

# 1 INTRODUCTION: RELOCATING THE AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

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African photography has emerged as a significant focus of research and scholarship over the last 30 years. From the frequent use of photographs as illustrations for historical and cultural narratives and the turn towards visual evidence across the humanities and social sciences to in-depth studies of specific collections, photography has become an essential medium for those seeking to understand African societies and cultures of the colonial and postcolonial periods.

As they have delved deeper into the photographic archive and as historical photographs have become ever more important to the stories they want to tell, researchers from diverse cultural and disciplinary backgrounds have begun to craft sophisticated ways of understanding and working with photographic images. Ideas around photography as a means of communication and as an artistic medium have merged with insights from anthropology and material culture studies to produce a complex and relational appreciation of the photograph as image-object. As Peffer reminds us, '[w]hat was called a "photo" was not entirely the same material thing in Africa as it was in Europe' (2013: 12). Added to an awareness of the image form as material culture is a greater attention to the biographical shifts that photographs are subject to in the course of their 'lives' and how their inherent social and cultural meaning is thereby patterned and communicated.

Photographs are the subjects of complex narratives. As images they are copied, remembered and imagined, as well as reproduced in various places and points in time; as objects they are touched, exchanged and marked. Just occasionally they are deposited in institutional archives. More often, and not least in Africa, they remain outside of official collections, subject to deterioration and loss.

Each social encounter, each shift in the photograph's status, adds another layer of meaning, and the excavation and critical examination of such layers is the core methodology of the contributions to this volume. But this archaeological metaphor has its limitations; researchers are also creating new meanings as they intervene in the lives of photographs and set them on new paths of circulation. We need to extend our analysis beyond the individual photographic image, so often at the centre of aesthetic discourse, to consider the different forms in which photographs accumulate and the contexts in which they reside, including the archival situations in which researchers find them. Outside of art collections, it is rare to come across a photograph in isolation; they will often be found as official or ad hoc collections in piles, boxes and exhibitions, accompanied by other documents, visual and textual. African photographic collections have complex stories to tell; it is by paying attention to their textured historical patterning that a new range of meanings around photography and Africa is beginning to emerge.

Despite the increased attention paid to African photographic archives, the critical and methodological literature is still emergent. It is easy to forget how recently serious academic research on African photography got under way. Early publications on South African photography (Bensusan 1966; Bull and Denfield 1970), Richard Buchta's photography in Uganda (Thomas 1960) and photography in Côte d'Ivoire (Forlacroix 1970) were the result of individual forays into a vast resource that most historians simply did not recognize as worthy of serious attention. By the 1980s, however, photographs were beginning to attract interest, appreciated as both authored documents as well as sites of cultural encounter and intersecting histories (Killingray and Roberts 1989). The growth of interest in this period in colonial history and its visual deposits was allied to interest from scholars of African art history who saw colonial photography as evidence of indigenous cultural and artistic traditions (Soulillou 1982; Collart and Celis 1984; Geary and Njoya 1985). This phase of research also revealed the way in which the mass production, dissemination and collection of postcard imagery contributed to the propagation of Western stereotypes of the continent (Alloula 1986; David 1978, 1982; Geary 1986; Geary and Webb 1998).

Although some scholars have responded to the need for a more detailed understanding of the work of early indigenous photographers, such as Viditz-Ward (1985; 1987) on Sierra Leonean Creole photography and Sprague (1979) on Yoruba portraiture in Nigeria, research in this area is still relatively undeveloped. Important exceptions include contributions to Revue Noire's anthology of *African and Indian Ocean Photography* (1999) and scholars such as Nimis on Bamako studio photography (1998), Chapuis on photography in St Louis, Senegal (1999), Wendl and Behrend (1998) and Haney's necessarily wide-sweeping survey (2010) as well as her research on the Lutterodt family studio from the Gold Coast (2013). Most of these studies have focused on the nascent professional studio tradition in Africa, giving particular weight to the genre of portraiture.

