NADIA⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚ ⬚KAABI-LIN KE⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚⬚

Artist
Berlin, Germany

Extras Reloaded

Imagined Time
2020

Imagined Location
**Plymouth Harbour,
United Kingdom**

Nadia Kaabi-Linke (PhD) and Timo Kaabi-Linke (MA)
Subdivision Circuit Bending, Anthropological Institute for
Metaphysical Studies, FU Berlin
Berlin, 16/12/02

Abstract: Due to dualistic implications in the Bill of Human Rights, spirits should be granted the same universal rights like living human subjects. Hence, human beings and psychic forces should be treated the same–at least juridically. In the following, we clear the methodological conditions for a new work of portraiture photography that responds to cases of undocumented residence of spirits in the United Kingdom. The paper will not refer to legal concerns of ghost deportation nor present traditional procedures of exorcism applied by the Vatican State, LPO, NYCG, AGS, ASA, or spiritual or governmental organisations. We, rather, aim to explore secular possibilities for a modern way of spirit deportation in cases of an undocumented residence.

Keywords: afterlife, evidence, extraneous person, ghostly matter, paranormal activity, photography, pornography, psychic force, remote forces, spectres, spiritualism, trace record, Victorian portraiture, Zulu

Outline:
The tale of the bishop's celestial slum dwelling
Dark matter in the light box
Nausea of a supposedly savage warrior
Modern visions on colloidal suspensions
Silver bromide souls
Conclusion for a photographical detachment of the extras
Feasibility and ethical assessment

The tale of the bishop's celestial slum dwelling

In an essay on the history of photography, Bill Jay retold the story of a bishop that he got introduced to by photographer Eddie Adams. Here is the plotline: on dying, the bishop approached the Pearly Gates, where St. Peter automatically checked off his name and directed him to his dwelling in the City of God: a cold-water one room flat in the basement of a rundown tenement. As the bishop received his keys, an uncouth and oafish individual approached. Peter asked his name, then checked his list and suddenly switched to a chummy state of excitation. He pointed the new arrival to a spacious mansion with panoramic views. The bishop was a little disconcerted and returned to Peter, saying that he would not like to appear ungrateful, but as Peter should know, he had followed the Church's teaching throughout his life, he had obeyed the Commandments and respected the rituals without questioning for a lifetime. So how come he received a slum dwelling while this shabby guy, obviously dissolute and sinful, was granted a palace? 'Aw, c'mon', Peter said, 'we have many good churchmen like you in Heaven, but this guy is a photographer and we don't get many of them up here'. The backside to the bishop's tale is that a vast majority of deceased photographers would congregate in Hell. Is this a joke or a sincere occupational hazard? What would the reason be for such disrespect for photography? Once a bailer of visual fidelity, photography became very popular in the production of visual facts and knowledge. However, at the peak of its popularity, it somehow seems to have lost its credibility, and the term 'imaging' became a common replacement for what once was known as faithful reproduction. In the following, we will reflect on two works where we more or less made use of photography and analyse what we did within the history of the medium and its metaphysics.

Dark matter in the light box

We made use of photography twice. The first photograph that we produced from the shot to the print was *Black is the New White* (2012), a fashion poster applying the pictorial language of glamour magazines. During the production, we did not reflect on what

we were doing at any time, the photography was just a means of purpose. The purpose was the production of an object, an advertisement in a light box that we would use to hack the visual codes of a regionally specific infrastructure of consumption. By doing this, we did not reflect on photography as a specific media of reproduction, we simply made use of it. What counted was the result: a composite image composed of culturally specific codes that—despite all embedded regionally specific codes—would tell the story of a deterritorialised man. We applied gender codes, geographical tags, and mysterious gadgets in order to unlock the viewer's imagination. Nothing in the image was natural; we manipulated every single feature. The photographed place does not exist—we took a picture of the skyline of Dubai with Burj Khalifa and put it in the background of a sand dune, which is not easy to find around Dubai. The man looks like a local, although the model is a foreigner. The garment was cut in the fashion of a local male dress, the *candura*, while the cloth was from the women's *abaya* dress. Though the sweat on the forehead of the model makes sense in relation to the alleged desert, the picture was actually shot at 55 °F and luckily, our highly professional fashion photographer donated his own sweat that got pasted onto the image. The golf ball is a gimmick—the model had to look down to show us the fake sweat and the ball was just an option to give a sense of action. All details in the composition were set up to be very loosely coupled in terms of a significant message. It showed that this was a key to ignite one's imagination.

