonisation of the savage is complete for the audience.

Slide 16. Mr. E.D. Morel

A photograph of Morel is presented in which he is seen sitting at his desk, a figure of studious contemplation in his grey waistcoat, black tie and white shirt. Morel sports a broad thick moustache that mirrors the centre parting of his well-kept hair. His form is that of the archetypal clerk. On his desk are piles of papers that indicate the amount of research Morel has done. His backdrop is a large-scale ‘Philips New Map of Africa’. His head is located in the middle of the map thus marking his authority over the continent. His eyes look into the distance, fixed in reflective contemplation. He holds a pipe, a sign of his sophistication and maturity of thought, which links him directly to an older more established form of British colonial history: the tobacco plantations of the American south. His sleeves are rolled up,

indicating his hardworking nature and commitment to his task. A mass of papers is spilling from the in-tray on his desk, suggesting the intensity of the work he has to manage. He is presented as a modest, honest and well-dressed man of steely determination and symbolises the ideal of European righteous reason and a restrained, protestant work ethic. (Fig. 6)

Slides 17–60

Alice Seeley Harris's images from the Congo act to complete an African visual trinity: the exotic, the ethnographic and the horrific. In future renderings of Africa, these three perspectives became the guiding principles of a doctrine that formed the foundations for a European way of seeing Africa at home: a doctrine of European visual superiority in which the church of photography reigned supreme.

With the support of the Congo Reform Association, Seeley Harris's photography, and her and her husband's work as missionaries, the plight of millions of Africans was brought literally into focus. It is worth noting, though, that through the presentation of a few intimate moments of violence the Harrises were able to generate an image of atrocity far beyond the visual evidence they actually presented within the lantern slide show. As a result, the Congolese were delivered from the direct rule of King Leopold II's regime of indiscriminate killing and mutilation. As far as Leopold was concerned, his colonial management, civilising methodologies and economic strategies were necessary and enlightened (a view that was endorsed by his grandson, King Baudouin I, over half a century later on the Congo's day of liberation from Belgium) to maximise the profit from Congo's core assets, namely rubber and ivory. It is important to note that Leopold did not have to purchase his slave labour. Therefore, for Leopold and his agents rubber and ivory were clearly seen as more valuable than the expendable and seemingly limitless supplies of the disposable and worthless people that were forced to collect them. Quotas of rubber and ivory were well measured, recorded and valued. Those killed during the atrocities we rarely named, seen or remembered.

Looking at the corpus of photographs that Seeley Harris produced, it is difficult for us not to engage with the complexity of her position as a missionary, photographer and campaigner. Yet her work as a pioneering woman photographer, who contributed to the use of photography to effect political change in Europe and America, has slipped away from the grand narrative of social reform photography history. Her time in the Congo pre-dates Lewis Hine's (1874–1940) 1908 Labour project in America but what they share is the desire to put a

human face on the exploitative nature of capitalism and those most vulnerable to its excesses. Rarely is Seeley Harris acknowledged as one of the world's earliest photographic activists who recognised the capacity of the photograph to work as a visual aid in effecting change, especially within British and American attitudes towards conditions and violence in Africa.

Through an evangelical sense of purpose and identification with her subjects, primarily through photography and testimony, she helped to change the view of European colonisation of Africa. Therefore, it has been argued that, while Seeley Harris's photographs are foundational within the context of imaging atrocity, they also form part of a unique index of colonial violence and sexual fantasy that spilled out beyond the graphic nature of the scenes depicted. In effect, her photographs broke the aura of colonial welfare and care for the native. The critical work that they performed was not to address or redress the question of African inferiority or human rights. They laid no claim to championing the equality of Africans; they framed a perspective that highlighted the unfairness of the treatment of Africans not as equals but as recognisably inferior beings. The question of African rights is an absent part of the moral dilemma at work within the photographs, as the objectives for Seeley Harris and her missionary colleagues were the pacification and control of the African body and, more importantly, its soul. We have to see the Harrises as operating under missionary codes of conduct:

This means, at least that the missionary does not enter into dialogue with pagans and 'savages' but must impose the law of God that he incarnates. All of the non-Christian cultures have to undergo a process of reduction to, or – in missionary language – of regeneration in, the norms that the missionary represents. This undertaking is perfectly logical: a person whose idea and mission came from and are sustained by god is rightly entitled to the use of all possible means, even violence, to achieve his objectives'. (Mudimbe 1988, p.47)

What needs to be considered when looking at Seeley Harris's photographs within the context of human rights discourse is whether there was any examination of the colonial self in the generation of the images, or if indeed there was any sense of power being altered or a critique of the photographer's presence and position. Seeley Harris's work did not create a shift in the ontological relations between the European and the African. The essential construct of an inferior African being remained intact. The historical past of the encounter between the

African and the European outweighed its future possibilities as a visual form. The missionary sense of ultimate responsibility for the African would have to be given up for African humanity to be fully recognised. This recognition was essentially blocked by evangelical thought and the sense of divine purpose. Although Seeley Harris created a visual space in which to engage with the morally bankrupt regime of King Leopold II, her photographic work has an inherited ideological and flawed basis that fixed her present to a past in an identifiable cultural trait, so that in the moment of her photographic instance Seeley Harris's core duty is not to demand acceptance of African humanity. Seeley Harris's responsibility comes from an acknowledgement of her divine purpose and righteous commitments and is anterior to all the logical deliberation summoned by reasoned decision. African human rights were not the forthright issue driving the production of these images. That sense of responsibility is imposed on them by later readings (Sliwinski 2006; Thompson 2012).

Seeley Harris's photographs did not emerge out of a context of the international public not knowing of atrocity in Africa (Nault 2012, p.2). However, it was Roger Casement (1864–1916), the British consular official who had just completed a 'damning investigation of atrocities' (Grant 2001, p.33) in the Congo, who established the conditions necessary for Seeley Harris's photographic representations of atrocity to emerge. This could be read as an opportune moment of missionary visual sophistication.

Casement's report carried several photographs that had been taken by missionaries working in the area. These included the Reverend W.D. Armstrong and the Faeroese missionary Daniel J. Danielsen, who was skipper on the American Missionary Union Steamer *Henry Reed*, which Casement used for his expedition in the Congo. Danielsen may well have been the first person to bring back and display in public staged atrocity photographs from the Congo (Jacobsen 2014, p.16). In recent research regarding the authorship of the photographs reproduced in Casement's report, the Faeroese scholar Óli Jacobsen cites Danielsen as being the actual photographer of some of the key images. On his return to the UK from the Congo, Danielsen, outraged by his experiences there, began lecturing on the atrocities, possibly with the aid of lantern slides, in Edinburgh, prior to Casement's arrival back in the UK (Jacobsen 2014).

What was key to some of the publications and displays was that they contained oral testimonies gathered by missionaries directly from the victims of King Leopold II's regime,

which, as an act in and of itself, represented a rare but small moment when the Congo subjects were given a voice and name.

Scholars across the fields of photography and human rights have only recently begun to recognise the strategic and historical significance of the Harrises' work together with other key photographic images authored by missionaries that emerged out of this critical period in colonial history Sharon Sliwinski's essay, 'The childhood of human rights: the Kodak on the Congo' (Sliwinski 2006), marks a significant enquiry into the cultural relevance of Seeley Harris's photographs taken in the Congo at the turn of the twentieth century with regard to how they assist current understanding of violence, colonial memory and ideological formulations concerning the construction of atrocity theories. She highlights that 'What is invariably underplayed in the histories of this movement is the impact of photography. The CRA was not only the largest humanitarian movement of the era, it was also the first humanitarian movement to use atrocity photographs as a central campaign tool' (Sliwinski 2006, p.334)

Sliwinski here comments on the significant 'underplay' in photographic history of Seeley Harris's photographs and how they contributed to humanitarian and human rights visual culture. However, it is important to recognise that these works, although they are now gaining in recognition as agents of change by some commentators on photography and colonial history, have become critical images that slip into a variety of different fields of enquiry. They have more recently become partially accommodated into the history of photography, but only through what could be described as a looser or marginalised photographic history outside of the main narrative of the medium, and have come to light mostly through the study of human rights and atrocity. They are not marked as a significant photographic contribution in their own right, but merely as examples of photography for a specific cause.

Christina Twomey covered some similar ground to Sliwinski in her essay 'Severed hands: authenticating atrocity in the Congo, 1904–13', published in *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (Twomey 2012, pp.39-50) in which she states that 'Photographs were an essential element of the Congo reform campaign, which was one of the most successful instances of a humanitarian revival at the turn of the century'. Twomey, however, lays greater emphasis on testimony:

The creation of the Congo photographs, then, can be viewed as an initial act of collaboration between missionaries and Africans, in which missionaries reserved for themselves the right to speak on behalf of their subjects. The photographs were given meaning by the words that surrounded their creation, publication and performance and almost always those words were spoken or recorded by non-Africans. (Twomey 2012, p.48)

The question of the African not having a voice is clearly identified by Twomey and I would suggest this position has not predominantly changed in the practice of photography across the African continent since its first arrival. It was not until the late 1980s that we began to witness in Europe and America the emergence of an indigenous African-orientated critical photography voice that worked to produce decidedly non Eurocentric readings into the history of photography in and from Africa. African scholars during this period began to claim that photographic history was primarily a European discourse. 'The camera', as Olu Oguibe reminds us, 'was a decidedly ideologically positioned tool on the side of incursion' (Oguibe 2002, p.566). These incursions arrived from many perspectives, including both the military and the missionary points of view. The end result, however, is often the same: a visual power relationship that is inherently ideologically weighted towards the cultural superiority of the Western gaze and its image interpretation. Seeley Harris's photography did not just reduce the African subject to a generic representational African body; she did to some extent 'privilege the body as evidence of atrocity' (Grant 2001, p.34), but what is significant is the move towards a space of greater identification with the subject in the frame through close engagement with the intended audiences. This is primarily achieved by the fact that many of the photographs included in the lantern show offer a direct visual exchange between the subject of the photograph and the viewer. Often the victims glare straight back at the camera. When this return of the colonial gaze is underpinned by a narrative of violence against the subject, which is delivered from an outraged missionary perspective, the capacity to identify with the subject as victim becomes increased as the distance required for complete objectification of the African subject is resisted by a more engaged theatre of encounter and knowledge transfer of the situation presented. It's in these moments of direct exchange between subject and audience that we can identify a more positive humanitarian aspect of Harris's work despite its other ideological flaws.

When we consider the photographic construction of Africa as a place in the European imagination, it becomes clear how absent the human subject is from the frame throughout the history of photography. The author of the work rather than the purpose of the image is the critical point from which we read the image of Africa. Africa as a visual place has predominantly been authored from outside or from positions of white authority.

One of the possible ways that we can look at the photographs taken by Seeley Harris and her missionary colleagues in the Congo is that they represent historical visual milestones for a way of seeing Africans in distress. What surfaces from the images as we look back at them with the benefit of hindsight is that a multiplicity of meanings emerges, the most obvious being the scopic pleasures in looking at the African as both the exotic Other and the photographic origin of the image of the helpless victim.

These historical photographs of violence in the Congo provide the perfect photographic moment for benevolent Christian ideology to work within a continued visualisation and infantilisation of the African subject. Seeley Harris's photographic work emerges not out of a human rights discourse but primarily out of a discourse grounded in a traditional British Christian abolitionist movement that was well versed in the use of images to influence public opinion. These were communications strategies that would have been very familiar to Seeley Harris and her husband. Therefore, when we consider John Harris's response to seeing the photograph of Nsala with the remains of his daughter, it is clear that his main concern was with the photograph's potential impact on audiences: 'The photograph is most telling, and as a slide will rouse any audience to an outburst of rage, the expression on the father's face, the horror of the by-standers, the mute appeal of the hand and foot will speak to the most skeptical' (Grant 2001, p.27). His analysis of the photograph coupled with his wife's staging of this moment illustrates a high degree of understanding in relation to the theatrical impact that the image would have at home. It would join a long line of outrageous images of violence on the black body. (Fig.7)

We now know that at the time of their display in public theatres as lantern slides the photographs from the Congo produced by Alice Seeley Harris and her fellow missionaries had a far-reaching influence, as is best illustrated by Joseph Conrad's (1857–1924) *Heart of Darkness* and in Mark Twain's (1835–1910) now celebrated 1905 critical text on King Leopold II's Congo, titled *King Leopold's Soliloquy*. Twain creatively writes in Leopold's

imaginary voice, lamenting the use of photography to attack his colony:

The kodak has been a sole calamity to us. The most powerful enemy indeed. In the early years we had no trouble in getting the press to ‘expose’ the tales of mutilations as slanders, lies, inventions of busy-body American missionaries and exasperated foreigners ... Yes, all things went harmoniously and pleasantly in those good days ... Then all of a sudden came the crash! That is to say, the incorruptible kodak – and all harmony went to hell! The only witness I couldn’t bribe. (Twain 1970, p.73)

Seeley Harris’s photographs functioned as vital visual evidence across Europe and the USA concerning the disasters taking place in the Congo under King Leopold II, but for the Belgian imperial rulers the photographs worked against them only temporarily as an uncomfortable source of political embarrassment, and over time registered as a historical blip across their overall ‘civilising’ mission in the country. Belgium’s rule continued in the Congo for another 50-plus years and, even after the Republic of Congo gained its independence, Katanga Province was too irresistible a source of natural resources for Belgium to discontinue its exploitation. The Belgians could not and would not let go of the desire to extract from the Congo its mineral assets or to allow democracy to flourish post-independence.

Three Speeches on Independence Day, 30 June 1960, for the Democratic Republic of the Congo

‘When Leopold II undertook his great work which today reaches its crowning moment, he did not come to you as a conqueror but as a civilizer. Since it was founded the Congo has opened its borders to international commerce, and Belgium has never exercised a monopoly in its sole interest.’

(King Baudouin I)

‘Belgium had the wisdom not to oppose the tide of history and, understanding the greatness of the ideal of freedom imbuing the hearts of all the Congolese people, transferred our country, directly and without transition, from foreign domination to independence and full national sovereignty, an action quite without precedent in the history of peaceful colonization.’

(President of the Republic, Mr Joseph Kasa-Vubu)

‘Although this independence of the Congo is being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in struggle, a persevering and inspired struggle carried on from day to day, a struggle in which we were undaunted by privation or suffering and stinted neither strength nor blood. It was filled with tears, fire and blood. We are deeply proud of our struggle, because it was just and noble and indispensable in putting an end to the humiliating bondage forced upon us. That was our lot for the eighty years of colonial rule and our wounds are too fresh and much too painful to be forgotten. We have experienced forced labour in exchange for pay that did not allow us to satisfy our hunger, to clothe ourselves, to have decent lodgings or to bring up our children as dearly loved ones.’

(Patrice Lumumba)

These statements are extracts from formal speeches delivered on Independence Day for the Republic of the Congo. The first two, although delivered from different sides of the colonial experience, work to deny the decades of colonial violence and the atrocities that were carried out across the Congo by Belgium’s imperial rulers, and both speakers act to construct a benign colonial memory. King Baudouin I (1930–93), like his grandfather before him, King Leopold II, offers a civilising gift, while Kasa-Vubu (1910–69) is a willing recipient. An analysis of these speeches demonstrates that the colonial power relationships are secure and entrenched both within the mind of the liberator and the liberated at the time of Congo’s independence. Both clearly illustrate the damaging psychology of colonisation on the colonisers and the colonised mind, and are an example of history being abstracted from the experience of the individual and the mass of people concerned. They represent fine examples of modernity’s capacity to forget: ‘Modern space is, as it were, space wiped clean’ (Connerton 2009, p.40).

The presence of two powerful forces – religion and commerce – from Europe in Africa wreaked havoc in the Congo and were at their most potent under King Leopold II’s rule. The result of this great European act in the Congo still resonates today. It is a geopolitical zone of intense conflict and is now fixed in the European psyche as being symptomatic of all that is

culturally deficient in Africa. The very idea of the Congo represents a sign that is both negative and hostile across notions of development in Africa, especially when discussed within the context of Africa as a European invention (Mudimbe 1988). Therefore, in reading Seeley Harris's photographs, what we see is a record of the disasters of European self-interest and they are foundational in the evidencing of the violence of those conflicting colonial missions.

Chapter 2: Race, Denial and Imaging Atrocity

Part 1. Horror In Time and *Life*

‘If at the beginning of the war and during the war twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.’ (Adolf Hitler, ‘The right of emergency defence’, *Mein Kampf*, 1926, vol.2, chapter 15)

‘ATROCITIES CAPTURE OF THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMPS
PILES UP EVIDENCE OF BARBARISM THAT REACHES THE LOW POINT OF
HUMAN DEGRADATION.’... ‘Dead men will have indeed died in vain if live men
refuse to look at them.’ (Headline, and feature text, *Life*, 7 May 1945, p.33)

During the much-anticipated United Nations Conference on International Organisation that opened in San Francisco on 25 April 1945 amid, according to *Life* magazine, ‘a typically American setting of elaborate arrangements, public excitement and swarming cameramen’, (Life, Vol. 18, No.19 May 7, 1945, p. 39) an extraordinary event in relation to the reception of photographic images took place. *Life* magazine published on 7th May 1945 a six-page feature of photographs showing the horror the Allied forces faced when they captured the German concentration camps.

The prominent human rights historian Paul Gordon Lauren, in his celebrated book *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen* (which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize), claims that these photographs made an important contribution to creating a real sense of urgency during the conference and acted as catalysts for change among the delegates, encouraging them to support the development of international human rights legislation as a global political necessity for the future security of the world’s people post-World War II (Lauren 2003, p.186).

For Lauren and the many other scholars (Zelizer 1998; Lowe 2012) who have since referenced this powerful series of photographs, the 7 May 1945 issue of *Life* and the ‘Atrocities’ photographs from the German concentration camps published within it command a very special place in discourses and ethical debates that attempt to theorise images of

violence and of war – in particular, how we picture atrocity, and the extent to which Western audiences have become anaesthetised to such images. They also force considerations of the role that aesthetics play in the making of photographs of violence for the media, the gallery and the many other sites of cultural production and display that photographs now occupy. One of the key points of ignition for this debate was the now seminal work by Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, in which she stated: ‘The ethical content of photographs is fragile. With the possible exception of photographs of those horrors, like the Nazi camps, that have gained the status of ethical reference points, most photographs do not keep their emotional charge’ (Sontag 1973, p.16). Sontag appears to be suggesting that most photographs are temporarily and culturally charged with ethical power at the time of production and initial consumption, but then later become transformed into petrified moments of atrocity whose ethical power is degraded. The exception to this rule, for Sontag, are photographs from Nazi concentration camps. It may well be worth considering that such images resonate across time whenever mass acts of violence are shown to us but the context of their original display and meanings produced will always be open to deconstruction. It is clear that there is a degree of memory management at work when we consider what constitutes the central motif of discussions on the theme of atrocity.

Our memory bank of atrocities thus works backward in time – using the past to stand for the present. Ultimately it reaches the first major killing fields to have been extensively and elaborately depicted in photos in the daily press – the concentration camps of World War II – and it is those killing fields that are replayed in discussions of contemporary atrocity. (Zelizer 1998, p.210).

In discussing the photographs from the concentration camps within the context of the San Francisco Conference of 1945, Lauren seems to see them as revelatory. He informs us that during the conference and ‘in the midst of all this discussion and debate, a powerful and emotional element suddenly appeared’, and that, ‘it was captured with particular poignancy in a single issue of *Life* magazine’. Lauren then describes vividly how the reader encountered the photographs, stating that this issue of *Life*

began normally with letters to the editors, ads, humorous cartoons, stories on the events of the previous week, that the readers quite naturally anticipated full coverage of the start of the San Francisco Conference. Then, without any warning they turned a

page and saw something they had never seen before in their lives. In an article entitled with the single word *Atrocities*, readers looked in horror at the photographs of piles of emaciated corpses and prisoners with bodies deformed by malnutrition found by Allied forces as they liberated Nazi extermination camps. (Lauren 2003, p.186)

Much work has also been done by other scholars who have commented that when the images were first shown in ‘newspapers, magazines and public exhibitions ... they inspired a feeling of intense and profound shock almost universally amongst the people they reached’ (Lowe 2012, p.190). Although Lauren’s analysis of the text that accompanied the photographs in *Life* is more than half a century on from the original publication, he asserts that ‘the accompanying text still speaks for itself’. It is worth noting that for Lauren time has not altered the editorial interpretative possibilities of *Life*’s deeply encoded humanitarian lexicon: the communicative process and the system of signs that the magazine employs to contextualise the photographs for its 1945 audience remains fixed and temporally transferable to the present intact. In choosing to frame these images as if seeing them solely within the context of their historical past, Lauren negates the idea that the meanings generated in the ‘*Atrocities*’ feature may have shifted over time and that even when originally seen in the context of their first display in *Life*, the visual language used cannot be read, given the complexity of the scenes of violence presented, as a simple and an unmediated reflection of the crisis at hand.

More than most, images that act as witness to atrocities need to be read as constructions and distortions simultaneously, as they are presented as events seemingly produced for our benefit and on our behalf. Such constructions and distortions work on us as part of a set of cultural values that we may, or may not, be aware of at the time and place of the encounter with the photograph (Procter 2004, p.59). For Lauren the political infrastructure that lies above the production of these photographs – the photo apparatus – is not a historical concern (Cramerotti 2009, p.97). The danger in not addressing the political and cultural infrastructure of highly charged emotive images of atrocities is that they become fixed as objects that simply transmit the history of their making as a dead piece of knowledge that we periodically unearth.

The German atrocities as a visual revelation in 1945 and Allied ignorance or doubt about the horror in the camps is a dominant idea that emerges from historical readings such as those of

Lauren: 'The most important trope in memory is forgetting. It exists against a background of what has been forgotten' (Hall 2008). If this is the case, then it is important that we continue to peel back the layers of time and look through the details of those repressed moments. We therefore cannot consider *Life*'s 'Atrocities' feature without taking into account the backstory of what has been ignored, reinvented or culturally forgotten. When regarding the feature from the advantageous place of our present, what seeps out of the photographs is not just the barbaric Nazi acts of genocide but also the violence of Allied abandonment of the most vulnerable people caught up in the horror of German fascism.

Lauren lays emphasis on a universal response to the images as being 'absolutely shocking', in common with a range of academic texts that examine the reception of these photographs by the Western public when they were exposed to them for the first time (Lowe 2012 p.193; Willson & Costello 2008, p.222). The theme of horror that Lauren and others support serves to encode the 'Atrocities' feature with a moral authority that is commonly associated with the golden age of photojournalism. Therefore, Lauren's historical perspective on *Life*'s publishing of the photographs encourages a reading that re-creates the condition that venerates the magazine and affirms it as a bastion of reportage photography for groundbreaking and truthful journalistic work.

Across photographic history, however, an alternative reading of the way in which *Life* and Western news media managed the use of the atrocity photographs can be made. In the case of *Life*, it is a reading that works against the grain of the magazine's revered place in photographic history (Martens 2000, p.245), that is, it used the feature in this specific context to conceal criticism of its historical editorial past, during which it chose not to pursue the many opportunities to present to the American public earlier atrocity photographs from the German camps, which were well known to picture editors of the period. When we see events like these through photographs their 'universal' effect as shocking images of violence may still be intact but as an act of looking into man's violent past one can 'see things you never thought you would see when you stop looking at the image as a strictly historical record' (Hall 2008).

It is clear that *Life* magazine and the Allied media had ample opportunity to publish photographs that evidenced German atrocities, which had in fact been in circulation in the West since 1933. As American academic Susie Linfield states, 'Western Governments,

embassies, newspapers, and antifascist organisations were flooded with atrocity images' (Linfield 2010, p.71). What is more relevant now as a useful line of enquiry into the history of the photographs from the concentration camps is to examine *Life*'s editors' inertia in not taking the opportunity to publicise the horrors in the camps much earlier. This enquiry shifts the emphasis on how we interpret the use of atrocity photographs in time and in location, thus enabling a different set of readings across the ideologies and ethical positions of *Life* magazine and its editors. The much-discussed shock and horror relating to the photographs might then be applied as a critique of Allied forces' alien entry policies, and of those in positions of media power who refused to publicise the images sooner. At this point, one would have to consider if the humanitarianism of *Life* and the Allied high command, both military and political, was largely a false sentiment and one might conclude that prior to 1945 the magazine simply did not care enough about the German death camps to warrant publishing anything from them, choosing instead to ignore the mass of photographic evidence that was available.

Given this, it seems logical, therefore, to ask if *Life* was politically or culturally restrained from publishing previously known atrocity photographs from the death camps, or if other motives were at work, what might they have been and how do these photographs of atrocities help us understand *Life*'s refusal to display previously known atrocity photographs. If 'the photograph formally evacuates the signs of its own productive hence ideological location, its purpose' (Willsdon & Costello 2008, p.221), then part of what we must now do is to re-locate culturally a photograph's connotative meaning in the present. When we choose over time to put the photograph back to work, its original dominant meaning could become redundant, so allowing a secondary reading to surface more clearly. The photograph then becomes enabled to do different cultural work.

From analysis of *Life*'s 'Atrocities' feature it is evident that, within its own editorial, the lack of recognition of the injustice of Western denial forms an essential part of the impact this article has on the reader. The feature and its capacity to profoundly shock enable *Life* to create a safe moral barrier between it and the sceptical American public, which the magazine accuses of being at the core of denying German brutality: 'Last week Americans could no longer doubt stories of Nazi cruelty'. What *Life* does is empower its own editorial voice to be read as a credible and legitimate source in restoring truth and faith back into the reality of the

‘Atrocities’ photographs and therefore presenting its editorial as a valid body of evidence against the German camps.

The use of the ‘Atrocities’ photographs by *Life* can be read as an editorial moral finger being waved at a denying and cynical American public. By giving the public the opportunity to empathise with the victims through engaging with the photographs, the magazine provides its readership with a place to focus any feelings of remorse that being doubtful of the atrocities’ existence might have generated. What is left open on *Life*’s editorial pages is the question of who we are actually looking at and how they got to the camps. *Life*’s shame of not acting earlier to publicise the stark reality of the nature and culture of those caught in the camps equates with the similar moment when many German people turned a blind eye as their neighbours were being rounded up. The moral stance of the text that accompanies the photographs allows the editors of *Life* to create a detachment from the sceptical American public. It is the American public, according to *Life*, who doubt the violence of the camps, not the powerful and influential editors and owners of the magazine. It was an editorial power that saw in 1945 over a million copies being sold weekly and that during the war greatly influenced American public opinion. What is important culturally about this issue of *Life* is that it allows us to see the nature of hegemonic media forces at work as ‘what was a site of resistance to publishing photographs of atrocities from the camps at one moment becomes a site of incorporation at another’ (Procter 2004, p.26). However, what the historian Lauren and indeed this issue of *Life* magazine do not address is why doubts regarding German atrocities were so prevalent among both the American and British publics throughout most of World War II and why a culture of doubt was manufactured, and, if so, what political or historical end might this have served.

After the ‘Kristallnacht’ in 1938,

Foreign consulates in Germany found themselves flooded with urgent and tragic pleas for visas from those seeking to escape Hitler’s persecution. But Switzerland and most of the Latin American countries closed their doors by actually making their existing laws on entry for refugees more restrictive. None of the major powers including Britain, France the United States, and the Soviet Union, would permit any large-scale Jewish immigration into their borders ... In some cases diplomats proposed that these

victims of the Nazis be settled among blacks somewhere in Tanzania, Northern Rhodesia, Uganda, or Madagascar. (Lauren 1988, p.133)

It is clear that in some diplomatic circles Jewish culture was regarded as being closer to that of Africa than Europe. Echoing the deadly medicine of eugenics that ranked Jews and blacks together as inferior races to the Aryan, Eugen Fischer, who served as the director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics from 1927 to 1942, minced no words when he stated in a 1939 lecture: 'I do not characterize the Jew as inferior, as Negroes certainly are, and I do not underestimate the greatest enemy with whom we have to fight. But I reject Jewry with every means in my power, and with reserve, in order to preserve the hereditary endowment of my people' (Bachrach & Kuntz 2004, p.10).

We have to bear in mind when analysing these images that, by 1945, the type of people that the fascists had an explicit interest in killing was well known among the Allied forces and media. Historians have amassed evidence showing that the Allies clearly knew, and in great detail, about the industrial nature of Nazi killing (Shephard 2006, p.25), and because of the strong historical links between German and American eugenicist movements, information that the Nazi programmes of racial hygiene had at their core violent anti-Semitic policies was widely acknowledged. Stefan Kuhl informs us that it was only after September 1935, with the passing of the Nuremberg Laws, that relationships between German racial hygienists and American eugenicists began to cool down (Kühl 1994, p.97). Wave after wave of people were advocating that action should be taken against German policies of Jewish extermination. As early as 1936, Victor Gollancz, George Orwell's publisher, produced *The Yellow Spot: The Extermination of the Jews in Germany*. Herbert Dunelm, the Bishop of Durham, a well-respected public figure, who was outspoken in his condemnation of Nazi anti-Semitism, wrote an introduction to the book. In it, he urges European states to take action against the 'resuscitation of medieval barbarism', and he makes very clear that he is aware that 'A new principle of persecution has had to be discovered. Not religion but race has provided the requisite plea. No longer the error of the mind, but the poison of the blood is to stamp the Jew as unsafe for German citizenship' (Dunelm 1936, p.8) The book's title references the legacy of Jewish persecution by European churches and states that historically required Jews to identify themselves by marking their clothes with a yellow spot. In 1942, *The German New Order in Poland* was published by Hutchinson & Co. in London for the Polish Ministry of Information, and in December 1942 the Houses of Parliament observed a minute's silence

after the Leader of the House of Commons, Anthony Eden, informed the house of mass Jewish executions in Germany. By 1943, *The Black Book of Polish Jewry: An Account of the Martyrdom of Polish Jews Under the Nazi Occupation*, by Jacob Apenszlak, was published in Russia and America, aimed specifically at an English-speaking audience. In October 1944, the *Illustrated London News* published 11 photographs from Majdanek, the camp on the eastern front liberated by the Russians: 'More than the earlier photographs, these images hinted at the scope and industrial nature of the Nazi atrocities' (Zelizer 2000, p.52).

We now know that

throughout the war, though, Western governments and the Western press tended to see these images of atrocity and the reports that accompanied them as examples of untrustworthy, exaggerated Soviet or Jewish propaganda; only a miniscule portion of the available images was ever published. And the fact that such photographs, when printed, generally failed to provoke the hoped-for responses. (Linfield 2010, p.72)

With so much evidence and military intelligence surrounding the horrors taking place in the camps, it was clearly manipulative, disingenuous and misleading of *Life*'s editors in its publication of these photographs to hide behind the shield of not having 'irrefutable evidence' of German atrocities. When Lauren states that the text used by *Life* 'speaks for itself', this 'speaking for itself' can be read in the present as representing a different articulation: one that asks a critical question relating to the depths of denial, inertia and racism that ran through the Allied political powers and their media concerning the horrors of the concentration camps.

When addressing the historical, cultural and humanitarian impact of the 'Atrocities' photographs reproduced by *Life* and other news media in 1945, a wider frame, or uncropped knowledge, should serve to remind us of the overarching attitudes regarding the construction of Jewish and other alien identities that were dominant throughout American and British social and political cultures during World War II. Matthew F. Jacobson, in his essay published in *Theories of Race and Racism* titled 'Looking Jewish seeing Jews', reveals that, 'In America an *Atlantic Monthly* piece entitled "The Jewish Problem in America" (1941) could still assert that the Jew had become "European only in residence; by nature he did not become an Occidental; he could not have possibly done so". Comparing Jews to another

problematic “Oriental” group, Armenians, this writer went on to wonder “whether (differences) can be faded out by association, miscegenation, or other means of composition.” When Nazi policy began to make news in the 1930s and the early 1940s, too, headlines in journals like the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Detroit Free Press* revealed the extent to which Americans and Germans shared a common lexicon of racial Jewishness.’ (Jacobson 2009, p.313). The Nazis were clearly not alone in their capacity to enjoy the cruelty of racism.

Part 2. The Russians

The drama of the ‘Atrocities’ article in *Life* was further enhanced by the editorial feature immediately preceding it, which created for the reader what looked like a warm and optimistic picture of camaraderie. Two features run uninterrupted from page 27 to page 31. The first is titled ‘War In Europe Draws To Its End’. The main photograph used over half the page is captioned ‘Russian Major General Rusakov and American Major General Reinhardt drink a toast in vodka as their divisions meet on the banks of the Elbe River’ and shows the two generals with rather stern-faced expressions in a moment that does not quite convey celebration or friendship, as if they are reluctant guests at the party. The Russian Rusakov is holding a drink, his eyes slightly averted from the camera. He looks bored. The American Reinhardt carries a similar expression although he appears to be in a more reflective mood. His look is to our left out of the frame, as if contemplative of the moment. Four Russian soldiers are standing directly behind the two generals. The Russian soldier nearest to Reinhardt seems to be singing or shouting in celebration of the occasion. The opening lines of *Life*’s editorial text frame the global significance of the moment for the reader:

The end of war was close in Europe. Rumors spread across the continents, over the oceans. The people of Verona in Italy celebrated the coming of peace. So did the people of Paris. In the U.S., Senator Tom Connally, vice chairman of the U.S. delegation to the San Francisco Conference, told a reporter that Germany’s surrender was expected momentarily. Two hours later the resulting roar of national excitement was silenced by President Truman’s announcement that there was no foundation for the report (*Life*, Vol. 18, No.19 May 7, 1945, p.27).

The text then goes on to describe a scene that clearly references the dark moments of the ‘Atrocities’ feature that follows shortly. It states that,

through the desolation of the cities still smouldering with a smell of death and across the countryside green with spring, streamed wandering hordes of humanity – looting, drinking, fighting, begging. Most were slave laborers, now suddenly free. Others were Germans escaping the Russian armies or crawling from the cellars and caves in which they had been living (Life, Vol. 18, No.19 May 7, 1945, p.27).

The scene portrayed in the text associates the freeing of those held in camps with a vision of hell and damnation, as if the act of release in and of itself has created a mass of zombie-like creatures devoid of any moral substance as they loot and drink across the decaying city. For the Germans, among these hordes of living dead the Russians are cast as an indiscriminate deadly force sweeping across Germany. The Russians here do not liberate; they terminate. The slave labourers in this editorial moment move from victim to parasite in a few short lines, homogenised as an amoral living dead. In this context there is clearly little, if any, empathy for the slaves or the victims of the camps. They simply become part of the wider story of Germany's defeat and are as far as the writer is concerned a problematic presence. The fact that many of the slave labourers would have been Jewish or Slavic, though we are never told, may have a bearing on the description of the slaves; casting them as vermin leans on old racist stereotypes. The text goes on to further emphasise the hell-like scenario as Berlin crumbles: 'In Berlin dust and the smoke of guns and the cries of the dying echoed through the sewers and subways'. The dead and dying, once again, become a vision of the living dead. These, though, are already buried in the sewers and subways; in this moment, the vision of humanity is equated with vermin. Throughout *Life's* reporting, there is a systematic failure to differentiate between Jewish victims of Nazism, Slavic forced labourers and German 'victims' of the advancing Russians. To be freed is to become a rat, a motif commonly used by the Nazis when describing the Jews.

The next two pages present a series of seven photographs featuring Reinhardt and Rusakov along with American and Russian soldiers in various forms of exchange and celebration. The photographs themselves are a fairly generic record of the meetings that took place between the two armies. Both sets of soldiers share drinks and shake hands in different formal and informal settings clearly staged for the camera. However, *Life's* captioning of the photographs focuses on the ideological differences between the political regimes that the soldiers represent. On page 29, one of the more formal photographs of an American soldier shaking hands with a Russian soldier is framed against the backdrop of a poster that mirrors

the actual exchange taking place. The real replicates the imagined painted event. The painted mural moment shows the soldiers standing in front of their respective national flags and conveniently standing on a fallen Nazi swastika. The poster is inscribed in English, 'East Meets West'. *Life*'s full caption reads: 'One of the first four Americans to make contact with the Soviets, Pfc Frank Huff of Washington, Va., shakes hands with a Russian before a poster signalizing the event. Less formal Russian greetings included guitar playing, bear hugs, handshakes that left Yank hands aching'. The aching grip of Russia becomes a bruising cultural encounter – something for the Americans to be mindful of as an early indicator of the ideological gulf that exists between these two emergent superpowers.

Another caption that builds on the ideological tension across the meetings of the Russian and American forces is one in which three soldiers are seen standing in what looks like relaxed conversation. A US Lieutenant is in the centre of the image. On his left is a female Russian soldier and on his right is a male soldier. The caption reads: 'Russian Wac, U.S. Lieutenant and Red Soldier try to converse despite their lingual difficulties. One Russian with a smattering of English called everyone "my dear". But when a GI tried to buy a Russian officer's cap insignia, he got instead a thundering tirade against capitalism'. This small encounter between the soldiers becomes for the editors of *Life* a 'thundering' ideological exchange between Russian communism and American capitalism. Each seemingly friendly encounter between the two armies shown in the photographs is laced through with exaggerated cultural and political differences via the captions used, underscored by the fear of aggressive communism. The Russians salute with heel clicks, turn up late for meetings with the generals, drink captured alcohol and ogle American women journalists. Their enthusiasm for the Americans is rendered crass and crude and forms part of a national narrative concerning fear of subversive communists who may be active in American government, Hollywood and news media. The post-war years in America rapidly become a hysterical period in which Senator Joseph McCarthy crusades through the House of Un-American Activities Committee to rid communists from American society.

Pages 30 and 31 carry no advertising and constitute a continuation of the previous feature. The text on page 30 is titled 'The End of The War in Europe'. It carries with it a prominent sub-title that reads, 'Coming At A Gas-Engine Clip, It Out Marches Our Ability To Think About Peace'. A single full-bleed photograph accompanies this article on the facing page, with the caption: 'At the Elbe River a U.S. and Russian Lieutenant meet to link the American

and Soviet armies'. The image shows two soldiers embracing each other in mirror-like fashion. Both smile warmly and look directly into each other's eyes; both place an arm around each other's shoulders and clasp hands to complete the embrace. The photograph represents a tender exchange between the two men. The similarity of the men's features is striking – in other circumstances they could have passed for brothers. Only their uniforms indicate their differences. The image is *Life's* 'Picture of the Week' for this edition.

The editorial, which is the final text before we turn the page to see the 'Atrocities' photographs, focuses on the concern that the US is not planning for peace quickly enough:

The diseases of social unrest that come in the wake of starvation do not respect geographical boundaries, and it is to our advantage to halt them before they develop and leap the ocean. We must plan our rehabilitation measures quickly if only to save Europe ... There have been indications that a U.S. chief 'hand outer' is about to be dispatched to Europe to look after the equity of rehabilitation distribution. One hopes that an able man will be chosen, someone who is neither a milk-to-Hottentots dreamer on the one hand or a person with a ward politician's view of the world on the other (Life, Vol. 18, No.19 May 7, 1945, p.30).

The reference here to 'milk-to-Hottentots' conjures up an image of inappropriate misguided political acts and plays to the myth that what Hottentots really want is to eat white missionary meat not to drink milk. The editorial's allusion to ideas of African cannibalism within the context of Europe on its knees serves to revive age-old myths of black savages eating Christian missionaries and their need for European civilising presences. In 1945 the term seems to have been used as a common point of reference for journalists discussing flawed political initiatives directly or indirectly endorsing racial stereotypes, a language that may not have gone unnoticed by the non-European delegates at the San Francisco Conference.

Part 3. The Atrocities Photographs

British and American newspapers and picture magazines exchanged photographic material and ‘This created a shared visual narrative record for both countries, somewhat neutralizing the differences between the nearby war in Britain and the more distant one experienced in the United States. The record produced was massive yet uniform’ (Zelizer 2000, p.88).

Life was a large-format publication, approximately 36 cm by 26 cm, and with some of the highest-quality printing available at the time. So, even by today’s standards, the ‘Atrocities’ feature can be recognised as an immense photographic moment and a dynamic visual statement. This being the case, and due to the historic significance of the horrific events that took place in the German concentration camps with the recognition that ‘the Holocaust has become for humanitarians the crime against which all else is measured – the un-comparable, to which all else is compared’ (Weizman 2012, p. 39), *Life*’s article is clearly one of the key moments regarding public awareness of the death camps.

