

*African Arts* 12 (1) (1978); Deborah Poole and the editor of *Representations* for permission to reprint an abridged version of her essay, which appeared in *Representations* 38 (spring 1992); and Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie and the editor of *Native Nations: Journeys in American Photography* (1998, edited by Jane Alison; London: Barbican Art Gallery) for permission to reprint her essay.

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## Introduction

"HOW THE OTHER HALF..."

During the ten years between 1877 and 1887, through which Jacob Riis was delivering his impassioned lectures concerning New York's "invisible" poor, photography — which he so famously championed — reached a new evidentiary crescendo. *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (1890), Riis's explosive conjunction of words and images, has rightly taken a central place among works on the history of photography, for it was a fulcrum of photography's collision with politics and life and an exemplary case of the image's ability to reconfigure its referent. Riis opened his work with the observation that "one half of the world does not know how the other half lives" (1997 [1890], 5), and he used photography as a shamanic trace exported from one demiworld to the other. The collection of essays in this volume was precipitated by the realization that photography itself is now in need of a similar revelation of its own other half, its own disavowed other history.

This volume seeks to change the focus of the critical debate about photographic practice. By abandoning the notion that photographic history is best seen as the explosion of a Western technology whose practice has been molded by singular individuals, *Photography's Other Histories* presents a radically different account of a globally disseminated and locally appropriated medium. In its details of the significance of colonial photographic practice in the formation of metropolitan self-identity, the book also presents case studies of contemporary photographic self-fashioning. Further, it addresses the importance of photographic records in the his-

torical and autobiographical formations that people construct for themselves, as well as the relationship between photography and other media. Through various substantive studies, photography's mimetic doubling becomes a prism through which to consider questions of cultural and self-identity, historical consciousness, and the nature of photographic affirmation and revelation.

Just as one might extend the history of photography far back beyond 1839 so as to incorporate entire traditions of indexical experimentation and ontology, so we might also extend the history of photography laterally outward to domains outside the purview of conventional narratives. Within Buddhism, for example, there is a complex blurring with ancient ontological expectations, which places photography in a very different—and much longer—chronology than that normally ascribed to it by historians of photography: "The icons of the Buddha are sometimes compared to the 'original' shadow that he is said to have left in a cave at Nagarahara" (Faure 1998, 804). In central Indian popular use, "photography" is a practice that also incorporates other media such as painting and chromolithography, and indexicality is a property shared by these different media: photos are not clearly marked as "modern" because their "functions are duplicated by so many other forms of palpably ancient representation" (Pinney 1997a, 112).

This volume, which has as its genesis an international conference held at the Museum of Queensland in Brisbane in late 1997, is notable for its cultural and historical reach. The saliency of photography to postcolonial debates is marked herein by the contributions of two indigenous Australians and of a practicing Seminole/Muskogee/Diné artist. The Australians, Driessens and Aird, powerfully consider the significance of photographic traditions in indigenous communities and the relationship between personal memories and that which is encoded in the archive. Much recent writing that seeks to historically contextualize photography's emergence during a period of colonial expansion has drawn on crucial insights from Edward Said and Michel Foucault and has tended to construct photographic imagery and practice as immovably within a "truth" that simplistically reflects a set of cultural and political dispositions held by the makers of those images. Perhaps the starkest of these contributions is that offered by the Algerian poet Malek Alloula in *The Colonial Harem* (1987). By consciously eschewing the study of the actual political and historical consumption of images (Barthes's claim that "the reading of public photographs is always at bottom, a private reading" appears as an epigraph in

Alloula's book), Alloula spins an eloquent but untested hypothesis concerning the role of photography as "the fertiliser of the colonial vision [producing] stereotypes in the manner of great seabirds producing guano" (4). The veil that Algerian women presented to this colonial vision was received as an affront by photographers ("the whiteness of the veil becomes the symbolic equivalent of blindness; a leukoma, a white speck on the eye of the photographer and his viewpoint" [7]), and a vengeance of visibility and nudity was wreaked on this inviolability that so deeply "haunted" the photographer-voyeur" (13).

Such debates tend to invoke formal readings of images that are then made to do the work of a preexisting political hypothesis. In Carlo Ginzburg's words these are "physiognomic" readings, in which the analyst "reads into them what he has already learned by other means, or what he believes he knows, and wants to demonstrate." Underpinning this approach, Ginzburg continues, is "the conviction that works of art, in a broad sense, furnish a mine of first hand information that can explicate, without intermediaries, the mentality and emotive life of a distant age" (1989, 35). Ginzburg raises a profound methodological issue of pressing relevance to all those working with imagery and artifacts, and although this is ultimately an unresolvable problem, the manner in which many arguments about the "political effects" of images overlay them with conclusions arrived at by "other means" is especially striking and troubling.

