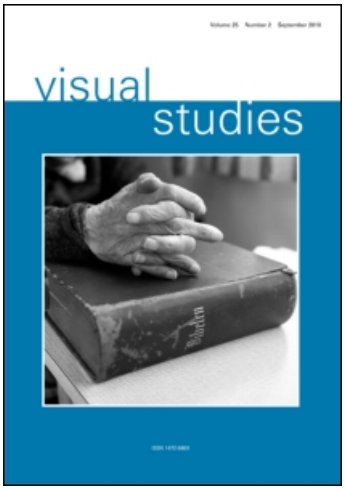

Visual Studies
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713689928

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Linda Devereux

Online publication date: 01 September 2010

To cite this Article Devereux, Linda(2010) 'From Congo: newspaper photographs, public images and personal memories', Visual Studies, 25: 2, 124 — 134
To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/1472586X.2010.502669
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2010.502669

Visual Studies, Vol. 25, No. 2, September 2010

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

From Congo: newspaper photographs, public images and personal memories

LINDA DEVEREUX

Objects, including photographs, offer a significant aid to memory and how people process past events. Family photography and family photograph albums can be important tools for preserving memories and creating shared family narratives. However, some important family events may not be represented in family photographs. In my family, for instance, some of the most significant events that took place are not recorded in traditional family albums, but through images that appeared in newspapers. My grandmother collected an archive of photographs of my family through newspaper clippings. The images document events that took place in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the postcolonial years immediately following independence. However, whether family photographs in a family album or newspaper photographs in a daily paper, images are cultural artefacts, censored and mediated by dominant social discourses. They will echo popular tropes and reflect the historical, cultural and political influences of the time. Drawing on insights from scholarship on family photography, cultural memory and trauma, this paper offers an analysis of the significance of the personal and the public use of photographs.

One evening, not long before her death, and on one of my last visits to her home in Scotland, my grandmother gave me an unexpected gift. She picked it up from beside her chair where it had been waiting for the appropriate moment and held it out to me – a well-used and rather battered brown leather portfolio with frayed hand-bound edges. Its contents, peeking beyond the broken zip, had been saved by my grandmother for more than 30 years.

I took the portfolio, sensing that I was being given something of significance, and pulled out its contents. Inside was a carefully collected archive – a series of newspaper clippings. Most of the clippings were photographs from the *Scottish Daily Mail*, *The Daily Record* and the *Scottish Daily Express*.[1] The images were of my mother, my father, my siblings and me. They documented a traumatic period in our family life when we were caught up in civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although I was nearly 40 at the time, I could not recall having seen most of these clippings before.

Why had my grandmother collected them? Why was this dramatic part of our family history – which had so clearly been in the public domain, first in 1960 and again in 1964 – so unfamiliar to me? Had it not been discussed? Had I been too young to be included in these family discussions? Or had the memories of these events for some reason been lost to me? As I reflected on this moment when I became the keeper of these 'family secrets', another, rather startling, aspect of my new acquisition occurred to me. In handing on her collection to me, Grandma was indeed passing on the role of safeguarding the images. However, in addition (and perhaps more significantly), by making the archive available to me she had created a tentative new opening for communication. The photographs were something tangible and material, fashioned memory objects that somehow broke the silent spell and created a new space from which to speak.

Obviously, my grandmother's archive has immense personal significance for me and I will explain some of this in the paper that follows. It also has relevance for contemporary research on family photography, history, cultural memory and private memory, and the complex, and sometimes uncomfortable, relationships that exist between different forms of remembering and representing the past. In addition, it raises issues about which memories are silenced and which are privileged in current narratives of war and conflict. In this case, the images are from newspapers rather than being part of a traditional 'family album'; but, like other photographs, they may stand in for events that cannot be represented in alternative ways both within a family and in the wider community. Using two photographs from my grandmother's archive as examples, and drawing on insights from scholarship on family photography, cultural memory and trauma, this paper offers an

Linda Devereux grew up in Africa, Scotland and Australia. She teaches in the early childhood and literacy education programs at the University of Canberra. Linda has also worked as the director of tertiary academic support services, and as a classroom teacher in a variety of settings including teaching in one of the most remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory of Australia. Linda researches and publishes in the field of literacy development, including how to help children make meaning from and create visual and multimodal texts. Her current doctoral work is an examination of childhood memory.

