The Less Acceptable Face of Capitalism: A Study of British
Documentary During the Rise of Thatcherism

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Declaration:

I, Stephanie King, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract:

This thesis is a study of the oppositional documentary practices produced by the Left in Britain during the rise of the New Right (c1968-1997). By situating the issue of class at the centre of my study, I seek to challenge poststructuralist histories of this moment which, I suggest, inadvertently hastened the triumph of Thatcherism by foreclosing the production of, or the devotion of critical attention to, representations of class. One project forms the kernel of this inquiry. It is Exit Photography Group's photobook *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities* (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1982): a study in words and images of the those whom Exit designate 'the less acceptable face of capitalism'.

This thesis is a careful and sustained analysis of *Survival Programmes* and a select series of interrelated documentary projects, both photographic and filmic, with which I place the photobook in conversation. Through the prism of Exit's project, I explore representations of class and how those representations intersect with questions of race and gender, as well as with concerns about the changing usages of, and connotations attached to, public and private space. My approach is informed by the contemporaneous writings of the cultural studies and media theorist Stuart Hall. His work provides a lens through which I interrogate how oppositional image makers have mobilised the camera as a prism through which to scrutinise Thatcherism, as well as the mass media institutions through which that ideology has been creatively mediated and mobilised. I ask if we can write social histories of documentary after 1979 without reverting to the duality between the naive celebration of so-called "community photography" on the one hand and, on the other, deterministic accounts of the inevitable critical and political failure of the documentary modality.

Impact Statement:

This will be the first sustained critical analysis of Exit Photography Group's photobook *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities* (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1982). This thesis, therefore, fills a critical gap in the literature on British documentary photography. I have begun the important work of theorising an exciting body of documentary in the hope that other academics within the broader research community will engage with, extend and deepen my investigation of Exit's project. In turn, I hope my research will proffer an initial jumping off point for further investigations into the social documentary of this period that has otherwise fallen out of history or been excluded from histories of this moment. I have presented my work locally, at University College London, and across the UK more generally and at a number of international conferences. My research has been received with interest on these occasions and I have begun to develop a network of fellow academics who work in the field of British documentary and who think about documentary histories. I intend to pursue projects with these interlocutors in the future. I have also disseminated aspects of my research in the form of a review of Peter Dench's exhibition 'A1: Britain on the Verge', which was published in the journal *Object,* Volume 20, 2019. I have a chapter pending publication in the book: *Other '68s. Lineages and Legacies of May '68*. The title of my contribution is: 'Arriving After the Fact: The politics of belatedness in Exit Photography Group's *Survival Programmes* (1982)'.

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

> Is it possible that the immense new material, cultural and technological capacities, far outstripping Marx's wildest dreams, which are now actually in our hands, are going to be politically hegemonised for the reactionary modernisation of Thatcherism? Or can we seize on those means of history-making, of making new human subjects, and shove them in the direction of a new culture? That's the choice before the left.[1]

> Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and Us'

The above epigraph is an extract from 'Gramsci and Us', an article by the seminal cultural studies and media theorist, Stuart Hall. It featured in the June 1987 issue of the Leftist monthly *Marxism Today*. The issue was published on the eve of the general election that saw Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party ushered into an historic third consecutive term in office with a staggering majority of 102 Members of Parliament (MPs). In the article, Hall grapples with Thatcherism's capacity to reproduce itself, in spite of its obvious contradictions. Following in the footsteps of the Sardinian philosopher and Marxist thinker, Antonio Gramsci, Hall asks how the Right has so successfully hegemonised the Left's defeat and the collapse of the post-war consensus. What 'Mrs Thatcher knows', he shrewdly observes, 'as the left does not, is that there is no serious political project in Britain today which is not also about constructing a politics and an image of what modernity would be like for our people'.[2] The success of Thatcherism lies in its capacity to speak to the county's collective fears and anxieties, but also its fantasies and ordinary aspirations, inviting a nation to *'think about politics in images'* and to picture themselves as Thatcher's subjects.[3]

A transcript included on page 176 of Exit Photography Group's photobook, *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities* (1982), demonstrates the acute efficacy of Thatcher's discursive project (figs. 0.1 & 0.2). In the transcript, entitled 'Let It Be Revealed!', Exit Photography Group interview three men they encounter, a caption explains, 'sitting on a bench close to the Crypt Night Shelter at the Metropolitan Cathedral on Brownlow Hill, Liverpool'.[4] The men, who are homeless, are killing time as they wait for the shelter to reopen and readmit its weary residents. As they wait, Exit ask their interlocutors how the homeless are treated at the shelter. The men recount

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[1] Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', *Marxism Today*, June 1987, p.21.
[2] Ibid. p.18.
[3] My emphasis. Ibid. p.19.
[4] Exit Photography Group (Nicholas Battye/Chris Steele-Perkins/Paul Trevor), *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1982), p.24. Hereafter referenced and cited in the text as *Survival.*

the trials and tribulations of hostel living and how they negotiate their day-to-day interactions with the hostel's other guests. The basics of hostel etiquette are these: refrain from imposing yourself on others and eat only your fair share of the food. When Exit ask the men if they would like private accommodation of their own, the anonymously titled "First Man's" response is perhaps surprising. He briskly replies, 'I don't, no!' When Exit inquire why not, the "First Man" curtly explains: 'Cos I'm just liable to tump [kill] me bastard self, if you want to know!' (*Survival*, 176-80).

The "Second Man", it transpires, is waiting to be rehoused. 'It's only a one-bedroom place', he explains, 'which I prefer… y'know. I suppose it stems from being in prison, and y'been in a cell on your own'. The man describes a difficult youth in an underfunded and authoritarian care system, followed by an adolescence spent in and out of remand homes and Her Majesty's Borstal, culminating in a total of 12 prison sentences. 'I reckon I've done about, what?... eighteen, nineteen years', he explains. The men recall their struggle to make ends meet on the £11.10 per-week that they are allocated in social security benefits by James Callaghan's Labour government (1976-9). 'One hour you're a rich man', the "First Man" explains, 'two hours after you're a poor man!... How many times have you drew £11.10… paid your debts and finished up with ten pence?... It's a *bastard* of a life!' (*Survival,* 178). He reserves a few choice words for the state of politics in Britain at the end of the 1970s:

> Look! If it's gonna be revealed, let it be revealed. You've had every government in this fucking world goin', and the only one they haven't given a go is the Salvation Army Government. If we had that we'd be goose-steppin' down the street sayin' prayers every five minutes. Give this woman, Margaret Thatcher, a chance! Let's see what she can do! (*Survival,* 178)

The homeless man's call for the nation to 'Give this woman, Margaret Thatcher, a chance!' bespeaks the discursive phenomenon that Hall describes. It discloses the utter disillusionment felt by a class unable to reconcile itself with a diminished Labour Party, as well as the incongruity of the fact that the Tories appealed better to the needs of the underemployed classes than the Labour Party itself. The "First Man's" account of the lure of Thatcher's authoritarianism necessarily tells us something important about a failure of representation on the Left; namely, the Left's inability to devise a logical counter-narrative powerful enough to render contradictory the ideological underpinnings of Thatcher's project of 'regressive modernisation'.[5] Historian Eric Hobsbawm captured this sense of disaffection in his 1978 essay 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?' when he bluntly observed that a nation of working-class voters who

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[5] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987, p.17.

had looked to Labour 'for a lead and a policy' at the end of the Sixties had been disappointed. They got instead 'the Wilson years'.[6]

These contradictions are played through, or *played out*, on the page of the photobook through the juxtaposition of image and text. On the page facing the "First Man's" account, Exit Photography Group shrewdly position a photograph of Thatcher at a General Election press conference, flanked by the liberal economist Geoffrey Howe – who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, would become the architect of Thatcher's economic project – and the Chairman of the Conservative Party, Peter Thorneycroft (fig. 0.3). By the time *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities* was published in 1982, unemployment had breached the three million mark for the first time since the 1930s; the spectre of the 'Iron Lady' shaking a bejewelled fist beneath the campaign slogan, 'We'll All Win with the Conservatives', was a bitter irony.

Given the events that unfurled after 1979, the uncharacteristically pessimistic tone of 'Gramsci and Us' perhaps seems justified. Yet a closer reading of Hall's text reveals an optimistic undercurrent that cuts against the essay's obvious cynicism. In 1987, the Left was teetering on a precipice; its choice, Hall sets forth, was this: 'capitulate to the Thatcherite future, or find another way of imagining'.[7] On the eve of an election, 'Gramsci and Us' is an appeal to the Left to make new images – to seize the means of history-making and produce an image of what socialism might look like in Britain at the end of the twentieth century.

My encounter with 'Gramsci and Us' and Hall's request that the Left make new images of how the working-classes lived and experienced their underemployment during the rise of Thatcherism, was the germ of this thesis – a study of oppositional documentary practices, both photographic and filmic, produced by the Left in Britain c1968-97. One project forms the kernel of this inquiry. It is *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities*: Exit Photography Group's study in words and images of the those whom they designate 'the less acceptable face of capitalism' (*Survival,* 9).[8]

A titbit of information in Darren Newbury's 2002 interview with Murray Martin of the Newcastle-based Amber film and photography collective first alerted me to Exit's

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[6] Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', *Marxism Today*, September 1978, p.286.
[7] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987, p.21.
[8] The 'less acceptable face of capitalism' is a term used in the 'Introduction' to the *Survival Programmes* which was scripted by Paul Trevor.

project.[9] Martin's mention of Exit's work was little more than an aside, a musing on the ambiguity he felt towards *Survival Programmes* when it was displayed, in the form of an exhibition, at Side Gallery in 1982. Nonetheless, I was intrigued by his observation and began to search for a copy of the photobook in local London-based repositories. Given that I had never heard of Exit Photography Group – a collective comprised of the photographers Nicholas Battye, Chris Steele-Perkins and Paul Trevor – or their project, I was surprised to discover that my home institution, University College London, held a copy of the photobook. Yet the book was not an open access volume kept on a shelf in one of the library's reading rooms, but buried in the Store: an off-site, closed access collection where books are relegated when deemed, to quote the library's information page, "not currently in high demand".[10] When I finally got a chance to spend time with the book, what I discovered was a richly textured and at times deeply contradictory portrait of the lives lived by the underemployed inhabitants of Britain's inner cities. The book transformed my understanding not only of Britain's socio-political history, but of the ways through which British documentarians were mobilising their cameras at this moment, as a means of contesting what Hall described as the 'great moving Right show'.[11] Indeed, Exit's project forms part of a larger corpus of political documentary work emergent at the end of the 1960s that sought to expose economic marginalisation and reveal the mechanisms through which social inequality is perpetrated. Much of this socially engaged documentary was produced by collectives (or co-authored) and there was an overarching emphasis on the pedagogical function of the production process and/or its outcomes.

Exit's project was conceived in 1973 and conceptualised as a continuation of the work that the group had begun during their previous study *Down Wapping* (1973). The project was an examination of urban redevelopment and social displacement in London's dockland communities that was presented in the form of a small, pamphlet-sized photobook that combined images and text. In a project proposal drafted for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the philanthropic organisation that would go on to fund Exit's work, the group described their intent 'to undertake', over a period of 20 weeks, 'a study of community development, poverty and deprivation in the form of photographs and

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[9] See: Darren Newbury, 'Documentary Practices and Working-Class Culture: An Interview with Murray Martin (Amber films and side photographic gallery)', *Visual Studies*, 2002, 17(2), pp.113-128.
[10] University College London, store services information page: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/stores-service (accessed 03/08/2019).
[11] Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show' (in) Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques (eds) *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart in association with Marxism Today, 1983), pp.19-39.

words to provide the material for public education in a subject about which too little is still known' (fig. 0.5).[12]

The coupling of images and words was central to Exit's methodology and was conceptualised as a means through which to counter, or perhaps *lay bare*, the limits of visual and textual representational registers. 'We consider', the group observed in their project proposal, 'that photographs and text are both essential: one medium doing what the other can't and together making some statements possible that previously have been impossible'. For Exit, the juxtaposition of photographs with the transcribed oral testimonies of the people they encountered in areas of economic deprivation, functioned as a means through which to move beyond simply "recording" social exclusion. The aim was not to 'merely display' the subject for the viewer, Exit explain, but to 'present the relationship that exists between subjects', and, we might add, between subjects and the spaces they inhabit. Through this means, through the coupled mobilisation of cameras and tape-recorders, it might be possible to expose the structural nature of social inequality and the mechanisms through which inequality is perpetuated in Britain through, in part, systems of representation.

The study Exit Photography Group outlined in their project proposal was much more ambitious in scope than *Down Wapping* which dealt with a single geographic locality. By contrast, Exit's expansive proposal outlined the necessity of a far-reaching but nonetheless detailed study of select localities across the nation, the purpose of which – at the risk of generalisation – was to expose the extent of underemployment in the UK. The concentration of underemployed subjects within urban areas, as well as the cohabitation of those spaces by white Britain's and commonwealth migrants, determined Exit's decision to make the inner city and its inhabitants their subject matter. Although, as Exit insisted, the majority of the underemployed lived not in these areas but in the small towns and villages scattered across the rural landscape, the inner city

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[12] The 'Exit Photography Group' who authored *Down Wapping* comprised Nicholas Battye, Diane Olsen, Alex Slotskin and Paul Trevor. Chris Steele-Perkins was not a member of Exit Photograph Group until later in 1973. Olsen and Slotskin ceased working with the group after the docklands project. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (1956-) is an international foundation that funds projects in the fields of arts, social welfare, education and science. 'The purpose of the UK Branch is', to quote the Foundation's website, 'to bring about long-term improvements in wellbeing, particularly for the most vulnerable, by creating connections across boundaries (national borders, communities, disciplines and sectors) which deliver social, cultural and environmental value'. See: https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/about-us/ (accessed 05/08/2019). Exit Photography Group, 'Project Proposal' (1973), SURVIVAL/1/1, Survival Programmes: Exit Photography Group, Library Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics, London.

retained currency as Exit's principal locality because it was a crucible where the manifold problems facing the less acceptable face of capitalism converged and appeared at their most acute. Inner city locales marked for "redevelopment", they explain:

> lack most opportunities that society believes it extends to all its members. Such areas include employment, housing, education, amenities and services, while prejudice manifests most strongly in race relations. Simply, they are deprived of rights, have no power, and cannot purchase escape to an environment that is not openly hostile.[13]

Localities in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Glasgow and Belfast, were considered representative of Exit's concerns and selected for study. Specifically, Brixton and Lewisham in London, Handsworth and Balsall Heath in Birmingham and parts of Middlesbrough were chosen because, in these areas, dire housing shortages and inadequate employment opportunities had been compounded by commonwealth immigration causing race relations to become particularly hostile. Regions of Liverpool and Newcastle in the "industrial North", as well as Glasgow, proffered examples of the devastating effects of deindustrialisation and the limited effects of post-war reconstruction. While Exit's interest in areas of Belfast ravaged by civil unrest (most notably Falls Road) allowed the group to investigate how the issue of underemployment intersects with, or is intensified by, sectarian struggle.

In their quest for a comprehensive portrayal of urban underemployment, what had originally been pitched to the Gulbenkian Foundation as a six-month study became a protracted investigation that lasted just shy of a decade. After six years of fieldwork in seven inner city locations across the UK, the capture of more than 30,000 photographs, and the quasi-anthropological collection of 100 hours of taped interviews, the result was the publication in 1982 of *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities*. In its drastically reduced form, the book comprised 97 monochrome photographs juxtaposed with the typed oral testimonies of the classed, raced and gendered "others" whom Exit encountered. The group envisaged the book as a pedagogic object that would be viewed collectively in the dialogical context of community groups, youth centres and adult education classes.[14] In other words, it was Exit's aim to enable the shared exploration of the photographs and personal histories precisely by the demographic that the book sought to represent. The book's reception, they hoped, would be entrenched

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[13] Exit Photography Group (1973), op. cit., np.
[14] Exit Photography Project, 'Project Proposal' (1973), op. cit., np.

in the everyday life-context of those who inhabited marginalised geographies, and as such, it was conceptualised as an object that would enable critical conversation.

Arranged with photographs on the right-hand page and interview transcripts on the left, the book is structured by four photographic narratives entitled 'Growth', 'Promise', 'Welfare' and 'Reaction', which run alongside, yet independently of, fifteen textual chapters (fig. 0.6). The transcripts, which are presented in columns, begin with a short epigraph derived from the account in question beneath which Exit detail the speaker's name (where appropriate pseudonyms are used to protect the subject's identity), age and country of birth, as well as details such as their address, housing tenure, familial situation and work status. The ostensibly unedited dialogue is offset by familiar shots of Victorian terrace streets and drab domestic interiors in which the sense of physical decay is omnipresent.[15] The rough concrete left bare and exposed in the dilapidated tenement flat in Marry Hill, Glasgow and the peeling, damp-ridden wallpaper in a cramped house in Bordesley Green, Birmingham, betray the subjects' economic status; the images capturing their everyday struggle to live and survive in conditions that one interviewee describes as 'slums like these'.

The photographs bear no direct relation to the transcripts that they are situated alongside. The photographs are not portraits of the interviewees whose transcripts are positioned on the facing page. Nor are they photographs of the speaker's family, their home, and they are not necessarily of their locality. 'The photographs are not', Exit explain in the project proposal, 'intended to illustrate the text (as in photo journalism) and reciprocally the text will not act as captions to the photographs. They will be complimentary and mutually independent'.[16] However, although the relationship between photographs and transcripts appears arbitrary, the pairings are in fact carefully considered, so that when read alongside, or in conversation with one another, the juxtapositions are generative. The photographs at times reinforce the transcripts, but often the images are positioned in tension, or at odds with the text and the outcome is often contradictory. Accounts of devalued work and worklessness are interlaced with tightly cropped shots of television screens transmitting pictures of prominent politicians and "pillars" of British society: Mrs Thatcher, the Queen and the Pope. While cynical

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[15] As Exit note in the book's 'Preface' the transcripts are, in fact, edited. They explain: 'We have edited the transcripts, sometimes heavily, so that they deal with the essential substance… but at the same time we have tried to retain a particular feeling and spirit of the occasions and the speakers' (*Survival,* p.7).
[16] Exit Photography Group (1973), op. cit., np.

images of the veritable fat-cats of commerce and concrete high-rises are peppered among disillusioned – at times, troublingly nostalgic – accounts of communities torn asunder by the juggernaut of post-war reconstruction.

In this thesis, I contend that *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities* is perhaps the most important, yet hitherto understudied documentary project produced in Britain during this period. As such, I assert that the book, which is 224 pages from cover to cover, demands careful and sustained work. Rather than a comprehensive account of the documentary produced in Britain c1968-97, this thesis is a close analysis of a single object – *Survival Programmes* – and a select series of interrelated photographic projects with which I place the photobook in conversation. This study is not, therefore, concerned with the project's manifestation as an exhibition. Nor am I interested in engaging with the individual photographers, not simply because the images included in *Survival Programmes* are – in accordance with the collectivist ideological standpoint – unattributed, but because biographical questions have little bearing on the issues with which I am concerned in this thesis. The political implications of collective practices warrant sustained critical investigation; however, the study of the social implications of collaborative documentary production per se is not within the remit of this thesis. That work remains to be done.