That the formal qualities of images themselves may be in large part irrelevant is suggested by their historical trajectories and the radical revaluations that they undergo. If an image that appears to do a particular kind of work in one episteme is able to perform radically different work in another, it appears inappropriate to propose inflexible links between formal qualities and effect. Instead, we need a more nuanced reading of the affinities between particular discursive formations and the image worlds that parallel them, as well as sophisticated analyses of their transformational potentialities.

What are the consequences, for instance, of the documented fact that "collectors of North African, Near and Middle Eastern descent dominate the market for Orientalist art" (Benjamin 1997, 32)? Those paintings, which Said (1978) and Nochlin (1983) have argued projected an image of largely negative alterity, are now eagerly consumed by those whose reality these images so distorted. Roger Benjamin's researches with those who market these paintings indicate that a nostalgic invocation of "indigenous iden-

ties through images of the pre-colonial past" is involved, together with "a new sense of positive empowerment expressed through the acquisition and thus redefinition of western cultural documents" (1997, 34-35).

The point here is not to invalidate Said's hypothesis — which remains of fundamental importance to all cross-cultural work — but rather to raise a set of new questions for further investigation. A greater sense of the fragility and instability of the relationship between images and their contexts might allow the exploration of why certain images prove capable of recording while others are more resistant, and many others are completely intractable. Thus Benjamin notes that only certain types of Orientalist paintings are popular with Maghrebian and Arab customers: especially favored are nontopographically specific painted scenes, and there is little enthusiasm for photographic images and those of female nudes (1997, 34-37).

#### Personal Archives

Jo-Anne Driessens's and Michael Aird's contributions to this volume recast the problem of the colonial archive. By addressing its existence not in terms of ontological generality but rather as located in a specific postcolonial moment, Driessens and Aird reveal the archive's contents as something like the cargo of a ship tossed on the waves of a heavy sea, subject to movements that produce a rearrangement and recoding. This reconfigured archive, influenced by new demands of personal recuperation, assumes a radically new role. In both Driessens's and Aird's cases the recoding of images arose from their discovery and recognition of images of family members, stored like a vein of gold in the archive. Recuperation takes the form of a homecoming: the naming of the formerly anonymous, the individuation and recognition of persons whose work in the archive had usually been to "typify" — that is, to exemplify some category. Recuperation here is a kind of particularization, the enclosing in a new space of domesticity and affection of images formerly lost in the public wilderness of the archive.

Aird wonderfully captures the creativity of the engagement of Aboriginal peoples with the archive as a "look[ing] past the stereotypical way in which their relatives and ancestors have been portrayed" (my emphasis). "Looking past" suggests a complexity of perspectival positions or a multi-

licity of layers that endow photographs with an enormously greater complexity than that which they are usually credited. The photograph ceases to be a univocal, flat, and uncontested indexical trace of what was, and becomes instead a complexly textured artifact (concealing many different depths) inviting the viewer to assume many possible different standpoints — both spatial and temporal — in respect to it. But for Aird only certain types of images permit this "looking past," just as only certain forms of Orientalist images appeal in the current market: he describes how an image of Andrew Ball ultimately proved wholly resistant to attempts to displace it from the space of enumeration and humiliation.

Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie finds a latency in many images of Native Americans that parallels the ability to "look past." Thus in E. P. Niblack's portrait of Johnny Kit Elswa (see fig. 8 in her essay) she feels a recursive texture, at the point now of resurfacing. The portrait pictures the Haida Gwaii man with the Bear clan inscribed on his chest and the dog fish on his arms. "Tattoos," Tsinhnahjinnie notes, "went under the skin to survive, encoded beneath the skin, programmed to resurface when the time is right. . . . This is also how I perceive the art of aboriginal tattoo, latent images." Tsinhnahjinnie proposes a view of photography very different from Barthes's stress on the flat image's preservation of anterior temporal states. For Tsinhnahjinnie, the photograph is more like a message in a bottle, or like a seed: an object transmitted to the future, ready at any moment to burst forth.