Studio portraiture, especially that dating from the period of decolonization, was the focus of considerable interest in the art world of the 1990s and early 2000s, where it became almost synonymous with African photography, often viewed as a site of rediscovery of the agency of the postcolonial subject (Oguibe 2001: 117). Yet this emphasis requires critical interrogation. As Peffer argues, the dominance of research on portraiture has been significantly influenced by wider art historical expectations around African photography (Peffer and Cameron 2013: 7). Inevitably, portrait photographs feature here, though what emerges is a nuanced understanding of the genre, its multiplicity and the 'rich embeddedness [of portraits] in their own worlds' (Hayes, this volume). One reason for the relative lack of research on indigenous photographic archives has been the scarcity of easily accessible archival sources with which to write a more nuanced and balanced visual history of the continent. Many collections of indigenous photography remain outside of institutional collections, and patterns of collecting and archival deposit have inevitably shaped research agendas. As Haney and Schneider note, much of the continent's 'photographic past' remains inaccessible and unrecognized, and in comparison with those in Europe or the United States, indigenous collections often struggle to garner support for preservation or conservation (2014: 312–13).

Important studies on the colonial photographic archive (Edwards 1992; Ryan 1997; Landau and Kaspin 2002) demonstrate a continuing intellectual interest in photographs as complex historical documents with which to critically re-examine colonial and disciplinary cultures. Alongside this has been the growth of visual and historical anthropology studies on African photography, including recent publications surveying ethnographic approaches to public and private collections (Vokes 2012a) and new methodological approaches to anthropological archives (Morton and Edwards 2009). Studies from anthropology are complimented by innovative artistic and historical projects of recovery that have expanded our conception of the archive (Stultiens, Peffer, this volume).

Against this background, this book signals three important methodological moves. First, going beyond consideration of the single photograph and the individual image-audience encounter, to think at the level of the collection and the archive and how institutional and collections histories can be understood to have informed readings of African imagery. Second, rethinking the category of 'the archive' to embrace the expanded range of collections that should come within the purview of research, from the familiar mission and state archives to more local and personal accumulations of photographs. Third, a critical and reflexive engagement with photographic collections, which acknowledges researchers', artists' and curators' own practices as lying within the history of the archive, and not analytically separated. Each contribution to the volume confronts the methodological challenges of the photographic archive through the study of a specific collection. Taken together, the range of case studies addresses a further

important question: where and what is 'Africa' as it is constituted in the archive – to paraphrase Achille Mbembe, what is Africa the idea of?<sup>1</sup> Since it is through images and archives that the politics of representation is so often performed and activated, it is important to bring a critical perspective to Africa's location in the archive and to reimagining and relocating the African photographic archive in the present.

## The idea of African photography

One might begin by asking whether it is possible to meaningfully discuss 'African photography' as a cohesive theoretical or curatorial entity. Any attempt to define or locate African photography in terms of the cultural background of the photographer, the geographical location of the photographic encounter or its subsequent archival location faces numerous challenges. As a putative theoretical entity, the 'African photograph' is at best a highly distributed object, with endless micro-histories and a vast number of custodians, archivists, curators, consumers and re-producers. It exists in archives, private collections and domestic settings in Africa and in a bewildering array of similar settings across the globe. One way of conceiving of 'African photography' is to atomize and dematerialize it and see it as a vast, nebulous and yet interrelated collection of 'images scattered across collections on several continents' (Peffer 2013: 11), which requires the resourcefulness of the researcher to track down and weave into a meaningful narrative. The problem with this approach is that seeing archival situations and micro-histories as incidental to the liberation of images – images that need to be rendered up for the scrutiny of commentators on the basis of their content alone – overlooks the way in which '[a]rchives themselves play host to numerous small dramas of contestation' (Edwards and Morton 2009: 10). Indeed, archival practices are especially significant, since it is through the selective publication, exhibition and mediation of collections and archives that 'African photography' is created and recreated over time.

What constitutes the African image archive is not a stable or single phenomenon. Whereas in the pre-digital era the archive may have implied an institutional context and a formal process of curatorial decision-making, in the last 20 years the notion of the archive has expanded to include the vast global circulation of audio-visual media shared and stored via the internet. For archives which have put their collections online, the last ten years or so has seen the extensive reappropriation (or repurposing) of such imagery by African and non-African websites and social media (Morton 2014) in pursuit of a bewildering variety of political, cultural and social agendas. For example, the Anyuak Mini Museum website reuses nearly 100 historical images from the Pitt Rivers Museum's Southern Sudan website to recover a sense of cultural history disturbed by civil war and displacement.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, ethnographers of online sociality understand online collections,