ISSN 1472–586X printed/ISSN 1472–5878 online/10/020124-11 © 2010 International Visual Sociology Association
DOI: 10.1080/1472586X.2010.502669

analysis of the significance of the personal and public use of photographs.

MEMORY, SILENCE, SHAME AND VIOLENCE

Considerable intellectual work has focused on describing different ways of explaining memories of significant events. Sturken (1999, 178) describes personal memories as those that remain solely within personal and familial contexts, separate from a public sharing of memory, whereas official history is the 'sanctioned narratives of the past'. Cultural memory, she maintains, can be thought of as something in between personal or familial memories and history. Cultural memories are shared outside of formal historical discourse, yet are imbued with cultural meaning.

Kuhn (1999, 200–1) writes about what she calls 'popular memory' accounts of important events. She explains that such accounts are marked by the ways in which they bring together the lives of the 'ordinary' people, who are both the photographs' subjects and their producers, with events on a grander or more public scale. Using Coronation Day (the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II) as an example, she explains that as ordinary people remember this day they will ground it in their own memories and impressions – 'domesticating' it, typically in fragmentary flashbacks, vignettes or sketches. There are links between these memories and more public histories of the day. Yet these popular memories also provide a great deal of information about the culture and society in which they are produced and circulated: 'Comprised as it is of stories people tell each other about the past, *their* past, popular memory is a shared story, a story visible in the creation of people's talk about the event' (ibid., 201). However, this process assumes that memories are discussed as part of how they are shared by a group of people. What is to be made of memories that for various reasons do not fit these patterns – memories that are seldom, partially, or perhaps never discussed? These memories too could provide valuable information about culture and society.

There are many reasons that determine which particular stories are silenced or spoken, both within families and in the wider public domain. Sometimes, a story does not seem to fit a particular social, or familial framework (Kluger 2001) or is not valued as part of the dominant discourse of the public memory of an event (Riley 2008). Perhaps some of the participants in the story, or their actions, are not viewed as legitimate (Butler 2004). In official histories of war, for example, it is the political and military elite whose stories have been most frequently privileged, often at the expense of the experiences of families and children (Nordstrom 1997). Sometimes people who have experienced war and violence choose silence deliberately to protect themselves or those whom they love (Lennox 2005; Nordstrom 1997). Parents choose silence to protect their children, and children may choose not to ask certain questions in their efforts to respect and protect their parents (Kluger 2001). On other occasions, particular experiences can lead to an overwhelming sense of shame, humiliation or embarrassment that can engender a deep silence. Trauma can inflict particular types of silence (Herman 1992; Kruger 2001; Prosser 2007). Hostages or prisoners can be forced to keep silent and to keep their emotions in check, developing a habit that is then difficult to break (Keenan 1992). Some events may seem so outside the 'normal' that it is difficult to find the words or occasions appropriate for their sharing (Herman 1992; Kluger 2001). Each story will have its own social, cultural and political context, which will influence how, when or if it can be told and interpreted (Hägele 2003; Riley 2008). The stories represented through my grandmother's archive are subject to many of these silencing influences.[2]

POSTCOLONIAL HISTORIES

Part of my story takes place in Africa, in the DRC. This country, in what has been called the heart of Africa, is in the centre of the continent surrounded by countries known for their violent colonial and postcolonial struggles. The people of DRC suffered horribly under colonial rule. King Leopold II extracted vast fortunes from Congo for himself, and later for Belgium (Gondola 2002). This prosperity for one group of the world's people came at enormous cost in Congolese lives and freedoms (Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig 2007). Some historians estimate that as many as half the population of Congo – between 5 and 10 million people – died during the 25 years King Leopold II ruled the Congo Free State (ibid.). DRC gained independence from a reluctant Belgium in 1960. This was followed by a period of political instability, regional power struggles, and meddling by world powers during the Cold War and civil war.[3]

My family lived in DRC on and off between 1958 and 1964. We lived in the northeastern Province Oriental, in the village of Yakusu. Yakusu is a remote community on the northern bank of the River Congo, about 25 kilometres down river from the town of Kisangani, or Stanleyville as it was called before independence. There is a road between Kisangani and Yakusu. Google Earth

FIGURE 1. Photograph from *Sunday Mail*, 17 July 1960.

gives a clear image of the sprawling metropolis of Kisangani.[4] The road to Yakusu can be followed west to the banks of the River Lindi, which takes off north at right angles from the Congo River. The Lindi, wide and fast-flowing, has to be crossed by ferry to reach Yakusu. The ferry is visible on the Google Earth image. It sits on the Kisangani side, where it often sat, broken down, during the years I lived in Yakusu. After that, if one follows the image to the other side of the Lindi, the road is abruptly lost; everything in that part of Congo fades to a dense, green blur.