Instead, I seek to explore the complexity of the photobook as a discursive object. The thematic threads and strands of thought that wind their way throughout the book do not come together to form a cohesive or harmonious piece. There are loose ends, and sections where the threads have been dropped, or become tangled to such a degree that meaning can only be unpicked over time, through careful and sustained work. Put simply, *Survival Programmes* cannot be treated as a discrete object that proffers anything close to a "conclusion", whatever that word means. The densely layered document does not provide the reader with answers but frames a series of questions. Accordingly, I mobilise the book in the way that Exit intended it be used: as a guide for thinking with, or for thinking *through*. Indeed, *Survival Programmes* does not close down but opens up or elicits critical conversation. Accordingly, my methodology is to position the book as a framework through which to interrogate wider patterns of documentary production and political change c1968-1997. Some of the questions that unfurl from its pages are these: How has underemployment been represented or *mediated* historically? How have raced and gendered subjects been represented in the media, or, more specifically, mediated by those in power? In addition, of interest are questions pertaining to the changing usages of, and connotations attached to, public and private

space, and how the repurposing of space altered the production and circulation of knowledge during the period in question. Ultimately it will be my claim that the book helps us to think about these questions by structuring mediation.

At stake in positioning Exit's photobook as a lens through which to scrutinise hegemonic media systems, is a greater comprehension of how the inner city and its inhabitants were actively produced by the right-wing arm of the media in relation to a discourse on "crisis". A 1974 speech by the Conservative MP and vocal arm of the New Right, Sir Keith Joseph, is a paradigmatic example of how the political stakes were increasingly being drawn out in relation to narrow definitions of what constitutes the home, the family and notions of that great abstraction, "community". Fraught with an anxiety inducing rhetoric, the speech, which prefigured Thatcher's infamous "There's No Such Thing as Society" interview with *Woman's Own* magazine (1987), read thus:

> It was not so long ago that we thought we had utopia within reach. What has happened to all that optimism? Has it really crumbled under the weight of rising crime [and] social decay? … Have we really become a nation of hooligans and vandals, bullies and child batterers, criminals and inadequates? Our loud talk about community underlies the fact that we have no community. We talk about neighbourhoods and all too often we have no neighbours. We go on about the home, when all we have are dwelling places, containing television sets… Vast factories, huge schools, sprawling estates, sky scraping apartment blocks, all these work against our community.[17]

The stock-in-trade of the New Right, such moralising and nostalgic elicitations of the public imagination formed part of a larger discourse that bemoaned a Britain-in-crisis and served to discredit the already fragile Labour government. With the humiliating multi-billion pound bailout of the nation's economy by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), rising inflation, mass trade union unrest and high levels of unemployment, by the decade's close, Britain, the New Right claimed, was on her knees. Against the prospect of economic enfeeblement, in February 1979 the *Daily Express* extended a thinly veiled call for a powerful reaffirmation of state control by posing the following question of its readers: "WHO THE HELL SPEAKS FOR BRITAIN?" (fig. 0.4). Accompanied by the suggestive by-line, "At a time when too many people have too much to say for themselves…" and a photograph of striking British Leyland workers, the *Express'* message was all too clear. In the wake of what *The Sun* (under Rupert Murdoch's premiership) infamously dubbed the 'Winter of Discontent', and on the eve of election, the *Express* was calling for Thatcher to destroy what remained of an already beleaguered post-war consensus. Such a move would be an act of historic reversal that

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[17] Keith Joseph, COO handout of Farley Hill speech, Luton, 3 October 1974.

would be performed, in the first instance, through the irreversible suppression of that infamous folk devil, the rapacious labourer and his tyrannical champion, the Union.

Yet, the *Express'* bellicose evocation of "Britain", like Joseph's posturing around the ambiguous term "community", bears another message. Inextricably tied to a rhetoric on post-colonial decline, it bespeaks an unmistakable patriotism born of the alleged erosion of so-called traditional British values. In the mid-seventies, Celtic calls for devolution became increasingly vocal, and the Irish Republican Army's prolonged struggle for independence reached its most acute phase in 1974, when explosive devices were placed in two Birmingham pubs killing 21 people and injuring a further 182. Meanwhile, the prospect of Britain's deeper incorporation within the European Economic Community was perceived, so the *Express* claimed, to threaten a further, profound adulteration of national identity. 'The European Parliamentary Elections', the paper explained, are 'designed to suck Britain into a sludgy amalgam of States and reduce our identity even further'.[18]

From amidst the climate of economic instability emerged a 'nagging sense of uncertainty', to borrow from the black British historian Paul Gilroy, about what it meant to be British, or, more specifically, *English*.[19] The *Express'* evocation of "Britain", constitutes little more than what the art historian and photography theorist John Tagg describes as a 'convenient disguise for an English nationalism that cannot speak its name'. Compelling a nation to renounce its traditional class and party-based allegiances, in favour of a mythic and essentialised image of England, the paper's jingoistic call for a nation of 'patriots not partisans' was evidently persuasive. It was a call to action that demanded what Tagg refers to as a "performative response": to vote, more specifically, to vote Thatcher.[20] Like Exit Photography Group's "First Man", many people did decide – perhaps in spite of themselves – to "give Thatcher a chance!" and, on 4 May 1979, Thatcher secured a 43-seat majority for the Conservative Party; a fact that attests to the extent to which the New Right was able to successfully transform a perennial economic crisis, into a crisis of Britishness and of social permissiveness.

In light of the entrenchment and cultural naturalisation over the past four decades of Thatcher's particular brand of New Right neoliberalism it seems that Hall's plea for the

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[18] 'Who the Hell Speaks for Britain', *The Daily Express*, Thursday 8 February 1979, No. 24447.
[19] Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1st ed. 1987, London, New York: Routledge, 1992), p.xxv.
[20] John Tagg, '*Introductory address',* Photography and Britishness (conference), 4–5 November 2016, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT. http://britishartstudies.ac.uk /index/article-index/ycba-conference/issue-5/blatant-vulgarity (accessed 15/07/2019).

production of other images fell on deaf ears. On 12th December 2019, Boris Johnson's Conservative Party won a landslide election victory, securing a parliamentary majority of 80 MPs: the Party's largest majority since 1987, the year that Hall penned 'Gramsci and Us'. Thirty years on from that essay's publication in *Marxism Today*, we are living through a moment of profound political uncertainty. Since 2010, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) has successfully exerted pressure on the Conservative government, engendering a further, profound shift towards the Right that the Labour Party has thus far been unable to avert. The emergent national identity crisis has, once again, been made inextricable from a discourse on immigration. Right-wing tabloids promise their readership, through their xenophobic rhetoric, that an act of cultural isolationism – a vote to withdraw from Europe on 23rd June 2016 – is a vote to "make Britain Great again". The severity of the Right's radicalisation was exposed during the week preceding the referendum when the Labour MP for Batley and Spen, Jo Cox, was murdered on the streets of Birstall, West Yorkshire. Jo Cox had been shot and stabbed multiple times by a far-right extremist who, witnesses reported, had shouted 'Britain first' as he launched his attacked. Since 2010, the global financial crisis (2007-8) has been mobilised by the Right and transformed into an ideological war against "the poor" which has been waged in the name of austerity. The very real, very dangerous effects of this were made visible when, on 14 June 2017, a fire broke out in the 24-storey Grenfell Tower, killing 72 of the block's residents, the vast majority of whom had been housed in Grenfell by the Local Authority. During renovations which many people suspect were done to improve the building's aesthetic for its surrounding residents, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea clad the block in a combustible material that was more "cost-effective" than its fire-retardant counterpart. What events such as Grenfell demonstrate, is that we are not living in the 'classless society' John Major promised the nation when he succeeded Thatcher in 1990.[21]

The reactionary shift taking place within our present moment can only be understood if we comprehend Britain's amnesic relationship with her recent past. For "Thatcher's children" – an epithet that refers to the generation who came of age during, and know nothing but, Thatcherism and its aftermath – the history that Hall recounts in 'Gramsci and Us' is an unfamiliar one.[22] The post-war period of social democracy was redacted from the history books in the wake of Thatcher's hegemonisation. What I found so

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[21] John Major (cited in.) Alwyn Turner, *A Classless Society: Britain in the 1990s* (London: Aurum, 2013), p.4.
[22] Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho (eds.) *Thatcher & After: Margaret Thatcher and Her Afterlife in Contemporary Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.5.

striking, nay *alarming*, about Hall's essay, was that it revealed a history of class politics and social struggle that has all but been erased from the nation's popular history and its collective memory. Today, few people born after the 1970s remember that, not so long ago, the political consensus in Britain was a socialist one: large swathes of the economy were governed by the public sector; trade unions held significant sway over public and political opinion; local authorities controlled social provision in their areas and welfare benefits were regarded as a right of citizenship.[23] Socialist politics, which are today, notwithstanding (or perhaps because of) the rise of Jeremy Corbyn, situated in popular discourses at the radical fringe, were once mainstream. 'Gramsci and Us' reveals a radically divergent version of the Labour Party than the "New Labour" government that Tony Blair successfully duped a generation of millennials into believing was 'Left wing'. Make no mistake, New Labour was in no way a contestation of Thatcher's project. Under Blair, New Labour actively pursued privatisation and monetarism; in the public sector, the practice of tendering out contracts to private sector management firms has done little to restore power to trade unions and the so-called gig economy continues to flourish.[24] "Thatcher's Children" are perhaps less Thatcherite than "Blair's Babies" who came of age in the wake of Thatcherism's entrenchment. For Blair's Babies such as myself, neoliberalism is naturalised to such an extent that we are unable to remember other ways of living and of structuring socio-economic relationships.[25]

Writing at the turn of the century, in 'Whose Heritage?', Hall observed the extent to which the Right had been successful in cleansing Britain's cultural landscape of its rebellious history. What is now commonly referred to, fallaciously, as "the British way of life", he observed, is in actuality, just a smokescreen for a series of social inequalities.[26] The predominance of the New Right's interpretation of events has been compounded by the widespread retreat during the 1980s from the language of class. Outside a narrow subset of academic disciplines conversations about class, specifically, about how people 'live, survive and cope' as working-class subjects, have been made to appear anachronistic or distasteful.[27] 'Where', Hall asks, 'is this deeply ruptured and

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[23] Francis Beckett (cited in) Ibid., p.3.
[24] Ibid., p.8.
[25] Maria Teresa Grasso, Stephen Farrall, Colin Hay, Emily Gray & Will Jennings, 'Thatcher's Children, Blair's Babies, Political Socialization and Trickle-down Value Change: An Age, Period and Cohort Analysis', *British Journal of Political Science*, 49(1), 2017, pp.17-36.
[26] Stuart Hall, 'Whose Heritage? Un-settling "The Heritage", Re-Imagining the Post-Nation',*Third Text,* 01 December 1999, Vol.13(49), p.6.
[27] See: Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey & June Melody, *Growing Up Girl: Psycho-Social Explorations of Gender and Class* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.27.

fractured history, with its interweaving of stability and conflict, in the Heritage's version of the dominant national narrative?'[28] What has been left out of hegemonic accounts of the rise of Thatcherism is the history of opposition.

This thesis begins where Exit Photography Group began, in 1968 – a date whose significance will not be lost on the reader of this thesis. In popular Leftist histories, the spring of '68 has been mythologised as a moment of rupture during which a socialist revolution was born and subsequently died. Yet, the events that compelled Exit to produce *Survival Programmes* complicate our standard history of May '68. This other, inconvenient, history is not so much about progressive social movements as it is about the ideological shift toward the Right.

On 20 April 1968, the Conservative MP Enoch Powell delivered his so-called 'Rivers of Blood' speech, an address delivered to the West Midlands branch of the Conservative Party. Amongst the pages of tabloid newspapers, Powell's dystopian vision of a nation beset by its former colonial subjects found fertile ground and three days later, on 23 April, public support for his anti-immigrant sentiment was affirmed when 1,000 East London dockers went on strike in protest of Powell's dismissal from the Conservative Party. The striking workers carried placards bearing jingoistic slogans such as 'Back Britain, not Black Britain' and 'Britain for the British'. The following day, 600 dock workers from St Katharine Docks downed tools and took to the streets, followed by a further 600 Smithfield Market meat porters. By the end of April, an estimated 4,500 dockers were on strike. 'Quickly', as the 'Introduction' to *Survival Programmes* observes, 'race and the inner city became major political issues' (*Survival,* 9).

In a reactive response, in May 1968, Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson hastily launched the Urban Programme, which was a government initiative aimed at arresting socio-economic decline in the inner city and, by extension, the eruption in Britain of upheavals akin to those taking place across Europe and North America, most notably in Paris. Thus, a moment of international protest was met by the British government with a haphazard gesture of reactionary paternalism. Problematically, when Wilson announced the Urban Programme, he made the link between government anxieties concerning worsening race relations and the Programme explicit by evoking so-called 'race riots' in the United States as a cautionary example of the events that might unfurl in Britain if the government failed to take urgent action.[29] Standing on the steps of

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[28] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1999, p.6.
[29] Specifically, Harold Wilson was referring to rioting in Newark and Detroit (1967).

Birmingham Town Hall – a location chosen as a riposte to Powell – Wilson publicly augured violent upheavals across the UK, thus inadvertently lending authority to Powell's speech.[30] Yet, the funding ring fenced for the Urban Programme was less than one-tenth of one percent of public expenditure. If the government genuinely considered social unrest an urgent problem, it was unprepared to spend money on it.[31]

Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities functions as a critique of the limited ambitions of the Government's Urban Programme and as a dialectical interrogation of the tensions compounded by Powell's speech and the mainstream press that mobilised and materialised his xenophobic rhetoric. Indeed, the book offers a corrective to theorisations of this moment that elide not only the issue of class, but the question of how the problem of class oppression intersects with the experience of being a subject who is raced and/or gendered. If *Survival Programmes* demonstrates that the 'deeply ruptured and fractured histories' that Hall called for in 'Whose Heritage?' were, in fact, being produced during the period in question, then how do we explain their invisibility within art historical discourses? Why has the question of class received so little attention in the cultural theory produced since the 1980s? The answer is a complicated one. In the book *Art Labour, Sex Politics,* Siona Wilson has initiated the important work of rigorously retheorising art historical approaches to the 1970s through a close analysis of the 'radical' feminist art produced during that decade. Wilson convincingly cautioned against reproducing melancholic accounts of '68; these nostalgic histories, she avers, 'only make sense if we fixate on the (inevitably lost) revolt'. By situating '68 as the "end" of the forward march of radical politics, she explains, cultural theorists have devalued the important political work performed in the wake of '68 by the women's liberation movement, as well as by grassroots community organisations and artists' collectives, among which we might count Exit Photography Group.[32]

While taking-up Wilson's proposition that we dispense with melancholic accounts of '68 and take seriously its cultural and political aftermaths, I want to push Wilson's analysis further, in order to put pressure on the origin story of revolt – and rupture – itself. This story, which is otherwise taken for granted by Wilson and the numerous scholars concerned with this moment, is in essence a Parisian story and, as such, its application

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[30] Martin Loney, *Community Against Government: The British Community Development Project 1968-78 - A Study of Government Incompetence* (London: Heinmann Educational Books, 1983), 31-37.
[31] Ibid, 2.
[32] Siona Wilson, *Art Labour, Sex Politics: Feminist Effects in 1970s British Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), pp.xii-xiii.

within the British context doesn't necessarily make sense. We must resist, as Hall asserts, following on from Gramsci, the 'easy transfer of generalisations from one conjuncture, nation or epoch to another'.[33] Beyond the limited institutional context of the student and women's liberation movements, popular workers' revolts such as those that erupted across the Channel in France, failed to materialise in any significant form in '68, *except* among Powell's xenophobic supporters. However, the fact that a socialist revolution failed to materialise in Britain in 1968, does not mean that '68 was an "end point" in the history of Left struggle. Powell's speech may have undermined what little solidarity had existed between Britain's classed and racialised others, but simultaneously – if unintentionally – it had the effect of awakening the Left to the urgent nature of the struggle confronting it.

In the years after 1968, the now seminal photographer and theorist Jo Spence established Photography Workshop with her long-term collaborator, Terry Dennett (1974). Named after Raphael Samuel's 'History Workshop' – a movement for a popular people's history – Photography Workshop was an alternative archive and resource centre, whose purpose was to encourage independent research and educational projects that mobilised documentary photography as a mechanism for social critique and a means for social change. In 1976, under the banner of Half Moon Photography Workshop, Spence and Dennett launched the radical leftist photography journal *Camerawork* (1976-1985) and Paul Trevor (of Exit Photography Group) became a member of the journal's editorial committee. Among the pages of *Camerawork*, photo-theorists and photographers debated the politics of photography and theorised what a socially engaged, political practice might look like in the 1970s. In fact, the essays published in *Camerawork* formed a manifesto of sorts, for reframing the liberal humanism of the post-war period. *Camerawork's* contributors contested the specialisation of photography and its integration within "Art" institutions and aimed instead to reinstate documentary as a social practice; or what the photo-historian and curator Jorge Ribalta describes as 'a minor, hybrid artistic form, whose archival and communication logics were in a certain sense anti-artistic [and] inseparable from political projects for social change'. A precondition of such a practice was a self-reflexive critique of documentary and its histories capable of exposing how the camera has been implicit in the consolidation of pre-existing power relationships.[34] By situating the

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[33] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987, p.16.
[34] Jorge Ribalta (ed.) *Not Yet: On the Reinvention of Documentary and the Critique of Modernism: Essays and Documents, 1972-1991* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2015), p.21.

emergence of a critical Left-wing politics in Britain alongside and conterminously with the rise of the New Right, it is my aim to reposition narratives pertaining to revolt in relation to, and as outcomes of, the more pervasive, reactionary turn of which Powell was symbolic. I therefore argue, qua Wilson, that the oppositional cultures that emerged from '68 should not be thought about nostalgically, or as part of a failed or redundant history, but as nascent beginnings.[35]

Like 1968, 1979 was a moment of political contingency. However, in light of the reactionary events that unfurled during the 1970s, it is easy to lose sight of the revolutionary spirit that is so often the kernel of discussion of May '68. This thesis will ask whether or not we can write social histories of art – specifically documentary – after 1979 without reverting to the duality between the naive celebration of so-called "community photography" on the one hand and, on the other, deterministic accounts of the inevitable critical and political failure of the documentary modality. Thatcher's election in 1979 signalled, perhaps, the final blow to an already ailing post-war consensus. Yet '79 also saw the publication of the influential volume *Photography/Politics: One*. Edited by Spence and Dennett with Sylvia Gohl and David Evans (also of Photography Workshop), *Photography/Politics: One* was a radical anthology of essays on documentary photography that included, among other texts, the American photo-theorist and practitioner Allan Sekula's major essay 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)' and extracts from Hall's essay 'The Social Eye of *Picture Post*'. The political sociologist Susanne MacGregor published her formative study of the ideologically and politically determined nature of popular conceptualisations of "poverty", *The Politics of Poverty,* in 1981. And in 1982 Jeremy Seabrook released *Unemployment,* an analysis of what happens to working-class subjects when the social imperative to work is made unattainable because of deindustrialisation. It was during the same year, 1982, that Exit Photography Group published *Survival Programmes*. I question if periodisations that situate '79 as the point of departure from class politics to identity politics, and from the street to the studio, are productive. What is the valency of art historical accounts of this moment vested in the concept of rupture? Is it useful or productive to divide our art histories into pre- or post-Thatcher?