not as *virtual* objects – the abstract representation of ‘real’ things in archival collections – but as ‘achieving first-class object status’ (Fischer et al. 2008: 525). Online providers of African photography, be they museums, archives, private collectors or photographers, must be understood therefore as the creators, rather than mediators, of a global African image archive. Modern-day digital salvage projects also give pause for thought. One recent project sponsored by the British Library’s Endangered Archives Programme involved a collection of some 40,000 studio negatives in Cameroon, digital copies of which were deposited in London and Yaoundé while the originals remained with the photographer.<sup>3</sup> Although the rationale for such digital salvage projects seems obvious – giving a fragile resource threatened by the uncertainties of future ownership and environmental conditions a stable institutional future for the benefit of researchers – it remains unclear exactly what local benefits might accrue as a result of such activity.

## Locating Africa in the archive

If the idea of African photography presents a number of conceptual and methodological dilemmas, the relationship between the continent and its archives is no less complex. To discuss ‘African’ photographic archives is to approach a set of photographs with a sense that they somehow belong to the geographical and cultural continent. But as soon as we begin to discuss photographs relating to either African diasporic experiences, or the porous cultural boundaries of what we might mean by Africa, our sense of coherence inevitably recedes. And indeed many African photographs in Western archives and collections have spent very little time in Africa itself, beyond an often brief sojourn within the continent, and of course the all important moment of exposure onto a negative (or now digital camera memory card). For these objects, their ‘Africanness’ somehow lies in their subject matter, at the level of the image, and yet also on remarkably resilient Western ideas of the representation of the continent. Recognition of this double dislocation, of sometimes long African ‘archival lives’ in non-African locations, is vital to furthering our understanding of the overlapping histories and hybrid cultural identities of image-making on the continent. As Haney notes, “‘Africanness’ registers in relation to one’s residence, and to one’s momentum’ (2010: 8). Although much of the continent’s visual history has been physically located (and thereby disseminated and controlled) in the West, an increasing amount of research has shown how soon after its invention photography was taken up by African photographers. A greater critical awareness that photography has never simply been a Western technology exploring the rest of world, but a significant feature of many cultural histories, has resulted in some of the most fascinating recent additions to the literature (Pinney and Peterson 2005; Morris 2009; Strassler 2010).

Besides the vast array of Western collections, the work of African (and non-African) photographers has also been retained in collections in Africa itself, notably in South Africa in such places as the Mayibuye Archives, whose photographic collection owes its existence to the international anti-apartheid movement. The complex story of this archive involves the coming together in exile of extant collections of historical photographs alongside an accumulation of images, which for reasons of security were sent unattributed in small packets from South Africa to London to be distributed to the international media. The collection was relocated to South Africa in 1990 at the very beginning of the transition to democracy to be held by the Robben Island Museum-Mayibuye Archives. The political commitment encoded in the physical return of the archive to Africa was as important as that which first secured the transport of African photographs to London. In South Africa, however, as elsewhere on the continent, one should note the anxiety that surrounds the archiving of photography, with an air of uncertainty hanging over even the most important collections.

Another vital question is the inclusion of the historical African diaspora in the larger concept of the African photographic archive. Although important initiatives by cultural organizations such as the London-based Autograph ABP have addressed themselves to issues of photography and diasporic identities, to date there have been few detailed photographic histories of people of African descent outside of Africa. Recent work, such as that of Tina Campt (2012) on private collections, that document African diaspora experiences in twentieth-century Europe represent pioneering studies, set to radically destabilize our assumptions about the historical construction of African identity through photography.

Although the essays in this volume range widely across the continent, a proper consideration of archives relating to the geographical and cultural north of Africa is beyond its scope. This is partly a result of patterns of research and curation in Anglophone academia, which in turn have frequently followed research pathways opened up in the wake of former colonial ties to the continent and archives produced during the colonial period. There are nevertheless notable exceptions in the essays here by Zeitlyn writing about Francophone Cameroon, Hayes writing about Namibia and Haney and Bajorek's wide-ranging survey, which pays particular attention to archives in Francophone West Africa. Instead of attempting to be encyclopaedic, our aim is to bring together key themes for understanding African photographic archives: cultural encounter, political opposition, identity and notions of self. Another volume, taking account of research at another point in time and with different case studies, might highlight a quite distinct set of social and cultural relations to the archive.