I have noted that Michael Aird drew firm limits on the potentiality of "looking past." Tsinhnahjinnie, however, performs a more difficult recoding, which appeals to a more overtly political space of action. It is an energetic recoding, a recuperation of an image of terrible degradation that less-strenuous analysts might have abandoned forever to the practices of genocide that made possible the accumulation of large parts of the archive. George Trager's photograph of Big Foot lying dead in the snow at Wounded Knee records an ultimate subjection, but it provokes in Tsinhnahjinnie a dream. In this dream she floats, seeing Big Foot as he is in the photograph. A small girl then traverses the snow, looking into the faces of the dead: "she walked over to Big Foot, looking into his face. She shakes his shoulders, takes his frozen hand into her small, warm hand, and helps him to his feet. He then brushes the snow off of his clothes. She waits patiently with her hand extended, he then takes her hand and they walk out of the photograph. This is the dream I recall when I look upon this image of supposed hopelessness."

How are we to understand this volatility of the image? Peirce's conceptualization of the photograph as indexical has recently been much invoked ("I define an Index as a sign determined by its Dynamic object by virtue of being in a real relation to it" [1958, 391]). This relationship of physical contiguity between image and referent certainly played a central role in the truth claims of the colonial archive: photography was seen to surpass and eradicate the subjectivity and unreliability of earlier technologies of representation. Indexicality was thus mobilized as a guarantee of fixity. Photography, so Valéry observed, came to underwrite experience and history: "The mere notion of photography . . . suggests the simple question: *could such and such a fact, as it is narrated, have been photographed?*" (cited in Trachtenberg 1989, xiii-xiv; see also my essay in this volume).

But the index need not only imply fixity and stability: it can as easily be used to undermine this very notion. Photography's exemplification of Peirce's index might be recast in terms of an inevitable randomness within the image. What in Peirce's terms are purely iconic images (e.g., paintings, drawings) are capable of excluding randomness because they reflect only the imagination and skill of their creators, and when those qualities are present in excess they are capable of driving out the incidental. Photographic technology, however, is founded on a paradox: the very capture of light on film implies an ineradicable surfeit. If we think of the painter's imagination and brush as a filter capable of complete exclusion, then the lens of the camera can never be closed because something extraneous will always enter into it. No matter how precautionary and punctilious the photographer is in arranging everything that is placed before the camera, the inability of the lens to discriminate will ensure a substrate or margin of excess, a subversive code present in every photographic image that makes it open and available to other readings and uses. Thus we might understand photography's indexicality to be the guarantee not of closure and fixity, but rather of multiple surfaces and of the possibility of "looking past." It is precisely photography's inability to discriminate, its inability to exclude, that makes it so textured and so fertile. Encoded "beneath photography's skin" (Tsinhnahjinnie) this excess lies waiting to resurface.

This volatility can also be seen to reflect the "misrecognition" that lies at the heart of photography. Once again, Carlo Ginzburg provides a vital route to understanding this notion. He has described what may appear to be a paradox of the completeness of those Inquisitorial records that deal with behaviors to which the makers of those records would have been especially hostile. Ginzburg agrees with other commentators that

most Inquisitorial records are extremely suspect and reveal that the interrogees' answers merely echo the questions posed by their interrogators (1989, 160). However, the Friulian trials of the *benandanti* (Inquisitorial investigations of suspected witches) stand out: Ginzburg notes that their "ethnographic value" is "astonishing": "Not only words, but gestures, sudden reactions like blushing, even silences, were recorded with punctilious accuracy by the notaries of the Holy Office" (160). Ginzburg uses these Friulian documents to argue against the suggestion that (following Jakobson) all reported speech is "appropriated and remoulded," suggesting instead that "a conflicting cultural reality" can "leak out" from these encounters. This "leaking" was much more likely where the quoter of that reported speech—in this case Inquisitors—misrecognize what is uttered to them. As Ginzburg says, the historians' "task is much easier when the inquisitors did not understand" (162-63). He suggests that where there is "recognition" cultural filters came into play that mediated and modulated evidence to suit the agendas of the Inquisitors: where there was recognition, templates and other preexisting schemata were mobilized that appropriated the new experience to old expectations. Misrecognition thus emerges as productive: "We can take advantage . . . of those invaluable cases in which the lack of communication on a cultural level between judges and defendants permitted, rather paradoxically, the emergence of a real dialogue—in the Bakhtinian sense of an unresolved clash of conflicting voices" (164; my emphasis).

