In an effort to enliven the review section of the *AHR*, we have been experimenting with new ways of evaluating scholarship of all kinds. In a number of instances, we have asked several scholars to review a single book or film, in order to bring a variety of critical views to bear on issues of historical importance. This has included roundtables on Michael A. Gomez's *African Dominion*, Adel Manna's *Nakba and Survival: The Story of the Palestinians Who Remained in Haifa and the Galilee, 1948–1956*, Jill Lepore's *These Truths: A History of the United States*, and, most recently, *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, edited by Armando Salvatore, Roberto Tottoli, and Babak Rahimi.

Here we offer a roundtable review of the collected essays in *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History*, which explores the use of photography as an instrument of state surveillance, as a medium promoting cross-disciplinary conversations, and as a methodological tool that intersects with oral traditions. As one contributor suggests, in "moving us outside the frame of the photograph itself, by refusing to accept the photograph as the last word, *Ambivalent*'s authors bring photography into conversation with orality, travel writing, ritual, and politics, with new approaches to questions of race, gender, age, time, and postcolonial and decolonial histories."

Introduction
By Jennifer Tucker (Wesleyan University)

Seated before a painted backdrop of a volcanic eruption in the background—possibly a depiction of Mount Vesuvius, which erupted in March 1944—a woman holds a small handbag on her lap. A neatly dressed young boy stands beside her as another woman, who appears to be with the group, looks on from the side of the composition, gazing back at the camera operator. The soiled fabric of the photographer's coat contrasts with the sitter's white clothing, which looks immaculate by comparison.

Part of the beauty of the image is that it does not silence the background noise that accompanied its production. White photographer Anne Fischer's image of a photographer at work outdoors in Cape Town in the 1940s (Figure 1) "captures both the making of a portrait and the social world that swirls around the sitters that studio portraits so

This roundtable is dedicated to the memories of Laban Natangwe Shapange and Jeremy Silvester, two individuals who saw the potential of photography to draw in the public to the historical discussions that are open to all and who contributed to photographic historiographies, collaborative public histories, and museums in Africa, and whose lives, like so many, were cut short during the relentless COVID-19 pandemic.

FIGURE 1: Photograph by Anne Fischer, Cape Town, ca. 1940s. Courtesy of Iziko Museums of South Africa, Social History Collections and University of Cape Town Libraries Special Collections.

often conceal from view."[1] In 1937, Fischer, a young Jewish refugee, fled Nazi persecution and traveled via Palestine, Italy, Greece, and England to South Africa, where she established herself as a photographer and was able to make the most of her privilege and power as a white woman in Cape Town. Fischer participated in and contributed to a visual imaginary of the city and its people shaped by the medium, in this case, through its touristic genre. Anne Fischer's photograph also opens a window into the hidden history of street photography in South Africa, as historian Kylie Thomas explains in a recent essay. As Thomas notes: "These kinds of photographs are reminders of untold histories that are only now being unearthed, and they cast light not only on how people were seen in the violent glare of apartheid, but also on how they chose to see themselves."[2]

[1] Kylie Thomas, "Glimpses into the History of Street Photography in South Africa," *Conversation*, October 6, 2020, https://theconversation.com/glimpses-into-the-history-of-street-photography-in-south-africa-146719.
[2] Thomas, "Glimpses into the History of Street Photography in South Africa."

Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History uncovers new histories and historiographies in its examination of the relationship between African histories and photography. *Ambivalent* brings together a number of established and emerging scholars in exploring histories and visual material about and from the African continent—much of it visual archival material that has not been written about extensively until now. The proposition is not merely that photographs are an important, widely neglected source for history. Rather, this collection presents the notion that "where the camera has been present, it continues to have effects," including the potential to read history anew.[3] Its editors, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, and contributors ask historians to consider not only what it means to write histories in the age of photography but also to resist claims to the general and universal in the categorization of photography—and of history.

This is a book about African photography that invites international scholars to not only become aware of new work emerging in Africa but to also consider different ways of engaging both contemporary and historical photographic trends. The majority of contributors are African and work on the continent. *Ambivalent* gathers a new generation of scholars to offer an expansive framework for thinking about questions of photography and visibility in Africa. In addition to the editors, its contributors include George Emeka Agbo, Isabelle de Rezende, Jung Ran Forte, Ingrid Masondo, Phindi Mnyaka, Okechukwu Nwafor, Vilho Shigwedha, Napandulwe Shiweda, and Drew Thompson. Its contributors pose new questions concerning the instability of the identity photograph in South Africa; ethnographic photographs as potential history; humanitarian discourse from the perspective of photographic survivors of atrocity photojournalism; the nuanced passage from studio to screen in postcolonial digital portraiture; and the burgeoning visual activism in West Africa, among other subjects.

The book also delves into the implications and contradictions of writing about "ways of seeing," in and beyond Africa. That phrase was coined not by John Berger, writer of an acclaimed 1972 British television series (which was later adapted as a book) with that title, but by the Barbadian poet and writer George Lamming in his 1960 classic postcolonial study of migration, *The Pleasures of Exile*. Historical scholarship on "ways of seeing" explores zones of visibility and opacity, revelation and secrecy.

The past decade has seen immense growth in historical scholarship on photography and African history.[4] This work is deepening our understanding of historical and contemporary photographic practices in Africa and their negotiation of regional histories—histories that are interwoven with broader forces and conditions. It also advances knowledge of historical and contemporary photographic practices and visual languages of the African diaspora.[5] These works are redressing the limitations not only of the pho-

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[3] Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, "Introduction: Africa and the Ambivalence of Seeing," in *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History*, ed. Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley (Athens, OH, 2019), 1–33, here 15.

[4] Among others, these books include Darren Newbury, Lorena Rizzo, and Kylie Thomas, eds., *Women and Photography in Africa: Creative Practices and Feminist Challenges* (New York, 2020); Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester, eds., *Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life* (New York, 2013); Richard Vokes, *Photography in Africa*: Ethnographic Perspectives (Suffolk, 2012); Erin Haney, *Photography and Africa* (London, 2010); and Jennifer Bajorek, *Unfixed: Photography and Decolonial Imagination in West Africa* (Durham, NC, 2020).

[5] See, for example, Krista Thompson, *Shine: The Visual Economy of Light in African Diasporic Aesthetic Practice* (Durham, NC, 2015), 173, who writes that "performance acts that capture the optical effect of being represented, the moment of being photographed, are part and parcel of the contemporary visual language of the African diaspora."

tographic archives but also of photographic history. They contribute to a broader questioning of the dominant discourses that often—and all too easily—categorize photographs and presume their meanings for given times, places, and situations. In the process, they open a wider dialogue on photography and history.