A further intention is to situate the photography of Africa in a global context. Essays by Morton and Rippe not only examine how European expectations around photography shaped the colonial photographic encounter but also how its subsequent publication and dissemination is just as important, since it is in these

contexts that such photographs gained their widest social activation. In similar vein, the contribution by Newbury considers a collection shaped by its travels from Africa to Europe and reflects on the implications of its return. Interpreting the African photographic archive requires an appreciation of the global networks, both now and in the past, through which it has taken shape and which have enabled certain possibilities and constrained others. The future African image archive is being forged today in the interplay between Africa-centred contributions to the global image of the continent, contributions produced by outsiders looking in and by the visual exploration of African diasporic identities. As Haney and Bajorek discuss, current archival projects on the continent are unevenly supported at state and institutional level, and so local and community initiatives to archive imagery have emerged in the digital age – a democratization of the concept of the archive that may signal a new direction for the African photographic archive in the future.

## Excavating the archive

While some commentators have sought to emphasize the decentring of the archive from collections and institutions as a result of postcolonial patterns of transnationalism and diaspora, others have sought to refigure the archive within the concept of a 'global image ecology' (Enwezor 2006). Individual images are understood within visual systems, in which they gain their meaning in relation to other images. As visual systems in their own right, archives are also subject to such an analysis, establishing networks of relationships between image-objects over time that have directly affected the way in which we understand Africa's visual history. What is needed is the 'excavation' of African archives and collections, a more detailed understanding of the layers of meaning laid down in the historical record. It is essential, however, that we understand the pursuit of context as already a first level of historical interpretation. As Ankersmit (1983) argues, narratives are not inherent in past events, but are formed into historical order by the historian's own narrative structure, a product of the present rather than the past.

Another emerging area of research is the importance of orality both within and surrounding the archive. Can we understand photography in isolation from the social situations in which it is embedded and activated? And by extension, can the visual be analytically separated from a consideration of photography's involvement with the other senses? Edwards has explored 'the way in which sensory modes beyond the merely visual are integral to the constitution of photographic meaning and usage' (2006: 27). In doing so, she foregrounds the photograph as a social object that is implicated in a complex of interactions and 'emotional registers'. Excavation of the archive therefore needs to pay attention to contexts that may not be readily observable or tangible (Morton 2012). The affectivity of photography

and its involvement with the emotions lies at the heart of several of the chapters in this volume.

While exemplifying the shift towards material and biographical approaches, as well as the role of indigenous agency, this volume also complicates any reduction of the concept of the 'colonial' to a monolithic category either in theory or archival practice (Stoler 2002). It is important to recognize that by complicating the theoretical stability of the category of the colonial we are not suggesting a lack of culpability for the many violences (of body and mind) committed by European powers in Africa. In fact, our intention is quite different, suggesting that a closer, more critical engagement with 'colonial photography' might lead to a better understanding of how both images and archives were socially and politically activated in the bewildering variety of administrative, bureaucratic, personal and public settings in which they were generated and used. Peffer's study in this volume of wedding portraits based on earlier passbook portraits or other colonial bureaucratic imagery brings to the surface the rich afterlives of colonial imagery that are frequently overlooked in descriptions of colonial-era photographic culture.

We also bring a critical perspective to the analytical distinction between 'professional' and 'vernacular' photography. It is often more productive, we suggest, to examine the patterns of making, storage and display of photographs across public and private contexts, than to try and locate absolute categorical distinctions in the image itself. And while they may travel, photographic genres are always subject to local articulation. Even the humble seaside photograph can assume the qualities of political documentary when set in the context of the segregated beaches of South Africa, as Hayes (2005: 519) demonstrates in her discussion of South African photographer Daniel Morolong.