We simply skipped photographical production issues for the sake of representation and concentrated on a composition of codes and signs. All references to the real world, such as the skyline, the sand, the cloth, the model, and other accessories, were secondary to us. What counted was nothing but the meaning constituted by the entire composition. This message emerges from pictorial codes and connotations, it determines how a photograph, either realistic or imaginary, would be read. It is a kind of dark matter that is invisible, but at the same time directing how an image would be seen. Roland Barthes noted some concerns that address the problem of the photographical message.[1] His major problems are: how do we read photograms? What do we perceive? In which order and succession?

Is it possible to perceive an image without linguistic categorisation? In other words, can we see the image detached from its codification?

Nausea of a supposedly savage warrior

We had to deal with these kind of questions again in *Faces*, a portraiture series presented in *Cabinet of Souls,* the basement section of the Mosaic Rooms' 2014 'Future Rewound' exhibit in London. The *BITNW* light box was a good preparation for this work. This time we did not produce an image, we recycled an already existing one that was found in the archives of the KwaZulu-Natal University Library in Durban, South Africa. The photograph was taken more than one century ago and tagged in the library catalogue with 'Chief of Zulus, his wives and troop of Zulus', as if it were part of an ethnological exhibition. Looking at this picture for a longer period of time, it became a bit disturbing. We felt that something was wrong. At this time, we were also running archeological research in the Tower House, the location of the Mosaic Rooms in London, Kensington, close to Earl's Court. We found that the first tenant of the house was Imre Kiralfy, a Hungarian impresario and showman who was also the founding director of London's Exhibition Ltd., who organised the *Greater Britain* exhibition at the Earl's Court exhibition grounds, among many others. This universal exhibition was meant to promote the colonies of the Empire and drag in some possible investors. The South African section included an equestrian spectacle of the Anglo-Zulu Wars and it was exclusively sponsored by the Chartered Company owned by Cecil Rhodes, a South African mining tycoon who made an unparalleled mineral fortune due to intense string-pulling and a warlord-like disposition. The colonial department in Cape Colony, as well as the colonial secretary in London, withdrew any support for the show since they feared a misrepresentation of South African life and people.

At the turn of the 20th century, Rhodes had a poor reputation in London. He got blamed for provoking the outbreak of violence in the Transvaal region a few years earlier since he was behind the digging rights to the land of the Matabele tribe. It came to an asymmetric war between Rhodes's militia and native warriors in which many

white settlers got killed. For this reason it was not a surprise that the main attraction from South Africa at the exhibition was a spectacle called 'Savage South Africa' produced by Frank E. Fillis, a circus performer and showman from South Africa. The event was strongly promoted in newspapers and exhibition guides as a faithful representation of 'life in the wilds of South Africa'. These wilds were shown in one of Feszty's panoramas that figured as a background for 35 mud huts that housed 174 native South Africans, exported to London by Fillis on behalf of Cecil Rhodes.