At a time when we are witnessing a proliferation of visual images through streaming social media, and when camera phones are making all of us into potential witnesses, the essays in *Ambivalent* move beyond photography as an isolated medium to engage larger questions and interlocking forms of expression and historical analysis.[6] The authors contribute to opening broader international dialogue about photographs and history. Scholarship has expanded beyond a primary focus on what photographic representations are *of* to include the questions of how do photographs work in the world and what historical claims can we make on the basis of photographs. This is an investigation that stretches back for decades, but which has gained new interest influenced by new histories and research fields.[7]

Photography is itself a historical subject: it involves arrangement, financing, posture, positioning, and other kinds of work that are otherwise invisible. In moving us outside the frame of the photograph itself, by refusing to accept the photograph as the last word, *Ambivalent*'s contributors bring photography into conversation with orality, travel writing, ritual, and politics, with new approaches to questions of race, gender, age, time, and postcolonial and decolonial histories. They remind us that while photographs carry an immense capacity for display, they can eclipse important histories that often emerge through oral engagements as well. They also suggest that photographs can exceed the parameters of discursive frameworks that scholars and institutions impose on them, including narratives of (de)colonization.

One of the most striking images in the book is a digitally retouched photograph by Nigerian photographer Mbadimma Chinemelum, who inserts a young woman into what appears to be a sea of textile. In his essay, Okechukwu Nwafor writes about the practices of digital reworking and recontextualization in Nigeria and questions the assumption that "photography is a spatial-temporal phenomenon that must follow a narrative consequence." Phindi Mnyaka, in her essay work on the photographers Joseph Denfield and Daniel Morolong, based in East London, South Africa, writes that she found it productive to think about both photographers' work "oceanically" in order to allow two sets of collections that are separated by time to speak to each other. Looking at Denfield's

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[6] Darnella Frazier filmed the murder of George Floyd on a trip to the grocery store. Frazier "used her phone to show that we are all war photographers, we can all use our phones for good, to show the world what's happening." Adrian Horton, "Film-maker Alexandra Pelosi: 'I think phones are more dangerous than guns,'" *Guardian*, October 23, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/oct/23/alexandra-pelosi-nancy-pelosi-documentary.

[7] Writing on photography and history is now a large body of literature. For works that combine multiple perspectives, see, for example, Gil Pasternak, ed., *The Handbook of Photography Studies* (London, 2020); Olga Shevchenko, ed., *Double Exposure: Memory and Photography* (New York, 2014); Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, *Photography's Other Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Jennifer Tucker, ed., "Photography and Historical Interpretation," special issue, *History and Theory* 48, no. 4 (December 2009); Elizabeth Edwards and Sigrid Lien, *Uncertain Images: Museums and the Work of Photographs* (London: Routledge, 2014); and Jason E. Hill and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds. *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News* (New York: Routledge, 2015); among many others. See Gil Pasternak, "Introduction: Photography Studies' Prehistory, Formation, and Evolution," in Pasternak, *The Handbook of Photography*, 1–18, where he describes the emergence of two dominant clusters of photographic scholarship: one that could be termed "history of photography," the other "photographic history" (11).

Victorian-era photographs through Morolong's apartheid-era photographs at the beach allows her to unstitch the former from settler historiography.

The essays stimulate us as historians to think about new ways of comprehending the past through images and their circulation and effects. As Matthew Fox-Amato writes, the essays in *Ambivalent* point toward "the richer histories we stand to tell—accounts mindful of how images were taken, what images meant, and why certain images were not made in the first place—when we listen to people talking about photography."

The roundtable features contributions from five scholars who not only use photographs as primary sources to interpret the past but also reflect on what it means to write about history in the age of photography. Their engagements with *Ambivalent* offer a chance to profile African scholars doing work in African studies and pioneering new approaches not only to photography and visuality but also to the study of politics and African history. The authors who contributed to the roundtable are especially well equipped to do this as experts in visual history across different historical periods and geographical places, working with different kinds of photographic media and archives and historical questions. **Matthew Fox-Amato** is a cultural historian of the United States whose first book, *Exposing Slavery: Photography, Human Bondage, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics in America* (2019), explores how photography influenced and was shaped by conflicts over slavery. **Zeynep D. Gürsel** is a media anthropologist whose current scholarship focuses on photography as a tool of governmentality in the late Ottoman Empire. She is the author of *Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of the Digital* (2016), an ethnography of the international photojournalism industry. **Marius Kothor** is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at Yale University. She has broad research interests in twentieth-century African history, gender, and Black internationalism. Her dissertation examines the role of women merchants in Togo's anticolonial struggle and how these women became icons of Black feminist liberation for African American women. **Sumathi Ramaswamy** is a cultural historian of South Asia and the British Empire, who works in the areas of visual studies, the history of cartography, and gender. Her publications include *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (2010) and *Empires of Vision: A Reader* (2014; coedited with Martin Jay). **Olga Shevchenko** does research on the issues of memory, photography, culture, and consumption in post-socialist Russia. She is currently working on a collaborative research project entitled *Snapshot Histories: Family Photography and Generational Memories of Socialism in Russia*, in which she uses family photo archives to understand how they at times conceal, and at other times enable, the production of knowledge and affect about the family, as well as the national, past.

The cover of *Ambivalent* is a photograph by Daniel Kgomo Morolong, "Train Station in Mdantsane, East London," circa the 1960s (Figure 2). The photograph shows three women and a man posing with exuberant smiles in front of a train at the central railway station in the city of East London, in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Morolong developed his photographic reputation through his studio work, providing social photographs and news and sports photographs of individuals and groups residing in Mdantsane. Morolong's images for the *African Edition*—a supplement in the South African newspaper the *Daily Dispatch*, published in East London—transported the viewer to a newly formed racial configuration whose creation was deeply intertwined with commercial expansion and labor appropriation. Daniel Morolong's photographs tell the

FIGURE 2: Daniel Morolong, "Train Station in Mdantsane, East London," c. 1960s. Photo © Daniel "Kgomo" Morolong. All rights reserved. Courtesy Morolong Estate and Everard Read/Circa Gallery.

"story" of life in the Black urban residential areas of the city at a time when apartheid's political agendas were beginning to unfold. Bringing readers closer to people and places that were seen from afar, he suspended movement, allowing for relationality between himself and the subject. In contrast to the fleeting impressions normally associated with train travel, the passengers dominate the image. Their exuberance at the moment the photograph was taken implied that they were not wholly constituted by the circuits of segregation. Designed as peripheral citizens by city officials in his photographs, they also appeared as organic members of the station, making it hard to discern the past or to anticipate the future.[8]

The inspiration for *Ambivalent*, the editors explain, was to think with the idea of "ambivalence." In this context, the term comes from Santu Mofokeng, the late South African photographer, who said that ambivalence informed his work.[9] Mofokeng's statement gestures not to the way that photographs may have different values or meanings—their "polyvalence," to use the biomedical term popularized in cultural studies—but also to the way that photography may make us aware of what it does not fully disclose—the way that photography, in the words of photography critic Shawn Michelle Smith, yields "the unnerving sense of living in a world only partially perceived."[10]

South Africa's remarkable transition from apartheid to democracy is one of the brightest spots in modern history. That transition was both painful and exhilarating in equal measure. It required many compromises and soul-searching and agonizing choices over which problems to prioritize. "Ambivalence" captures the spirit of the place—where the South African state was more directly brutal to its neighbors in the subcontinent in terms of violence—and it is a watchword for the essays in this collection on how photography deals with the past and the present and the relation between the two.[11]

While the essays as a whole address topics of photography, visuality, and visibility across many regions and situations in Africa, many of the essays in this collection stem from original postgraduate thesis research—much of it nurtured in the history departments at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town and the University of Fort Hare in Alice, Eastern Cape, South Africa, both hubs for critical thinking on projects on photography, visual history, and public history.

