

Photographic images of black persons:

Do the photographs of Prince Alamayou by Julia Margaret Cameron, and the Girl with white collar, by Fred Holland Day; offer an alternative to the accepted Victorian view of black people?

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Introduction:

The Victorian era was a time of development and progression. The Industrial Revolution was heralded by the harnessing of electricity, the invention of the radio, sewing machine, typewriter, telephone, sewage system, underground train, steel and the like gave the nation intellectual growth while the ruling of a quarter of the world's population gave Britain its Empire and its power and wealth. During the same period, Darwin's Theory of Evolution (1859) was sparking intellectual debate and rocking the foundations of scientific and religious certainties. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that some of the major issues of modern Western culture - particularly racism - were established during the Victorian era.

The camera, invented in 1839, with all its documenting powers became the means to capture what was real, but for some reason this was not always the case and instead the photographer was able to use the tool as a convincing way to alter perception.

The aim of this paper initially was to address the images made by past black British photographers of black persons and to see if and how the representations in the archives differed from those of contemporaneous white photographers. However, locating a fitting selection of the type of images required proved unsuccessful. Henry Mayhew, who wrote extensively about Londoners of the time in his book *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1851, made reference to a practising black photographer.

....You see when first photography come up I had my eye on it, for I could see it would turn me in something some time. I went and works...so as to try and learn something about chemistry, for I always has a haggling after science. Me and Jim...we was both black ...  
(Mayhew 1967, Vol. 3, pp216-220)

Despite this evidence of a black photographer working in London during the Victorian era, photographs from that time of black subjects, or by black photographers, were not found in British archives. The reason for this could be as simple as the fact that the subject's or photographer's race was not recorded. Caroline Bresssey's paper *Invisible presence*, 2006, reveals that archival classifications of black people were neither stereotypical nor racist, for example a picture of a black fisherman would read as "fisherman". She states:

The 19<sup>th</sup> century has proved to be the most difficult period for researchers to explore, despite the numerous archives that are available...the aim of this paper is to present some sightings of black people during this period and to use their presence in the archives to suggest why there have been so few  
(Bresssey, 2006, p48)

This has left a resounding 'Why?' Why are there none in the British archives? Is it that they do not exist? I then began to question the use of photography in the identity formation of black people and the use of photography by black people from its invention. The lack of images in this country suggested suppression, as in the USA, black photographers such as Jules Lion, Augustus Washington James Presley Ball and the Goodridge brothers (the latter becoming the most important African-American establishment in photography's early history) produced images that not only produced a living for the photographer, but also explored the importance of community, identity and preservation of family histories. Awareness of the racial situation (slavery) and attitudes that continued for another 25 years makes the work of black

photographers in this period even more outstanding and important and highlights the production of these photographs as an accomplishment in itself.

However, the archives produced a selection of stereotypical photographic images of black people, showing them in an anthropological light as discussed in chapter one. The images that seemed to show a different way of looking - in no way different from those of white subjects taken by white photographers - were taken by Julia Margaret Cameron (chapter two) and Fred Holland Day (chapter three). They produced images that at the time of conception were viewed by the gentry and were appreciated by content not context.

Following this 'revolution' one might have thought that there could have been a further development of black images and photographers, but there was not. It should be remembered that at this stage, photography was an expensive activity and therefore not accessible to the greater part of the population, both black and white.

Britain's political stance was one of greatness and greed - in other words colonialism and empire. History reminds us that black people played a huge part in the construction of Britain's empire and identity and begs the question then what part these images could have played in the identity formation of black Britons. Do these negative images themselves play as large a part in white perception of black stereotypes, as they have in black identity?

The subject of this paper has therefore been amended to investigate the images that are accessible in this country and will centre around Cameron's photographs of Dejatch Alamayou, King Theodore's son, 1868 (fig 1) and Holland Day's Girl with the white collar photograph 1905 (fig 2). The question of why the photographs of Cameron and Day did not do more for black identity is addressed in chapter four.

Fig.1



Cameron, J.M. 1836. Photograph of Prince Dejatch Alamayou [photograph]  
Museum no. 24-1939. NPG London

Fig, 2



Day, F.H. 1905. A Young School Girl [photograph]  
Part of the Louise Imogen Guiney Collection and housed in the Prints and  
Photographs Division of the Library of Congress. USA

## Chapter one: The Victorians

The development of photography gave the opportunity for everything to be documented. Depiction of race was extremely influential in the concept of identity; it was one in which the British could create their own identity and distinguish their status.

*It is without question that the onset of photography coincided with the expansion of British Empire. This record and progress was provided by photography. (Ryan, 1997 p11)*

Although most experienced extreme hardship/poverty, nonetheless black people have held a presence in England since before the 15<sup>th</sup> century. (Fryer 1984) It was slavery that brought many of them to England and with the abolition of the slave trade in Britain in 1833; many stayed and began rebuilding their lives.

The introduction of the race classification, abhorrent as it was, as a result of the anthropological system, did not find its way through to the non-scientific community until much later. Even the criminal record log sheets that accompany the infamous images of both the black and white inmates of Pentonville Prison (1880) contain no information on skin colour, deeming it, at this level of society, more relevant to provide detailed criminal history. Sekula perpetrates this alignment with the social underclass he states:

...Thus, photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the other, to define both the generalized look- the typology- and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology.  
(Sekula, 1986 p7)

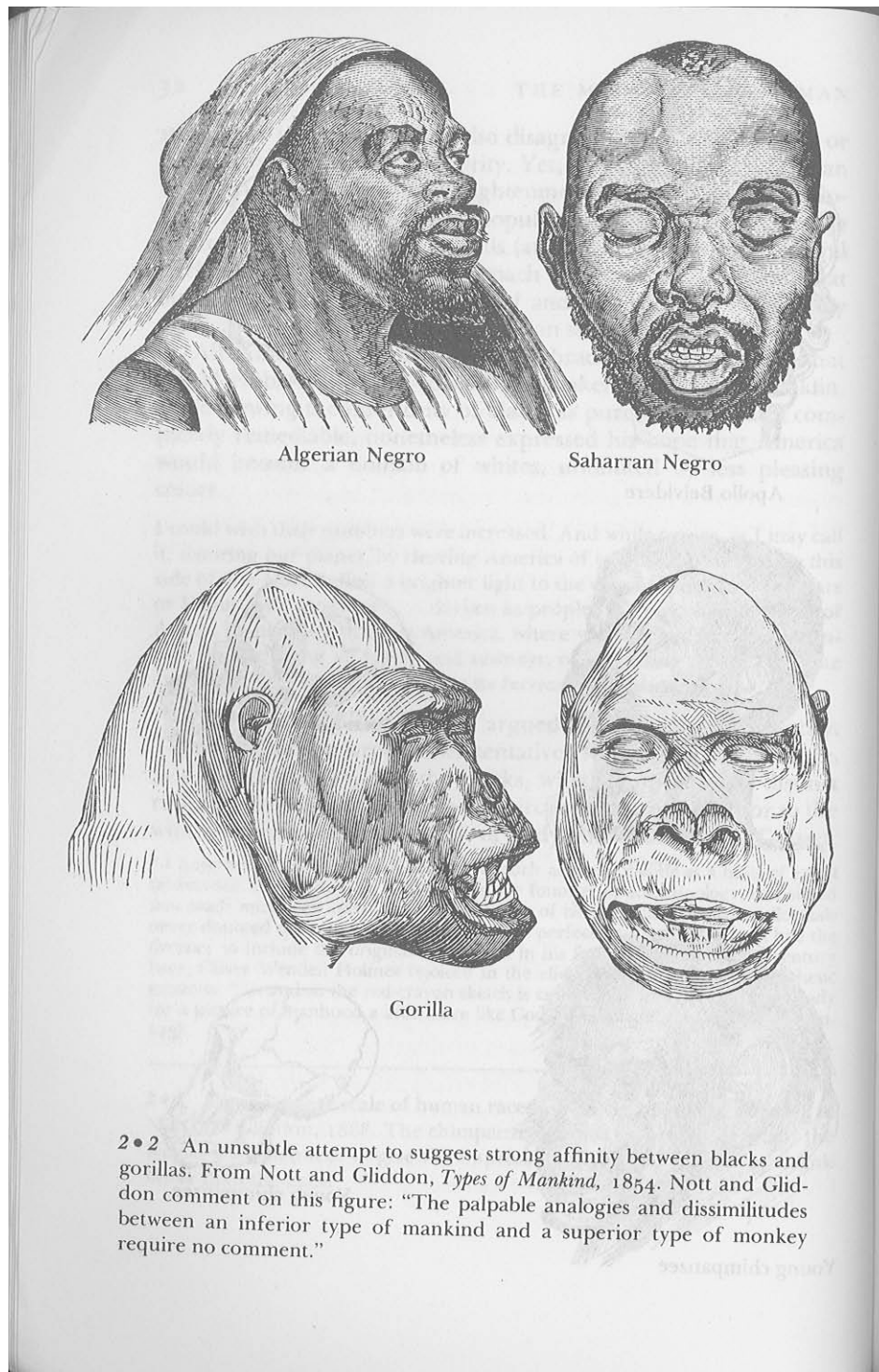
The black man, if he had money, had an unusual place in society; he was recognised and to some extent, was accepted. However, the rise in status of the black man, followed by his decline through British satire, brought him to a position that made it necessary for the white ruling class to 'keep the black man in his place'.