Page 32 is the opening left-hand page of *Life*’s ‘Atrocities’ spread. It is the only place within the ‘Atrocities’ article where a photograph fills the complete page. This image has become recognisable as one of George Rodger’s more well-known photographs from Belsen and as such deserves particular attention.

The photograph is captioned ‘A Small Boy Strolls Down A Road Lined With Dead Bodies Near Camp At Belsen’. The story of the boy’s identity carries with it a degree of intrigue because, when the same photograph was reproduced subsequently elsewhere, the caption stated that the boy was German. However, according to research by the German Historical Museum, the boy was in fact a Belgian Jew named Sieg Mandaag (Bernard-Donals 2004, p.382). In *Humanity and Inhumanity*, Rodger’s retrospective photography book published by Phaidon in 1994, the caption reads, ‘1945 Belsen. A Dutch Jewish Boy Walks Through the Camp’. Rodger was meticulous in his research notes and diary-keeping when it came to captioning his work. However, in the context of the photograph’s original use in *Life* the boy’s identity was uncertain, but the meaning generated when looking at this photograph shifts significantly depending on whether he is cited as being German, Jewish, Belgian or Dutch. If he is identified as German, he becomes part of a wider German problem of ambivalence towards Nazi atrocities. His stroll can be read as a nonchalant and familiar encounter with the scene of horror and he becomes a representative of the German nation and

therefore associated with the perpetrators of these violent acts. The abnormality of the scene becomes a metaphor for the fascist state. If the boy is identified as Jewish, then the difficult question to ask is: what are the conditions of his survival – or how has he survived when all around he is surrounded by death? Retrospectively, the photograph's appearance in *Life* and the viewers' relationship to the scene are further complicated by the fact that we now know from both Rodger's book and the *Life* archives that the image has been cropped down its right-hand side as we view it. Apart from a couple of young women, who are also walking down the forest road in the distant background, there are few signs of human survival when we look at the photograph as reproduced by *Life*. The cropping is significant in that it reduces both the foreground and background of the photograph's content on the right-hand side of the frame. When the photograph was reproduced in full in Rodger's book (Rodger 1994, p.137), the right-hand side opens up the scene to being much more than the story of the boy's existence, revealing in clear detail the explicit body parts and faces of many victims. In particular, a woman stares out at the viewer with dead, non-seeing eyes from underneath the fully-exposed body of another woman, whose face is covered by her clothes. In the uncropped version of the photograph, the dead woman's pathetic expression eclipses the punctive power contained in the small boy's inquisitive look. This version also reveals a well-populated scene. In the background on the right-hand side, survivors are clearly evident throughout a woodland area of the camp, many of whom appear to be squatting, huddled together in small groups. Given the angle of the sun and the length of the boy's shadow, we can assume that it is around midday. It is possible, then, that the people are preparing some kind of meal. The detail of what they are doing is not visible, but it adds a degree of turbulence to the reading of the photograph. What is evident, though, is that, in this moment, the presence of the boy and the two women following him further down the road seems less significant, less at odds with the scene, as we can interpret these individuals as being some of the many survivors hanging on in the chaos of the camp.

One analysis of *Life*'s decision to crop the photograph suggests that there was a real desire to visually exploit the presence of the boy so as to emphasise the level of inhumanity operating in and around the camps. However, the cropping denies us access to the wider scene of the chaos surrounding survival and death across the camps and shuts down some of the uncomfortable aspects of seeing simultaneously people dead, on the edge of life or in moments of survival.

Rodger was so sickened by the experience of trying to make aesthetically-pleasing photographs for news media from the horrors that he had encountered at the camps that he never returned to photographing in war zones again. He is much quoted as saying,

It wasn't even a matter of what I was photographing, as what had happened to me in the process. When I discovered that I could look at the horror of Belsen, 4000 dead and starving lying around, and think only of a nice photographic composition, I knew something had happened to me and I had to stop. I felt I was like the people running the camp, it didn't mean a thing. (Shephard 2006, p.102)

What Rodger states here is of profound importance when we think about the role of photography and the making images of violence for popular consumption. He tellingly reveals that his act of photographing the results of the camps with his aesthetic eye equated to a quasi-fascist act of violence. Rodger recognised the power of his situation above the vulnerable dead or living, who were caught in the most extreme circumstances. This relationship for Rodger was so profoundly disturbing that he aligned his fully exploitative gaze with that of Nazi prison guards, which was a form of über-objectification at work.

On page 33 there are four photographs of equal size. The two at the top are from Belsen and were also taken by Rodger. They portray the sick, the dying and the dead lying around the enclosures at the camp. The lower two are from Buchenwald and are by Margaret Bourke-White. Like that of Rodger, Bourke-White's work from the camps has become iconic. Her two photographs are taken from inside the barracks and portray the emaciated, starving and deformed men on the edge of existence. In one of the photographs some of the men smile and wave back at Bourke-White's camera in acknowledgement of her photographic act. It is an example of an awkward human moment when, even in the harshest conditions, one of the default positions for people in the presence of a camera is to smile or wave. They clearly see her looking at them and now, from the archive, they wave back at us. Her use of flash adds an increased sense of exposure to an already harsh scene. Bourke-White reflected on her time making photographs at the death camps: 'I saw and I photographed the piles of naked, lifeless bodies, the human skeletons in furnaces, the living skeletons who would die the next day ... and tattooed skin for lampshades. Using the camera was almost a relief. It interposed a slight barrier between myself and the horror in front me' (Feinstein 2005, p.4).

Not all who saw the prisoners could hide behind their cameras. When many of the ‘soldiers looked into the camp ... one after another, they threw up. Seeing this, the inmates became embarrassed and turned away’ (Shephard 2006, p.23). In this moment the prisoners understood that they had become a horrific sight and their self-consciousness prevailed. Shephard’s text addresses how the prisoners, once liberated, saw themselves through the eyes of the liberators, that is, as being human again but in debased form. Seeing the faces of the liberating soldiers and watching the response to their condition relocates the victims’ sense of self outside the violent gaze of the Nazi regime, which clearly derives pleasure from their destruction. The gaze of the liberator returns the victim back into a difficult place of self-consciousness and embarrassment concerning their condition when they register that they have been seen as human once again. Their sense of liberation, then, is destroyed when the soldiers vomited, which the victims may have equated with the disgust and hatred that the Nazis had for their prisoners, thus causing the latter to turn away in shame.

At Gardelegen camp, William Vandivert took all the photographs that run over pages 34 and 35. Page 34 contains four photographs each used roughly at quarter-page size. They show in detail the remains of the people who were locked in a warehouse when the camp guards set it on fire; some of the corpses are still smouldering. The image filling page 35 illustrates the enormity of the overall atrocity from inside the warehouse at Gardelegen.

The almost full-page photograph on page 36 was taken by Johnny Florba at Nordhausen. It shows thousands of prisoners laid out, waiting for burial in neat rows across a bombed-out street. American soldiers can be seen surveying the scene.

The final photograph, on page 37, provides a detail of German guards being forced to bury the dead. The first part of its caption reads ‘Two German Guards, knee-deep in decaying flesh and bones, haul bodies into place in the Belsen mass grave’. The photograph is once again by Rodger. This image takes the reader full circle back to Belsen but this time with the perpetrators enclosed in the making of their own horror. The lack of horizon in this photograph creates the impression of an unending mass of dead people. You cannot see past the corpses that fill the image from top to bottom. The guards appear to rummage like scavengers as they pick through the bodies. The fact that one of the guards is a woman intensifies the level of horror, as atrocity in Western visual culture is generally men’s work. The popular myth surrounding women is that by ‘nature’ they nurture, not massacre. The

female German guard represents the ‘unnatural’ order of events in the camp. The caption informs the reader that she is a ‘strong armed German SS Girl wearing leather jack boots’. The reference to her boots pulls her even further away from any idea of the ‘natural’ feminine world to which she may well have once belonged. The dead bodies in which the guards are knee-deep, and the way they are framed as they handle the corpses, render the dead as symbolic lost souls collectively caught, even in death, in Nazi hell. They have become a mass of nameless players in a horrendous theatre of death that visually recalls Goya’s *The Disasters of War*. The horror here, however, is intensified because these images are not etchings but photographs and as such they are loaded and discharged in the face of the audience by *Life* with all the realism associated with the medium.

In 1945, because these photographs were displayed in this particular magazine, they would have been regarded by the American public as being images that ‘transmit immutable truths ... it is clear that photographic meaning depends largely on context ... Meaning is always directed by layout, captions, text and site and mode of presentation’ (Sekula 2002, p.445). While this issue of *Life* illustrates well Sekula’s thoughts, over time linkages in meaning may be weakened and unhinged from their original dominance. Now these photographs cast a dark shadow across Allied attitudes towards Jews during the war. Further analysis into the dark shadows of *Life*’s editorial policy could help us to decode some of the other possible meanings, cultural attitudes and discourses present in the 7 May issue of *Life*, which might further our understanding of the nuanced ideological positions that the magazine supported at the time it published the ‘Atrocities’ feature. (Figs. 8- 10)

Part 4. Omissions (Back to Language)

The language of the text used by *Life* that Lauren claims ‘still speaks for itself’ generates in the reader the sense of being present at a courtroom summary at the tense moment just before the sentence is handed down. The judgement aspect of the text also recalls a darker, more sinister narrative concerning the value of life and those who die in vain during war. Part of Hitler’s rage was wrapped up in avenging those Germans who in World War I were gassed and died ‘in the field, the sacrifice’. For Hitler, killing Jews, as he states in *Mein Kampf* (Hitler 1925), meant that those Germans who perished in the trenches of World War I would not have ‘died in vain’. *Life*’s editorial tone is rich with righteous condemnation and moral authority, and evokes a nationalist tone. The text is peppered with the symbolic meaning of judgement. Words such as ‘evidence’, ‘charges’, ‘witness’ and ‘doubt’ reproduce the logic of

a courtroom trial in process. Part of the work *Life*'s text performs for its readers, then, is to call forth these evidential photographs as primary collective chief witnesses from the scene of atrocity. What is evident is that before *Life*'s editorial moment, photographs of German atrocity, especially those from Soviet or Jewish sources, did not carry the authoritative power to make the charge. An analysis of the text exposes *Life*'s attempt to deflect its 12-year legacy of refusal to address Nazi brutality back onto the American people as being the primary source of doubt that drove the 'skeptical' perspective that the magazine highlights. In discussing the importance of these photographs as active agents in the development of human rights politics, Lauren chose to edit *Life*'s text for his reader. He lays emphasis on the notion of the shocking discovery. Lauren's version reads as follows:

Last week the jubilation of impending victory was sobered by the grim facts of the atrocities which Allied troops were uncovering all over Germany. For 12 years since the Nazis seized power, Americans have heard charges of German brutality. Made sceptical by World War I 'atrocity propaganda,' many people refused to put much faith in stories about inhuman Nazi treatment of prisoners (*Life*, Vol. 18, No.19 May 7, 1945, p.33).

Lauren continues: 'Last week Americans *could no longer doubt* stories of Nazi cruelty. *For the first time there was irrefutable evidence*, as the advancing Allied armies captured camps filled with political prisoners and slave laborers, living and dead.' (Lauren 2003, p.186) The first point to note is that the use of italics here is not in the original *Life* text. More significantly, Lauren's omissions from *Life*'s relatively short text create a gap in understanding in the magazine's editorial stance, especially when the text and photographs are considered through the prism of the evolution of the history of human rights.

A retrospective reading of *Life*'s full 'Atrocities' text reveals a most disturbing absence that is crucial to both the debates on the representation of atrocities within the concentration camps and the development of human rights in spring 1945 – that is, the lack of any reference to the ethnicity of the prisoners. This omission is also evident in the 12 photographic captions. The critical aspect of the Jewish existence in the camps is withheld and totally denied throughout the 'Atrocities' feature. If *Life* states that the 'camps are filled with political prisoners and slave laborers', then given the high moral standing that *Life* adopted throughout this powerful editorial moment, this omission or refusal to discuss the Jewish

presence can only be read as a deliberate withholding of information relating to the content and potential messages these photographs may have transmitted to readers at the time of their reception. The photographs can therefore be read as evidencing a different set of concerns that reveal a coherence across the Western media in the form of a general refusal to address the specifics of German policies of extermination aimed at Jews at this critical time in public awareness of the who, the why and the when of these events. A question then that surfaces here is, did *Life*, like its British media counterparts, have concerns when it came to highlighting the violent treatment of Jews by the Germans? When discussing the British media in her essay, 'Horror in Our Time', Hannah Caven states that,

One of the biggest difficulties for newspapers appears to have been how to refer to the Jewish populations within the camps. In some ways it almost seems as if there was an attitude that everyone knew that the Jews were the main victims and that no more needed to be said on the subject. (Caven 2001, p.234)

Read from the perspective of racial politics, it could have also been that highlighting the fact that the majority of the victims were Jews might reignite old anti-Semitic attitudes and alienate readers; veiling the presence of Jews in the camps renders the photographs less emotive for generic Western public consumption. In short, and given Allied state and public attitudes to Jews, as 'the worst period of American anti-Semitism was sandwiched between the ends of World War I and World War II' (Dinnerstein 1993, p.212), might the audience be less inclined to identify with the people in focus if they considered them alien and apart from themselves?

Part 5. Race and Information

Paul Lowe informs us that in Britain it was well known that 'the majority of the inmates at Belsen were Jewish' (Lowe 2012, p.193), but 'by the time the reports reached the general public this fact had largely been censored from the material. This was mostly the result of attitudes of the British Ministry of Information and the Foreign Office who rarely mentioned Jews in their reports on the camps preceding the liberations' (Lowe 2012, p.193). The text in *Life* appears to mirror this policy of censorship adopted by British state information services when reporting on the ethnicity of the victims in the camps and indeed the overall condition of the Jews held in the camps during World War II. By withholding the racial aspects from the 'Atrocities' feature, *Life* may well have thought it could maximise the potential to extract

an emotive and sensational response from its readership. A critical question for us to consider is whether this editorial omission was a symbolic humanitarian act of inclusiveness for the Jewish victims in the camps, or whether it was a deliberate act of erasure aimed at creating wider public empathy for the victims of the camps from among *Life*'s readers. If it was the latter, then this was gained at the expense of denying the victims their Jewish identity.

Images carry out the incessant work of a formulation of archaic passions. Warburg proposed an iconology (a method of reading the work performed in images) of the interval, the symbolic space between thought and the deepest of emotional impulses that is produced and remembered by the formulation of affect in the image. (Pollock 2012, p.66)

In May 1945, could the wider symbolic order of the work produced in the 'Atrocities' photographs have had such a wide emotional impact if the ethnicity of the Jews was made the central narrative of the feature? This cultural erasure, then, becomes a denial of the historical reality to which the images belonged.

Lauren draws our attention to the parts of the text in the 'Atrocities' feature that highlight the eyewitness accounts of those who entered the camps. He states that, 'Eyewitnesses were quoted as saying, "Anything you hear ... will be an understatement. The full truth would get ... so low you couldn't print it." "The memory of what we saw and heard will haunt us."' Lauren continues,

The editors then concluded by informing the readers that, 'With the armies in Germany were four *Life* photographers whose pictures are printed on these pages. The things they show are horrible. They are printed for the reason [that] ... "Dead men will have indeed died in vain if live men refuse to look at them".'

He concludes his analysis of the impact of the photographs by stating that, 'The images on the pages that followed were absolutely shocking, especially when seen by the public at large for the very first time, and revealed the power of photographs to arouse the conscience and thereby serve as a catalyst for action.' Lauren then states that 'the juxtaposition of the knowledge of the Holocaust entering the public consciousness at the same time as the creation of the United Nations ... added still another powerful force to a volatile mixture of

politics and diplomacy at the San Francisco Conference' (Lauren 2003, p.186). The key emotive, catalytic action that was generated by these photographs was, according to Lauren, to help create a sense of political urgency among the delegates at the San Francisco Conference to subscribe to the formation of a new global world order that would prevent the disasters of war that had been laid out before them on the pages of *Life* magazine from recurring. However, if the photographs had revealed the nature of the clear majority of people who had suffered in the death camps, then they would have performed different political work. They would have supported with greater emotive charge those at the conference who wanted to ensure that anti-racism was enshrined in any new universal declarations on the rights of man. The image work that Lauren claims this feature in *Life* carried out contains a fault as the Holocaust as an idea was not fully formed in the international political consciousness as World War II drew to its end.

Part 6. Wider Scene of Events and the Absence of Rage

Before we examine further the role that the 12 'Atrocities' photographs perform as catalysts for action, and because of the highly charged nature of the images and the complexity surrounding the 'doubt' among the Allied forces relating to the scale of killings in the German death camps, it is worthwhile considering some of the wider issues at play regarding the specifics in the reproduction of these photographs within the overall editorial context of this particular issue of *Life*. This may help throw more critical light on some of the prevailing cultural and political attitudes at work among the shadows of the Allied powers' media as World War II was drawing to its conclusion.

When looking at the 'Atrocities' photographs we have to bear in mind *Life*'s massive circulation and the influential editorial news position that it held in America and beyond. With greater distance, we can now possibly draw out some of the other cultural work that these photographs did at this particular moment in world affairs, as epitomised by the events unfolding at the San Francisco Conference. As Lauren states, readers of *Life* 'quite naturally anticipated full coverage of the start of the San Francisco conference' (Lauren 2003, p.186). This was the main political event of the period and represented the possibility of a new dawn in world affairs.

At the conference there was a variety of different and complex political agendas being worked through within the grand settings of the San Francisco Opera House, but one of the

more poignant questions was how the world's smaller nations, colonial subjects and other peoples that had been historically oppressed would fare in a new post-World War II global politic. What would freedom and liberation look like for the colonised subjects of the world after the defeat of the Axis powers, and would the Allied powers live up to the promises made, for example, at the signing of the 1941 Atlantic Charter? Fabien Klose captures the expectations raised by the Charter for the leaders of colonised peoples:

The Atlantic Charter of 1941, signed by Roosevelt and Churchill, reaffirmed faith in the dignity of each human being and propagated a host of democratic principles. Some in the West saw the Charter as empty promises, but not those of us in Africa. Inspired by the Atlantic Charter and the fight of the Allies against tyranny and oppression, the ANC created its own charter, called African Claims, which called for full citizenship for all Africans, the right to buy land, and repeal all discriminatory legislation. We hoped that the government and ordinary South Africans would see that the principles they were fighting for in Europe were the same ones we were advocating at home. (Klose 2013, p.22)

Expectation for the Allied powers to deliver was therefore high and political aspirations real. Political autonomy throughout the colonies was being demanded as the war in Europe was entering its final phases. In describing the events that took place at the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester 1945, George Padmore noted that 'The Second World War had led to an almost universal feeling among Africans and people of African descent that colonial liberation was the order of the day, and that this struggle would be achieved by force if necessary' (Padmore 1947).

Racism and imperialistic attitudes among the Allies were clearly in evidence as the war in Europe was coming to a close. America's black soldiers served in a segregated Jim Crow army and American racism during the war was not just reserved for its own citizens. It was American high command that specifically ordered that French African colonial soldiers should be excluded from taking part in the victory parade through Paris to celebrate French liberation in August 1944. The order came from General Walter Bedell Smith, who was President Eisenhower's Chief of Staff. The face of victory over fascism in France as far as America was concerned had to be white (Deroo n.d). The assumption here is that black faces

liberating white Paris would have had a negative impact on race relations back at home in the USA.

Eisenhower visited the camp at Ohrdruf just a few days after its liberation on 4 April 1945. He played an important role in publicising the events unfolding in the camps and stated:

I had never felt able to describe my emotional reactions when I first came *face to face* with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency. ... I have never at any other time experienced an equal sense of shock. ... As soon as I returned to Patton's headquarters that evening I sent communications to both Washington and London, urging the two governments to send instantly to Germany a random group of newspaper editors and representative groups from the national legislatures. I felt that the evidence should be immediately placed before the American and British publics in a fashion that would leave no room for cynical doubt. (Charny 1999, p.296)

In the immediate aftermath of the discovery of the camps both the American and the British editorials would indeed be fashioned to a purpose that clearly suited the Allied political perspective on how to manage public perception of the camps. However, not all senior Allied army staff that visited the camps felt or displayed the same compassionate need to act as Eisenhower did, although it is evident that Eisenhower still had to come to terms with America's racist policies towards colonial soldiers and black American service men.

Leslie Hardman, a Jewish British soldier, notes that 'he recalled that a visiting officer to the camp made the tasteless comment "Bloody Jews it's good for them". Hardman was understandably incensed, disbelieving that in the sight of such tragedy people could still be so callous towards the Jews' (Caven 2001, p.212). It is clear from Hardman's experience that not all those in positions of authority in the Allied forces carried with them a sense of outrage regarding the dehumanising conditions in the concentration camps. The absence of rage across the Allied forces is historically evident through the lack of military and political action by the Allied forces and is made manifest by Hardman's experience in the camp. 'It is no doubt possible to create the conditions under which men are dehumanised – such as concentration camps, torture, famine – but this does not mean that they become animal-like:

and under such conditions, not rage and violence, but their conspicuous absence is the clearest sign of dehumanisation' (Arendt 1970, p.63).

The 7 May 1945 issue of *Life* stands out in this highly influential magazine's famous legacy, primarily because of the moment in history that the 'Atrocities' feature represented.

However, it is important that we examine the full visual aspect of this issue, for example the cover story and its specific reference to the 'the German People', and the images immediately preceding and following the 'Atrocities' article that focus on the other visual and textual aspects of the conclusion of World War II, one of which was, as discussed, the hugely symbolic moment when the Russian and American armies met in Germany. An examination of the impact these photographs may have had on the reader in the build-up to the 'Atrocities' photographs being published is useful, as we are then able to situate the 'Atrocities' feature within a wider editorial narrative. Similarly, and probably more importantly, consideration should be given to the way the 'Atrocities' photographs may have influenced the reading of the feature about the San Francisco Conference.

Part 7. The Cover Story

The environmental photographic portrait taken by William Vandivert of three German men, which appears on the cover of this issue of *Life*, presents a distinct sense of menace. The men all stare challengingly back in the direction of the photographer. Given their age, it is hard to imagine that they never saw some kind of military service and they therefore appear in the guise of demobbed army personnel. The youngest of the three looks straight ahead but very slightly off camera, assured, inquisitive and confrontational in his gaze. He has an injured left hand, which has been freshly bandaged; it is not soiled in any way. Standing slightly behind his right shoulder is a man of roughly the same age; and behind his left shoulder, further back in the frame, is an older man, who is gaunt and more sinister-looking in his black hat and overcoat. The text to the left of the photograph reads 'THE GERMAN PEOPLE'. The three men present an image of a wounded, defiant, but still dangerous, nation. They appear hostile in attitude, aggressive in defeat, confident and unremorseful as representatives of the broken, flawed German nation. (Fig. 11)

This sense of defiance and lack of remorse is carried through the article that appears some 23 pages, after the feature titled 'San Francisco Security Conference Starts'. Between the feature on the Conference and the cover story we are presented with a feature titled 'Baseball', which

is closely followed by one called 'How America Lived – Six Old Houses Give A Realistic Record Of The Past'. There is then a photo feature: 'Freudian Ballet "Undertow" is a choreographic study of frustration and violence'. On page 69 the cover story unfolds. The title is repeated, 'THE GERMAN PEOPLE', but this time we have a sub-heading too: 'A FEW ANTI NAZIS FACE THE APPALLING JOB OF REDEEMING A COUNTRY THAT FEELS NO GUILT OR SHAME'. An accompanying photograph, occupying over half the page, was taken by the now legendary Robert Capa. It shows an elderly German couple dressed in dark overcoats, scarves and hats squatting in a foxhole in the middle of a field. It is mildly comical, as the couple appear to pop out of a muddy grave. The surreal nature of the image is further enhanced because Capa's close framing gives no indication as to why they are there and where the foxhole is in relation to the environment. The caption reads: 'German and his frightened wife squat in a foxhole. Unlike the young, older Germans were friendly and anxious to please the Americans'. The caption does not reconcile with the image and the image tells us nothing about the older German people in relation to the Americans. What the image does do, though, is echo back to an earlier sequence of photographs from the letters to the editors on page 6. These were sent to *Life* by an American soldier returning from Europe. He reports finding the three photographs in Germany:

Sirs: To supplement your pictures of what the Germans did to their prisoners of war I submit three pictures I found in Germany. They evidently give a photographic record of a typical German execution, one in which the condemned man dug his own grave before being cut down by rifle bullets. Not a very pretty practice, is it? Sgt. Earl E. Rauscher.

The 16 April issue had carried photographs of American prisoners of war in a state of starvation and Sgt Rauscher sent in the photographs he had found in response to seeing the emaciated American men. The letters to the editors also carried another interesting response. The reader commented that she could not bear to look at the starved American soldiers. She criticised *Life* for publishing the images, stating:

But I cannot conceive of the psychology behind the publishing of such pictures as these of starved American prisoners of war ... There is enough realism and foresight in the average American to convince him that these murderous enemies must for ever

be silenced. We can do without the pictorial examples until our men have returned.
Our hearts have quite enough burdens to carry ... Jane M. Smith.

Jane Smith's point illustrates how difficult it may be to look at a subject caught up in violence when the person in the frame is readily recognisable as one of our own. Two of the American soldiers photographed were emaciated and close to death. Both the images were produced as empathetic documents of humanity in distress. They render the American servicemen with dignity and are loaded with pathos. The subject of American soldiers held in prison camps has been clearly handled by *Life* with national sentiment in mind, even at this mild level of exposure to their debasing condition. The difference between these images in the 16 April 1945 issue of *Life* and those in the 7 May 1945 issue is that the men are clearly identified as being American, the detail of the capture is part of the caption, as is the length of their captivity. The men isolated in the frame become the sole focus of our gaze rather than part of a mass of violence, with the result that they equate more to an intimate bedside visit than to being part of an overall scene of disaster. In these frames we are encouraged to be with them as men rather than as mere observers of their condition.

Nevertheless, as Smith illustrates, reader reaction could be quite strong:

The language of these magazines revealed a true concern for social problems but from a reformist point of view: 'there is a real rhetoric of change and improvement there, of people capable of resilience and courage; but there isn't anywhere a language of dissent, opposition or revolt'. *Life* magazine proved most influential during this period; it had a major, long lasting impact on the very conception of the photographic document in the west. (Ribalta 2008, p.22)

'THE GERMAN PEOPLE' article runs from page 69 to page 76 and highlights through the writer's direct experience the fact that there is no sense of guilt, shame or responsibility for the war among the German people themselves. The article concludes with a photograph by Margaret Bourke-White of an older man dressed in a trolley car inspector's uniform, leaning assertively on his bicycle, taken from a low position at an upward angle, thus elevating his status in the frame. In the context of Germany's defeat, the inspector becomes a parody of German military might, which now renders him a tragic but sinister comic figure as if Hitler himself is reduced to riding a pushbike. If the reader is in any doubt, the caption affirms his

clownish status: 'A Hitler moustache still decorates Paul Pelzer, Cologne trolley car inspector. A typical small Nazi, he had confidence in Germany's victory until bombing stopped his cars'.

Part 8. The San Francisco Conference

African Americans and those caught in Europe's colonies who had contributed to the war effort numbered in the hundreds of thousands, and these men and women were not going to revert back to being treated as mere simpletons or second-class citizens living under the old segregationist or Jim Crow laws, nor would they continue to succumb to colonial regulations that condemned them to servitude. If we understand that conflict has the capacity to cause both national and personal trauma, and given the roles played by black soldiers and civil rights activists throughout World War II and in the subsequent anti-colonial, pro-civil rights and Cold War-based ideological confrontations that emerged throughout the twentieth century, then we can acknowledge that one of the key outcomes of these conflicts was that the racialised and disenfranchised subject's sense of self – of being a valued human being – was profoundly altered by the direct experience of war, the concentration camp and the struggle for political recognition. Walter White, the executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1945, was 'convinced that the Allies simply could not grasp that if they tried to trot out the same old discredited peace plan, especially a peace based on the perpetuation of white overlordship, ... another war is inevitable.' To save the Allies from committing 'the folly of another Versailles Treaty', the NAACP, 'on behalf of the Negroes not only of America, but Africa, the West Indies and other parts of the world', was going to have to make its 'voice heard' (Anderson 2003, p.17).

A contradictory political and ideological front opened during World War II. Europe wanted to maintain or re-imagine the old imperial structures but at the same time had to espouse libertarian and humanitarian propaganda to mobilise the colonies to support the war effort. America faced a similar predicament and maintained throughout the war a policy of racial segregation in the army and at home. The Allied forces' essential propagandist message was that they were fighting for universal freedoms and that extreme fascist aggression, which targeted all those who did not meet the Aryan model of human worth, was a collective, moral and shared human concern for all the world's peoples. The Atlantic Charter of 1941 adopted by Britain and America served as the guiding principle of the Allied forces' moral and political position throughout the war. The third point of the charter had a particular relevance

to the colonised and disenfranchised peoples around the world. It stated that ‘all people had the right to self-determination’. However, the Allied forces had clearly not thought through the actual political reality and delivery of self-determination for all the world’s people after the war. The Atlantic Charter was critically important in that it marked the beginning of the end of European colonisation in the minds of the colonised and represented a milestone in the concept of self-determination for the colonised nations. It was also to play an important part ideologically as a key point of contention for the non-European and African American delegates at the San Francisco Conference. ‘For African Americans...the Atlantic Charter was revolutionary. It was something, as NAACP Board member Channing Tobias declared, that black people would be willing to “live, work, fight and if need be, die for”’ (Anderson 2003, p.17). What was becoming most evident to the black delegates was that the major powers would fight ‘tooth and nail over the definitions and priorities of human rights, they unanimously agreed that these rights could not be used to pierce the shield of national sovereignty The most powerful states, through the human rights discourse, made their priorities the universal concern of others’ (Douzinas 2000, p.119). The construct of universality as an idea among dominant Allied forces maintained its fundamental Eurocentric essentialist origins.

After World War II, ‘These subjugated voices from across the black world accrued into a new kind of colonised peoples’ political reconstruction work’ (Bailey & Hall 1992, p.106), a work produced from within an increasingly unified subaltern and shared body politic that was demanding autonomy. The colonial subjects’ participation in the war against the fascist threat therefore evolved into a continuous, complex web of interconnected struggles for freedom that would resonate around the world for decades to come. These utterances of real freedoms were turned into political articulations during the San Francisco Conference. However, faith in change began to slowly dwindle during the course of the event, which led W.E.B. Du Bois to comment later that ‘San Francisco was a beginning, not an accomplishment’ (Anderson 2003, p.55).

For the historically oppressed person of colour, having rights and scrupulously following legal procedures offers much more than the actual contents of these rights; it offers the respect of others and the self- respect that legal recognition ensures but which has been systematically withheld. Being admitted to right-holding is a

symbolic admission to the dignity of humanity and a very real introduction to the legal recognition of (formal) equality. (Douzinas 2000, p.295)

So while the fresh cool wind of Cold War politics was beginning to be felt around the collars of delegates attending the conference, American black activists such as Du Bois, White and others were pushing forward the questions of race, decolonisation and equality beyond the politics of civil rights and into the theatre of human rights.

‘As feared by some, and hoped for by others, the question of race came up immediately at the San Francisco Conference. The mood and interests of the delegates differed sharply from those of the Americans, British and Soviets at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in 1944’ (Lauren 2003, p.109). As voiced by Du Bois:

Today as we try in anticipation to rebuild the world, the propositions of Dumbarton Oaks center their efforts upon stopping war by force and at the same time leaving untouched, save by vague implication, the causes of war, especially those causes which lurk in rivalry for power and prestige [and] race dominance. (DuBois 1945, p.103)

As long as these exist, he declared, ‘there can be neither peace on earth nor good will toward men.’ Now was the time, argued Du Bois, to shift from the old ‘for white people only’ policies and to recognise that ‘the day has dawned when above a wounded and tired earth unselfish sacrifice, without sin and hell, may join through technique, shorn of ruthless greed, and make a new religion, one with new knowledge, to shout from the old hills of heaven: “Go down Moses!”’ Du Bois and other active observers and participants conveyed an intensity that far surpassed Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius’s first general expression of the need to work towards ‘greater freedom and greater opportunity for all peoples of every race, creed and colour’ (Lauren 1988, p.163).

Page 38 of *Life* follows George Rodger’s photograph of the German guards pulling bodies around in the Belsen mass grave. This page features a wide photograph taken from high up in the opera house looking down at the stage and the theatre packed with conference delegates. The caption reads, ‘CONFERENCE OPENS IN SAN FRANCISCO OPERA HOUSE’. It is a fantastic grand setting in which the future security of the world is being dramatically

addressed. The old opera house is rendered a fitting location for the reality of this political drama. (Fig. 12)

Page 39 is divided into three sections. The first has a photograph in which the U.S.S.R Foreign Commissar Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov is speaking to the conference. The text states that, 'Molotov showed himself to be a master of both stubbornness and surprise.' The caption reads, 'U.S.S.R. Foreign Commissar V.M. Molotov tells the conference that his country believes in a security organisation and will help set it up now.'

It is a typical conference setting with note-takers and the chairman of the conference, Edward R. Stettinius, with his distinctive head of white hair, watching over the proceedings. One of his colleagues is seen whispering in Stettinius's ear. The text for the feature occupies the centre section of the page, with the final third of the page showing a photograph filled top to bottom with the seated delegates applauding. The caption informs us that the three delegates closest to the camera are from Brazil: 'Delegates at the first session applaud the address of welcome by Governor Warren of California. In the front of the photograph are seated three of the delegates from Brazil.' The unnamed delegates, though solemn in expression, appear mildly appreciative of the speech. The photograph is revealing not so much because of its focus on the three Brazilians but because it highlights just how few black faces made up this section of the conference despite the fact that while it was being staged over 750 million people were under some form of colonial control.

Page 40 has two photographs positioned on the left-hand side, one above the other. The right-hand side of the page is dedicated to a text titled 'The Russians'. The top photograph shows Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, speaking at the podium caught in a true statesman-like gesture, his right hand held high, while he addresses the delegates. We have been informed on the previous page that he gave 'the most eloquent speech' in which he 'reminded the big powers of their responsibilities to the world' and that the 'conference should conclude its work within four weeks'. The photograph below the one of Eden is of T.V. Soong, the Chinese Foreign Minister. He is also photographed standing at the podium. The caption for both photographs reads, 'Addressing the conference, Anthony Eden, British Foreign Minister, declares that "we must succeed" in solving disputes by agreement. Below T.V. Soong, Chinese Foreign Minister, says that "China, perhaps more than any other nation, understands the necessity of success of this conference".' (Fig. 13)

In direct contrast to the relatively positive messages used in the captioning of the photographs of Eden and Soong, *Life* includes a text that focuses on the difficulties and cultural gaps that exist between 'The Russians' and the Americans. The title of the editorial carries a subheading: 'A *Life* editor finds they got off on the wrong foot because they did not understand the Americans'. The article is written by Fillmore Calhoun, a *Life* foreign correspondent. The opening paragraph states,

For reasons of which they seem entirely unaware, the Russian delegates at San Francisco started out by losing friends and jeopardizing its influence at toboggan speed. Either the State Department, their own people who have lived in the U.S. or a competent public relations man should have filled them in on a few facts. What they probably needed was a little booklet similar to those which introduced the GIs to various European countries, titled *The Americans a Strange People*.

Calhoun's article constructs an image of the Russians as being a suspicious, hostile, secretive people locked out of foreign techniques of diplomacy and courtesy. The article continues,

The trouble began when word got round that the Russians had brought a shipload of vodka and caviar for their own pleasure. The 'proof' was that anyone could go to the top of Telegraph Hill and see the ship at anchor. Actually the ship was there primarily for communications and to provide living quarters for some of Russia's delegates, but the everlasting secretiveness of the Russians made it all seem mysterious. Idle tongues clacked away.

Russian photographers seemed to have upset America photographers by breaking out of the designated 'pool' of photographers: 'Screams of rage rose, "Is San Francisco running this conference or is Moscow?"'. Just before Molotov's plane did arrive the whole mob was allowed to move out to take their pictures where they wanted to, each and every individual feeling he had struck a firm resounding blow for liberty'. A chaotic photographic press moment at the airport is rendered as a fight for liberty against the Russians. The article goes on to further ridicule the Russians when it states that, 'Part of the Russian difficulty lies in the fact that they have been so busy ironing out a revolution and winning a war that they have paid no attention to the mores of other nations. The conference marks the Soviets' first real

emergence into the outside world.’ The Russian presence in San Francisco is ultimately infantilised through *Life*’s article, which creates a sense of a Russian nation lacking the cultural confidence to cope with the modern developed ‘outside world’ represented by San Francisco.

The article also pokes fun at the Russians’ appearance: ‘Their clothes are poorly cut, their shoes badly worn ... men whose courage has won them the Hero of the Soviet Union medal look half-scared to death.’ The statement mocks the integrity of their status as war heroes, questioning whether these shabby characters can be genuine heroes if they are so easily frightened at a world peace conference. In closing the article it is evident that *Life*’s editors would have preferred to have had a Russian delegation that was prepared to sing and dance to the tune of American politics and they clearly had an expectation that foreign diplomats and soldiers should have the capacity to entertain Americans: ‘If the Russian soldiers had brought out balalaikas the crowds would have cheered, traipsed around with them as they do when Scots bagpipers parade on New Year’s Eve.’ The idea of equating the Russian delegation and war heroes at a world peace conference with Scots bagpipers on New Year’s Eve reveals a form of deep-seated cultural arrogance and insensitivity from the editors of *Life*, who, by trying to elevate the Russians’ obvious trivial differences into significantly political events, ultimately inform us of *Life*’s own hysterical sense of fear that the communists are among us and, as such, their presence must be tarnished.

Breaking up the coverage of the San Francisco Conference, on pages 41 and 42 there are full-page advertisements for Campbell’s Soup and Snider’s Tomato Catsup respectively. These interject a flavour of American domestic values across the scene. Caricatures of women positioned on different days of a calendar wearing aprons offer a warm welcome to the viewer. One of the women stands out as she is dressed for a formal occasion. Page 43 continues with further coverage dedicated to the Russians. There is an almost full-page photograph of the U.S.S.R. Foreign Commissar V.M. Molotov. Its headline reads ‘MOLOTOV HOLDS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE’. The photograph shows him talking to the press in an open and inviting manner, his gesticulating hands wide apart and with what appears to be a glint of excitement in his eyes, possibly enjoying his newly found celebrity status. Throughout the text Molotov is presented as a ‘graying, dark-suited Russian of medium height with a mustache and pince-nez’. We are informed that ‘he is usually completely surrounded by bodyguards ... Reporters knew him only by reputation – a stern-

visaged early Bolshevik, twice exiled to Siberia, once editor of *Pravda*, once 1930–1941 Premier of the U.S.S.R. They understood him to be a capable but colorless administrator.’ The editors of *Life*, though, did discover that Molotov ‘had a sense of humor’ and they offer some additional respite to the coldness of their description by conveying to the readers the sense that the Russian delegation is not beyond negotiation, as they state that, ‘Russia was willing to amend the Dumbarton Oaks plan’. However, the article lays strong emphasis on Molotov’s dogmatic character when he is quoted as saying that ‘it was “only just” for Russia to have three seats in the Assembly.’ Molotov, as far as Du Bois and his colleagues were concerned, was hardly a grey politician – for the black delegates at the conference, Molotov and the Russians were a source of inspiration and hope because, as ‘Du Bois noted, at San Francisco, it was painfully obvious that “not a whisper against colonialism could be heard except from Molotov”’ (Dubois 1997 p.14). (Fig. 14)

What is striking about the articles in *Life* is just how little detail is given about the critical political issues at stake during the conference. Much of the coverage is dedicated to reinforcing ingrained xenophobic attitudes towards different cultural and political perspectives. The British are described as ‘natty Etonized’ characters although Anthony Eden is photographed as statesman-like at the podium. The Saudis later on in the article provide an exotic presence by wearing long brown robes.

The final four photographs from the San Francisco Conference appear on pages 44 and 46. The first shows Clement Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain, holding a press conference. It seems to be a rather informal affair as there is no podium for the speaker and it is taking place outside the main delegates’ hall. One of his colleagues sits on the small raised stage from which Attlee is speaking, while another leans back confidently smoking a pipe. We are informed by the text that Attlee is in favour of Russia having three votes on the Assembly and also ‘that said means must be provided for removing conditions in which wars breed. This would require improvement of the economic conditions and social well being of all peoples.’ Attlee’s comment uncannily mirrors Principle 5 of the Atlantic Charter, which states ‘there was to be global economic cooperation and advancement of social welfare’, a position from which the imperial powers and the USA were progressively retreating during the conference.