Frequently shorthand in art or art history writing for a certain style of (usually colonial) imagery, 'ethnographic photography' is another highly problematic category that tends to recede as soon as it is critically examined. Our argument is that the ethnographic cannot be held to reside in any particular photographic style or image content. Instead, the ethnographic in photography should be understood as just another disciplinary frame that has shaped the production, circulation and consumption of images of indigenous peoples. Arguably, very few images later subsumed within anthropological archives were produced under the auspices of 'ethnography' as an idea. Furthermore, the intellectual filing of images into simplified photographic genres closes down the range of possible meanings that our excavation of the archive seeks to expand. Where, for instance, might the meaningful boundaries of the 'ethnographic' exist in relation to photography? In what contexts might we say that an image is being used to register mostly at the level of ethnicity or cultural surface rather than any other consideration? Added to this is the further complication that many indigenous researchers continue to discover images of their ancestors in such anonymous 'ethnographic' images,

redeeming an honorific dimension within the historical image that had hitherto been assumed to be forever denied.

## Relocating the archive

The archive is not what it once was, as several of the essays in this volume will attest. The dispersal of historical narrative and power has led to the increasing atomization or individualization of African history, accompanied by greater emphasis on biographical approaches and a shift in focus towards personal archives. The writing of African history has shifted from biographies of the continent written from the outside looking in (Reader 1997), to micro-histories based on local or personal collections that tell new stories from inside the postcolony. In Stultiens' work on the personal archive of Kaddu Wasswa, a Ugandan man active in local voluntary organizations for many years, the artist enters into a collaborative endeavour. In the resultant work, the materiality of local and personal histories are prominent, as well as the process of cultural translation signified by the presence of the artist's hands holding the material. In Vokes' essay, the personal archive of a local politician is the starting point for considering how local photographic practices intersect with wider historical developments in postcolonial Uganda. Although micro-histories beginning to emerge from personal archives on the continent give a strong sense of place and belonging, it is important to signal that many archives today are distributed entities – migratory objects and images moving between places and socio-cultural contexts as part of the diasporic or refugee experience. If the centre of gravity of the archive has shifted then this demands a consequent shift in perspective on the part of those who seek to understand, and work with, historical photographs. One of our tasks as researchers and curators is to 'relocate' the photographic archive, to reimagine it in order that we might recognize it when we see it, as the contributors to this volume have done, for example, in the sitting rooms of local council officials or on the walls of township houses. But the idea of relocation also signifies in other ways, pointing to the need to reflexively reposition oneself in relation to the archive and to consider how the work we do with photographs and collections shapes their future lives and trajectories.

A preoccupation with context can drain images of their own energy *as images*. This is a dilemma that confronts anyone working with historical photographic collections, though it has often been left to artists to pose the question most directly, refocusing our attention on photography as a particular mode of engagement with the world and a particular medium with its own characteristics, rather than as a carrier of, or lever for, other forms of historical evidence. African artists work within the global image ecology that informs the representation of their continent, but they frequently do so with a certain irreverence towards

historical context. For them, photographs frequently stand as images in their own right, and their work draws upon – and enters into dialogue with – the archive in order to generate new meanings and creative possibilities. For instance, in a fascinating recent project South African artist George Mahashe worked with a collection of photographs made in the 1930s by Eileen and Jack Krige during their fieldwork with the Lobedu of the north-eastern Transvaal (now Limpopo province). Arguing that those depicted in the collection and their descendants, who might have cause to reject the objectifying gaze of the anthropologist's camera, 'had made peace with its history in favour of reaping the benefits provided by the materials today', he took licence to explore the practice of photography afresh.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he was being overly optimistic. As art historian Tamar Garb notes, 'no ambitious contemporary figural photographer in South Africa works without taking cognizance of one or other of their legacies, whether to honour, refute or mimic them' (2011: 12). And this dominance of citationality in contemporary African art photography is not without its problems and limitations: the 'pressure of this tradition weighs heavy' for artists in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent (Garb 2011: 12). Mahashe's account of his own trajectory demonstrates the difficult negotiation that African artists can have with the photographic archive before they arrive at a position from which to make new work. Ultimately, as postcolonial theorist Achille Mbembe points out, this endless cycle of re-inscription risks becoming a cultural 'prison'.<sup>5</sup> For researchers there is an equal danger that looking at historical photographs will tell us only what we already know.

It is on this challenging intellectual, cultural and political terrain that those who work with African photography have to engage, as they seek to make the photographic archive a productive site for dialogue between the past and present, doing justice to the weight of history and memory with which photographs are burdened, while retaining their capacity for renewal and surprise. This is the task of reimagining and relocating the African photographic archive to which this volume contributes.