My parents were sent to Yakusu as medical missionaries in 1958, just a few months after I was born. They worked in the Yakusu Hospital: my father was a doctor and teacher of medical students, and my mother, a laboratory technician, helped with the teaching and pharmacy work. In my mind, the hospital was an impressive building standing two storeys high on the edge of the river, but in reality the facilities were very basic, and by the time we went there the mission struggled to recruit enough staff to keep the hospital and its training programs going. There was no running water, and often no electricity. When the generator broke down, or when there was no fuel to run it, Dad did operations at night by hand-held lamplight. It was also unlike a Western hospital, where patients are looked after by hospital ancillary staff. In Yakusu there were no such people, and patients were cooked and cared for by family members who took up residence on the concrete floor next to the patient's bed. Belongings had to be moved each morning for the daily cleaning-out of the ward with disinfected water carried in by bucket from the river and sluiced over the floors.

I have no memories of my first two years in Yakusu. In fact, my earliest childhood memory is of leaving. My memory is of flight, though I had no understanding then

of the multiple meanings of that metaphor. What excited me flying out of a European airport headed for Scotland was that the red terracotta roofs looked just like the image of toy town on the inside front cover of my Noddy books. It was that, rather than suddenly leaving my father behind in Yakusu, that sticks in my mind. Perhaps this was my childish way of making sense of an incomprehensible and sudden change. What I remember is linked to something safe and predictable – a book I had been read many times. An illustration I had seen often suddenly made sense to me in real life as I saw that bird's-eye view of a city rather than Yakusu with its palm trees and canoes on the River Congo. I was leaving DRC and my father because in 1960 the women and children of Yakusu – or rather, the white women and children – were quite suddenly evacuated back to their 'home' countries when civil unrest broke out in some regions of Congo around the time of Independence from Belgium.

My grandmother's archive includes a photograph taken shortly after that flight (Figure 1). It is situated in the living room at my other grandmother's house. Although I have never discussed this photograph with my family, I can identify its location from the cushion in the image. As Barthes (1988, 22) points out, objects in photographs are significant. In this case, the objects are significant both for the photographer in setting the image within a genre, and for me because of their associations with my grandmother's home. These plump golden cushions decorated Grandma Miller's lounge for almost 30 years. This was in the days before throwaway furnishings, in a community where curtains were hung with their pattern facing towards the street; inside were the seams and the fraying edges, or, if you were lucky, the plain calico lining. My Grandma Miller had those cushions until her final stroke sitting in a chair adorned by them in the late 1980s. I look at that photograph – a public artefact – and I see a private moment in a private home I knew well. I shift between the personal, the public, the subjective and the academic in my attempts to make meaning from this image.

The public story that accompanies this photograph is about a dedicated missionary wife.[5] 'A Congo Wife Tells . . . My Flight From Fear' the headline explains. This was an editorial interpretation rather than my mother's, and the article tells little of the political situation in Congo at the time.[6] Just two years earlier, in Brussels, Belgium had showcased its model colony to the world with the 'scientific' 1958 World Expo.[7] Congolese citizens were brought in and put on show in a 'Congolese village' where they were stared at in a zoo-like setting, along with the carefully collected examples of flora and fauna that still feature in the displays at the Musée Royal De L'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren.

The photograph is of a young mother and two small children. It was taken slightly angled from above and my mother is sitting, as I have described, in a 'domestic scene' in the lounge of a private home. Her arms are around my brother, and I am positioned close by, leaning into her. My mother and brother gaze into the camera while I look slightly to the left of the photographer. The image shows a scene that represents safety and comfort – 'home' and familiarity. It is clearly within the genre of a 'human interest' story about the brave young 'wife' longing to get back to support her missionary husband and is in contrast to the description of the dangerous, foreign life of this mother and her two small children. There is no recognition of my mother having a missionary status. She is described in the paper as the 'young mother', the 'wife' and 'the girl', clearly portrayed as the helper and supporter brought back to the safety of civilisation by the British Embassy from Congo – 'the land of crisis'.