The photograph immediately below that of Attlee shows Prime Minister Jan Christiaan Smuts of South Africa. He is looking down in a reflective pose from the heights of a balcony at the Fairmount Hotel over the San Francisco Bay area. 'Now 74, he was in Lloyd George's cabinet during the last war, and helped shape the League of Nations. This time, he thinks, the world is "ready" for a peace organisation. "We have learned our lesson now," he told reporters in San Francisco.' Smuts had been a good friend of Churchill since World War I and, 'His presence in San Francisco can be seen as the start of a precipitous political decline, a process highlighted by his (and his political peers) failure to comprehend fully the democratizing environment of postwar internationalism' (Dubow 2008, p.46). The inclusion of Smuts in *Life*'s feature brands him as a significant political elder statesman in attendance at the conference who like many of his political peers, Churchill included, is out of time and out of step with the speed of change occurring across the world. In reading the photograph of him today, Smuts becomes symbolic of the many white statesmen present at the conference whose 'ideas had been formed in the First World War context of the League of Nations', the vast majority of whom were clearly 'adrift in the post-1945 world order, as the language of anti-colonialism and democracy challenged' white world authority (Dubow 2008, p.47). Within a year Smuts would be facing a different set of concerns at the United Nations. 'At the very first session of the General Assembly, in 1946, South Africa was charged by India with discriminating against citizens of Indian descent' (Dubow 2008 p.47). It is evident from Smuts's comments that the sovereign state of South Africa had learnt some lessons from its participation in World War II. However, it would take South African statesmen nearly 50 years to acknowledge the social injustice and cruel inhumanity of white supremacist policies that promoted segregationist racism and the economic and cultural disenfranchisement of black Africans under its regime of Apartheid that was implemented in 1948, the same year in which the United Nations came fully into being. (Fig.15)

The last two photographs and the end of the coverage from the San Francisco Conference are on page 44. The photographs take up the right-hand side of the page and are presented with extended captions. The first portrays a chef sitting on a stairwell lined with plates of food. He strikes a jovial figure in his chef's whites and his button mushroom hat as he poses on the steps smiling into a plate of food. It is a seemingly banal photographic moment. The caption reads: 'George Mardikian, owner of San Francisco's Omar Khayyan restaurant, is semi-official Conference chef. On Wednesday he will serve Armenian dishes at the Opera House itself. Above, he poses with some of his favorites: shish kebab, cracked wheat and rice pilaf,

yapark sarin, harpout keufte, kouzou kzartma, derevapatat, paklava.’ The offering of an Armenian dish at the conference would have literally served to remind the delegates of the historically benevolent nature of American foreign policy and charitable acts towards minorities caught up in State-sponsored violence against them. Between 1915 and 1930 the American-based charity, which became known as the Near East Relief Fund, raised millions of dollars to provide critical aid for the minority Christian Armenians being systematically slaughtered by the nationalist Muslim Turks.

The final photograph and last editorial comment are positioned immediately under the photograph of Mardikian. The caption reads:

Sayyid Jamil Daoud, advisor from Saudi Arabia, is cornered by autograph fans. At first the Arabians, along with the Russians, refused to give autographs, but before long they caught on to the American custom. The Fairmont Hotel, where they are staying, was alarmed when told that their brown robes had to be pressed every night.

The photograph shows Daoud smiling back at the photographer enjoying his newly found celebrity status, surrounded by mostly women autograph hunters, some of whom also return a smile to the photographer. It is obviously a light-hearted moment for most of the people present. *Life*’s mention of the Saudi robes, however, encodes the delegate as an exotic rather than a political presence at the conference. For *Life*, the issue is not what the Saudi delegate stands for ideologically and politically but what he potentially represents in the mind of *Life*’s editorial and its readership. The reference to his brown robes is all that is required to unlock larger circuits of oriental fantasy in the West. The political reality of the Saudi situation was that they were instrumental in the formation of the Arab League just a few weeks previously. The Arab League would progress to play a significant part in post-World War II world affairs and at the time of its foundation was most concerned with ending European colonial influence in the region: ‘the issues that dominated the league’s agenda were freeing those Arab countries still under colonial rule, and preventing the Jewish community in Palestine from creating a Jewish state.’ (Anon 2011).

In a telegram sent to American magazine magnate Henry Luce in 1936, the poet and essayist Archibald MacLeish wrote, ‘The great revolutions of journalism are not revolutions in public opinion but revolutions in the way in which public opinion is formed’ (Briggs & Burke

2010, p.194). MacLeish gauged the role that *Life* was to play in American society profoundly and accurately, as by 1945 the magazine was in a powerful position to shape public opinion through its wide national and international circulation. Opinion-forming is clearly evident in the way *Life* used these ‘ethically’ (Sontag 1973, p.16) stable and emotionally charged photographs from the Nazi concentration camps. However, their ethical stability and emotional charge when first presented to the Western public was far from being fixed.

The usage by *Life* of these ‘Atrocities’ photographs represents a cultural and media milestone in the representation of atrocities. According to Lauren, the *Life* editorial played a significant role in knowledge of the Holocaust entering the public realm, and if they were, as Lauren further claims, a ‘catalyst for action’ (Lauren 2003, p.186), then it is legitimate to ask, what action did they cause and to what purpose did this action serve? On closer scrutiny of the ‘Atrocities’ feature we can observe a subtle but significant level of cultural management in the presentation of the photographs: as we look back at them in the context of their original narration, it is evident that race is omitted from the feature and is markedly absent or decoded out of their meaning, yet this was the essential element concerning the construction of the death camps. If we accept that ‘the relationship between photography and reality is not perfect evidence but it is nonetheless a substantial link to what-has-been, like a footprint or a deathmask’ (Taylor 1999, p.296), then reading *Life*’s ‘Atrocities’ photographs through the time of their publication as images from the Holocaust, as Lauren invites us to do, would historically reposition them and alter the precise nature of work they performed on the audiences that read this issue in early May 1945. As photographs used by *Life* they cannot deliver the vital knowledge relating to the Holocaust with which Lauren retrospectively empowers them (Lauren 2003, p.186). They fall foul of a form of atrocity supervision over *Life*’s readership because within the editorial and historical time and context of their original display reading these photographs as records of violence against Jews was not possible unless the reader had access to or prior knowledge of the extreme levels of ethnic cleansing that had taken place.

The editors of *Life* can therefore be charged with a large degree of misrepresentation and race management through the use of the photographs from the death camps by not providing their readers with the critical and key information concerning the nature of the majority of the victims. The ‘Atrocities’ photographs, which flow seamlessly into those taken at the San Francisco Conference, can now be read as working more to aid American national and

foreign policy during the conference than to highlighting the core violent racial realities of the death camps. If *Life* had seen fit originally to position these images within the context of the racist violence to which they now belong, then maybe as far as racial politics during the conference was concerned, those campaigning for the rights of the black Americans and subject peoples would have had a powerful visual tool to assist their cause, which was to enshrine anti-racist clauses fully within the formulation of any new universal declaration. Anti-racism and colonial freedoms were omitted from the outcomes of the San Francisco Conference creating despair among key black political activists such as Max Yergan and Walter White, who commented that ‘the San Francisco Charter provided “scant hope for liberation” for the 750 million people in non-self governing areas’ (Anderson 2003, p.56). Even with the increasing amount of visual evidence that was emerging from the concentration camps, it was hard for the dominant powers driving the formation of the United Nations to recognise the catastrophic disasters of race-orientated violence.

Chapter 3: Violence of the Image

Part 1. Racial Time

‘Equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it ... The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized.’ (Taylor 1994, p.36)

‘We forget the things that shape us and all those things that made us.’ (Hall 2008)

Archival photographs are a message from the past. As documents they open and adjust our understanding of the way we were. Photographic archives, such as those held at the Royal Anthropological Institute in London and the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt, when read from outside the dominant narratives of their making, offer the potential for different points of departure from which to translate the past. As we can only read the past, as it were, in our present, and as the present is never still, then it makes sense to read the past as always being in transition, constantly redefining us in the present as we learn more about the historical conditions of our existence back then.

As Stuart Hall suggested in 2008, trawling through the archive often means ‘we have to take one step back and go through the imaginary to enter the domain of culture’. (Hall 2008).

Archives are highly cultured precious spaces, making them rich and attractive places within which artists and curators of photography may make critical interventions, as was seen in the exhibition held in 2008 at the International Centre for Photography in New York, titled *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*. The press release states:

One of the most compelling issues explored by artists in recent years centers on the nature and meaning of the archive, that is, how we create, store, and circulate pictures and information. This widespread investigation examines the archive as both a conceptual and physical space in which memories are preserved and history decided.

The exhibition, which included works by Walid Raad, Thomas Ruff, Anri Sala, Fazal Sheikh, Lorna Simpson, Eyal Sivan, Vivan Sundaram, Nomeda and Gediminas Urbona, Andy

Warhol and many other internationally respected names, owed its title and curatorial framing to Jacques Derrida's book *Archive Fever* (1996).

The place of race in the archive is a highly contested area of investigation, one which W.E.B. Du Bois was at the forefront of articulating through his work on the visual and race. In discussing the work of Du Bois, Shawn Michelle Smith states that, 'In Dubois's early writings, the colour line represents not only the systematic inequity of racialized labour but also a visual field in which racial identities are inscribed and experienced through the lens of a "white supremacist gaze"' (Smith 2004, p.24). Archival photographs put to work in the present can now help us recall, re-articulate, manage and make visible the systems of visualisation that have brought the racialised body into focus and question how that focus has contributed to Western ideas on human progress and understanding.

Archival photographs constitute a place in which we can continuously engage with important cultural memory work, which helps us re-read the actual making of the past and therefore reconfigure different historical narratives concerning the stories that make up history, race, rights and recognition: four vital stations in our understanding of humanity that remind us of the power relationships between the 'observer and the observed' (Ribalta 2008, p.38).

Old photographs from colonised and oppressed regions of the world can influence our current sense of place. They have the potential to become key markers in the understanding of how colonisers have, in different temporalities and political conditions, chosen to engage, make visible, control or erase the colonised subjects' claims for recognition, reminding us that in many instances the political space of progress is nearly always framed as a modern space and that 'modern space is, as it were, space wiped clean' (Connerton 2009, p.121). Modern space often denies the racial spectres that live in museums and among the photographic archives. It is a space where time seems to start afresh and memories are suppressed. It is critical to consider that when archival photographs focusing on the black subject are set free to be read in the present they have the capacity to resist the pace and process of photography's and modernity's desire to forget. In using Derrida's seminal *Archive Fever* as a point of departure from which to discuss the distancing nature of archives, Ariella Azoulay highlights that 'in the archive constructed as ex-territorial and as a receptacle for the past, that which has been cruel and biting is supposed to appear, or so we expect it to appear, as dulled; a piece of history, its accusing finger cut off, blunted' (Azoulay 2015, p.195). Opening the archives

concerning the making of race and unsettling the meanings made there in terms of knowledge produced around race equates to a burning down of the master's house and using the remaining ashes to fertilise the soil so as to produce a liberated and fertile plot that grows out of its violent past to generate new meanings.

Burning down the house as a concept becomes representative of some of the key critical moments in modern history in which oppressed peoples have taken action towards ending the conditions of their domination. Meetings, protests, strikes, rebellions, revolutions and civil wars mark the path to freedom. Looking back at the role of photography in these moments helps us understand the conditions in which anti-colonial, liberation and civil rights movements were born and how we in the present understand oppressed peoples' making in history often as victims of systems of state violence. For example, the photographs that Charles Moore took in 1963 in Birmingham, Alabama, showed young civil rights protestors being attacked by police dogs and blasted with fire hoses, and the poignant archival retrieval work that Santu Mofokeng produced in building his 'Black Photo Album' project that redressed the lack of historical photographs of black middle-class South Africans from 1890 to 1950. He used archival photographs as markers of absence of an indigenous black presence locked out of civil society. As a photography slide show the images helped Mofokeng and his audience to understand themselves differently. Photography, then, assists us in the continuous analyses of how these critical journeys towards freedom, modernity and equality for black people have been visualised, framed and represented, especially within the context of the global reconfigurations and the political failures that occurred throughout the first half of the twentieth century, which was devastated by imperialism, colonialism and wars. Reworking the history of photography assists us in comprehending the different temporalities of global conflicts that have European expansion at their core, and that events such as World War II in particular may be understood as a very different phenomena if read 'through the longer history of colonialism' (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.174) and its visual regimes.

'Cultures do not exist outside of how they are represented' (Hall 2008), and in the hands of the coloniser photography has dominated how the Other has been portrayed. The act of Europeans photographing has played a leading role in the theatre of cultural violence against non-Europeans and, as far as representing the colonised and subjugated peoples of the world, the European camera can be read as constituting a 'decidedly ideologically positioned tool on the side of incursion' (Ougibe 2002, p.566). Historical photographs from within the colonial

world or regimes that supported racial violence, such as those made during South Africa's system of Apartheid or from the far-flung corners of the British empire that celebrate white dominance over the Others, now help us identify possible new entry points into the ideologies that produced racism in the West and, as historical images, part of the work they can do in the present is to throw different light onto the history of these dark human chapters. Through the European dominance of photography and the resulting massive overexposure of the Other, a condition in the West, it could be argued, has been created within photography, where it has become difficult to see any photographs of black or subjugated people let alone photographs of 'black people being abused (or caught in compromised circumstances such as famine, war or indeed the normal activities of their day to day life) as being wholly benign.' (Berger 2011, p.52). The archive of the world image bank has built fortunes on trading in malign images of the Other.

The mass of photographs taken in Africa by Europeans, such as the one made in 1923 and sent back to England as a colonial Christmas card from the African Oil Nuts Company and Miller Brothers, which was based in Badagry, Nigeria, illustrates the debasing approach by colonials to taking photographs of Africans as a form of trophy image-making. The photograph's full caption reads:

Christmas photograph of staff at the African Oil Nuts Company and Miller Brothers. Three rows of bare-chested African workers pose for the camera, each man's chest painted with a letter to spell out '1923, Badagry, Merry Xmas'. Four Europeans dressed in white sit on a makeshift bench up front beside three African children, possibly domestic servants. Badagry, Nigeria, circa 1923. Badagry, Lagos, Nigeria, Western Africa, Africa.

This seminal photograph now forms part of a permanent exhibition at Liverpool's Slavery Museum. It is on continuous public display because it highlights the level of colonial cultural arrogance that was at work in visualising the black body and which existed in the mind of the coloniser in the early part of the twentieth century. In this instance, the European colonials use their 'staff' as human blackboards to convey the company's Christmas greeting. The black workers are positioned as if posing for a team sports photograph, but instead of celebrating the men as achievers they are placed in rows merely to spell out the greeting for the intended recipients at home. The marking of the African men with white paint constructs

the workers as being wholly devoid of any authority over their own bodies. Each painted letter represents an absolute mark of domination by the colonial rulers. The company owners join the frame, positioning themselves for the camera in front of the marked black bodies that function as the backdrop to this colonial festive message. It is the complete objectification of the black men that makes the photograph so extreme and is vital to the transference of the intended colonial humorous message generated by the photograph.

Reading the photograph now allows us to connect the colonial mindset across space and time, creating a cultural affirmation of the racist attitudes so prevalent in the making of images of black subjects in Africa and within the imagination in Britain. The colonisers are shown sitting dressed in their casual, splendid, bright white clothes. To add to the theatre of the image, two black children, also dressed in white, are positioned lying on the ground, pet-like, in front of the four seated Europeans. The final drama of the scene is created by a very small black boy, again dressed in white, who sits centrally on the same bench as the Europeans. The caption informs us that the children are ‘possibly domestic servants’. The smallest of the African boys is sandwiched between the four Europeans, snuggled between one of the men and the only woman in the photograph. The child folds his arms, mirroring the pose of the two men on the left. The placing of the African child constructs an abstracted sense of a colonial family where everything and everyone is owned. The boy’s position leads us to question what his relationship was to the colonisers and at what age his indoctrination into colonial service began. The presence of the small boy, although positioned on the same plane as the Europeans, can be seen as representing colonial infantilisation processes at work. Placing the African child centre stage, and the other slightly older children on the ground in front of the Europeans, further emphasises the photograph’s message of dominance in communicating to the viewer the colonial pleasures of childlike African servitude and European rule.

Within this photograph, however, there is an engaging visual twist that emerges out of its ‘oppressive’ first reading. Time and the context of its reception have fortunately diluted the colonial humour intended, especially when the photograph is read through the prism of a contemporary de-colonial critique. The African man whose body was selected to carry the letter X in the Christmas message is head and shoulders above the rest of the men. Due to his large stature, the X is the most dominant sign in the photograph. He stands almost directly behind the European man seated on the right. The dominance of the letter X pulls the

viewer's attention to it and marks, in a Barthesian sense, a punctive fault-line in the relationship between the colonisers and colonised. The X becomes a symbol of rejection that distorts the original jovial message. The towering black figure marked with the white X announces in the present that something is profoundly wrong within the politics of this frame beyond the objectification of the black men and beyond the politics of the time of the photograph's making. Reading the letter X within a contemporary context aligns the black painted subject to a more recent political application of the letter. X as a sign was used by black radical activists such as Michael and Malcolm X, among others, to mark the rejection of their European slave names and as a symbol of their awakened consciousness as black people. In reading this photograph today, and with the prior knowledge of how the letter X was used in black radical political contexts, the black central figure is transformed through time and political cultural appropriation to emerge as having the potential to challenge within this photograph the colonial authority that is so evident in the production of it. (Fig.16)

To understand the depth of black objectification in the transatlantic European psyche one only needs to take a quick glance through the pages of James Allen's critically acclaimed *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (2000). The book places on display visual reminders of the intensity of race hatred at work in the USA during the first half of the twentieth century and indeed beyond. The photographs in the book represent a pathology of race hatred. This pathology, on reflection, seems in the present time illogical or abnormal and yet as photographs of lynching they provide damning testimony to the perversity of violence and conditions of hate that were recognised by so many in America as being the natural order of things. When they were made, many of the photographs were transformed into postcards produced as memorabilia and, as such, they work within the long tradition of violent commodification of the black body in pain.

The photographs of lynching collected together within the context of the *Without Sanctuary* project were never produced as evidential documents in a court of law to assist in the service of justice against the perpetrators of such crimes. They were generated for wider appreciation and cultural affirmation of Jim Crow white violence that was clearly sanctioned as normative because, although they portrayed graphic violence, they were allowed to be sent to family and friends through the US mail. What is shocking about these types of images, once we move beyond the obvious horrific depiction of the broken, brutalised and butchered black bodies, is the sheer sense of pleasure, cultural pride and excitement visible in many of the

faces of the white participants at the lynching scenes. They gladly pose and in some instances jockey for pole position in front of the camera in celebration of their presence or direct participation in a spectacle of unlawful human killing in full knowledge that they would not be prosecuted. The photographs that make up the *Without Sanctuary* archive date from as late as the 1960s, thus they bring the act of lynching closer to us in time than is politically comfortable.

Representations of lynching in popular culture tend to re-create it visually as a nineteenth-century practice, as seen in Steve McQueen's Oscar-winning 2013 film *12 Years a Slave* and subsequently the photograph he produced while scouting for locations for the film *Lynching Tree*. As the title suggests, the latter focused on a large tree, which is located near New Orleans and was used for lynching slaves. The photograph, displayed as a colour transparency on a light-box, was shown as part of Tate Britain's *Fighting History* exhibition (2015). When we encounter the works that make up *Without Sanctuary* the difference is, however, that we are invited to consider that for many African Americans today lynching forms part of living memory. Also, some of the work they do now is to close the temporal gap associated with race hate in America, which is often through the archive represented as a phenomenon in the country's past. These photographs remind us that living with the threat of violence because of one's difference is real and potentially devastating, and that lynching remains, for many, a constant fact of life as highlighted by Isabel Wilkerson in her 2014 article for the online version *Guardian*: 'About twice a week, or every three or four days, an African American has been killed by a white police officer in the seven years ending in 2012'; this rate of killing black Americans 'is nearly the same as the rate of lynchings in the early decades of the 20th century' (Wilkerson 2014).

Colonial and racist trophy photographs therefore serve as fragments and frames from within the grand narrative of white supremacist visual ideologies. They allow us to enter the catastrophic frames of violent colonial and racist times and they become important articulations that signify the dark cultural codes constructed against people of African descent or Others classified as inferior (Young 1995).

Photographs such as the 1923 Christmas message from Nigeria haunt the old imperialists and segregationist regimes, and as images working on the present they reanimate and reunite us with the violence of colonial time: a time when European values considered, 'force, as a

universal, simple, rapid, and easily understood method of communication', and a time when 'cultural difference not only made the use of force helpful to the accomplishment of European objectives, but also made it easy for its employers to assume that the usual conventions of human relations could be partially abrogated in contact with members of alien and inferior cultures' (Cairns 1965, p.42).

Time also does its 'reconstruction work' (Hall 1984, p.106) on the *Without Sanctuary* lynching images. Racist trophy photographs, like all photographs, have the capacity through time to mutate in meaning away from their original intended purpose. In the case of these images, they have become culturally recoded by their display as objects of shame that reveal the horror in the spectacle of lynching. This recoding becomes possible only through different modes of articulation, such as the museum, the gallery, the publication and the internet, and by allowing a number of cultural perspectives into the archives. Re-imagining the cultural work performed by violent images of black people has, in the case of the *Without Sanctuary* project, changed the perception in the understanding of the scale of racist pleasure derived from lynching black people in the USA. Photographs made from within the racist culture of Jim Crow-ism or colonialism now provide the space for new articulations and political awareness concerning representations of the black subject in the Western world to emerge. If we take the time to look at photographic representations of acts of violence where race is the critical driver for their production, we can track back over time and ask pertinent questions about photography as an ideological tool concerning race, violence, Western visual pleasures and photography's role in the making of whiteness.

It is in the space and time of culture and politics that black trophy photographs such as the *Without Sanctuary* project and the 1923 'Merry Xmas' photograph can become transformative objects, referent, fragmented moments that evoke and invite a reworking of old formations and understandings of photography's work in racial time. Leaning heavily on Johannes Fabian's 1983 book *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*, I suggest racial time is different. It is a phenomenon where waiting forms the majority of the everyday. It is a time where progress is not charted through the prism of Western epistemologies. In racial time, slavery does not end, it merely evolves, changes shape and oppresses through different but equally violent regimes. Racial time also has its critical periods where progress is thought through tangible events. For example, in World War II racial time for the subaltern became the backdrop or opportunity for a significant challenge to

be mounted against the political dominance and the constructed time lags that framed them. The upheavals in Europe produced by war and conflict for the subaltern were moments in which the time for change could be seized, appropriated and speeded up in favour of liberation. In this instance racial time is not always slow. Racial time as far as justice is concerned is probably the slowest of all and is best recognisable today in America through the disproportionate amount of black men locked up in prisons and on Death Row. 'Time appropriation in racial politics', remarks Dilip Gaonkar,

mostly occurs during periods of social upheaval and transformation, whether locally, nationally, or transnationally. Sometimes starting in relative isolation, as in the Montgomery bus boycott, time appropriation can launch a series of events, propelling a single act into a series of acts, within the same location or well beyond its geographical realm. (Gaonkar 2001, p.285)

Racial time does not tick along in a fashion that produces seconds, minutes, hours and days. It works more like a cultural pulse in which the political conditions around it cause it to quicken or slow down.

New formations of photography's orthodox history are indeed possible if we read photography through different political temporalities and cultural perspectives within the constructs of race and time. Acknowledging that race is a construct and that photography has been most suitably applied in aiding the creation of a dominant Eurocentric symbolic order in which the subaltern has been condemned as an object, rendered and processed as a mute and inferior being, then creating a opening in which photographic epistemologies can surface from below allows different cultural readings and interpretations of photography to emerge. This resurfacing of the medium's history enables us to 'trace a larger journey of translation, from the disempowered to the empowered' (Young 2010, p.8). This was most recently evidenced in the exhibition *Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life*, which opened at New York's International Center of Photography in January 2013. The organisers state in the accompanying media release that the

premise of this exhibition is that South African photography, as we know it today, was essentially invented in 1948. The exhibition argues that the rise of the National Party to political power and the introduction of apartheid as the legal foundation of

governance changed the pictorial perception of the country from a purely colonial space based on racial segregation to a highly contested space based on the ideals of equality, democracy, and civil rights. Photography was almost instantaneously aware of this change and responded by transforming its own visual language from a purely anthropological tool to a social instrument, and because of this, no one else photographed South Africa and the struggle against apartheid better, more critically and incisively, with deeper pictorial complexity, and more penetrating insight than South African photographers (International Center of Photography 2012).

According to the curators of the exhibition, Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester, photography in South Africa as visual language was within its core altered by the intensity of the Apartheid political regime. Here I would argue that it is not photography that is transformed by Apartheid; it is the people on all sides of the racial divides. What is evident is that black photographers trying to make their lives visible to the outside world were under intense political pressure, often working in secret with concealed cameras. On being arrested by the police, Ernest Cole, the black South African photographer, was offered two options: join their ranks as an informer or be sent to prison. He went instead into exile. His book *House of Bondage*, published in 1967, ‘shows the Apartheid world within the world but also hints at a larger, yet unrealized world where black people could be seen or chose not to be seen, on their own terms’ (Baer 2014, p.5). A statement from Cole’s book reads: ‘Three hundred years of white supremacy in South Africa has placed us in bondage, stripped us of dignity robbed us of self esteem, and surrounded us with hate’ (Cole 1967). Reading photography from below, or from the south, opens the door for subaltern voices to address the impact of photography on the black body and mind, and enables them to recognise themselves as subjects in their own right. The making of photographs such as the one taken in 1923 at Badagry says nothing of any note or worth about the African and everything about the time and people of the photograph’s making, a time when, ‘the Briton saw his world in terms of a broad three-stage hierarchy in which the white race, western civilization, and Christianity occupied the top rungs of the racial, cultural and religious ladders of mankind’ (Cairns 1965, p.74). While this imperial northern perspective on the world has proved remarkably resilient, photographers such as Cole proved their revolutionary qualities – and those of photography – as each time they released the shutters of their cameras they chipped away at imperial systems of knowledge. They altered the frames of reference in which the subaltern subject had been located.

Likewise, the *Without Sanctuary* project, made possible through the collecting work of James Allen, a white American from the south who describes himself as a ‘picker’, becomes a radical intervention in how we see race. He states,

I believe the photographer was more than a perceptive spectator at lynchings. The photographic art played as significant a role in the ritual as a torturer or souvenir grabbing – a sort of two-dimensional biblical swine, a receptacle for a collective sinful self. Lust propelled their commercial reproduction and distribution, facilitating the endless replay of anguish. Even dead, the victims were without sanctuary ... Studying these photos has engendered in me a caution of whites, of the majority, of the young, of religion, of the accepted. (Allen n.d.)

By bringing a corpus of lynching photographs together and positioning them within the public realm where they perform critical and ongoing political work, social change becomes a reality. The *Without Sanctuary* photographs were cited as being a significant contributing factor for the US Senate in finally acknowledging its complicity in lynching by failing to act to protect its victims. Senators George Allen and Mary Landrieu were partly motivated in their quest to gain a formal apology from the state to victims of lynching by seeing these images. The visual vocabulary of the book helped them to secure progress through the Senate of non-binding ‘Resolution 39’, which was passed by the Senate on 13 June 2005 (S.Res.39 2005). On this historic date the US Senate issued a long-awaited formal apology to civil rights political activists for not protecting people against lynching. The resolution reads as follows:

Now, therefore, be it *Resolved*, That the Senate –

- (1) apologizes to the victims of lynching for the failure of the Senate to enact anti-lynching legislation;
- (2) expresses the deepest sympathies and most solemn regrets of the Senate to the descendants of victims of lynching, the ancestors of whom were deprived of life, human dignity, and the constitutional protections accorded all citizens of the United States; and
- (3) remembers the history of lynching, to ensure that these tragedies will be neither forgotten nor repeated.

Over 100 years after some of these photographs were taken, it is important to acknowledge that they still perform important cultural and political work and indeed caused change at the highest level of politics when reintroduced into the public realm. Here, we can point to a rare and direct moment when photographs have generated real social and political change.

‘Resolution 39’ is more than an apology for not prosecuting racist murderers and not protecting black lives. It is a symbolic moment of recognition and a significant moment of justice. (Figs. 17 and 18)

Such a journey across time to a form of justice for those black people executed for white pleasure is an example of racial time in operation. Racial time is exhaustive for those whose lives have been historically managed and framed through the images and ideas of race, not because they are worn down by seeing images of violence against the Other, but because they are the Other so familiar in being framed in a violent totalitarian Eurocentric gaze. Homi Bhabha in his 1986 forward to Frantz Fanon’s seminal text, ‘Black Skin White Masks’ states that,

The black presence ruins the representative narrative of Western personhood: its past tethered to treacherous stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy will not produce a history of civil progress, a space for the Socius; its present, dismembered and dislocated, will not contain the image of identity that is questioned in the dialectic of the mind/body and resolved in the ‘epistemology of appearance and reality’. The White man’s eyes break up the black man’s body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision disturbed. (Fanon 1986, p.12)

Part 2. Ruptured Image

By examining archives of images that address the ebb and flow of the political realities that brought the colonised and African American subjects into public focus by the Allied governments both during and immediately after World War II, we can observe some of the critical image positioning of the black subject that was produced by the Allies in order to bring the black subject closer to whiteness at an unprecedented time of crisis. This allows us to consider how images that addressed racism and colonialism were produced and put to

work in various public realms within Britain and the USA. By doing this we can assess whether these public service racialised images either aided or hindered the sociopolitical conditions of subaltern subjects under imperial rule during the war and also examine how the question of race was managed through the photographic image at this critical juncture in global politics.

For colonised and subjugated peoples World War II ruptured the established image of European dominance. With the experience of the war, as noted in the previous chapter, many from the colonies and those who had historically been subjected to racial, cultural and political violence harboured the conviction that they had the moral right to carry on the fight against European colonisation and other oppressive practices of white racial superiority that had become widely accepted as norms across much of the 'developed' world. A steady process of political agitation against the hegemony of systematic colonial and racial oppression was unleashed during the war years. This represented a new kind of black cultural and political work from within the subaltern international body politic. The war against the fascist threat seamlessly evolved for the subaltern into battles for equal rights, recognition and independence. This subaltern political reconstruction work was staged on myriad cultural and ideological fronts, both from within the Allied states and throughout their colonial territories. These direct forms of agitation, effectively from below, produced a climate in which critical consideration of the subaltern had to be addressed by the Allied governments. What resulted in Britain and America was an attempt to produce an official visual shift in the perception of black people and their place in the fight against fascism. This desired shift in perceptions of race was consciously generated by state bodies to perform specific cultural work across the fault-lines of race that were opening up across the USA and throughout the British empire. What became evident is that the status quo around race could not be maintained in the negative as the Allied states faced the threat of the Axis powers.

During World War II the idolatry-like presence of the 'white, western, civilised male ... as the ultimate face of humanity was in crisis. It is this profile that monopolised the definition of humanity in mainstream western imagery' (Pieterse 1992, p.223). This was an imagery that would be profoundly challenged and altered forever as a key consequence of black participation in the war. 'The war diminished not only the power but also the self-confidence of Europeans to rule their colonial possessions. In so doing, moreover, it revolutionized the myth of white invincibility and superiority among indigenous peoples' (Lauren 1988, p.172).

For the European powers during and after the war, African nationalism and civil rights movements became an unstoppable force for change. The great white nations in fighting themselves effectively opened the door to freedom for the colonised and those who Fanon would later call *The Wretched of The Earth* in his inspiring 1961 revolutionary book. For African nationalist leaders World War II was the point at which Europe's grip on Africa began to loosen.

During the war the Allied powers taught the subject peoples (and millions of them!) that it was not right for Germany to dominate the other nations. They taught the subjugated peoples to fight and die for freedom rather than live and be subjugated by Hitler ... Here then is the paradox of history, that the Allied Powers, by effectively liquidating the threat of Nazi domination, set in motion those powerful forces which are liquidating, with equal effectiveness, European domination in Africa ... The emergence and the march of African nationalism are in reality a boomerang on the colonial powers. They fired the anti- domination bullet at Nazi Germany, but now the same bullet is being fired at them. (Sithole 1959, pp.19–23)

It was in the midst of the disasters of World War II that the image of black people in the Western world would experience a significant shift within and in relation to Western governments. This shift occurred not as a result of any great act of humanitarian Allied enlightened policies but because the Allied governments had slowly begun to recognise that the impact of the continuous promotion of cultural and political hostilities against blacks was not beneficial to their wider objective of defeating the Axis powers. It was clear that the old pre-War assumption based on race and imperial arrogance was increasingly problematic and indeed costly at least for the duration of the war for the Allied governments. In the early 1940s racial conflict in the USA was absorbing vital resources and discouraging the much-needed manpower in the factories to defeat the Axis powers. In analysing some of the country's race riots, in the 'United States the war department noted that 1,250,000 man hours of production were lost in the factories of Detroit' (Menefee 1944, p.15) because of riots in 1943.

Popular constructions of World War II history, such as those produced by the BBC relating to Winston Churchill's famous morale-boosting speech to the House of Commons on 4 June 1940 after the great retreat from Dunkirk, tend to omit the fact that the empire was regarded

as a vital element of survival should Britain be successfully invaded by the Germans. The designated role of the empire according to Churchill was to carry on the struggle against the Axis powers until the New World (the USA) could rescue, liberate and restore the old imperial world. Churchill stated, ‘We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender’, but it is the final part of the speech which that is most revealing within a colonial context:

and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God’s good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.
(Churchill 1940)

It was in this moment of Britain’s most dire need that the idea of empire became a reassuring symbol of British freedom within the House of Commons and across the nation. The empire here is importantly framed by Churchill as a permanent entity as much a part of Britain as Britain itself. He later stated that, ‘We mean to hold our own. I have not become the King’s first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire’. Churchill understood clearly what was at stake in the war, and he insisted on distinguishing strategic and tactical war considerations, such as that of the Atlantic Charter’ (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.174), over notions of decolonising the empire. Freedom for subject peoples was not part of Britain’s post-war agenda. Churchill’s view of the empire’s role during and after the war was profoundly different from that of the many anti-colonial and pro-independence groups,

which had been formed in Britain before or during World War II ... The most important [of these groups] from an international perspective were the West African Students’ Union (WASU), formed in London by Ladipo Solanke and Dr H.C. Bankole-Bright in 1925; the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), formed in London by Harold Moody in 1931; and the International African Service Bureau (IASB), formed in London by George Padmore in 1937. (Adi 1995, p 12)

For political groups such as these ‘the Second World War provided the opportunity to further develop their anti-colonial activities’. It was therefore from within the body politic of the Allies that increasing political pressure was applied to the Allied leadership

to disclose their war aims, especially after the signing of the Atlantic Charter in 1941, to declare that self-determination was a principle that applied as much to colonies as to the occupied countries of Europe. British colonial administration came under the spot light, as did the effects of racism in Britain, at a time when the Government was anxious to enlist support for the war effort, and to demonstrate how British imperialism was morally superior to Nazi fascism. (Adi et al. 1995, p.12)

World War II was at a critical point in 1941 and Britain needed manpower. Across the colonies appeals were made for colonial subjects to join the armed services and extensive propaganda campaigns against the Nazis were put to work to bolster manufacturing and recruits for the armed services (Sithole 1959, pp.19–23).

‘The plan [as far as Britain was concerned] was to compete with Nazi Germany’s highly efficient Ministry of Propaganda by promoting Britain’s position both at home and abroad [as secure]. The Ministry of Information duly came into being on 4 September 1939’ (Slocombe 2010, p.5). From that date Britain’s Ministry of Information produced images that attempted to construct a more intimate face of the colonial subject. This was done mainly by public poster campaigns that aimed to reassure the British public that they were not alone in their fight against Axis aggression. These wartime posters, with the colonial subject in focus, represent a significant moment within Britain’s imperial story. Upon examination they can be read as objects that function as critical visual markers in the perception of racial difference and racial time. If we consider that the posters were aimed at a British nation that was perceived to be harbouring deep-seated anxieties and fears in relation to Germany’s military might and in the context of grave concerns about Britain’s readiness for war and fear of isolation as German forces swept across Europe, then they were produced at a time when the British government was desperate to define a face of support, especially as the USA was reluctant to enter the war. The distinctive message to the British public was that the colonies were the ‘sinews of war’ (Slocombe 2010, p.11), a resource that strengthened British resolve and would hold the muscle of Britain in place to resist any threat posed by German forces.

How effective the overall poster campaigns were in raising British morale is, according to senior curators at the Imperial War Museum such as Richard Slocombe, a source of dispute. In the same year the posters entered the public domain, a survey was commissioned that revealed that the British public felt patronised through a use of language that expressed ‘lofty tones and abstract notions of “Freedom” and “Resolution”’ (Slocombe 2010, p.5). These lofty ‘abstract’ notions that seemingly patronised the British public resonated differently throughout the empire as thousands of colonial subjects rallied under the British flag to join the fight for freedom. The colonised subject identified in these posters a new sense of self that had not been widely displayed in public across the empire prior to World War II. In offering an image of closer cultural proximity between the coloniser and colonised, the posters visually articulated a people’s aspirations for self-determination. ‘WWII did not give birth to the spirit of independence, but rather gave expression to that spirit which was already there’ (Sithole 1959, p.26).

As stated above, how successful the poster campaigns produced by the Ministry of Information in Britain may have been in raising British public morale is disputed (Slocombe 2010). In his 2010 publication *British Posters of the Second World War*, Slocombe absents any analysis of race in presenting his interpretations of the cultural work the war posters performed. In fact, he references only one of the more popular posters that feature the colonial soldier or colonial war worker. Slocombe does, however, include four other posters from across the empire – from Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand – but these present a rather anglicised vision of the colonial industrial workers’ support for the war and are more textual than visual in nature. The single poster that references the colonial soldier that Slocombe chose to reproduce in his book is titled ‘Together’ and is credited to the British artist William Little. This poster was reproduced in various formats throughout the duration of the war and was used across colonial recruitments stations. World War II public information posters, especially those that reference the colonies, warrant greater scrutiny than curators such as Slocombe have offered. Given the critical and contradictory nature of racial politics at work across both the Axis and Allied powers before, during and after the war, it is evident that it would be culturally negligent not to consider the question of race as a primary concern when exploring the archive of posters produced by the Ministry of Information.

What begins to surface when we look into this archive, especially at those posters that carry a racial element, is the emergence of a new colonised being and the appearance of a different

colonised/coloniser image relationship. This relationship in some circumstances effectively breaks through the historical visual legacy of the black subordinate subject, a portrayal of the black that underpins the foundations of imperialism, colonialism and notions of white supremacy with regard to the visualisation of subaltern subjects in the West.

In some of the posters, rarely seen in public after the war, the black subject is presented with a greater degree of parity and individuality, effectively singled out as visually honourable in their own right as either soldier or war worker. What is radical about these images is that they break with the tradition of portraying the colonised subject as merely the backdrop to white endeavours (Wood 2000). Prior to the outbreak of World War II, the dominant photographic images in circulation showed the colonial or black soldiers or workers as an extension to the colonial mission or white authority: no name, no rank, no worth. Rarely within the popular realm were the black subjects portrayed as dignified fighting men in their own right. The normative mechanism and preferred visual message, when bringing the black subject into view, was as objects to signify the Allied army officers' superiority. Within the US

print culture, the good black soldier remained conspicuous by his absence. *Life* magazine supported the war with gusto. But in seventy-eight glossy issues during the final year and a half of the war, when black (American) soldiers were at last in combat, *Life* published a mere ten pictures of black men in uniform – out of some 14,000 photographs. Most of these ten pictures were very small, and most of the soldiers were clearly service troops. One black soldier carried an accordion. None carried weapons. (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.113)

Some of the lesser-known and now celebrated World War II posters that are held at the Imperial War Museum and the United States National Archives can be read as attempts by the Allied forces to advance the image of the black subject towards a more refined and human presence, a presence that opens up the possibilities of seeing the racialised subject not merely as a curiosity but as a professional participating soldier or as trained and skilled worker with a meaningful sense of purpose, history and identity. These relatively rare images may have helped to close the cultural gap that surrounded the understanding of the black subject. These representations are figuratively personable and carry a descriptive sense of purpose. In some cases the images were supported by informative and detailed texts relating to the black subjects' own personal journey in aiding the war effort.