If we make the mistake of regarding '79, like '68 before it, as an end point, then we reproduce precisely the melancholic art histories that Wilson cautions against. After all,

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[35] Siona Wilson, pp.xii-xiii.

how we understand our past, and by implication our present, depends on how we write, and who writes, our histories. On the trajectory from 1968 to 1987, there are several significant conjunctures where one might place a pin that could convincingly be argued represents the moment when Thatcherism became "truly" hegemonic. From Powell's speech, to Thatcher's ascent to leader of the Conservative Party in 1975, to the election of her law and order government in 1979 and the subsequent repeal of *jus soli* claims to citizenship in 1981, through to Thatcher's re-election in 1983, and then again in 1987, we could identify any number of moments during which the triumph of Thatcherism seemed final. Yet, what Hall indicates in 'Gramsci and Us', is that everything was still up for grabs, even in 1987. Hall's appeal to the Left is, in itself, an indication that Thatcherism had not yet been hegemonised and as such her re-election was not, as it is so often made to seem in our histories, inevitable.

In fact, it is now commonly agreed among scholars that the "crisis" that unfurled during the 1970s was discursively produced by the New Right through the bastions of Murdoch's press.[36] For reasons that I hope have become self-evident, Hall's work is central to my investigation because it enables a way of thinking about how "crises" are manufactured by the news media, simultaneous with, and against, the counter-hegemonic documentary projects being produced concurrently, in response to, and in contestations of, the mass media's "version" of events. If, as Sekula so famously contends, 'political domination, especially in the advanced capitalist countries and the more developed neo-colonies, depends on an exaggerated symbolic apparatus, on pedagogy and spectacle, on the authoritarian monologues of school and mass media', then any notion of a "truly" political art is contingent upon its capacity to actively work against such ideological frames.[37] A critique of how the media enables Thatcherism to reproduce itself is an urgent theme in Exit's work and the work of the photographers and theorists surrounding *Camerawork*.

However, problematically, the upswell of poststructuralist photo-theory in Britain during the 1970s, facilitated, though unintentionally, the New Right's capacity to hegemonise both the political field, and the historical narrative. The relegation of *Survival Programmes* to the library's Store is analogous to its treatment within art historical

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[36] For more on the construction of "crisis" see: Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques (eds) op. cit. & Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987., & Colin Hay, 'Rethinking Crisis: Narratives of the New Right and the Construction of Crisis'*, Marxism Today,* Vol.8, No.2, Summer 1995., & Louse Phillips, 'Hegemony and Political Discourse: The Lasting Impact of Thatcherism', *Sociology*, Vol.32, No.4, November 1998, pp.847-67.
[37] Allan Sekula, 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)', *The Massachusetts Review,* Vol. 19, No. 4, (Winter, 1978), p.861.

discourse. In fact, within the field of art history, the theoretical fissure engendered by the rise of poststructuralism caused extant representations of class to disappear from the art historical record almost entirely. Poststructuralist analyses, I claim, inadvertently hastened the triumph of Thatcherism by foreclosing the production of, or the devotion of critical attention to, representations of class.

In a series of influential essays published between 1978 and 1984 in the prominent photography and film journals *Ten:8* and *Screen Education*, John Tagg developed the poststructuralist critique of documentary "realism".[38] According to Tagg's social power theory, the documentary mode held dear by "certain sections" of the Left during the 1970s simply could not, and cannot, function oppositionally because documentary is always already enmeshed and 'imprisoned' within the historically produced systems of observation which were inherently tied, during the nineteenth century, to regimes of truth and sense. Within disciplinary institutions such as the prison and the workhouse, the camera – which was perceived to derive authority from its mechanically assured objectivity – was mobilised as a vehicle through which to transform the subject's body, and by extension the *social body,* into an object of knowledge. The photograph's official status as proof, as 'scientific and legalistic fact',[39] enabled institutions to capitalise on the bodies they governed. Likewise, the liberal humanist practices of philanthropic organisations intent on improving living conditions for "the poor", were nonetheless motivated by the bourgeois desire, Tagg explains, to uphold prevailing institutional and social hierarchies.[40]

During the twentieth century, the philanthropic documentary that had emerged at the end of the nineteenth century became increasingly integrated within, and broadened the interests of, the newly centralised state apparatus, consolidating social regulation in a hitherto incomparable manner. The emergence of the state and social welfare, Tagg asserts, were tied to a form of governance that establishes control (qua Gramsci), not through the authoritarian regimes of the police or the army, or through the institution, but through the less visible, more pervasive structures of self-regulation, dependency and assent. The advent of social documentary during the 1930s among, for example, the pages of the liberal publication *Picture Post,* did little to alter the power relations

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[38] I want to dispense with the term realism due to its entanglement in these loaded debates. Such debates prompt a range of ideological and theoretical questions that I am not principally concerned with in this thesis.
[39] Allan Sekula, op. cit., 1978, p.863.
[40] See: 'A Means of Surveillance' (in) John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), pp.66-103.

established by social scientists and reformers during the previous century. Both the philanthropist and the documentarian, Tagg avers, speak to 'those with relative power' about the dispossessed: 'those positioned as lacking, as "feminised" Other, as passive but pathetic objects capable only of offering themselves up to a benevolent, transcendental gaze – the gaze of the camera and the gaze of the paternal state'.[41] Through its particular mode of liberal humanist address, the documentary emergent during the 1930s reproduced power in ways more subtle and less transparent than the work that had come before it:

> Documentary transformed the flat rhetoric of evidence into an emotionalised drama of experience that worked to effect an imaginary identification of viewer and image, reader and representation, which would supress difference and seal them into the paternalistic relations of domination and subordination on which documentary's truth effects depended.[42]

'Realism', Tagg stresses, fixes its subjects in position at the point of the transparency – at the level of the surface – in a locus of observation and coalescence whereby the image and its subject collide and thus 'cannot be thrown into process by the sliding of signifiers that disestablishes social positionality'.[43] If, Tagg emphasises, following on from Louis Althusser, the subject is produced in discourse, that is, in and through representation, then realist images can only anchor subjects to the ideological positions that they already inhabit.[44] Oppositional documentary representations of the less acceptable face of capitalism are inextricably linked to precisely the order that they seek to overturn.[45] For Tagg, documentary realism, as a mode that is historically bound up with regulatory and disciplinary institutions, is inevitably and invariably an objectifying and dehumanising practice.

Toward the end of the 1970s, the poststructuralist theory being developed by Tagg and his interlocutors (most notably Victor Burgin) caused an impasse within the documentary field, fundamentally altering the representational possibilities open to photographers. As Leftward leaning documentarians attempted to adapt their socially engaged photographic practices in response to poststructuralist critiques of realism, their practices became bifurcated into two disparate strands. The first strand was influenced by Tagg and Burgin's anti-realist stance, and saw photographic practices

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[41] John Tagg, op. cit., 1988, p.12.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p.101.
[44] See: John Roberts, 'The Rise of Theory and the Critique of Realism' (in) *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography and the Everyday* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.152.
[45] John Tagg, op. cit., 1988, p.102.

displaced from the street to studio, and from the social body and the question of class, to identity politics. Within emergent histories of documentary, this transition has been historicised through the prism of Spence's work and the shift in her practice from the collaborative work on gender and class that she produced with the women's arts collective, the Hackney Flasher's, to what she would come to describe as phototherapy. This so-called moment of "rupture" occurs between Spence's final project with the Flasher's, *Who's Holding the Baby?* (1978), and Spence's subsequent solo-project, *Beyond the Family Album,* which was first exhibited at the Hayward Gallery, London, in June 1979 as part of 'Three Perspectives on Photography'. Spence described the project as an attempt to better comprehend how one's subjective view of themselves and others is produced and hierarchised through the circulation of visual and rhetorical representations in the public sphere.[46] By mining her family album, and producing staged self-portraits, Spence made herself the subject of the camera's gaze, thereby circumventing the potentially objectivising relationship between the photographer and their subject/other. In the studio practises that emerged from this moment, concerns about how otherness has been inscribed upon the body of raced and gendered subjects came to assume priority over and above the issue of class. And, as Duncan Forbes has pointed out, by 1982, *Camerawork* – from which Spence and Dennett had been expelled c1978 – was now largely devoted to the issue of identity politics.[47]

The second strand of photography premised its claims for legitimacy on the sustained nature of a photographer's interaction with the communities they encountered and the collaborative nature of the work that that encounter generated, leading to the assumed moral and ethical primacy of so-called "community photography". As Su Braden asserts in 'Subject and Predicate', the opening chapter of her little known 1983 volume *Committing Photography*, as the relationship between the photographer and their subject/s, the work and its audience have increasingly become the site of scrutiny, so the issue of a subject's self-representation through access to and, supposedly, empowerment as a consequence of, the camera, has become paramount. 'The ideal form for community development and learning to take', Braden opines, 'is surely that in

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[46] See: Jo Spence, 'Visual Autobiography: Beyond the Family Album' (in.) Jo Spence (ed.) *Putting Myself in the Picture* (London: Camden Press, 1986a), pp.82-97.
[47] The circumstances of Spence and Dennett's expulsion from *Camerawork* are unclear. It is thought that members of the editorial committee found Spence's stance too political and were increasingly disinterested in the question of class. When *Camerawork* was relaunched in 1980, Forbes notes, it emphasised its commitment to the "political category" of representation and there was increasingly a divorce between academics (by now the journal's principal contributors) and activists. Duncan Forbes in conversation with Sarah James & Siona Wilson, 'The Reception of Worker Photography and the New Documentary Culture in Britain' (in) Jorge Ribalta, op. cit., 2015, pp.63-4.

which a group of people initiate the process using outside technical help to meet the needs they themselves have defined'.[48] She queries:

> What kind of collaboration can there be between photographer and photographed which will ensure that the person behind the camera is not appropriating the identity of the person in front of the lens? What structures are there which encourage participation in the process of production and publication of photographic images and ensure that cultural identity is not forever determined by the demands of big capital? … If the initiative is not to result in a cultural invasion, overpowering, subjugating and even perhaps wiping out the cultural world of the recipients, *the photographers/interveners must be prepared to become integrated participants in the cultural concerns and values of those in whose worlds they are operating.*[49]

It is certainly the case that such projects are preferable, ethically, to the "point and shoot" methodology of earlier documentary projects such as Humphrey Spender's *Mass Observation* work. However, "collaboration" should not be the only or even the primary yardstick against which the success of social documentary practice is measured. Putting the camera in the hands of the other is not, in and of itself, socially or politically transformative. We cannot assume that because a photographer gives a subject a camera and teaches them how to use it, that the work they produce will automatically be political or unproblematic. This assumption is not only deeply reductive, but it satisfies the liberal end, to borrow from Stephanie Schwartz, of 'the simple celebration of left politics'.[50] We cannot assume the camera's capacity to account for the politics of those by whom it is wielded. Nor can we assume – as the "First Man's" transcript demonstrates – that a subject's political affiliation is guaranteed by their class status.[51] Too much "community photography" has been produced in the absence of any serious dialecticism. In order to make room for Exit's project within the history of British documentary, it is necessary to first problematise both the assumptions surrounding the "politics" of so-called community photography and poststructuralism's foreclosure of social documentary practices.

As Tagg confessed in *The Burden of Representation*, his critique of photography's implication in the reproduction of pre-existing power relations is unduly pessimistic. 'Because power is relational', he concedes 'there is no power without resistance', power thus necessarily foments countervailing discourses. If the reader can comprehend that power is not synonymous with its "terminal forms", then we can imagine critical or oppositional possibilities.[52] Tagg is disinterested in describing for the reader what these

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[48] Su Braden, *Committing Photography* (London: Pluto, 1983), p.69.
[49] My emphasis. Ibid., pp.2&13-5.
[50] Stephanie Schwartz, 'Writing After', *Oxford Art Journal*, 2015, Vol 38(1), p.8.
[51] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987, p.20.
[52] John Tagg, op. cit., 1988, p.93.

new strategic possibilities might mean in practice. However, since Tagg describes documentary as power's terminal form, we might assume that this other way of mobilising photography precludes realist modalities. Yet, Tagg's particular history of photography is fundamentally limited by the fact that he only deals with the nexus of disciplinary intuitions that developed during the nineteenth century as well as the state sponsored work of the Farm Security Administration produced in United States during the Depression. By failing to attend to, or account for how non-institutional or state-governed projects and practitioners have attempted to intervene in, or disrupt hegemonic information systems, Tagg engenders the flattening out of documentary practices. As John Roberts' crucially posits in *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography, and the Everyday*, we need a dialogical theory of documentary that is simultaneously attentive to the performative nature of meaning, while withstanding the temptation to homogenise realist practices or the question of audience.[53]

The dialogical approach to documentary realism described by Robert's has, since the 2007-8 global financial crisis, assumed a hitherto unprecedented sense of urgency among left-wing scholars in search of the historical origins of our reactionary present. Prominent documentary theorists such as Steve Edwards and Ribalta have turned to the 1970s – to a moment when, to quote Edwards, the 'stakes of documentary mattered' – in an attempt to bring into visibility the political documentary work that was deemed inherently problematic in poststructuralism's wake and thus unworthy of critical attention. 'In our own moment of increased anti-capitalist and anti-militarist activism, when attention is again falling on global-labour practices, particularly those associated with migrants and women's precarious labour', Edwards writes in 'The Fire Last Time: Documentary and Politics in 1970's Britain', 'it seems like an opportune moment to revisit the last attempt to combine Left politics and documentary photography'.[54] Indeed, he argues, if the rejection of social documentary was not inevitable but, in fact, the form that the flight from class politics took within the field of representation, it compounded that departure by eradicating the urgent conditions for dialogic struggle.[55] Through a close reading of the documentary projects produced during the 1970s and 1980s and

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[53] John Roberts, op. cit., 1997, p.161.
[54] Steve Edwards, 'Undocumented: "Intensification, Contraction and Localization", part 1 of the series 'The Fire Last Time: Documentary and Politics in 1970s Britain', *Still Searching*, Foto Museum blog, available online at https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/explore/still-searching/articles/31236_undocumented_intensification_contraction_and_localization (21/07/2019).
[55] Ibid.

by attending to their complexity, I want to recognise the dialogism of Leftist social documentary in order to attest to its politics.

Exit were not naive to, or unaware of, poststructuralist critiques of documentary, and in particular, their critique of liberal humanist practices. As the 'Preface' to *Survival Programmes* attests, Exit were fundamentally aware that documentary is a historically codified practice. The book's opening statement reads: 'Documentary photographers have traditionally been concerned with "the human condition". But to document its condition is not to explain it. The condition is a symptom, not a cause; more precisely, it is the outcome of a process' (*Survival*, 7). Here Exit explicate not only the urgent Leftist imperative to reveal the structural nature of social inequality, but the need to treat documentary as a practice, the American artist and theorist Martha Rosler contemporaneously stressed, with a past.[56] But also, and this is crucial, with a *future.* What I propose in this thesis is that Exit mobilise documentary, in spite and in full consciousness of, the limits that have been imposed upon it historically. The fact that *Survival Programmes* is a photobook that combines words and images (something that is, it seems, all too often forgotten by exhibition curators) demonstrates that Exit did not believe in the capacity of photography to account, in and of itself, for politics.[57] Instead, Exit turn to the contextualising possibilities of the photobook in order to produce meaning. Through the careful selection and sequencing of photographs, and through the juxtaposition of images and text, Exit make the socio-economic and political contradictions implicit in Thatcher's project perspicuous and, in doing so, they make *Survival Programmes* function toward the mediation of *difference*. Contra to Tagg's assertion that "realism" fixes its subjects in position at the point of transparency, thereby negating the possibility of disestablishing social positionality, I argue that through the interrelation of image and text, in *Survival Programmes,* differences are held in play, or, as the case may be, in tension. Realism, as it is mobilised by Exit, does not fix its

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[56] Martha Rosler, 'In, Around and Afterthoughts (On Documentary Photography)' (in) *Martha Rosler: 3 Works* (1st ed., 1981, Halifax, N.S.: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2006), p.73.

[57] Stephanie Schwartz, 'This Ain't the Swiss Family Robinson', *Photoworks 20*, October 2013, p.152. Exhibitions of Exit's project continually abstract the photographs from the wider context of the book. The recent exhibition at the Centre de la Imatge in Barcelona entitled 'Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities' professed, on the gallery's website, to present the first exhibition "in full" of *Survival Programmes*. Unlike previous exhibitions, the Centre de la Imatge did preface the images by reproducing the book's 'Preface' and 'Introduction' on the gallery wall. However, only a handful of the transcripts were reproduced, and the images were presented in the typical "white cube" format. This decontextualised treatment of the images stripped the project of its complexity. For the exhibition blurb see: http://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/lavirreina/en/exhibitions/survival-programmes/341 (accessed 05/08/2019).

subjects "in place" but suspends them within a chain of sliding signifiers that is, in itself, indicative of the deeply unstable nature of class identities during this period.

By thinking through difference, Exit reveal the instability of the category working-class and its economic signifier: poverty. With the abandonment of the post-war settlement and, with it, William Beveridge's vision of full employment and a 'nation free from want', by the mid-1970s the monolithic, supposedly coherent category "working-class" – itself, Sheila De Cuyper writes, never an actuality – was becoming progressively harder to identify and contain.[58] For entire communities in the industrial North, South Wales and Scotland, deindustrialisation, Seabrook explained, had landed a blow 'against the one thing which, it was always assumed, would never be superseded – the working function of the working classes'.[59] Meanwhile in Britain's inner cities, the scarcity of jobs and lack of adequate housing caused racial tensions between Britain's white working-class and their black and Asian counterparts to foment. Cramped Victorian terrace houses and miners' cottages were demolished, only to be replaced by what Blair famously described in 1998 as "sink estates".[60] As the economy shifted in the direction of the service industry, a new "feminised" workforce was born that was principally based around part-time shift work, while the legislative decimation of the trade union movement further undermined the nation's assumptions about regular and secure employment.

Consequently, by the mid-1970s the Left's appeal to the 'traditional Labour voter', otherwise understood to mean the white male (industrial) labourer, was increasingly anachronistic and the Left had come to look increasingly as if it was caught nostalgically in archaic cultural forms, failing to imagine socialism in a vernacular or image relevant to the "ordinary" folks of the late twentieth century.[61] It follows that those who cannot see themselves reflected in the Left's homogenising mirror – those, for example, who are without work, or who are different by dint of their race and/or gender, cannot properly belong. When writing in the wake of Thatcher, it quickly becomes evident that the term working-class is ideologically and discursively overdetermined; it is at the same

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[58] Sheila *De Cuyper, 'On the Future of Photographic Representation in Anthropology: Lessons from the Practice of Community Photography in Britain', Visual Anthropology Review, September 1997, Vol.13(2), p.9.*
[59] Jeremy Seabrook, *Unemployment* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), p.xiii.
[60] Tony Blair (cited in) Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p.99.
[61] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987, p.20.

time both too straitened and too nebulous to account for the specificities of the post-industrial, post-colonial era.