Something else strikes me about this image: its ordinariness, its everyday familiarity. It shows my family members and me – a specific family; but, as I examine it more closely, I consider that these people could be any family. The mother and two small children in a domestic scene could accompany many narratives and could be located in a variety of settings, including a private photograph album (Kuhn 2007). It is not 'representative' of the particular events unfolding in DRC. The newspaper photographer and editor have chosen it specifically because it is so accessible; it can be identified with – easily. Yet these very qualities also shield the UK citizens who view it from any uncomfortable feelings of postcolonial responsibility or discomfort. By focusing on this young local mother and her children, there is no need to consider the many Congolese mothers and children in Africa deeply affected by the violence in their communities. There are 'gaps and silences' surrounding the decision to publish this image in terms of who is represented, how, and for what purposes (Hirsch 1999, xiv).

My family lived separated lives for most of the year after this photograph appeared in the paper in 1960, my father working as the only doctor in Yakusu while my mother, my brother and I remained in Scotland. In 1962, after some furlough together in Scotland and the birth of another baby, the whole family went back to Yakusu. Just 18 months later, in August 1964, we were caught up in much more serious conflict and held under house


Saturday, December 26, 1964

From the Congo . . .

CHRISTMAS IN PEACE FOR CHILDREN WHO WERE SAVED

FIGURE 2. 'From the Congo . . . Christmas in peace for children who were saved' (*Scottish Daily Mail*, 26 December 1964).

arrest for three months during the hostage crisis that took place in nearby Kisangani (Stanleyville). The political history of Congo during this period is complex and contested, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a detailed analysis. However, some account is required to make sense of the events that are described in the following paragraphs.

Essentially, there had been unrest, disillusionment, interference by world powers and violence in various parts of the country ever since independence in 1960. After the murder of the first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, in 1961 the civil unrest increased. Lumumba had many supporters in the Stanleyville area, where there was increasing dissatisfaction with the Kinshasa-based government now led by Moise Tshombe.[8] In a bid for greater involvement in the government of their country, the rebels took over Stanleyville in July 1964. Many Congolese were killed in the rebel fighting, and nearly 1600, mostly Europeans, were taken hostage and imprisoned in various locations in and around Stanleyville. Soon afterwards, Yakusu was under rebel control. The missionaries who worked in the Yakusu hospital and at other jobs on the mission continued to work under rebel supervision. The missionary wives and children were restricted to their homes under rebel guard.

During the months that we were held captive, members of my family and the other four British missionaries were variously subjected to emotional, physical and sexual violence. The local Congolese people were terrorised and

forced to supply the rebel soldiers with food and other supplies. Some were killed. On 24 November 1964, a military operation was jointly undertaken by the Belgian, American and Congolese governments to rescue the Stanleyville hostages. Belgian paratroops were flown in by US planes and dropped at the airport. A large number of hostages were rescued, but many also died. In Stanleyville, once it was clear that an attack was underway the rebels marched hundreds of hostages into the streets and opened fire on them, killing about 50 men, women and children.[9] Many more hostages in remote areas, and Congolese suspected of supporting the government or protecting Europeans, were killed in retaliation after the military intervention. My family, the other Yakusu missionaries and a group of Congolese medical students from outlying areas were rescued on 25 November by 'Mad Mike' Hoare and his band of mercenary soldiers. Hoare had been employed by the Congolese government to recruit, lead and train a group of mercenary soldiers to support the Congolese army's efforts to quell the rebellion.