Part 3. The Posters

One of the posters produced in Britain from a series titled 'Empire War Workers in Britain', which carries the subtitle 'A Tank Worker from Nigeria', operates within the frames of this more benevolent attitude towards the black subject. The full caption from the Imperial War Museum reads as follows:

whole: the image occupies the majority, with a smaller image placed in the lower left, held within a blue circular inset. The title and text are separate and positioned in the lower fifth, in black. All set against a white background and held within a brown border.

image: a half-length depiction of a Nigerian worker in a British factory. He is repairing a component of a tank. The smaller image is a Union Flag.

text: EMPIRE WAR WORKERS IN BRITAIN A TANK WORKER FROM NIGERIA This is Jack Smith, from Nigeria, who worked for the Secretariat there before coming to England to play saxophone in a dance band. When war broke out he, like many other West Africans, took a course in a Ministry of Labour training school, and now he is helping to repair engines of light tanks in a Ministry of Supply factory. Some of the tanks he has worked on were salvaged from France before the collapse. They were reconditioned in England and then sent out to his native Africa where they went into action against the enemy during the British advance into Libya. FOR VICTORY G.P.D. 365/67. ('A Tank Worker from Nigeria' n.d.)

Studying the poster's image and text further, we can see 'Jack Smith' as being portrayed as a typical British factory worker. He is wearing standard navy blue workers' overalls and is busy at his position on the factory production line. There is no visual exchange between Jack Smith and the camera. The scene is reportage in style. He looks down at his work, focused on the task at hand. The poster has been produced as a colour lithograph. This gives the image a rich depth and texture, painterly in quality, as if it has been hand tinted. The use of colour creates a far greater sense of visual proximity to the subject for the reader, as we learn from the text more about Smith's story. Smith is brought to life by the text, and in this way his individuality becomes an active agent in reading the image. His short story helps the audience

to understand the conditions of his arrival in Britain. The dominant message is that he is here because Britain needs him here and he is fulfilling his sense of patriotic duty to the motherland. Within the poster there is a strong balance between highlighting Smith's skills and his place of origin. We are, for example, told that he was working at the 'Secretariat'; this suggests he has a high degree of literacy and administrative skill. He plays saxophone, a complicated and expensive instrument, informing us that he is a professional competent musician associated with jazz or an orchestrated big-band of the time. We also learn that he has been retrained as a skilled engineer who now repairs the engines of tanks that are fit for purpose in front line war manoeuvres. The African's transformation into a worthy war worker is completed through his anglicised naming, 'Jack Smith', a very British name serving to further trans-culturally locate him for the viewer as being made by Britain in Africa. In this guise, this colonial subject is an ideal contributor to the empire's war effort. Smith, here working in the 'Ministry of Supply Factory' through this poster, represents an African mirror, reflecting hope into the minds of the British while they are under siege. This poster has one other compelling factor. In the background another worker can be seen at his station. He also appears to be operating a machine. This man is white and he is out of focus, but his presence is critical to the message. The white man's framing within the image makes Jack Smith a co-worker and generates in the audience the reality of racial equality within the industrial war effort. (Fig. 19)

Women from the colonies are also brought closer to their European colleagues through the cultural work they perform in a similar series of posters titled 'On War Work In Britain'. This series focuses on Asian women and men carrying out various highly skilled and trained tasks, such as the poster featuring 'Miss Dogdo Ardeshir Jilla'. The Imperial War Museum captions the poster as follows:

whole: the image occupies the majority, with a smaller image placed in the lower left, held within a blue circular inset. The title and text are separate and positioned in the lower fifth, in black. All set against a white background and held within a brown border.

image: a half-length depiction of an Indian nurse holding the back of a male patient's head as a doctor examines his nose. The smaller image is a Union Flag.

text: ON WAR WORK IN BRITAIN: No. 6 FROM INDIA TO PLAY HER PART IN BRITAIN'S MEDICAL SERVICE In the Prince of Wales' Hospital, Tottenham, London, twenty-year-old Miss Dogdo Ardeshir Jilla, a Parsee, is taking a four-year course as a probationer nurse. Now in her second year, Nurse Jilla lives in the nurses' quarters with the other nurses, takes part in the ordinary routine of the hospital, attends three lectures a week and studies in her off-duty time. In this photograph Nurse Jilla is seen adding to her experience by taking a turn of duty in the out-patients' department. She is assisting a doctor who is giving nasal treatment to a patient. FOR VICTORY G.P.D. 365/13/21/1.

'Nurse Jilla' is positioned in the centre of the poster gently supporting a young white man's head as he receives attention to his nose from a white doctor. Dressed in her immaculately clean, predominately white uniform, she looks down caringly at the patient. She appears in the poster to be the epitome of angelic nursing. The poster is a colour lithographic print, the effect of which works to epidermally harmonise the range of skin tones of those portrayed. This renders the three people culturally closer as their racial differences are diminished. The extended caption helps the viewer identify with the journey Nurse Jilla is making to becoming a nurse, and by extension British. We are informed that 'Nurse Jilla lives in the nurses' quarters with the other nurses'. This gives the audience an understanding that she has successfully integrated into living within the nursing institution. We are told that she takes part in the ordinary routine of the hospital, attends three lectures a week and studies in her off-duty time. Like Jack Smith, Nurse Jilla represents a much-needed colonial helping hand cited as a real person doing valued wartime work. In caring for Britain's young men in their hour of need, Nurse Jilla becomes representative of a saving angel from the colonies. Her brilliant white uniform and hat symbolise the purity of the nursing profession. Her dark right hand cradles the young soldier's blond head as he receives treatment from the doctor. To her right is a surgeon's lamp that glows down on the young soldier's hair adding a degree of golden divinity to the image. Nurse Jilla then becomes transformed into a Madonna-like figure helping Britain, represented by the soldier and the doctor, do God's good work against the fascists. (Fig. 20)

These posters help to shift the black body away from its historical debasing renderings produced across the history of Western visual culture. This new black face from the colonies is portrayed as being committed to fighting and working for king and country, with both

pride and an increased degree of cultural parity, but still bound by empire and loyal in the service of their colonial masters and as a people allied in their collective purpose in defending Britain's interests. This juncture in the image production and presentation of the colonised subject at home and abroad marks a distinctive transfiguration in the portrayal of the colonised black body. It was out of political necessity and foreign invasion that the British propaganda machine produced the conditions in which 'the savage had turned subject, an image of mature colonialism' (Corbey & Leerssen 1991, p.192). If we consider these wartime posters at work in different geographical and political conditions, and within the context of an empire on its knees, then as forms of propaganda they may have registered 'differently' within the colonies than they did at home. In West Africa, the image of a dignified respected black worker viewed from within the context of Africa's colonial reality could carry multiple different or transgressive meanings.

The British Ministry of Information further produces this sense of colonial coevalness within another series of posters that focuses directly on the colonial soldier. The series is titled 'Our Allies The Colonies'. One of these posters highlights the Royal West African Frontier Force. It portrays an African soldier looking back confidently at the viewer, as if staring them down. This series is also held in the archives of the Imperial War Museum and its object description reads as follows:

whole: the main image is positioned in the upper centre, with a smaller image placed in the lower centre. The title is separate and located in the lower half, in red. The text is separate and positioned across the top edge, in white cursive script, in the lower centre, in black, and down each edge, in black held within a brown and white design. Further text is integrated placed in the lower centre, in black outlined orange. All set against a grey background.

image: a portrait-length depiction of a soldier of the Royal West African Frontier Force. The smaller image is a depiction of the badge of the Royal West African Frontier Force.

text: The British Colonial Empire ADEN ANTIGUA BAHAMAS BARBADOS
BASUTOLAND BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE BERMUDA BRITISH
HONDURAS BRITISH SOLOMON IS. BRITISH VIRGIN IS. CEYLON CYPRUS

DOMINICA FALKLAND IS. FIJI GAMBIA GIBRALTAR GILBERT AND
ELLICE IS. GOLD COAST GRENADA HONG KONG JAMAICA KENYA
MALAYA MALTA MAURITIUS MONTSEERRAT NEW HEBRIDES NIGERIA
NORTH BORNEO NORTHERN RHODESIA NYASALAND PALESTINE ST.
HELENA ST. KITTS ST. LUCIA ST. VINCENT SARAWAK SEYCHELLES
SIERRA LEONE SOMALILAND SWAZILAND TANGANYIKA TONGA
TRANSJORDAN TRINIDAD UGANDA ZANZIBAR Royal West African Frontier
Force OUR ALLIES THE COLONIES R.W.A.F.F. Printed in England by A.C. Ltd.
51/2372.

51/2372. Part of a series of posters featuring different colonial regiments of the
British Army (see PST 15418, PST 15419, PST 15820 and PST 15421).

The poster displays a head and shoulders portrait of a uniformed young African man with his regiment's name clearly stated just beneath him. The soldier looks resolute in purpose and proud of his mission. The signs of caricature or servitude, or exaggerated African props are absent. There are no indicators that support notions of the savage African Other. This is a portrait of a black man on the edge of modernity, a professional soldier acting as a proud bearer of his British regimental regalia. It places him outside of racial time and into the contemporary condition of war. His only sign of servitude is the one that cannot be changed: his black skin, his Fanonian epidermal schematic marker, which holds him in a place of inherent cultural bondage. 'He is the object of information, never a subject in communication' (Foucault 1991, p.200).

The soldier wears a striking bright red fez on his head that carries his regimental crest. The fez is adorned by a long black tassel resting neatly down its left-hand side and stopping at the corner of the man's left eye. The gold braiding on the collar of his uniform frames his head in regal splendour. The braiding meets in the middle of his throat and surrounds the royal blue collar, separating it from the red fabric of the rest of his uniform. His image appears framed by a white halo that emphasises his black skin. It is as if his body heat bends the light around him, creating a subtle sense of divinity. The white halo then fades to a sandy desert orange colour. Above his head in italics are the words 'The British Colonial Empire', and directly beneath his image, spelled out in small black letters, are the words, 'Royal West African Frontier Force'. In large red letters follows the most prominent text on the poster, which

reads 'Our Allies The Colonies'. Below this is a simple graphic image of the regimental symbol of the RWAFF: a palm tree on a small mound. Either side of his image is an elaborate scroll in the form of a list of all the British colonies, starting with Aden in the top left corner and finishing with Zanzibar in the bottom right. In total, 49 colonial territories are represented through the face of this one West African soldier, who is rendered fit for purpose and is clearly portrayed as an asset to behold. (Fig. 21)

Another poster from the same series portrays a young black soldier from the King's African Rifles. While he, too, is portrayed in classic head and shoulders portrait style and also wears a tall bright red fez, he is shown looking attentively off to the right of the frame as if contemplating his future. His eyes do not meet those of the viewers. His uniform is more basic than his fellow African counterpart: it is a regular collarless khaki uniform. His regiment and its symbol are also named and positioned directly under his portrait. The same text and overall compositional format are shared across the series of posters that includes colonial soldiers from Malta, Cyprus and Ceylon. However, it is the soldier from the Royal West African Frontier Force who stands out in the series, as only he is privileged with the right to project his gaze directly back at the viewer. This solitary composition suggests that something may have changed that informed the rest of the series, as the other four posters representing colonial soldiers have been produced with a subtracted sense of grandeur. The information available through the Imperial War Museum cites that all the posters are 'Subject Period Second World War'. To look directly into the eyes of the colonised soldier and for him to return the gaze of the viewer creates a more difficult and demanding exchange. The other posters of soldiers with their gaze averted lose their sense of authority because we simply observe them and they do not engage us. The construction of the other posters denies the viewer the task of looking directly into the face of the Other (Levinas 1987, p.74). Exploring the archive of this particular wartime campaign raises a critical question relating to the overall message conveyed by the posters: was the direct face-to-face exchange with the colonial soldier rejected as an unacceptable public message and were the alternative, more passive images of colonial soldiers averting their gaze deemed more suitable by the British Ministry of Information?

For Africans who were among those colonial subjects that had been most viciously rendered as docile and dependent and in particular need of the British empire's civilising mission, these types of images would have represented revelatory moments in identification. Any

sense of visual communication that promoted African cultural worth would have been considered a major shift in European perceptions of African capabilities.

Many of the racialised recruitment posters and photographs produced by Britain during World War II can be read as representative of a radical shift in the mindset of the colonisers. This shift clearly worked against the grain of dominant renderings of the black subject. It also served as a distinctive historical marker that exposed the hegemonic nature of a history of racial imagery in the West that constructed entire races of people as inferior. With the onset of war with Germany being inevitable, the aim of Britain's national communications departments, as far as the empire was concerned, was to foster an image of equity among its subjects and to visually attempt to close the gap between the coloniser and colonised, at least for the duration of the war. 'It is not ethnicity, or "race" that governs imagery and discourse, but rather, the nature of the political relationships between peoples which cause a people to be viewed in a particular light' (Pieterse 1992, p.217). What these particular World War II posters offer us now is an opportunity to see the logic of racist imagery at work as attitudes in Britain shifted during the war and eased when it was deemed politically expedient.

This adoption of a sympathetic view of the colonies was not due to a concern to readjust the archive of racist imagery so prominent across the field of perception created by scores of photographers working within the visual codes that laid the foundation for the colonial view that Britain had of its subject peoples (Edwards 2001, p.139). Instead, this new leaning towards a more human view of the colonised subject was a matter of national survival. Across the British empire, and as far as this moment in the visual perception of the Other is concerned, the long-standing Eurocentric photographic and academic fascination with race, culture and religion was laid bare and rendered less significant. One hundred years after its invention in 1839, the racialised photographic discourse produced in Britain, due only to the possibility of its own destruction, was diverted away from its historical fixation with racial difference and European supremacy towards a much-needed sense of reassurance that the country was not alone. With the crisis of World War II, it became strategically important to move away from a stance of cultural ridicule towards a more unifying and humanitarian purpose. The European is 'fixed upon a certain variety of perception that favoured particular representational scales and could only follow on from the isolation, quantification, and homogenization of vision' (Gilroy 2004, p.35). The extreme conditions of war interrupted that Eurocentric visual homogenisation process.

These new wartime British state-sanctioned images carried a uniquely distinctive message that encouraged the British public and colonial subjects to see themselves as brothers in arms, united, allied and equal, both in the workplace and the armed forces, in which they were joined by a common goal to fight against Nazi tyranny and Japanese imperialism. These images, now buried in the archives of the Imperial War Museum, were distributed throughout the British empire and carried the message that collectively the coloniser and the colonised were magnificent in their joint purpose, that of defending 'freedom'. It is in this instance that black subjects within the context of a modern world in conflict are no longer framed as dependent children or willing servants but as men and women with great potential and equal power to overcome the threat from the Axis powers. These more sympathetic images could be read as an early attempt by Britain to bring black cultures back to life (Gilroy 2004, p.31) and to awaken a sense of black cultural self-esteem, even if ideally this only represented another layer of colonial management to be prosecuted through the theatre of war: 'Visibility is a trap' (Foucault 1975, p.200).

Part 4. United We Win

During World War II, race relations were a continuous problem across the USA. 'By 1942, the federal government began investigating Negro morale in order to find out what could be done to improve it. The Office of Facts and Figures and its successor, the Office of War Information, undertook this project'(Hixson 2003, p.102). Walter Hixson goes on to inform us that, 'Surveys by these agencies indicated that the great amount of national publicity given to the defence program only served to increase the Negro's awareness that he was not participating fully in the program. Black Americans found it increasingly difficult to reconcile their treatment with the announced war aims' (Hixson 2003, p.102). The treatment of black servicemen was also a highly contentious issue as,

Urban Negroes were most resentful over defence discrimination, particularly against the treatment accorded black members of the armed forces. Never before had Negroes been so united behind a cause: the war had served to focus their attention on their unequal status in American society. Black Americans were almost unanimous in wanting a show of good intention from the federal government that changes would be made in the racial status quo. (Hixson 2003, p.102)

The early 1940s represented in America a period that saw major racial unrest and cities explode with racial violence. 'In 1943 alone there were over 200 major disturbances across the country' (Kruse & Tuck 2012, p.109):

Riots in Los Angeles, Mobile, Alabama and Beaumont were all precursors to the massive 1943 riot in Detroit City, which lasted for four days and ended with the army having to protect black students trying to go to college. The city of Detroit was in the 1940s nicknamed the 'arsenal of democracy'. The days of rioting had been severe. Twenty-five black residents and nine white residents had been killed. Of the twenty-five African Americans, seventeen had been killed by white policemen. The number injured, including police, approached seven hundred while the property damage, including looted merchandise, destroyed stores, and burned automobiles, amounted to two million dollars. The Axis Powers grabbing the propaganda opportunity were quick to point out that the riot was symptomatic of a weak nation. The German-controlled Vichy radio broadcast on the riot revealed 'the internal disorganisation of a country torn by social injustice, race hatreds, regional disputes, the violence of an irritated proletariat, and the gangsterism of a capitalistic police.' ('WGBH American Experience. Eleanor Roosevelt | PBS' n.d.)

It is evident from the scale of racial unrest across the USA during World War II that racial tension was damaging for the economy of the country and that as far as race was concerned it could be described as being at war with its self.

One month after the outbreak in Detroit, another riot erupted in New York City's West Harlem. Again the U.S. Army had to intervene. Troops occupied Detroit for six months until Roosevelt felt it was safe to pull them out in January of 1944. Racial conflicts would not appear on such a visible and widespread scale again until the Civil Rights movement just one decade later. ('WGBH American Experience. Eleanor Roosevelt | PBS' n.d.)

As the Detroit riots of 1943 proved, African Americans were aware of the stark reality that they had to fight on two racialised fronts if they were to achieve the ultimate objective of the 'Double Victory', a term that the black press embraced in order to illustrate the paradox of being black in America during World War II. Many of the African Americans participating in

the war did so in full recognition that they were actually going to be fighting on two fronts with the long-term aim of defeating fascism abroad in order to win freedoms at home. The contradiction and ironies of fighting a foreign enemy and not having equal rights at home were clearly evident across the black American workforce employed in the factories that built armaments. One of the core causes of the riots in Detroit was that whites were not prepared to work alongside blacks in the same factories.

In 1942 James G. Thompson a mere cafeteria worker in a Kansas aircraft manufacturing company wrote to the Pittsburgh Courier, a black newspaper stating that the V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries, which are fighting for victory ... Let we colored Americans adopt the double V for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. ('Hennessy History – Double Victory Campaign-1' n.d.)

Black Americans who entered the theatre of war were humiliated at every point of engagement: in the factory, in uniform and on return from front line engagements. They bore this humiliation in exchange for some possible political domestic advantage in their fight for equality, which, as far as a political reality was concerned, was still decades away. It is evident that old ingrained Jim Crow attitudes towards race were inherent within the body politic of the US government throughout, and indeed after, the war.

The American War Manpower Commission, which was formed by executive order from President Roosevelt in May 1942, was acutely aware of the negative impact that internal racism had on the US capacity to prosecute a war. As a move to counter the deeply ingrained hostile racial tensions in America, the Manpower Commission produced a key propaganda poster titled 'United We Win'. This poster represents a defining moment in the field of American racial and visual politics. It signifies a naïve and concerned critical point in state policy where race is visualised and acts as an indicator of recognition for which black Americans were pushing, even though the cultural distance that the 'United We Win' poster would have to cover in unifying black and white citizens during the 1940s was beyond contemplation. As far as race was concerned, as the riots of the 1940s testified, America was tearing itself apart.

The purpose of the poster was to help overcome the damaging impact of racism on the American industrial war effort and workers' relationships. Since the onset of war, activists such as the black American Asa Philip Randolph had been prominent in highlighting the chronic extent of racism and discrimination in terms of the armed forces being segregated, the segregationist employment policies among America's employers and workers' racist attitudes towards blacks. Randolph and several of his colleagues played an important role in the American civil rights campaign. It was Randolph who devised the systematic lobby of Roosevelt so as to allow blacks the right to fight as soldiers on an equal footing with whites and the right to work for America under the same terms and conditions as whites. It was through this lobbying that the civil rights movement post-World War II gained its powerful momentum and it was as a result of sustained pressure from these early campaigners that a new image of America was attempted. The poster shows two young men, one black and one white, working together, constructing an aeroplane with the American flag acting as a backdrop to the image. The photograph was taken by Alexander Lieberman, a skilled photographer, painter, sculptor and author who later went on to establish himself as an influential editor in the American popular magazines industry. The 'United We Win' poster was circulated across America in 1943 and according to research undertaken at Bucknell University in the USA became one of the best known American propaganda posters of World War II. The researchers describe the poster in the context of its production and aspects of its interpretation and reception in the following way:

The goal of the War Manpower Commission was to present an idealized view of race relations in America. However, the poster may have been depicting racial inequality through the placement of the two main subjects. The white man stands above the black man. While this [placement] may have been unintentional, it could be interpreted as white superiority in the work force at a time when blacks still held lower positions, equality in the workforce was not actually occurring. The words 'united' and 'we' are significant. The government wanted the public to see that in order to unite the country individual differences must be put aside ... However, large numbers of employers refused to hire blacks for anything but unskilled work. (Anon n.d.)

Further examination of the 'United We Win' poster reveals greater fault-lines in the desired message produced by the American War Manpower Commission in attempting to create an

image/myth of American racial harmony. While the two men are working in the same space and on the same part of the aircraft, there is no sense of workers' solidarity between them, as they are engaged in disjointed autonomous work, although performing the same task. There is no empathy, solidarity or celebration in their shared mission in assembling the aircraft. Contact between the young men, both physical and ocular, is non-existent due to the positions of the subjects in the frame. The workers' focus is down at the job in hand rather than upwards or outwards towards the intended viewers. As subjects in the frame they do not produce signs of coming together across the colour line. Their shared space does not point towards a new, racially harmonious workplace. Their division is made evident through their lack of engagement with each other, and in this way the poster inadvertently draws attention to how extreme the levels of racial intolerance were in the factories of the USA during the war. The framing of the men throws into doubt that a single photograph of the two men in the same place at the same time was ever actually made; rather it suggests that the poster is a montage and, if so, it emphasises further the degrees of racial distance active in the American workplace.

The 'United We Win' poster may well have been read by black Americans as a positive sign in the right direction towards some form of equal recognition in society. Given the levels of extreme racial violence operating in factories at the time the poster was produced, it would have generated among white workers feelings of anger and anxiety that blacks were now seen by the state as being increasingly able to compete in the workplace for well-paid jobs. The poster represents a significant marker in the visualisation of racial politics in the USA even during the crisis of World War II, when vital propaganda had to be employed by the state to advance the ways in which African Americans were literally seen at home.

While the UAW [United Automobile Workers] hierarchy outwardly supported integration of its work force, its rank and file did not. Whites didn't mind so much that blacks worked in the same plant, but they refused to work side by side with them. Three weeks before the riot, Packard promoted three blacks to work on the assembly line next to whites. The reaction was immediate and swift. A plant-wide hate strike resulted as 25,000 whites walked off the job, bringing critical war production to a screeching halt. A voice with a Southern accent barked over the loudspeaker, 'I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win than work next to a Nigger.' ('Detroit race riot 1943' n.d.)

World War II can therefore be read as a significant moment in which the production and promotion of images of black people by the Allies was seen as essential to national security, national morale and national confidence. (Fig. 22)

In analysing these photographs in the present, they may be read as being a mild or minor attempt by the Allied governments to reconfigure public perception of the racialised subject through striving to build a sense of unity in a time of crisis. As images produced by official state agencies they represent a few conscious steps in trying to reverse the historical tide of images that worked to negate black humanity in the West. It is possible, however, that the making and distribution of these more human and more equal images of the black subject across the USA, Britain and its empire produced a different effect on the black viewer than may have been originally intended by the Allied governments' systems of communication. Rather than simply presenting an acceptable face of blackness for white consumption, these images may have created a space in which oppressed subjects saw themselves in a new independent light. The subaltern subject may have decoded these images as being a positive move by the Allied governments towards empathy, recognition and equality. As images placed in public spaces, their reception would always be in flux. Independence and civil rights movements were active agents working on the black subject, soldier and worker, and these images as frames for interpretation may have performed a task that aided further the awakening of black nationalist movements and claims for equality, especially as the images of black subjects in the context of these war posters is brought much closer to those of Europeans and therefore by extension much closer to the idea of self-determination and equality. The image of 'Jack Smith' could, for example, be read as that of the Negro being transformed into a man in a benevolent act of colonial coevality or a more harmonious relationship across race. Or from a black nationalist perspective the image may be read as that of black oppression: a man robbed of his name and African cultural identity, transformed into the complete subaltern colonial subject conditioned to serve the empire.

Part 5. Together

A photograph from the archives of the Imperial War Museum represents a rare instance in which we can see a colonial recruitment poster at work on a group of young African men who are pictured directly engaging with a British empire military recruitment campaign poster. The picture articulates a new moment in black recognition within the context of

empire, war and recruitment. The image is black and white, square in format and probably shot on a medium-format camera. It shows five young black African men all studying a rather weathered poster that has been put on the side of a wooden clapperboard colonial building. The white text of the poster's masthead reads 'THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS' and is contained in dark borders. A larger text runs across the bottom of the poster. This is also framed in dark borders and reads 'TOGETHER'. The horizontal central image of the poster according to the object information supplied by the Imperial War Museum shows seven representatives of the Commonwealth Armed Forces marching towards the right with a Union Jack positioned behind the front four figures. We are informed that when 'reading the image left to right the men pictured in the poster are from India, East Africa, South Africa, New Zealand, a Canadian airman, an Australian soldier and a Royal Navy sailor'. This version of the 'TOGETHER' poster, and there are several different versions some of which incorporate the representations of the Allied forces along with the Commonwealth forces, went into production in 1941. The five young African men are clearly engaged with the poster's message as each of them stares directly at the proud Commonwealth soldiers marching off in unison. One of the young African men positioned nearest to the camera is dressed in long dark shabby-looking robes. His head is shaved around the back and sides leaving a small crown of hair on the top. His appearance suggests a rural or impoverished existence. Two of the other men are wearing shorts and loose-fitting shirts, while the fourth man also appears to wear only robes. The fifth man is mostly obscured but we can just manage to observe that he is wearing a checked shirt. The four men whose feet we can see are all bare-footed. The central figure with his robes and shaven head has raised his right arm and is pointing directly at the East African black soldier, although the actual tip of his finger appears to be resting on the shoulder of the white South African soldier. It is evident from this photograph that the critical point of encounter for this particular group of young African men is the presence of the other black African man in the poster. As a group, the young African men are seen in sharp contrast to the well-groomed and presented soldiers. The caption informs us that the photograph was taken at a 'recruiting centre in Accra, Gold Coast [now Ghana], British West Africa' and that, 'these men are joining up in the Royal West African Frontier Force'. In this instance, in Accra, the 'TOGETHER' recruiting poster had clearly done its work in encouraging the young men to sign up to defend the Commonwealth. We also have to consider the purpose of this particular photograph and what its intended use may have been. As a photograph of recruitment in progress it supports the propaganda objectives of the empire by presenting 'real'

documentary evidence of the interest and willingness of young Africans to join the armed services.

In studying the actual 'Together' poster, we can deduce that there is a racial hierarchy at work in the construction of the image. The white soldiers, from Britain, Australia and Canada, lead the parade and feature as a prominent presence framed by a flapping Union Jack. The Indian and African soldiers are positioned to the outside of the flag and so appear to be forming the rearguard of the Commonwealth army. However, all the men carry rifles and the African presence is clearly enough, as is evident by the young African men seen viewing the poster, to stimulate the idea of recruitment to 'The British Commonwealth of Nations' armed forces, to become proud men in uniforms and march forth into the modern world and future freedom. Recruitment to the armed services is a moment of coming into being with the rest of mankind. Recruitment is therefore a departure from the world of the primitives and into the world of Western modernity, with uniforms, regiments and technology becoming signage towards the exit from racial time. (Fig. 23)

These wartime new constructions of black subjects were in effect complex strategic images that were put to work to close cultural gulfs that existed between black and white subjects. The question of race across Britain, its empire and America is culturally and profoundly different but is historically yoked together through the legacies of slavery and cultural Apartheid. Black Americans during the 1940s existed in their millions as a people separate within the culture of segregation, fear and violence. This marks the 'United We Win' poster as a willing sign from the state that it wanted to take a degree of responsibility in easing racial tension rather than simply maintaining the status quo of oppression. Black American veterans from World War I would not have been easily convinced by this type of message as the legacy of the violence against them as prime targets for lynchings on returning home would still have resonance. The visual messages concerning the British empire and its colonial subjects, fighting or working for Britain, form part of a long process of cultural indoctrination that built on established racist hierarchies, dashed hopes, forced servitude and the British sense of its imperial entitlement that worked on the colonised subject through a false face of hospitality.

As images produced and sanctioned by Allied states' communication bureaus to serve a distinctive moral and immediately political/ economic purpose, posters such as 'Together'

and ‘United We Win’ can be read not simply as images that fostered black participation in World War II but also as images that subversively encouraged black involvement in the war as a route out of racial, geographical and economic oppression.

These images when read through the time of their making by black political activists would have also been interpreted against the backdrop of the newly stated Allied principles of liberation that were promised through the signing of the 1941 Atlantic Charter, as subject peoples began to argue that ‘self determination should be universally applied; that imperialism as well as fascism, should be condemned and eradicated, as it was the basis of international inequality and the rivalry that led to wars’ (Adi et al. 1995, p.16). It is critical to read these state-sanctioned black images in the context of the other global forces that were gaining momentum during World War II, especially the Pan-African movement and the American civil rights movement. These two movements forcefully challenged the dominance of colonial and racial politics in the West, and both expressed desires for people from the subaltern world to be recognised as modern subjects with their own rights to freedom so as to be able to re-imagine their own political futures and cultural lives. These new wartime images of black humanity released in the public realm across the colonies, the USA and Britain can therefore be read as outcomes of resistance work, as images produced under pressure applied from within and without the Allied states. This meant that, as posters, they served multiple political purposes beyond and outside of their original intentionality as they had the potential to be decoded as radical signs of black autonomy.

Part 6. Seeing the Pan-African Movement 1945

The Pan-African movement enabled connections throughout the colonies and beyond to be consolidated, to become a manifest reality. As an ideological platform, leaders from within the movement could form important alliances that hastened the liberation movement and intensified the demands to have a representational voice in the staging of a new world agenda post-World War II. The Pan-African movement would serve to give weight to the demand for the development of a meaningful timetable that would see an end to European domination across the world. It would constitute its separate and critical demands through the production of its own resolutions, such as ‘The Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World’, in which it was stated that freedom must be delivered to the colonised world and if necessary by force. The timing of these statements and the repetitious references to force were politically critical, especially as Europe and much of the USA was struggling with the moral dilemma of

the atrocities committed in the German death camps. It was in this political moment, and with force being a real option, 'that black humanity takes its right to produce meaning, its freedom to choose a past from among the options that the (Western) culture offers it' (Mudimbe 1992, p.101).

It was through the conflict of World War II that 'third' world leadership was envisioning a new post-colonial world. The liberation process represented an unstoppable quest for change, not just from the physical domination of colonial territorial occupation (the land) or structural domination in the form of governance (the order, through indirect or direct rule, assimilation or alienation) but more importantly from the psychology of the colonial mindset that had been ingrained in the black subject whenever the encounter with the European occurred and concerned questions of power, whether on a micro level, through the basic tasks of servitude (the servant, or low paid worker), or on a macro conflicted level, through ultimate resistance, represented in the form of force (the freedom fighter): the face of the well-trained black ex-serviceman, now audaciously demanding equality.

Effectively, this post-colonial Pan-African vision added up to a modern concept of a new humanity, one that reconciled the past with a focus on traditional values and called for justice through the creation of a different understanding of the universal man.

It's a question of the Third World starting a new History of Man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious theses which Europe has put forward, but which will also not forget Europe's crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of man, and consisted of the pathological tearing away of his functions and the crumbling away of his unity. (Gilroy 2004, p.71)

From the 15 to 20 October 1945 the 6th Pan-African Conference was staged in Manchester. John Deakin photographed the conference for *Picture Post* magazine. His photographs represent a rare and defining visual legacy of the event, which, apart from his work for *Picture Post*, was not well photographed. The headline used by the magazine for its two-page article reads, 'Africa Speaks In Manchester', with a subheading that states, 'Delegates from many parts of Africa and the United States to the first Pan-African Conference talk for a week of freedom from the White Man, of the colour bar, of one great coloured nation, of force to gain their ends'. The article was published in the 10 November 1945 issue. The

headline stating this to be the first Pan-African conference was, in fact, incorrect. This event was cited by its primary organiser, George Padmore, as the fifth, although it was actually the sixth. He ignored the first Pan-African conference, held in London in 1900:

it was at that first conference that Du Bois spoke his famous prophetic lines: ‘The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea’. (Legum 1965, p.25)

Above the main headline for the ‘Africa Speaks’ article, three portraits of conference delegates are presented, run as single images across the top half of the page. Reading left to right the first photograph is captioned, ‘The Abyssinian Delegate Jomo Kenyatta asked for an Act of Parliament making discrimination by race or colour a criminal offence’. Kenyatta looks relaxed, confident but stern in his expression with his head leaning slightly to the left of the frame. He wears a heavy fur-collared coat over his formal suit, shirt and tie. His delegates’ ribbon is clearly visible, pinned to the fur of his coat. The photograph suggests that the Chorlton-upon-Medlock Town Hall was a cold environment for the delegates. The background framing the photograph of Kenyatta is made up from one of the many handmade textual posters that were positioned throughout the conference hall and across the front of the raised stage used by the speakers. The poster states ‘Ethiopia wants exit to the Sea’. Kenyatta’s head blocks the word ‘exit’, but from another photograph on the following page we can clearly read the poster’s slogan as it hangs high, decorating the front of the stage. The hard flash from Deakin’s camera creates a strong shadow behind Kenyatta’s head and brings his face into sharp focus as he returns the photographer’s gaze, staring back directly into the lens of the camera and demanding recognition. Kenyatta’s left eye appears to be open wider than his right. This widened left eye creates a focal point for the portrait that is loaded now with a Barthesian punctive post-colonial charge. When reading the image it gives the impression that it is Kenyatta who holds the ocular power to observe, not the photographer. Kenyatta’s eye is as much on the viewer as the viewer’s eye is upon him. The portrait suggests a defiant persona: a man confident in the context of his framing. When looking at Kenyatta’s right eye, however, it carries a warmer, more subtle reception for the viewer. It is as if the right side of his face is enjoying the confrontation that his left eye presents to the camera, to the photographer and to the future reader of his image.

The second photograph, which is positioned centrally on the page, is captioned, 'The Nigerian Trade Unionist Chief, A.S. Coker, represents unions with a half a million workers. He demands full franchise for the negro worker'. Behind Coker is a poster that reads 'Freedom of the Press in the Colonies!' He wears a smart formal three-piece suit, shirt and tie. His smoker's pipe is sticking out of the top pocket of his pinstriped jacket. Pinned on his lapel is his delegates' ribbon. He is framed looking over the lens, beyond the photographer, photographed as a much more reflective and friendly looking colonial delegate than the hard-eyed Kenyatta. Coker's mouth is slightly open as if a smile has just been completed or is about to be performed. A dark area in the front of his mouth suggests missing teeth. Presented in this way, beside the image of Kenyatta, Coker appears to be less of a threat, as is the slogan on the poster behind him. Coker, therefore, in this moment represents the more passive face of **Pan-African demands**.

Completing the trio or triumvirate of delegates, the third photograph is captioned, 'The Liverpool Welfare Worker Mr. E.J. Du Plau, is responsible for hostels and centres for negro seamen. "Negroes are social exiles in Britain," he maintains.' The photograph of 'Du Plau' mirrors the image of Kenyatta. His head, however, leans out towards the right of the frame. 'Du Plau', too, is photographed as a confident man, holding his own direct gaze back into the camera towards the viewer. He wears large rounded spectacles and sports a stylish pencil moustache. 'Du Plau' also sports a heavy coat over his formal suit. The poster behind him states, 'Down with Colour Bar'. The caption referring to him as 'E.J. Du Plau' is incorrect: his name is in fact E.J. Du Plan.

It is evident from the other photographs reproduced in the article and from Deakin's contact sheets and prints housed within the archives of Getty Images that the posters originally displayed at the conference were repositioned behind the three African men so as to provide a background for *Picture Post* readers, enabling them to fix the men within the context of the simple one-line slogan. Through Deakin's image/text construction, the African men become synonymous with the messages that form a backdrop to them. Their physical presence framed with the text renders the men as human slogans. This act of visual elaboration effectively over-determines Kenyatta, Coker and 'Du Plau'. Deakin's work creates an image of a Pan-African face that is clearly working against the grain of Britain's mighty empire. *Picture Post*, in reproducing the contrasted textual portraits as if they are traditional police mugshots, suggests that their presence in Manchester is an act of political transgression leaning towards

criminal intention. The three men framed in this manner collectively make up a trilogy of black radical voices that simultaneously becomes a gallery of African rogues. By viewing the uncropped photographs at the Getty archives, we can clearly see this construction process of the image-making at work. The vital elements of the photographs, when compared with their cropped usage, are made more distinctive. The white backgrounds highlight the black subjects, as does the text behind them. It is clear from analysis of the archive that Deakin effectively set up a makeshift studio at the front of the conference hall to provide a set in which to present the Pan-African delegates. When these three African men speak, it is through a highly mediated code that visually works to negate the legitimacy of their political voice. It is evident that the men are being tightly framed. The un-cropped photographs portray the men in a much more relaxed conference environment.

Another, and larger, photograph on the same page works in complete contrast to the three previous images of the Pan-African men. It fills around a third of the page and is positioned in the bottom right-hand corner. It shows a couple taking afternoon tea in their house. The caption reads, 'A Mixed Marriage That is a Success Mr. John Teah Brown, with his wife, Mrs Mary Brown, in their Manchester home. He says the negro must earn the respect of the white man to merit full citizenship'. The photograph shows the couple seated in a bay window at a dining table, which is covered in a bright white tablecloth. In the centre of the table is a vase containing a bunch of flowers. An elegant tea is laid out across a very well-presented table. Mrs Brown smiles at her African husband, who is smartly dressed in a suit, shirt and tie. The scene is framed through the genteel act of tea being served formally using a fine china tea set. The image and caption produce a reading of an ideal integration into British values. This photograph is in sharp contrast to the more radical men pictured above it, who demand political change and equality. John Teah Brown seems more concerned with earning respect from the white man, assuming inequality to be overcome rather than an a priori equality that needs to be asserted. Deakin, however, in photographing John and Mary Brown seated directly in front of their bright sunlit bay window, has created an image so high in contrast that renders John as an almost unrecognisable dense black form disrupted only by the whiteness of his teeth. As a portrait of a couple, the photograph is grossly inadequate. Its only redeeming quality is that the Browns are pictured exchanging smiles across the fabulously traditional display of English afternoon tea rather than being framed in some uncompromising manner. The white teapot, placed so prominently on a stand directly in front of Mary, commands the attention of the viewer; it seems to symbolise the presence of the

empire within the everyday life of this couple's British home. The Browns 'Mixed Marriage That is a Success' is made more palatable for the reader by the fact that they, as a mixed-race couple, are framed as subjects aspiring to the traditional aspects of British life, which are represented in this photograph through the act of tea being served, which in turn becomes symbolic of the 'simple human values' the writer refers to in the closing first paragraph of the text that accompanies the photograph.

Hilde Marchant, a well-respected Fleet Street journalist, was sent by *Picture Post* to cover the conference. Marchant's approach was to address it through the frame of the 'mixing', which she discovered while in Manchester. Her opening sentences for the article are,

The dance was a mixed affair – mixed in trade, from the stoker to the anthropologist; mixed in class, from the £3 a week labourer to the rich cocoa merchant; mixed in dress, from the baggy grey flannels to the suit of tails. But above all it was mixed in colour, from the blonde white to the midnight black. The dance, held at Edinburgh Hall, on the corner of one of Manchester's drab and soot-blackened streets, was the first gathering of the delegates to the Pan-African conference.