It seems probable that it was slavery that allowed the hierarchy and stigma of Otherness to take centre stage. It had always been there but the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) allowed a Victorian reading of black people for many, as nearer to apes than any other member of *Homo sapiens*.  
(fig. 3)

This notion of the black man, combined with the earlier mixture of folklore and anecdotes, allowed many people to view different human races in the same manner as species of animals, naturally competing (survival of the fittest) with the white race at the top.

The archaeological find of the Neanderthal man (1829-1856) forced many of the Victorians to accept that their ancestors had been as primitive as these 'savages' from Africa. However, combined with the anthropometric and craniometrical scientific measurements that were in use at the time, this find convinced them that the black man was on the same par as the prehistoric man, making him primitive - very low in the evolutionary chain - akin to apes.

Fig. 3



Untitled [print] Available at:

<https://segue.middlebury.edu/view/html/site/amst0227a-f07/node/1361164>

This theory assured the Caucasians that in no uncertain terms, due to the size of their heads and brains, they were indeed a superior civilization.

This was not the only reason for Victorians to think that the blacks were savages. Literature of the time included historical stories of conquest and what was found when they reached those strange lands, views of ministers who had travelled to foreign shores professing the need to tame the savages with religion. They linked the lack of clothing and simple lifestyle to a primitive nature.

...Is a people who like animals eat of the herbs of the grow on the banks of the Nile and in the fields. They go about naked and have not the intelligence of ordinary men. They co habit with their sisters and anyone they can find...these are the black slaves, the sons of Ham...(Priest 1851,cited in Gilman1985 p80)

The comparison of black people with animals was proliferated during this century. What came before photography were visual statements, exaggerated drawings, flamboyant text on how the black man was not a man at all.

Yet accounts of Christopher Columbus's voyage by Bartholomew las Casas (1474-1566) tell a different story, the one that they don't want us to hear - one that reveals the truth about the 'Other':

*Given that the indigenous peoples of the region are naturally so gentle, so peace-loving, so humble and so docile ...and are deemed wicked and are condemned and proscribed by all such legal codes...it would constitute a criminal neglect of my duty to remain silent about the enormous loss of life as well as the infinite number of human souls dispatched to Hell in the course of such 'conquest'*  
(Trans. Griffin. 1992. P6)

The account goes on to mention how it is the Spanish themselves, who are the vulgar ones, treating the natives in an un-Christian manner and killing them in unmentionable ways.

Such atrocities towards the natives in order to accomplish wealth, land and empire continued through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. King Leopold II (first cousin to Queen Victoria) went to the Congo and perpetrated similar crimes upon the natives just as the Spaniards did to the American indigenous peoples in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

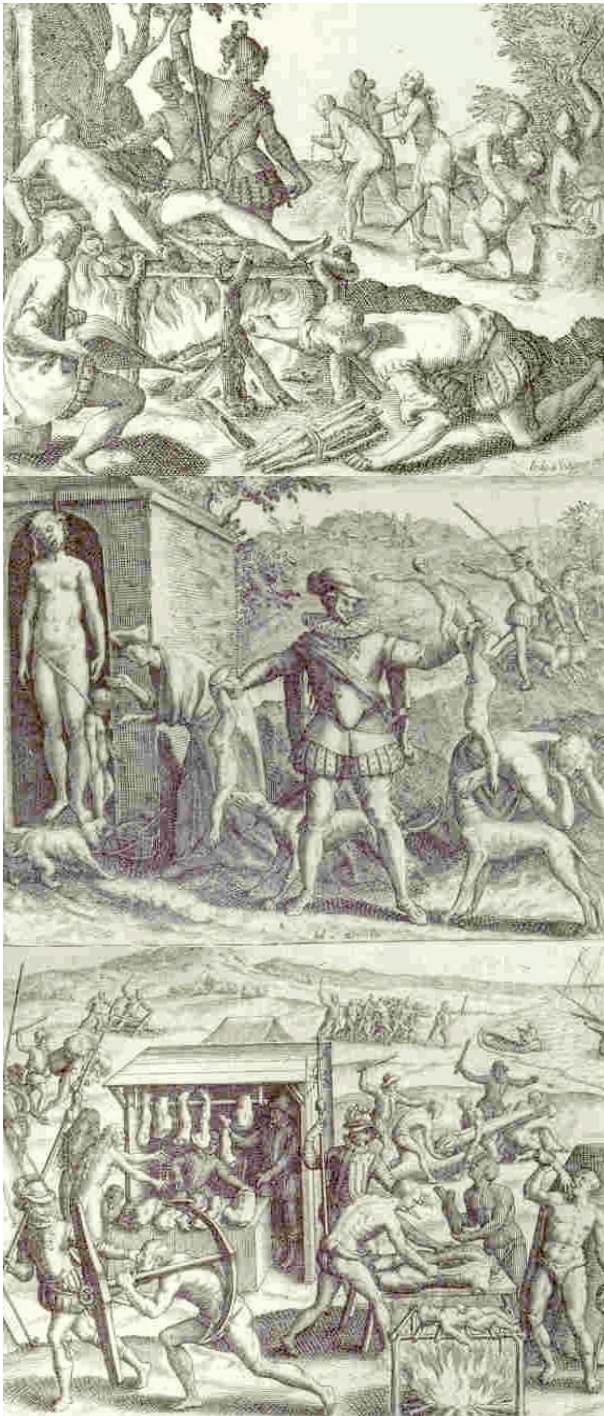
One white officer described a raid to punish a Congolese village that had protested against Belgian actions. The white officer in command: ordered us to cut off the heads of the men and hang them on the village palisades, also their sexual members, and to hang the women and the children on the palisade in the form of a cross.”  
(wikipedia: congo free state)

...A repetition that had been played out four centuries earlier:

Some they chose to keep alive and simply cut their wrists, leaving their hands dangling.... The way they normally dealt with the native leaders was to tie them to a griddle... and grill them over a slow fire  
(Griffen 1992 p.15)