Ambivalent contributing author Phindi Mnyaka writes that the notion of "ambivalent" became a productive springboard, allowing the authors to write essays that spoke to these photographs' refusal for analytic closure and the necessity at times of holding conflicting viewpoints. She adds: "Often, our research questions as we engaged with

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[8] Phindi Myanka, "The Profane and the Prophetic at a South African Beach," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 209–32, here 226. Morolong was the chief photographer of the *Daily Dispatch*, tasked with compiling images of the township of Mdantsane, an area that had been set aside for Black East Londoners, for a new weekly supplement, the *African Edition*, produced at a time when the city was restructuring in alignment with apartheid's racialized separate development. The production of the newspaper supplement coincided with the deepening of the city's segregation. Rules and restrictions to which the public were required to adhere to on the basis of race and class; to prevent "racial mixing."

[9] Santu Mofokeng, digital recording of artist walkabout at opening of the exhibition *Chasing Shadows*, Extra City Gallery, May 3, 2012, Antwerp; quoted in Hayes and Minkley, "Introduction," 26n15.

[10] Quoted in Hayes and Minkley, "Introduction," *Ambivalent*, 4. Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight* (Durham, NC, 2013), 6.

[11] There are many works that address this subject. An encompassing one that sets out some of the transitional dilemmas and problematics is Leslie Witz, Gary Minkley, and Ciraj Rassool, eds., *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2017), esp. chap. 1.

local archives didn't sit easily with existing literature on photography in Africa. Binarisms such as repressive/honorific, with problematic categories of genre, and historical periodisations connected to terms like 'modernity.'"[12]

This roundtable discussion on the historical analysis and the photographs in *Ambivalent* invites us to reflect more deeply together not only how photographs are manifested in history but how history can benefit from a more genuinely plural scholarly inquiry about our multiple and embroiled histories.

Talking about Photography
By Matthew Fox-Amato (University of Idaho)

There is much to admire in *Ambivalent*. Examining the intertwined story of photography and African history, it brings together a set of essays that are diverse in place, genre, and cultural practice. Subjects range widely—from photographic identification documents in South Africa and images of the Chinese community in Mozambique to digital photographs of aṣọ ẹbì fashion in Nigeria and atrocity imagery in Angola. I would imagine specialists in African history and visual culture will take interest in the interventions of this collection, which seeks to explore African photography on its own terms rather than as a derivative version of European image-making. These essays encourage readers to move beyond narratives that have stressed either colonial domination or African resistance through visual media. But *Ambivalent* also offers a great deal to scholars of many fields: it puts forth models for assessing photographs as historical sources.

Photographs are notoriously slippery forms of evidence, due no doubt to the particular challenges of the photographic archive. Whether personal likeness or popular stereoview, scientific image or photojournalistic scene, photographs often sit in repositories with little immediate information about their histories of production, circulation, and reception. Of course, this has certainly not stopped many historians of visual culture. In my field (United States history), scholars have drawn upon sources such as speeches, diaries, photographers' memoirs, and organizational papers to illuminate the place of photography in American imperialism and the African American freedom struggle.[13] *Ambivalent* similarly underscores how the effort to treat photographs as evidence of the past cannot rely on aesthetic analysis alone. Its use of oral histories, in this regard, is particularly compelling.[14] Some of the most effective moments in the volume come when authors use interviews that discuss photography and photographs, thereby illuminating the creation of colonial photographs in Namibia (Napandulwe Shiweda) and the meanings of pass photographs in South Africa (Gary Minkley). These and other essays

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[12] Quoted in Phindi Mnyaka, "At the Edge of Sight," Africa Is a Country (website), December 10, 2019, https://africasacountry.com/author/phindi-mnyaka.

[13] Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000); Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven, CT, 2002); Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011); John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier, eds., *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York, 2015).

[14] *Ambivalent* is not, of course, the first study to incorporate people talking about photography into its analysis. See, for instance, Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, *Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of Digital Circulation* (Berkeley, CA, 2016).

in *Ambivalent* demonstrate the great benefit in not only looking at photographs but also in listening to people talking about photography.

Historian Napandulwe Shiweda reveals the complex production process behind seemingly straightforward "ethnographic" photographs in "Images of Ambivalence: Photography in the Making of Omhedi, Northern Namibia." The essay focuses on Alfred Duggan-Cronin's 1936 pictures of the Ovakwanyama people of Omhedi. Shiweda contextualizes these images within what she terms the "photography of colonial legitimation" that South African colonizers employed in Namibia.[15] During the 1930s, South Africa sent annual reports to the League of Nations that included photos casting indigenous people as backward and the colonial administration as a modernizing force. Duggan-Cronin reflected this agenda. Originally from Ireland, he traveled throughout southern Africa seeking to visualize the "traditional" lifestyle of the region's indigenous people, as seen in his series *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa* (1928–1954). One of the photos that Shiweda reproduces from Omhedi features two unnamed women, one facing toward the camera and the other away, wearing long skirts and necklaces made from shells, balancing baskets on their heads. Though the specifics of the circulation of this image are unclear, Shiweda shows how there is much more than meets the eye for many such images at Omhedi. Oral histories point toward the routinely orchestrated nature of the production process, in which native people helped choreograph scenes for white photographers. For instance, one interviewee named Foibe Shoovaleka remembered how her father or the photographer's assistants directed her and other members of the household to perform household tasks for the camera, such as pretending to make beer or enacting dances from the *efundula*, a female initiation ceremony. While readers might be more accustomed to thinking about staged photographs of war, Shiweda frames colonial photography through this lens. Her use of interviews brings out the visual subjects' perspectives. It helps her to show, in turn, that many photographs in Omhedi were far more than "documentary" records of "traditional" cultures in action. Instead they were manufactured images that reflected and fueled a broader narrative legitimizing colonialism.

Oral histories can also bring out the multiple meanings of an obviously staged genre: the pass photograph. In "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," historian Gary Minkley examines the history of pass photographs that were incorporated into apartheid by the Population Registration Act of 1950 to further racial classification. Using interviews from people in the Eastern Cape and in East London, Minkley investigates how the subjects sought to look in these surveillance images, asking, "What did people imagine and on what images might they have drawn"? Examples included the attempt to look like a political leader, show disdain, and render oneself attractive.[16] This sort of analysis furthers a theme throughout *Ambivalent*: stressing the active role of Africans in the photographic process, even if they did not control the cameras. While never losing sight of uneven racial power dynamics, Minkley's use of interviews offers up a creative way of approaching images deemed instruments of control, especially when written records may be scarce.