Marchant is clearly concerned with the myths, fears and the spectacle of witnessing miscegenation at work. In her text she awakens the hysteria and fears that were evident throughout the British empire of the white race being culturally contaminated as a result of sexual activity across the colour line. Marchant's mention of the blonde whites and midnight blacks 'mixing' potentially ignites the ultimate, ingrained, white males' fears of losing 'their' women to savage dark races if contact is allowed (Cairns 1965, p.59). In focusing on the fact of interracial mixing as seemingly a by-product of Pan-African equality, Marchant creates a subtle and sinister narrative for the readers of *Picture Post*, in which to imagine that unnatural dark forces are at work in Manchester and that the sanctity and purity of British culture is being eroded and polluted. Manchester is constructed by Marchant as deviant, dark and 'soot-blackened' place with a unique breed of white people who have 'less curiosity or hostility to colour than the people of any other English city'. The misery and drabness of industrial Manchester become synonymous with the presence of the Africans, as if their blackness has somehow infected the indigenous population causing them to act differently from the rest of the nation: a contamination so deep that it has darkened the atmosphere of the city.

Marchant's text further informs us that, 'Certainly, there was no self-consciousness among the white women who partnered their negro husbands or friends through "jive" to the last romantic waltz. Their attitudes varied. Some had approached the colour bar problem intellectually, others from a Christian viewpoint and others from simple human values.' She suggests that this display of interracial contact through jive and waltz is a bold and transgressive act. It is evidently socially problematic for Marchant that the white women show no signs of 'self-consciousness' in dancing with their black husbands and friends; her use of the word 'certainly' suggests that she feels that a degree of self-consciousness was to be desired and expected. She regards unselfconscious mixed dancing as a deviant act that is out of step with the normal conventions expected of white English women. Marchant as a concerned and experienced journalist decides to investigate this matter of racial 'mixing' further. She states that,

Typical of the last attitude [shared human values] is the mixed marriage of Mary Brown to John Teah Brown, and before the conference got down to more serious problems of the negro peoples, I went to their home to see a successful black and white marriage in its own domestic setting.

The domestic space of Mary and John Brown becomes a critical site of journalistic enquiry for Marchant: a curious human zoo on which to report. Marchant's moment of discovery of northern interracial mixing produces an editorial charge that overrides the core purpose of her reporting on the Pan-African conference. The Browns' home becomes a metaphorical moment of concern regarding the issues of equality and rights raised at the conference. What is coded within Marchant's report is a dangerous reawakening of the ghosts of forms of popular racism so evident before World War II. Her obsession with 'mixing' works the readership of *Picture Post* into a position where it has no choice but to consider the notion of racial hygiene and purity of race at home in Britain. For Marchant, something alien has clearly settled in Manchester and it represents a disturbing presence that disrupts her idea of empire.

Marchant goes on to describe in detail the circumstances of how Mary and John Teah Brown met. Mary was left stranded with her child in Liverpool when she met John, a donkeyman in the merchant navy: 'He married her, gave her overwhelming affection, and saw that her child

was properly educated'. This subtly establishes the terms of the relationship, for Mary is implicitly portrayed as being morally suspect (she has had a child, she was abandoned, she is out of wedlock), and John as being solid, loyal and fully able to assume the mantle of paterfamilias. Marchant writes, 'I listened to John Teah Browns's story which in many ways put in terms of one human being the resolutions and speeches of the whole conference.' We learn that John was born in 'Sierre Leone' (the incorrect spelling is in the original text) and that he is a member of the Kroo Tribe. Throughout the early twentieth century the 'Kroomen' dominated dockyard employment in Sierra Leone. Tribal headmen from the Kroo were used as agents by the European shipping lines from 1916 onwards to recruit cheap labour on the docks (Mukonoweshuro 1991, p.108). We are informed that John was brought up in a mission to be a Roman Catholic and that while in South Africa he was ejected from a white church by a priest. 'He left Sierra Leone at the age of fifteen, for he felt the discrimination, segregation and low standards of the negro's life there cramped his spirit. His escape was to the sea and for thirty years he has been in the Merchant Navy.' Through Marchant's text, John becomes the ideal colonial subject. Apart from her fascination with 'mixing', it is the Browns' experience that becomes the central narrative through which we enter the politics of the Pan-African conference. Marchant finishes her focus on the Browns when she quotes John as saying, 'The negro is not only exploited by white men – he is often exploited by the rich and wealthy negro traders. When we learn to help each other, then we shall merit citizenship and freedom from the white man'. Before she introduces any different voices into her article, and in quoting John Teah Brown, it is evident that Marchant is keen to highlight the notion of 'wealthy negro traders' as being one of the root causes of black exploitation. John is, of course, politically out of step with the conference, its delegates and its agenda. The conference organisers, George Padmore and W.E.B. Du Bois, do not regard independence and citizenship as something to be earned or merited from the 'white man': they regard them as their fundamental rights and not gifts from Britain or the white man.

On the following page of *Picture Post* are four more photographs. The main photograph positioned in the top left-hand third of the page shows the conference in full swing. The caption reads,

In Conference: A White Man Urges the Negroes' Cause. John McNair, General Secretary of the I.L.P., addressing the delegates, says: 'I object to the idea that the white people have anything to give to the black. There is, on the other hand, a debt

which the white people owe to the coloured races: a debt which must and shall be paid’.

The photograph shows McNair, from the Independent Labour Party, standing with his hands clasped together. The distance of the photographer from the speaker and the low artificial lighting were conditions that required Deakin to use a long exposure, resulting in portraying McNair as a blurred, soft and out-of-focus figure. His presence in this photograph as an identifiable white ally to the Pan-African movement is, therefore, rendered insignificant and ghostly. Deakin’s archived contact sheets show that the photograph has been heavily cropped to make it square in format. In so doing, critical visual information about the Pan-African movement’s wider political alliances with other liberation struggles has been lost. Cropped out on the right-hand side is a slogan that simply reads ‘Down with Anti-Semitism’, and on the left in the original photograph is the slogan ‘Arabs And Jews Unite Against British Imperialism’. Omitting these two slogans from the photograph of McNair for *Picture Post* neither enhances the visual impact of the image nor brings us closer to specific details of McNair’s presence. What could be argued, therefore, is that there was a deliberate decision by the editors to omit from the photograph any visual links or political concerns that the Pan-African movement may have had in relation to the rising tensions in the Middle East at the time of the magazine’s publication, or, indeed, to the recently publicised horrors of Nazi anti-Semitism.

McNair, like John Teah Brown in Deakin’s previous photograph, is almost unrecognisable. The lower third of the photograph is taken up by rows of delegates’ backs and a small table at the front of the conference seated area at which three white women appear to be working as note takers. The central visual motif that stands out is the array of hand-painted slogans used to decorate the speaker’s stage. The same posters and slogans that frame the delegates on the first page of the *Picture Post* article are clearly visible in the McNair photograph and have been repositioned for the rest of the duration of the conference. One of the slogans that can be seen behind the main speaker’s podium reads ‘Oppressed People of the earth Unite’; another on the same rear wall reads ‘Freedom for all Subject Peoples’. Others claim ‘Africa for Africans’, ‘Freedom of Press in the Colonies’ and ‘Africa Arise’. High up on the left-hand side of the photograph we can see the words that form part of the coat of arms for Manchester – ‘CONCILLO ET LABORE’ – which translates as ‘Wisdom and Effort’. The overall scene

presented is one of a seedling African peoples' revolt. Visually the conference is represented as a mild-mannered affair: a disgruntled naive colonised peoples' gathering.

Running across and filling the bottom of the page are three more portraits of delegates at the conference. These are square in format and appear to have been taken while the subjects were actually listening to the speakers. The first photograph is captioned 'The American Red Cross Worker. He comes from Washington and cares for his own people in Britain. He suffers no colour humiliation'. It shows the side profile of a middle-aged African American man in a military-style service uniform. He has no name. On his lapel we can see the letters ARC. He is well groomed, wearing a shirt and tie, and his hair has been oiled back, slick and tidy. His profile is illuminated by the daylight coming in from the window behind him. While there is no reference to his presence in the main body of the text, the caption negates any understanding of black American servicemen's experiences of the war and the deep-rooted racism that existed within benevolent institutions such as the American Red Cross, which had in 1942 been denounced by the *Pittsburgh Courier* for refusing to accept blood from black donors (Gates n.d.). The notion that this African American Red Cross serviceman 'suffers no colour humiliation' effectively ignores the harsh reality that all the war service personnel and its support structures were racially segregated. The ARC racially segregated blood for transfusion throughout World War II, something that the man photographed by Deakin would have no doubt been aware of. The tragedy of the ARC is that in 1941 its racist practices led the great African American surgeon Charles Drew to resign from his post as Director of the American Red Cross Blood Programme. Drew's work was critical to medical science. It was Drew who pioneered the revolutionary methods of storing blood plasma for transfusion and it was his scientific work that created the conditions in which the first large-scale blood banks in the USA and Britain could be developed. As a result of his endeavours, thousands of Allied servicemen's lives were saved. Drew's argument was very simple: there was no scientific reason to segregate blood, and he duly resigned. The American Red Cross, however, carried on its policy of segregating blood until the 1960s.

The second portrait, in the centre of the page, shows a black woman in profile facing to the right. The caption states, 'The Barrister from Lagos Mrs. Renner urges the need for a great raising of the standard of education and knowledge among African women'. Mrs Renner strikes an attentive pose resting her chin lightly on her raised hand. She wears a small hat and we can just glimpse the collar of her fur coat. According to records held in the Marxist

Internet Archive, Mrs Renner was in fact from the Gold Coast (Ghana). She was attending the conference with her husband, Bankole Awoonor Renner, who had been championing the politics of a 'Federated West African State ... strong, and independent free from feudalism since 1937' (Sherwood 2012, p.110) and was a strong supporter of Kwame Nkrumah. The Renners were representing the 'Friends of African Freedom Society' that was based in the Gold Coast. B.A. Renner played an important role throughout the conference: he was the conference secretary, while Mrs Renner sat on the entertainment committee. Marchant and Deakin appear once again to struggle with reporting accurately the story of the subjects present at the conference.

The third portrait shows an elderly black man with a receding silver hairline, facing left. He sports a waxed turned-up moustache and round studious-styled spectacles to complement his formal shirt and tie. His eyes are squinted and his mouth is raised slightly as if in a half smile. In the bottom left-hand corner of the photograph there is a white object, suggesting the presence of another person close by. In the full uncropped version of the photograph we can see that the man is seated with a small mixed-race girl sitting on his knee. He holds both her arms affectionately just above the elbows as she returns a smile directly back at Deakin's camera. It is the child's white puff-shouldered dress that is just visible in the cropped frame used by *Picture Post*. In the original version the man is facing the other way. The editors of *Picture Post* flipped the image so that it faces into the centre of the page rather than the central gutter of the magazine, making the sequence of images more harmonious to read. The caption states 'The founder of Pan Africanism Dr Du Bois is the head of the American Negro Association. He opposed the extremist idea of a "new nationalism of colour".' Du Bois's presence at the 1945 Manchester conference was hugely significant. It affirmed his intellectual and political relationship with George Padmore, the conference organiser, and cemented the continuity with the previous Pan-African conferences, which Du Bois and been central to organising.

However, the photograph used by *Picture Post*, although captioned as being a portrait of Du Bois, is clearly not Dr Du Bois. The editors, writers, photographers and even current-day archivists at Getty Images have mistaken another delegate for Du Bois. Further research into Deakin's negatives shows that Du Bois was indeed photographed by Deakin while he was at the conference, and as a portrait of the delegates present it represents one of the stronger photographs taken there. The image reproduced in *Picture Post* is in fact that of Dr Peter

Millard. Millard was instrumental in founding the Pan-African Federation in Manchester earlier in 1944. His political activity and, more importantly, his physical appearance were completely different from those of Du Bois. The only feature that Millard shared with Du Bois at the time of the conference was the fashionable handle-bar moustache. It seems that their moustaches were similar enough to have caused the editorial mistake. Other than this, the two men bear no physical resemblance. In mistaking the photograph of Millard for Du Bois, *Picture Post* inadvertently raises the critical question relating to the reporting on and recognition of the black subject in European historical narratives. Given the significance of Du Bois being in the UK and the international standing he had as a leading political spokesman for black people, this mis-recognition of him, together with the chain of other mis-information throughout the article, can be read as revealing a lack of both interest and due diligence in reporting black political presences in Britain. If we consider that the core premise of the conference in Manchester was that of black affirmation, political visibility and right to recognition, then Marchant and Deakin have produced a journalistic dis-service to these voices, choosing instead to focus disproportionately on the issue of 'mixing' couples. That the actual image of Du Bois, who at that time was the most important figure in Pan-African politics, has, through a lack of basic journalistic diligence, been rendered invisible, indicates that there was more concern for the drama of the encounter than the politics of the day. Marchant and Deakin have therefore created a situation in which 'The Founder of Pan Africanism' has become the victim of a case of mistaken identity within the narrative of 'Africa Speaking', from which he is absented. This mis-recognition of Du Bois, along with the fact that he was never involved with an organising body known as the 'American Negro Association' and no comment was sought from him by Marchant, illustrates with a degree of irony the attitude and lack of gravity this significant conference was given by the editors of *Picture Post*. This editorial approach also illustrates well Du Bois's theory of 'The Veil'. He formulated this theory over 40 years before the events in Manchester, in his now classic 1903 book titled *The Souls of Black Folk*, in which he describes that for black Americans a barrier exists, that a 'Veil' stands between black Americans and the recognition by white Americans of black people's humanity. Du Bois states that he was shut out from the white 'world by a vast veil'. This 'Veil' according to Du Bois serves to block the path to equality, black legitimacy and progress. The 'Veil' silences and therefore makes the black subject invisible: 'It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (Du Bois et al. 1996, p.5). In absenting Du Bois, Marchant and

Deakin undertake an incredible work of erasure in the context of reporting on the Pan-African conference in Manchester.

Marchant's text goes on to highlight that 'A few delegates admitted the positive side of our rule in Africa. There is a maternity hospital at Accra, capital of the Gold Coast, where a native woman can have a child for 1s. or nothing at all' and that 'a younger and more vigorous type of white civil servant has been sent to the West Coast and their conscience and good will is showing results. On Britain's side that six years of war has robbed us of much chance to put into operation White Paper proposals'. Her reference to the war in this manner is also an early indicator of the way the war would be framed historically as a white Allied victory. Anne Sebba, in her book *Battling for News*, highlights that Marchant struggled in her later life: she became a drunk who suffered from ill health, was a pathetic has-been of a journalist and eventually died destitute with no family to pay for her funeral. Deakin was also a war veteran:

the war marks the moment when his career – and his legend – properly catches fire. Audrey Withers, editor of *Vogue*, was so impressed by his street photographs of Paris and Rome that she hired him as a staff photographer in 1947, and quickly regretted it. His offhand manner, his drinking, his indifference to 'fashion' and his propensity for losing valuable equipment damaged an already dubious reputation. (Quinn 2014)

Deakin is now posthumously celebrated for his portraits in Soho and his friendship with the artist Francis Bacon. His work has been marked by a book and an accompanying exhibition at the Photographer's Gallery in London (2014), *Under the Influence: John Deakin and the Lure of Soho*. It is evident through the many omissions across the 'Africa Speaks in Manchester' report that Deakin and Marchant as a journalistic pairing may not have been best suited to the task of reporting on this significant event in post-war black British history. They, like John Teah Brown, are out of step with the new face of African politics: a face that will be determined as much by the emerging Cold War as by the politics and ideologies of colonial liberation struggles. (Fig. 24 and 25)

Chapter 4: Decolonial Frames

The year 1960 was a landmark moment for the continent of Africa. It was the year in which the Belgian Congo and 16 other colonies in Africa gained independence from their European masters. According to Eugen Gerstenmaier, then president of the Deutsche Bundestag, ‘Africa’s entrance onto the stage of world history under the leadership of the Africans is probably the most important event of the year 1960’ (Willenbrock 2008, p.4). It can also be regarded as the year in which the violent process of imagined disentanglement from Europe began in Africa and in which the Cold War arrived on the continent in earnest. For the new African states, self-government was not going to be an easy task and increasingly, as the historian Paul Lauren noted, the journey to independence was a much more complex political scenario. In the condition of post-independence many African leaders ‘found themselves confronting a bewildering array of complicated international problems, not the least of which was trying to chart a neutral course of nonalignment through the morass of the Cold War’ (Lauren 1988, p.231). The relationships with the old colonial masters across Africa were not settled affairs, as the economies and industrial wealth that underpinned Europe were still part of the fabric within many African societies. The face of leadership may have changed but the ontology of ‘empire and all of the violence that came from it’ (Drabinski 2011, p.7) simply became less transparent but still present.

Independence Cha Cha

In October 1958, just two years before Congo’s independence, Patrice Lumumba, leader of the newly formed political party ‘Mouvement National Congolais’, publicly demanded the immediate end of Belgium’s colonial rule over the Congo. In Accra (Ghana) two months later, as an invited guest speaker at the All Peoples African Conference, Lumumba located his case for the Congo’s freedom firmly within the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He stated at the conference that

we base our action on the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man – rights guaranteed to each and every citizen of humanity by the United Nations Charter – and we are of the opinion that the Congo, as a human society, has the right to join the ranks of free peoples. (Lumumba 1958)

Lumumba was making a claim for international recognition of the Congolese cause and for this cause to be acknowledged within the global context of the humanitarian and decolonisation debates that were prevalent across international state relationships in the immediate aftermath of World War II, such as the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester held in 1945 and the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia.

The following year, Joseph Kasavubu's 'Abako' party reiterated its demands for a fully independent state of Congo. This combined escalation of action by Lumumba, Kasavubu and a host of other political leaders ignited the historical smolderings of political discontent that had existed for decades within the Congolese people. The presence of this long-harboured dissatisfaction was clearly evident in the unofficial speech that Lumumba delivered at the ceremony of proclamation of the Congo's independence on 30 June 1960. He stood, uninvited, on this day and claimed his right to have a voice and reminded the new nation of the huge indignities his people had had to bear during Belgium's 80 years of colonial rule. Through the content of his speech, which was broadcast by radio across the country, he was determined not to negate the historical violence to which the Congolese had been subjected. Much to the discomfort of King Baudouin I and the other Belgians present, Lumumba evoked the nation's traumas when he stated that

morning, noon and night we were subjected to jeers, insults and blows because we were 'Negroes'. Who will ever forget that the black was addressed as 'tu', not because he was a friend, but because the polite 'vous' was reserved for the white man? ... Who will ever forget the shootings which killed so many of our brothers, or the cells into which were mercilessly thrown those who no longer wished to submit to the regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation used by the colonialists as tool of their domination? (Lumumba 1960)

The Congolese people's political discontent and fervour for independence had been earlier demonstrated when a bloody, riotous revolt erupted in Léopoldville on 4 January 1959 (Witte et al. 2009, p.394) sending shockwaves across Belgium. Today, this significant moment in the history of European colonial rule in Africa is marked throughout the Republic of Congo as Martyrs Day. The riots came about as a direct result of Kasavubu's Abako party being denied the right to hold a rally at its local offices in the Kalamu district of Léopoldville. This act of political denial was due to a minor administrative error in Abako's application to the

Belgian authorities to hold a public meeting. Word was slow to reach the Abako supporters that the meeting had been cancelled. Once they began to gather at the place where the rally was due to be held, the supporters of Kasavubu and other nationalists present were determined to go ahead with it; when ordered by the state soldiers to disband, they refused to do so. The conditions for confrontation with the authorities were heightened by the fact that a crowd of football supporters coming out of the nearby stadium that afternoon joined the political gathering.

Reports of the events of the day state that the rioters were quickly and bloodily repressed.

Official figures obtained from hospitals and burial services indicated only 49 people were dead, all were Congolese, and 116 were seriously injured including 15 Europeans ... [other] estimates [of the number of] people killed were as high as three hundred. [This was because many of the] Africans killed on that day were buried by relatives and friends without any formalities, and not all the people injured [during the riots] sought hospital care. (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p.85)

The riots clearly ‘had a major psychological impact on both the black and white populations’ (Vanthemsche 2012, p.89) under Belgian rule, leading to uncertainty, concern and an increased sense of urgency in both Brussels and throughout the Belgian Congo. The apprehension and fear were ultimately fuelled by the proximity, ferocity and violence of other liberation movements taking place across the African continent. The Mau Mau in Kenya and the intense violence throughout the French/Algerian war (Vanthemsche 2012, p.90), along with the growing influence of Pan-African political ideals, had the effect of destabilising Belgians at home and their sense of presence and dominance in the Congo. Belgium feared that the Congo was becoming part of a wider network of liberation movements in Africa.

Just a few weeks before the January riots Lumumba had met, for the first time, Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, Gamal Abdul Nasser, Ahmed Sékou Touré and many other African leaders at the conference in Accra. Contact with these highly influential Africans would prove significant as all of them would later support Lumumba in his struggle to uphold the Congo’s independence and territorial integrity (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002b, p.84). What occurred on this terrible day in 1959 was to some degree inevitable given the historical

violence prosecuted for decades by Belgium on the peoples of the Congo. The events articulate well the schema of Fanonian thought as expressed in his writings on the psychology of violence under colonialism. Fanon's essay, 'Concerning violence', was first published in 1961 in his seminal book titled *Les Damnés de la terre / The Wretched of The Earth*. In it Fanon describes violence as a necessary act that ultimately returns the oppressed subject back to his sense of humanity and human worth. He explores the psychological impact and damage on the colonised mind through the prism of primary acts of violence that are perpetrated by the colonisers. This violence in turn and in time leads to intensive, spontaneous and cathartic acts of violence by the colonised subject such as those displayed in the riots in Léopoldville on 4 January 1959, during which Europeans and their property were attacked, burnt and looted. At this time in Léopoldville, and in the numerous other instances of anti-colonial resistance work, we can recognise the dynamic trajectory and formulas of colonialisng violence that Fanon articulates so well. The power, violence and fear of the colonisers' regimes of terror in the Congo came to a defining head that day. It was the moment when the flow of violent colonial power was reversed through a profound and unprecedented display of violence by the colonised. It is clear from the reports that more Congolese subjects were killed during the riots but these deaths created a liberating reality within the independence movement. As a result of the riots, the Belgian state had to restructure its political and economic objectives for the Congo as it became fully aware that the direct colonising moment represented by 80 years of terror had entered the first phase of its eventual demise and that in the future new modes and methods of control would have to be deployed.

With so much historical violence active on the psyche of the Congolese people it is not surprising that the Belgians feared a Fanonian backlash against it. Belgium's dread of Congolese nationalism needed a face and this was found in Lumumba, who was cast as a wide-eyed African Marxist determined to bring communism to the Congo. The code name given to Lumumba by Col. Louis Marlière of the Belgian Secret Service was 'Satan', and he stated that 'for us Lumumba was Satan and he did look like Satan. You just have to look at those eyes' (Gieffer (dir.) 2010). Constructing Lumumba as a non-human, a devil, an evil African brute, served Belgian Catholic sensitivities well, because in killing Lumumba as 'Satan' they would be doing good Christian work. This ideological formation goes to the very heart of the colonial justification for the European enterprise in Africa. The Belgian Congo was ruptured and psychologically altered through anti-colonial violence and this was the

decisive element for Belgium and the other European powers in Africa that changed everything. The European colonial sense of self and progress could not imagine itself outside of Africa. This is because European modernity began in Africa with slavery. As John E. Drabinski argues, 'The project of European modernity begins at this moment; which is to say Europe begins in what one might refer to as its elsewhere' (Drabinski 2011, p.7).

The riots of 1959 represent the moment when Belgium had to acknowledge the effects of its own cultural violence in the Congo over decades. Seeing the Other manifest itself in the streets of Léopoldville as a violent aggressor ruptured the assumed authority of the colonials who had previously gained a perverse pleasure from their own violence imagining it as a form of historical benevolence. This is evidenced in the deluded speech given by King Baudouin on independence day. The Belgian authorities at this critical juncture in time were traumatised by a different Congolese sense of self: one that rejected the myth of European superiority and that ultimately smashed through the visible and invisible barriers of authority, domination and exploitation of the colonised subject. 'The root of this colonial trauma, however, emerged out of the utter Belgian unpreparedness for Congolese independence. From 1958 onwards Belgium not only had to react to the rapid pace of events in the Congo; it was panicked and over taken by them' (Vogt 2014, p.26).

It is evident from the speed of the decolonisation process that took place in Brussels that a new Congolese subject was now being recognised: a subject forged from within the pressure and heat of colonising violence. The Belgians finally acknowledged the authority and legitimacy of Lumumba when they released him from jail so that he could participate fully in the process of decolonisation taking place in Brussels. This articulates well the schematic of Fanonian thought in which he discusses violence as a necessary stage for those under colonial rule to experience before they can be truly free and regarded as equals. The loss of the colony also meant that Belgium had to face up to the reality that without the Congo it was just a small country in Europe dependent on its neighbours (Vogt 2014).

This sense of a new Congolese threat was assisted by Belgium's military weakness and fear of a colonial war for which it had neither the appetite nor the economic power. According to Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, Belgium's sense of its size in relation to the rest of Europe had a strong bearing on the way it handled the decolonisation of the Congo. They state that, 'to a larger power than Belgium these disorders would not have appeared

impossible to suppress. But to Belgium, in the words of a government spokesman, they presented a terrifying alternative' (Oliver & Atmore 2005, p.262). Fanon also states in 'Concerning violence' that, 'the naked truth of decolonisation evokes for us the searing bullets and the bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists' (Fanon 1963, p.28). The moment of decisive struggle for the Congo was marked by the events of 4 January 1959, during which Belgium willingly turned away from its legacy of decades of direct physical, cultural and psychological violence over the Congolese. Belgium's fear of being consumed in violence was the critical condition that paved the way to the Congo's liberation. The moment can be described retrospectively as a decisive Fanonian twist regarding the formulation of the country's independence. It was violence that lifted the veil of the assumed racial superiority of the Belgians, vigorously pushing aside decades of white authority. The Belgians were forced to recognise a new African reality that was defiant and willing to die for unconditional independence.

For the outgoing Belgian colonial masters the unwillingness to admit their violent colonising past became in the transformative moment of liberation for the Congolese on their day of independence the ultimate instance of Belgian disavowal and of violent colonialism being reinvented and presented as a glorious civilising gift to the Congo.

On June 30, 1960, King Baudouin was still trapped in the Belgian colonialist state of mind as he tried to rationalise this paternalistic paradigm that his great-uncle Leopold II initiated in the Congo, appealing to the newly created Congolese independent government and the Congolese masses to work for its continuance. Baudouin's speech denoted either the monarch's utter loss of touch with the Congolese reality or his sheer lack of knowledge of the historical facts, and especially his lack of education about the empire that his great grand-uncle could have bequeathed him had it not been for the international outrage that forced Belgium to snatch the Congo from his deadly hands. (Frindéthié 2009, p.195)

In his speech, which was full of delusional fantasy, King Baudouin stated that,

For 80 years Belgium has sent the best of its sons to your soil, first to free the Congo Basin from the odious slave trade which was decimating the local population, and

later to reconcile ethnic groups who, previously enemies then worked together to create one of the greatest independent states in Africa ... When Leopold II undertook his great work which today reaches its crowning moment, he did not come to you as a conqueror but as a civiliser.

The speech revealed the extensive nature of Belgium's denial of the extreme violence and cost in human life that shaped the Belgian Congo: a violence that so outraged the likes of Alice Seeley Harris and other British missionaries that they campaigned for years internationally to raise awareness of the scale of forced labour, mutilation and murder taking place in the colony (see Chapter 1). Not a single hint of apology can be detected in his words for the regime of terror that caused tens of thousands of deaths.

After 4 January 1959 nothing in the Belgian Congo was the same again. Fanon helps us now, in the present, to understand that it is in the necessary moment of grabbing power back – of rebellion and violence – that ultimately self-recognition occurs from within the colonised subject and by the colonising powers. In effect, an act of anti-colonial violent rebellion enables a sense of human dignity to formulate within the mind of the subaltern. It is this clarity that charged Lumumba to speak directly to 'the hard facts of Congolese's daily lives from 1885 to 1960' (Frindéthié 2009, p.198) on independence day.

Liberating acts of violence – mocking kings, snatching at freedom, destroying the totemistic presence of oppression, burning and smashing buildings, statues, flags and other symbols of power that are revered as sacred objects, worshipped and idolised by the colonial masters as marks of cultural authority and superiority – enable the colonised subject to see colonialism afresh for what it actually is: a pure form of 'violence in its natural state, and [in that natural state] it will only yield when confronted with greater violence' (Fanon 1963, p.48).

Patrice Lumumba was dangerous to the Belgians because he clearly understood the dynamics not just of liberation struggles for freedom and autonomy but also, critically, the absolute importance for the Congo on political, cultural, historical and humanitarian levels, for the Belgians to recognise the Congolese people and to take responsibility for the violence perpetrated against them in the past. Lumumba would not accept independence as a benevolent gift. This for Lumumba meant that he would always be in debt and subject to the myth of white superiority. He could not accept the rewriting of history and Belgium's

disavowal of its genocidal past made manifest in the colonial fantasy of King Baudouin's speech in June 1960. Independence for the Congolese people was a long, hard, violent battle that was filled with decades of 'tears, fire and blood' (Lumumba 1960).

Events immediately prior to meetings on 20 January 1960 in Brussels, which are now referred to as the Round Table Conference, saw Baudouin visit the Congo in December 1959 in a desperate attempt to defuse the ongoing political crisis.

Lumumba, founder of the Congo National Movement Party, was in prison. The king, it was said, would establish concord between the whites and the negroes. The royal triumphal voyage was announced as though white men had never shed the blood of Negroes, as though the Congolese would fall down on their faces at the sight of the white king and chant his praise for his benefactions. Inwardly, the colonialists felt jittery. They were wondering whether it would not be the other way round, whether the king would not be hooted. They started cleverly spreading rumours among the Congolese. It was whispered into their ears that Baudouin I was a 'good white man', that he would have Patrice Lumumba released from prison into which the 'bad white men' had thrown him. (Laurent 1961)

The British historian Richard Tomlinson, when writing King Baudouin's obituary for the *Independent* newspaper, reminded readers of Baudouin's lack of political acumen when he stated that 'against the advice of his ministers, [King Baudouin I] travelled to Léopoldville hoping to halt the Congo's slide into anarchy. Instead, he was met by jeering demonstrators along the 12-mile route from the airport, and was accused of provoking by his presence the riots that soon followed.' (Tomlinson 1993). The humiliated Baudouin returned to Belgium, his attempt to restore the old status quo having failed. His imagined regal authority over the Congo had been ridiculed and rejected. Baudouin, even when confronted directly by the Congolese people, was clearly blinkered regarding the pace of political change and his own influence in the colony. This in a historical sense was the first insult directed at Baudouin by the Congolese people.

Such was the speed of political change in the Congo that by January 1960, just one year after the violent riots in Léopoldville, the song 'Independence Cha Cha' had been written and was being performed by the popular Congolese musician, 'Le Grand Kalle', in the heart of

Brussels. 'Le Grand Kalle', whose real name was Joseph Athanase Tchamala Kabaselleh, was part of the Congolese nationalist group that attended the Round Table Conference in Brussels. This crucial conference between Belgium's political leaders and the Congolese nationalists was the final theatre where the decisive discussions were held that led to the establishment of an independence date for the Congo: 30 June 1960. It was to be a fast transition from colony to independence.

Several of the Africans who took part have stated that they went to Belgium expecting to settle for a five-year transition period leading up to independence. They would have been willing to accept this ... The Congolese negotiators at the Round Table Conference found no resistance against which they could bargain, no strength that would force them to unite. (Oliver & Atmore 2005, p.262)

It is evident from this statement that either the Congolese delegation had massively underestimated the scale of Belgium's collapse or they had failed to recognise the political realignment of Belgium's political aspirations for the territories. After just one month of discussions the conference concluded, and it was Patrice Lumumba who was given the task of writing the closing statement on behalf of the Congolese delegation. The opening comments from the official statement dated 20 February 1960 read,

At this moment when the Round Table Conference is closing down, we beg to be allowed to speak in the name of the Congolese National Movement and to express its thoughts and feelings. We are particularly satisfied with the results of the negotiations which have just been conducted with the representatives of the Belgian Government and Parliament. We demanded the immediate and unconditional independence of our country. We have just won it. (Lumumba 1960)

In his acclaimed book *The Sixties Unplugged: A Kaleidoscopic History of a Disorderly Decade*, Gerard DeGroot informs us that what had in fact occurred was that Belgium was planning a ruse for indirect rule by working with selected Belgium-friendly individuals 'that would give a semblance of self-government yet keep colonial interest intact. In order to increase the likelihood of this scenario, the Belgians intentionally quickened the pace of decolonization, while neglecting to prepare the Congolese for self rule' (DeGroot 2013, p.33).

The Image of Independence

On 29 June 1960, the German photographer Robert Lebeck was in the Belgian Congo along with many journalists to record the historic events through which this vast colony would gain independence. Lebeck later stated in an interview for the film *Boyamba Belgique* that he was ‘just waiting like the others in Léopoldville, waiting for the King to come and the new president.’ While he was waiting in Boulevard Albert,

Robert Lebeck would witness and capture on film a remarkable moment in the decolonisation of the Belgian Congo, a moment that is eternalised in a single frame taken around half past four in the afternoon, as the Belgian King Baudouin I was being driven through Léopoldville / Kinshasa, standing bolt upright next to the future president Kasavubu in a Cadillac convertible, he saluted the Belgian flag. At this very moment a young Congolese man steps from the crowd, steals the sabre of King Baudouin from behind, and runs away – Robert Lebeck eternalizes the incident in a single shot. (Engels, D. & Van Peel, B. (Dir.), 2011)

Robert Lebeck, a self-taught photographer, was aged 31 when he arrived in the Congo. He was working on assignment for one of Germany’s leading editorial magazines, *Kristall*. He travelled from March to June across the continent to photograph its changing states. He had worked in Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Togo, Ghana, Rhodesia and South Africa. His final destination was the Belgian Congo where he planned to photograph the ceremonial handover of the country by the young Belgian King Baudouin I to the newly elected leaders of the country, President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba.

The events that unfolded over the next few months would have a profound impact on both Belgium and the future Republic of Congo. The fight for control of the old colony would reveal the massive ideological fault-lines that ran throughout the Congo, the manipulative covert strategies of Belgium’s desire to hang onto the Congo by indirect rule and, ultimately, the political inadequacies of the United Nations to resolve conflicts in Africa. The struggle for power in the Congo would test and expose the United Nations as an ineffective forum of global diplomacy with regard to post-colonial states caught between old colonial desires and the theatre of Cold War politics. The event on 29 June provided Lebeck with a photographic opportunity that would make him world famous for capturing a unique moment in colonial

history: a moment that represents a profoundly symbolic episode within the visual history of African liberation. (Figs. 26-9)

The Photographs

The photographs examined below are reproduced in *Robert Lebeck Moscow Tokyo Leopoldville*, a three-part publication published by Steidl in 2008. The book's cover image for the Léopoldville section is a photograph taken in Ghana. It is captioned, as are all the photographs, at the rear of the book in a dedicated reference section. The cover photograph shows a well-built European man, wearing sunglasses, loafer-like shoes, long white socks, white shorts and a short-sleeved white open-neck shirt, being carried ashore by four muscular African men through the shallow tide waters in a sedan-like chair. The caption reads: 'Ghana 1960 / Port workers in Accra carrying a captain ashore'. The photograph resonates with a familiar old colonial narrative and it illustrates well the nature of Europe's presence in its post-colonial states.

The book aims to be a 're-encounter' with Lebeck's 1962 exhibition, which was held in Hamburg at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe. The photographs that made Lebeck's reputation are reproduced in the Léopoldville section of the book across 10 pages. The sequence is introduced by a brief white text on an all-black page that simply reads 'Leopoldville 30. JUNI 1960'. This sequence of photographs is marked as being distinctive and special: they are the only photographs in the book that are reproduced on matt black varnished pages creating a separate portfolio presence within the volume.

Lebeck's first photograph from his Léopoldville series is captioned as a 'View through the window of the parliamentary building in Leopoldville. Military escort for the car of President Kasavubu and the King of Belgium. Independence for Congo'. The photograph is essentially divided into three sections by the window frames of the building through which it was taken. Lebeck's position provided an ideal platform from which he could observe the distant crowds and Congolese soldiers lining the wide Boulevard Albert. The sense of occasion is clearly emphasised by the strong military presence. It is the overall sense of spectacle framed in the top section of the photograph that brings the viewers' gaze onto the crowds as they wait for King Baudouin and President Kasavubu to enter the scene. The top third of the photograph, however, is dominated by the rear view of the massive equestrian statue of King Leopold II

that occupied the centre of the boulevard in 1960. This focus allows space for a different narrative to be formed, one that can be read as an inverse to the actual events taking place. The crowds seem to be bearing witness to both the arrival of the new head of state, Kasavubu, but also to the departure of the historic ruler, King Leopold II. The huge lone figure of Leopold riding out of the top of frame with his back turned on the parliamentary building and on the events that are about to unfold marks his influence on the Congo as arrogant and masterly. The flags of both Belgium and the new Republic of Congo that line the boulevard create a setting for a grand passing of Leopold's time. This architectural monument to Leopold II reproduces within the photograph particular 'cultural and political dispositions' with regard to how history continues to be perceived by the Belgians (Connerton 2009, p.34). The statue of Leopold II suggests that his time and influence are not yet quite over. This sense of the Belgians still being very present within this time of political change is emphasised further by the fact that it is the Belgian flag that we see as the most prominent motif of nationalism in the photograph.

The central section of the photograph frames two shining Willys military jeeps, each bearing six seated Congolese soldiers with rifles. A black official car carrying dignitaries is in front of the jeeps. The vehicles have just passed the monument to Leopold II. Three Congolese military motorcycle outriders accompany the jeeps and the car. On the right two soldiers are saluting the vehicles as they pass by, completing the formality of the scene. All of the pomp and ceremony of a European political spectacle is unfolded to mark the day in which Léopoldville appears to be effectively transformed into Brussels.

The lower section of the photograph shows another immaculate Willys jeep. This jeep also carries five Congolese soldiers as well as a white soldier in the front passenger seat. The latter is standing up looking back towards the other vehicles, and is pointing forwards towards the parliamentary building from which the photograph is taken. He appears to be directing the vehicles behind to ensure that they follow his lead. His presence within this part of the photograph can be read as a subtle indicator within the overall scene as to who remains in charge of the military in the Congo. The white soldier's gesture with his head turned away from the camera could be interpreted as a sign to the retreating colossus of Leopold that he too is going in the wrong direction: that the legacy of his presence is not quite yet done and that his retreat at this moment in the history of the Congo is not part of the post-colonial narrative.

In the bottom section of the photograph the heads of the spectators within the parliamentary building are shown in near silhouette. Framed in this manner they appear as dark shadowy figures lurking on the edge of the political proceedings. They signify a strong European presence that at this point in time still maintained the most privileged vantage points.

The next photograph in the sequence shows King Baudouin I and President Kasavubu standing in the back of their black open-top official car. The shot is taken with a wide lens so as to bring into the frame as much visual information as possible from the scene. A Congolese chauffeur, dressed in a bright white military uniform that echoes Baudouin's attire, drives the car. The uniforms create a bizarre sense of union between the two men, the only difference being that Baudouin's is decorated in the paraphernalia afforded by his status. Beside the black driver sits a highly decorated Belgian officer. He wears a more traditional khaki uniform and his medals of honour are clearly visible on his chest. His authoritative gaze is firmly fixed directly back into Lebeck's lens as he rests his right arm informally on the passenger door of the car, testimony to his sense of control and ease within the situation. In the rear of the car Baudouin stands upright and to attention. He faces the right side of the frame across Kasavubu. Baudouin wears a pair of dark glasses, although we can see from the lack of shadows in the photograph that it was not a particularly bright day. Few of the spectators watching the car pass by have elected to wear sunglasses. Kasavubu, dressed in a simple black suit, white shirt and black tie, is clearly enjoying the scene ahead of him. He smiles lightly and holds his right hand up to the crowd as if he is being sworn into power. In the distance and over Baudouin's right shoulder the vast twin towers and statue that make up the monument to King Albert I of Belgium are clearly visible as a central motif in the image. Lebeck once again references the monuments dedicated to Belgium's colonial past and brings them to bear on the transitional scene being presented. The weight of history in this moment is with Baudouin as he becomes, in his white splendour, a living monument to his state's past.