## **The organization of this book**

The photographic archive as a conceptual entity, as well as in its many material manifestations, has come to occupy a significant position within a range of disciplinary approaches and endeavours. This volume brings together essays that emerge from these different perspectives in the development of a shared intellectual agenda with which to engage African collections. The book builds on the emergent scholarship on African photography and the archive through consideration of a rich set of case studies, placing particular emphasis on the ways in which current scholars and curators approach collections of historical photographs and their

conceptual and methodological terms of engagement. The themes that we have touched on in this introduction – the materiality and biography of collections, an expanded appreciation of the photographic archive, a reflexive understanding of our own scholarly and curatorial interventions and a critical engagement with the idea of ‘Africanness’ – are developed throughout the volume, grounded in a close consideration of specific empirical examples, yet always with an appreciation of the wider context of the continent and the medium, and their intertwined histories. The organization of the volume does not follow a geographical pattern, though at points the essays do cluster in this way, most notably in section three in respect of Southern Africa. Nor are they arranged strictly by chronology, though there is across the volume a deliberate sense that the questions posed by the shift of attention from archival pasts to archival futures, addressed in some way by all the essays, become louder and more insistent as one proceeds. Instead, the essays coalesce around shared thematic and methodological concerns: the archival mediation of cultural encounters; ethnographic approaches to the photographic archive; the political framing of archives in relation to histories of opposition; and new archival propositions.

The opening section, ‘Connected Histories’, addresses the archival legacy of what are often seen as archetypal photographic engagements with the continent, through which much of its early photographic history has been written: the colonial-era photographic expedition and the missionary archive. Morton turns his attention to the Austrian photographer Richard Buchta and what is considered to be the first photographic tour of central Africa (1878–9), which despite the widespread circulation and reproduction of the photographs during Buchta’s lifetime has since fallen into obscurity. The concerns of Morton’s essay, however, go substantially beyond the retrieval of a neglected collection to open up a series of questions around the visual representation of Central Africa in Europe and the historiography of early African photography. Morton directs our attention both to the interaction between image and materiality – Buchta’s photographs were crafted with certain forms of circulation in mind – and the consequences of the latter; their original material form also rendered them a ‘difficult’ archive, resulting in their absence from major European collections where one might have expected to find them. This archival absence is contrasted with their more recent archival visibility in the digital image ecology of the twenty-first century, where they have been decontextualized and reappropriated, raising afresh questions about their capacity to represent Africa. The second chapter operates across a similar sweep of time, working with a collection from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created at a Catholic Mission near Durban, in what was then colonial Natal. Rippe’s essay takes as its starting point the ‘mission encounter’, an important dimension of which, he suggests, is the photographic occasion, with the missionary, the diviner and the chief key figures in its visual discourse. Although the latter figures were positioned in familiar and stereotyped ways within the

discourse of the mission, Rippe meticulously reconstructs the biography of the images and explores the capacity of photography to facilitate forms of 'distributed personhood' (Gell 1998). In the case of the missionary, Abbot Franz Pfanner, this involved the careful reproduction and dissemination of his portrait in pursuit of his beatification. In the case of the latter two figures, the actions of the researcher facilitated forms of 'reconnection' with the people and places from which they had been separated; what might be considered a form of redemption from archival anonymity and isolation.

Both chapters demonstrate the value of biographical approaches to photographic collections and how it is impossible to understand photographs independently of the material forms in which they circulate. They also point to the ways in which research practices – at the level of the institution publishing images online or simply the individual scholar asking questions or getting practically involved in salvage and digitization – are implicated in the lives of collections, intentionally or not.

Following this examination of relatively stable and long preserved collections of photographs, the next section, 'Ethnographies', turns its attention to images and accumulations that have led more precarious and less institutionalized lives. The emphasis is on a deep understanding of the social and cultural contexts within which photographs are gathered together, looked at and given meaning. Picking up the theme of redemption from the previous section, Zeitlyn's chapter offers a series of reflections on photographs he encountered during a period of fieldwork in Cameroon. In doing so, he introduces the theme of orality or more specifically the multiple narratives that circulate around photographs; and which, arguably, are the only thing that can save them from becoming 'dead object[s]' (Berger 1980: 56). For Zeitlyn, then, fieldwork centred on historical photographs is an ethical practice. In contradistinction to earlier fieldwork practices for which the names of photographic subjects were often marginal or irrelevant, the attribution of names to images has become a fundamental task for a contemporary anthropology engaged with historical photographs. So much so perhaps that photographs without names need to account for their absence or risk being associated with the symbolic violence of the past. The work of archival salvage may equally be conceived in such ethical terms, to the extent that it returns newly identified photographs in new material forms to those depicted and their descendants. But this is not an act of disciplinary contrition, rather it sets photographic fieldwork practice on a more equal and collaborative footing, conceived as a form of exchange in which the researcher gets stories in return. And, as Zeitlyn observes, 'once names are attached then the possibility of other stories in the future seems more likely'.