As Exit confessed in a Project Report for the Gulbenkian Foundation, the process of dislodging, dismantling and reworking common conceptualisations of "poverty" is acutely difficult when those representational tropes and terminologies are themselves already ideologically charged. As the letter demonstrates, Exit were acutely aware of how language produces meaning in ways that are both unstable and culturally and ideologically determined. The despondent letter opens with the following admission:

> Initially, now over a year ago, we had hoped to present a conclusive, collective, report that would help redefine poverty, deprivation and community development in the inner city areas of G[reat] B[ritain]. A work that would be a force towards change and understanding of some of the fundamental problems facing society today. In these terms the report must be considered a failure, although in its own terms, which have arisen from a constant redefinition of the aims in the face of the difficulties that we met, it need not be considered as such.[62]

The group's stated aim, to 'redefine poverty, deprivation and community development', attests to the extent to which the public's understanding of these terms had, at this moment, been rendered problematic. 'The first major problem', they observe, 'is one of definition. What actually constitutes poverty[?]'. This intractable question, which has preoccupied sociologists and political thinkers since the Industrial Revolution, forms the crux of Exit's project. 'Consider poverty alone', Exit suggest, 'superficially the definition is easy, the Government has done it for us by drawing up standards of income [the 'poverty line'] below which it considers people to be living in poverty'. Yet such absolute definitions, Exit make clear, are profoundly inadequate. They explain:

> One person may feel deprived under conditions [in] which another feels proud. An example of this is housing… whereas some are appalled [by their housing] and only wish to move to a better area, others find it entirely suitable and are offended at the suggestion that it is otherwise. This problem, the disparity between official definition and personal experience was a major feature and source of confusion during the project, because there was always the conflict between what we felt ought to be the case and the reality of the situation. This manifest[s] itself in the tendency to ask leading questions designed (not necessarily consciously) to make people conform to their classification, and looking for photographs that illustrated this conformity.[63]

The passage underscores the extent to which a person's comprehension of how underemployment is lived and experienced is at the same time both predetermined by, and inhibited because of, extant representations of that socio-economic condition.

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[62] Exit Photography Group, 'Project Report' (c1980), SURVIVAL/1/1, Survival Programmes: Exit Photography Group, Library Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics, London, n/p.
[63] Exit Photography Group, op. cit., c1980, n/p.

Consequently, the problem of representing the urban underemployed is twofold: it necessitates dealing not only with the experiences of underemployment and immigration themselves, but with how they have been represented, or mediated, by those in power. Historically, on both the Left and the Right, 'the poor' have been made, through the media's use of codified images and discursive systems, the subjects of pity, disdain and nostalgia. Yet, as Exit reveal, the effects of historically conceived, subsequently entrenched 'truths' about what it means to live in the absence of a sufficient income are so potent that they effect a tendency on the part of the photographer to make people consonant with classifications that are already entirely inadequate.

My attempt to deal with documentary representations of the less acceptable face of capitalism has been perpetually frustrated by these deeply problematic designations. This thesis will ask whether or not it is possible to work outside of these unsatisfactory visual and verbal categories, when such extant representations determine the way that we think about the problem of underemployment in the UK. Is it possible to avoid the trap of merely reproducing problematic stereotypes of "the poor" or "the other"; that is, of re-presenting what we have been taught by the media and by those in power 'ought to be the case', as opposed to the lived reality of a situation?

Whilst operating within the limits of our established lexis, it is extremely hard to think of a language to describe "poverty" that avoids notions of lack. That said, as Hall once conceded and as Exit Photography Group were evidently aware, 'you have to get into that game or you will never say anything at all'. After all, Hall eloquently notes:

> You have to be positioned somewhere in order to speak. Even if you are positioned in order to unposition yourself, even if you want to take it back, you have to come into language to get out of it. There is no other way. That is the paradox of meaning.[64]

Thus, in spite the of obvious limitations of the terminologies at hand, in this thesis I will, wherever possible, employ Exit's designation 'the less acceptable face of capitalism' or the term 'underemployed' to refer to the social demographic that this project investigates. Taking into consideration the major societal shifts that took place during the period in question, these designations enable me to draw a distinction between the "traditional working-class" (i.e. those in employment who received an adequate income) and those who are either unemployed, or earn a wage insufficient to attain a minimum

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[64] Stuart Hall, 'New and Old Identities, New and Old Ethnicities' (in) Anthony King (ed.) *Culture, Globalization and the World-system: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997b), p.51.

acceptable standard of living. I assert that greater linguistic specificity will enable the reader to better comprehend exactly how Thatcherism was mobilised through discourse, while at the same time allowing me to mount a critique of alienating stereotypes of "poorness". While acknowledging the inadequacy of the term 'underemployed' (the prefix "under" is inevitably hierarchising) and that this thesis will, like Exit's project, be full of slippages – that it will be open to the 'infinite semiosis of meaning'[65] – I nonetheless trust that the reader will, having perused the introduction, consider my use of that inescapably problematic term as always cautious and never fully resolved.

Like *Survival Programmes,* this thesis is a refusal of the chronological and it does not claim to provide a cohesive or conclusive study of the period in question. Rather, it seeks to think through the history of photography and to consider the implications and impact that that history – and the writing of histories more generally – has had in shaping our present moment. Accordingly, I treat history, and how it has been written, as an entity that is inextricably bound up with the present. Thusly, this thesis takes up Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho's assertion in *Thatcher and After,* that the urgent goal of our present moment is to 'restore a Thatcherite past to the present to provide strategies and opportunities to resist, in the present, however belatedly, Thatcherism's all-pervasive politics'.[66] After all, we are living through what Raymond Williams so famously described as a long (meaning, *yet to be realised*) revolution.[67]

In the spirit of the rhythms and discursive mechanisms through which *Survival Programmes* unfurls, I have chosen to organise my thesis into three non-discrete, interrelated chapters that pursue the multifarious and complexly interlaced thematic strands that emerge from the book's pages. By taking the socio-political contradictions produced on the page through the juxtaposition of photographs and text, I treat *Survival Programmes,* as I have already noted, as a guide for thinking with, or for thinking *through,* allowing the book to determine the issues that this thesis seeks to explore.

In Chapter One I consider how Leftist documentarians have engaged with history and the history of representation in their work as a means of thinking through notions of continuity and rupture. Central to my investigation of documentary and temporality will be a discussion of monochrome and how Exit's purposeful suppression of colour

[65] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1997b, p.51.
[66] Hadley and Ho, op. cit., p.22.
[67] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with Chatto & Windus, 1965).

functions, politically, to codify history. This chapter will engage with documentary work produced during the 1930s through the prism of its "reinvention" and repetition during the 1970s. I ask: what is the political currency of maintaining documentary's colourless?[68]

In Chapter Two I build on the questions raised in the first chapter and explore how the nation has been 'invented' and reinvented through the various channels of the media. I begin the Chapter by analysing a single, close-up shot of a television screen that bears an image of Queen Elizabeth II's jubilee. By situating this image within the wider context of the photobook, I argue that *Survival Programmes* functions as a prism through which to contest notions of "Britishness", or, more specifically, "Englishness". I examine the rise of the New Right and consider how Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech was mobilised and materialised by and in the media as a means of furthering Thatcher's project. I discuss how the pervasive effects of the media's xenophobic rhetoric manifests among the pages of *Survival Programmes* and how immigration was represented in the mass media more broadly. What was at stake, for Exit, in reproducing what are, at times, deeply contentious transcripts? How might the polyvocal nature of Exit's project function politically, as a means of contesting the tabloid's version of "crisis"?

In my final chapter, I perform a close analysis of the first double page spread included in *Survival Programmes* in order to draw to the surface questions about being a subject who is both classed and gendered. In turn, I use these questions to scrutinise Jo Spence's *Mother Work* (1982-1986). In this, my Third Chapter, I interrogate poststructuralist histories of documentary and argue that issues pertaining to the othering of classed and gendered subjects are inextricable within Spence's practice. I note that, having gathered pace during the 1970s, by the 1980s poststructuralist anxieties about the moral and coercive consequences of photographing the "other" had become the established norm. Consequently, for many on the Left, raising a camera to the working-class became impermissible. If art histories that deal with representations of class and gender have almost always been bifurcated, then during the 1980s, the former concern was written out of representation, or so the history goes. Spence's *Mother Work* puts pressure on our documentary histories. If, for poststructuralist theorists, the economic other was no longer an acceptable photographic subject, then

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[68] Sally Stein uses the terms 'colorfull' and 'colorless' to set up her debate about chroma in: Sally Stein, 'The Rhetoric of the Colorfull and the Colorless: American Photography and Material Culture between the Wars' (Unpublished PhD thesis: Yale University, 1991).

how do we account for Spence's work, and her principal subject, her underemployed mother? In this chapter I am interested in thinking about how Spence's *Mother Work* blurs the dichotomy between the self and the other and the photographer and *photographed* and how this complicates poststructuralism's attempt to foreclose social documentary practices. Through the prism of Spence's project and the transcripts of working-class women included in *Survival Programmes*, I ask what it means to live as a classed and gendered subject when being "written off" – or *written-out* of representation – is a precondition of that subject's very existence? How might this erasure be countered?

Chapter One

Towards a Politics of Chroma: Colourlessness in the 1970s

Through an exploration of Exit Photography Group's project and the work produced by collectives surrounding the radical journal *Camerawork*, this chapter will consider how debates concerning continuity and rupture, temporality and immediacy, anteriority and urgency have been played out through a politics of chroma. Although I will begin and conclude this chapter with a polychromatic project produced during the 1980s – namely, Nick Waplington's photobook *Living Room* (pub. 1991) – this discussion is not so much about the "shock" of colour photography in the eighties, but the political and ideological rationale for colourlessness in the seventies.[69] By working backwards from the apparent "advent" of colour documentary in the 1980s, it is my contention that by assuming monochrome's neutrality, we have stripped the decision made by Leftward leaning practitioners to work in black and white of its politics. In reading documentary projects for their content instead of their form, we have read their politics incorrectly.

Too often, Raymond Williams argues in *The Long Revolution* (1961), we fail to see cultural production in its original terms. However, by recontextualising a work and repositioning it within its period, we can make 'interpretation *conscious* by showing historical alternatives'. This allows us, Williams avers, 'to relate the interpretation to the particular contemporary values on which it rests' and by exploring the patterns that emerge and the relationships between artworks and the forms they take, we are confronted with the 'real nature' of the representational choices that have been made across history.[70] Thus, if we are to understand *why* the reorientation of documentary towards colour in the eighties proved so contentious, we must first understand the cultural logic that motivated the use of black and white in the seventies.

Colour in the Eighties

Speaking in reference to *Living Room*, Nick Waplington elucidated his project thus: 'I'm a middle-class boy from Surrey who wanted to show the warmth of a working-class

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[69] As noted in the introduction, for the term "colourlessness" I am indebted to Sally Stein whose unpublished thesis 'The Rhetoric of the Colorful and the Colorless', greatly informed this chapter. See: Sally Stein, 'The Rhetoric of the Colorfull and the Colorless: American Photography and Material Culture between the Wars' (Unpublished PhD Thesis: Yale University, 1991).

[70] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with Chatto & Windus, 1965), p.69.

family, and make work with less distance, and a sense of humour, that showed the best in people' (fig. 1.1).[71] Shot over a duration of five years, between 1987-1991, at a time when jobs for the working-classes were being systematically stripped from British society by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, *Living Room* records the lives of two unemployed families living on the Broxtowe estate in Nottingham; the estate is where Waplington's father had grown up, and his grandfather continued to reside. In brilliant colour, Waplington chronicles quotidian moments from the families' attempts to subsist in the absence of a self-generated income. Providing a rare glimpse into the curtained-off space of the home, he makes visible the typically *invisible* experience of unemployment. We see the day-to-day activities that occupy the otherwise unstructured week: inevitable moments of lethargy and laughter, of boredom and frustration, and of sombre contemplation (fig. 1.2 & 1.3). Notably, by the time *Weddings, Parties, Anything* – the sequel to *Living Room* – was published in 1996, unemployment among the heads of households on Nottingham's most deprived estates, Broxtowe among them, had reached over sixty percent.[72]

As we leaf through the book's pages we are confronted with a glut of tawdry objects and fleshy bodies. Here, the permanence of the living room, a fixed point in both space and time, exists in contrast to the transience of its many inhabitants: neighbours drop by to borrow pints of milk, mothers-in-law overstay their welcomes and kids arrive *en-masse* for birthday parties. With his 6 x 9 camera, Waplington captures these chaotic cycles of influx and exodus at equally unruly angles, with blurred focus and an emphasis on skewed shots of both floor and ceiling (fig. 1.4 & 1.5). As viewers we are disallowed distance. Pushing, pulling, tugging, heaving, stretched and suspended bodies overwhelm the pictorial surface. In extreme close ups, our view of unfolding events is obscured beneath blurred masses. Hazy patches of brilliant red, cream and pastel blue index the bodies of tiny children who, in their curiosity, have ventured too close to the camera's lens (fig. 1.6). Elsewhere, overweight, ingesting and scantily clad bodies fall through space, collapse in space and space collapses in on itself. Registered in lurid hues, kitsch patterns, flimsy cardboard boxes, litter, 'Bacofoil', bare flesh, taut fabric and fag butts saturate our vision.

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[71] Nick Waplington (cited in) Michael Grieve, 'Work in Progress', *British Journal of Photography*, May 2015, p.51.
[72] Angela Brennan, John Rhodes & Peter Tyler, 'The Nature of Local Area Social Exclusion in England and the Role of the Labour Market', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 2000, Vol. 16, No.1, p.139.

This sense of absolute proximity is reflected in the way *Living Room* is organised. There is no front matter. Instead, the book begins with an uncaptioned photograph that all but fills the white, unnumbered page (fig. 1.7). The image depicts an extended family in their living room, relaxing and at play. From the photographer's vantage point, literally and metaphorically "on the ground", forms appear magnified. The horizon line – the point at which floor meets wall – is disorientatingly high, and much of the image is given over to the carpeted floor, which is stained in areas and littered with detritus. To the left of the image a rotund woman draped in a long white nightgown reclines on the sofa. At her feet, her children play. A young girl seated on a maroon cushion in the centre of the room stares directly at the camera. Still, as her siblings shift around her, her folded arms rest upon her knees while her tongue absentmindedly explores the corner of her mouth. To her right, striped slippers and a pair of folded legs indicate an adult couple whose torsos are positioned just out of frame. In the foreground and out of focus, a fourth small child lies on his back as he intently inspects his hands. His body is nestled between Waplington's legs which are identifiable by a pair of large, trainer-clad feet that frame the child's torso. As the eye moves from one figure to the next – from the reclining mother on the left, to her children, to the anonymous figures on the right, and then to the foreground and the small boy, and finally to the photographer himself – the viewer traverses what John Berger describes in the book's accompanying essay, 'Means to Live', as a 'magic circle'; a configuration that unifies the family, and Waplington, within the intimate space of the living room.[73]

Seven more images follow, each of which occupies a full page, before the title page, which is accompanied on the facing page by a dedication. Inscribed beneath a wallet-sized photograph of Waplington's bespectacled grandfather are the following words: 'This work is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Walter, without whose help it would not have been possible' (figs. 1.8). The inscription is signed with the initials 'N.W'. Notable for its size, this small photograph, an image that might be cradled in the palm of one's hand, conveys a sense of intimacy. Indeed, it is through Walter's portrait that Waplington's own family passes into the field of vision. While in images such as the opening photograph and, notably, photographs in which Waplington turns the camera on himself, the photographer also enters the picture plane. Although his presence is invariably truncated, it is nonetheless deliberate. In his search for immediacy in the face of mediation, Waplington becomes the subject of his own project. At a moment when

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[73] John Berger, 'Means to Live' (in) Nick Waplington, *Living Room* (Manchester: Cornerhouse Publications, 1991), n/p.

the designation "working-class" had lost what Stuart Hall has described as its 'stabilising force', Waplington's intimate examination of his own class and familial history forms part of a fraught identity struggle.[74] By collapsing his own family history into the history of the estate, Waplington – a child who is *of*, if not actually *from* the estate – aligns himself with the families that he records. As his assertion that he wanted to 'make work with less distance' implies, Waplington intended *Living Room* as a corrective to the debased images of Britain's economically precarious classes that made the less acceptable face of capitalism appear radically other.

In fact, it is precisely Waplington's proximity to his subjects, his apparent lack of embarrassment and the ostensible absence of a selective photographic filter that have been hailed by Waplington's champions as the means through which he was able, Michael Grieve reasons, to 'show life honestly, [and] without condescension'.[75] Justin Spring reiterates this view, evocatively asserting that it is Waplington's 'complete lack of irony or distance from the subjects that makes these pictures so incredibly beautiful'.[76] While Berger notes that: 'what is remarkable about Nick Waplington's photographs is the special way in which they make the intimate something public'; making visible the once sacrosanct private realm of the home.[77] The title *Living Room* is significant because it foregrounds the dislocation of the public sphere from the realm of the street, and its relocation within the home. This underscores the increasing politicisation of the domestic sphere and that space's aesthetics under neoliberalism. In fact, how neoliberalism impacted the production of space during the 1970s and 1980s is an issue that runs throughout this thesis and is central to my discussion of race and the media in Chapter Two.

Despite his desire to negate the distance between the viewer and subject – between the project's bourgeois audience and their underemployed "others" – the politics of Waplington's project feel precarious. Like much of the colour work produced during the 1980s and 1990s, *Living Room* elicits contentious reactions. The overbearing presence in Waplington's work of swollen bodies surrounded by sweet wrappers and stained tissues is all too often interpreted as a gross illustration of the inflated tropes of Thatcherism. David Lee's vitriolic critique of the *subjects* photographed by Martin Parr in his near-contemporaneous project *The Last Resort* (1986) demonstrates the deeply

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[74] Stuart Hall, 1997b, p.45.
[75] Michael Grieve, op. cit., p.51.
[76] Justin Spring, 'Nick Waplington', *Art Forum*, Jan 1992, Issue 30, p.101.
[77] John Berger, op. cit.

problematic tendency to critique a photographer's subjects themselves, as opposed to his or her choice of subject matter, composition or photographic *form* (fig. 1.9). As Lee argues, in an article that appeared in the August 1986 edition of *Art Review*:

> I wish that I could summon up genuine indignation to contest a view [of Parr's work] that will doubtlessly be interpreted by some as a malicious and despicable travesty of the already badly exploited. But it isn't; Parr's bitter insight merely *records* the humiliating and regrettable surrender of many people in Mrs Thatcher's Britain to circumstances which they have unwittingly conspired to create and which are now thought to be beyond their control.[78]

For Lee, Parr's images prove his subjects' ignorance. But it is not the holidaymakers of New Brighton Beach, Liverpool, that are the issue in Parr's work. Rather, the problem is Parr's deeply cynical vision and his brash and abrasive use of unadulterated colour.

Of course, *Living Room* and *The Last Resort* are vastly different projects*;* Waplington's study is about intimacy and immediacy, not irreconcilable, insurmountable *difference*, as is the case with Parr's work which is born of the 'point and shoot' school of documentary. Yet, the ambiguity of Waplington's project nevertheless renders his subjects vulnerable. As opposed to proffering an intimate portrait that subverts the derogatory mythologies of the media, Waplington's work inadvertently gives an image to the Thatcherite folk-devil of the "undeserving poor". On approaching Waplington's images, the viewer all too often feels like an outsider, a curious spectator – a fly on the living room wall – observing "How the Other Half Lives".[79] It is a familiar, yet slightly off-kilter world where children (God forbid!) eat their food off the floor as opposed to seated at the dinner table.

Waplington's frank proximity to, and intimacy with, the families he records represents a startling departure from, or refusal of, the terms of political instrumentality that had developed in Britain during the inter-war years, and were 'reinvented' during the 1970s.[80] The black and white photographs taken by the Worker Photography Movement in the thirties and collectives such as Photography Workshop, Amber and Exit Photography Group during the seventies, recorded, in steely hues, the struggle to subsist against the juggernaut of unemployment that ravaged both those decades.