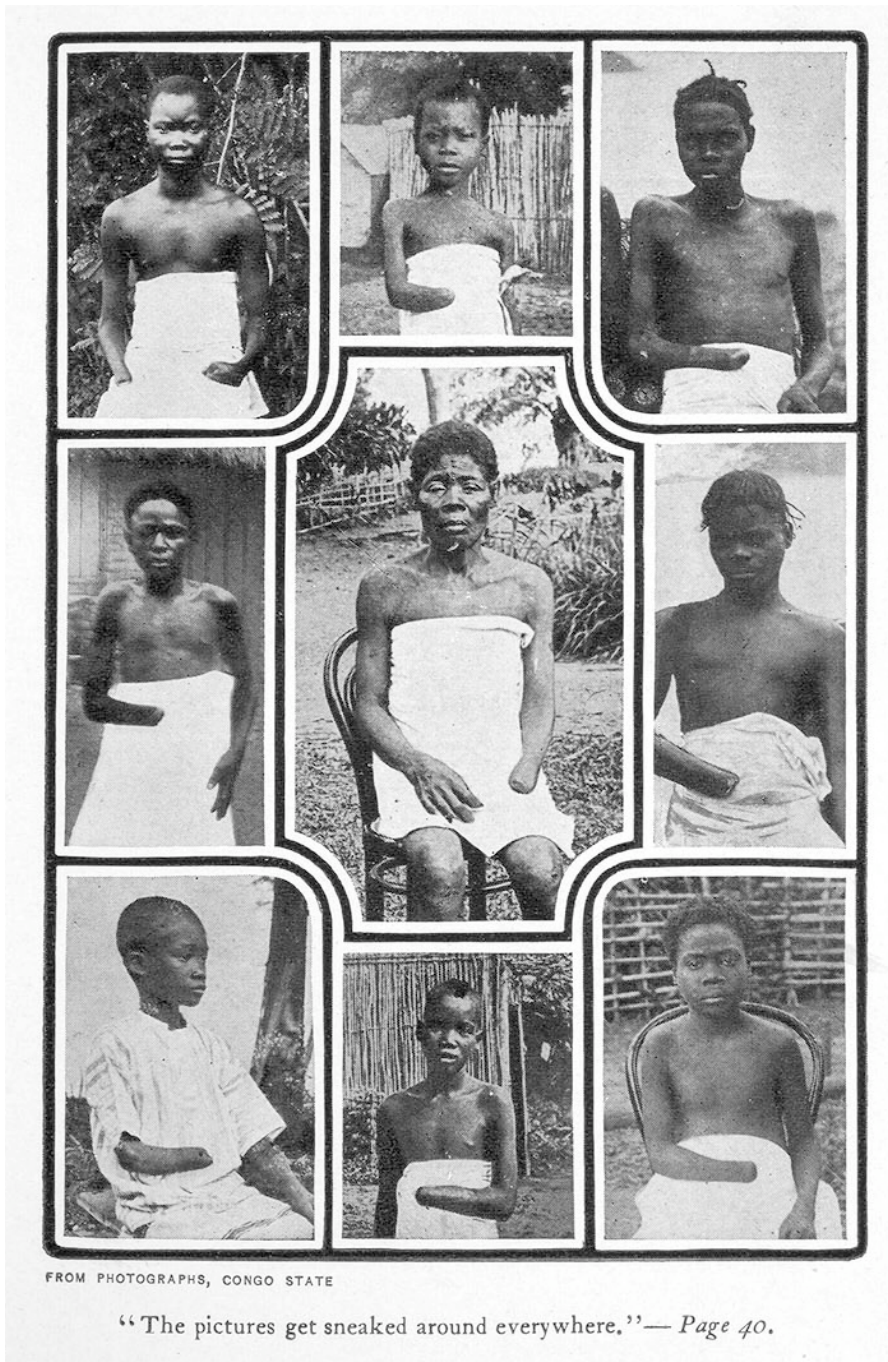
Both of these accounts have documentation and visual evidence. The lack of photographic development in the 15<sup>th</sup> century allows illustrations to explain (fig. 4), while for the 19<sup>th</sup> century we are shown photographs in clear anthropological style i.e. the dominance and hierarchy in which the photograph in its tangible form and the photographer in their image making capacity elicited power over those photographed. (Fig. 5)

Fig. 4



Bry, T.D., Untitled [Print] Theodore De Bry's Illustrations for Bartholomew de Las Casas's Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies  
Available at : <http://www.lehigh.edu/~ejg1/doc/lascasas/casas.htm>  
[Accessed 15 June 2009]

Fig. 5



Anon, 1904, Mutilated people from Congo Free State [photograph] 'in' Twain, M., 1905, King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule, (2ed), Boston: The P. R. Warren Co.

These images, despite their content and post colonial substance, allow a way of seeing that was indicative of how a person looked and it is here that photography within the realm of anthropology showed us the differences and similarities of race of man.

The anthropometric measurements, anthropologic photography and human display exhibitions were used to reinforce Darwin's theory and provide scientific legitimisation for difference and Other. Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton<sup>i</sup>, a firm believer in evolution, eugenics, phrenology and anthropology used photography to distinguish the Other from themselves.

His portraits of people highlighted their physiognomy and played a huge part in the nineteenth century in establishing the subject's racial and class status; they became a prominent factor in the establishment of British type and identity. It was photography's role in this that allowed the scientific surveillance and fragmented framing of the Other, which in turn perpetrated their subordinate status and worthlessness, motivating the start of the western construction of identity.

Another influential mode of viewing the Other was introduced just as photography was becoming more popular, with the collection, display and trading of the carte-de-visite photographs<sup>ii</sup> and the expositions.

The expositions were established to show growth, accomplishment and progress; this included showing races of mankind. According to the US

President William McKinley <sup>iii</sup> (1901);

Expositions are the timekeepers of progress. They record the worlds advancement. They stimulate the energy, enterprise and intellect of the people and quicken human genius...(Rydall, 1987, p.4)

Indeed the content of these shows proved educational and highly influential in shaping popular understanding of race and place.

Whether bona fide or counterfeit, these shows drew in audiences by reinforcing the comfortable binary of savage/civilized that encouraged even working-class audiences to imagine themselves to be members of an imperial ruling race  
(Blanchard et al 2008, p.83)

It also

Constructed a racial otherness as freakish bodily difference, thus naturalizing and normalizing the white British body.  
(ibid 2008, p.88)

The viewers separated themselves from the subjects on display allowing a disassociation between the races until they were separated enough for some people to believe that those they viewed were actually not human.

It has to be remembered that history had always placed this notion in the mind of the people, so to see the foreign, primitive, barbaric, uncivilised ape-like creatures 'in the flesh', and to own a photographic reproduction of them, was a political game of the government to formulate progression and wealth by enabling and creating greater imperialism: 'The ownership of the photograph permitted a controlled domestication that allowed consumption and possession while maintaining the crucial distance between self and other'. (ibid p240)

What the expositions encouraged was 'spectacularisation' of the Other. The performance of the exotic and the display of the scientific while photography allowed a collection of these types and gave the white members of all levels of society, class aspirations and real evidence for declaring and emphasizing racial difference.

As the distance grew between 'them' and us, photography gave the power to attribute one feature to all - stereotyping. Francis Galton's composite photography tried its best to prove that a type could be identified merely through sight and for some time his practice was effective, however, eventually he had to concede that 'types' were not sustainable in practice.

Most famously known for the *steatopygia* accumulation of fat around the hips and buttocks and *micronymphia* large labia,<sup>iv</sup> The Hottentot Venus was a feast for the eyes - nothing like it had ever been seen before (fig 6). On show, examined and illustrated, her body and genitalia size naturally allowed a sexual reading; it was purely fascinating.

It was this black female that gave rise to the stereotypical identity of sexual bestiality. Gould (1996) wrote of the sinister fascination exercised by Saartjie, not as a missing link, but as a result of her position halfway between mankind and beast<sup>v</sup>.

The morbid interest in her supposedly deformed body, her supposed bestiality, and the belief in her unusual sexual appetite, fed fascination with her among men. They fetishised her at the same time as being horrified and debasing her, the strangeness of this female body (for it was similar to their

Fig. 6



Anon, 1810, Sartjee, The Hottentot Venus, Now Exhibiting in London, Drawn From Life, City of Westminster Archive Center, London/Bridgeman Art Library.

own) reassured them of their own bodies but also brought about sexual fantasies that led their repressed outlook to attune sex with Other and here the Others are standing for the prostitutes.  
(Blanchard et al 2008, p.70)

The experience that Saartjie Baratman left with the Europeans was that of 'black grotesque' and 'inhuman of species'. Twenty-four hours after her death like an animal she was dissected and her genitalia were examined in detail, preserved and exhibited as specimens. Cuvier, who performed the autopsy on Saartjie Baratman, could not help categorising her with numerous species of monkey:

.... since her ears are small and weakly formed, as with the orang-utan, and she frequently juts her lip outwards in a like manner; likewise, her Skull resembles a monkey's more than any other I have examined. (Cuvier, 1817)

Cuvier's anatomical observations testified to Baartman's humanity, but his decision to categorise her as a *Boschimanne* rather than *Hottentot*, suggests that for Cuvier, Baartman was as close as possible to an ape. (Guenther, 1980, p.128)

The history of the development of the black stereotypes is more than just a visual representation of reality. The repression of the person, the necessity to define hierarchical roles, was at the beginning a need to segregate and subordinate in order to acquire wealth. Regrettably the stereotype became the way to oppress and suppress the Other; thus the images used to reinforce the difference of black people penetrated throughout society to become symbols.