The value of the Friulian transcripts reflects the absence of "cultural filters" that permitted the Inquisitors to mediate the evidence in terms of well-worn formulas. A "misrecognition" of *benandanti* knowledge precluded the Inquisitors from excluding anything: they didn't "know" what to exclude and as a result ended up recording everything.

This is a useful metaphor for photography: however hard the photographer tries to exclude, the camera lens always includes. The photographer can never fully control the resulting photograph, and it is that lack of control and the resulting excess that permits recoding, "resurfacing," and "looking past."

This dimension of "photography's other history" reflects the specific nature of photography as a technology: prephotographic technologies do not exhibit this inescapably random element. Photographs are necessarily contrived and reflect the culture that produces them, but no photograph is so successful that it filters out the random entirely. This is another ground on which we might wish to complicate Foucauldian and Saidian

approaches that presuppose an absolute fit between the image and the ideological forces that appear to motivate the image, as well as those approaches that treat photographs merely as art-historical texts betraying only a grander sweeping aesthetic intentionality.

### Visual Economies

A set of essays grouped together under the title "Visual Economies" forms the second section of this volume. The title is taken from Deborah Poole's exploration, in her book on Andean photography, of the inequalities that characterize representational domains. Eschewing the term "visual culture" for its supposition of consensus and homogeneity, Poole advocates a stress on unequal flows and exchanges: hence "economy" rather than "culture." She states that economy "suggests that this organization has as much to do with social relationships, inequality, and power as with shared meanings and community" (1997: 8). Clearly this is necessary as a corrective to the potentially utopian conclusions suggested by a stress on photography's volatility and infinite recordability. We must not lose sight of the extraordinary circumstances of inequality (encompassing the range from cultural, political, and economic hierarchy to systematic genocide) that gave rise to the vast majority of the images inhabiting the colonial archive. Poole has another intent: to stress the globality of image flows that exceeded the locality that the term "culture" might imply: "It is relatively easy to imagine the people of Paris and Peru, for example, participating in the same 'economy.' To imagine or speak of them as part of a shared 'culture' is considerably more difficult. I use the word 'economy' . . . with the intention of capturing this sense of how visual images move across national and cultural boundaries" (8).

Roslyn Poignant inserts photographic representations of abducted indigenous Australians in the context of a history of earlier depictions and questions the "difference" that most writings on photography attribute to its technology. Susan Sontag (1979) famously expounded the metaphorical affinity between photographic practice and "capture." Here, Poignant explores photography as an accompaniment to the literal abduction of a group of Queenslanders who were paraded as the living incarnation of a set of Western fantasies of savagery through nineteenth-century America and Europe. A fragment of an important forthcoming work, Poignant's essay is concerned with the persistence—across diverse technologies—

of discriminatory representation. Tracing enduring tropes of "savagery" from 1600 onward, Poignant observes the intimate entwining of discourses of conceptual and visual fixity exemplified in the terms "stereotype" and "cliché"—both originally used to describe repetitive printing processes.

Poignant also develops a strategy to destabilize this apparent fixity, which resonates with the "excess" of photography discussed above. She detects a disturbance in photographic images akin to Barthes's notion of the "punctum," characterized by what Berger and Mohr (1982, 96) describe as a "quotation from experience." However, across the centuries a continuity emerges that links the woodblock, through photography, to the digitized injustices perpetrated by global media.

James Faris traces the ways in which Navajo have been photographically depicted, and like Poignant he detects enduring structural features that regulate the manner in which certain people are represented to the archive. What may appear faulty or objectionable are not "flaws in an uneducated, unevolved, unenlightened West [rather] they are the necessary conditions of existence of the Navajo to the West." Faris's model of knowledge production is much less optimistic than Ginzburg's, seeing in the "optical unconscious" of Navajo photographic representation a limited set of ossified permutations rather than a fecund field of volatile possibilities: "There are but a finite series of means by which the West has viewed Navajo." A particularly interesting feature of Faris's analysis is his attempt to specify the limits of the representational paradigm through a contrast between published and unpublished images (a theme pursued in more detail in Faris 1997). This is one of the ways through which one can identify "effectivity" under specific discursive regimes: the choice to publish or not publish reveals contemporary understandings about which photographs do a particular kind of work (effect) and which do another kind of work. Through this sort of comparison we can transcend the inevitable limitations of the sort of formal analysis (e.g. by Alloula) discussed earlier.