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[78] My emphasis. David Lee, 'Photography', *Art Review,* 15-29 August 1986, pp.440-1.

[79] I evoke this phrase ironically, to recall and critique Jacob Riss' deeply paternalistic project of the same name that represented the inhabitants of New York tenements as the abject other. See: Jacob Riis*, How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Poor* (London, New York: Sampson Low & Co, 1891). For a critique of Riis' project see: Su Braden, op. cit. & Martha Rosler, op. cit., pp.61-93.

[80] My use of the term 'reinvented' is a nod to Allan Sekula's essay 'Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary, op. cit., 1978.

By placing an image from Exit Photography Group's corpus alongside the opening image from *Living Room,* the shift in mood between the 1970s and 1980s is thrown into sharp relief (fig. 1.10). Exit's photograph was captured in 1975 and depicts an extended family in the living room of their council flat in Everton, Liverpool.[81] In terms of their subject matter, the photographs bear a striking resemblance to one another. Both families are un- or underemployed. Both domestic spaces feel over-crowded, and the décor of Waplington's living room is reminiscent of Exit's Everton interior; the floral upholstery of the settee in the former image echoes the bold geometric wallpaper of the latter. Likewise, both rooms are littered with detritus and discarded food wrappers. In the immediate foreground of Exit's photograph, a crumpled sheet of greaseproof paper is the residual evidence of a fish and chips supper. Yet, despite the similar subject matter and composition of the photographs, the tone of the images is markedly different. When compared with the quite sobriety of Exit's photograph, Waplington's noisy images signify a dramatic departure from the seriousness of the politically engaged work produced during the previous decade. Subsequently, it is easy to write this project off, as many have done.

Yet, the moral or ethical implications of Waplington's decision to wilfully disregard middle-class mores and notions of 'respectability' need not be rehashed. As I argued in the Introduction, poststructuralist debates about the moral or ethical status of a photograph's subject matter have already taken up too much space in debates about documentary, and besides, such debates tell us little about the history of photography. Thus, while acknowledging the undoubtedly contentious nature of Waplington's representational departure, in this chapter I want to take his claim for immediacy seriously because it carves out a problem within the history of documentary. The problem is not voyeurism or objectification, as many histories of this moment have argued. It is, as I have already stated, the naturalisation of the monochromatic image. What is so obviously disturbing about Waplington's photographs – seen and not seen – is colour. It is colour, as a transgression of documentary convention, that is "vulgar" here.

By taking the monochromatic aesthetic for granted, we have failed to recognise that the privileging of black and white in the 1970s was deliberate. If we reconceptualise the

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[81] This photograph is from the *Survival Programmes* archive, it is not included in Exit's book although another image of the Everton family is included in *Survival Programmes* (*Survival*, p.77).

colourlessness of photography in the 1970s as an outcome of choice, or what Williams has described as "selective tradition", then we can position *Living Room* within an alternative critical history.[82] This history of chroma and its temporalities, I argue, opens up broader questions pertaining to how we have come to imagine underemployment through images. My questions are these: How are political positions inscribed though the ordering of chromatic surfaces? What were the stakes involved in maintaining an ideologically "coloured", or rather *colourless* image of the under-employed in the seventies? And finally: What, if anything, does monochrome signify that colour cannot? What at least seems clear is that, for the Left during the 1970s, the production of political images of the less acceptable face of capitalism was achieved at the expense of colour.

Dispelling the Myth of Documentary's Colourlessness

How monochrome manifests the interests of the Left in Britain during the seventies is a complex question that has thus far been largely overlooked in prevailing histories of British photography. This is primarily a result of the assumption that polychrome photo-technologies were unavailable to social documentarians during that decade. Yet these eighties-centric narratives of technological progress are easily undermined by instances of so-called "early" colour work. Peter Mitchell's *Memento Mori* is prominent amongst such projects. Captured on the condemned Quarry Hill estate in Leeds during the seventies, *Memento Mori* records the estate's demolition through a set of incongruously vivid photographs of gutted buildings, their exterior walls stripped away to reveal a series of evacuated interiors (fig. 1.11). In 1972, Daniel Meadows and Martin Parr captured Butlin's holiday camp in Filey, Yorkshire, in an array of lurid hues (fig. 1.12). Seven years prior, during the summer of 1965, Shirley Baker ventured onto the streets of Manchester and Salford, her camera loaded with Kodachrome colour slide film, to capture the vestiges of the area's Victorian housing stock (figs. 1.13). Meanwhile, the brilliant reds and deep purples that dapple the otherwise beige surfaces of Phyllis Nicklin's survey investigation of post-war reconstruction in Birmingham city centre and its sprawling suburbs attest to the use of polychrome for documentary purposes as early as 1953 (fig.1.14). Despite the relative scarcity of these projects and their somewhat disparate subject matter, these instances of colour work are important because they destabilise our technologically determined histories of photography, revealing instead

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[82] Raymond Williams, op. cit., 1961, p.61.

the deliberate suppression of colour documentary outside the commercial sphere during the 1970s.[83]

Yet it is not simply the case that extant polychromatic work was written out of documentary history. Rather, monochrome became so naturalised as a representational modality, that, almost without exception, photographers shied away from using colour altogether. The marginalisation of polychrome images of the working-class was so complete that the nation's collective cultural memory of the 1970s is registered in monochrome. In fact, when Meadows and Parr exhibited their Butlin's work at Impressions Gallery in November 1972, with the exception of a small, mounted compilation of four polychrome photographs, their colour negatives were all printed in monochrome.[84] The antipathy toward colour was so well established in Britain that among prolific photography collectives concerned with recording working-class life, such as the Newcastle based Amber Film and Photography Collective, the suppression of colour persisted well into the 1980s. In fact, Amber maintained a largely colourless aesthetic until the late 1990s, with only a handful of polychromatic images produced before that date. Perhaps tellingly, those images were, in general, the output of international photographers. While it would be easy to explain away the absence of colour from oppositional documentary practices on the grounds that it was unaffordable or unworkable, it would be an oversight to insist that the decision to work in monochrome was purely dictated by practical limits. Indeed, in her instructive pedagogical essays, Jo Spence continually insisted upon the affordability of colour film, countering the assumption that polychrome film was too expensive. In 'Photography, Ideology, Education', a primer for community documentary practices printed in a 1976 issue of *Screen Education,* Spence and Terry Dennett assert that:

> If it all sounds… highly expensive, we can say that it isn't… costs will not overload a budget. Current costs of 100ft of Ektachrome [colour] film is about £18 if you can get an

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[83] For such technologically determined histories see: David Mellor, *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2007). For a counter argument see: Paul Graham, 'Past Caring: an interview with Paul Graham', *Creative Camera*, February 1986, pp.22-3. In the interview, Graham asserts that his colour work dates from 1976. *Past Caring* (1984-5) was not, as it is often made to seem, his first encounter with colour. (In the article the project is titled *Past Caring*, it has subsequently been retitled, and is more commonly referred to as *Beyond Caring*.) In relation to the filmic image, in his essay *Machines of the Visible*, Jean Louis Comolli deconstructs the notion of technological determinism, arguing for the *socially determined* nature of technological processes. See: Jean Louis Comolli, 'Machines of the Visible' (in) Teresa de Lauretis & Stephen Heath (eds), *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp.121-42.
[84] Daniel Meadows recalls how the Butlin's project was re/presented for the gallery in monochrome in a short film available at: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015 /sep/25/daniel-meadows-photography-society-ordinary-butlins (accessed 08/08/2019).

educational discount, plus costs of processing at a reliable colour laboratory. Colour prints can later be made from the slides from about 30p each for postcard size.[85]

What this demonstrates is that the colourlessness of documentary in the seventies was by design.

As David Chandler has argued, in the twenty-first century it is hard to comprehend just how contentious the 'apparently simple *addition* of colour' to the photographic image was in Britain during the 1980s. In fact, the shift toward colour was met with bitter resistance by photographers and theorists alike. They saw polychrome as indicative of a troubling departure from the rigorous work of the 1970s in favour of an "art" preoccupied with the formal ordering of the pictorial surface, the arrangement of desperate hues and the search for "telling" contrasts.[86] Colour was considered an aesthetic embellishment; a non-essential, extricable addition that was added *on to*, or *on-top-of* the "real" pictorial content of the photograph itself.[87] Symbolic, so the paradigmatic narrative of formalist criticism goes, of aesthetic excess, colour was pegged, like modernism, as an apolitical regression to a kind of ornamental apathy or as an alarming swing towards the subjective. In its alleged superfluity, colour was seen as an anathema to serious documentary. As the Magnum photographer Philip Jones Griffiths recounts in 'The Curse of Colour', colour is an impediment to photography. In the turn to polychrome, he explains, a 'subtle shift' occurs in the mind of the photographer who subsequently becomes 'consumed with colour composition and neglect[s] the message'. The photographer's fixation with colour, he continues, supersedes their concern for content. In the toss-up between form and content, 'it is the light-show that reigns supreme'.[88]

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[85] See: Jo Spence & Terry Dennett, 'Photography, Ideology and Education', *Screen Education*, 21, 1976, pp.85–96. In 'The Walking Wounded' (1986) Spence records the cost of colour film as follows: 'At £1.15 for a roll of 24 exposures colour negative film (at Sainsbury's), with processing at £2.05 including a set of prints (at Bonusprint)'. Jo Spence, 'The Walking Wounded' (in) Jo Spence, *Putting Myself in the Picture* (London: Camden Press,1986b), p.215.

[86] My emphasis. David Chandler's use of the term 'the addition of colour' is perhaps a linguistic lapse. This 'lapse' is similarly a trend that troubles my own analysis, I have tried to exaggerate the use of terms such as 'appendage', 'on-top-of' and 'on to' as a means of exposing the contradiction inherent within the wider literature on documentary. David Chandler, 'Time After Time: Paul Graham's *Beyond Caring'*, David Chandler & Jeffrey Ladd (eds) *Beyond Caring: Photographs* (New York: Errata Editions, 2011), n/p.

[87] Roland Barthes establishes this idea in *Camera Lucida.* See: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1984), p.81.

[88] Philip Jones Griffiths, 'The Curse of Colour' (in) Julian Stallabrass (ed.) *Documentary (Documents of Contemporary Art) (*Mass: MIT Press 2013), pp. 38-41.

In *On Photography* (1979), Susan Sontag affirms this rationale arguing that, for photographers attempting to 'exorcise the spectre of art', colour was undesirous due to its 'implicit comparison with painting'.[89] In fact, rather than situating *Living Room* where it belongs, within the history of social documentary, in his analysis of *Living Room*, Berger instead draws a parallel between Waplington's work and Flemish baroque ceiling painting. Unable to separate Waplington's polychromatic images from a discourse on the painterly, Berger describes the photographs, in his words, 'not as icons of poverty, but, rather, painted cupolas of play'. He goes on to assert that, in terms of 'colour, pose, gesture, framing, [and] composition', there is an 'extraordinary affinity' between Waplington's images and those of Peter Paul Rubens.[90]

Berger's inability to deal with polychrome photography-*as-social-documentary* originates from an already imperfect critique of formalism based upon a diametrically opposed view of art and documentary, aesthetics and politics, chroma (or form) and content. These facile historical binaries have determined the limits of debate and have imposed a series of theoretical conventions that fundamentally restrict our capacity to think critically about documentary images. To peg colour as an exercise in mere formalism is to deny the 'necessity of a metalanguage, of the embeddedness of the artwork in a discourse'.[91] *Living Room* has little in common with the leitmotifs of formalism. It is, of course, "to do with" the social. The elision of polychrome and debates about aestheticism during the 1980s is indicative of an ideological project aimed at disassociating the work of the eighties from the documentary of the seventies. Such polarised discourses refuse to treat *Living Room* as a project with a context and history that opens up questions within the history of social documentary. It is to refuse to deal with what exactly it is that colour *does* to the documentary image. Rather than tackle these contentious images head-on, they are explained away via paradigmatic critiques of modernism and subsequently buried.

Yet, this myopic, post-1930s, post-documentary narrative overlooks the fact that the accusations of aestheticism or painterliness levelled at the polychromic work produced during the 1980s had already been levelled at monochromatic photography at the turn

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[89] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979), p.128.
[90] John Berger, op. cit.,
[91] Allen Sekula, 'On the Invention of Photographic Meaning' (in) Victor Burgin (ed) *Thinking Photography* (London: MacMillian Press Ltd, 1982), p.100.

of the twentieth century.[92] In essence this is a debate that concerns the binary relationship between monochrome and polychrome that has been produced and elaborated upon within discourses on documentary. In ascertaining a rationale for colourlessness, we need to look beyond the explanation that colour was too much like painting; most obviously because this mistrust of colour presupposes monochrome's artlessness. Put simply, implicit in the accusation of polychrome's subjectivity is the assumption of monochrome's neutrality. Having gained something akin to authority across time, monochrome feels like knowledge. However, we should not mistake photographic convention, or *tradition,* for objectivity. Why then the deliberate marginalisation of colour?

An Initial Attempt to Theorise the Colourful and the Colourless

In her unpublished study, 'The Rhetoric of the Colorful and the Colorless: American Photography and Material Culture Between the Wars' (1991), photo-theorist Sally Stein has historicised the question of the deliberate marginalisation of colour through an examination of photographs produced in the United States by the Farm Security Administration (FSA).[93] The FSA was a New Deal agency formed in 1937 to tackle rural poverty during the Depression. In order to make the agency's work visible, the public relations arm of the FSA, overseen by Roy Striker, hired photographers to travel to the American dustbowl with the aim of gathering "visual evidence" of both the devastated farming industry in the South and the measures taken by the FSA to alleviate social hardship. The purpose of accruing these images was twofold: on the one hand, the reproduction of the images on the pages of magazines such as *Look* and *Life* served to foster awareness among the liberal elite of the unfolding crisis, while on the other, the images functioned ideologically to garner support for New Deal Economics.

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[92] A rigorous theoretical analysis of the technical development of colour photography is provided by Laure Blanc-Benon. Blanc-Benon argues that in order to overcome the binary between black and white and colour photography we must think stylistically about the formal properties of the image, of the play of light and the painterliness of the image in order that we then might separate out photography into aesthetic and documentary "types" – thus dispensing with the binary between monochrome and polychrome. Blanc-Benon's arguments are compelling to the extent that they work to break down the binary between polychrome and monochrome, but ultimately they reaffirm the binary between form and content, the aesthetic and the documentary. See: Blanc-Benon, 'Black & White versus Colour: The Philosophy of Photography'. This is a podcast available at: http://www.londonaestheticsforum.org/?p=2119 (accessed 08/06/2016).
[93] Although Stein's thesis is unpublished, in recent years it has received serious critical attention and has sparked a series of debates about the politics of chroma. Stein is at present reworking her doctoral thesis into a book.

While they were in the field, Striker sent the photographers detailed shooting scripts directing them to capture specific objects and events such as 'snow shoes', 'sliced bread', 'tin plate – tin cup or dipper', 'barbeques', 'hitch hikers thumbing a ride', 'sky writing' and 'parade watching'. He also requested that they use their initiative to gather images, more generally, of all aspects of "the American way of life" that seemed interesting. The result of this endeavour, which spanned approximately a decade (1935-44), was more than 80,000 photographs capturing the day-to-day lives of America's rural underemployed.

Through her prolonged engagement with the ostensibly monochromatic FSA archive, Stein brings to the fore a set of dissonant colour photographs produce by the Administration during the thirties (figs 1.15 & 1.16). By doing this, she works to deconstruct what she describes as the paradox of monochromes 'vaunted realism and its traditional suppression of colour', thereby demonstrating the deliberate colourlessness of the images of the Depression that entered the public sphere.[94] Picking her way tentatively through the bourgeoning of consumer culture during the first half of the twentieth century, Stein articulates a complex history that inextricably links the massification of polychromatic technologies with the colourisation of utilities. What ensued amongst advertising agencies and photographic-film manufacturers, was a race to invent new colour technologies proficient enough to record and promote these newly tainted goods. Thus, Stein argues, the commercialisation of colour photography in the United States was indistinguishable from the demands of advertising and consumer culture. For those sectors of society that were apparently resistant to commerce and the commercialisation of "traditional" agrarian ways of life, the perceived vices of polychrome were codified against the virtues of monochrome. Thinking through and around this polarisation, Stein attributes certain values to each medium so that the cultural dilemma faced by the FSA is comprehended as a choice between austerity and excess, the authentic and the artificial, the homespun and the commercial. With these discursively produced polarities in mind, Stein concludes that the only way of dealing with the 'competing claims' of monochrome and polychrome photographs of the Depression, is to regard these sets of images, and their chroma, as 'culturally invested, mutually dependent, and antagonistic – as coupled rhetorical operations'.[95]

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[94] Sally Stein, op. cit., p.xi.
[95] Ibid., p.xii.

Through her theorisation that colour became an index of commerce in the inter-war years, Stein concludes that polychromatic photography manifests an image of the Depression that was fundamentally at odds with preconceived perceptions of what "poverty" (to work within Stein's own designations) "looks like". Against polychrome's perceived 'semantic plenitude', the paired-down aesthetic of monochrome is situated by Stein as the only suitable medium through which the FSA could adequately convey the moral and aesthetic "virtues" of austerity. It was simply too difficult to foster support for New Deal economics when the dustbowl was rendered in colour; seen through a polychromatic lens, the underemployed somehow became less "deserving" than they had been when they were imagined in black and white. Thus, for the FSA, the abandonment of colour served the purpose of cleansing the image of the dustbowl of the corrupting "stuff" of the market. Consequently, monochrome came to furnish an intellectualised impulse to escape, in Stein's words, 'the world of commerce and color… [and] commune with the ghost of an American past… imagined to be *purer*, less complicated and less garishly-tinted'.[96]

The dichotomous relationship between monochrome and polychrome has crystallised across time, between the thirties and the seventies. This, coupled with the general reluctance of documentarians to work in colour, has caused monochrome to become naturalised to such an extent that the black and white image has become indexically linked (in analytical terms) not only with the "image of poverty", but with notions of objectivity. In spite of Stein's important inroads in this field, the scholarly predisposition to valorise the subject matter of the photographic image has caused us to "see through" its surface configuration. This perceptual "short-sightedness" has obscured the cultural codification of the 'colourless' image. The history of polychromatic photography is a history written against monochrome's orthodoxy.

It would be more productive then, to reconsider the history of documentary, not in terms of how colour photography relates to, or is divergent from, monochrome, but in consideration of how both those mediums relate to, or represent, a particular image of the social. We might thus better understand *both* monochrome and polychrome as additive, as qualities that are added to the image.[97] By comprehending the two mediums as distinct instances of ideological codification, it is possible to complicate the binary between colour and black and white, so that we can understand them instead dialogically as competing temporal modalities. Put simply, this is a debate that has little

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[96] My emphasis. Sally Stein, op. cit., p.341-2.
[97] Ibid., p.iii-xxii.

to do with objectivity, and everything to do with choice. If we can understand the cultural logic that motivated the use of black and white in the seventies, then we might understand how knowledge is inscribed structurally through the ordering principal of monochrome. We might then ascertain how monochrome actualised the interests of the Left in Britain during the 1970s.