The photographic images by Cameron and Day seem to give a sense of hope and faith to black identity as to how the black image could be subverted. The next chapters will examine these images in these terms.

## Chapter Two: Cameron

In 1868, Cameron had a visitor to her Isle of Wight home and not to miss a chance of someone new to photograph, she photographed the Abyssinian prince on his own and with his two attendants<sup>vi</sup>.

These images are not widely known or discussed within the history of photography. The modern recognition of Cameron as a maternal artist of religious and poetic influence has allowed the political and racial interpretation to be overlooked.

After returning to Ceylon in 1875, Cameron, commented:

...The glorious beauty of the scenery - the primitive simplicity of the inhabitants and the charms of the climate all make me love and admire Ceylon. (Weaver 1986 p.68)

Cameron's importance in photographic history should not be forgotten. Her misty, moody photographs mesmerise the modern viewer into forgetting the social mood of her time, whereas the use of the word 'Primitive' denotes her belief in her status in contrast to the Ceylonese in terms of evolution.

The Prince in her photographs was an orphan of Abyssinia. His father, King Theodore committed suicide whilst at war with Britain in 1868, while his mother died of consumption a few weeks later. As she was dying she gave the charge of her child to Lord Napier who brought him back to England (at the request of Queen Victoria). But the child was drawn to another member of the unit, Captain Speedy was to become Alamayou's<sup>vii</sup> closest confidant and his guardian at the request of Queen Victoria, who took a keen interest in Alamayou's welfare<sup>viii</sup>.

Cameron is best known for her allegorical, sensual images of friends and family, which, of the time were not in keeping with the conventional mode of representation in photography. She photographed without the detail of the norm, and this in turn presented her photographs like paintings to be appreciated by many but not all.

Rosen explains that during the year 1867 and 1868

Cameron's photographic career reached its fullest stride, until then she was photographing family members and friends. She seized upon global events of primary importance to the British Empire, political activities that captivated colonialists at home and abroad. These events included the public debates surrounding the expanding scope of covert British interventions into colonial territories and the preparations for and execution of the war in Abyssinia. Cameron contributed to the public discourse surrounding these events by creating and displaying photographs that referred directly to the colonial incidents. In doing so, she used her photography overtly to affirm both the justness and the justice of the political imperialism. (Codell 1998, p.169)

The photographs to which he is referring are the photographs of Prince Alamayou.

Cameron took every opportunity to photograph who-ever would allow themselves to be photographed. William Allingham a friend of Cameron who she did not photograph, for he would not let her; kept a journal. On August 21st 1868, he wrote about being present when Cameron was preparing to photograph Alamayou and captain speedy.

.... dress to be photographed by Mrs. C., the prince in a little purple shirt and a necklace, captain speedy in a lion-skin tippet (Allingham,H., 1908, p168)

Cameron's copyright of all the Alamayou images, the control of the subjects costumes and, we can assume the poses too; show the viewer, her awareness in influence how the images were read.

On the three occasions that Alamayou and his attendants were photographed<sup>ix</sup>, 20th July, 27th July and 29<sup>th</sup> July 1868; the images produced reveal Cameron's manipulating of Alamayou. He was first photographed with captain speedy, thus coaxing him in. By the second sitting he was photographed on his own, she had got what she wanted, and by the third sitting, she was after a very different way of seeing, a way in which to depict the strength of the British against the weakness of the Ethiopians (as in the war they had just won). She staged Speedy attacking an Abyssinian titling the image spear or spare (fig. 7). This image had none of the mistiness or deep emotions that her other staged tableaux images had, this had clarity and purpose. Cameron was carefully and skillfully, politicizing the images for an attending audience, and not knowing if her view was inclined in the colonial way, her motivation for manipulating Alamayou presence and the stereotyping of the act, could have been for money and recognition.

The image of Alamayou, was sent and displayed on the windows of P & D Colnaghi, Cameron's 'art' dealers awaiting orders.

Captain Speedy, wrote in his notebooks that the prince caused something of a sensation among the islands residents, where everyone was interested in the Abyssinian expedition and wanted to catch sight of Alamayehu. (Southon 1991)

The public and hence the papers had great interest in this Prince. His popularity increased their readership, while the public, asked by the magazine Punch, what they would do to the Abyssinia King, once he had been captured; responded that he should become an exhibit in the centre of a live exhibition.

Fig. 7



Cameron, J.M., 1868, Spear or Spare; Báshá Félíka / Captn. Speedy, [photography]  
Ph.19-1939 Victoria and Albert London

Evidently the political response towards King Theodore, allows us to see the public attitude to people of colour. The public's need to view and ridicule, allows Cameron's image of the Prince to be read in a similar vein; something that they would pay money to go and see, instead it was a cartes-de-visite that could be bought. Thus making him a spectacle, allowing him to remain in the nature of how images of type were seen by the Victorians.

Placing the images of Alamayou for sale in the gallery, Cameron alludes the representation of the Prince to one that is based on the 'thirst of the public' of the time; in order for an image to be valued by society it had to reflect the values and ideas of this authority. She uses the images to show and perhaps tell others who fail to see her making the same political stance as them, that she also believe in Britain's greatness. The only way for them to really believe it is show so through photography, by showing Alamayou as a stereotype or was she saying I Julia Margaret Cameron photograph this black boy as I would my other portraits and allegorical studies, no.

The image of the prince shows ambivalence and displacement.

Ambivalence may be detected, according to Bhabha when imagery vacillates uneasily between what is always in place, already known and something that must be anxiously repeated...[which] can never really in discourse be proved (Bhabha 1983, p.18)

The image promotes a double expression of colonial representation; as the images that show children do not reveal the same approach. The Prince is no longer a Prince, he has been removed from his land, the clothes he wears are not authentic Ethiopian dress, the adornment of necklaces and props refer him

no longer as an individual, but refer to him as a 'type'.

Cameron places the symbols that encourage a stereotype

Barthes acknowledges this use of sign as symbol and symbolic meaning as the studium that, which is purely personal and dependent on the individual, and the punctum that which pierces the viewer. He explains its usage to show the personal importance that is applied to the representation shown. For the Victorians, it brought about a distinct level of them and us and according to Edwards

characterized a fetish desire and reification of the qualities of the difference and danger (be it moral, physical or sexual), [to be] focussed on the body of the Other; [thus allowing the] photographs [to be] performed as both allegory and reality' (Blanchard, p 2008 p240)

This is what Cameron's earlier photographs precisely do, this is what she is so famous for producing, and perhaps in a unconventional way she is trying to do the same thing with the Alamayou images, but the simple fact that she has chosen to do so with a black person and the because of the time, black people were not seen in that way. Cameron's, images of Alamayou continue to be displaced

For Cameron photographs were valued because of their direct connection to the referent, her images were always about her sitter's superiority as individuals. Her ideas about the indexicality and iconicity of the photography was shared by Caryle, he wrote of photographic, portraiture reveled its status as an index as that face and figure which [a photographer] saw by his own eyes, but he recognized too that photographic portraits also required iconic and symbolic value, standing emblematically for an individuals timeless or universal greatness. (Codell 1988, p.164)

The Alamayou images do not have that air about them.

This displacement is continued when we learn about the exhibition she had in the German gallery in London between January and February 1868.

Images of Alamayou and captain Speedy were shown within the context of the other images displayed during the exhibition. The politics that were of topical debate of the time, allowed the images Cameron made of Alamayou to be read, how she may have intended.