The photograph introduces another critically important figure into the scene: a Congolese man who is running closely beside the state car carrying Baudouin and Kasavubu and directly in front of one of the official motorcycle escorts. The man wears a pair of white trousers, a white shirt, a dark tie and a black jacket. His attire is formal for the occasion. On his jacket is pinned a single medal signifying that he has been decorated for some kind of service by the

state. The running man mirrors Kasavubu's gesture to the crowd. He holds up his left hand as if he too is acknowledging the presence of the spectators or as if he has crossed an imaginary political winning line along with Kasavubu. His presence and his proximity to the open-top state car reflect the relatively lax nature of the scene. Journalists with cameras and audio recording devices are very close by, also chasing the official cavalcade. The pavements are lined with mostly white Belgians; parents can be seen holding their children and enthusiastically waving and cheering at Baudouin as he and Kasavubu pass by.

The next photograph in the sequence suggests that the cars have had to slow down. It shows a few more journalists and photographers running ahead of the official car, jockeying for better positions from which to record the events. The scene photographed by Lebeck is of the rear of the car, which has just passed Lebeck's position. From this point of view we can surmise the possible reason why Baudouin has taken up a more formal stance. His attention appears to be drawn towards two large Belgian flags and a small group of white men dressed in suits applauding the cavalcade. The Congolese man who was previously running beside the car is now walking with his left hand casually resting on it. By physically touching the car he becomes a point of focus within the photograph. It is evident that an encroachment is being made. It is the critical visual moment when he moves from being simply an enthusiastic spectator to being the main protagonist within the overall scene. His presence through his gesture now draws attention away from the main participants, Baudouin and Kasavubu, and it becomes clear that not everything within this formal occasion is quite right. Something in the car has caught the man's attention. His gaze is fixed on the back seat behind the standing dignitaries who appear at this point to have no sense of the man's presence. Across to the left of the frame the still mostly white crowd is happily cheering and waving at the two men. In the bottom right corner a military motorcycle escort rider features prominently and is dutifully close behind the car. The rider must have had to alter his course to avoid Lebeck's position as his photograph appears to have been taken in the immediate slip-stream of the Congolese man. The caption for these two photographs is a shared one and reads, 'Congo / A young Congolese running beside the open Cadillac carrying the King of Belgium in a white General's suit and the black president of the Congo in civil dress. The King's rapier is lying on the back seat.'

The Sword ‘Thief’? An Act in Three Parts Through One Photograph

Part 1. The Introduction

As the majestic Cadillac crawls down the wide boulevard and in a moment of complete defiance the ‘young Congolese’ man snatches from the rear seat of the car the king’s sword. He then turns back with both arms raised, straight towards Lebeck and his anticipating camera. Lebeck, in an equally opportune moment, photographs one of the most spectacular incidents in Congo’s colonial history. In this act of defiance caught on camera, the Congolese man becomes a radical transformative figure across the space and time of the ‘first, second and third world’. He is caught by Lebeck’s photograph between the colonial and post-colonial moment. He then becomes symbolic of ‘both the country as a promised landscape and as a political body, both the ground and the figure of the Leviathan, his arms raised to exercise his sovereign authority with the twin powers of religion and war’ (Mitchell 2012, p.118). The compulsion to grab the king’s sword can be read as an articulation of the colonial subject acting physically against the colonising authority at the moment he recognises his release. The young Congolese man acts as if caught within an impulsive condition of cultural reclamation work in which, for a fleeting time, he is restored back to himself and, by extension, the nation to an imagined freedom. In grabbing the sword this man is declaring, ‘I am a man and I will be seen’, and in stealing the sword directly from the king the man symbolically disarms or strips away the sovereign’s power of authority over the Congo. He reduces the European totemic power imbued within the sword to an object of ridicule that no longer threatens as its authority is diffused in a fleeting and vengeful act of self-empowerment.

Part 2. *Studium* (Roland Barthes)

In discussing the wider narratives and cultural meaning contained within a given photograph, Roland Barthes presented the concept of these readings as the *Studium* within the photograph, that is, the place where the wider meaning and reading of an image may be located by the reader.

It is by *studium* that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally (this connotation is present in *studium*) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the actions. (Barthes 1981, p.26)

The defining aspects at work in Lebeck's photograph are symbolised in the two opposing but distinctive gestures of the thief's left and right hands. His right hand, 'that has fingers that run straight to the soul of man' (Laughton (dir.) 1955), is clutching the stolen ceremonial sword of King Baudouin. It is caught not only in the act of stealing the sword but also in the act of making another and unwittingly symbolic sign of independence, freedom and love: the Black Power salute. The fist as a sign here is even more potent because the black Congolese hand is wrapped around the European king's historic symbol of power. The thief is therefore transformed into an iconic symbol of African liberation. The thief's black right fist is set in total contrast to the brilliant whites of King Baudouin's royal uniform as the fist and the sword visually morph back into the body of the king. The king's salute to the Belgian flags on the left of the frame works as an ideological and polemical counter-narrative to the psychology of the man stealing the sword behind the king's back, as both Kasavubu and Baudouin, oblivious to the incident, focus on their shared political vision ahead. The theft of the sword can also be read as a bad omen for the political development of the newly formed state and for Baudouin, as he will be vulnerable and susceptible to other unofficial insults that await him the next day, insults that will tarnish the future of the new state and open the door for the covert Cold War politics to enter. It is important to note that on the following day, during the independence ceremony, King Baudouin I received a second insult to his family honour. It came from Lumumba who broke the protocol, took the podium and made an uninvited speech. The insult came in the content of Lumumba's speech, which condemned Belgian rule in the Congo. Such was King Baudouin I's anger that he had to be persuaded by his diplomats to stay for the rest of the ceremony. Lumumba's speech sealed his fate, as from this point on his life was under threat. Forty years after his violent death, a 2001 Belgian parliamentary report concluded that King Baudouin I was implicated in Lumumba's demise. Killing Lumumba was necessary because, unlike Kasavubu and Mobutu, Lumumba was not willing to become a political pawn in Belgian plans for the post-independent Congo.

Reading this key photograph from the position of Fanon's wretched ones, and by building a context in which different knowledges can surface out of the past, brings forth a diversity of possible narratives in the present that break with the burdens of tradition when we discuss the representation of African independence. The caption for Lebeck's photograph, which was produced for public consumption in a museum two years after the Congo's independence, reads 'Congo 1960 / Drama on the eve of independence. Baudouin, King of the Belgians and

Colonial ruler of the Congo, and Joseph Kasavubu, the President, travel together on the Boulevard Albert Leopoldville. A young Congolese man steals the King's rapier.' The caption, like the photograph, attempts to fix everything in a moment of absolute representational fact. This encourages the photograph to be read as a document displaying actual events, not what had previously been hidden and politically suppressed when the photograph was first shown in Hamburg. The sword thief image now performs a different function beyond the narrative of the day. The position of the sword can be interpreted as visually and metaphorically cutting the torso of the king in half and at the same time puncturing the body of the newly elected president, Joseph Kasavubu, thus suturing the conservative Kasavubu to his old colonial masters forever. Simultaneously, as we look into the refracted reflection of the thief holding the ceremonial sword in the convex curves of the state car, the sword seems to be aimed at the compliant head of Kasavubu as he bows to the white crowds and the two Belgian flags being held high above him. In this pose, Kasavubu enters the dock of history charged with being a political puppet. Lebeck's photograph opens a historical visual trial in which all those present could be accused of delivering a false dawn of new freedoms. The expression on the Congolese man's face as he grabs the sword is one of pained anxiety. This is not a jubilant moment for him. As he looks back down Boulevard Albert he sees the colonial/neo-colonial transformation crystallising in front of him in the form of the Congolese army soldiers still being commanded by the white Belgian officers that are about to arrest him.

Part 3. The *Punctum* (Roland Barthes)

In discussing the elements within a photograph that pull him in to a specific detail within it, Barthes states that 'A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me is poignant to me)' (Barthes 1981, p.27). Part of the turbulence that emanates from this photograph and causes its heightened sense of dis-ease is generated by the thief's empty left hand, 'the hand of hate' (Laughton (dir.) 1955), which he holds up to his face as if defending himself against the immediate forthcoming events. In this moment the man appears to be in full acknowledgement of the futile nature of his rebellious act and by holding both his hands in the air seems to be surrendering. His left hand is open in a passive gesture, as if some delicate object has just been touched or dropped. His hand appears to be caressing the air of the day and pulling at the fog of politics. It also recalls a violent episode in the Congo's history, discussed earlier in Chapter 1, in which King Leopold II's agents terrorised, mutilated and killed the Congolese people who failed to meet designated quotas for

harvesting rubber. His agents collected the severed hands of their victims as evidence of the punishment meted out. The hand reaching out towards the viewer signposts us back to the time of Belgium's most violent past, a past that has to be reconciled even within this vital moment of Congo's independence. This is the violent past that Patrice Lumumba refused to put to rest and of which he would defiantly remind the Belgians during the official independence ceremonies the following day. This was considered an insult to the Belgians: an act of political defiance that would ultimately help seal Lumumba's fate and lead to his own execution within a few months.

The next three photographs are captioned 'Congo 1960 / The rapier thief did not have a chance. Belgian and local soldiers catch him a short time later at the monument to King Albert of Belgium, snatch the rapier from him and lead him away, a gun at his chin.' On a left-hand page, two of the photographs are presented in half-page landscape format; on the opposite page the third is included in a full-page portrait format. In the first of the landscape photographs the thief holds the sheath of the sword in his left hand and the drawn sword upright in his right hand. His focus is on the soldiers who are now beginning to close in on him. His expression and his force of movement forward suggest that the encircling soldiers do not intimidate him. His gesture is a direct challenge to the soldiers who now hold their rifles with a different sense of purpose: they are lowered for deployment rather than shouldered for ceremony. The soldiers that confront the thief are different from those who line the route taken by the King and Kasavubu. While their uniforms are adorned with the same white trimmings as seen on the soldiers riding in the jeeps that form part of the official cavalcade, their armbands carry the bold letters 'PM' suggesting they are in the service of the military police. To the left of the frame a white Belgian soldier advances on the thief. The surrounded thief has held up the rest of the cars in the procession. The inevitable confrontation takes place in full view of the crowd that has gathered on the King Albert monument steps. The elevated statue surveys the spectacle before him.

The subsequent photograph begins a sequence in which the sword is taken from the man and he is arrested. The same white Belgian soldier mentioned is the main protagonist in the photograph: he disarms the man and is supported by a Congolese 'PM' soldier. The thief's expression is pained as the sword is twisted out of his grasp. The ceremonial sword is in fact a blunt instrument of power. If it had been sharp, the three struggling men, with their hands on the blade, would have been wounded badly. The sword is purely symbolic, rather than a

usable weapon, and therefore the man is not a dangerous threat. In his hands the sword is powerless. Behind the man two more Congolese soldiers are present, one of whom appears to be attacking the man. As he recoils backwards we cannot see what this soldier is doing to him. This soldier's action is obscured from view and his presence suggests a more covert disarming of those that dissent against this authoritative body. The triangulation of violence against the thief renders his act of liberation hopeless: the old colonial forces close in on him, and the sword and its symbolic significance are restored.

The next photograph in the sequence shows the thief facing Lebeck's camera and being frog-marched by a group of soldiers. One soldier holds a pistol to the left-hand side of the thief's face while simultaneously holding the waistband of his trousers. Other soldiers grip his wrists and shoulders, pushing and pulling him towards the camera. The thief's hands, although gripped at the wrists, are raised in clenched fists, signalling his defiant political body. His expression belies the chaos of the scene. His direct gaze toward the camera offers the viewer a mocking smile of mild indignation. In contrast, the expressions on the soldiers' faces build the sense of urgency portrayed within the image. One face, however, stands out within the frame: the out-of-focus Belgian soldier in the centre of the top third of the photograph generates a feeling of manipulative menace. The photographer catches the Belgian soldier's distant gaze directly from over the shoulders of the arrested thief and of one of the soldiers active in the arrest. The Belgian soldier's ghostly face stares into Lebeck's lens asserting his historical sense of privilege over the frenzied scene.

The last four photographs all appear as single images on the page and the sequence shows the thief still in defiant mood. His sense of protest and capacity to resist arrest continue to require the attention of a group of soldiers. He is held from the back by the collar of his jacket by one Congolese soldier and from his front his arms are restrained by two Congolese soldiers holding his left arm and one white soldier holding his right. Within the following frame the thief is completely surrounded by soldiers once again. His arms are now raised as if pleading his case to a white soldier who stands directly in his path. From behind him another white soldier is attempting to grab his right hand to bring him under control once more. The thief is confronted from both the rear and the front by white Belgians; it is they who are engaging directly with him. On the left a Congolese soldier with his pistol drawn is raising the thief's jacket as if searching for anything concealed by him. On the right a Congolese soldier looks at the thief with an inquisitive gaze, giving the impression that for a brief moment he

identifies with his remonstrations. The rest of the Congolese soldiers appear to await instructions. Only one soldier, on the far right, seems to be aware of Lebeck's position as he watches him take the photograph. Lebeck must have had to climb onto something close by to elevate his position so that the viewer of the image looks down on the overall scene. The height from which the photograph was taken and the use of a wide-angle lens add to the sense of claustrophobia within the photograph. Looking down on the man creates visually his sense of decline.

The final two photographs in the series show the man being pushed into and taken away in the back of one of the official jeeps. The penultimate shot captures the thief in mid-air as soldiers throw him into the vehicle. To complete the scene we see that a senior flat-capped white Belgian officer has appeared to oversee matters. He stands, legs apart, with his arms braced behind his back. His own ceremonial sword hangs mockingly down his left-hand side registering for the viewer that colonial order has now been restored. On the left a ceremonial band provides an almost comical finale to the episode. In the final image the soldiers are back in their positions in the Willys jeep. Four soldiers sit in the back of the vehicle. We can see from the thief's raised hands that he has been handcuffed. He lies flat on his back between the four soldiers on the floor of the jeep, out of view of the crowds who line the streets. His hands are shown in an open gesture and the two soldiers' faces that we can see look down on him. The thief's dialogue with the soldiers is clearly not finished. Although handcuffed and lying down he appears to be having the final word, even in captivity. The caption for these last four images is again shared and reads 'Congo 1960 / The soldiers get a robust grip on the young rapier thief, push him into a jeep and put hand cuffs on him. Next Stop: Jail.' Looking back in time across Lebeck's photographs taken on 29 June 1960 and through this unique sequence that follows the sword thief, what emerges is a sense that they work as allegorical signs pointing towards the immediate future and the problematic politics of the emergent Congo state: a state that is not being transformed into a condition of full independence, as perceived by Lumumba and the people of the Congo, but as one that is, in reality, moving from one condition of oppression to another in which the absolute power of neo-colonialism will prevail.

The narrative within the images of the sword thief – the process of quickly snatching power (like seizing the sword), momentarily enjoying wielding it in direct confrontation with the old colonial forces (the soldiers, Congolese and Belgians) whose real presence in the colony is

undisturbed and unyielding, then finally losing it (being physically overwhelmed) under the pressure and influence of Belgium's dark forces, and the final arrest – was echoed just a few months later when Lumumba was captured and returned to Léopoldville under the watchful eye of General Mobutu. Lumumba was tied up and thrown into the back of a military truck and driven off to jail. But before this last act of public humiliation and revenge orchestrated by the Belgians and Mobutu, the soldiers guarding Lumumba in the truck attempted to force him to literally eat the paper on which his speech was written, the speech in which he reinstated his claim to be the Congo's rightful premier. This scene, like the final scene of the sword thief, was the last time Lumumba was seen in public.

The sword thief was later discovered to be Ambroise Boimbo. He was a Congolese patriot who stole the sword belonging to King Baudouin I of Belgium on 29 June 1960 in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) on the eve of the independence of the Belgian Congo. Boimbo died in 1989 and remained in anonymity until, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of independence, a team of Belgian journalists discovered his identity and found his grave. LeBeck later stated that, 'the rapier thief is until today my most frequently printed picture and my identity picture, almost like a trademark.' (LeBeck n.d.)

Chapter 5: Wayne Miller – ‘Black Metropolis’

‘To think of humans as freedom loving, you must be ready to view nearly all of history as a mistake.’ (Gray 2013, p.57)

In Sean O’Hagan’s obituary for Wayne Miller, which he wrote for the *Guardian* in May 2013, we are informed that, ‘through his first-hand experience of the horrors of war, Miller came to see photography as a medium that could effect social and political change.’ The obituary goes on to describe Miller’s experiences of World War II, quoting him as saying,

We didn’t know the people we were fighting. They didn’t know us ... maybe if we knew each other better, the war would be a different kind of a war ... there would be less carnage. I thought that after the war, if I could get involved in some kind of a project that was related to that thinking, it would be my way as a photographer of participating in maybe slowing down the next war. (O’Hagan 2013)

The quote above from Miller used by O’Hagan is taken from an eight-minute film about his life, which borrows its title from Miller’s 1958 book *The World is Young*. The film was made in 2009 by a young San Francisco-based documentary film-maker named Theo Rigby (Rigby (Dir.) 2009). From such reflective comments made by Miller towards the end of his life we can infer that, for him, World War II had failed in much the same way as World War I had failed, in being a war that would supposedly end all wars (Wells 1914). It is evident in his comments that Miller was completing his career as a war photographer pessimistically: ‘I could have attended the surrender ceremonies, but I didn’t. I was just tired of it all’ (Light & Tremain 2010, p.47). However, when he left the navy in 1945, there was a growing political desire among many nations to create an international forum that would seek to protect the world from future wars and protect individual lives. That year marked the end of the old pre-war League of Nations and outdated conventions on war and saw the emergence of the United Nations, which theoretically had at its core an inclusive, rights-based, universal approach to humanity and humanitarian matters. The formation of the United Nations was based on the concept of a renewed focus on the protection of civilians and the making of new conventions as a direct response to the suffering of civilians during World War II (Oberleitner 2015, p.49). Miller was charged with a real sense of humanitarian responsibility

and felt that with the aid of his camera he would endeavour to make the world a more humane place.

At this point in Miller's thought process the idea of working on a photography project in the heart of America's black metropolis, Chicago, had clearly not yet been fully formed in his mind. He was mainly a self-taught photographer fresh from art school when he enlisted in the navy in 1942, where he spent four years photographing American servicemen under the direction of Edward Steichen who was in charge of the Naval Aviation Photographic Unit.

The tragedies of war clearly impacted on Miller: he was one of the few photographers that had directly 'witnessed and recorded the horror and immediate aftermath of Hiroshima', an experience that he would later refer to as, 'the ultimate denial of sanity' (Miller 2000, p.13). Working in Hiroshima just two weeks after the atomic bomb had been dropped signalled for Miller that the world had gone mad. At Hiroshima he photographed the epicentre of the bomb blast and the plight of people suffering from radiation burns who were being treated in the most basic of conditions. The burned Japanese subjects of his photographs – the emaciated dejected women, children and men – are portrayed looking forlorn, covered with flies. Observing these people today, they bear the familiar characteristics of the refugee caught by the documentary photographer's lens, but in this case they did not get the chance to flee the scene of disaster. In his large-format retrospective monographic book titled *Wayne F. Miller: Photographs 1942–1958*, published in 2008, these images show the subjects against a backdrop of deep black tones that create around them a *mise-en-scène* of utter dejection. One of the photographs is of a small group of Japanese men and women at prayer. They are shown as a people literally emerging from the dark, on their knees, waiting for salvation, as if in this moment they have been abandoned by their god. With a high degree of empathy not usually expressed for enemy combatants, one of these dark photographs shows a Japanese child lying down while being treated for a serious head wound. He is being attended by two Japanese women. One of the women can be identified as nurse because of the Red Cross armband she is wearing; the other, due to the intimate exchange of looks between the boy and the woman, is probably his mother. The child looks helplessly up at his mother who appears dramatically out of the dark, her face turned down towards the tragic sight of the injured child. The radiance of light around her face frames her as sign of hope for the young child. On the face of the nurse in the foreground of the image we can just glimpse the sign of a smile as she leans to dress the child's wounded head with a clean bandage. The scene Miller

has photographed is a stark reminder to his audience of the cost to innocent civilian life of the dropping of the bomb. The caption for the image simply reads 'Victims of the atomic blast in primitive conditions for radiation burns and shock Kangyo Ginko Bank'. (Fig. 30)

Miller also photographed Japanese soldiers on their way to being demobilised. The focus of his attention for this sequence appears to be the hopelessness and intimacy of a defeated people. For example, the soldiers are shown gently lighting each other's cigarettes as if leaning forward to exchange an intimate kiss, the tips of their cigarettes as they touch becoming an extension of their lips. Other soldiers waiting for a train to depart lean out of the carriage windows and gaze into Miller's camera in a shy, childlike, inquisitive manner. The men appear simultaneously young and old, as if war, not time, has aged them. It is an image in which everyone is a loser, both the observer and the observed. The soldiers are clearly a spent force and Miller, who is sickened by his experiences as an observer, cannot bring himself to take a photograph that demonises those who are now directly facing him. It is as if, even when photographing the Japanese soldiers, Miller remembers his early instruction from Edward Steichen, which was to photograph the 'little guys' (Light & Tremain 2010, p.46). Miller continued to photograph the 'little guys' but these 'little guys' are not the non-commissioned sailors that Steichen imagined; they are the defeated Japanese infantrymen. The final image published from this section of photographs is a bombed-out barren cityscape. Its caption reads 'Destruction caused by atomic bomb blast'. It shows the remains of a burnt tree and the ruins of a church-like building. Here Miller creates a scene in which both nature and religion are dead and evokes the presence of something distinctively evil and unnatural. (Figs. 31 and 32)

Miller's photographs in Hiroshima are melancholic, detailed, quiet studies of the effects of war rather than grand or dramatic documentary moments. They attempt to relay the scale of personal experiences of the individuals who were exposed when the new atomic weapon was detonated. These images then are not 'decisive moments'; they amount to a series of unexpected intimate exchanges across the lines of conflict. For those steeped in the documentary tradition such as Kerry Tremain, the principal author of Miller's book, Miller's work in Hiroshima fails to satisfy a need to see more details of the horror than was possibly available for him to photograph. Tremain states that, 'Indeed, his photographs, some of the first taken after the bomb, can feel unsatisfying, unequal to writer John Hersey's searing descriptions of extreme suffering or to the moral significance of the new weapon' (Miller &

Daiter 2008, p.12). Hersey's essay on Hiroshima was first published in *The New Yorker* magazine in 1946. He described in graphic detail the injuries to some of the survivors of the bomb. He cleverly employed a fiction style to write up his journalistic accounts of the victims. We can see from the following quotation that Hersey wants to bring his reader as close as possible to understanding the experience of surviving an atomic bomb blast and its actual impact on an enemy body:

He saw a uniform. Thinking there was just one soldier, he approached with the water. When he had penetrated the bushes, he saw there were about twenty men, and they were all in exactly the same nightmarish state: their faces were wholly burned, their eye-sockets were hollow, the fluid from their melted eyes had run down their cheeks. (They must have had their faces upturned when the bomb went off; perhaps they were anti-aircraft personnel.) Their mouths were mere swollen, pus-covered wounds, which they could not bear to stretch enough to admit the spout of the teapot. (Hersey 1946)

The edition of *The New Yorker* that included Hersey's text sold out in days and his essay was quickly published as a book. It became a best-seller and is now recognised as a landmark piece of writing on the horror of nuclear war (Green 1946). It also represented at its time of publication a clear indication of the scale of the American appetite to get closer to what happened at Hiroshima in the previous year. Miller, in contrast to Hersey, decided on a less forensic or anatomical approach to narrating the aftermath of the bomb. Hersey's work appears to emulate the concept of 'invasion'. Taking the stories of the individuals he worked with, his main task seems to be to prolong the enemies suffering for the entertainment of readers at home, an approach that dangerously slides into a form of pornographic detail that obliterates any potential for human empathy (Scarry 1985, p.65) as we focus on the injuries rather than the wider political causes of the individuals' condition.

In Miller's work at Hiroshima he appeared to be looking for a shared symbolic order out of the chaos that could possibly be recognised by all beyond the scene of conflict. While in Japan, he resisted the temptation to fuel the public imagination by bringing into view a narrative of the pure physical horror created by the atomic blast. He did not, however, avoid the violence that he encountered; maybe he worked around it because, as stated above, he was 'tired of it all'. We know the violence is there within Miller's Hiroshima photographs. However, the critical question that they invite is, how much of the results of the dropping of

the atomic bomb on the actual people do we need to see, or indeed imagine, to understand its devastating nature? It is worth considering, then, that culturally and politically within conventional Western thought 'Hiroshima' by Hersey might work best as a semi-fictional narrative because photographs may not have the capacity to fully satisfy the imagination relating to such a significant global event. The work that Miller's photographs perform as an after-image of the event could be read as disappointingly real rather than the anticipated spectacular violence they could have portrayed. This may answer the question as to why Hersey's work on Hiroshima was so immediately popular with American audiences: he clearly filled a cultural gap in the articulation of violence.

Miller's photographs were produced in a single day and by all accounts he had no idea of what he was actually walking into. He had been taking empathetic photographs of Americans at war for years but one day at Hiroshima may have shocked him beyond belief, when he encountered 'the ultimate denial of sanity' (Light 2010, p.47); however, the way in which he took photographs was not altered by his experience. His primary focus, even at Hiroshima, was to record the more human moments. Even here, right in the face of his enemy, there is a sense of responsibility at work within the photographs he chose to take. He manages to bridge a gap in the depiction of the 'enemy'; it is hard within his work to locate the menace of the racist fears of Asian expansionism historically constructed as the 'yellow peril'. First and foremost he sees the Japanese as people, and secondly as victims of circumstances now beyond their individual control.

For Miller, Hiroshima did not stand out from the carnage he had seen elsewhere; it merely consolidated 'his hard-won humanist convictions' (Miller & Daiter 2008 p.12). His state of mind as the war was coming to an end was not one of victorious celebration. As he stated, he was not interested in documenting the Japanese surrender, nor was he deluded by a sense of national pride in being part of the Allied forces' victory in the theatre of the South Pacific. Miller was already reflecting, while still on board his racially segregated US navy aircraft carrier, on how to use his camera to construct a photographic project that would bring people closer together. The theory that photographs could in the future make a difference to global human understanding was formed in his mind out of the chaos of war. Like the celebrated British photographer George Rodger, Miller would never photograph war again after seeing so much devastation. Through the experience of witnessing such violence, he became critically concerned with mediating and defusing aggressive intolerance across human

understanding, and his family in later life would become the primary focus for his photographic work. For Miller, it was the degree of cultural distance along with ignorance and a lack of empathy towards those we do not understand that ultimately resulted in violence and war. It may well be logical to assume that his presence on board a racially divided ship and his daily close proximity to those Others, in this case black American Negroes, whom he did not understand, caused within him a profound sense of unease about his own place and privileges in the world.

Miller acknowledged at the end of the war that it was the dividing fault-lines across different human conditions that produced the critical factors that made violence possible locally and globally. On speaking about his photographing of the aftermath of Hiroshima he exclaimed, 'Christ almighty! I just spent four years with them as the enemy and then it was like changing a channel'. (Miller & Daiter 2008, p.251) It was at this critical juncture in Miller's experience of the war and through his close proximity to the 'enemy' at Hiroshima that he was able to expose the dominant frames through which he had been conditioned to assume of Japanese alterity, and to recognise the shared humanity of the Japanese people whom he directly encountered. Once the channels had been changed in Miller's mind, he appeared to find it difficult to see the enemy in his subjects. His reference to 'changing a channel' identifies for us that he had reconfigured his point of view when considering how the Japanese were to be framed. Radically then, his photographs of the Japanese soldiers are images of 'brotherhood, not only between the soldiers but also with the viewer' (Miller & Daiter 2008, p.12).

Miller's war helped him to identify how his future photographic work might evolve. By the end of the conflict in 1945, he understood that how we see each other has a profound impact on how we relate to each other, and came to recognise the role photography could play in lifting the veil of race. In portraying the Japanese in a way that brings us closer to their plight, he built a dialogue with his audience that produced a counter-narrative to the war's propaganda machine against the Japanese. Miller's photographs render the subject not as deserving victims or tragic losers of the war, but are an attempt to bring a distant and demonised enemy closer to his American audience. His tender photograph of a man having his hair cut outside by a young Japanese woman amid the ruins of Tokyo is a testament to his desire to build an image of the Japanese beyond the conflict and the old 'yellow peril' (Dower 1986, p.176) stereotypes. The photograph resonates with a sense of dignity for both the man and the woman. She is dressed in traditional Japanese clothes as she attentively cuts

the seated man's hair from behind him. The man sits covered in a white robe, which protects him from the cut hair that is falling from his head. His eyes are closed and his pose seems reflective as if he refusing to acknowledge the ruins around him. This relatively simple act photographed in the midst of all the surrounding devastation becomes readable as a small resilient moment that records a man's desire to preserve his dignity and to pursue life's routine acts of existence. Miller's work in Japan indicates well his self-designated Herculean task at the end of the war, which was to begin to roll back the forms of visual 'opacity that prevents peoples from seeing and understanding each other' (Mitchell 2012, p.89). (Fig. 33)

Miller's future as a photographer was not only shaped by his historical relationship with the influential Edward Steichen; it was also profoundly altered through his encounters with his fellow servicemen. It was with the servicemen that he had a transformative exchange near the end of the war that helped mould the course of his thoughts. Miller recalled a key moment on board his ship:

One evening toward the end of the war I drifted out on deck and joined a group of my shipmates. We swapped jokes and gossip for a while, but then our mood shifted, and we began to discuss the blind futility of war. Many of us felt we were fighting in the dark, by instinct, against enemies we didn't know and who didn't know us. Guns and bombs might win the war, but ignorance and suspicion would surely lose the peace. Only through awareness and understanding, we agreed, could foes ever become friends and friends become neighbours. I never forgot that conversation. It convinced me that after the war, with a camera, I might be able to document the things that make this human race of ours a family. We may differ in race, color, language, wealth, and politics. But look at what we all have in common – dreams, laughter, tears, pride, the comfort of home, the hunger for love. If I could photograph these universal truths, I thought that might help us better understand the strangers on the other side of the world – and on the other side of town. (Miller 2000, p.13)

After World War II, Miller had set himself the utopian task of photographing the 'universal truths' that for him and his mentor Steichen bind mankind together. In this mode of thought, Miller would a few years later prove to be a willing and able assistant to Steichen as the latter worked on his landmark and much-celebrated (Mauro 2014) 1955 photography exhibition, *The Family of Man*, for the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Going Home

After completing his embedded service with the Naval Aviation Photographic Unit, which was commanded by Edward Steichen, Miller returned home with his wife and two children to the city in which he grew up, with the intention of photographing Chicago's South Side African American communities. He wanted to work where his photographs would make a difference and he chose Chicago, his hometown, as the place in which to exercise his humanitarian photographic vision, a vision that was aimed at opening up new perspectives and dialogues relating to race relations in America. For Miller, the global conflicts of World War II and his humanitarian acts of making photography had now shifted focus and become a local concern mediated through the prism of race. The project was an attempt to understand the black strangers on the other side of town and may well have been influenced by his experience on the aircraft carrier. We are informed by Mark D. Faram, author of *Faces of War. The Untold Story of Edward Steichen's WWII Photographers*, via a short film made by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC in 2009, that at the 'end of the war he [Wayne Miller] had such a touch with people that he was allowed access into a lot of the segregated parts of the ship by the people in those areas' (Wolly & Burke n.d.). The aircraft carrier that Miller worked on was clearly a microcosm of life back home: a racially segregated space fighting a foreign enemy.

The black strangers encountered by Miller both when he was growing up in Chicago and while he served in the navy had obviously been close to him physically but distant culturally. Miller's parents still lived on the North Side of Chicago and his mother did not approve of his new photographic project. Angering him over a family dinner she asked, 'so do you want Jeanette [his daughter] to marry a negro?' (Miller & Daiter 2008, p.13) Such was his mother's racism that she feared his project would somehow influence her young granddaughter to break America's greatest social taboo, which was to marry across the colour line.

Having been born in 1918, Miller grew up in a Chicago that was infected by and hung over with racist violence. The summer of 1919 in America became known as the Red Summer, due to the number of race riots in major cities that year. As a young white woman in Chicago, Miller's mother would have had direct experience of the riots, the most violent of which occurred in Chicago, Washington, DC, and Elaine, Arkansas. The riots represent a landmark

moment in American racial history and are recognised as being the first time that blacks fought back against white violence in any significant numbers and across different cities. One of the key reasons identified by white Americans for this change in black American attitudes, that is, having the audacity to fight back against white aggression and oppression, was that during World War I the French had ‘put ideas of equality in African American [soldiers’] heads’ (McWhirter 2011, p.71). The 1919 riots in Chicago shook all of America: they ‘showed ... that large-scale white violence would be met by large-scale black violence. [It signalled profoundly] that black Americans had no intention of abandoning their place [within the heartland of] industrial America’ (McWhirter 2011, p.148). Miller’s mother’s racist attitudes over a family dinner are a poignant reminder of the depth of fear and prejudice that existed within Chicago’s North Side white community. It was against this historical context of deep-seated racism and hostility that Miller began his photographic work within the city’s black South Side community.

Strangers on the Other Side

Chicago was a culturally contested city even before mass black migration north occurred, but from the early to the mid twentieth century the city was dramatically transformed epidermally and became known across America as the ‘black capital of the Midwest’ (McWhirter 2011, p.15). Historically, white immigrants had ‘thronged to the city from all parts of Europe for decades. Irish, Swedes, Germans, Italians, Russians, Jews, Poles, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Greeks, Bohemians, and others transformed Chicago into a network of cramped insular neighbourhoods set apart by language and religion’ (McWhirter 2011, p.115). The continuous flow of southern black Americans in vast numbers to Chicago during this period was seen by many of the city’s white communities as a major threat. The potential for social problems caused by black mass migration, especially in relation to the competition for housing and jobs, had prompted the *Chicago Tribune* as early as 1917 to state in an editorial that ‘a new problem, demanding early solution, is facing Chicago ... the sudden and unprecedented influx of southern Negro Laborers’ (McWhirter 2011, p.118).

The tense racialised urban space that Chicago represented in 1917 still existed in 1945. Towards the end of World War II it remained a racially segregated and intolerant city. The harsh reality was that since the turn of the twentieth century very little had changed culturally, politically and economically for black Americans with regard to their overall social wellbeing. The number of black people moving northwards increased dramatically

before, during and after both World War I and World War II, partly because northern industries solicited the cheap labour that the black workers from the south offered, and partly because, as a non-unionised workforce, these new arrivals were easy to exploit. The issue of black workers operating outside the unions was a major contributory factor in the ongoing conflict between black and white workforces across the industrial north of America.

Between 1940 and 1944, 60,000 new Negro migrants arrived in the Mid-West Metropolis. There were plenty of jobs, but already troublesome problems of inadequate housing, congestion and inferior recreational facilities, and overcrowded schools in the Black Belt were aggravated by the influx. Half-forgotten memories of the Great Migration and the race riot [of 1919] were revived among both Negroes and whites. The Negro was once more becoming a ‘problem’ and racial conflict seemed to loom in the offing. (Drake & Cayton 1945, p.91)

Black urban workforces were particularly vulnerable in 1945, at a time when white soldiers were returning home and demanding employment. The National Urban League had predicted ‘that 400,000 Negro war workers would lose jobs between V-E Day and V-J Day ... this spectre of widespread unemployment and poverty hovered over the community and exacerbated the housing and health care issues laying siege to the African American ... this was a national phenomenon’ (Anderson 2003, p.66). The dire condition of the African Americans prompted a major detailed academic study of black life in Chicago. This groundbreaking work published in 1945 was entitled *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* and was written by two leading African American scholars, St Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton. Cayton would go on to play a significant role in helping Miller obtain access to and an understanding of Chicago’s South Side. Miller later stated that,

I had good luck from the start. Guided by some angel, one of my early stops was at the Parkway Community House. It was a gold mine. Horace Cayton the director, and co author with St Clair Drake of the sociological study *Black Metropolis*, knew everyone and, without question, was most generous in sharing his immense knowledge and contacts with me (Miller 2000, p.13).

It is clear, then, that without the work and generosity of Cayton and Drake, Miller’s project may well not have got off the ground and the angels he mentions were in fact these

remarkable black academics to whom Miller through some providential force was guided. Miller's 'gold mine' was the discovery of their key sociological work. In the acknowledgements that accompany his book *Chicago's South Side 1946–1948*, published in 2000, Miller states that without Cayton he could not have taken the photographs. One could therefore argue that his project represents a collaborative dialogue that was facilitated by the authors of *Black Metropolis*. This remarkable academic study was the key that opened the door for Miller's project.

Importantly, Drake and Cayton's book contained an insightful foreword by the author Richard Wright. Wright's text is politically melancholic and damning concerning the progress and quality of black life in Chicago, and by extension across America, as he describes the unbearable ennui of the black American experience. This was a position he would reaffirm a few years later in an article for *Ebony* magazine, in which his own critical account of the city was linked with Miller's photographs to dramatic effect.

In his foreword Wright draws on the philosophy of William James to articulate the idea of what a 'man would feel if he were completely socially excluded'. He goes on to quote James: 'No more fiendish punishment could be devised were such a thing physically possible' (Wright 1945, p.32). Wright continues his theory of how damaging complete social racial exclusion can be claiming that,

the American Negro has come as near to being the victim of a complete rejection as our society has been able to work out, for the dehumanized image of the Negro which white Americans carry in their minds, the anti Negro epithets continuously on their lips, exclude the contemporary Negro as truly as though he were kept in a steel prison and doom even those Negroes who are as yet unborn (Wright 1945, p.33).

This text by Wright may well have gone on to influence his friend and fellow writer Ralph Ellison, who began working on his seminal book, *Invisible Man*, in 1945. The critically acclaimed novel was finally published in 1952 and was constructed from the same theoretical premise concerning the condition of cultural violence on blacks made invisible within white American society.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, how to make black life more visible was a key and critical point of concern for black writers and photographers alike. *Ebony* used Miller's photographs in December 1951 to illustrate an essay that they had previously commissioned from Richard Wright in September 1950, entitled 'The shame of Chicago'. The editors strongly disagreed with Wright's perspective on the development of black people in the city. His text highlighted the 'bleak façades of the slum hovels' that stretch 'endlessly across the South Side' (Ward & Butler 2008, p.348). For Wright, by the end of the 1940s there had been no improvement in the quality of life for black people in Chicago since he had left the city in 1937. Miller's photographs accompanied Wright's sombre textual analysis of Chicago as a city that never 'became the promised land, the longed for Mecca which Wright so eagerly sought when he left the South[Mississippi]and headed North [to Chicago] in search of freedom in 1927' (Ward & Butler 2008, p.348). Even though the editors strongly disagreed with Wright, they published his text, and it was on the pages of *Ebony* that Miller's photographs of the South Side entered the public realm for the first time, surrounded by a damning critique of the city. They successfully illustrated and supported Wright's condemnatory text on the place of race in the city. Wright's grim view led to a permanent falling out between himself and the owners of *Ebony*. He would never work for the magazine again and Miller's photographs of Chicago appear to have been set aside, apart from only two images that were selected for inclusion in Steichen's 1955 exhibition, *The Family of Man*. Surprisingly, as a body of work Miller's photographs from Chicago were not seen for another 50 years. The photographs being linked to Wright's text may well have had an adverse effect on any future reception of Miller's project. Through Wright's words Miller's work became an indictment of the city's racial problems rather than the celebration of black humanity that he had intended.

The intensity of violence and injustice against African Americans immediately after World War II was not just articulated by black academics, creative writers, photographers and white humanitarians. Such was the dire state of the black subject across America that, by 1946, due to the increase in the number of lynchings, murders and vicious attacks on black war veterans and their families in particular, President Truman had to admit, 'that he was deeply troubled' that, 'in this country' there was 'disturbing evidence of intolerance and prejudice, similar in kind, though perhaps not in degree' to that of the Nazis. He lamented that the 'better world we fought for' was not here yet (Anderson 2003, p.68). Founded in 1945, *Ebony's* primary focus was on the lives of black celebrities and America's upwardly mobile black middle

class. The magazine's denial of the vulnerability of African Americans highlighted by Richard Wright was politically out of step even with President Truman's concerns. Miller was drawn to commenting on this sense of outrage within the South Side community when black war veterans were specifically targeted for lynching. One of his photographs from the project is captioned 'Anti-lynching demonstration'. It portrays a warm evening in which a young bare-chested black boy aged around 10 years old is seen on the edge of a crowd holding a placard in the air that states, 'Negro Vets Dared Vote They Were Lynched'. By focusing on the young child demonstrating against the lynchings, Miller delivers a critical message about the serious nature of the community's consternation surrounding the issues of rights and violence.