On Monochrome's "Pastness"

If Waplington's use of polychrome in *Living Room* registers immediacy – or a 'lack of distance' – then, following on from Stein, it might be argued the Exit's use of monochrome in *Survival Programmes* codifies as an excess of history. Agitated by a complex temporal aporia, the monochromatic image works relentlessly to obscure the boundaries between present and past in a way that serves simultaneously to inscribe and erase meaning. As a "past-mode" that lingers within an otherwise technicolour present, monochrome functions to frustrate a contradictory effect already inherent in the photographic image. Roland Barthes described this effect as its 'temporal anteriority' or the sense, or incident, of *coming before*.[98] Purged of the contextualising information afforded by colour, the monochrome image is untethered from its immediate setting within the present and made vulnerable to historical slippages. Thus, despite easily observable signs that indicate the project's location within recent history – for example the omnipresent television set – *Survival Programmes* is transposed dramatically backwards in time (fig. 1.17). In fact, registered in the sweeping shots of barren industrial wastelands and bleak interiors is a mournful echo of the urban spaces pictured during the Depression by the likes of Edith Tudor Hart (fig. 1.18). Through the intricate modelling of bodies and forms according to minute gradations of grey, the seventies are mapped onto the thirties so that the rubble strewn backstreets of Humphrey Spender's Tyneside are made and unmade, made and remade, amongst the pages of *Survival Programmes* (figs. 1.19 & 1.20).

This temporal anteriority spells out a dilemma. In refusing to restate the present in chromatic terms, monochrome enacts an evacuation of the immediate that unburdens the viewer of the disquieting knowledge that, to quote Barthes, '*this-is-what-happened-and-now'*. On viewing the monochromatic image, more so I suggest then on viewing the polychromatic one, we experience what Barthes wryly described as a 'precious

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[98] Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' (in) *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p.44-5. Also see: Raymond Williams, op. cit., 1961, p.67.

miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered'.[99] Profoundly troubling, it thus must be stated that this temporal "(in-)balance" – the sense of '*having-been-there',* as opposed to '*being-there',* so exaggerated through monochrome's temporal "delay" – fundamentally undermines the urgency of the image which is seemingly so central to a project such as Exit's.[100]

If political instrumentality is dependent upon a project's contextual specificity, on its immediacy within the *lived present*, then monochrome's "pastness" serves, in part, to negate *Survival Programmes*' radical potentiality. The essential ripping-out of time that monochrome performs consequently diminishes the 'projective power of the picture'. Because of monochrome's perceived pastness, the sense that '*this-is-what-was',* to evoke Barthes terms, 'breaks down the *it-is-me*;' which is the feeling of immediacy experienced when an image appears to be of one's lived moment.[101] Is optical and temporal immediacy – we might ask – a necessary precondition of political instrumentality? If so, Exit's project elicits the following questions: Does the temporal imbalance engendered through the suppression of colour risk the negation of *Survival Programmes*' political potentiality? Does Exit's use of monochrome result in a 'perhaps disastrous' move away from what Williams describes as the 'energies of actual life'?[102] If monochrome is codified as the past, then it could be argued that *Survival Programmes* is all too easily reduced to an exercise in nostalgia.

Certainly, for many of the documentarians active during the 1970s, monochrome functioned to encode a sense of nostalgia for a class and a way of life that was perceived to be on the verge of disappearing. Chris Killip's 1989-90 project *Pirelli Work,* a set of photo-portraits of labourers at the Pirelli tyre factory in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, is a seminal example of this tendency (fig. 1.21). Through the use of a flashbulb, Killip models his subjects in dramatic chiaroscuro, monumentalising them as the heroic representatives of a certain, mythical form of working-class masculinity. Captured during the decade that witnessed the wholescale disappearance of industrial work, Killip's images – stripped of their colour and rendered in steely hues – both celebrate and idealise the perceived virtues of industrial labour, of working with one's hands, while at the same time, they mourn the demise of craftsmanship. As Darren Newbury observes, black and white is quintessentially the medium of industrial labour. 'Images of working class men', he writes, have principally been bound up with physical

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[99] Roland Barthes, op. cit., 1977, p.44-5.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Raymond Williams, op. cit., 1961, p.67.

work, 'the aesthetic possibilities inherent in black and white photography have often been harnessed to good effect in giving expression to this view of working class life'.[103] Similarly, David Campany explains that, during a moment when most photographers had abandoned the question of labour in favour of the 'colourful, amnesiac world of consumerism, leisure and the service industries', Killip, by contrast, had embraced monochrome's 'untimeliness, perhaps as a sign… [that] good work belongs to all eras and can guarantee no particular affinity to the moment it was made'.[104] By engendering a series of historical slippages through his "untimeliness", Killip's enacts the "mythologisation" of the labourer as a deeply romanticised figure who is a touchstone for the Left and Right alike.

Similarly, in a review of Killip's now iconic *In Flagrante* (1988), a series of photographs of "The North" captured between 1973 and 1985, Liz Heron (formerly of the Hackney Flashers) reads the monochromatic effect nostalgically, evocatively describing Killip's use of black and white as a 'poetic vocabulary for the inexpressible loss and dislocation' experienced by a community in the throes of deindustrialisation (fig. 1.22).[105] The chromatic tone of Killip's work thus manifests, Heron suggests, a torpefying longing for the past and for industrial work.[106] As Val Williams and Susan Bright likewise contend in their survey of British documentary photography, *How Are We: Photographing Britain,* the wholesale suppression of polychrome in the 1970s was a pessimistic 'rejection of the British idyll so persuasively projected in the colour photographs of the 1950s and 60s'. For Williams and Bright, the 'idiosyncratic' monochromatic work that emerged at this moment of economic decline merely indexed what they describe as the "frayed edges" of a socially unequal society.[107] Such nostalgic images are, of course, problematic. Nostalgia functions to 'sanitise' as it selects, 'making the past feel complete, stable [and] coherent' and in so doing – in belying the complexities of working-class histories and histories of labour – it risks the falsification of memory

[103] Darren Newbury, 'Photography and the Visualization of Working Class Lives in Britain', *Visual Anthropology Review*, March 1999, Vol.15(1), p.36.

[104] David Campany (in) Chris Killip, *Arbeit/Work: exhibition catalogue with essays by David Campany* (Essen: Museum Folkwang, 2012), p.125.

[105] For a critical analysis of how the North has been treated by documentarians see: Stephanie King, 'Review: A1: Britain on the Verge', *Object*, Vol 20, 2018, pp.103-5.

[106] Liz Heron, 'Tale of Two Nations', *New Statesman*, 29 April 1988, p.28.

[107] Although Bright and Williams acknowledge the suppression of polychrome in *How Are We*, this theme is mentioned as an aside and does not receive serious attention from the authors. Susan Bright & Val Williams, *How Are We: Photographing Britain: From the 1840 to the Present* (London: Tate Publishing, 2007), p.137.

through a romance of origins.[108] Put simply, by idealising the image of industrial labour we cleanse that labour of its violence.

Stein's analysis of the FSA's suppression of colour affirms the penchant for monochrome's pastness. She postulates that by virtue of black and white, the image of the Depression was 'set-off at an even more attractive distance from the present, appearing more tenacious and incorruptible for its flinty repudiation of colour'.[109] As such, monochrome functioned to produce a pre-modern image of an American "poor" untouched by the tides of change and by commerce, and in doing so the FSA materialised the intellectualised idyll of the rural pastoral. Through the marginalisation of colour, the image of poverty was transformed into a receptacle of bourgeois fantasy. For Stein, as for Heron, Williams and Bright, monochrome symbolises dead things. The monochromatic image signifies lost ways of being-in-the-world whose passing must be mourned; as such, monochrome is theorised as a reactionary medium. Yet for Stein, monochrome is less about mourning a particular working-class way of life, than it is about middle-class anxieties concerning the destabilisation of a once secure class hierarchy in which the middle-class occupied an elevated position. As Stein postulates, the FSA's image of the dustbowl encapsulates a bourgeois fantasy for a romantic idyll imbued with certain material and socio-economic inferences, and as such, the steely image of the Depression is one that is tinged by anxiety. Through the 'flinty repudiation of colour', she opines, 'the image of tradition was simultaneously brought close and set off at an even more attractive distance from the present, appearing more tenacious and incorruptible' due to its professed historicity. For Stein, the archetypal image of the American dust bowl is of a 'time warp' blanketed by dust and heightened by the absence of colour.[110]

Keeping the "Poor Pure"

In the introduction to a book of Baker's reconstruction era photographs of Manchester and Salford, Stephen Constantine avers that for many British people, post-war consumer affluence in Britain was perceived as a solvent for traditional working-class values.[111] In light of Constantine's assertion, and the aformentaioned argument set forth

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[108] See: Francis Mulhern, 'English Reading' (in) Homi Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990). Also see: Guy Lane, '"The Photographer as Recorder": Daniel Meadows, Records, Discourse and Tradition in 1970s England', *Photographies*, Sep 2011, Vol.4(2), pp.157-73.
[109] Sally Stein, op. cit., p 348-9.
[110] Ibid., p.341-2.
[111] Stephen Constantine, 'Street Scenes: Late Afternoon' (in) Shirley Baker, *Street Photographs: Manchester and Salford* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1989), p.20.

by Stein in 'The Rhetoric of the Colorfull and the Colorless', it might be reasoned that Exit's marginalisation of colour is indicative of the group's deep-seated unwillingness to deal with the fundamentally altered complexion of class in the post-war era. It was perhaps easier to maintain a pure (read monochromatic) idea of the working-class, than to tackle head on the trend towards consumer individualism and the associated ideological complexities that that shift engendered. In contrast to the "grey" era of rationing and consumer conformism that characterised the early 1950s, by the 1960s, new manufacturing technologies, marketing techniques and a swell in consumer demand signalled a greater range and choice of objects, which were realised in a multiplicity of brilliant hues.[112] In fact, during the rise of neoliberalism, the living room was transformed into a space burdened by ideologically determined concepts of normative and desirable lifestyles intrinsically tied to, as Raymond Williams argues, notions of 'status'. In *Keywords* he writes: 'One continuous scale of social status has been based on the style of lifestyle reflected in the living room'. This measure of social normativity is, problematically, 'not only hierarchical and individually competitive', but 'essentially defined by notions of consumption and display'.[113] Discerning one's social status (and, by implication perhaps, their class) according to the "look of things" was by no means a new or distinctly neoliberal phenomenon. When the Victorian social researcher and reformer Charles Booth devised the concept of 'the poverty line' in 1887, he formulated the means of accessing a person's economic position as follows: 'Those whose means prove to be barley sufficient or quite insufficient for the dependence of life, are counted as "poor" or "very poor" respectively'. However, Booth explains, when it is not possible to ascertain a person's exact income *'the classification is also based on the appearance of the home*'.[114]

Yet, whereas the temptation to use the "look of things" as a measure of economic status was only nascent in the era of Victorian reformism, surface appearance during the post-war period became part of an exaggerated symbolic apparatus. As a result of the commercialisation of the domestic sphere fostered by consumer capitalism, surface became social currency. The accrual and display of object and hue within a home of one's own thus became a primary mechanism through which individuals might demonstrate the trappings fitting to a specific social position. Accordingly, attention to

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[112] Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture & Postmodernism* (London, Newbury Park, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), p.83.
[113] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), p.300.
[114] My emphasis. Charles Booth (cited in) Susan MacGregor, *The Politics of Poverty* (London: Longman, 1981), p.63.

the minute gradation of tone came to function as a means through which consumers could exert their economic status over or above those with less income. Colour became symbolic of taste and, inevitably, tastelessness.[115]

In the eighties, the demarcation of class positions through the symbolism of colour became hypervisible through the ritualistic 'painting of the doors' of ex-council owned properties against the uniform colour imposed upon those people dependant on the state for their housing provision. This symbolic re-inscription of social status through the addition of individualising hues functioned as a means of demonstrating the new freedoms afforded by the "right-to-buy", while simultaneously allowing homeowners to exert their difference from (aka over or above) increasingly vilified council tenants. As Wolfgang Fritz Haug has argued in his *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics*, freedom under neoliberalism simply means freedom of choice.[116]

Already by the seventies, it was not merely for the middle-classes that life had become increasingly vivid. As utilities were transformed into commodities through the addition of brilliant hues, even for those economically marginalised by the ravages of deindustrialisation, life became more colourful.[117] So much so that underemployment itself acquired a strange, especially garish new hue. As Newbury notes in what is perhaps the only productive analysis of *Living Room* to date, the representational shift toward polychrome in the 1980s 'signalled a closer interest in the texture and aesthetic qualities of the living spaces of the photographic work'. This shift in the visual language of representation is likely a by-product of deindustrialisation and the subsequent reorganisation of public life around relations to consumption rather than production, and around the domestic sphere which was reimagined as a symbolic space within which consumer desires might be enacted.[118]

Was it precisely this, the new "luridity" of underemployment, that the Left was refusing to deal with through its purposeful suppression of colour? As Stuart Hall fleetingly suggests in 'The Culture Gap', when it comes to issues concerning the consuming underemployed, the response amongst a subset of the Left had become a distinctly contradictory one. To quote Hall, the response was of an 'inverted puritanism', whereby:

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[115] For more on this see: Mike Featherstone, op. cit. and Sally Stein, op. cit.

[116] Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1971), p.102.

[117] For more on this see: Mike Featherstone, op. cit.

[118] Darren Newbury, op. cit., 1991, p.33.

[some] middle class socialists, heaving under the weight of their new hi-fis, their record collections, their videos and striped pine shelving, cheap prints and Chinese lanterns sometimes prefer 'their' working class poor but pure: unsullied by contact with the market.[119]

Nowhere is this contentious standpoint more bluntly laid bare than in Mike Leigh's suburban comedy of manners: the vitriolic 1977 film *Abigail's Party* which was broadcast on BBC1 as part of the 'Play for Today' series. Claustrophobically staged entirely within the living room of an aspiring working-class couple who have recently bought a house in suburbia, the film ruthlessly ridicules the attempts of would-be-Basildon-Man Lawrence (Tim Stern) and his wife Beverly (Alison Steadman) – an ex-beautician swathed in tangerine – to assimilate the middle-class mores of their new neighbours through the faltering rehearsal of pretentious cultural clichés (figs. 1.23 & 1.24). Excruciating in its relentlessness, the film presents a derisive picture of a vulgar working-class seduced by the ballads of Demis Roussos and a lurid array of tacky consumer knockoffs. Yet as Leigh makes clear, even though they have acquired the trappings of "middle-class" – the semi-detached house and the three-piece suite – Lawrence and Beverly will never *truly* be a part of the class they aspire to join. The obvious double standard that underscores Leigh's text is entirely indicative of a particular brand of rarefied Leftist thought that would refuse the underemployed the workaday "luxuries" that are enjoyed by the rest of the population and which make life worth living.

Perhaps Waplington's use of colour was so contentious precisely because it refused to leave "unsullied" the Left's romantic version of the "pure poor". In an essay on Paul Reas' photobook, *I Can Help* (1988), a project all about shopping, Chandler points out a link between the representational shift to colour in the 1980s and a general hardening of public attitudes towards that infamous New Right folk devil, the "dole scrounger" (fig. 1.25). He notes that: 'Where as the preservation of dignity had been paramount to the credo of the "concerned" photographer' in the seventies, by the 1980s, 'there was none: people were lost, they looked stupid'.[120] Indeed, something very strange happens when "poor" subjects, conventionally laid before us in monochrome, are reimagined through a spectrum of brilliant hues. Garishness makes life all the uglier, all the more disturbing. Colour makes the viewing experience more acute somehow, more visceral, while smell and touch are made more palpable, so that the 'pale and pasty' flesh seems all the

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[119] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1984, p.20.
[120] David Chandler generously sent me a draft of a review of Paul Reas' work. David Chandler, *Paul Reas: New Work* (draft), personal correspondence between the author and Chandler, 12/15/2015.

more yielding, and we register how, to quote Spring, 'the cheap synthetic fabric reeks of perspiration and cologne, mingled with bath soap, tobacco, and wet dog'.[121]

Yet, by posing the following questions of *Living Room* and its audiences Newbury shrewdly and ironically turns such analyses on their head: 'What is it that the viewer finds frightening here? That they may be seduced by what they know by culture and education to be bad taste?'[122] Here Newbury astutely underscores that "taste", as a product of 'culture' and 'education', is just another form of classification and, by implication, socio-economic differentiation. As a measure of normativity "taste" is determined, or codified, by the class whose power it serves to reproduce. Newbury's approach is significant because it affords, qua Hall, a productive way of thinking about the biases that the viewer (especially the bourgeois viewer) brings or projects onto the photographic image. It is against, or in spite of, these normalised and *normalising* conceptualisations that Waplington's project operates.

However, to suggest that Exit's suppression of polychrome is a consequence of the medium's capacity to "colour" – to taint or stain its subjects, thereby making them "impure" – implies that Exit capitulate to what Hall describes as the emergent 'rhythms of gratitude and deference' demanded by those in power. The prerequisite for gratitude and deference underscores the rhetoric, on the one hand, of the humanist reformists who wanted their underemployed to look "deserving" and, on the other hand, the architects of the New Right, who mobilised the concept of the so-called "undeserving poor" as a means of disassembling the welfare state.[123] Indeed, the Thatcherite notion that the underemployed have been corrupted by consumer avarice is an attitude that rears its ugly head among the pages of *Survival Programmes*. As an anonymous teacher superciliously posits in a transcript entitled "Written Off":

> Most of them you'll find got colour telly, which in itself – so what? – But it's indicative of the fact that it's not purely financial hardship. It's just mismanagement of spending. Maybe this school should have lessons on bloody cookery, so people can feed their kids properly (*Survival*, 24).

The teacher's attitude echoes Lee's assertion that "poverty" is somehow naively self-imposed through irresponsible or feckless expenditure. Perhaps, then, through their use

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[121] Justin Spring, op. cit., p.101.
[122] Darren Newbury, op. cit., 1999, p.33.
[123] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1984, p.19.

of monochrome, Exit do defer to representations of "poverty" that are "inoffensive" or "acceptable" in public discourse.

This is, of course, not how *Survival Programmes* works. And anyway, as Hall stresses, the puritanical subset of the Left untenably resistant to an affluent working-class, was so insignificant that it 'hardly bore inspection'.[124] And as Hall drolly confessed in 'Gramsci and Us':

> A tiny bit of all of us is also somewhere inside the Thatcherite project. Of course, we're all one hundred per cent committed. But every now and then – Sunday mornings, perhaps, just before we go to the demonstration – we go to Sainsbury's and we're just a tiny bit of a Thatcherite subject.[125]

Thus, Hall's essay is not about the "purity" of the working-class, but the impure, deeply contradictory nature of the Left *itself*. What Hall establishes is a problem of semantics that is both verbal and visual. Simply put, 'The Culture Gap' is an essay about the limited ways in which we have come to understand underemployment through a rhetoric in which the "poor" are seen as "pure" and not as un- or underemployed. Our problem is that underemployment is continuously collapsed beneath the pathologising designation "poor" and uncoupled from economics. As such we make the underemployed – through our images and through our language – the subjects of pity, fantasy and nostalgia.