Shown in the context with portraits of white advocates of colonial power, John Eyre (controversial colonial Jamaican governor) and Thomas Carlyle (fig 8), (a supporter of Eyre, who's ideas appealed to many Victorians who were grappling with scientific and political changes) declared

One always rather likes the nigger....he is the only savage of all the coloured races that doesn't die out on sight of the white man [sic] ; but can actually live beside him and work and increase and be merry. The almighty maker has appointed him, to be a servant. (Ibid p164)

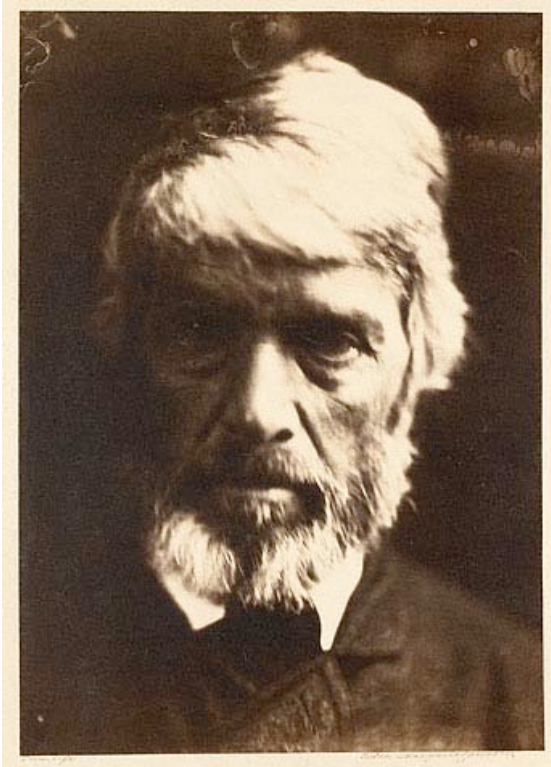
The exhibition was a way in which to promote Eyre's cause and to show that he had supporters.

One of his many supporters was Lord Tennyson and Charles Dickens, very close friends of Cameron

The portraits of the men tied in with her other allegorical images of truth and virtue and trust, reiterating to show a positive view of Britain's colonial rule.

At first glance, the images containing the black boy, reveal a positive affirmation of race and type. We are led to believe having known this child's story and Queen Victoria's love for him, that what we are shown is acceptance of the Other. Almost taken in the same light as her previous imagery, at first glance we are fooled. The picture of Alamayou in the arms of speedy plays on this, it lulls us into the deception, of having empathy, understanding and likability, while the cultural norm was to mock and to use the Other as a base to show the Caucasians as superior.

Fig. 8



Cameron, J.M. 1867. Thomas Carlyle. [photograph] National Portrait Gallery: London, P122

### Chapter Three: Holland Day

In the October 1897 issue of *Camera Work* (an American periodical), an image of Day's black chauffeur, dressed in a robe with his head crowned, adorned the front page. The young man holds a staff in one hand with the other holding back the robe to reveal his black body. This was one of the first times that the idea of black being beautiful had been presented. (fig. 9)

Alfred Steiglitz, the periodical owner, was highly influential in the 'art' of photography and admired the image as a work of tonal excellence.

Its tonal values are exquisitely harmonious and in its conception, it is distinctively Greek. It has but one fault that I can mention: the little ivory statuette is in too high key of white for the subdued tones of the balance of the picture and is distinctly disturbing. (Jussim 1981, p.109)

Day's technique won him acclaim within the elitist photographic world; his contemporaries praised his skill with skin tone and costuming, while a reader commented on how "...barbarically picturesque a negro model can be made with judicious costuming and careful posing (ibid p108)

Evidence from text about Day's life (Jussim 1981 and Michaels 1994) suggests that he, as well as his family, had a close affection for black and other races of people. Day is best known for his 'adoption' of a Lebanese boy, Kahlil Galiban, whom he also photographed. Galiban, who later went on to write 'The Prophet' (1923), became very successful with his writings and paintings, which were first introduced through Day's studio to the 'art' society in 1904. This allowed him to

Fig. 9



Day, F.H., 1897, Warrior Tannyhill as king [photograph]  
Available at: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Fred\\_Holland\\_Day](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Fred_Holland_Day).  
From, Wikimedia Commons  
[Accessed 10 June 2009]

further his art with teaching from Auguste Rodin in Italy.

Day's friend Louise Guiney made her feelings known about her distaste of his affection towards people of colour by saying:

America has a subtle effect on its foreign born children, on Orientalists in particular: they come out of a grave ripened civilisation into an air where no values are fixed and it goes very badly to their heads. (Jussim,1981 p117)

Day did not let those remarks affect him.

In 1904, Day lost his home and entire collection of art, photographs, and negatives to a fire. However, some of his prints belonging to Frederick Evans, Edward Steichen, Alvin Langdon Coburn, Robert Demachy, Alfred Stieglitz, Gerbtude Kasebier and Clarence White survived, and many were restored to Day.

Unphased by the tragedy, he took himself off to Ohio, stopping on the way at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute (a college to educate freed slaves) to see his sister who worked there and also to help out at the Hampton Institute Camera Club (internally known as the Kiquotan Kamera Klub). It was here that the image of the *Girl with white collar* (1905) (fig 2) took shape.

This photograph reveals a directness, a softness, a strength and a uniqueness that reflects Day's earlier images of women and black men. It contrasts with the documentary images by Francis Benjamin Johnston that were part of the 1900 Paris Exposition, but echoes the sentiment and freshness portrayed by W E Du Bois in the same exposition<sup>x</sup> (fig.10 & 11), in fact it can be said that Day's images move the gaze of white to black, to a new view of looking at one's

Fig. 10



Anon, 1900, African American women, half length portrait, seated facing front [photograph] Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Fig. 11



Anon, 1900, African American boy, three-quarter-length portrait, half sitting, seated facing front [photograph] Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Fig. 12



Johnston, F,B.,1899-1900, Geography, Studying the Seasons, The Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia [photograph]  
Museum of Modern Art, USA.

(black) self.

Day's images of children, which he produced at the Hampton's, can be read as the most successful of his images taken there. They detail a closeness and acceptance that shows warmth and respect in the manner that time was taken to consider carefully how best to take the photograph.

The Girl with the White Collar is a predominately black picture showing the subject staring at the viewer. The size of the face, due to the close-up, allows the viewer to see very clearly the shape of her head; it is beautiful and no different from any white head. The close-up emphasizes the shape and size of her lips, nose and eyes, as these are the features which stereotyping imagery mocks. Here, there is none of this. Instead there is symmetry -perhaps he was showing what he had always been trying to show a 'conception distinctively Greek' (a phrase coined by Alfred Stieglitz). Maybe now he is hoping that the viewer will understand.

The Girl with white collar is cropped in such a way that it permits the viewer to wonder where this person is and where she is going. The white background allows the white collar to blend into this whiteness, while the black girl situated near the edge of the frame stares comfortably at the viewer. This whiteness could be a play with tone and contrast; the black does not dominate the picture and neither does the white - in-fact they harmonise with each other. Day could be showing the integration of tones as a metaphor for a future society.

The pale background draws attention to the darkness of who she is; it allows her to be seen even more, she is no longer hidden; but it is clear that she still feels a little weary and maybe that is why she is not fully in the picture; there is no smile on her face. She is perhaps, like Day, waiting to see how the people outside the Institute will see this image of her.

Day allows the highlights on her lip to echo the collar, point of her nose and forehead, thus drawing attention to the forehead, where lies the intelligence. He emphasizes the features for which blacks are known and are ridiculed, not by exaggerating them but by shining a light on them, showing truth.

A friend of Day's, Ralph Norris, in 1922 reflected on an image of a black boy he had seen in Day's home;

...as a human document and as a work of superb technique, a picture ever to refresh the mind's eye. (Michaels 1984, p.344)

It is clear from comments of his contemporaries that Day's images are more about the technique, skill and the art of photography than the context, which was in no way directed towards a political end. It is not clear despite his admiration for Julia Margaret Cameron's work, calling her a 'forerunner of artist photography' that he saw her images of Alamayou as political (Crump 1995 p20). Day's love of photography and people of colour was purely aesthetic. His early visit to Algeria with his cousin Alvin Langdon Coburn in 1890 saw him return with many artifacts and allowed him to produce strong direct images of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern women as well as his chauffeur.