Keeping this in mind, we started to read the archival photograph quite differently. We looked closely into the faces of the alleged 'warriors', using a drum scan of the image that allowed multiple magnifications. The whole picture was a perfect *mise-en-scène*, the extras were dressed like warriors with shields and spears, wearing feather dresses. Though the costumes were not overly exaggerated, they were untypical for Matabeles at that time. Also, we felt that their faces did not look like the faces of 'savages' at all. If one would change their clothing, they could as well be considered teachers, accountants, officers, missionaries, interpreters, and—according to the results of further research—this would better reflect what they actually were.[2]

The close up on some of the extras' faces drew our attention to a curious look: some of them appeared to express seasickness. We found ropes and chimneys in the background and concluded that the image must have been taken on a ship. Further research confirmed our hypothesis: it was taken on the SS Goth, an intermediate steamer of the Union Line. The photo must have been taken before the steamer entered the harbour in Plymouth in order to provide visual material to the press in England for the announcement of the spectacle. After the facial expression of the seasick traveller attracted our attention, we also looked closer into the eyes of the other extras in the group photo. Finally, it was revealed that the whole scene was a setup. This unintended expression was also part of the message, but it bypassed the attention of the photographer. It is an unwittingly objective side note that was captured by the exposure of the plate rather than by the shutter-pressing subject of the photographer. Barthes calls this

kind of semiotic side effect an 'unsharp meaning'.[3] It is not obvious, like the well-composed meaning of an image, but it is readable and understandable as well. However, it is not explicit and most probably an unauthorised feature of the image, but it cracks the shell of sensemaking and triggers curiosity for further questioning and interpretations.

Despite the historical context of the *Greater Britain* exhibition and the signs that indicated the steamer in the photograph, when we found it in the archives' catalogue, it was still labeled with the same wording with which it was branded by Rhodes and Fillis in 1899. Both wanted the picture to be read as an example of South African savages. Although totally constructed, it was a very strong message that could even hold up against the critical expertise of academic archivists. For this reason, we tried to hack the sealed meaning of the image by way of a photographic tradition that would help to re-establish a similar situation as looking into each single face on a magnified drum scan. Thus we isolated each individual and re-framed them in the style of Victorian portrait photography. Back in the day, many single person portraitures were produced in the same way, as an extraction from family portraits. The typical oval frame was ideal to isolate a face from others. It changed the way the subjects were looked at. Suddenly they started to look like disguised young men and women.

By applying this method of face extraction, we could get closer to the individual character of each extra, but it did not wipe out all categorisation and codes. We learned that in the religion of the Zulus and in South African mythology, life after death is divided between the horizon of Samani, the eternal life of a soul, and in a Sasa period, an intermediate world that is closer to actuality. It connects the living and the dead. In addition to this, a South African soul is site-specific—it is bound to the place where a person passed away. As long as the deceased are remembered by the living, their souls would not be granted access to eternity. This would not have been a problem, since memory in Zulu terms is mainly an orally transmitted memory. As soon as the last friend, relative, or acquaintance died would they be allowed to move? However, most of them were baptised and educated as mission

boys, and in Christianity—if one looks at all devotional objects and monuments—memory is obviously a materialistic concept. Since they were cultural hybrids of Zulu belief and Christianity, their souls must have gotten trapped in the suspension of the photograph taken on the Goth. As long as their *faces* would be recognisable in the group photo, they would be retained in the Sasa period and stuck between life and the realm of the dead. The photograph condemns them to a remoteness presence.

The work 'Faces' could attribute a kind of social dignity to the misrepresented extras, but it could not redeem their souls. In contrast, it even fortified their actual state of being by making their faces even more recognisable. By this logic, we need to address this issue by asking if there is a possible salvation of the extras at all? Looking for a conclusion in this request, we need to go back to the history of photography and propel our problem towards a kind of homoeopathic solution. What was caused by photographical reproduction must be solved by photographical reproduction.

Modern visions on colloidal suspensions

Going back to the beginning, the dead bishop did not fancy photographers, but St. Peter did. The acknowledgement of photography went through a drastic change although its technical principles remained the same. While the optical mechanism in the camera was often credited, the anthropomorphism of the camera-eye also caused an undervaluation of photographical reproduction in terms of visual objectivity. The success of a photographic exploration of a visual world beyond human eyesight was actually due to the photochemical emulsion that captures the intensity of light that is either reflected or absorbed from objects in front of the camera lens. László Maholy-Nagy drew attention to this basic feature in 1927, stating that the photochemical emulsion either applied on glass, metal, paper, or celluloid would be the basic requirement for any productive use of the medium, be it for cognitive or aesthetic purposes.[4] Until that time, the common understanding of photography was mainly linked to the optical aspects of the