As media theorist Judith Williamson argues in 'The Great History Photographs Mislaid', an essay printed in the critical corpus *Photography/Politics: One,* the image of unemployment, like the image of labour, is one suspended between discursive and representational extremes. In making this argument, Williamson's point of departure is an advertisement for factory ventilation systems that somehow masquerades as a paternalistic critique of unemployment and a petition for improved working conditions. The advert, which appeared in the *Financial Times* in May 1971, features a clichéd image of an unemployed labourer standing in a cloth cap by a bulging bin (fig. 1.26). Here the former labourer is, by association, represented as trash. In his superfluity, he is consigned to the historical dustbin. In reference to this image, Williamson states:

> The photograph itself shows that the ad cannot be directed at those workers themselves… it is an *image* of labour, an image shared by the bourgeois Right and Left alike, equally patronising… It is a photo by a class tourist, for class tourists… Grainy black-and-white "realism" turns this worker into an object, the repository of a bourgeois

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[124] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1984, p. 20.
[125] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987a, p.19.

style, a bourgeois vision in which he will never be a person, only an unemployed statistic or a work of documentary art.[126]

What is most interesting about Williamson's critique, is that it foregrounds that 'grainy black-and-white "realism"' has become codified or conventionalised as part of a formula for the representation of the underemployed. The aesthetic and discursive "qualities" of monochrome are not, as Newbury asserts, inherent, but, have been made to appear as such through their historical codification. In fact, the image of the unemployed worker that features in Williamson's article strikingly resembles Kurt Hutton's 1939 photograph of an unemployed man standing, capped-head bowed, on a street corner in Wigan (fig. 1.27).[127] A photograph of a homeless man included amongst the pages of *Survival Programmes* likewise directly recalls this image (fig. 1.28). As Williamson makes clear, as a prefigured representational convention, the highly aestheticised, deeply nostalgic monochromatic trope of the underemployed worker, bowing his head and tugging his forelock, tells us little about the very real physical and psychological hardships engendered by industrial labour, or a lack thereof.

As Hall stresses, we must dispense with the concept of the "pure poor" most obviously because by chastising the underemployed for their contact with the private market and private consumption, the Left has come to look increasingly 'as if it is trapped nostalgically in ancient cultural modes', failing to imagine socialism in a contemporary vernacular or image.[128] While the Left's refusal to comprehend the basic human desire of the underemployed to have something of what others have, bespeaks the Left's capacity to overlook the extent to which private market participation, no matter how limited, affords the unemployed a measure of inclusion in a society in which they are excluded from the usual channel of integration: the labour force.

For these reasons, the application of Stein's logic to Exit's work feels unconvincing. It is true that in the United States during the 1930s, documentary had played a crucial role in the facilitation and reformulation of a new but nonetheless oppressive relationship between corporate capital and the state.[129] But Stein's theory concerning the suppression of polychrome is limited by the fact that she deals only with the state

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[126] Judith Williamson, 'The History That Photographs Mislaid' (in) Terry Dennett & Jo Spence (eds) *Photography/Politics: One* (London: Photography Workshop, 1979), p.68.
[127] It is worth mentioning that Kurt Hutton's image features on the cover of the Penguin Modern Classics 2001 edition of *The Road to Wigan Pier*. See: George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1st ed., 1937, London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2001).
[128] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1984, p.20.
[129] For a critique of the FSA's work see: John Tagg, op. cit., 1988.

sponsored work of the FSA.[130] In 'The Rhetoric of the Colorful and the Colorless', she thus accounts only for monochrome-as-affirmation; it is a medium that facilitates the government's demand for a "pure", "deserving" image of those ravaged by the Depression. As such, Stein works within, and contributes towards, a regulatory history of documentary. This is to leave unconsidered what it is that monochrome does in the context of oppositional documentary projects. For example, during the 1930s there was a parallel, *critical* photographic movement that sought to document the Depression, also using monochrome. For example, projects such as James Agee and Walker Evans' dialectical study of three Alabama tenant families, *Let Us Now Phrase Famous Men* (1941), sought to reveal the structural nature of social inequality and to expose the complacency of an inert liberal left. Originally commissioned in 1936 by the business magazine *Fortune,* the extended visual and verbal study – the result of four weeks spent living with a tenant family during a summer's cotton season – was deemed unpublishable and subsequently shelved. The publishing house Harper paid Agee for a year's sabbatical from *Fortune* so that he could revise and extend the manuscript but the ambitious project was once again dropped.[131] Now over 400 pages, it was eventually published by Houghton Mifflin in the form of a book, which was finally completed and realised in 1941. Other projects such as Eudora Welty's unpublished *Black Saturday* (1935) and Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices* (1941) likewise attest to an alternative, critical-oppositional documentary history. Monochrome does not function to produce meaning in a way that is singular or uniform. It is, therefore, not productive to assume that every choice to photograph in monochrome is compelled by nostalgia. The problem of chromatic inscription exceeds the rigid binaries of monochrome and polychrome, documentary and aesthetics, dignity and disgust and exists, instead, on a spectrum. We must, therefore, complicate our binary histories of chroma by revealing the contradictory and unstable effects of each form. In order to do this, I will turn now to the work of the feminist photographer and theorist, Jo Spence.

Consumerism Defrocked

Within the British context, one of the most sustained attempts to codify the political significance of monochrome was performed by Jo Spence in the essay, 'The Politics of

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[130] This is not intended as a critique of Stein's work, of course it is impossible for an author to cover all eventualities in a single thesis, or, for that matter, career.
[131] This version, which was completed in 1939, was rejected on the grounds of Agee's refusal to accommodate the editors' suggestions for ''deletions in the interests of good taste''. See: Emily Sun, 'From the Division of Labor to the Discovery of the Common: James Agee and Walker Evans' Let Us Now Praise Famous Men', *Figurationen, 7*(2), 2006, pp.33-52.

Photography' (fig. 1.29). The introductory text in the inaugural issue of the radical journal *Camerawork,* 'The Politics of Photography' argues for a documentary practice that is grounded in the social and the political and that circulates within its own anti-bourgeois networks. Within the hegemonic networks of the mass media, Spence contends, oppositional documentary images are, with rare exception, uncoupled from or "elevated above" any critical context, and become assimilated within liberal humanist systems of representation. Spence proffers a paradigmatic example of this de- and re-contextualising trend through an analysis of photographs commissioned by the housing charity Shelter. An example of the campaign material appears centrefold (fig. 1.30). In the wake of Ken Loach's influential film *Kathy Come Home* (1966), Shelter commissioned the photographer Nick Hedges to document the inadequacy of housing in the UK between 1968 and 1972. The result was a targeted charity campaign that combined literature (stats etc.,) with photographs carefully selected from Hedges' four-year corpus. While Hedges himself conceived of his *durational* project as a polyvocal, structural critique of social inequality, Shelter shrewdly selected the images that most closely reflected the liberal reformist model of voyeuristic victim photography, uncoupling the images from their wider discursive representational framework.

The image included in *The Politics of Photography* is paradigmatic of the kind of image that Shelter sought for their campaign material. The shadowy photograph depicts two infant children, the older of whom stares wide-eyed at the camera, his head rested upon a cocked arm. Stamped above the image, in a graphic font, is the word "Condemned". Through their association with the descriptor "condemned", it is the children themselves, as opposed to the home that they occupy, that become the subjects to which the label is applied. Based on intervention from above, rather than wholescale transformation from below, Shelter's unashamedly paternalistic interpretation of the children's situation is profoundly disempowering. Refracted through the international advertising agency, we are sold on glossy paper, Spence asserts, the graphically illustrated saga of the suitably abject.[132] As Hedges notes in a self-reflexive essay that appeared alongside Williamson's essay, in *Photography/Politics: One,* the 'stereotype' of underemployment that Shelter perpetuate merely 'distorts the subject', thereby insuring that society's response to homelessness is inadequate. In a passage that critiques the mass media's use of "poor" tropes, Hedges reaffirms Williamson's analysis of the undialectical nature of representation on both the Right and the Left, when he

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[132] Jo Spence, 'The Politics of Photography', *Camerawork*, No. 1, February 1976, p.1.

notes that 'the propaganda of the National Front, and the very different propaganda of the Socialist Workers' Party, is as singular in its presentation of reality as Shelter'.[133]

Printed, as Spence explains, 'alongside the hi-fi and sherry advertisements in the colour supplements' the "clichéd" photo essay 'eventually becomes just another commodity for us to thumb through in our search for distraction'.[134] When positioned alongside slick advertisements for luxury consumer goods in *The Sunday Times Magazine*, the documentary image is tainted by the technicolour spectacle of the sleek weeklies with their extraneous 'glossy paper' and 'tasteful design' and come to bare the latent message that 'the world is commodity'.[135] For Spence, like Stein, polychrome inscribes meaning in relation to commerce, yet for Spence monochrome is significant not because it operates nostalgically, but because it refuses the capitalist myths of consumption that are propagated by the glossy magazine. Within the context of commerce, Spence implies that colour operates to negate serious looking. The experience of leafing through the colour supplement is equated with distraction, Spence thus suggests that the production of an oppositional discourse must be achieved at the expense of colour.

That the parameters of the debate were being drawn out in terms of the surface – of the technicolour veneer of commerce – is further confirmed overleaf, in a wry critique of an exhibition of fashion photographs by Helmut Newton staged at The Photographers Gallery in 1976. The article includes a black and white reproduction of one of the polychrome photographs featured in the exhibition (fig. 1.31 & 1.32).[136] The photograph depicts a slender woman floating naked in an iridescent pool, her arms coyly crossed over her groin. The overtly mocking exhibition review begins as follows:

> Fashion photography can be as mouth-watering as candy floss. As ephemeral as a fruit fly, it is allied to a ruthless selling machine. It is repressive, fetishist, mystifying and

[133] Nick Hedges, 'Charity Begins at Home: The Shelter Photographs' (in) Jo Spence & Terry Dennett (eds), op. cit., pp.161-4.

[134] Jo Spence, op. cit. 1979, p.1.

[135] Stuart Hall, following on from Walter Benjamin, 'The Social Eye of *Picture Post*' (in) Paul Stiff (ed.), *Modern Typography in Britain: Graphic Design, Politics, and Society* (London: Hyphen Press, 2009), p.84.

[136] I cannot locate the polychrome original of the photograph reproduced in monochrome in *Camerawork,* No. 1. To give the reader a sense of the photograph's original hues, I have included another image from the St Tropez series that features the same model and is very close, compositionally, to the image reproduced in *Camerawork.* From: Helmut Newton, *White Women* (London: Quartet Books, 1979).

> obscurantist. It trivialises with glossy efficiency. It is part of a culture industry that absorbs protest and alienation by making it "fashionable".[137]

Mouth-watering like candyfloss, the subject is at once an unattainable ideal and a passive object. Laid bare by Newton in a spectrum of rich caramels, the woman, who basks in a sea of vivid blue, is unashamedly presented for our consumption. With no motive besides commerce such images condition our notion of, to quote Spence, 'what is real and what is normal'.[138] Such alienating images can thus only operate as sites of misidentification. For Spence then, it is consumer culture (as opposed to the subject who *consumes*) – with its prerequisite function to mystify social relations and to mask structures of gender and class oppression by making the world beautiful, and consumable – that proffers the site of ideological struggle. Yet, that Newton's nude is drained of colour through its translation from the gallery wall to the printed page of the journal, does not amount to its de-commodification. This reinforces the fact that the binary between monochrome and polychrome is false. Colour is not commerce (commerce is commerce), but at the level of ideology colour is made symbolic of commerce through association and through its insertion within a binary discourse. It is hence not monochrome itself that is important here, but the *absence* of colour.

Taking up the mantra 'the personal is political', as a member of the radical, all-female photography collective the Hackney Flashers, Spence was instrumental in developing this representational logic. A key example of this operation is *Who's Holding the Baby?* a project that examined the double burden of formal and reproductive labour. By combining photographs and ephemera with text panels and statistics, *Who's Holding the Baby?* sought to demonstrate the lack of childcare provision in Hackney and the implications that the absence of social care infrastructure had on women's lives. Against the commodification of the female body and the wholesale commercialisation of the domestic sphere among the slick pages of glossy magazines, and, in fact, among the pages of the family album, Spence inscribes in black and white a parallel history of the devaluation of "women's work". This alternative history mines the salient surface of commerce. Idealised polychromatic images are cut from glossy magazines and juxtaposed with black and white photographs dealing with the inadequacies of childcare provision in inner London, and the burden this places upon working-class mothers. In particular, the panel titled '*Who's holding the baby… and where?*' addresses the usually hidden problem of domestic inequality (fig. 1.33). On the right, we see a colour

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[137] Jo Spence & Tom Picton (eds) 'Helmut Newton: Review', *Camerawork,* No. 1, February 1976, p.2.
[138] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1976, p.1.

photograph snipped from a magazine. The carefully staged image depicts a middle-class mother conversing with her daughter within a spacious kitchen. The pair frame the open fridge which is laden with food, and a brown paper bag indicates that the mother has just bought more supplies which she now must attempt to squeeze into the already overburdened refrigerator. In stark contrast, positioned alongside this image is a monochrome snapshot of two small boys eating dinner at a sparse table in a rundown kitchen while their mother busies herself pegging washing to a makeshift line. By playing-up the historical convention of polychrome-as-commerce, Spence makes monochrome perform politically as a means through which to reveal difference and the contradictions implicit in the hegemonic image of the domestic. What is important here, is that Spence understands the social and historical nature of the dichotomy between colour and black and white. Accordingly, she exploits these pre-existing representational codes to her advantage by manipulating them towards the structuring of an oppositional discourse.

That 'The Politics of Photography' was the inaugural essay in *Camerawork* is significant. Serving as a kind of prologue or manifesto for the journal's ideological trajectory, it seems a reasonable assumption that the essay would have had resonances with the radical photographic community at that particular historical conjuncture. With that in mind, we might suppose that Exit Photography Group mobilise a similar logic in *Survival Programmes*, a project that similarly works to get beneath the veneer of mass media representations of the less acceptable face of capitalism. It is worth mentioning that 1974 – the year Exit Group began shooting *Survival Programmes* – is synchronous with the year that Spence and Dennett established the Photography Workshop in London. Although this is most probably coincidental, it is significant that during the following year Paul Trevor of Exit Photography Group assisted Spence and Dennett with the amalgamation of the Half Moon Gallery and the Photography Workshop which became collaboratively known as Half Moon Photography Workshop (HMPW). During the same year, 1976, Spence and Dennett, under the banner of HMPW, launched *Camerawork* and Trevor became a member of the editorial committee. Given that Trevor and Spence were colleagues on *Camerawork's* editorial committee, it is highly likely that Exit were aware of Spence's work with the Hackney Flashers which was taking place contemporaneously with Exit's work on *Survival Programmes.* The interconnection of these two photography groups within the discursive context of *Camerawork* indicates the existence of a culture of critical exchange.

While the total use of monochrome in *Survival Programmes* rules out the literal inscription of chromatic difference within the referential frame, it might be argued that an oppositional stance akin to that indicated by Spence, is registered through colour's extraction. Indeed, a position against the varicoloured veneer of advertising – and, crucially, its myths – is registered in the numerous instances of burgeoning floral or geometrically pattered wallpaper where colour is made conspicuous through its absence (as opposed to simply going unseen, as Stein argues in relation to the photographic work of the FSA) (fig. 1.34). As the film theorist Jean-Louis Comolli has argued:

> Every image is… doubly racked by disillusion: from within itself as a machine for simulation, mechanical and deathly reproduction of the living [and] from without as a single image only, and not all images, in that what fills it will never be but the present index of absence, of the lack of another image.[139]

It might be argued thus, that we approach *Survival Programmes* "through colour" or a lack thereof. According to Comolli's logic, it is a lack of colour that "fills" the photographic image. It is precisely this present/absent dichotomy, which Comolli refers to as a "structuring disillusion", that provides the offensive power of the cinematic representation; enabling film to be deployed against the 'completing, reassuring [or] mystifying representations of ideology'.[140]

In Victor Burgin's contemporaneous project *UK76*, the artist likewise uses the absence of colour as a structuring disillusion. Although colour is absent from the chromatic field in the series, colour is evoked in the project through language. By superimposing extracts of text composed in the seductive language of ad-speak on top of monochromatic photographs of work-a-day routines, Burgin mimicked advertising forms to critique how consumerism had impacted political attitudes and lifestyles in Britain during the 1970s. One photograph depicts a group of work-worn women waiting for a bus at the kerbside on a rundown street in London (fig. 1.35). The central figure – an Afro-Caribbean woman in a headscarf – stares blankly ahead, her brow slightly furrowed. Burgin combines the black and white photograph with a sensuous verbal description of the colour palette and materials that one might expect to find in a clothing catalogue. The description is prefaced by a wry would-be sales motto: 'Life demands a little give and take. You give. We'll take.' The descriptive passage continues as follows:

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[139] Jean-Louis Comolli, op. cit., p.141.
[140] Ibid., p.134.

> Evening is the softest time of the day. As the sun descends the butterfly bright colours which flourish at high noon give way to the moth shades. The tones are pale, delicate. These are the classic Mayfair colours. White, naturally, takes pride of place, but evening white lightly touched with silver or sometimes gold. Mayfair colours are almond pinks and green, dove greys and blue with the occasional appearance of what can only be described as peach. But what a peach – a delicious soft peaches-and-cream peach. Jewellery is kept to a minimum, just simple pearls and diamonds. Not necessarily real, it is the non-colour that is important. The look is essentially luxurious, very much for the pampered lady dressed for a romantic evening with every element pale and perfect.

In the passage Burgin adopts the jargonistic sales-speak employed by the editors of glossy magazines and the marketing assistants at design companies to titillate their audiences and to conjure an image of luxury. Sensuous phrases such as 'white lightly touched with silver' and 'delicious soft peaches-and-cream peach' are designed to make the reader feel expensive – to convince them that clothes are more than utilities in which to shroud the body, but status symbols. Indeed, the post-war era saw the establishment of the Mayfair Colour Centre, a consultancy and design company founded with the ambition: 'to meet the growing demand for colour in everyday life'. 'Here' as a British Pathé correspondent explains, for the 'colour conscious Britain of today', the Mayfair Colour Centre offers 'a team of experts [who] give free advice on the focal point in our lives, the home'.[141]

Similarly, the evacuation of colour thus forms the 'structuring disillusion' or the formal logic through which Exit were able, by focusing attention on the domestic sphere, to register resistance to consumerist discourses. It is interesting then, that after reading *Survival Programmes,* the contemporary literary critic Roland Blythe bleakly commented that what these pictures establish, all too candidly:

> Is that in spite of the new cities, the new education, the new pleasures – TV, attractive casual clothes, household equipment etc. – the new advertising, what many citizens get is an inter-war poverty which… [has] somehow been brought up-to-date and made to fit the 70s and 80s.[142]

Observing the fundamental disparity between the consumerist promise of advanced capitalism as propagated by advertising and the absolute bewilderment and alienation elicited by its failure, Blythe touches upon the incongruous relationship between how the media represents socio-economic relationships for us and how those relationships are lived and experienced in actuality.

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[141] British Pathé, 'Mayfair Colour Centre', film short, 1956. Available online at: https://www.britishpathe.com/video/mayfair-colour-centre/query/MAYFAIR+COLOUR
[142] Roland Blythe, 'Letter to Exit', 1981, *LSE Archive*, SURVIVAL - *Survival Programmes: Exit Photography Group* (Nicholas Battye/Chris Steele-Perkins/Paul Trevor).