It is very hard to comment on the colonial attitude towards of his works. Before the Hampton pictures, his usage of costumes had been heavily symbol and

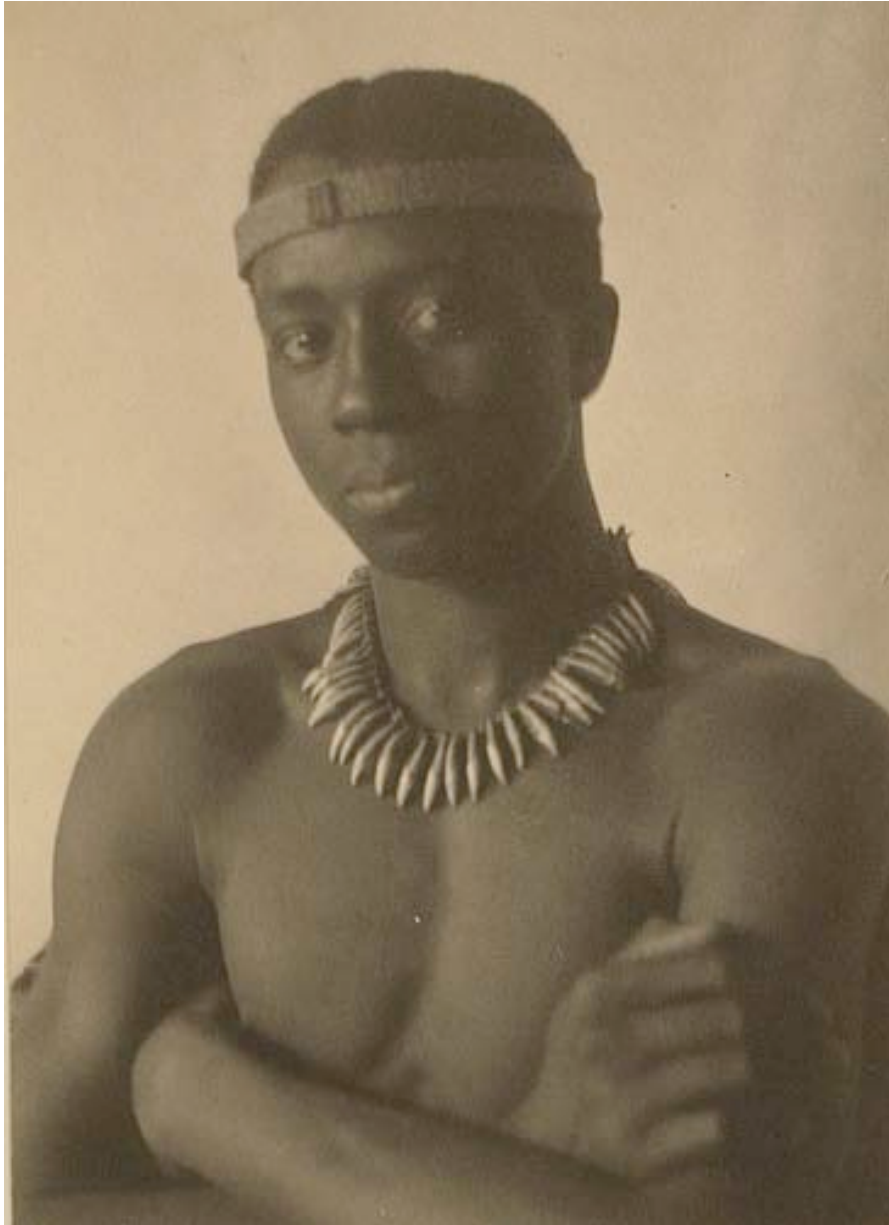
race specific. (fig.13) The use of his servant in a partially nude pose revealing flesh, mimicking the primitiveness of early black people, shows elements of white power, control and hierarchy, but the images themselves show strength and pride and in many ways liberate the aesthetics of the image and of the print (see fig 9). However, ignorance of his real intentions invite an ambivalent reading of the images.

Had the girl in the portrait adopted a conventional head and shoulders pose, which is what the picture would have been if the girl were in the centre of the frame, would posit a different way of seeing as it would have resembled a modern 'mug' shot. Sekula (1986) suggests that the portrait was the root of middle class self-recognition at that time, while images of the criminal body were classified, together with black people, as Other, serving as a point of distinction from which they could identify themselves. It appears however, as though she has been told to stand there, but at the moment of capture she has moved and come too close to the camera. It is possible that the shift in the girl's location within the frame was a move to a new way of seeing a black person. The 19th century portrait was then hugely influential and how the subject was represented, conferred status or eliminated it. The power of the viewer, the power of the photographer, the power of the representation, all combined to determine one's place in society and how one was treated. Out of the school context, there is no clue as to how the Girl in the photo was treated.

Day did not give information about her, so even the girl's name is unknown.

There is no record of what became of her life and if she too played a part in the development of black photography.

Fig. 13



Day, H. F., 1897. Young man with headband and necklace, [photograph] The Louise Imogen Guiney Collection, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division.

History confirms that these images and the ones by W E B Du Bois gave the black man an identity and strength that seemingly was doing such a good job, that it had to be halted with the enforcement of segregation, (1909) in the southern states of the United States of America.

This ambivalent nature of photography will be discussed in chapter four, for the part it plays in identity, power and control.

## Chapter Four: The Effect on black identity

The people connected with the perception of black people through the photography were a small but connected group.

Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) led many to believe that black people were inferior to white people. Years before he had been aided by Louis Agassiz, who commissioned the daguerreotypes of slaves on a southern plantation in 1850, in order to analyze the physical differences between European whites and African blacks, to prove superiority of the white race. Agassiz was a protégé student of Georges Cuvier, the scientist who is most heavily connected to the Hottentot Venus. Agassiz influence allowed Darwin to take on the describing of the entire world of barnacles living and extinct (Desmond & Moore, 2009. pp-228-230). In 1850 Agassiz wrote a book and gave a speech on the 'Types of Mankind', prompted by his disgust at seeing his first black man in America. He wrote to his mother (1868) saying:

...It was in Philadelphia that I first found myself in prolonged contact with negroes; All the domestics in my hotel were men of color. I can scarcely express to you the painful impression that I received, especially since the feeling that they inspired in me is contrary to all our ideas about the confraternity of the human type and the unique origin of our species. But truth before all. Nonetheless, it is impossible for me to repress the feeling that they are not of the same blood as us. In seeing their black faces with their thick lips and grimacing teeth, the wool on their head, their bent knees, their elongated hands, their large curved nails, and especially the livid color of their palms, I could not take my eyes off their face in order to tell them to stay far away. And when they advanced that hideous hand towards my plate in order to serve me, I wished I were able to depart in order to eat a piece of bread elsewhere, rather than to dine with such service. What unhappiness for the white race - to have ties their existence so closely with that of negroes in certain countries! God preserve us from such a contact.

(Harding 1993, p.95)

He had written previously that the human species consisted of different races, each inhabiting its own geographic zone. Now after his 'shocking' experience he argued that each race was created in its own zone and was 'well marked and distinct' and did not originate 'from a common center ... nor a common pair'.

(Wallis 1995 p44) Agassiz sent a copy of the book to Darwin, who is said to have responded on a page by writing 'oh proh pudor Agassiz' - *oh for shame Agassiz*. (Desmond & Moore, 2009 p265)

Agassiz views were compelling in America with regard to race segregation.

While in America Agassiz became acquainted with Samuel George Morton, who wrote *Types of Mankind* (1854) and was a Eugenicist.

Francis Galton was a cousin of Darwin. He knew of Agassiz and it is likely that his writings influenced Galton's ideas on anthropometry, heredity and eugenics. Galton's use of photography in showing type, was directly influenced by Agassiz' daguerreotypes.