technique that reproduced the more than 500-year-old principles of the camera obscura. The main focus was on the way light masked the factual newness of the direct imprint of light onto the photosensitive emulsion. The photosensitivity of haline and bromide crystals is the real reason for photographical evidence because these reactions are caused by light that reflects from outer objects. Hence, every entity that connects to the cosmos via light can get printed in the emulsion.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the success of photography was undeniable and pulled down the reliability of the human eye in terms of objectivity. It was applied in science and got particularly famous in anthropology and criminology studies. Eadweard Muybridge arranged 12 cameras in a row to show that galloping horses had a moment with all hooves off the ground—a fraction of a second that was unrecognisable to human eyes. No painter paid any attention to this detail; even Muybridge only discovered it in order to defend his claim and win a bet. The result was a bit shocking; it was the evidence of a fact that had never been seen although it occurred regularly.

Another productive use of photographical techniques is linked to the name Francis Galton, a relative of Charles Darwin, who also became known for phrenology studies. His idea was the composite portrait for which he did multiple exposures of one or different persons on the same plate. Then he photographed the superimposed image to portray the resulting face image. The final result was surprisingly successful and considered to have significant characteristics. It seems that they represented an idealised look of a person or group. These composite images would become both birth and confirmation of anthropometric typologies. Galton became interested in particular generational and also different racial types such as the Hindu or the Caucasian type. With not much speculative effort, one could even claim that composite photography fostered the theory of descent.

From anthropometry, it was a little step into criminology. Edmund DuCane, Director General of Prisons, supplied a series of portraitures taken from murderers detained in London's prisons. The shots were superimposed and reproduced by Reynolds, who specialised in scientific applications of photography. The idea was

to find out a general 'murderer' type to identify a possible murderer before he committed a crime. A temporal aspect kicked in as prosecutors applied visualising techniques to forecast criminal acts. Usually, forensics functions in the opposite way.

Later developments of photographic techniques using infrared, ultraviolet, X-ray, dark light and Terahertz rays would extend our visuality far beyond the range of human vision. All these technologies were developed and refined for one purpose: to deliver the human eye visual facts that it was unable to detect itself.

This kind of image is different from those we are used to 'reading'. Reading the unseen image is impossible since no one ever learned to understand its language. Barthes calls these kinds of images 'shocking' since they bring to light a photographical insignificance and repel codifications and styles of representations.[5] In relation to interpretation, these images seem to be closer to the light of objective truth since they do not distract with cultural codes. Instead they bypass our apperceptive capacities and reduce us to an undirected seeing.

Silver bromide souls

The history of photography is also crisscrossed by mysteries that emphasise the psychic capacity of the reproduction of the unseen. Many examples are documented in the Vatican archives. The research on miracles such as the Shroud of Turin are fragments of this media history. There are even attempts to explain this phenomenon with photographic principles. If this were accepted, the face of Jesus Christ would be the original exposure (die Ur-Belichtung) and photography would have started with a portrait.[6]

The second half of the 19th century was not only the era of humanities such as physiology, anthropometry, and psychology—sciences that referred mainly to irrational aspects of the human subject—it was also the time for modern spiritualism. Starting with the occurrences at the house of the Fox family in New York in 1851, the interest in psychic phenomena exploded and only four years later, the number of spiritual practitioners in the USA was more than

two million. In the early 1860s, William H. Mumler was drawn into spirit photography by chance. The jewellery engraver and amateur photographer experimented with autoportraits in the studio of a photographer friend and discovered on one plate the apparition of what they called an 'extra' or extraneous person. Instead of himself, a little girl was sitting on the chair. He was surprised and showed the picture to his friend who said that the plate was probably not well cleaned. A little later, he mentioned this occurrence in conversation without clearly noticing his interlocutor's interest in spiritualism. Two days later, he found the story, including the address of the studio where the alleged ghost was conjured, in several spiritualist magazines and newspapers all over Boston and the country. He was shocked and decided to warn his friend who owned the studio where he took the pictures. As he arrived the studio was already full of sensationalists who subscribed to the waiting list for their portraits.