Morris Low's significant contribution to this volume can help destabilize the sense of a unitary "colonial archive" through the documentation of a different colonialism—that of the Japanese in Manchuria. The reattribution of agency to those formerly denied it also entails the acknowledgment that imperialism, racism, and genocide were not the exclusive preserve of Europe and America but also have been enthusiastically performed by many other nations and cultural traditions. Low's essay can be seen as an actualization of Nicholas Thomas's (1994) invitation to explode the singular fiction of "colonialism" into diverse local practices that need to be

investigated through their singularity (attending to its "dispersed and conflicted character" [3]), rather than through an appeal to an archetypal monstrous practice. However, Low reveals—in this singularity—a doubling or a mimicry of longer-standing models of colonialism (e.g., European narrative forms, colonial sartorial conventions, and stresses on "manliness"). Other studies of local colonialisms are urgently needed to explore the questions raised by Low's work.

In a subtle and sophisticated essay Christopher Wright suggests that the New Guinea photographs of F. R. Barton (which might at first appear to be exemplary instances of a voyeuristic colonial gaze) are trapped in a wider cultural history—an economy of desire that is cross-cut by Hula constructs of personhood. Barton's dubious images appear on first viewing to be utterly reducible to a set of expectations created by "ready-made interpretive frame[s]" and to be exemplary of the carceral and pornographic network of colonial photography. But Wright argues that this notion simplifies and overwrites the image with our own preoccupations: Barton's photographs are entangled in many different scopopic regimes, not just that of colonial surveillance. Echoing Tsinhnahjinnie, Wright suggests that Barton's images might be thought of as a form of tattoo, impregnated with diverse latent cultural codings. Wright raises the problem inherent in Foucauldian and Saidian approaches, namely the assumption that, in Homi Bhabha's words, "colonial power is possessed entirely by the coloniser" (cited in Young 1990, 142). The analysis presented here stresses Hula agency and the photographic image, as a record of a space of complex negotiation—and of a "leaking out" rather than simple dominance.

Various contributors to this volume address the impact of different photographic technologies on what might be termed the "photographic event"; that is, the dialogic period during which the subject and the photographer come together. These meetings encompass a diverse realm that includes lengthy negotiations under conditions of elaborate technological preparation and a fleeting invisible surveillance in which the photographer may be invisible to the subject of the image. Different essays examine the theatrical idioms of studio portraiture, the spaces of complex voyeuristic desire that early technologies encouraged, and the wall of silence and mutual mistrust that can also characterize certain photographic events. Nicolas Peterson's essay sets "colonial" photographic practice centrally within the fluid political reality of Australia. He records the increasing recuperation of images from the archive by Aboriginal individuals and communities. This recuperation takes the form of a recovery from the public

domain into more enclosed arenas in which they are controlled by the images' subjects and their descendants. Contrasting the free photographic access that the 1891 Elder Expedition had to Australia's native people with a 1997 legal dispute over the right to photograph on Gumaitj clan land in the Northern Territory, Peterson reveals a profound transformation in the ethical and political space within which photography operates. In contrast with Faris's stress on the relative immutability of the matrix through which Navajo are represented by the "West," Peterson demonstrates contestation and change. Photography as a technology of capture and appropriation (in the terms popularized by Sontag) is no longer free to explore the full extent of its metaphorical violence. Since the mid-1970s it has come to operate in a field of dialogue and refusal, subject to the injunctions and restraints of Aboriginal communities and national law. Peterson also observes that Aboriginal people are increasingly using the camera themselves. The use of video by remote Aboriginal communities has been famously described by Eric Michaels (1994), but regrettably no work has yet emerged that provides any substantive insight into the use of still photography in these localities.

### Self-Fashioning and Vernacular Modernism

The third section of this volume, "Self-Fashioning and Vernacular Modernism" raises the issue of what questions about other practices need to be examined in order to understand photographic practice. Moving from an autonomous history of photography with its own necessary determinants, a much more culturally fluid set of possibilities opens up that reveals popular practice often to be in advance of "art" practice in its visions of the world. Attention is also given to popular practice as a creator of culture rather than simply (as in Bourdieu's noted study [1990]) its reproducer. Case studies from Peru (Poole), India (Pinney), Kenya (Behrend), and Nigeria (Sprague) illustrate the heterodox practices that flourish outside the metropole. These photographic practices appear to be at an ultimate remove from the disciplinary framework through which photography first impacted on these locales, and they constitute a distinctive postcolonial popular aesthetic.

In the relative absence of anthropological work on photography, historians and cultural theorists of the medium have managed to avoid asking fundamental questions concerning the social and personal space that