Darwin was retreating from a science that fixed and separated racial temperaments with its disparaging view of blacks. His heritage and Hottentot experiences put him on the mission side with John Herschel, who refused to see blacks as innately inferior. (Desmond & Moore, 2009, p.106)

Herschel was a dear friend of Cameron's, who, like Darwin, she later photographed. Her friends Rejlander and Duchenne contributed photographs for Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872).

In This Book Darwin makes two references to Captain speedy

In the northern regions of Africa Captain Speedy, who long resided with the Abyssinians, answered my queries partly from memory and partly from observations made on the son of King Theodore, who was then under his charge; And Captain Burton speaks of certain negroes spitting with disgust upon the ground. Captain Speedy informs me that this is likewise the case with the Abyssinians.

(Darwin, 1872, p75 )

It is clear by the diary entry of Wiliam Allingham (see notes viii) that Darwin had contact with Captain Speedy and Prince Alamayou.

Out of the loop is Day, who on the other side of the Atlantic was only to have in common his cousin Alvin Langdon Colburn, who photographed many of the men previously mentioned for his book *Men of Mark* (1908).

The large sexual apparatus of the Hottentot Venus implied that black women had a large sexual appetite. This sexual fascination was explored and developed later by Freud, who was influenced by Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871), a work that postulated a process of continuous evolution from animal to man and distinguished stages within human evolution.

Freud was also influenced by *Galton's Hereditary Genius Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (1907 [1883]), which he referred to in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).

Darwin's distinction between "inferior" races and "superior" races was accepted by Freud and used to support his views on the progress of civilization through the difficult, but necessary, repression of instinctual drives, a repression that made necessary the phenomenon of sublimation which directed these energies to more "noble" ends. The Hottentot Venus filled the repressed Victorians with

notions on sexual gratification. The bustle that was introduced in 1860 echoed the primitive sexuality of the Hottentot Venus.

Freud's (1926) ignorance of contemporary psychology concerning adult female sexuality (Gilman 1985, p.107), allowed him to refer to it as the 'Dark Continent', declaring it profusely 'masculinist' and 'colonialist' (Khanna, 2003 p iv).

Psychoanalysis, which established itself in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, seemed to be founded on the difference of women, primitiveness and the colonized as Other.

Freud's reference to the black reflects the image of contemporary colonialism and the exoticism and pathology of the Other. Khanna (2003) explains the connection of Freudian theory to anthropology as a means of developing the 'trajectory of human civilisation, and the origins of repression' i.e. as a colonial discipline. She posits that Freud's eradication of cultural difference and his acceptance of Darwin's evolutionary ideal, later manifest themselves to be 'exemplary documents of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe's theorizations of nationhood and selfhood as they were developed in response to colonial expansion'. (Ibid p 28)

To achieve their ends, the colonial powers had to confuse, oppress and manipulate the Other through fear. Lacan's views of the three orders make a clear affirmation for the process of repression and 'mind playing' - elements that are of particular use in Cameron's work. In his orders, the symbolic, imaginary and the real can be seen to work within the structure of stereotyping. The Symbolic is the domain of culture as opposed to the Imaginary order of nature where language has symbolic and imaginary connotations in its

imaginary aspect; language inverts and distorts the discourse of the Other. It is by working in the Symbolic order that the analyst [for analyst read coloniser] can produce changes in the subjective position of the analysand [colonised]; these changes will produce imaginary effects where the analyst transforms the images into words. The use of the Symbolic is the only way for the analytic process to cross the plane of identification. (Lacan 1956)

Freud continues a discourse that relates images of male discovery to images of the female as the object of discovery, thus inhibiting female power and self-ownership. However, these black and white, man and female, coloniser and colonised, power and passive, slave and master binaries continue to show a split of representation that keeps on directing itself towards colonial man - the black man.

Taylor (1993) cites Bhabha's essay on Fanon concerning identity formation and the three processes that are in play. These are 1) the process of identification that emerge out of one being present, meaning that there is another other, i.e. role reversal. . *Jacqueline rose* writes, " It is the relation of this demand to the place of the object it claims, that becomes the basis of the identification. 2) Wanting to be both different and the same. The very place that identification is caught in, the tension of demand and desire (Milne 2003, p292) and 3) matching the demand how far will they go till the desire or the demand of the identity is met.

Splitting of the subject as it stands, in its historical stance, creates a splitting of the self within a tradition of representations that conceive an identity of neither

here nor there, not worthy. Confusion arises, identity formation is not whole and this disjunction allows the person to be incomplete, unhappy, with no self esteem or hope. The construction and progress of the Stereotype allows us to question its conception and survival. Modern day society shows us that stereotype exists and function incredibly well. The Black person still struggles to show true identity and is held back by the old, negative stereotypes. Bhabha (1994) furthers an understanding of how stereotypes are formed, while Stuart Hall's ideas on image and identity, where representation simultaneously depicts and symbolizes, is another useful analogy.

... Visual culture [photography] is fundamental to racist classification [and identity] but also racial re-inscription and the reconstruction of racial knowledge in the 19th and 20th century  
(Smith, 2004 p.3)

## Conclusion

Construction of identity through images especially portraiture is paramount. The formation and development of photography during the highly charged Victorian era, has affected and effected the way in which images are seen in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Tied to the prestige of the 19<sup>th</sup> century science, the idea of racial difference in the 20th century became the means for manipulating and eventually destroying entire groups (Gilman, 1985 p.129).

No other era has been more damaging in the construction of identity for its view of people.

The development of photography allowed anthropology to flourish and extend itself out to most members of society and not just in Britain.

The accessibility of reproducing the photographs created their value, like trading cards. The content of the image lost its individuality and became an item that was owned and reduced to an object. The typological systems that were introduced by these exchanges of photographs, allowed the prevalent contemporary fascination of the body to take shape.

Thus, photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the other, to define both the generalized look- the typology- and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology. (Sekula 1986, p.7)

The indexical nature of the photograph allowed real to become more than what it was, and hence the use of symbolic type, placed on the imaged body, created a difference, that became the 'concept' of 'difference' towards the Other; in other words, the typological photograph became a form of representational colonialism.

Victorian Images of black people hidden in the archives, silenced by society, in a non-stereotypical framing are hard to find. Day's images, have more to say about the identity development of the black person during the Victorian era, more so than Cameron's, but they still reveal a hierarchy.

Photographers are able to challenge what they see, however having the strength to challenge Victorian values would have been hard for a woman to do. Day who had far more money than Cameron, could to an extent do what he pleased, he wanted to photograph nude women, but at the time this was highly unacceptable, instead he chose young men of all races.

Photography as an "art" and as a form of 'representation' had developed; allowing the reading of the images by the public to be influential in how photographers and those photographed saw themselves. It was very clear that how you look, governed how you were treated; it is just very unfortunate that slavery and the race issue, coincided with the exploration of lands, the industrial revolution and the development of photography.

Any Victorian image of a black person, could not evade society's opinions and stance in contrary to their nation's status and development; history was as it was. But modernity has explained the importance of history. Without it, we would be without identity.

There lies an inability to take the stand, that if the images were different, if the view of the black man was never as it was, then what would be seen, would be

an image which would equal the white representation; memory denies that possibility, for it has never taken place.

The images of black people which show a new way of looking are shadowed by the past negative stereotype of blackness. The stereotype still exist. The cover of American Vogue (April 2008) shot by Annie Leibovitz portrays an image which is reminiscent of king Kong clutching the white lady<sup>xi</sup>. The black male athlete is shown as aggressive and threatening which reinforces the criminalization of black men, this is an image that was played over and over during and after the Victorian era.

What this image shows us is that nothing has changed. The stereotypes and prejudices are still there, and still to some extent dictate how a black person is perceived. The image on Vogue, was the first time a black man was on the cover, and this was the way they have chosen to shown him.

The images made previously that show black people in an emphatic way, have done little, if nothing to change the attitude towards how black people see themselves and how they are seen. The stereotypes are too deeply rooted and are a huge part of history.

Our present day, race of mankind, has not evolved in terms of seeing the Other. It has been a long time with no changes, power and control still lead the world however, at some point according to Darwins theory, there will need to be a adaptation – a change will come.