My grandmother documents some of these events, and how our family was affected, through her newspaper clipping collection. There are several 'mug shots'[10] of my parents during the time that the family was missing, presumed dead, and a series of photographs taken over several days documenting our rescue and return to Scotland. The last photograph is one taken four weeks later, on Christmas Day, 1964 (Figure 2). It shows us – my mother, my father and the children – in the lounge room of a borrowed house surrounded by gifts and toys. It is the 'Happy Christmas' image – the consummate good news story, staged to create the desired narrative ending (Schirato and Webb 2004, 181). The accompanying article assures the readers of the *Scottish Daily Mail* that our 'terror' is 'already forgotten'. Scotland could put us, along with DRC and Africa, out of their minds again just in time for the start of the New Year.[11]

PHOTOGRAPHS AND MEMORY

Photographs have a unique place in the telling of cultural and family history (Kuhn 2007). They can be saved as objects in a tangible form and are powerful evokers of experience. Photographs allow the viewer to stare, to come back to the image repeatedly and in a sustained way (Hagopian 2006). They can also be interacted with; held, cut out, cut up, saved, ritually crumpled and thrown out, or lovingly handed on to somebody else (Hägele 2003, 12, paraphrasing Flusser). In these ways they can take on different meanings and have different purposes for different viewers. Sontag (1999, 81) argues that photographs can become a surrogate for a cherished person or thing. They provide a way of 'consuming' events – both those that are part of our experience and those that are not. She goes on to argue that this means it can be possible to think of photographs as some material part of us. She suggests that this is why it is so difficult to tear up or throw away the photograph of a loved one, as this seems such a 'ruthless gesture of rejection' (ibid., 84).

Photographs may be particularly important as 'memories' because of their position in contemporary Western societies. In such a visual world, they can become a common currency of recollection (Hagopian 2006, 214; Riley 2008). Films and images have surrounded us since birth; they have come to play an important part in our own memories, influencing how we think about the past. We may even have learned to 'think photographically' (MacDougall 1994, 261), and this phenomenon is reflected in the way we often hear the recounted experience of significant events described as like 'being in a movie' (Sontag 1999, 84). Moreover, the lasting quality of photographs means that they are widely held to be a record of some person, thing or event. Images can become a piece of evidence that something happened at some time, somewhere, and photographs can thus have particular relevance in making and remaking memories (Kuhn and McAllister 2006, 1; Kuhn 2007).

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS

Families collect photographs as a way of sharing memories and building collective memory experiences, and my grandmother's action in collecting the images of her loved ones is not unusual. One of the more common methods of passing on significant family memories is through family photograph albums. Langford (2006, 224) points out that family photograph albums work like a book; they are presented to 'tell a family story' and they do so in some predictable ways. This format supports an oral retelling of a life, or of the lives of a group of people with many events in common, and becomes a performance that cements the shared memories of significant family stories in a particular way. Photographs can thus combine the durability of artefacts with the force of oral tradition. They are concrete reports from the physical world, 'petrified points of reference', and they can become both political and cultural symbols (MacDougall 1994, 268; Riley 2008). This suggests that, as a social practice, 'photography is one of the family's primary instruments of self-knowledge and

representation – the means by which family memory is constituted and perpetuated, by which the family story is henceforth told' (Hirsch, cited in McAllister 2006, 87). But this method of recording family history also ensures that *particular* versions of 'the story' are told and retold, while other aspects of family life tend not to be recorded (Kuhn 2007).

Family photograph albums thus privilege particular representations and retellings of family history. McAllister's (2006, 88) work with families who were placed in internment camps during World War II gives a striking example of the gaps that can occur in family albums. McAllister argues that photographs are cultural objects that their subjects 'expect future generations to view'. This prediction of future audiences affects how the camp experience is represented and recorded. Although McAllister found many images taken in camps, they showed little of the 'emotional duress, anxieties and material hardships' that were clearly part of camp life. McAllister maintains that because family members generally care about each other deeply, they do not wish to add to the hurt of an already hurtful experience. She argues that the families in her research tended not to photograph and record some events or show certain harshness, out of a desire to avoid humiliating or hurting anyone. The resulting family albums can, therefore, reflect and maintain silences and gaps in a family history.

ABSENCE OF MEMORY OBJECTS

There are other reasons, many of them sensible ones, why certain events are not recorded photographically in both the familial and the public versions of history. Where there is significant danger, violence, or haste in leaving a situation (or coercion, for instance), it may be that there has not been time, the opportunity or the desire to record an event. The artefacts of memory may thus be absent or incomplete. In my family, many of our family photographs, along with our possessions, were left behind when we were given 10 minutes to collect one small bag each before being loaded into the back of an open truck. One of the reasons my grandmother kept the newspaper images may have been because she had few other photographs of the family taken during the years we were in Africa. She may have collected them in an effort to 'fill in the gaps' left by a lack of other tangible memory objects. In some instances, as it is for my family, media photographs may provide the only pictorial record of particular places or events.