Since Mumler was interested in both photography and in apparitions, he took the opportunity in hand and started a new business and genre: spirit photography. Since he did not promise any positive results to a client—he was not sure if the apparition would happen again—he did not take any further risk and by doing so, he got paid for the photography but not for the apparitions. Most of his clients had already been spiritualists before they came to Mumler's studio. Some of them were even known as mediums. Mumler produced some ghost shots from time to time. He also tried auto-portraiture again and found the apparition of a figure that he identified as his cousin who died twelve years earlier. After that he bought out his friend to pursue spirit photography full time.

One of Mumler's clients was Abraham Lincoln's wife, who wished for a photograph together with her husband. Mumler became famous even though he was a controversial figure. His careless, happy-go-lucky disposition did not protect him from failures that caused him to undergo trial for fraud. The showman Phileas Taylor Barnum, at this time mentor of the above-mentioned Imre Kiralfy, testified against Mumler. He hired Abraham Bogardus, the famous New York daguerreotypist, to fabricate an image of himself and the supposed ghost of Abraham Lincoln. This photograph was tendered as evidence in Mumler's trial to demonstrate to the court

how easy it was to forge spirit photographs. But who could tell whether this apparition of Lincoln's ghost was a forgery or not? In the end, Mumler was found not guilty, since no one could prove that Mumler didn't believe in what he was doing. However, the US$3,000 expense of the trial killed his business.

Barnum himself was an American politician, showman, and businessman remembered for celebrated hoaxes. He was the leading figure in marketing sensations at this time, and—this is quite important—he did not invent the spirit photography that attracted an audience of more than 2 million. Furthermore, Mumler owed nothing to Barnum and Barnum had no reason to blame Mumler for anything, he was not even a client. He probably felt menaced by a new competitor and defended his claims in the market of sensation against the mysterious newcomer Mumler.

Towards the turn of the century, spirit photography became very common among middle class Victorian England, where no case like Mumler's fraud trial occurred. Here, it was the opposite. Spirit photographers were renowned persons with professional backgrounds and ties to either Oxford or Cambridge. The public scepticism was also less aggressive although the business of spectral portraits was productive. It was a totally different climate than in America and the hype of the genre lasted longer. At the turn of the century, an underground market developed that supplied easy-to-use tools for spirit forgery and a lot of fraud was committed. Nevertheless, one must admit that academics and professional photographers often controlled pioneers and stars of the genre, and they were never convicted of fraud. In addition, many later-known spirit photographers first stepped in after they were hired to supervise the methods of other of spirit photographers.

With all this taken into account, it is justifiable to assume that Barnum campaigned against Mumler to defend the value of his own hoaxes and spectacles. As we already mentioned, Barnum was the mentor of Kiralfy, who allowed the 'Savage South Africa' spectacle to take place at Earl's Court exhibition grounds. He was not amused by it and even considered it a bad and unnecessary representation of South African people. On the other hand, he did not reject Cecil

Rhodes's blood diamonds. Hence the story of 'Faces' continues and we suppose that it will do this until the souls of the South African extras are redeemed and allowed to leave the intermediary world between actuality and enter their remote cosmic eternity.

Conclusion for a photographical detachment of the extras

According to the African mythologies collected by John S. Mbiti[7] and Arthur Conan Doyle's personal experiences with modern spiritualism journeying in Australia and New Zealand[8], the only successful method to redeem the souls of the extras sealed on the archival photograph would be to re-enact the original event. The reconstruction of the SS Goth steamer and the application of the same photomechanical appliances and methods would be mandatory for a successful outcome of this venture. In order to determine the originally applied techniques, we propose a procedure based on trial and error. The following steps gathered in the table below are mandatory for goal achievement: a) the finding of the appropriate camera and lens, b) the determination of the components and mix ratio of the original emulsion, and c) the carrier of the emulsion, either glass, metal, or paper. These findings will be brought to light by A) further analysis of the original photograph and B) by the simple decision-making based on trial and error mentioned above.