[15] Napandulwe Shiweda, "Images of Ambivalence: Photography in the Making of Omhedi, Northern Namibia," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 181–208, here 183.

[16] Gary Minkley, "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 105–25, here 114–15.

One encounters other examples of oral history in *Ambivalent*. Historian Drew Thompson uses interviews of studio photographers in a study of images of the Chinese community in Mozambique. Likewise, historian Vilho Shigwheda incorporates survivor testimony in an analysis of a photograph of a mass grave following the Cassinga Massacre of 1978 in southern Angola. These essays, too, suggest the possibilities that interviews offer visual history, particularly regarding our understanding of the production and reception of images.

I have reflected upon the importance of analyzing discourses about photography in one of my current projects, which examines Federal Writers' Project (FWP) photographs of formerly enslaved people. These images were taken in the 1930s alongside the better-known interviews. Though composition varies widely, the photographs typically picture formerly enslaved people in solo portraits, sitting or standing in front of fields and cabins, looking toward the camera. FWP correspondence and the interviews themselves shed light on the differing desires behind the production of these images. On the one hand, FWP officials sought a particular kind of visual. George Cronyn, associate director of the FWP, wrote to the state director in Florida, stating the intent of these photo sessions: "We urge your photographers to make the studies as simple, natural, and 'unposed' as possible. Let the background, cabin or whatnot, be the normal setting—in short, just the picture a visitor would expect to find by 'dropping in' on one of these oldtimers."[17] While Cronyn's goal of making seemingly "unposed" images reflected the documentary aesthetic of the 1930s, it also extended a trope found in popular stereoviews of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one that visualized southern Black people as passive subjects, gazing at the camera from cabins and cotton fields.

But formerly enslaved people often had different desires.[18] Since interviews occasionally mention these African Americans' engagement with the photo sessions, one learns of how Black people played an active role in the composition of the photographs, as in the case of Lucindy Lawrence Jurdon of Alabama, who, according to the interviewer, chose to be pictured with her spinning wheel, which had been her mother's.[19] Others simply rejected the process entirely. Declining to pose for her picture, Jessie Sparrow of Marion, South Carolina, asserted, "I ain' studyin bout wantin my picture scatter all bout de country."[20] Sparrow evidently did not want to lose control over the circulation of her image. Her opposition, like the essays in *Ambivalent*, points toward the richer histories we stand to tell—accounts mindful of how images were taken, what images meant, and why certain images were not made in the first place—when we listen to people talking about photography.

[17] George Cronyn to Carita D. Corse, April 15, 1937, box 1, folder: Florida Ex-Slave Stories, Federal Writers' Project: Correspondence Pertaining to Ex-Slave Studies, 1936–1940, RG 69:21, National Archives at College Park.

[18] Starting points on African American photography include Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*; Celeste-Marie Bernier, John Stauffer, and Zoe Trodd, eds., *Picturing Frederick Douglass* (New York, 2015); Jasmine Nichole Cobb, *Picture Freedom: Remaking Black Visuality in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2015); Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to the Present* (New York, 2000); Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham, NC, 2012); Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery* (Philadelphia, 2013); Sarah Lewis, ed., "Vision and Justice," *Aperture*, no. 223 (Summer 2016).

[19] Lucindy Lawrence Jurdon, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938*, Digital Collection, Manuscript Division, vol. 1, Alabama Narratives, 242–243, Library of Congress.

[20] Jessie Sparrow, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936–1938*, Digital Collection, Manuscript Division, vol. 14, South Carolina, 144, Library of Congress.

Looking Anew
By Zeynep Devrim Gürsel (Rutgers University)

Photographs are always more than just photographs. Contrary to popular belief, the time of a photograph is always more than just one moment in time. That is why they are so compelling for historians, anthropologists, sociologists, art historians, artists, and many others. They refract so much more than the content that appears in the image. One of the many strengths of *Ambivalent* is the extent to which the book goes beyond photography to engage larger questions about visibility. A rich array of chapters explores photographic material from southern, central, and west Africa, taking us through colonial and ethnographic archives in novel ways and forcing us to look anew at some categories we think we know well, such as identity photographs, wedding photography, spirit photography, newspaper photography, or images of atrocity. Again and again the volume implores the reader to genuinely look anew at an image or a genre not to see what we already know is there but to let the images open new analytic spaces. Looking anew demands that the time of a photograph be kept open. Wet emulsion dries at a certain moment, but a photograph never ends. Each time it is looked at anew it is potentially once again reanimated, such as when a newspaper photograph of a Boko Haram leader makes a Nigerian woman recoil in horror as she is eating her beef roast wrapped in newspaper.

From Phindi Mnyaka's masterful chapter we learn of a South African salvage photography project begun in 1962 by photographer Joseph Denfield. He published photographs of old East London in a section of the local paper, the *Daily Dispatch*, titled "Do You Remember?" Denfield told his readers of salvaging old glass negatives sent to him after gathering dust and implored them to care about these images and to collaborate in the salvation of both the images and the visual history they held. "Irreplaceable negatives are lying in box rooms, attics, garages and rubbish heaps."[21] Denfield adds that he found some used as broken glass for the top of a garden wall; others had been used to glass in a greenhouse or were cleaned off completely and put into windows.

The shard of broken glass negative now serving as cheap barbed wire on the East London garden wall is the perfect metaphor for what this book accomplishes and how it opens the field of photography studies. Mnyaka analyzes the photographs of the early establishment of East London, images of shipwrecks and train stations, taken in the late nineteenth century—images like the one that might have been on one side of the now broken glass negative. She brilliantly juxtaposes Denfield's salvage photography project with Black photographer Daniel Morolong's photographs taken in townships set aside for Black East Londoners who were displaced from the heart of the city. Some of Morolong's photographs appeared in the weekly *African Edition* section of the same newspaper publishing photographs curated by Denfield. While Morolong's photographs appeared in the same paper, his own mobility was curtailed by racial segregation, and as a result he would have been kept out of many of the locations in the historical images gathered by Denfield. Broken glass was placed on garden walls to keep out Black populations perceived as dangerous at the moment. Keeping at hand not only the historical image and its reprint in 1962 but also its repurposing as a sharp barrier underscores

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[21] Phindi Mnyaka, "The Profane and the Prophetic at a South African Beach," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 209 32, here 213.

what is at stake in photography whether for Black residents insisting on posing for care-free pictures at the beach before eventually being banned from certain beaches or for white readers within the garden walls consuming nostalgic images that project East London's fictitiously separate visual history. *Ambivalent* consists of scholarship on photography that constantly keeps multiple archives in tension with one another. This history of photography includes the glass negative's repurposing as shard on a segregated wall *and* as a window pane made transparent at the cost of complete erasure.