There are many reports of situations where people have responded to a lack of memorial objects in other ways. They may create drawings and art works (Prosser 2007), or revisit significant places or experiences and photograph them at a later date (Prosser 2007; Riley 2008). In some instances there appears to be a human desire to find, create and preserve tangible objects to support or perhaps 'take the place of' particular memories that it is difficult to access in other ways (Riley 2008). Physical distance from the scene of significant events, geographical and/or political considerations can compound difficulties in locating and preserving memory objects. Although for many reasons I would not draw parallels between my family's experience and that of those affected by the Holocaust, I felt moved by Hirsch and Spitzer's (2006) description of how they, as second-generation Holocaust survivors, each took a stone from the site of a European concentration camp home with them to carry 'a fragment of the place away with us'. The stones were taken home 'as evidence' to substantiate a family history they wish to memorialise and of their efforts to locate that past, which they know only through incomplete information; the 'silences and whispers' between the generations of their families (Hirsch and Spitzer 2006, 138). The stones became 'physical testimonial remnants' that helped to locate the authors as 'co-witnesses, carriers of memory', which they have adopted and can pass down to future generations. The newspaper clippings my Grandma kept may have been her tangible artefact to a painful part of our family history that she, and my parents, had no wish to discuss regularly. The photographs have certainly become such objects for me. They are a link to my grandmother and her love and concern for me, and a reminder of that part of our family history that I can show and talk about with my children and grandchildren. This 'reciprocal gaze' may also, Kuhn and McAllister (2006, 9) contend, offer the possibility of transformation for both the 'creators and curators of these belated commemorations and photo-narratives'.

SHARING AND PASSING ON MEMORY OBJECTS

I have discussed how objects, including photographs, can be important physical and material aids to memory and the sharing of memory within families, and that people can be creative in how they acquire such objects and invest them with meaning. What people choose to do with memory objects can also be significant. Sturken (1998, 366) describes how visitors leave photographs and other objects at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. She argues that this may be a 'desire to transfer the private memories of this war into a collective experience', transporting them from

'personal' to 'cultural' artefacts (Sturken 1999). That so many objects are left at the memorial suggests that there is something important happening for people in this action. Sturken (1999) suggests that people may bring things in an act of 'fleshing out' the person who has died or the experience that is being remembered. The act of sharing may also be linked to a need for others to know and witness some aspect of a lived experience that has been silenced. Similarly, Chong (1999) describes his desire to create an artwork from the only photograph he had of his mother. Chong argues that he felt the picture of his mother should 'remain in the world meaning something to others'. A private remembrance was not enough.

There could even be, perhaps, some 'letting go' or 'opening up' of private grief in the action of offering some *thing* to a more public memory situation, maybe some easing of a private burden or some comfort in the knowledge that other people may share an awareness of something significant to an individual or group of people. Grandma's relinquishing, late in her life, of her tangible memory objects to me has intrigued me. Perhaps her desire was not just to ensure that the memories were kept and passed on by someone she knew would value them, but also some kind of letting go of the way she had held her memories separate from mine for so long. I suggest that placing personal memory objects in a 'family space', or a 'public space' in the ways described above, could be read as a desire to create a larger forum for these memories. Conceivably, this could form part of a process of moving from a 'personal' memory to a 'cultural' or 'popular' one through the process of creating *shared* memories. Perhaps securing this engagement of others is, as Butler (2004) suggests, part of what categorises a person, or experience, as 'human' and therefore worthy of acknowledgement and grief.