The Photographs

Once resettled in Chicago Miller, with the financial support of two successive Guggenheim Fellowships in 1946 and in 1948, was able to spend extended periods developing relationships with and photographing Chicago's African American communities. Miller's project for his Guggenheim Fellowships was formally titled 'The Way of Life of the Northern Negro', which clearly drew from St Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton's book *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. The specific use of the word 'Northern' in Miller's title helped to define the parameters of his photography culturally and politically. It also signified an important characteristic in Miller's approach to the project: he, like Drake and Cayton, recognised that in 1946 black Americans living in the north were distinctly different and no longer could these people who had established themselves in Chicago be framed as being culturally from elsewhere, transient Others, from a generic southern American alien space. They were not migrants but individuals within a settled, permanent community that was now fundamentally ingrained in large numbers within the social fabric of Chicago and other northern cities. Blacks in Chicago had contributed fully through the workplace to the industrial success of the city. The riots of 1919 played an important part in anchoring the black presence in the north: 'Anchorage in a space is an economic-political form which needs to be studied in detail' (Foucault & Gordon 1980, p.149). Miller's use of the term 'Northern' effectively closed the gap in relation to the hierarchy of migratory claims over Chicago and demanded parity for the black presence within the city's migrant story.

Miller's photographic intentions in 1946 echoed the historical photography work commissioned by W.E.B. Du Bois in 1900 for his 'American Negro' project, which won a gold medal at the 1900 Paris Exposition. Du Bois organised over 350 images into albums entitled the 'Types of American Negroes, Georgia, U.S.A. and Negro Life in Georgia, U.S.A.'. The central idea behind his project was to visually unlock the American Negro from the burden of scientific racism that dominated perceptions of black people as being inferior human subjects at this time. There is a correlation between Miller's and Du Bois' projects in the intention to use photography as a tool to disrupt ingrained cultural hostilities towards black Americans. This moment of international acclaim for Du Bois at the Paris Exposition acted as a significant cultural and visual indicator that announced the possibility of France being a place where black Americans might receive the recognition that they sought and which was absent from America. Such recognition was critical psychologically to their sense of human worth. As the French Revolution proved, liberty, equality and fraternity are infectious political ideals when used to mobilise the disenfranchised. This was acknowledged by white American racists, after World War I, when black Americans arrived back home from fighting in France with a new sense of their rightful place in the world, and lynching was also aggressively employed to re-establish the old racial order. Richard Wright also used his experience of being in Paris from 1946 onwards as a cultural barometer of how backward America was as a place in which to live and work as a black person. His essay that was commissioned in 1949 by *Ebony* about his experience of Paris was entitled 'I choose exile', and was part of a trilogy of commissioned texts that included 'The shame of Chicago', discussed above. In 'I choose exile' he argued that 'he experienced in France the freedom, equality and human dignity which was denied him in his native land, there was more freedom in one square block of Paris than there was in the entire United States' (Ward & Butler 2008, p.192). *Ebony* never published the essay.

We can now recognise that Miller's Chicago project was part of a longer radical tradition within America to mobilise photography in an attempt to humanise the black American subject. His images were an important visual channel constructed out of the core body politic produced by those such as Du Bois and Cayton to alleviate the social forces and forms of violence that were at work on the black American subject. What Miller effectively did so well was open up a critical visual site of recognition across the question of race and place within Chicago, and by extension across America. It is important that we do not just read this work as a simplistic set of humanitarian moments. His project was culturally complex. On the

one hand, he wanted to bring the humanity of the South Side into focus but, on the other and in order to do that, he himself literally begged for what the subject in the frame feared most: the condition of invisibility so that he could take his photographs. “‘Please, I said, pay no attention to me just keep doing what you’re doing.’ Believe it or not they usually did” (Miller 2000, p.14). In desiring and being allowed by his subjects to acquire the state of an invisible man taking photographs, Miller may well have been evoking, consciously or unconsciously, a degree of white privilege that has historically allowed white constructions of black life to become manifest. Indeed, having the choice to become invisible or visible becomes an important indicator of how power traditionally works when documentary photographs are being taken. He believed that, through the coat of invisibility he was able to wear whenever he chose to do so, he could make more tangible the realities of the everyday black subject in Chicago. Miller’s project invites the question: who sees who and where? ‘Somehow or other, they understood that my motives were sympathetic and uncritical. They sensed I was not looking for good or for evil. My search was for the everyday realities of life – *their* view of the world, *their* feeling, *their* attitudes, their stories’ (Miller 2000, p.14). What Miller naively did not recognise was the possibility that, as a white man with a camera, he may well have been considered by the South Side black community as a figure of authority that would be difficult to challenge and that, in ignoring him, not troubling him, he might simply go away.

To capture the everyday moments of black American life was by no means a new concept. This mission was also central to the work of several less celebrated African American photographers such as Robert H. McNeill, for example. Almost the same age as Miller, McNeill was born in 1917 in Washington, DC, a city that was also traumatised by the intense racial violence of 1919. His photographs of the lives of black Americans were ‘frequently published in black newspapers such as the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Washington Afro-American* and the *Chicago Defender*. McNeill’s photographs showed that African Americans living in a segregated city survived – even thrived – by creating their own social and community organisations’ (Willis-Thomas 2002, p.88). What was important about his images, however, was that they ‘suggested the dimension seldom acknowledged in illustrated American studies ... of the 1930s–1940s: [that being the] non-monolithic nature of black experience’ (Natanson 1997). McNeill’s experience of taking photographs of people was very different from that of Miller. In an interview with the historian Nicolas Natanson he recalled an experience he had had in a small town called Pocahontas:

I was driving this Ford black coupe, with 'USA' on the license plate. As I pulled into town, this sheriff with a long gun going practically to his knee, stopped me and started in with, 'Boy, what are you doing with this USA car?' He emphasized the 'boy' and the 'USA.' I gave him the logical explanation, and he was still suspicious. 'Well, I got to check into that!' So I was taken to the sheriff's office, and they telegraphed the [headquarters] office to investigate. Found out I was telling the truth ... but they never did let me photograph in the mines. Only the show mine. (Sullivan 2005)

As this illustrates, black photographers working outside of familiar spaces did not have the privilege of simply requesting to be ignored. A black man with a camera clearly represented a visible threat in this instance to the local southern authorities, to the point where McNeill was not allowed to work. Whiteness was also a critical factor in photographing the civil rights movement. What the southern American authorities wrongly assumed in the early days of the civil rights movement's development was that all white photographers were sympathetic to the state authority's position. In contrast, a black photographer working for the civil rights movement was an easy and obvious target. When challenged by police Matt Herron and Bob Fitch, both white pro-civil rights photographers, would simply adopt southern accents or slip away into the crowd. Their whiteness enabled them to float across both sides of the lines of racial conflict. It protected them against state violence and gave them access to black spaces. In a filmed interview for Ryerson University Fitch says that he was informed by leaders of the civil rights campaign that they 'could not send black photographers and writers in the field, they get beat up and they get killed' (Sealy 2010).

California 50 Years Later

By 1946, Miller had been able to manoeuvre himself into a position where he could imagine, through his photographs, speaking for Chicago's African American community. His desire to bring these black lives into view from behind both the visible and invisible barriers that oppressed them made Miller's photographs readable as part of a dynamic political conjuncture aimed at producing resistance work against the culture of American racism. Had they surfaced in the public realm at the time of their taking, then the photographs could have been effective in lifting, however momentarily, the weight of historical oppression that burdened Chicago's black population. Plate 3 from Miller's Chicago's South Side book is captioned 'A tenement on South Indiana Avenue, the type of housing for half the city's black children' and is one of only two photographs in the book that do not include people. It shows

a four-storey housing project surrounded by litter and rubble: an image of depressing urban squalor that reflects the desperate daily lives of its residents. While the actual image is devoid of any black children caught in these circumstances, the wording of the caption causes the viewer to reflect on the terrible conditions endured by black American families. Plate 10 is captioned ‘An alley between overcrowded tenements, with garbage thrown over the railings of the back porches. Most of the area’s tenants were transient.’ The photograph shows a lone figure walking through the piles of garbage. It is a wet day and his reflection is caught in the stagnant pools of rainwater. The man wears a long overcoat and a wide-brimmed hat and walks towards the camera with his hands pushed firmly into his pockets. He is positioned within the middle of the frame slowly walking through the scenes of chaos all around him. The background to the photograph is a steaming smouldering atmosphere that obscures the buildings that lie beyond, hinting that the rubbish there is alive with fermentation. The photograph complements well Plate 3 as it suggests that behind the squalor presented earlier things are actually even more desperate. (Fig. 34)

In examining Miller’s ‘The Way of Life of the Northern Negro’ project today, we are able to observe through his depiction of such abject poverty the stark reality of the violence present in post-war America and the social politic at work on the black body even when it is absent from the frame. (Fig. 35)

Chicago’s South Side was home to several large environmentally damaging steel mills and other forms of heavy industry that needed manpower. It is not surprising, then, that the majority of Miller’s photographs examine the black subject in the workplace doing manual hard labour, taking breaks from their work, on strike or just waiting in public spaces. However, one important photograph stands out for bucking this trend of depicting black labourers. Miller’s caption reads, ‘Debutante ball sponsored by the “Royal Coterie of Snakes”, an exclusive gentlemen’s club, at the Parkway Ballroom, December 1946’. Here we are presented with a mass of black men and women packed tightly together, all dancing formally hand in hand as if doing a gentle slow waltz (none of the dancers have any signs of sweat). The men are dressed in dinner suits, bow ties and white shirts, many of them with white carnations. The women wear fine evening gowns. Smiles are exchanged between couples as well as being directed towards the camera. This is not an impoverished group of people. The ‘Royal Coterie of Snakes’ according to *Jet* magazine was established in 1922 as an organisation, ‘dedicated to the betterment of social standards of Chicago’s business and

professional leaders' (Major 1973). It is evident from the smiles that Miller's presence was very welcome on this elaborate occasion when Chicago's black middle-class elite was on display. From the angle the photograph is taken it is clear that Miller has managed to find a high place from which to work, making him in this instance clearly visible to his subjects. This photograph is a rare celebratory moment within the book, recording black wealth and black subjects enjoying themselves as an affluent and confident group while being watched by a white observer. It can also be read as a moment that smiles back in the face of the oppressor. As a photograph from Chicago's South Side it changes the perception of the community presented in the previous published images. It stands alone because it interjects a visual dynamic of the black middle class across Miller's project. Apart from the celebrities such as Paul Robeson and Lena Horne who visit Chicago, the black middle class who resided in the southern section of the South Side are absent from the project. (Fig. 36)

In Miller's photographs from Chicago, even through the image of the 'Royal Coterie of Snakes', we see a people historically trapped: a people fixed culturally and temporally through race despite their profession or social aspirations. Only two photographs in the book portray black and white people sharing a physical space: both are of manual workers at the Harvester Tractor works. One of the photographs, Plate 29, shows two men, one black and one white, and its caption reads, 'Black safety worker, the supervisor of his white coworker at International Harvester'. The two men, both covered in coal dust from their tasks, stand shoulder to shoulder; the white worker places his arm around the shoulder of the slightly larger black worker. They both return full broad smiles back at Miller's camera. The black man proudly displays his Safety Inspector's badge. The image represents a rare moment of black superiority over white colleagues in the workplace. It presents a cultural turning point in the place of race in the workplace where the presence of the black subject is traditionally nearly always subordinate. (Fig. 37)

The critical element in Miller's project is that he attempted to radically re-cast black people as fully-fledged human subjects that make up an undeniable community of people fused together by all the ordinariness and complexities that occur when people are simply allowed to go about their everyday lives despite social forces working against them. Street sweepers, female impersonators, policemen, debutantes, celebrities and the ordinary black men and women who go to church, party, flirt, bring up families, mourn the dead and celebrate the newborn are all part of Miller's 'Negro' story. His project can therefore now be read as

grounded in a form of cultural ‘reconstruction work’ (S. Hall 1992), with the aim of seeing others not through the prism of epidermal judgement but through photographic moments of familiarity, hospitality and possible identification with a people beyond the confines of race. Miller’s empathetic eye shifts the black subject out from the historical frames of reference in America that sign them as an alien or object Other, and into the realm of the collective us rather than the distant them.

A burning question underlying this process of humanitarian advocacy towards those ‘strangers’ is why it took 50 years for the work to surface publicly in any meaningful way, either as an exhibition or a publication. It seems astonishing, given Miller’s support from the Guggenheim Foundation and his direct connection to Edward Steichen, that this project was not seen in public until half a century later. The question, then, for Miller’s work and indeed for the history of American photography is: was America politically and culturally ready for the challenges that this body of photographs might have invited if they had been shown closer to the time of their taking? And, indeed, were Miller and his core sponsors really prepared for them to be seen? We recognise that ‘the past cannot speak except through the archive’ (S. Hall 1992, p.106) but its voice gets softer over time and cultural violence has the capacity to transmogrify into romance if we do not keep its dark nature in focus. With this work appearing so late after its making, when looking at the images we now have to resist nostalgia, and that is a difficult task.

Reading Miller’s photographs in the present means that this specific body of work can possibly be considered as a rare and significant post-war act by a self-assigned white American photographer to take responsibility for the Other and it could represent a direct attempt to use photography as a tool to cut through the Gordian knot of historical racism and violence in America. Time, though, has diffused their potential radical impact.

Miller’s act of taking responsibility pre-dates many of the white photographers who would later record black American daily and political life. Miller’s photographs from his ‘The Way of Life of the Northern Negro’ can also be read as a form of cultural investment in African American life across not just race but also class, gender and age. As stated above, it was an investment that would not yield any significant return until at least 50 years later, when, after lying dormant at his home in California for decades, Miller’s work was presented as the inaugural exhibition curated by Ken Light for the newly formed Center of Photography

housed at the University of California, Berkeley. A 1998 Public Affairs News Release from Berkeley informs us that ‘Miller has handpicked 70 black and white photos for exhibition’. After the exhibition the University of California decided to publish the project retitled as *Wayne F. Miller: Chicago’s South Side 1946–1948*. Time and shifts in the politics of race and language render titling a book ‘The Way of Life of the Northern Negro’ in the year 2000 a backward cultural step in the dynamic discourse of race and authorship. The new title disperses the seeds of problematic anthropology that attach themselves to the author’s old title and lays open a path for a different discussion about the work performed by the photographs. The back cover of the book reiterates the desire for a new conversation on race by featuring an endorsement by Gordon Parks, who at the time of publication was America’s most celebrated African American documentary photographer. Parks’s testimony is embellished with the myth of the divine photographer on a mission. He states that ‘Wayne [Miller] went to wherever his conscience called him, and his camera’s eye baptized whatever confronted him’. The image accompanying the Parks text is also reproduced inside the book as Plate 43, where it is captioned ‘Western Union telegram messenger’. No caption appears on the back cover, so its meaning is therefore much looser and less fixed when read in the context of Parks’s comment. The photograph portrays a black woman in uniform wearing a cap and heavy wool double-breasted coat. On the buttons of the coat are the letters ‘WU’. Her shirt is neat and buttoned to the top. Under her arm is tucked a clipboard with documents and dollar bills attached. Just visible at the bottom of the photograph are the two bars that run in a circular pattern around her coat’s sleeves. On her head she wears a typical postal service peaked cap with what looks like a bold metal badge on the front. The woman, however, is photographed out of focus, thus blurring the detail of her features. Despite this, we can see that her mouth is open and her white teeth are visible as she moves her head sideways while laughing; with her eyes half closed as she leans slightly back, she seems to be enjoying having her photograph taken. However, in reading the photograph through the context of Gordon Parks’s symbolism, the image becomes loaded with religious baggage. The blurring of the black woman’s face gives the photograph the sense of a spiritual encounter with the Other. The choice of image here suggests that it is not so much a photograph of a black woman worker with whom we are being invited to engage; it is her spiritual essence beyond the physicality of her racialised being that we are encouraged to see. (Fig. 38)

The image selected for the front cover of the book is taken in a pool hall and captioned ‘Afternoon game at Table 2’. The room is lined with black men stylishly dressed in hats,

coats, shirts and bow ties observing the action. It is clearly a cold environment as nearly all the subjects wear big heavy coats. One player is leaning over 'Table 2' about to strike the white pool ball with his cue. His opponent looks on in anticipation as to where the balls might go after the strike. He stoops slightly to get a better view. The lights hanging above the pool tables add to the ambience of the photograph. All the men in the room seem locked in respectful contemplation of the players at the tables. It is a serene, intimate, tight space in which the men are shown calmly engaged with time and leisure. Alcohol or any form of exuberance is markedly absent and as a cover photograph it signals well the proximity of visual intention behind Miller's project.

The Last Photograph

The last photograph in Miller's *Chicago's South Side* is captioned 'Father and son at Lake Michigan' and can be seen as highly significant in the depiction of African American males. The photograph is taken from behind the subjects: a black man is sitting quietly with his young son, who looks around three or four years old, on the beach at Lake Michigan. The backs of the father and son are caught in bright sunlight. The man's back is broad, straight and strong and provides a striking contrast to the vulnerability of the child. On the surface the photograph seems to be merely a record of an intimate moment between father and son, but the dominance of the man's back in the frame invites a number of interpretations. By focusing on the black backs, Miller breaks the hegemony of images that operate across the history of the portrayal of the black male body in which the subject's back is the main focus. These black backs photographed by Miller are not marked with the violence of the whip or stressed by toil. They carry no signs of the burden of racism and are not loaded with an erotic or exotic charge. The father's back represents a solid place of security, like a rock on the shore of the lake, and is emulated by his son's back, suggesting a statement of permanence.

By being photographed on the lake shore and having the urban context of the city stripped away from the black subject we are able to focus on the primary function of the image, which is to highlight the close relationship between the father and son. The backs of the black man and the young boy carry a 'punctive' (Barthes 1981) charge. The image evokes a darker moment from the history of Chicago, namely the violent incident that triggered the 1919 riots, which occurred at the same beach. A young black boy who swam across an invisible racial line in the lake was fatally wounded and drowned. A rock thrown by a white man standing on the shore had hit the boy directly on the head. What then appears to be an image

of escape and relaxation away from the pressures of the grey grime of Chicago becomes a potential site of contested space and the violent imposition of racial boundaries. When reading the photograph with the knowledge of the race riots in 1919, the man's gaze across to the right of the frame away from the horizon of the lake becomes an act of vigilance rather than of reflection or contemplation. (Fig. 39)

The radical nature of Miller's project lies in the fact that he refused to acknowledge the extreme edges that may have been photographable across Chicago's black community. Looking through this body of work we can see that no matter what the circumstances of the situation focused on by Miller, there is clearly no sense within his photographs that the subjects here have fallen 'apart' or been broken by racism. What they are doing as a people is hanging on and Miller's project gives us a sense of the complexity of threads that bind them together as a people and to us as observers of historical conditions of race at work, thus allowing us the possibility to understand that we can read photographs either through the specific history of the medium itself and the romance of authorship or we can choose to untangle them through different historical moments relevant to the time of their making.

Chapter 6: Rights and Recognition

Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 states that, 'Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.' If the concept of 'recognition' as a 'human right' is so clearly enshrined within the 'Declaration', then by extension the establishment of human recognition has to include a right of recognition of one's cultural identity, especially those cultural identities that concern the historically oppressed, the victimised, the marginalised, the migrant, the refugee, stateless ones and other subalterns. Cultural difference and questions of identity within 'the right to recognition' have for many of the disenfranchised people of the world been front line battles in establishing their dignity and human worth when faced with forces of oppression as they have been systematically excluded from being able to articulate or take control of the means of cultural production in which their lives have been made visible. In 1948, alongside the proclamation of the Declaration of Human Rights, another significant event in Britain's relationship to its colonies took place: the 1948 British Nationality Act. This Act paved the way for workers to arrive in Britain to help with the post-World War II reconstruction work in the motherland. The merchant ship *Empire Windrush* arrived at Tilbury Docks, in Essex, on 22 June 1948. On board were 492 workers from the Caribbean, and their arrival, along with many others later from across the empire, marks a significant chapter in modern British history, one that transforms the very fabric of British society and notions of Britishness. Echoing W.E.B. Du Bois, who famously claimed in 1903 that 'the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line' (Du Bois 1996, p.1), when addressing the challenges of the twentieth century, Stuart Hall rearticulated the problems with race not just through the prism of the colour line but through the question of cultural identity and ethnicity, when he claimed that

the issue of cultural identity as a political quest now constitutes one of the most serious global problems as we go into the twenty-first century. The re-emergence of questions of ethnicity, of nationalism – the obduracy, the dangers and the pleasures of the rediscovery of identity in the modern world, inside and outside Europe – places the question of cultural identity at the very centre of the contemporary political agenda. (Hall 1995, p.4)

The politics of photography and the role that photography was to play in helping shape debates concerning identity were seen by Hall as a critical front at which to engage the issue that he called 'secondariness', especially as Britain's black communities came under increasing attack from both the state and the media who in their respective ways demonised and terrorised black communities (Hall 1978, p. 339).

Making the Right To Recognition Possible

The genealogy of many of Britain's black photographic practices can be found in the radical left-wing cultural policy-making corridors of the Greater London Council (GLC) and to a lesser degree its regional equivalents in the 1980s. From 1981 to 1986 the GLC had a profound influence on London's black artists. It could be argued that, through direct forms of social engineering specifically targeted at marginalised groups and individuals that it wanted to support, the GLC created the conditions out of which the concept of (B)lack British photography could grow. Capitalising the 'B' in the word 'black' came to signify that works produced under this label would have a direct political and social focus on black experiences and questions of black identity. Financial support through the GLC's Ethnic Arts Sub-Committee, which was dominated by black artists and activists such as Parminder Vir, meant that black photographic practitioners based in London had access to funding streams for the first time in a meaningful way and over a sustained and intense period of time. The impact of this shift was dynamic and profound. 'In terms of cultural policy', writes Paul Bianchini, 'this meant going beyond Labour's traditional concentration on centralised planning and even beyond existing forms of decentralisation' (Bianchini 1987, p.108).

It was recognised at the highest levels within the GLC and in light of the 1981 riots in Brixton and beyond that 'new alliances could be built only by devolving power and resources to the constituencies represented on the Ethnic and Community Arts Sub-Committees. The concept of representation was central to this policy' (Binachini 1987, p.108). For Alan Tomkins, an influential and leading policy advisor at the GLC during the 1980s, 'representation is not just a matter of parliamentary democracy: it is one of the principal means through which the cultural and political configurations of a social formation are historically produced' (Binachini 1987, p.108). In order to promote the 'production, the celebration of working class, women's, black and youth histories', one of Tomkins's principal objectives, the GLC began to fund contemporary cultural forms like photography, video, pop music and community radio, which had traditionally been neglected by the state.

As a GLC report on black arts pointed out, this was a precondition for creating ‘a new aesthetics which is not “traditional”, “ethnic”, “folk”, “exotica”, but which is appropriate for what needs to be expressed here and now. It was probably in the area of Black arts that the Arts and Recreation Committee’s social engineering strategy worked most successfully’ (Bianchini 1987, p.109). It is clear from the objectives laid out by political activists such as Tomkins that the arts were to be used by the GLC to maximum political effect across the Left’s agenda for social change and black practitioners took full advantage of this unique opportunity. Most importantly, however, the astute among the black artists and activists began to understand the politics in arts funding. As a strategy to gain access to funding a simple equation was employed: if four per cent of the population in the 1980s were labelled ‘ethnic’ then surely those ‘ethnic subjects’ had the right to at least four per cent of the nation’s art funding budgets.

The First Wave

The first wave of what can now be described as a form of black photographic resistance work is evident in the photographs produced by a generation of mostly self-taught black British Caribbean-born male photographers who had grown up in metropolitan cities in the 1950s. The most prominent of these were the London-based Armet Francis, Neil Kenlock and Charlie Philips. Their collective retrospective exhibition titled *Roots to Reckoning*, held at the Museum of London in 2005, consolidated their historical significance in the city’s photographic history. This was further evidenced when the organisers of the exhibition dramatically stated in the catalogue that ‘if the black British community can be said to have a soul, these images are a reflection of what it is’ (Philips 2005, p.4). It was naively romantic in 2005 for the organisers to support any claims that stated Francis, Kenlock, Philips or indeed any other photographer is capable of reflecting the soul of man or a whole community through their photography, and it is evident that their work as photographers excludes the important regional differences that make up the black British presence. However, such inflated statements are often induced by a sense of nostalgia that is generated by these types of exhibitions, where a community is retrospectively reimagined to be wholly and definitively representable through the frames of the documentary photograph. This community-reimagining work may well be because historically these communities have been denied the opportunities and the spaces with which to render themselves visually. However, when these moments of exchange are offered through a museum, the work is in danger of becoming fixed and susceptible to a programming and contextualising process that locks the

work within the 'steel pan syndrome' (McGuigan 2012, p.137), reduced in spectacle to a mini carnival experience.

What can be claimed, however, regarding these three photographers' working methods, is that they acted during the 1970s and early 1980s to take responsibility within London's black communities for recording acutely the different forms of social pressures under which these communities existed, such as inadequate housing, disproportionate unemployment and aggressive policing. They independently made important photographic, often quiet, records of black people's presences in the UK, the results of which now constitute collectively a rare archive with intimacy at its heart. The question of intimacy within these photographers' works is an important consideration: for them, the houses, churches and public houses that they attended were part of their own social make-up.

Crucially, if we look through these three bodies of work we can see clearly that as documentary photographers they collectively rejected making work through the periscope of racial conflict; nor did they draw out clichéd moments of alterity when photographing the black subject. Their contribution within the field of black representation effectively comes from a place of cultural familiarity, affinity and quiet reflection. They aimed to be at the service of their community rather than simply observers of it. They were separately but simultaneously working on documenting the black subject, trying to capture tenderly through photography the unobtainable essence of black Britain's humanity. They were attempting to create a new image of black life that would work to reframe their 'communities' affectionately and make these communities visible under the terms of their own individual perspectives or ideas of what constituted a black life. In practice, these communities were to some degree romanticised through photographs. People are shown for example in their Sunday best clothes, or at work smiling at the camera, masking the realities of their hardships through a willingness to participate in the recording of their lives. On reflection, within this type of essentialist documentary focus it is evident that a rather conservative construction of a homogenous black subject is at work. It is interesting to note across this generation of photographers' works that the more transgressive, queer or counter-cultural side of black cultural life in London is absent. Roles within these communities are defined along nuclear family lines, with the result that the photographic archive of black life in London becomes a very straight, traditional and patriarchal affair. Nonetheless, without their intervention that straight, black, patriarchal image would also be absent. The photographs produced in this

period, then, served not only as an expression of black life from within but also worked as a way of presenting black life in forms within which ‘normal’ white society might also recognise themselves. When read in this capacity, the photographs can be seen as producing a visual dynamic that offers parity of experience. By making visible shared social narratives such as weddings and funerals to a white British public the photographs open up the possibility for a greater sense of empathy and connectivity to the black strangers in their midst. (Fig. 40)

What they shared as photographers was primarily the desire to represent and record the missing stories of what they deemed to be ‘normal’ daily black London life. Social gatherings, such as attending church, weddings, funerals and parties, family gatherings and carnivals, were during the 1970s and early 1980s central to their focus as photographers, as were the moments of black celebrity, fashion shows and protest. This kind of straight reportage and positive image affirmation work drew attention from audiences within the communities they portrayed. The photographs were often exhibited within local community-orientated spaces that were supported by small amounts of local authority funding that was drip-fed to practitioners from diminishing budgets. Libraries, town halls and foyers of civic centres were the primary places of encounter for their audiences, with wider distribution for the work being rarely achieved beyond these points of display. The recognition on a local level of this type of work should not be underestimated, however, as it represents a radical turn in race and image translation. The early 1970s in particular marked a low point in media representations of black communities as a wave of hysteria was generated across the nation concerning rising crime rates among black youths and incidents of violent muggings (Hall 1978). As a result, black youths were uniformly regarded as a dangerous criminal element terrorising white society. The new wave of image-making facilitated by the availability of public funding is important because in many instances black people could see within the context of these photographs their own lives framed for the first time in a way with which they could identify in a positive light. At the moment of their photographic making, the critical and aesthetic qualities of the work are not a primary concern; the radical nature that underpins any aesthetic fault-line is the fact that these photographers picked up a camera and acted to arrest the waves of negative images that bombarded black British communities. (Fig. 41)

It is in this self-taught and self-assigned documentary photographic work, which had its focus on race and was authored and legitimised through the race of the producer, that we can locate the emergence of the black British documentary photographer, who was funded, framed and ideologically supported through left-wing institutions such as the GLC. In this context the (B)lack British photographer would be cast as a uniquely insightful chronicler of black peoples' experiences. The core theoretical dialectic at work in discussing the act of taking a photograph from within the places and spaces defined as the black community was whether the epidermal schema of the photographer made a difference to the making and reception of the work. The preferred politically-correct answer during the late 1970s and early 1980s was an essentialist 'yes'. (Fig. 42- 4)

Vanley Burke, the Birmingham-based photographer who is of the same generation as Francis, Kenlock and Philips, claims that his work is a form of 'histograph',

A histograph, capturing the personal, social and economic life of black people as they arrived, settled and became established in British society ... The 'histograph' metaphor makes the camera and the photographer appear to be a sensitive recording machine, making a template to the life being lived in black communities. It throws the emphasis away from the photographing process itself – the practice of representation which the photograph always represents – onto the photographed subject. It is the people and their lives, it seems to be saying which are important. (Hall 1993, p.13)

This mode of positive template-imaging photographic practice was typical of the work that would attract support from the GLC. This is illustrated most effectively by one of the last photographic exhibitions that the GLC supported in 1986, which opened just a few days before the GLC itself was finally shut down by Margaret Thatcher's government. The exhibition was shown at the Brixton Art Gallery and was titled *Reflections of the Black Experience*. It showed the works of nine photographers operating across the documentary tradition: Marc Boothe, Vanley Burke, Sunil Gupta, Mumtaz Karimjee, Dave Lewis, Zak Ove, Ingrid Pollard, Suzanne Roden and Madahi Sharak. The exhibition also included a tribute to Armet Francis with a modest selection of his work. His presence marked a generational gap as he was cast as an established and authoritative black photographer. In 1983, Francis had had a solo exhibition at the Photographers' Gallery in London and had self-published his book titled *The Black Triangle: the People of the African Diaspora* in

1985. These two events marked him as the most significant black photographer working within the UK during the 1980s. The organiser of the exhibition was Monika Baker and in the accompanying publication she stated,

We are proud to present the specially commissioned works of 9 black photographers, as part of the GLC Race Equality Unit's Black Experience Programme ... Reflections of the Black Experience marks a milestone for Black photographers in this country ... The strength of the final work presented was achieved through the sensitivity that comes from an identification with the subject ... It is through the medium of photography that this exhibition has chosen to express the mood of and feeling of black people's presence in contemporary Britain. (Baker 1986, p.5)

The primary act of focus, even within the last few days of the GLC, was to endorse in the heart of London's black community a political agenda relating to the notion of self-affirmation within the making of images. In reading the work produced for the exhibition it is clear that the objective was to try to bring a more human face to the photographic image of black subjects caught up in the pressures of daily metropolitan life and to highlight the urban spaces they occupy. This project then, via the GLC, was a direct attempt to bring new ways of seeing and understanding to blackness.

On analysis, as documentary moments that reflect black life, the commissions suffer from being far too generic in nature, with no one project being fully developed beyond a series of single images of black people's daily existence. The lack of photographic narration makes it difficult to locate 'the mood of and feeling of black people's presence' in the UK within the works. When compared with the images that the African American photographer Dawoud Bey produced in the 1970s in Harlem, for example, the GLC initiative unfortunately resonates poorly, as the works suffer from a lack of investment not in money but in time. In discussing his project Bey later stated:

As I got to know the shopkeepers and others in the neighborhood, I became a permanent fixture at the public events taking place in the community, such as block parties, tent revival meetings, and anyplace else where people gathered. The relationships and exchanges that I had with some of these people are experiences I

will never forget. It is in those relationships and the lives of the people that these pictures recall that the deeper meaning of these photographs can be found. (Bey 1979)

However, within the context of Britain and as photographs, the works in the *Reflections of the Black Experience* exhibition are different mainly because they stand outside of, and are away from, the debasing media representations of black subjects that were so prolific here in the 1970s and 1980s. This is because these documentary moments are not made with news media as their primary purpose. No one black person in any of the photographs in the exhibition constitutes a threat. When we look at work of this nature it is not its formal qualities alone that need to be assessed: it is the social and political world in which they were made that needs to be considered. It is their rawness as images and their early articulations of framing race that mark them as culturally relevant and historically significant. Hence the recent drives from major cultural institutions such the Museum of London and the Victoria and Albert Museum to purchase images with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund from this unique aspect of Britain's photographic history, acknowledging now that these works fill vital missing chapters of Britain's visual culture within their collections.

What an exhibition like *Reflections of the Black Experience* marks is the desire for popular and mainstream media representations of blackness to be made something else. What we see in this black photographic moment is the black radical imagination at work but it is not yet fully formed; it is in its infancy visually. The desire is clearly evident within this type of work for an image of blackness to emerge that could be made real photographically, theoretically, politically and emotionally, and that should ideally and exclusively be articulated through those black subjects such as Francis, who occupy the physical and psychological space of race. Therefore, it is important to state that the 1980s marked the moment of the arrival of the epidermal schema in photography in Britain where the photographer's cultural identity, as being black, was considered to be a transgressive, political act within the politics of black recognition. This was because taking ownership of the means to re-present blackness back at those in society that negated black presences was recognised as an empowering and positive step.

There was no privileged decisive moment in black British photography; what was at work was a black photographic call and response that wanted to change the hearts and minds of the nation's people who had been imbued with stereotypical images of blackness through, for

example, popular television shows such as the 'Black and White Minstrel Show', which was seen by 16 to 18 million viewers a week. The programme was aired on British television from 1958 to 1978 despite several campaigns against it as being racist (Newcomb 2014, p.271). Black photography was a call that was visually aimed at the centre of the nation's psychological state and in particular its limbic system. The work wanted to affect the emotive condition of the nation, against the backdrop of state-run institutions such as the BBC, which encouraged the public to seek pleasure from ridiculing the image of the black subject. Black photographic work was in many respects an early attempt to help people on both sides of the colour line see race holistically differently.

The *studium* (Barthes 1981) at work within the photographic image to which Barthes famously refers, in short its overall conventionalised meaning, is in black photography created within different racialised zones of experience and encounter. What these early black British documentary photographs represent is a bold attempt to offer the viewer the possibility of new perspectives on race and to consider the work that the images carry out for race from a position where race is not only central to the reading of the photograph but is also central to the making of the photograph. This demands that different criteria be applied to reading the work and that the work is assessed through different cultural codifications from those that traditionally dominate the making and curating of photography. The critical question here is: how would the *studium* or *punctum* of an image be addressed through the optics of racialised ways of seeing? Early black documentary work is therefore an attempt to find a new language, a subaltern visual presence from within the burden of the old photographic discourses where black cultures are predominantly framed against a blinding white cultural backdrop that works pervasively to misrepresent black people and where their lives can only come into existence through the space of whiteness. Historically, then, the vast range of images that bring black life into focus have been produced by white photographers. Wayne Miller in the 1940s, Bruce Davidson in the 1960s, Eugenie Richards in the 1990s and Pieter Hugo in the 2000s are among the many ranks of celebrated white photographers who have built their careers on framing black subjects. Burke and his peers' work in this context says more about the quest for black authority and a desire for the impossible condition of authenticity than anything else. What these photographers have been attempting to do through their documentary work is to make the black gaze the dominant feature within the framing of the racialised subject. Black documentary photography from this period is in essence an offer to share a wider view of marginalised lives authored by the marginalised.

This is what was being signed off culturally and politically through the display and funding of these types of photographic translations or conversations. Therefore, what was being constructed was the possibility of a black way of seeing that disrupts the homogeneity of photography's past and an acknowledgement that photography in and of itself is not the sole domain of the European eye. The black gaze is a radical oppositional act that has its location in many different origins associated with power. For example, black slaves were punished for looking too hard at their white owners, and how the impact of this informed black spectatorship is investigated at length by the scholar Bell Hooks in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Here Hooks reminds us that 'all attempts to repress our/black peoples' right to gaze had produced in us an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, an oppositional gaze. By courageously looking, we defiantly declared: "Not only will I stare I want my look to change reality"' (Hooks 1992, p.116). Black photographers working with the tradition of the documentary genre looked through their lenses and as they did so believed they would be contributing to changing the realities of black people's lives. Where the GLC was instrumental is that it created a framework within which these photographers could come together, facilitating a collective dialogue across the work they were producing. As Sunil Gupta, one of the photographers commissioned to make work for the *Reflections of the Black Experience* exhibition, later stated, 'the process brought a bunch of people together all interested in the idea of black photography. The research [funded by the GLC Race Equality Unit] had unearthed this elusive creature, the black photographer' (Gupta 2007, p.2).

Something 'other' had happened to photography in Britain through the hand of the GLC. Something new emerged and came into visibility in the 1980s that had been ignored, overlooked or never imagined: the moment when black British people 'enter their own subjectivity ... and put themselves in the frame' (S. Hall 1992). As Hall states, entering the 'frame', by which he means engaging with society, visually, culturally and politically through the act of making a photographic image, has been possible to a degree but managing the institutional dialogues and the positionality that determine where the frames of race sit within the wider cultural-institutional context of British life has proved to be far more difficult to achieve. Resisting the cultural ghettoisation that informs the ways in which black photographers' works are seen is an ongoing process and these historical black images, even when entering the domain of white cultural institutions, appear as reluctant guests within the museum or art gallery, as often they are merely corralled into their corners. This is epitomised by a recent small photographic 'display' at the Victoria and Albert Museum titled

Staying Power: Photographs of Black British Experience 1950s–1990s and described as ‘a project to increase the number of black British photographers and images of black Britain in the V&A collection. It aims to raise awareness of the contribution of black Britons to British culture and society, as well as to the art of photography.’ (Victoria and Albert Museum 2013).

This project was produced in ‘partnership’ with the Brixton Cultural Archives and the fact that it was not staged until 2015, nearly 30 years after the GLC’s final photographic initiative, illustrates the depth of cultural time-lag at work concerning race within the state’s national archives, museums and galleries. The V&A purchased for its collection a total of 118 photographic works by 17 different artists, both black and white. What is most troubling relating to projects of this nature, however, is the degree of disavowal and amnesia at work concerning white cultural institutions and black representation within them.

Entering the Frame

The theoretical work produced by academics such as Professor Stuart Hall and Kobena Mercer, coupled with the visual work of black photographers and artists, challenged the dominant ideologies and distribution networks that produced the knowledge and popular cultural frames of meaning that concerned and made up the problematic image of the racialised British subject. This type of theoretical work opened up the conditions of black existence and demystified the representational fields of their reception and the power structures that disenfranchised black lives. The political work both in theory and in images comes together to create a new episteme. It is a front that challenged the history of the racially inscribed black body and it is important that this challenge to the racial insignia on the black body is recognised through the visual. In one of his speeches delivered in 1986 at the launch of the GLC’s ‘Black Experiences’ programme at the Commonwealth Institute, London, Hall addressed the politics of race, culture and their relationship to state funding:

We [black migrants] are here to stay. We are the centre of creative cultural life of this society and we require the jobs, the training, the opportunities [and] the funding. We want the path open especially for the young black people of this society who have created in their myriad art forms – writing, poetry, dance music, right through to rap – a new culture which in its variety and power astonishes now the eyes of young white people. It is a mark, a sign, that they are the people of the future. (Hall 2012)

This theoretical and visual race work was grounded in recognition that the construction of post-war 'black experiences in British culture [were] not fortuitously occurring at the margins [of society], but placed, positioned at the margins, as the consequence of a set of quite specific political and cultural practices which regulated, governed and "normalized" the representational and discursive spaces of English society' (S. Hall 1992, p.252). Therefore, especially in the 1980s, the 'issue of black [British] cultural identity, based on the deconstruction of established stereotypes, presents itself as one of the most serious problems in the definition and defence of black identity' (Sarikaya 2011, p.165). The phenomenon or idea of black British photography as a kind of 'shooting back' was effectively forged within the heat and tension of the contested social formations surrounding the politics of race that characterised the 1980s. This tension finally exploded again in the riots that occurred in Brixton, Peckham and Broadwater Farm in London, and in Toxteth in Liverpool, in 1985. The police shooting of Cherry Groce in Brixton and the tragic death of Cynthia Jarrett at Broadwater Farm sparked the riots during which the young photojournalist David Hodge (Brixton) and PC Keith Blakelock (Broadwater Farm) both lost their lives.