Ambivalent* pays close attention to the various genres and institutions that photographers cycle through. We meet Daniel Morolong as a newspaper photographer documenting Black townships in Mnyaka's chapter, but we also meet him in Gary Minkley's chapter as an early pass portrait photographer. The passing of the 1952 Natives Act required adult Africans to carry their pass at all times, and Minkley argues that the sittings for pass photos need be taken seriously as intimate photographic events.[22] Through interviews, Minkley allows us to hear what pass photos—or dompas, as they were called—actually meant to individuals in the 1990s as well as to the photographers who took them. For Morolong, pass photos were how he taught himself to "find" each individual he photographed. "Even if it was on the dom pass the snaps were not dom."[23]

This attention to photographers' career trajectories runs throughout several chapters. A footnote in Okechukwu Nwafor's essay tells us that acclaimed Nigerian portrait photographer J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere had his start in photography as a darkroom assistant at the Ministry of Information. Drew Thompson's chapter emphasizes that Chinese-owned studios provided films, cameras, printing services, and even employment opportunities to press photographers in colonial Mozambique. Thompson deftly mines the ramifications of the printing laboratory Focus, the newspaper *Diario de Moçambique*, and the Café Continental being in the same building. Despite Chinese photographers' mobility within Mozambique, the archive of Chinese community photographs that remains today are also racially segregated, showing the Chinese community, native populations, and white settlers as separate. Thompson's meticulous scholarship foregrounds the history of intermingling erased in the images that remain.

Ambivalent* continually keeps open the time of photography, but perhaps never more painfully than in the chapter by Vilho Shigwedha discussing the production of photographs of the 1978 Cassinga massacre in Angola. We benefit tremendously from interviews conducted not only with photographers but with individuals who were there, such as Paavo Max, who is given the task of counting the bodies in the two mass graves. The history of photojournalism is full of heroic stories of the taking of an iconic photograph, but this is not such a story. Rather, the temporality of the instant of photography is exploded by the horror of having to unearth the bodies and reopen the mass grave just sorrowfully closed in order to display the bodies for journalists to document. The painful moment of photography is extended, and yet no amount of images can possibly yield a representation adequate to the memories of those who witnessed the events. No matter how empathetic, no viewer will look at the image after having been tasked with counting bodies while looking for his sister among them. For decades professional photojournalism seduced viewers into believing they could witness an atrocity from

[22] Minkley, "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," 109.
[23] Quoted in Minkley, "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," 116.

afar. Shigwedha's essay exemplifies photography scholarship that underscores not only the impossibility but the arrogance of such a position.

Conversely, *Ambivalent* also demands that we see each viewing of photography as a repurposing, potentially an event, like placing the shards in the wall. The scholars in *Ambivalent* attend to how photographs linger and allow for the possibility that they sometimes "escape the original constraints of their production."[24] Napandulwe Shiweda takes colonial photographs from South West Africa (Namibia) to the descendants of the sitters eighty years after their production and asks what is at stake when looking at them in the contemporary context. Every historian who uses images should think hard about Shiweda's question concerning what is at stake when photographs are taken from the archive to the field. Yet *Ambivalent* refuses a stable answer to this question even within a single chapter. Photographs "compress, fold, and unfold different historical layers and possibilities of interpretation, opening up a new universe of juncture and disjuncture across media and disciplines."[25] So, just like some negatives can glass in a greenhouse and presumably contribute to new growth while others' shards keep people out, Shiweda shares how the Ovakwanyama use photography to reconstruct their cultural identity but questions what will happen when they end up in a postcolonial museum.

Ambivalent grows out of sustained conversations over time. By the end, any reader will be jealous of the students and faculty who participated in the postgraduate module in visual history that was started by the editors, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, in the 1990s at the University of the Western Cape. Through this volume they've shared some of the wonder that comes from thinking together. Okechukwu Nwafor's marvelous chapter on the popularity of being photographed in traditional aṣọ ebì cloth in contemporary Lagos is not only terrific in its own right but a ripe provocation for any who study photography. Nothing would seem to upend salvage ethnographic images of natives dressed in traditional African cloth like the special surface treatments applied in places like Animasaun Digital Studio to customers' photographs. Nwafor tells us of Nigerians who leave their homes in the morning only to return in the evening with beautifully designed photographs "bearing a background that never existed in their imaginations."[26] Nwafor's interviewees tell him that they are not concerned with who or what is actually in the frame, because they already anticipate much being edited out. Digital software, such as Photoshop and CorelDRAW, not only compensate for the importation of cheaper textile material for aṣọ ebì fashion but they also enable fundamentally new kinds of collaborative photographic practice. "Photography becomes an active process of group participation and interaction."[27]

I want to end by returning to one of the editors' core concerns: "The question is not only one of rights—and who has the right to write about seeing—in Africa. It is also about the distribution of theory."[28] It is time to radically rethink how we shape conversations in photography. One place to begin is certainly our syllabi. I can easily imagine *Ambivalent* being taken up in classes where it is taught after the weeks on Barthes,

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[24] Shiweda, "Images of Ambivalence," 202.

[25] Patricia Hayes, "Coda: An Expanded Milieu," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 304–12, here 309.

[26] Okechukwu Nwafor, "Photographing Aṣọ Ebì: Of Surfacism and Digitality," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 233–59, here 239.

[27] Nwafor, "Photographing Aṣọ Ebì: Of Surfacism and Digitality," 244.

[28] Hayes and Minkley, "Introduction," 3.

SUGGESTED PAIRINGS FOR READING AND TEACHING *AMBIVALENT*

**"Photographic Genres and Alternate Histories of
Independence in Mozambique"**
Karen Strassler, *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National
Modernity in Java* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

**"Photography, Mass Violence, and Survivors:
The Cassinga Massacre of 1978"**
Oksana Sarkisova and Olga Shevchenko, "'They Came, Shot Everyone, and
That's the End of It': Local Memory, Amateur Photography, and the
Legacy of State Violence in Novocherkassk," *Slavonica* 17, no. 2 (2011):
85–102.

**"Images of Ambivalence: Photography in the Making of
Omhedi, Northern Namibia"**
Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, "When Is a Photograph worth a Thousand Words?,"
in *Photography's Other Histories*, ed. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas
Peterson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 40–52.

"Photographing Aṣọ Ebì: Of Surfacism and Digitality"
Miyarrka Media, *Phone & Spear: A Yuṯa Anthropology* (London: Goldsmith's
Press, 2019).

"Boko Haram Insurgency and a New Mode of War in Nigeria"
Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, "Framing Zarqawi: Afterimages, Headshots, and Body
Politics in a Digital Age," in *Double Exposure: Memory and Photography*
(London: Routledge, 2014), 65–89.
Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, *Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of
Digital Circulation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).
Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca L. Stein, *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in
the Social Media Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).

**"Mirrors and Waters: The Practice and the Visual in
Beninese Mami Wata Cults"**
Deirdre de la Cruz, *Mother Figured: Marian Apparitions and the Making of a
Filipino Universal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
Karen Strassler, "Seeing the Unseen in Indonesia's Public Sphere: Photographic
Appearances of a Spirit Queen," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*
56, no. 1 (2014): 98–130.