PERSONAL INVESTMENTS IN MEMORY OBJECTS

However, photographs or other memory objects alone cannot move us, and it is we who ascribe narratives to them if we are moved by them (Briggs 2006; Kuhn 2007; Prosser 2007; Riley 2008). There must be some connection, for example, between the image and the viewer for a viewer to make meaning from an image (Van Alphen 1999), or some story accompanying an everyday object that gives the object meaning and significance (Objects and Memory Project 2010). Marianne Hirsch (2006) offers a way to conceptualise this power of images and objects as well as their possible after effects. Her conceptual framework explains the connection between a photograph and its viewer as being through an 'imaginative investment and creation' rather than through 'recollection' (McAllister, paraphrasing Hirsch, in Kuhn and McAllister 2006, 94). Grandma had a familial link to the people in the photographs, but she also had other experiences of war and loss. Grandma's last memory of her older brother, Charles, was of a teenager marching down the street as he headed off to serve in World War I. He, like so many other young men of his generation, did not return. She had very few photographs or other physical reminders that documented her brother's life. Grandma's life was touched by war at many points, and the images of her son and grandchildren lost in a war zone must have triggered many different memories and emotions of both loss and retrieval (MacDougall 1994, 262).

WHOSE STORY?

Photographs – whether family photographs in a family album, or newspaper photographs in a newspaper – are cultural artefacts. They reflect the well-worn cultural stereotypes that make them easily 'read' (Negrine 1994, 4; Riley 2008). As Eldridge (Eldridge, Kitzinger, and Williams 1997, 76–7) explains, it is 'the notion of the neutral photograph . . . which cannot be sustained . . . because every picture tells more than one story'. Each photograph is within a setting, for a purpose, and within a culture and we respond to 'dominant mythologies' of family life, to 'conceptions we have inherited, to images we see on television, in advertising, in film' (Hirsch 1999, xvi).

As I reflect on my grandmother's photographs, I start to wonder if there is a point where a personal, or family silence is echoed in (or even exacerbated by) a public silence. There are parallels between the silence in my family and the silence generally about the effects of postcolonial violence on Africa and its citizens. This silence continues still, as the old colonial powers show reluctance to intervene in the ongoing war and violence played out in Africa today (Jackson 2007). I have experienced an ambivalent reaction to my attempts to tell my story in public forums. Perhaps it is our uncertain positioning as a 'missionary family' in a postcolonial world. We are easy scapegoats, an embodiment of the *Poisonwood Bible* (Kingsolver 1999) characters. Perhaps there is even, in the minds of some people, a sense that we 'deserved' what we got because we should not have been in Africa. The silences affecting one family are reflected in other silences, and the stories in my family about our war experience, like the stories we hear about war in the public domain, are censored and mediated by dominant cultural

discourses and the fashions of the time. War and violence affects familial relationships, children, parents and grandparents (Connolly and Hayden 2007; Lennox 2005; Nordstrom 1997); but in a family, as well as within a society, there can be collusion in representing versions of events that privilege some narratives while obscuring or silencing others. There can be a 'struggle for control of image, narrative, and memory' (Hirsch 1999, xi).

The photographs of my family that I have described in this paper are examples of familiar media tropes. They also follow familiar photographic conventions in other ways. The 'loving young mother with two small children' and the image of 'the happy family on Christmas Day', although newspaper images, could just as comfortably appear in a family photograph album. The viewer thus relies on other cues for instruction on how to view and interpret them. These domestic images evoke family in their readers – and, perhaps because they are situated in a newspaper, this evocation is happening at a subliminal level. Van Alphen (1999, 46) argues, using Hirsch's framework, that photographs of families prime those who view them to see and respond to them in a particular way. When we recognise an image as familial, it 'elicits a specific kind of readerly or spectorial look, an *affiliative look* through which we are sutured into the image and through which we adopt the image into our own family narrative'. Van Alphen goes on to contend that this familial mask inscribes certain conventional narratives because the 'cultural codes' do not allow representation of other events that are thus absent from the photographs, and largely absent from the family and societal discussions of war and its impacts on families. Bound by our cultural codes, there are some subjects, some experiences we cannot capture. Instead, what the photographs show is the opposite of capturing and representing reality. They show socially sanctioned, pre-existing and culturally imposed images, and they ascribe particular narratives to the people they represent.