Another theme here is that of personhood; introduced by Rippe, it is picked up by Zeitlyn and, in the following chapter, by Behrend. Zeitlyn discusses the practice of marking crosses on persons who have since died, in effect using the photograph as a register of the changing status of those depicted. Behrend extends

this examination of the relationship between photography and death through an examination of the place of photographs in funeral practices among Kenyan Christians. Her essay explores uses of photography that go beyond the making of post-mortem photographs to include the creation of photographic biographies of the deceased and the funeral as a photographic occasion, with photographic 'stops' choreographed on the journey from mortuary to grave. The photographic biographies that Behrend considers are an important component of the funeral programmes, created from the personal archives of the deceased and their relatives. The photographs are arranged into well-ordered visual life narratives, attending to social relations as well as individual achievement or material wealth. Given to those present and sent to distant relatives and friends, these photographic biographies are gifts to be kept in personal collections or displayed in the home. Not only, therefore, do they give a brief public life to personal photographs, but they also act as a form of archival distribution, allowing the continued social presence of the deceased. The collection that is the focus of the final chapter in this section although held in a domestic setting, kept by a local council chairman in the corner of his living room in South-western Uganda, has a quasi-official status, providing a pictorial record of the major public and political events in the area over a 20-year period. Vokes examines the complex interplay between, on the one hand, the tendency of the photographic archive to reproduce itself as photographers absorb past images and develop a sense of what is required, and, on the other hand, the agency of the chairman who commissioned the photographers and then made more or less considered choices in respect of which images entered the collection. Cognizant of earlier studies of state-sponsored photography in Africa, which have tended to oversimplify the relation between political power and photographic production, Vokes' micro-level examination reveals how, while the collection lends itself to narratives of political development or agricultural improvement, for instance, there always remains a sense of contingency and the possibility of contradiction. Furthermore, the political significance of photographs lies not simply in the narratives they can be mobilized to support but also in their sensory engagement, a point that became evident while watching the chairman's visitors handling them. Taken as a set, the chapters in this section underscore the capacity of archival ethnographies to enrich our understanding of the cultural work that photographs do.

The third section of the book, 'Political Framings', brings together case studies of photographic collections created in the context of the political conflicts and racial oppression in southern Africa during the latter half of the twentieth century. In three of the four chapters in this section, the author has played an instrumental role in bringing the collection to light and relocating it, literally as well as metaphorically, in the present. Peffer's chapter is the exception, but here the idea of relocation signifies in a different sense, asking us to reorient ourselves as he uncovers a visual archive of apartheid South Africa, which runs parallel