As the 1980s progressed, a typical example of the contested nature of this difficult political and cultural terrain unfolding within photography in Britain was the verbal mauling by black delegates that the feminist photographer Jo Spence received in 1987 at the National Photography Conference, in Salford, Greater Manchester: the city in which just a year before a 13-year-old Bangladeshi boy named Ahmed Iqbal Ullah was stabbed to death in the school playground by a white pupil.

After Spence's keynote speech titled 'Questioning documentary practice? The sign as a site of struggle', arguments within the conference raged. She had infuriated some of the black delegates by not addressing the question of race. George Shire, a young Zimbabwean scholar, led the outrage that split the conference for the rest of its duration along the lines of gender and race. According to Sunil Gupta, the photographer and gay activist who was present at the event, Spence had 'skirted around the issues of race and there was an uproar, she finally left the conference.' Gupta puts the politics at work during the conference into a wider context when he states that, 'in retrospect, those were also the days when folks were pretty territorial about work, women did women and blacks did blacks etc' (Gupta 2015). It was at this conference in Salford, funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain, that black British

photographers came politically into full view on the national stage of photography for the first time. The year 1987 in Salford marks a critical turning point for the question of race and photographic practices in Britain: a turn that the funding bodies present at the conference had to recognise as a growing and vocal presence that was demanding, militant and not easily appeased – even within its own body politic, which was itself also fragile and fractured. After the conference, several of those present were invited to the Arts Council of Great Britain's offices in London to discuss future state funding possibilities for black British photographers. It was at the invitation of the state that black British photography moved out of the local and into the national cultural field, with the Arts Council attempting to pick up on some of the social engineering the GLC had seeded.

The year 1987 saw another opening of a group exhibition of young black British photographers. It was a touring exhibition that was first shown at the Ikon gallery in Birmingham in July and August under the title *D-Max*. It then travelled to the Photographers' Gallery in London in January 1988. The exhibition included the works of David A. Bailey, Marc Boothe, Gilbert John, David Lewis, Zak Ove and Ingrid Pollard, all of whom at that time were working at the edges of documentary practices. Also, as they were all based in London, they were fully aware of the cultural debates and economic initiatives behind the production of a new black aesthetic that had previously been at work through the GLC (four of them had taken part in the *Reflections of the Black Experience* exhibition). *D-Max* was curated by Eddie Chambers who stated in the introduction text that accompanied the exhibition that, 'In terms of aesthetics, our second objective is to contribute to the development of something which could be referred to as a black aesthetics in British photography' (Araeen & Chambers 1988, p.69). The idea of a new black British aesthetic that was being generated throughout this exhibition was a clear echo of what had been articulated by the GLC. However, the concept of a black aesthetic within photographic practice was easier to claim than to actually theoretically identify, especially through the form of documentary works. In a tetchy and important exchange between the artist and activist Rasheed Araeen and Eddie Chambers for *Third Text* journal in 1988, we witness the critical fragility of such a notion. On discussing the subject of black aesthetics with Chambers, Araeen states that,

the ambition to create black aesthetics is of course laudable, and I'm very interested in the idea of a new visual language with its own distinguishable features. But I'm still

not clear what it is. I know what it is in relation to jazz, but when I look at those contemporary art works which claim to be concerned with black aesthetics, I don't find anything there which could convince me of its presence or development ... My understanding had been that these photographs had been selected and legitimized as 'Black Photography' not only because they were taken by black photographers but also their contents were about black life or experiences. It seems common sense to say that in the end we will have to look at the work, whatever it is meant to be about or say ... What worries me, personally, is that we are making claims on a basis which does not yet exist and we would perhaps end up promoting mediocre works – which is not an unusual situation in the black arts scene today. And to tell you the truth, I was very disappointed by the D-Max exhibition. It's time we pay some attention to the question of quality. (Araeen & Chambers 1988, p.69)

The black aesthetic as far as Araeen was concerned had not yet arrived within photography. In the exchange between the artist and the curator we witness the opening of a major and unresolved critical fault-line in the articulation of race and photographic practices. Araeen in his challenge to Chambers is primarily concerned with issues of quality within the actual photographic work. He is clearly 'disappointed' that some of the works have not engaged with his notion of what constitutes 'black life or experiences'. Araeen appears to find these aspects hard to locate within the work and therefore for him what is at stake becomes the issue of quality. What Araeen failed to recognise was that one of the major critiques of (B)lack photographic work was that it was didactic in nature. What the *D-Max* exhibition attempted to do was free the black photographer from the burden of representation but at the same time allow the question of race to be present within the work. *D-Max* was effectively a break with the first generation of black photographers. Its visual offer was to view blackness as being polysemic in nature. This, however, created tension within the positioning of black photographic works among black practitioners as some, for example Dave Lewis and Franklyn Rodgers, became unanchored from the documentary genre and the cultural expectations concerning positive representations of race, therefore opening a critical fault-line in attitudes within black photographic practices. One side of the fault-line claimed responsibility for representation in the comfort of a black essentialist paradigm; the other desired to be free from its representational responsibilities and conservative fixings.

The assumed authority of documentary photography was, in the 1980s, under pressure from those working on the margins of society while fighting for visibility even among themselves, like Chambers and Araeen, who were intent on subverting the mainstream even if the form and content of the work made this act very problematic in practical terms. (It should be noted that Chambers disassociated himself from the photographers in the *D-Max* project shortly after the exhibition opened because of ‘serious differences within the group, and not all the photographers agreed with my idea of Black aesthetic’ (Araeen & Chambers 1988, p.73).) It is evident when we look back at the 1980s that ‘feminists and black artists and filmmakers during ... [the] 1980s used, and frequently subverted documentary modes and conventions in order to address, respectively, the role of women in society and the construction of a multicultural image of Britain’ (Barson 2006, p.17). Tanya Barson is correct in her analysis of the strategies of subversion within respective documentary practices but what linked these practices together across the politics of difference was not so much a readable aesthetic but a shared contempt for the ideologies of social exclusion epitomised through Thatcherism and articulated through movements such as ‘Rock Against Racism’ and its magazine *Temporary Hoarding*. What unified people who had been regulated to the margins of society was an equally complex deep desire to ‘enter the most modern of all domains, the domain of representations’ (S. Hall 1992).

The Auto-portrait

Photographic practices are always historically specific, they belong to a particular conjunctures. Black self-portraiture, in this historical moment, has broken many of its links with the dominant ‘western’ humanist celebration of self and has become more the staking of a claim, a wager. Here, the black self-image is, in a double sense, an exposure, a coming out. The self is caught emerging. (Hall 1990, p. 3)

It is evident within Britain’s photographic history that the 1980s represented a seismic shift in the cultural landscapes of photography politics, race and representation. It is a narrative that is well encapsulated in the last edition of Birmingham-based Arts Council of England-funded photo-journal *Ten 8*, published in 1992, titled ‘Critical decade: black British photography in the 80s’. The introduction to the magazine was written by Stuart Hall and states that the editors intended the reader to gain

a clear understanding of the complex debates which have taken place ... [and understand that] the photographers and writers [published in this edition] offer an insight into a range of key issues, [such as] the meaning of blackness, gender and sexuality in a discourse of racial difference, the role of racial representations in popular culture, documentary and its relation to realism and authority, [and] the politics of the constructed image. Set against a background of debates around post colonial theory and its critical questions of hybridity, marginalisation essence and identity, *Critical Decade* seeks to provide the ground for new critical responses in the 1990s. (S. Hall 1992, p.4)

The editors' intentions are clearly complex. When read now they can be seen as an attempt to present a strong theoretical hand of different discursive tools that were aimed at offering the reader of photography politics in the early 1990s an opportunity to engage culturally with a different kind of photographic discourse: a discourse that presents to those thinking through photography, especially at the time of this last edition of *Ten 8*, a chance to interrogate the space of visual marginality and to examine the recent role photography had played across the critical space of identity politics, particularly when we consider the legacy of colonial encounters inherent within the grand narratives that surround the making of photography's history. What is essentially and uniquely on offer within these few pages of *Ten 8* is an ideological place in which to reflect on the myriad different voices that are absent or ghosted from the narration and making of photography. The publication represents a small example of the difficult cultural turning points that occurred within a decade of turns that collectively added up to a series of complex but incisive cultural incursions into the hegemonic body politic of British photography and its cultural institutions. It is an undeniable fact that by the end of the 1980s very few people working within cultural institutions and managing photographic collections were aware of the work being produced by black photographers and artists based in Britain, and this issue of *Ten 8* aimed to address that lack of knowledge specifically within the field of photography.

The ideas presented in the *Ten 8* editorial crashed theoretically and directly into the master narratives that made up the established canon surrounding the story of photography in Britain. What was at issue in this form of politically conscious photographic and theoretical work was the possibility and recognition of new, racially charged heterogeneous photographic moments that were emerging forcefully from the margins and disrupting the

institutional centre by making race within photography a major issue. Black photography in this racialised condition is a productive and radical moment, which visually moves the question of race onto and into the wider socio-political cultural field. The act of picking up the camera from a condition of oppression becomes an act of transgressive liberation almost as important as the making of the photograph itself because it creates the possibility for something new to be seen, something different to emerge. The realisation that one can remake the self independently frees the black artist up from the documentary tradition and the burdens of representation.

The 1980s signify the formation of a new photographic epistemology concerning race and photographic practice in Britain. What was being marked in the pages of *Ten 8* were the signs of a cultural rupture across the 'normal' flow of images that relate to the cultural business and image exchanges that have historically and temporally fixed black subjects in spaces that are not of their own photographic making. In considering the surrounding politics and ideology of photography's dominant histories we can begin to recognise through *Ten 8* the signs that point towards the end of a white monocultural perspective on photography in Britain and the uncoupling of how its black subjects are rendered, framed and articulated from the dominant discourses of the medium.

Typically, this moment of disrupting the old imperial ways of seeing race is articulated through the early photographs produced by Joy Gregory. Her work is reproduced on pages 28 and 29 of this edition of *Ten 8*. Gregory's series titled 'Autoportraits 1989–1990' was shown at Camerawork in the East End of London for the first time in 1990. This series of nine separate multiple selves was produced as a direct response to the lack of visibility of black women in popular culture, and in particular within the fashion industry. This radical intervention into how black women have been historically framed offered a direct challenge to the reader to locate the 'real' black woman subject as she moves cinematically through the frames of her own auto-photographic moment. As a subject, Gregory occupies different locations within the actual photographic frame; it is as if she is physically and temporally moving through the laboured positionality of the camera's long, historical, racist resting place. It is an act stating that she refuses to be fixed as a subject. Gregory slides across the frame, entering it and presenting to it however she so chooses. The making of the self-portrait here is a mark of control across the actual exposure and focal length of the photographic moment. It is also a moment that marks for Gregory the end of absence and pacificity. This is

done in what appears to be a double act of playfulness and challenge. Nothing in this work is stable. The reading is uncertain because it is Gregory who caresses and controls the camera and the moments of release and capture. She is simultaneously in your face while covering hers. Her eyes, lips, ears, hair and hands, which in one of the frames cover her face, all play a central role in the abstracted notion of the multiple framed selves that she presents to the camera. Within this sequence of images it is as much the object of the camera as a mechanism for recording that comes under scrutiny as the subject that is positioned in front of its lens. The subtle interchange between the subject as photographer and camera as recorder becomes confused for the reader because the work performed by these images leads ultimately to subvert the traditional role that the black woman plays within photography. As representations these images become markers of the individual survival strategies employed by the photographer to disrupt the indexicality of the photographic medium. The subject in this 'Autoportrait' series wilfully refuses in an unruly but playful manner to behave in front of the camera's lens. What is ruptured formally here is the unspoken conservative code that demands the visual comfort of centrality of the subject when presented in front of the camera. At work within this photography is the breaking of the orthodoxies of anthropology and fashion photography. In the making of a single portrait through a series of nine fragmented works, all the traditional rules of photography portraiture are subverted. Therefore, as photographs they are a politically and culturally defiant act; they place the questions of gender and race centre stage in the contested field of representational politics in the 1990s. They break with tradition as nothing of what is presented within the sequence of images offers the reader the chance to settle on the idea of a definitive black woman. Within the process of unsettling the viewer, it is the viewer's subject position that is 'under threat' (Burgin 1982, p.150). This photographic work invites the viewer to consider and deconstruct the actual act of seeing the black woman. Gregory consciously 'deconstructed [the self, in order to produce] a conception of seeing [gender and race] as a site of work' (Tagg 1989, p.23). (Fig. 45 and 46)

Enter 'Esu' (the Trickster in Brixton)

At the vanguard of these marginalised and newly forming anti-essentialist and reconstructive photographic practices within the UK was the Nigerian, gay, Brixton-based photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode. Fani-Kayode was born in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1955. After the military coup of 1966, the Kayode family moved to England. Fani-Kayode went on to study at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, and the Pratt Institute, New York, where he

completed an MA in Fine Art/Photography in 1983. He returned to England that same year (Bishton 1991). He emerged from his studies as an openly gay African photographer, his work being charged with hybrid visual motifs that positioned the black male body as a central figure in transgressive moments of desire, fantasy and memory. These images were uniquely infused with the imaginative visualisations of Yoruba deities that were constructed within frames of deep saturated colour or dense black and white photographic tones that announced to the reader a new moment in representations of the black male body. To fully understand this work one would need to access a different epistemological sphere of reference, because as photographic images they lie outside the usual discourses of Western photography. Rotimi Fani-Kayode's work is produced within the ideology of 'the diasporic attitude [that] often finds itself compelled to look back to something – a ground, a beginning – which may never have existed, exist only in remembered form or is now embedded in fantasy, memory, or desire' (Hall & Sealy 2001, p.42). The black men in his frames perform difference both theatrically and culturally. His staged constructions offer the reader the opportunity to make an enquiry into the nature of desire, fantasy and ecstasy. Fani-Kayode wanted to position the black male subject beyond being an object of Eurocentric enquiry; he offers the black male nude up as the key to unlock a different set of African cultural codes. Fani-Kayode's black male bodies are not just translocated out of their racialised reality and placed in a studio to become a mere backdrop to someone else's visual story, real or imagined. These bodies are active agents that seek 'to emulate the "technique of ecstasy" of Yoruba priests' (Doy 2000, p.157). As images they become a direct conversation with the Orisha.

If we consider Fani-Kayode's photograph titled *Golden Phallus*, taken sometime around 1988–89, we can begin to decode the transgressive quality of his project. Within the image an athletic-looking black man is seen seated. He is positioned as if he is about to rise from his pose. The distribution of his weight passing through the right side of his body provides the resistance required for the muscular torso to become active for the observer's eye. The subject wears a bright white commedia dell'arte mask that has a long pointed protruding nose. The mask emphasises his rich deep brown skin and critically the fact that this moment is symbolically not real: it is an enactment, a moment of a masquerade. The tone of his skin is almost perfectly matched in the lighting used for the backdrop in which he is framed. This merging of the backdrop with the sitter's skin colour flattens the space in which we read his body and creates an ambiguous warm but dark Rubenesque non-place in which the figure is lavishly located. The figure is literally stripped of any signs of modernity and time. The

golden brown skin-toned backdrop used by Fani-Kayode allows the majority of the subject's body to be present but not overly dominant in the frame. He is simultaneously from the dark, merging out of the dark and is comfortable in the dark. It is as if we are in an unconscious visual register of race and desire. The subject looks directly back at the viewer as if mildly disturbed from within his most natural state of being, but his gaze is returned to the viewer from behind his white mask referencing here directly the psychological work of Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which he 'investigates the way in which black men, in particular internalize myths of blackness invented by the colonial society and damage their psyche in the process' (Doy 2000, p.158). Critically, through the presentation of the white mask, the work becomes a grotesque reflection of whiteness and desire. The mask presented as an object through which to look becomes both a shield and a mirror that reflects back a caricatured racialised and distorted Eurocentric gaze.

The golden phallus referred to in the title of the work is the penis of the seated subject that is painted gold. His penis is suspended by a white cord that runs diagonally down the frame, left to right, under his penis and over his knee. His right hand is out of view but from the position of the cord and of his arm we can deduce that he is holding the cord in his left hand, which is just glimpsed in the photograph. The weight of his penis can therefore be lowered or raised at will by the subject. It is positioned as neither fully erect nor fully flaccid; it protrudes at a 45-degree angle from his body. The golden phallus hanging here by a white thread becomes representative of the trickster Yoruba god 'Esu'. The trick here is in allowing the viewer to reduce the image of the black man to that of his penis but at the same time reminding the viewer of the workings of the veil of race at play within this exchange through the symbolic use of the mask. We are informed by the writings of Kobena Mercer and by Fani-Kayode himself that his work is immersed in Yoruba traditions and that within this photograph Esu is indeed present. Esu 'is the Trickster, the lord of the crossroads, sometimes changing the sign posts to lead you astray' (Fani-Kayode et al. 1996, p.119). Therefore, nothing within this photograph can be read at face value and its radical nature is formed in the fact that it is an invitation and a wager to see the world of black masculinity through the prism of a different cosmos. The golden glow of the subject's penis lights up everything within the frame. It exposes the phallogocentric obsessions ingrained within racial myths concerning the black male body and it playfully constructs the penis as a drawbridge to a new place where desire and fantasy can roam freely, unfixed from the burden of culture and history, inviting the viewer to cross over into the uncharted terrain of ecstasy. (Fig. 47)

Fani-Kayode's work is progressive in nature, hybrid in construction and thoroughly Yoruba in creation. It is made in a world that is inherently and ideologically different. Maybe it is here, within the photographs of Fani-Kayode, that we can begin to see or read the black or African aesthetic at work that Rasheed Arareen found so difficult to locate in the documentary photographs of black artists. Fani-Kayode's cultural heritage ran deep and his family were rooted in Yoruba culture; towards the end of his life this became the bedrock of his practice and symbolised a return from a diasporic place. In his work, though far away from his family and home, he is able to stay located and connected to his place of origin. Fani-Kayode's family holds the ancestral title Akire, and they are the keepers of the Shrine of Yoruba Deities and Priests of Ife. The Yoruba-isation of making photography was the critical point at which Fani-Kayode was able to enter into a process of self-fashioning that created the conditions in which he could expose the constructed nature of identities, discover himself and, by extension, the world around him.

In his artistic project he found the freedom to use the complexity of his experience as a resource with which to embark upon a journey into emotional states of being where it is hard to tell where sexuality ends and where spirituality begins. What he brought back from his travels into such nocturnal spaces are glimpses into a world illuminated by the ancient enigma of something so violent, so marvellous and so tragic as to be un-representable: the human experience of ecstasy. (Mercer 1996, p.108)

Within his work we can read the announcement of something distinctively new within photography, this being a moment when black African gay imagination is made visible: an articulation of a hybrid identity that builds race, migration, sexuality and indigenous religion into a complex form of photographic staging.

The complex nature of Fani-Kayode's work and its potential to be read primarily through its homoerotic currents would have carried with it a stigma especially for his middle-class exiled family living in London. Though different in degrees of acceptance of gay life, London and Lagos were not easy environments in which to discuss or display different masculinities or desires publicly in the 1980s. Fani-Kayode stated that, 'As for Africa itself, if I ever managed to get an exhibition in, say, Lagos, I suspect riots would break out. I would certainly be

charged with being a purveyor of corrupt and decadent Western values.’ (Fani-Kayode 1992, p.70).

Even today, more than 25 years after the publication of his 1988 essay titled ‘Traces of ecstasy’ and with Lagos now recognised as a throbbing Afropolitan city, it would be almost impossible to stage an exhibition of Fani-Kayode’s photographs there. In the 1980s the possible stigma attached to his sexuality within Nigerian and British society could have created for him a wider sense of dislocation that may have pushed him deeper and deeper into new transgressive, imaginative and spiritual paradigms within his photographic work, much of which, ironically, was produced within the tight confines of his small one-bedroom housing association flat on Railton Road in Brixton, which he shared with his white partner Alex Hirst. As a flat transformed into a studio his home became a space of limitless horizons for his photographic work, where a new cosmos could be imagined. It was also an ambitious undertaking in the mid 1980s to engage Western conservative galleries with this particular form of ‘African’ photography: it was simply too early for it to be recognised by the cultural gate-keepers of the time. It was distinctively new work and few in positions of authority had the capacity to decode or unlock its points of reference beyond false or simplistic comparisons to Robert Mapplethorpe’s phallocentric images of black male nudes that had caused a wave of criticism and debate from black critics in 1983 when they were shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. This criticism tended to fix Mapplethorpe’s work within what Hall describes as the ‘tropes of fetishization [and] fragmentation of the black image’ (S. Hall 1992, p.256), and negated the difficult question of gay desire within black identity politics into which Fani-Kayode enquired.

Fani-Kayode knew exactly who he was, what he represented and how his lifestyle and photographic work would affect those around him. Railton Road in Brixton was not only his home; it was also a front line for riots in 1981 and 1985. It was home to the critical journal *Race Today* and where the historian and journalist Cyril Lionel Robert James lived till he died in 1989. Fani-Kayode’s local environment was one of the most politicised and policed areas in Britain as far as race was concerned. His sense of being an outsider in this radical black British space and beyond is evident from his own words in ‘Traces of ecstasy’: ‘On three counts I am an outsider: in terms of sexuality; in terms of geographical and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably married professional my parents might have hoped for.’ (Fani-Kayode, 1992, p.64) He was aware both

of the external and internal pressures that applied to the idea of what constituted the traditional representational fields of the 'black experience' in Britain and beyond and what it meant to be a black, gay, African man in exile politically, sexually and artistically. Being an outsider on three counts suggests he fitted in nowhere but we might consider that to some degree this may well have released him from the burdens of black representational politics that were grounded in the theories of 'us an dem' (Chambers 1994) and from the responsibility of his Yoruba traditional family heritage. 'While many were beguiled by the multiple adjectives that sought to name his identity – a modern African artist, a metropolitan black gay man, a key figure in Black British photography, the irony is that Rotimi's life and work were never about the comforts or security of mere identity' (Mercer 1996, p.109). So when we read Fani-Kayode's work through the prism of Hall's 1988 essay titled 'New ethnicities', we can recognise that what it did was bring 'to the surface the unwelcome fact that a great deal of black politics, constructed, addressed and developed directly in relation to questions of race and ethnicity, has been predicated on the assumption that the categories of gender and sexuality would stay the same, remain fixed and secured' (S. Hall 1992, p. 256). We could also add to Hall's statement here that until the emergence of Fani-Kayode the majority of black photographers working in Britain prior to the 1980s were mostly concerned with and subscribed to the idea of a documentary truth wedded to the notion of recording through photography a real life rather than imagining a different narrative. By the late 1980s, Fani-Kayode's work was at the forefront of blowing apart the stereotypical image of the black male body. He resisted categorisation and labelling on a least two fronts: from within a traditional black political narrative that was focused on a counter-perspective of the black subject that functioned primarily as a direct response and rebuff to the tide of negative imagery produced throughout the history of Western photography that continuously pulled the black subject into focus as a mere simpleton wherever his location may be; he also resisted being cast as an essential African subject. Critically, then, Kayode's work operated as a direct challenge to the established idea that the essential black male subject existed and through his work we can begin to unpick the threads of that mythical construction from both within and outside of black cultural politics.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode's untimely death in 1989 robbed him of enjoying the accolades he was soon to receive throughout the 1990s, and if the 1980s signalled the arrival of the black British postmodernist photographer in the guise of Joy Gregory, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Sunil Gupta and many others, then the 1990s can be defined as the 'Definitive decade' that

introduced the contemporary African photographer to the art world. It would be the period in which the African photographer would emerge as a significant new ‘discovery’ within the theatre of Western photography, and in which African photography would break free from the condition of Eurocentric mimesis. The 1990s can therefore be read as the decade that permanently changed the epistemologies of photography and fine art. The 1990s tilted the enquiries into the discourses of photography towards the south, with African practitioners such as Rotimi Fani-Kayode being recognised for entering the field of the visual through the forging of new possibilities with the camera. However, it is not Lagos that provided the catalyst for a different type of enquiry into the black subject; it was Bamako.

The Bamako Two-Step

In the summer of 1991, two of New York’s cultural institutions – the Museum of African Art and The New Museum – co-organised an exhibition titled *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art*. It was organised by Susan Vogel who was then the executive director of the Museum of African Art. The exhibition’s stated aims were to ‘focus on Africa, its concerns, and its art and artists in their own contexts and in their own voices’ (Anon 1991). The event was relatively well reviewed in the mainstream press. For example, the *New York Times* art critic Michael Brenson wrote that, ‘As a result of this show all contemporary African art in New York will make sense in a new way’ (Brenson 1991). According to the *New York Times* this exhibition can then be read as being transformative in relation to the understanding of contemporary art from Africa in the West. The exhibition clearly followed in the curatorial footsteps of the producers of *The Magicians of the Earth*, which was staged in Paris in 1989. Controversially, non-European contemporary artists from across the globe were invited to show their work in this exhibition alongside that of European and North American artists for the first time across two significant cultural spaces: the Georges Pompidou Centre and the Grande Halle de la Villette. The curator and main architect of *The Magicians of the Earth* was the now-celebrated Jean-Hubert Martin, and he was assisted by Mark Francis, Aline Luque and André Magnin. Magnin’s research for the exhibition mainly took place in Africa. He chose to work there for personal reasons that went back to his childhood and he states that his ‘travels through the end of 1988 took [him] just about everywhere in Africa’ (Magnin n.d.). However, while travelling extensively and carrying out his research Magnin had crucially not visited the old French colony now known as Mali.

On show in New York as part of the *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art* exhibition was a series of small photographs in various styles and formats and from different African locations, which were all captioned as being taken by 'unknown photographers'. Three of the photographs were studio portraits, approximately 18 x 13 cm in size, and credited as being taken in the 1950s in Bamako, Mali. The first photograph shows a young couple posing in a studio; the second is a portrait of a young man dressed half-way between European styling and traditional African clothes, as if on arrival at the studio he decided to don a jacket, hat and shoes from the props closet of the photographer. The third photograph is a portrait of two young men. They wear traditional long white robes and short fez-style hats and both proudly display their watches and hold small rings of beads that are entwined between their fingers. The men appear to be clutching white documents close to their bodies, which are hardly visible against the brilliant white robes that they are wearing. In this photograph the men appear to have entered the studio to mark a form of graduation. Apart from their difference in size they almost mirror each other perfectly in clothing and pose.

The captions for the three photographs from Bamako inform the reader that they are silver prints made in 1974 from original negatives and are on loan from a private collection. As a small group reproduced on the pages of the catalogue for the exhibition, these photographs stand out from the rest both in terms of quality and composition. The first (cat. 58) is worth noting further as it is by far the most accomplished image technically and is intriguing as an object image to be read. From the tight composition it is not immediately evident that it is in fact a studio portrait. However, the lighting and formal composition suggest that the photographer is skilled in his craft. The black skin tones of the sitters resonate with detail. The young man wears a pinstripe jacket over a white shirt, while the woman wears a fitted dress with a floral design and frilly neckline. The backdrop for the frame is of a floral William Morris-type design. The couple present themselves stylishly for the camera as if freshly stepping off the set of an African production of Bizet's *Carmen*. They are photographed posing with their faces cheek to cheek. The man's body is mostly obscured as he is positioned behind the woman with his hand resting gently on her hip. The intimacy of the couple is relayed further through the fact that the woman has lowered the left-hand shoulder of her dress in a gesture of self-confidence and assertive sexuality. This is also reinforced through the inquisitive expression on her face. Her eyes convey to the viewer a slight degree of hostility. The naked shoulder can also be read as a seductive invitation to her intended audience but the look in her eyes ultimately acts as a visual counter-narrative to the

message delivered by the off-the-shoulder dress. Her pose can be read as a forward and transgressive act, especially if we consider the religious and cultural position of women in 1950s' polygamous Bamako. She also wears an array of accessories, necklaces, earrings and a headscarf. These accessories are modern in design and may well be fashionable objects of the day. She is clearly a woman who wants to relay through the photograph that she is of her time. She is identified here as a modern 'Bamakois' (Diawara 1998).

The expression on the young man's face is one of enthusiasm for the camera and his eyes are alert to the photographic encounter. He projects an aura of innocence that is chiefly emitted from within his enthusiastic gaze and through his gentle unassertive touch of the woman's hip; he appears to be slightly intimidated by the moment. His gesture and look contradict the edgy arrogance of the woman and her expression acts to create a degree of tension in reading the relationship between them. Whereas she is a powerful woman, he seems overly youthful and boyish. It is the tension that is generated between the different expressions on the couple's faces and the physicality of their exchange that carries the visual charge within this photograph. The man's gaze is childishly passive when set beside the confident expression of the woman so that she effectively emasculates him. Though on the surface of the image they are representative of a loving couple, there is an uncanny sense of violence inherent within the photograph. It is, in effect, a portrait of a woman. The man ultimately serves as just another accessory to the women's desire for modernity. Her desire and the way she presents herself to the camera transform her into a modern African subject representing a confidence and sexual arrogance that eclipse the boyish man. As a photograph now dislocated from its place of origin and its intended original purpose it has the capacity to be read as a metaphorical prologue for Malian independence and youthful liberation and as a visual sign that acts as a rejection of the weighty conditions of colonisation that rendered the African subject childlike and of indigenous religious custom that hindered women's progress.

(Fig. 48)

Given Magnin's specialism in African art and his extensive travels across Africa in researching *The Magicians of the Earth*, a photograph of this nature and visual quality clearly represented an irresistible object that was ripe for further enquiry. The caption supplied by the curator and the private collector suggests that original negatives may well still exist and that additional prints may be available to be bought. Crucially, then, these three 'unknown' photographs on display in New York in 1991 proved to be decisive and catalytic factors in

the extraction of photography from West Africa and its re-presentation and commodification in Europe and North America. It is these three photographs from Bamako that provided the impetus for one of Europe's leading curators, André Magnin, working for one of Europe's wealthiest art collectors, Jean Pigozzi, to enquire further into the authorship of the works with the idea of owning them.

It was during *The Magicians of the Earth* exhibition that Jean Pigozzi met André Magnin and together they founded the C.A.A.C. (Contemporary African Art Collection), [commonly known as] the Pigozzi Collection, [which is based in] Geneva. Magnin states that this was done, 'at a time when non-western contemporary art was not known and not apprehensible in the international art scene. [By 1991] André Magnin is the C.A.A.C.'s curator and artistic director' (Magnin n.d.). It was while visiting the *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art* exhibition with Pigozzi that Magnin encountered the photographs from Mali. This led him to travel to Mali to locate the photographer. Magnin flew to Bamako on 7 March 1992. While staying at the Hotel Tennessee he employed Taihrou, a local guide, to help him try and locate the photographer. They drove to Bagadadji, 30th Street, where an as yet undiscovered photographer, Malick Sidibé, recognises the photographer's work that Magnin is looking for and takes him directly to Seydou Keita. In a voice that echoes the historical colonial joy of discoveries of potential new products and markets Magnin recalls his meeting with Keita in classic colonial schoolboy tones: 'Such were the moments of my African photography adventure' (Magnin 1998, p.22).

The encounter between Magnin and Keita marked a decisive moment in Seydou Keita's work one that pushed his photography towards a more complex relationship with the photography world outside of Bamako. The critical meetings – Pigozzi with Magnin, and Magnin with Keita – created the perfect conditions that were ripe for the extraction and exploitation of Keita's work. This was the moment of Keita's photographic relocation – the arrival of the work in the West towards the marketplace through the agency of Magnin – and it was the moment of Keita's photographic dislocation (its extraction and 'invention'). In turn, the encounter between Magnin and Keita represented the resignification of Africa and its history within photography along with its cultural appropriation, as almost 1,000 negatives from Keita's studio began to head north from Bamako towards Paris with Magnin. It was during this exchange and journeying that new ideas arose concerning what African photography might be and become, and it was through the 'discovery' of Keita that these new African

works entered the lexicon of the European and North American cultural and commercial mega-spaces, such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. The frenzy in the West (Rips 2006) and the art market's excitement in the discovery and recognition of Keita's photography was followed shortly afterwards by a similar enthusiasm for the works of Malick Sidibé and then later still the autoportraits produced by Samuel Fosso, a studio photographer from the Central African Republic. This intense interest positioned these photographers as the dominant photographic presence within the West when it came to the collecting, promoting and displaying of photography from Africa throughout the 1990s and the early part of the 2000s in both private and public cultural institutions across Europe and North America. At least for a while, it eclipsed the political and critical intensity of African documentary photography that was well established in South Africa and was epitomised by the photographers working for *Drum* magazine in the 1950s and the foundation of the Market Photo Workshop in 1989, a project that was so influential in providing Santu Mofokeng and other black South Africans with their first structured photography education.

A critical point we have to consider when we look at the rise of Keita, Sidibé and Fosso is that collectively their works offer a less harrowing view and therefore more palatable perspective on the impact of Europeans in Africa. What the South African photographers like Bob Gosani, Peter Mugubane, Ernest Cole and later Santu Mofokeng offer the European viewer through their work is a constant reminder of the dark side of European presences on the continent, as their photography exists primarily within the struggle against the violence of the 1948 enactment of Apartheid laws in South Africa. What Magnin discovered in his African photography adventure was a pleasurable photographic space that as far as the visual was concerned reflected well on the time of the French in Mali as a colonising force. Keita was in fact 'poor, [and] made prints, using a 5-by-7-inch view camera, by placing the negative directly against the photographic paper, used his bed sheet as a backdrop, and photographed outdoors using available light' (Rips 2006). And yet the (French Sudanese) Malian, African subjects he framed become, when presented out of context from their original commission as pocket-sized prints, translocated objects. As such they are re-readable as African subjects mildly content in their slow mimetic journey to modernity: a journey to modernity that is managed by a colonising force that is in reality and temporally ever-present but rendered absent in popular readings of Keita's work. Given the context of the original purpose of these photographs, as 'a type of private correspondence' (Rips 2006) for the French Sudanese, they have worked well on the contemporary and romantic French

imagination concerning memory of Africa. This is because they allow a safe and absent image to emerge of the French colonising selves. This sense enables the romance of Henri Matisse to be evoked rather than an image of violent colonial occupation that Algeria, Mali's neighbour, has come to represent. Keita's subjects, through the agency of Magnin, are then read as a people in transition, moving from one African temporality – the old French Sudanese subject – towards the new modern European Malian identity that is moulded suitably and benevolently by the French. The fascination with the work within France and beyond may possibly lie in the fact that Keita's photographs unconsciously produce a unique visualisation, especially outside of Mali, of the degrees of success that the workings of the French colonial processes of assimilation managed to achieve. Represented as objects for purchase by European galleries, they are tainted by the fact that they bring forth the myth of the happy native. As images repurposed within the white cube context, they ultimately work against, in a Fanonian sense, the processes of decolonising the mind.

Also in 1991 the celebrated French photographer Françoise Huguier was increasingly working on extended personal photo projects in Africa and it was while in Mali that she, too, encountered the work of Seydou Keita. Huguier's biography states that she 'discovers and contributes to popularizing the works of both the photographers Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé' (Françoise Huguier – Biography n.d.). The first public popularising moment of the work of Keita was achieved primarily and significantly in 1993, when Huguier introduced it to Louis Mesplé, the Artistic Director of the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, Arles, who in turn invited Huguier to curate a large-scale audio-visual programme for the Arles photography festival in the summer of 1993. This was the first significant public display of Keita's photographs in Europe in which he was credited as the author in front of an influential, knowledgeable and international photographic audience. The projection took place in the old Antique Theatre in Arles at around 9pm. Dominique Anginot from Lux Modernis in Paris designed the audio-visual installation. Keita's images were projected hugely across the multi-storey high screen and were dramatically accompanied by a live solo performance on guitar and vocals from one of Mali's rising stars in the world music scene, Mama Sissoko. Sissoko sat as a lone figure in traditional Malian robes playing his melancholic electric guitar interspersed with his high-pitched vocals constructing a mesmerising fusion of rock guitar and traditional song building a wall of sound that complemented the slow slide transitions of the work on display. Sissoko was dwarfed by the giant-sized images from Keita's studio projected behind him, and the wind from the south

carried his voice effortlessly around the theatre. The audience was captivated by frame after frame of Keita's portraits. One of the songs that Sissoko sang was specially written for and dedicated to the work of Keita:

'Oh Mother!

Oh Mother, all human beings

Are born from you

And we owe You everything.

Look, Look at Seydou:

How did he live and how

Did he do? ...'

The song goes on to praise Keita's 'probity and fortitude'. The display of Keita's work was organised along simplistic visual motifs that occurred within the works: cars, mopeds, bicycles, cigarettes and other Western consumer goods were the unifying indexical signs that drove the narration of the projection. Though the work had been 'discovered' and presented, few were really able to translate it at this juncture and as far as the projection in Arles was concerned the work was ultimately positioned within the realm of the exotic as the names of the sitters, along with the social and political context for the photographs, were markedly absent. The 'Bamakois' were presented as a nameless body.

This context in turn contributed to the project's success and that night Keita's work was literally the 'Talk of the Town' (Diawara 1998). Throughout the remaining days of the festival Keita's presentation eclipsed interest in the major exhibitions being staged in Arles that year, such as the works of Richard Avedon and Larry Fink. It was evident that a new chapter on African photography had been opened up in the mainstream theatre of European photography within the heart of its oldest and most celebrated international festival.

As part of her Malian encounters Huguier also developed the concept of a biennial for African photography, titled '*Rencontres de Bamako*', which was successfully held in Bamako in 1994, primarily with funding from the Paris-based state-funded cultural agency 'Afrique en créations'. The event attracted a significant amount of interest from France's photography elite who attended en masse to re-create the atmosphere of Arles in Bamako. Their collective visual presence at the festival in Bamako was representative of a caricature of post-colonial

cultural exchanges: sunglasses, straw Panama hats and expensive white linen abounded among the visiting Parisian delegates. The cultural highlight of the event was formal recognition from Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of Mali, who inaugurated the festival by cutting a ribbon and making both Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé guests of honour in recognition of their significant work behind the camera. In a photograph taken by Abbas, the Iranian Paris-based Magnum photographer, Huguier can be seen standing next to the President as he cuts the ribbon. On his other side is an elated-looking French diplomat. The photograph captures well the power relations at work across the event. Bamako as a festival for African photography continues to play an important part in the display and discovery of African photography; however, it remains dependent and under the ultimate control of l'Institut Français and its impact on the local Bamako communities is, even after 20 years, problematic in that few locals actively engage with the exhibitions programme.

With the international *succès fou* of two studio photographers from Bamako, Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé, whose work found new life and, quite literally, global recirculation in galleries and museums in the 1990s, photography has played an important role in securing critical and curatorial as well as popular interest in modern and contemporary African art. Photography and photographers from Africa have not only benefited from, but have in many instances clearly driven, the current trend. (Bajorek & Haney 2010, p.264)

It is doubtful if African photographers are capable economically and institutionally of currently driving trends in the appreciation of its photographic history, and the benefits gained, both financial and cultural, need careful consideration. Long before 1991 and the 'discovery of Seydou Keita' and the establishment of *Rencontres de Bamako* in 1994, trends were fixed through specific cultural and curatorial displays of African photographic subjects and practices were managed by strong market-led interest in African works from Eurocentric private collectors, galleries, government-funded cultural agencies and philanthropic entrepreneurs. These trends disproportionately dictate, even today, the terms of African photographic image reception and dangerously reproduce the historical, cultural, hierarchical and political disavowal embedded within the histories of photography and its associated and problematic colonialities.

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Autograph ABP, Rivington Place, London EC2A 3BA – Rotimi Fani-Kayode Archives.

The Bodleian Library, Broad St, Oxford OX1 3BG – Alice Seeley Harris Archives.

Getty Images, 101 Bayham St, London NW1 0AG – Picture Post Magazine Archives.

Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Rd, London SE1 6HZ – War Posters Archives.

Magnum Photos Ltd, 63 Gee St, London EC1V 3RS – Wayne Miller Archives.

Ryerson Image Centre, 33 Gould St, Toronto, ON M5B 1E9, Canada – Black Star Photo Agency Archives.

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