A) analysis of the archival photograph	B) testing based on trial and error
a) determination of the lens	a) determination of the camera
b) suspension components	c) carrier

Table 1: Analytical and experimental approach of determination

Feasibility and ethical assessment

Photography is the functional exploitation of the physics of light. This makes the technique superior to the functions of the human eye, which is usually decelerated by physiology and tamed by intellect. The chemical emulsion is able to capture visual information without any selective psycho-physiological *relais* such as the retina, optic nerves, brain or attention, perception, memory, emotions, or the censorship of consciousness. If one considers the velocity of light compared to the speed of human perceptions, it is quite clear that the difference between a visual object and its photographical reproduction would be insignificant. Intuitively, we do not tell any difference between objects and reproductions—this is the reason why we collect photographs of our beloved. The difference seems to be made by the intellect, which is trained to respond to interactions and goal attainment. It is most likely that any facts in conflict with a socially successful behaviour are usually excluded from human perception. In contrast, light is an all-embracing cosmic energy, and its speed defines the limits of space and time. This is the reason why we conclude that photography that applies the speed of light for the pictorial reproduction is the only reliable means of capturing spiritual facts that were never seen but always there. Since light emanates in space and time and superimposes one on the other by physical laws, it is our only medium to get in touch with the remote and rewrite its past.

Pasolini always understood cinema as a medium of the conjuring. It is basically a transfer print of light that emits from outer objects onto a photographic emulsion. He never accepted that semiotic categories of cinematographic pictures would occupy more attention than its ontology.[9] Cinema shows the light that reflects from the objects onto celluloid as a raw image of the visible and invisible world without any rational or physiological filtering. It is a purely physical vision—a transmission of electromagnetic rays that immediately connect objects, eyes, and brains to the cosmos. By this understanding, Pasolini's aim was not to compose a message and render an image readable to the human observer. He was rather after the image as such, the shocking image that would be its own message. These insignificant images speak to us in a language that we first have to learn to understand. And we are obliged to do so for the sake of cosmological and spiritual integrity.

1 R. Barthes, '*Le message photographique*', in *L'obvie et l'obtus. Essai critiques III*, Paris, Seuil, 1982, p 21.
2 Valery Ward and Margery Moberly, two South African journalists, referred in 1999 to an archival photograph taken in the compound showing a congregation of fully dressed South Africans listening to the prayer of an English priest. Each Sunday morning before the exhibition grounds would open, the exhibition organisers had to allow a service. This was a condition set by the extras of the spectacle. Ward, V. and Moberly, M., "The Travelling Circus from 'Savage' South Africa", *The Witness*, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, October 19, 1999.
3 R. Barthes, 'Le troisième sens', in *L'obvie et l'obtus*, Paris, Seuil, 1982, p 48.
4 This is what László Maholy-Nagy brought to attention in his essays on painting, photography, and film. L. Maholy-Nagy, *Malerei. Fotografie. Film*, Leipzig, 1927. Reprint edited by Hans M. Wingler, Mainz/Berlin, Kupferberg, 1967, pp 26-27.
5 R. Barthes, 'Le message photographique', in *L'obvie et l'obtus. Essais critiques III*, Seuil, Paris, p 20.
6 Note that there are also many mythologies that date the invention of photography long before the birth of Christ. One myth refers to a Chinese emperor who lived in 1,000 BC and others date even further back to Ancient Egypt.
7 J. Mbiti, *Afrikanische Religionen und Weltanschauungen*. Berlin, New York, De Gruyter, 1974.
8 A. Conan Doyle, *The Wanderings of A Spiritualist*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2009.
9 P. Paolo Pasolini, 'Essere è naturale?', *Empirismo eretico*, Milan, Garzanti, 1991, pp 242-247.