Sontag, Sekula, etc. Yet this, I think, is to miss the point and to shortchange the opportunity presented by such a volume. Why set African photography against a Euro-American theoretical canon that we thereby reinforce when we now have the benefit of two decades of work on photography in East, Southeast, and South Asia; Australia; Latin America; and the Middle East? When do we stop treating these "other" photographies as exceptions that challenge the same old rules? This raises the question: Why "African" photography? What holds that category together? Might the Chinese photographers in Mozambique have more in common with Indonesian Chinese photographers than with Nigerians embellishing their clothes digitally? Might these latter individuals have more in common with Australian Aboriginal communities using cell phones to make ancestral connections than with colonial photographers in South Africa? What is the basis of the categories by which we divide up our scholarship and put practices into relation, and how does photography as a mobile and global technology challenge these boundary-making practices? I'm not suggesting Africa doesn't matter as place and idea in these photographies, but when and how does it matter, and when are other connections salient?

It is up to us to read this volume, cite it, and perhaps most importantly teach with it and put it in new dialogues. (To this end I have suggested several fruitful pairings of texts that would draw out connections across the Global South.) *Ambivalent* is a book about photography and visibility in African history, but it is also an invitation to radically broaden how we study photography at large. Let us put it to good use.

Photography and Orality in African History
By Marius Kothor (Yale University)

In *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History*, editors Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley have compiled an impressive body of essays that demonstrate the importance of thinking of photographs as integral components of historical processes rather than mere illustrations of particular moments in time. When read together, the essays in the volume offer historians new frameworks for conceptualizing image-making processes on the African continent.

The visual components of African oral traditions have been noted by scholars such as Oyèrónkẹ̀ Oyěwùmí, who demonstrates that Ifá divination—an epistemological orientation in Yoruba communities that is largely articulated through oral traditions—has both visual and oral components.[29] One of the most provocative and infinitely generative themes in *Ambivalent* deals with the relationship between oral traditions and photography. Expanding on this scholarship, Isabelle De Rezende's contribution to the volume highlights the visual components of Congolese oral traditions, while Patricia Hayes shows how photography can transcend lacunae in oral accounts of the past.

De Rezende's contribution to *Ambivalent* shifts our understanding of the origins of photography in Africa. Her study illustrates how, as a "sensibility and a mode of organizing knowledge and reality," photography—that is, a visual rendering of a scene or moment that could be accessed by people elsewhere in time and space—existed in oral

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[29] Oyèrónkẹ̀ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making African Sense of Western Discourses* (Minneapolis, MN, 1997), 15.

traditions in the Congo before the camera was invented.[30] Her analysis adds to the scholarship on both orality and visuality by revealing how Congolese communities produced detailed visual descriptions of landscapes, people, and items associated with specific groups of people so as to create a visual record of a time when an "epistemological chasm" opened up as a consequence of regional wars, European conquest, and slave raiding in the region.[31] De Rezende's analysis suggests that photographic visuality became especially salient in moments of rupture in the history of the Congo. By illustrating how Congolese communities produced images through orality, De Rezende effectively decenters Europe from the history of photography and proposes that photographic visuality is a communal sensibility that predated the arrival of Europeans in Africa.

While De Rezende's work is concerned with how oral traditions produce images, Patricia Hayes's contribution to the anthology examines the ways photographs can capture details that are not emphasized in oral traditions. Hayes's analysis addresses a series of photographs taken by officials in the Native Affairs Department of the Union of South Africa during the First World War. Many of these images capture a female initiation ceremony called *efundula* in the flood plains of Namibia, then a colony of South Africa in all but name. Reading the photographs in the context of oral histories of the ceremony, Hayes argues that although oral traditions do not stress this detail the images of *efundula* highlight the fact that the ceremony, which focused on female sexuality and fertility, became the grandest demonstration of social reproduction in a time when kinship was becoming increasingly centralized and masculinized. As a result, while oral accounts can produce images we don't retain in photographic form, photography can, in turn, rectify gaps in oral traditions.

As these essays suggest, thinking of photography and orality in concert opens up new possibilities for conceptualizing the relationship between photography and time. Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley state, for example, that time ruins photographs, and photographs ruin time.[32] Examining photography and oral traditions in tandem suggests that perhaps photography wasn't "invented" at all—it just developed different technical apparatuses over time. Image-making, then, has always been a central component of people's world-making processes. To be in the world is to be constantly producing images. Thus, photography must be seen as timeless. Admittedly, this is a difficult thing to ask of historians, whose main intellectual preoccupation is to illustrate how everything has a place in time.

In my work, I use a methodology that includes elements of De Rezende's and Hayes's arguments. Through a comparative reading of African American and African women's modes of self-presentation in studio portraits and oral histories, I illustrate how Black women on both sides of the Atlantic used photography as a tool to articulate solidarities with each other. Drawing from De Rezende's approach, I highlight the ways in which these photographs are manifestations of long histories of Black internationalist formations that predated the invention of the camera and are preserved in oral literature. Just as Hayes does in her analysis of the *efundula* photographs, I rely on Black women's studio portraits to remedy omissions in their oral records of the past.

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[30] Isebelle De Rezende, "Ambivalent Mediations: Photographic Desire, Anxiety, and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Central Africa" in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 35–55, here 36.

[31] De Rezende, "Ambivalent Meditations," 52.

[32] Hayes and Minkley, "Introduction: Africa and the Ambivalence of Seeing," 11.

The essays in *Ambivalent* provide innovative frameworks for historians to interrogate the central role photography has played in African history. De Rezende's and Hayes's contributions to the volume have opened up provocative possibilities for scholars to examine how photographic visuality and oral traditions intersected with the physical apparatus of the camera on the continent. This is an underexamined area in the field of African studies, but one with enormous potential to illuminate processes that are difficult to discern from traditional documentary sources.

In Your Face
By Sumathi Ramaswamy (Duke University)

What could be more banal than a passport photo, or drearier than an ID image in our times? Is there anything (new) one can learn from subjecting these to critical analysis beyond the obvious truth that they are the quintessential bureaucratic and highly instrumentalized visual objects produced by the modern state's need, even desire, to see, control, and regulate its subject-citizens? Following Foucault's arguments about disciplinary practices and the operations of modern biopower—and through the important work of scholars like Alan Sekula, John Tagg, and those who wrote in their wake—we have come to recognize photography's implication from almost the moment of its birth in regimes of surveillance unleashed first in the West and not long after in many of its colonies elsewhere.[33] By the 1880s, in Tagg's words, "it was no longer a privilege to be pictured but the burden of a new class of the surveilled . . . the exercise of a new kind of power on the social body, generating new kinds of knowledge and newly refined means of control."[34] In image after image, in the most repetitive manner, the full head-on but nevertheless miniaturized face of the documented looks back at us, the product of an asymmetrical, frequently involuntary, visual transaction facilitated by the seemingly strict mechanical fidelity of the camera. "These are the traces of power, repeated countless times, whenever the photographer prepared an exposure, in police cell, prison, consultation room, asylum, home, or school."[35] In Alan Sekula's influential scheme, photography thus released a "double" system of representation "capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively* . . . Every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police."[36] The face in the physiognomic paradigm that shored up these new mechanized regimes of surveillance is the discloser of inner character, the revealer of a proclivity for criminality, and not least and perhaps above all the marker of race and ethnicity.