to the documentary and journalistic, in the portraits and wedding photographs that adorn the living room walls and sideboards in many township houses. This dispersed visual archive, produced by a network of small commercial studios and ambulant township photographers, tells a complex story of how black South Africans fashioned their own image while negotiating the racial categories of the state and the disruption of black family life that apartheid effected. Peffer uses the archive to map out a largely unremarked yet complex photographic economy and rich set of aesthetic forms. The following chapter centres on the collection of one such ambulant photographer, Ronald Ngilima, who made portraits across racial lines in and around the town of Benoni on the East Rand, South Africa, during the 1940s and 1950s. Feyder's essay asks us to think about the ways in which archives are recalled in the present. It was in the late 1990s when the photographer's grandson, then a fine art student in Johannesburg, brought the collection out from where it had been stored for 30 years and initiated a new and more public phase in its career. Feyder's intervention in the life of the collection dates from 2011 when the idea of re-inserting the photographs into the Benoni landscape took shape. She recounts here the ways in which the apparently simple idea of a street exhibition brought to the surface the conflicting narratives of community and place shaped in part by apartheid and its policies of segregation and forced removal. The research and exhibition also required a series of tricky negotiations around the material form it should take and the new forms of circulation that its digitization made possible, complicating claims of ownership and copyright. Newbury's chapter recounts a not dissimilar story of archival rediscovery, though in this case the collection's biography charts a course that takes it from Cape Town in the early 1950s to England, where it disappeared from view until recently 'rediscovered' by the author. Like Feyder, Newbury navigates between the position of researcher and that of curator, attending to the aesthetic and ethical claims presented by the collections as well as seeking to understand their history. The chapter sketches the social biography of the collection as it was shaped by the political moment in which it came into being. It also considers the 'artistic agency' (Gell 1998) embodied in the collection, suggesting that the skilled and motivated vision of the photographer is as important to their resonance in the present as their denoted social and political content. In common with a number of other authors in this volume, Newbury asks whether the photographs might be redeemed from their troubled past and their display provide a site of dialogue about the past and a space for imagination in the present. Further developing the emphasis on the photographer, Hayes' chapter considers a set of previously neglected portraits made in a migrant labour compound in Namibia by John Liebenberg at the outset of his professional career. The essay carefully unwraps the complex personal, political and photographic histories enfolded within the collection. This 'undisclosed' collection within his personal archive, Hayes suggests, was more than simply a small commercial endeavour as Liebenberg sought to develop a career

as a photographer. It was in fact a foundational experience: learning to navigate the restrictions that surrounded the compound helped to shape his approach to his career as a photojournalist documenting the Namibian struggle for liberation. Hayes also considers the portraits' subsequent re-exhibition in Windhoek, 'creat[ing] new lines of connection between the past and the present'.

The final section of the book, 'Archival Propositions', takes further this theme of renewal, directing our attention to possible futures for the African photographic archive. With an economy of expression that is refreshing, Stultiens' photo-essay summarizes many of the key themes of the volume: the multiple, diverse and fragmented material forms that historical photographs take, their metamorphosis from negative to print to photocopy, the ways in which they accumulate over time, one overlaying another, and come together with printed and handwritten text and the importance of their sensuous relationship to the beholder. Yet it also looks forward, pointing to the importance of collaborative artistic engagements with the archive and their generative potential; as Stultiens notes, her interlocutor 'keeps digging up new documents and photographs', she keeps taking photographs. In the final chapter, Haney and Bajorek review the current institutional infrastructure for African photographic archives and call for an energetic renewal. Although critical of the failure on the part of some European collectors and curators, despite their appetite for African photography, to develop a deeper appreciation of its full range, and a lack of imagination shown on the part of some Western institutions with significant collections of African photography, they also point to exciting initiatives and examples of 'archival experimentation'. The digital accessibility of collections is a theme that has recurred throughout this volume; while they are clear that this is no panacea, used intelligently Haney and Bajorek suggest that it can open the photographic archive in new ways to important constituencies. The re-making of the institutional infrastructure for African photography in the twenty-first century will require both small-scale local projects as well as larger cross-regional initiatives. Not all of these will succeed of course and issues of funding and political commitment will remain as difficult as ever, but it seems fitting to close the volume by acknowledging the grounds for optimism and identifying examples from which to draw inspiration.

## Notes

- 1 Keynote address at the conference *Figures & Fictions: The Ethics and Poetics of Photographic Depictions of People*, 24 June 2011, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- 2 <<http://www.anyuakmedia.com/Anyuak%20Mini%20Museum/index.htm>> (last accessed 6 January 2015). The Pitt Rivers Museum's southern Sudan website is available at: <<http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk>>.

- 3 <[http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview\\_item.a4d?catId=68531;r=23811](http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=68531;r=23811)> (last accessed 6 January 2015). The project in question relates to the archive of photographer Jacques Touselle in Mbouda, Cameroon, and was led by David Zeitlyn.
- 4 George Mahashe, 'Neither nor: residue of a four year long obsession with Balobedu anthropology and photography'. Presented at *Beyond the Iconic Image*, University of the Witwatersrand, 13–14 June 2013. See also Davison and Mahashe (2012).
- 5 Keynote address at the conference *Figures & Fictions: The Ethics and Poetics of Photographic Depictions of People*, 24 June 2011, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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