## Endnotes:

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<sup>i</sup> Francis Galton provides one of the most memorable indications of the lasting obsession with the Khoikhoi body in an account of his visit to the Cape in 1851. Observing a Khoikhoi woman in the distance, he writes: I profess to be a scientific man, and was exceedingly anxious to obtain accurate measurements of her shape; but there was a difficulty ... I did not know a word of Hottentot ... I therefore felt in a dilemma as I gazed at her form, that gift of bounteous nature to this favoured race which no mantua-maker, with all her crinoline and stuffing can do otherwise than humbly imitate. The object of my admiration stood under a tree, and was turning herself about to all of the compass, as ladies who wish to be admired usually do. Of a sudden my eye fell upon my sextant; the bright thought struck me, and I took a series of observations ... and registered them carefully upon an outline drawing for fear of my mistake; this being done, I boldly pulled out my measuring tape, and measured the distance from where I was to the place where she stood, and having thus obtained both base and angles, I worked out the results by trigonometry and logarithms.

(Galton, F. 1891. P.54)

<sup>ii</sup> The carte-de-visite, were small visiting cards that were used largely for portraits of celebrities, exotic types and family members. They were mass-produced and so a frenzy of collecting became fashionable and hence the photographic album became popular.

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<sup>iii</sup> McKinley was shot later at the exposition by a Leon Czolgosz a student of Emma Goldbery an Anarchist. (Buffulo history works)

<sup>iv</sup> In his report, he confirmed Geoffroy Saint-Hillarie's earlier impressions on studying this unusual specimen, claiming that, races with depressed and compressed skulls are condemned to a perpetual state of inferiority. *'The anatomy of the Venus, in particular her tablier, or apron, was proof to Cuvier of what he considered to be the primitive sexual appetite of African women'* (Gilman 1986). The sexual organs and the anus were preserved, along with other organs such as the brain, and they were placed in a museum available for any who wanted to inquire. The scientific community thus transformed her role once again into a specimen.

<sup>v</sup> For further reading see *The Hottentot and the prostitute; toward an iconography of female sexuality Looking at Olympia and Nana*. In Gilman, S.L. 1985 *Difference and Pathology stereotypes of sexuality, race, and Madness*.

<sup>vi</sup> In William Allingham's diary it is written on

p.184 FRESHWATER 1868

August II. — To Freshwater ; engage bedroom over little shop, and to the Darwins. Dr. Hooker in lower room writing away at his Address ; going to put ' Peter Bell's ' primrose into it and wants the exact words.

Upstairs Mrs. Darwin, Miss D. and Mr. Charles Darwin himself, — tall, yellow, sickly, very quiet. He has his meals at his own times, sees people or not as he chooses, has invalid's privileges in full, a great help to a

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studious man. Dr. Hooker and I to Plumley's Hotel (where he is put up) ; T. and Hallam come in, and T. calls me ' an ass ' for not taking a bed at Farringford. I to little shop, — and then to Farringford. After dinner come in Mr. Erasmus Darwin, brother of Charles, an old bachelor and invalid, living in London ; Mrs. Darwin, and second Miss Darwin ; also Captain Speedy, six feet and a half high, who has pleasant manners. He talks of Abyssinia^ — -the churches there, religion, slaughter of animals, the Trinity. The Hindoos and Beloochs ' wept for Theodore.'

Little Alamayu (means ' I have seen the world '), Theodore's son, is here at Freshwater in Speedy's charge, by the Queen's wish. The little prince has a native attendant, a young man who is devoted to him. Speedy the other day overheard them amusing them- selves by mimicking English people. Attendant comes up in the character of an English lady, shakes hand — ' How you do ^. '

p.168 LYMINGTON 185

Alamayu replies — ' How you do ? '

Attendant. — \* How you like this country ? '

Little Prince. — ' Ver' mush.'

Attendant. — ' Ah ! you like ver' mush ' — and so on.

T. complains of hotel charges, especially in England.

I say — ' They ought to let you go free, as a Poet.'

T. — ' They charge me double ! and I can't be

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anonymous (turning to Mrs. Cameron) by reason of  
your confounded photographs.' The party breaks up about twelve, ' an orgie,' T.  
calls it. He comes out with me and we wander some distance. Jupiter and a  
half-moon in the sky ; talk of immortality. I go back with him and find the door  
locked ! He rings and says ' My wife will come,' but a servant woman comes.  
Nobody guessed he was out.

August 12. — Freshwater. Pack bag, to Farringford.

Breakfast in the study, the boys pleasant ; Lionel back  
from bathing ; A. T., letter from America for auto- graph.

Mrs. T., ' Lionel going to Eton.' She dislikes Darwin's theory. I sit in study : A. T.  
teaching Hallam Latin — Catiline.

Charles Darwin expected, but comes not. Has been himself called ' The Missing  
Link.' Luncheon. Then T. and I walk into croquet -ground, talking of Christianity.

' What I want,' he said, ' is an assurance of immortality.'

For my part I believe in God : can say no more.

Friday^ August 21. — Mrs. Cameron's: Captain

Speedy opens the door. Little Alamy, pretty boy, we make friends and have  
romps, he rides on my knee, shows his toys. His Abyssinian attendant. They  
dress to be photographed by Mrs. C, the Prince in a little purple shirt and a  
necklace, Captain Speedy in a lion-skin tippet, with a huge Abyssinian sword of  
reaping-hook shape (' point goes into your skull '). Photographing room —  
Speedy grumbles a little, Mrs. C. poses

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(Allingham, H, 1908)

<sup>vii</sup> Further reading about Prince Alamayou can be found in

Ethiopia Observer journal of Independent Opinion, Economics, History and the Arts. Vol VIII 1970 no:1 p 8-15 Prince Alamoyu of Ethiopia (lord Amulree).

Published Ethiopia and Britain. Anecdotes of Alamayu, the late King Theodore's son by C.C [with a portrait]. W. Hunt & co, London 1870

<sup>viii</sup> Queen Victoria in her journal November 14<sup>th</sup>, states

‘I was very grieved and shocked to hear by telegram that good Alamayou had passed away this morning. It is too sad. All alone in a strange country, without seeing a person or relative belonging to him, so young and so good, but for him one cannot repine. His was no happy life, full of difficulties of every kind, and he was so sensitive, thinking that people stared at him because of his colour, that I fear he would never have been happy. Every one is very sorry’.

Windsor, Royal archives: p18/70, D19, H22/43, Addl Mss J, Queen Victoria’s journal

<sup>ix</sup> The dates and titles of the images that were registered to the copyrighters, which were taken by Julia Margaret Cameron of Prince Alamayou and his party, whilst visiting at the Isle of Wight.

23 July 1868

a) Dejatch Alamayou full face and Basha Felika profile, No 1

b) Dejatch Alamayou full face and Basha Felika 3/4 face, No 2

c) Dejatch Alamayou and Basha Felika both 3/4 face, No 3

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27 July 1868

- d) Dejatch Alamayou full face and Basha Felika nearly profile, No1
- e) Dejatch Alamayou 3/4 face and Basha Felika profile, No 2
- f) Dejatch Alamayou 3/4 face holding doll in arms, No 1
- g) Dejatch Alamayou 3/4 face left hand to necklace, No2
- h) Dejatch Alamayou 3/4 face right hand to necklace, No 3

29 July 1868

- i) Captain speedy with spear and shield profile, No 1
- j) Captain speedy with spear and shield 3/4 face, No2
- k) Captain speedy with spear and shield profile, No 3
- l) Captain speedy standing with spear over hand to head of Abyssn Native, lying down, No 1
- m) Captain speedy standing with spear over hand to head of Abyssn Native, lying down, No 2

Copyright registrations, public record office, copy/3/108

<sup>x</sup> W.E.B Du Bois took to the 1900 Paris Exposition four volumes of work, containing images of black people. The images in the volumes were presented as a way of showing how the black man had developed, since being free. He was asking the viewer of the exposition who were predominately white to consider themselves to the view of how the black person was viewed.

In one of these volumes he presented images of Black people in the style of portraits. They began looking like the images of mug shots of the time and through the turning of the page, the portraits became to resemble those that

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were indicative of the middleclass portraits, even going further with three quarter turn poses and even a smile.

<sup>xi</sup> Image not shown due to copyright.

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