New scholarship on photography—in a new millennium—is showing surprising, even stunning, reversals in our received understandings of the modern state's regimes of seeing and surveilling, and the modern subject's capacity to deflect or repurpose the state's demands on yielding up our faces, some of these studies coming to us from spaces far away from the Euro-American heartland, where such disciplinary practices

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[33] Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 3–64; John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst, MA, 1988).

[34] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 59.

[35] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 85.

[36] Sekuka, "The Body and the Archive," 6–7.

originated.[37] I write this especially on the strength of new writings on South Africa, where under apartheid, as we well know, one of the most brutal and repressive regimes of documentation and identification was put in place in the latter half of the twentieth century, underwritten by the capacity of the camera to capture and still the face on a piece of paper on which lives and livelihoods depended. After all, "between 1916 and 1981, there were 17.25 million black South Africans arrested . . . for pass-law infringements."[38] Correspondingly, in this span of time, an agent of the state was thus confronted at least 17.25 million times with the face of the Black subject printed on a piece of paper. And yet we learn to appreciate from curator Ingrid Masondo's fine-grained analysis of the identity document (ID) from South African archives from this period that for an object on which so much of the state's policy of classifying and controlling the populace rode, the pass photograph is strangely "unstable," even unreliable. Clearly for a state obsessed with preserving racial purity and segregating and disenfranchising citizens on the basis of their appearance and color, the faces that look out from the eight ID cards in figure 3.2 must have been confounding. What might an apartheid-era official or police officer have made of "the smiling and relaxed" face looking back at him from one of these cards, or one that apparently carried a look of "defiance" or "annoyance?" The lack of standardization of appearance aside, some faces are blurred, even illegible, completely undermining the state's project.[39] They are poor images, literally.

The state tried repeatedly to address the problem of the ID between 1950 and 1970, but Masondo concludes that "the discrepancies in the photographs (and IDs) also point to the limits of this bureaucratic and documentary *frenzy*—a system obsessed with control and the appearance of order but unable to keep up with its own prescriptions."[40] On the one hand, we have the state in a state of frenzy; on the other, its apparently "docile" subjects look back with varying expressions, but not with frenzy. Instead, more often than not, their faces wear their "'card look'—what I would call a picture of you not like what you see in the mirror, but is still you—maybe more like how I see you." These are the words of Daniel Morolong in an interview with historian Gary Minkley. There is the ironic fact that East London's most important photographer learned how to be a photographer—"how to see people properly"—through the very process of taking pass photographs on behalf of the apartheid state. In turn, the people he photographed tried, even in these most asymmetrical and involuntary of "intimate" visual events, to find "themselves."[41] Indeed, and here is another irony that scholars writing in other subaltern contexts have noted, their ID photograph—commissioned by the state—is frequently the only image many had of themselves.

Skillfully and adroitly, Minkley connects such statements—and conversations in post-apartheid time about their pass photographs with their former holders—with an important insight from anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards that every photograph "positive or negative, happy or terrifying" is an inscription of sheer presence, "profoundly

[37] For example, Karen Strassler, *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java* (Durham, NC, 2010), 123–163.

[38] Lily Saint, quoted in Ingrid Masondo, "Unstable Forms: Photography, Race, and the Identity Document in South Africa," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 77–104.

[39] Masondo, "Unstable Forms," 86–88.

[40] Masondo, "Unstable Forms," 88.

[41] Minkley, "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," 115.

subjective and profoundly personal, a reclaiming of a moment."[42] As Minkley concludes, "even in the situation of the taking of the pass photograph . . . where agency is denied the subjects—they have no alternative form of action in the taking of the photograph—they still have their presence."[43] Presence for him is an alternative to the overused language of agency. Tempted as we might be to dismiss it as an "empty photograph"—defined by coeditor Patricia Hayes as a monovalent image, so repetitious and recognizable that one thinks no more of it, plagued by fatigue or indifference when confronted with a surfeit of them[44]—the pass photograph emerges in these revisionist analyses as charged with meaning and possibilities. It is a site of memory—sadness, in some cases, terror ridden, in others, but also in some recollections, even laughter—almost always triggering a reaction in its afterlife among those who depended on it for their sheer survival in an earlier era.

Such findings also compel me—a historian of colonial India and the British Empire—to cast a look back at an earlier period in the history of South Africa than that covered in this valuable anthology under review, when the ID photograph was perceived in terms that resonate more with Sekula and Tagg writing from the center than with Masondo and Minkley analyzing from the margins, so to speak. Thus, about a decade after his arrival in 1893 in Natal to represent the legal interests of Muslim Indian traders, Mohandas K. Gandhi began to rail against the pass photograph as a "new engine of torture" devised by the Asiatic Office to "terrorize" his people, reducing them to the status of criminals.[45] In particular, he objected on religious grounds to the state's demand for capturing the likeness of the face with the help of the camera. Indeed, little noticed in the vast scholarship on the Mahatma is the critical fact that his career as a disobedient activist was forged around his resistance to the photographic pass in colonial South Africa from 1903. Arguing that the pass photograph "only makes the Indians hang their heads in shame," he campaigned against the Cape Immigration Act in early 1907, insisting, "We would advise the leaders of the Cape to fight out the question of the photograph without losing time. It was a mistake that they allowed the Act to be passed in the first place. But we will regard it as a major crime if the clause requiring a photograph remains."[46] He even argued that it is "more disgraceful to furnish a photograph than to give fingerprints."[47] His eventual acceptance of the state's attempt to register the likeness of fingers as opposed to his unequivocal resistance to capturing the likeness of the face complicates an otherwise fine argument about Gandhi's attitude toward biometric technologies recently sketched out in an important article by Keith Breckenridge.[48]

Years ago, historian Ranajit Guha drew our attention to the need to recognize "the small voice of history," that which is "drowned in the noise of statist commands. That is

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[42] Elizabeth Edwards, "Anthropology and Photography: A Long History of Knowledge and Affect," *Photographies* 8, no. 3 (2015): 240–41.

[43] Minkley, "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," 112.

[44] Patricia Hayes, "Empty Photographs: Ethnography and the Lacunae of African History," in Hayes and Minkley, *Ambivalent*, 56 76, here 60 61.

[45] Mahatma Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 100 vols. (New Delhi, 1958–94), 3:342 43.

[46] Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 6:263, 6:346.

[47] Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 7:156.

[48] Keith Breckenridge, "Gandhi's Biometric Entanglement: Fingerprints, Satyagraha and the Global Politics of Hind Swaraj," in *The Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present* (New York, 2014), 90–114.

why we don't hear [it]. That is also why it is up to us to make that extra effort, develop the special skills and above all cultivate the disposition to hear these voices and interact with them. For they have many stories to tell—stories which for their complexity are unequaled by statist discourse and indeed opposed to its abstract and oversimplifying modes."[49] The pass photograph, with its miniaturized human face, is a visual equivalent of "the small voice" of history that has the capacity to reveal new stories and destabilize old certitudes. In taking note, heeding it, and bringing it to the center of our analyses, we stand to complicate our understanding of the complex dynamic that unfolds when the state attempts to get in your face.