These domesticated family images are depoliticised. They are neutered and contained within the walls of the 'home' and thus removed from the spheres of political influence. They are disempowered and silenced. They ignore the suffering, the damage, the complex colonial past and the violent ongoing experience of Africans in DRC. Colonial powers 'rescue' their own citizens and forget about the mess that we have been complicit in creating. In a desire to shift uncomfortable responsibilities, missionaries are 'blamed', past colonial staff may be blamed, and other countries may be blamed. Primarily, Africans themselves are blamed. Photographs that normalise hide different narratives and uncomfortable complexities and maintain particular silences and the status quo (Eldridge, Kitzinger, and Williams 1997). They are not apolitical. They are political in maintaining one version of events and in privileging specific ways of telling a story. Images are thus used, along with other cues, to direct an audience to respond in a particular way. This paper too directs the reader in particular ways, resisting the original direction implied in the newspapers and perhaps also my grandmother's purpose in collecting and preserving the images that she gave me. Resisting a pull to maintain my silence, I have used the images to assist a developing narrative of my own.

Grandma may not like the story that I tell with her photographs. My parents, like other parents presented in a particular way by their children (Sultan 1999), may not see themselves in what I have shown you. They may not recognise the story that I have created. Gallop and Blau argue, 'Family photography is not just about how the family looks in the picture; it's also about how the pictures look in the family' (1999, 82). Miller (1999, 53) also cautions that family history is 'a history of complex negotiation'. When is the story 'my' story, when is it 'theirs', when 'ours'? Miller concludes that stories are always 'in relation to'. Although I began by describing my grandmother's photographs, they, and the narrative that accompanies them, have really become mine in relation to hers, and to my parents and siblings.

Intergenerational memories can include a whole range of mixed feelings and emotions. Spitzer (1999, 218) argues that feelings of joy, happiness and relief can co-exist with those of suffering, loss and sadness; 'tears as well as smiles'. This is how I have, for now, come to understand my Grandma's collection. It is a tangible artefact for remembering events of significance in the family, my grandmother's pseudo photograph album and her way of being a co-witness. The existence of the photographs and her action in handing them on was a significant act of silence-breaking for me. The photographs somehow help to make the incomprehensibility of childhood memories of this war and violence more tameable, and the bittersweet memories of loss and survival more bearable.

This paper is dedicated to Mamie and Jim, parents who taught their children not to hate, but rather to engage with the messy complexities of human experience in an effort to understand.

NOTES

[1] Negrine (1994) classifies these papers as 'popular' rather than 'quality' ones. The majority of the images come from regional versions of the paper, and so have an emphasis on 'local' news and on a 'relationship with the local community' (Brown 1978). Though a full analysis of the images used to accompany newspaper stories on DRC is beyond the scope of this paper, an examination of the images in *The Times* (classified by Negrine as a quality paper) between 1960 and 1964 reveals none of the 'domestic' family images I discuss here.

[2] It has taken this author 10 years since being given the photographs to begin to work out how and where she might begin to discuss them.

[3] For more information on this part of DRC history, see Gondola 2002 and Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig 2007.

[4] Google Earth, accessed 26 October 2009. I noticed, on a final editing of this paper (March 2010) that the Google Earth image has changed: the old ferry is no longer visible in the image.

[5] This image, and the one I discuss later, was saved as part of a complete page from each newspaper. This means that the date and newspaper can be identified. Some of the clippings do not have information that identifies their source or date.

[6] The *Daily Mail* (and its regional subsidiaries) were regarded as 'popular' newspapers and exploited a 'demand for reading and entertainment' (Negrine 1994, 59), though Negrine argues that research confirms print media are the means by which the public acquires information about the world and current social and political problems.

[7] Photographs and films of the Congolese visits to Belgium were on display in the Royal Museum for Central Africa as part of a temporary exhibition, *Expo 58 at the Royal Museum for Central Africa*, between 18 April and 19 October 2008. Sliwinski (2006, 360) offers interesting examples of how such exhibitions fuelled popular conceptions of Africa in the nineteenth century.

[8] Moise Tshombe had not supported Lumumba's quest for a national Congolese government, and was suspected of collusion with Belgian interests when he led the Katanga revolt immediately after independence. For more information on this part of DRC history, see Gondola 2002 and Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig 2007.

[9] Survivor accounts are published in a number of places; see, for example, reports in *The Scotsman*, 26 November 1964.

[10] For an analysis of the use of 'mug shots' in photographs of missing people, see Sturken 1999.

[11] Sliwinski (2006, 335) argues that, similarly, despite the huge loss of life in Congo in the early colonial period and a vigorous UK media campaign against human rights abuses, 'this history remains at the edges of contemporary consciousness'.

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