Beyond the Image
By Olga Shevchenko (Williams College)

> But photographs always escape their boundaries.
> —Napandulwe Shiweda, "Images of Ambivalence"

Imagine this: Several figures are leaning over prints of colonial-era photographs of Ovakwanyama people in traditional garb, fingers tracing the outlines of their clothing, eyes smiling at the elaborate craftsmanship of the jewelry and the complex, rare, and spectacular hairstyles and decorations featured in the photos. In a spirited exchange among themselves and with the visitor who brought these images to them, the members of today's Ovakwanyama community are discussing the photographic traces left by their ancestors, reframing these archival images as access points to "the picturesque products of ingenuity," as manifested in the ancestors' clothing, and as "tokens of a former order."[50] Coming into possession of these images today, these Namibian men and women find inspiration as well as reference points in these images, drawing on them as they search for their own ways to establish their connection to ancestral practices through craft and performance of Ovakwanyama cultural identity.

The paragraph above might sound as a description of a photograph from *Ambivalent: Photography and Visibility in African History*, but it is not. It is, however, a verbal snapshot of one of the aspects that make this volume so exciting to read and review—namely, the close attention its contributors pay to all the ways in which research on photography necessitates looking not only within but also outside the frame, toward the exchanges, interactions, and currents of sentiment and action necessitated by the photographic act.

In this particular example, the chapter by Napandulwe Shiweda discusses colonial-era photographs taken in the 1930s by Alfred Duggan-Cronin, a "travelling" ethnographic photographer working on a multivolume series entitled *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa*, and by the South African native commissioner for Ovamboland C. H. L. "Cocky" Hahn, who not only facilitated Duggan-Cronin's visit but also left a photographic record of his own. Shiweda's chapter provides an astute, sensitive reading of the two men's photographic gazes, recognizing the multiple differing modalities through which the colonial relationship and expectations enter and shape the field of the

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[49] Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voice of History," in *Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (New York, 1997), 3.
[50] Shiweda, "Images of Ambivalence," 202–3.

visual. But she also attends to the fact that the images always transcend their makers' intentions for framing their subjects not only at the moment of photography, which presents opportunities for self-fashioning and playing into—or against—the perceived colonial stereotypes, but also long after the click of the shutter.

Indeed, Shiweda's research, which takes Duggan-Cronin's and Hahn's photographs from the archives where they reside and places them in the hands of the communities they purport to represent, contributes to the photographs' capacity to exceed the intentionality of their makers in fascinating ways. Separated from the institutional setting and the authoritative captions that frame these images as representative of colonial ethnographic "types," these images become, to the descendants of the people pictured in them, sentimental images to be searched for familiar faces and landscapes and mined for inspiration in their current-day projects of cultural revival. The history of these images, in other words, is very much still ongoing.

Shiweda's chapter is characteristic of the other contributions to this remarkable collection, all of which combine broad methodological pluralism and reflexivity with the deep-rootedness of the authors in their respective social and historical contexts, which range geographically from South Africa to Benin. The volume opens and closes with ambitious chapters on photographic visuality broadly construed as a mode of literary description in nineteenth-century Central Africa (Isabelle de Rezende) and as one of the many possible modes of visual world making as practiced by the Vodun Mami Wata cult worshippers in Benin (Jung Ray Forte). The rest of the chapters feature fine-grained visual analyses of photographic images from a multiplicity of genres—from digitally manipulated wedding snapshots in Lagos (Okechukwu Nwafor) to photojournalistic representation of the Cassinga massacre in Angola (Vilho Shigwedha), and from ethnographic photographs made by colonial administrations for the Union of South Africa (Patricia Hayes) to present-day video stills produced by Boko Haram insurgents and the Nigerian army (George Emeka Agbo).

But close visual readings do not stand on their own. They are put into conversation with multiple other kinds of data, which include oral history interviews with photographers and their subjects, diaries, literary and archival sources, as well as ethnographic (and, in Ingrid Masondo's and Okechukwu Nwafor's chapters, autoethnographic) accounts of the images' production and circulation. Emerging from this rich tapestry of methods is an account of seeing and representation that remains focused on the photographic but also transcends visual theory, offering insights into colonial and postcolonial relationships of power, knowledge production, ethnic and political pluralism, and subjectivity over the long twentieth century on the continent.

What makes photography so exciting to work with to a social scientist like myself is that photographic practices cut across the taken-for-granted divisions separating disciplinary subfields and geographic regions. When we look into the social lives of photographs, we are grappling with objects and practices that are gendered, classed, racialized, and yet accessible to and practiced by members of virtually all communities and social groups around the world. As such, attention to the meanings and contestations around photographic flows holds promise of unexpected but fruitful connections.

I have long been intrigued by the significance and value assigned by many former Soviet citizens to their identity photographs, which are collected in domestic albums and enlarged for commemorative occasions even at the times when other, more

dignified studio portraits of the same person are available. The chapters by Gary Minkley, Ingrid Masondo, and Drew Thompson in this volume all take on the valences of identity and passport photographs, refusing to reduce them to their stated purposes as instruments of state surveillance. Instead, they focus on identification photography's failures to register the racialized classifications that mattered, shifting the discussion to their sitters' and makers' investment into these visual documents as forms of portraiture. After all, in the words of Daniel Morolong, an East London photographer whose images are discussed in the chapters by Gary Minkley and Phindi Mnyaka, passport photo work taught him to "*find each one*—each person for themselves."[51] Furthermore, to their owners, these images often became tokens—not of bureaucratic fixity but of, however limited, social and geographic mobility. This is an observation that would echo the Soviet citizens' experience of the internal passport as the document that both connected them to a specific address and allowed them the right to move within the USSR and to change occupations, which, in the case of peasants, they were previously denied. Here, like in other chapters in the volume, visual analysis is inseparable from larger questions of political subjectivity and citizenship.

The promise of *Ambivalent*, as articulated by its editors, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, is to push the limits of visual theory by thinking and writing African photography from Africa, and in the process, to unsettle current theoretical certainties in favor of new conceptual possibilities. This promise would not be complete had the contributors to this volume not mobilized tools of ethnographic and historical analysis to uncover what could be called the local ontologies of photography: the way visuality and representation are thought, felt, and done in the specific southern, central, and western African contexts in which they work. The impulse of the volume is so strong that as I read the chapters I found myself wishing for more, wondering whether every portrait has to be read as a victorious assertion of liberal individuality, and whether the vocabulary of representation—as opposed to, say, performance or transfiguration—is best suited to capture what is sought of photography by its African practitioners. There are, perhaps, further theoretical certainties to unsettle. But one thing is clear: By looking and listening into how the photographs were and continue to be produced, used, and remediated, this volume invites us to attend to the categories in use through which the populations we work with think visually and figuratively about their place in the world. In this way, it offers lessons that not only illuminate photography and African history but also reach beyond them.

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[51] Minkley, "The Pass Photograph and the Intimate Photographic Event in South Africa," 115.