By focusing their lens on familial interactions in the home, within domestic spaces such as the kitchen and the living room, Exit continuously recall the popular tropes of lifestyle magazines. Glossy publications such as *Women and Home, Good Housekeeping* and *Ideal Home* (among many others) functioned not only to reflect the rising trend in consumerism, but actively aided in the production of that phenomenon through the reaffirmation of capitalist social ideals.[143] As James Halloran has argued, the media functions to redefine already extant social tendencies or to establish new social realities where they had formally not existed. A vital function of the glossy magazine was to produce these "realities", providing the affluent private homeowner living on the New Estate (a Conservative concept first elaborated in the thirties) with an 'ideal image of itself'.[144] Demonstrative of that trend are adverts such as that for "New Beautility Furniture" that appeared in *Woman and Home* magazine and served to fundamentally shape ideas of normative familial behaviour through the articulation of a desirable social "type" in the public's imagination (fig. 1.36). Built into a prefabricated display cabinet, a vivid, blue-tinted television screen forms the veritable electronic hearth of a family's living room. The metaphorical "Crown Jewels" of the room's stash, it functions as a 'defining symbolic object of affluence' and signals the family's ability to buy and to consume the latest mod-cons.[145] Clad in a garish green dress-suit and high-heeled boots, a woman enters carrying a laden tray. Her beaming expression conveys a lofty countenance of carefree domesticity. It is a hot afternoon, the children are playing with their toys having changed into their casual clothes after school and their father, still wearing his acidic lemon shirt, has just returned from a day at the office. All-white, middle-class, with 2.4 children (the 0.4 pertaining to the dog I suppose), a patriarchal father and stay at home mum; the advertisement is indicative of the normalised ideal that flooded glossy magazines in the post-war era.

Paragons of the capitalist nuclear unit, the family ooze use-value: they work, they support themselves, and with their surplus money, they avidly consume luxury goods that have been vested with the false-promise of "happiness". Burdened with images that denote 'aesthetic contemplation, luxury [and] the spectacle of consumption', the colour supplement is an object laced with the latent message that 'the world is commodity'.[146] As Todd Gitlin has argued the capitalist ideal perpetuates itself through

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[143] In Chapter Three I will explore how lifestyle magazines functioned toward the production of ideal feminine "types".
[144] James Halloran, *The Effects of Television* (London: Panther Modern Society, 1970), p.35.
[145]Ibid., p.29.
[146] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 2009, p.84.

the fetishised promise of titillation. 'In format and content', he explains, 'popular culture ordinarily affords its consumers the pleasure of desires both expressed and contained'; it mimics a form of pleasure that everyday social conditions cannot afford. This 'promise of happiness is what binds the audience to the commodities themselves'.[147] Proffering a rare glimpse into the curtained-off space of the front room, the overwhelming sameness of the advertised ideal functions to establish a series of universalising assumptions about the "normal" British home and our culture of consumption. Such adverts confer a heightened symbolic value upon the objects they display before us, transforming them into emblems of power, respectability, and upward social mobility. It thus follows that those who cannot see themselves reflected in its homogenising mirror, i.e., those who lack the economic power to consume, cannot properly belong.[148]

Mass media consumer discourses proved so pervasive that, even *within* the private sphere, familial self-representations – namely, the family album – came increasingly to resemble carefully composed advertisements. Through the persuasive ventriloquism of consumer advertising, the family was encouraged to define its identity through the accumulation and display of "consumer durables".[149] Indeed, as we flick through its pages, the family album is burdened with images of weddings, holidays, birthdays and Christmases, events which almost invariably connote economic expenditure. Within the family album, familial affirmation is vested in the memory of collective consumption. Moreover, the fact that by the 1970s the average family album was flecked with polychrome attests to both the commercialisation and proliferation of cheap colour technologies in Britain and the desire of the working-classes to imagine their own selves in technicolour (fig. 1.37).[150] This trend can be traced across media, especially with regard to the televisual. By 1974, the year that Exit began shooting *Survival Programmes*, over 6.8 million households either owned or rented a colour set, and by 1977 there were more households in the UK with a colour TV than a telephone.[151] These facts attest to the extent to which colour had permeated the nation's everyday encounter

[147] Todd Gitlin, 'Television Screens: Hegemony in Translation' (in) Michael Apple (ed.) *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p.206.
[148] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1999, p.4.
[149] 'Consumer durables' is a term evoked by Raymond Williams. See: Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 1974).
[150] My father's own childhood family album is flecked with colour. He himself came from a working-class family with very little expendable income. That the family chose to spend their money on colour film is thus very telling. The photos date from 1967-81.
[151] Joe Moran, '"Stand Up and Be Counted": Hughie Green, the 1970s and Popular Memory'*, History Workshop Journal,* Issue 70, 2010, p.181.

with images. And, by the time *Survival Programmes* was published in 1982, that number had more than doubled, rising staggeringly to over 14 million households.[152]

The fact that the family album had come to look, by the 1970s, disturbingly like the lifestyle magazine was something that Spence was acutely aware of. As she frustratedly notes in *The Walking Wounded:*

> If the glorious technicolour world of Kodakology could begin to be challenged… people could understand that the very roots of their being are stitched into certain forms of documentary realism stemming from that most treasured of all family possessions, the family album... But how can this happen when, from the moment we can hold a book and nod in the direction of small rectangles of coloured paper, we continue to be encouraged to believe that all the complexities of the submerged world of family life can be encapsulated in snapshots, that such pictures 'mean' what we are told they mean, that we are who we are told we are.[153]

In light of the 'technicolour world of Kodakology', Exit's choice to work in monochrome constituted a significant decision to work "against the grain" of both the contemporaneous commercial preference for polychrome images and the popular trend toward colourful self-representation. It is significant then, that in compositional terms, a 1978 photograph from *Survival Programmes* of a family having a lunch of buttered bread and tea in front of the television in a sparse maisonette on the Turf Lodge estate, Belfast, strikingly resembles – though in the inverse – the advertisement for "New Beautility Furniture" (fig. 1.38). Drained of the saturated hues that characterised the advertised ideal and situated ironically alongside an interview transcript entitled 'The Wrong Class', an account in which council tenant Helen Coleman seeks advice from a self-help group in Handsworth concerning her appalling living conditions, the image opens up fissures in what Sekula famously described as capitalism's 'phony consumer options of lifestyles' which are inverted, in *Survival Programmes,* through the extraction of colour.[154]

On the one hand, instances of colourlessness manifested themselves as significant moments of ocular interruption within the wider ingestion of polychrome. While on the other, Exit's use of monochrome signifies a refusal of the specialisation of photography, both within the commercial sector and within art and academic institutions where photography had recently (re)acquired the status "Art".[155] For many on the Left who

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[152] BBC, *BBC Annual Report and Handbook*: *Figures for 1956–1986* (BBC 1986).
[153] Jo Spence, op. cit.,1986b, p.212-3.
[154] Allan Sekula, op. cit., 1978, p.855.
[155] It is important to note however, that Spence's insistence that community groups etc., work with colour film puts pressure on the view that colour was specialised. As Spence stresses, colour was a workable medium.

believed in the democratisation of image making, and in documentary's function as a social and political practice, the hierarchisation implicit in the title "Artist" was incompatible with their own self-conceptualisation. Consequently, social documentarians rejected this designation in favour of the label worker or producer. This tendency is reflected in the name of the journal *Camerawork*, which emphasised the photographer's status as labourer. For those associated with Photography Workshop, the journal's title was significant because it allowed the documentarians to align themselves with the underemployed subjects in whose name their work was performed.

Selective Traditions: Colourlessness in the 1970s

In her weighty analysis of Spence's work with the Hackney Flashers, Siona Wilson has rigorously historicised the collective's attempt to negate the specialisation of photography through her evocation of the term 'self-conscious crudity'.[156] Wilson evokes the term to describe the aesthetic mobilised by the Flasher's in their project *Women and Work* (1975) which coupled hand-written text-panels with unframed photographs 'crudely pinned', to use Wilson words, 'onto cheap backing card in irregular patterns'. This calculated de-skilling – not accidently but *deliberately* crude – represented a sophisticated move, Wilson argues, to reposition the cultural work produced by the Flashers within a history of 'proletarian amateurism'.[157] This so-called "amateurism" was also reflected in the temporary arrangement and display of material in the format of transportable, bulletin-boards. Indeed, it was precisely the provisional nature of the Flasher's practice that worked to counter the institutionalisation and professionalisation of photography, which, Spence argues, encouraged entry into a 'competitive ratrace entirely geared towards servicing the needs to contemporary consumer society'.[158]

Yet, what is more significant for Wilson, is the urgency of the bulletin-board format which, she contends, evokes the 'wall newspapers' that were a common feature on notice boards in factories and workplaces during the 1930s. The wall newspaper, Wilson explains, was a temporary collage of textual information, ephemera, leaflets and visual imagery that functioned among working-class communities as a 'leftist alternative

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[156] Siona Wilson, op. cit., 2015, pp.149-50.
[157] Ibid, p.140. Before I continue with this line of inquiry, I want to propose an alternative to Wilson's use of the term "amateurism". Amateurism is a term that is borrowed from Jeff Wall and that I find particularly objectionable in that it infers a lack of skill. In place of "amateurism" I will evoke the term "urgency" which I think better reflects the Flasher's aesthetic which is about immediacy rather than amateurism.
[158] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1976, p.1.

to the mainstream press'. The organisational structure of the Flasher's work is thus, Wilson posits, arranged in such a way as to purposefully establish a connection between the 1930s and the 1970s.[159]

This call to history was impelled within the British context by Terry Dennett's important excavation of the documentary archive. Dennett's research sought to make visible the revolutionary fervour of inter-war projects such as the Workers Film and Photo League. The League was a movement that upheld the self-representation of the working-classes in order, its manifesto proclaimed, that we 'have a valuable record of working class life, which would enable workers in different branches of industry to understand each other's problems'.[160] Humphrey Spender's *Mass Observation* photographs were likewise rescued from obscurity by the theorists and practitioners surrounding *Camerawork* during the 1970s and, in 1981, an entire issue of the journal was dedicated to a sustained examination of the *Mass Observation* archive (fig. 1.39). Meanwhile, James Agee and Walker Evans' aforementioned depression-era study of tenant farmers, *Let Us Now Phrase Famous Men* (1941), was first published in Britain by Peter Owen Publishers in 1965. Indeed, it is significant that, in both in the UK and the US, the seventies constituted a formative decade in the historicisation of working-class culture during which, as cultural critic Eric Hobsbawm notes, the volume of work scrutinising the question of national movements and class culture and what role they play in history was more prolific and fiercely contested than in any previous period.[161] With that in mind, and considering the aforementioned interconnection between Exit Photography Group and Half Moon Photography Workshop, it seems likely that Exit would have been acutely aware of Spence and Dennett's rigorous theoretical examination of the Worker Photography archive. And it is likewise significant that, in a 1973 funding proposal for the Gulbenkian Foundation, Exit situate their project, in their words, 'in the tradition of *Let Us Now Phrase Famous Men*'.[162] That Exit imagine their work in the image of Agee

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[159] Siona Wilson, op. cit., pp.158-160. While simultaneously, Wilson avers, this conscious de-skilling allowed Spence to counter the work she had produced as a commercial photographer. A role that, she herself acknowledge, had made her implicit in the reproduction of patriarchal gender stereotypes.

[160] The manifesto is cited in Su Braden, op. cit., p.9. 'Worker Photography' is otherwise or more formally referred to as 'The Workers Film and Photo League' (WFPL). Jorge Ribalta, op. cit., 2015.

[161] For more on this see: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Specifically, Hobsbawm identifies the years 1968-1988 as the years during which this trend was most ferocious.

[162] Exit Photography Group, 'Poverty Application' (draft), SURVIVAL/1/1, Survival Programmes: Exit Photography Group, Library Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics, London.

and Evans' project importantly demonstrates that the group were concerned, not only with social history, but also with the history of documentary, as well as its politics and forms.

The point I want to argue is that Exit's use of monochrome reads as "the past" despite the political urgency of their project. Thus, if Exit's use of monochrome was not a given, but pointed, then we must read monochrome's inference of the past for politics. We must read for the urgency of history and work towards a history of political forms. Crucially, if we can comprehend Exit's use of monochrome as a formal 'operation' or 'outcome' of what Williams has described in *The Long Revolution* as 'selective tradition', then we can deal with the project's formal elicitation of history more productively.[163] As a means of drawing lines across history through the selection and re-selection of cultural forms, selective tradition functions as a mode of social organisation through which we might understand the structuration of a period.[164] With that in mind, as a past mode that lingers within an otherwise technicolour present, monochrome functions transjunctively to structure meaning across time by binding together two temporally disparate but politically similar moments of economic crisis (figs. 1.40 & 1.41). Exit do not choose monochrome in order to cleanse the image of the detritus of the market, or to make the image of poverty "pure". Rather, in *Survival Programmes*, by accentuating monochrome's pastness, Exit direct us beyond the surface of commerce and towards history. As Williams asserts, the mobilisation of selective tradition functions as a means through which to 'name and place' a particular moment in history.[165]

It seems plausible then, that at a time when profound changes were taking place within working-class communities, the formal repetition of monochrome functioned as a means of anchoring the experience of under-employment in the 1970s within a wider political and representational past. Specifically, the 1970s constituted a moment during which the transformations taking place in society seemed so absolute that all contemporary reference points had, to quote Hall, been 'shot to bits'.[166] In the context of major political upheaval, photographers and theorists alike turned to the past, and to history, in search of a precedent from which to work in an increasingly fragmentary present. By recalling the moment during which the documentation of working-class lives became a social imperative on the Left, Exit were able to position themselves within a

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[163] Raymond Williams, op. cit., 1961, p.69.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., p.66-70.
[166] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987, p.1.

history of critical-oppositional documentary.[167] They, therefore, draw out a narrative of historical continuity that might break with the prevailing mythology of political rupture.

Moreover, I want to argue that Exit position *Survival Programmes* in dialogue with, and *against,* not only the glossy magazine, but the news media. They do this through their use of chroma, coupled with their evocation of language and the formal arrangement of these representational registers in ways that recall the print-news. Through, in other words, the arbitrary juxtaposition of image and text, and the evocation of columns, "headlines", "by-lines" and "subheadings". Indeed, *Survival Programmes* fits within a lineage of socially engaged, quasi-anthropological photographic-news magazines that attempted to proffer a more transparent account of underemployment. The most notable of these are the aforementioned wall newspapers, as well as the pamphlets produced by the Worker Photography movement and more formal projects such as *Left Review* (1934-8) (fig. 1.42. & 1.43). By asserting that the book closely mimics editorial forms and, by implication, the mass media more generally, I claim that *Survival Programmes* affords a critical way of thinking about how media systems are implicated in the production and dissemination of knowledge, a claim that I will develop further in Chapter Two. In making this argument, I assert that Exit mimic mass media forms not because they want to make "truth" claims (by adopting a supposedly "objective" aesthetic style), but because they seek to debunk the very myth of news-media's objectivity. As such, *Survival Programmes* offers an illuminating prism through which we might complicate the social and historical narratives produced by the New Right that actively enabled Thatcherism.

Reading Against the News: A Counter-Hegemonic Dialogue

If, as Sekula contends, political hegemony in advanced capitalist countries hinges on dominant symbolic apparatuses, on mass media spectacles and on educational institutions, then any notion of a "truly" political art is contingent upon its capacity to actively work against such ideological frames.[168] As Louse Phillips suggests, in *The Lasting Impact of Thatcherism*, the major problem facing the Left in Britain during the 1970s was its inability to proffer a compelling alternative to Thatcherism. Despite its deeply contradictory nature, the Thatcherite master-fiction, with its "right to buy" motto and its evocation of the language of "choice", proved extraordinarily persuasive.[169] This

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[167] Raymond Williams, op. cit., 1961, p.63.
[168] Allan Sekula, op. cit., 1978, pp.861-2.
[169] Louse Phillips, 'Hegemony and Political Discourse: The Lasting Impact of Thatcherism', *Sociology,* Vol.32, No.4, November 1998, p.854.

profoundly exclusive ideology was constituted discursively in the media by the mouthpieces of populist opinion, the *Express*, the *Mail* and the *Star*, through the representation, both visual and verbal, of desirable subject positions such as 'the consumer', 'the tax-payer' and 'the British people'.[170] These desirable social typologies, were animated by the Right through the encoding of a set of undesirable or other subject positions such as the 'idle poor', the 'dole scrounger', the 'lay-about', and, of course, the "impure poor". The propagation of these folk devils in the media functioned as a means of winning assent for the abandonment of the post-war consensus.

In accordance with this ideology, unemployment was figured as a symptom of an essential "class attitude". Ignominious phrases such as the "hand-out kids" were coupled, in tabloid newspapers such as the *Daily Express*, with images of teenagers loitering about in the graffiti-strewn stairwells of abandoned high-rises (fig. 1.44). In an article with the headline 'The Lost Generation', a by-line warns: 'Idleness has become a way of life'. Not subjects (or adults) in their own right, the so-called "hand-out "kids" are made to stand in for their working-class parents. These children, the news implies, are the product not of an unfair economic system that has rejected the policy of full-employment, but of their bad mothers. The article cites an interview with a "frustrated care worker" who alarmingly states: 'They're going to be parents [themselves] soon. What'll it do to their kids? I mean, we are creating a generation who don't know what it is to work'.[171] Cast as objects of contempt, the un- and under-employed are made accountable for their own dire economic situation; having inherited, so the story goes, the art of "scrounging" from their parents, and their grandparents before them, they will likewise pass an 'idle way of life' on to their own children. "Listlessness", so the story goes, repeats itself – is *wilfully reproduced* – from one generation to the next. Such representations characterised the centre spreads of tabloid newspapers and cast the urban poor as objects of contempt; themselves accountable for their own dire economic situation.

As Susanne MacGregor shrewdly observed in 1981, hegemonic 'explanations of the inevitability of poverty tend to refer to the characteristics of the "residuum" (what might now be called "scum"), characteristics which lead to their rejection by society [due to] their inability to "fit in" or "match up"'.[172] Such superficial representations of underemployment in the media and underemployment's elaboration as an essential

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[170] Louse Phillips, op. cit., p.852.
[171] 'The Lost Generation', *Daily Express*, Wednesday 19 April 1978, pp.16-7.
[172] Susan MacGregor, op. cit., p.55.

"character trait" served to reinforce prevailing hegemonic discourses by obscuring the underlying structures of inequality and the government's engenderment of mass-unemployment through de-industrialisation. In fact, as MacGregor has argued, the decision to abandon the objective of full employment was made by both parties, and politicians on both benches mobilised the "scrounger" folk devil as a tactic to get this ideological about-turn accepted.[173]

Through the appropriation of editorial forms – through the use of "headlines" and "by-lines" and through the organisation of the transcripts in textual columns, as well as the juxtaposition of text and images – Exit work to produce an alternative, counter-history of underemployment. Phrases taken from the interview transcripts such as 'In the Melting Pot', 'We Understand Our Predicament', 'Tantalizing Glimpses', 'No Chance', 'The Money's Good' (the account of an optimistic sex worker), 'Sweet Life' (the story of a women who works in a sweet factory) and 'Ambitions' function as a set of self-authored, often satirical headlines that work to subvert the disempowering mediation of class experience. Beneath the "headlines", "by-lines" detail the speakers' name(s), housing situations and familial and work statuses before authorship is given over to the inhabitants of the seven inner city locations that Exit map. Wherever possible, Exit remove their voices from the transcripts, interjecting only occasionally with prompts and questions which ensure the readers' comprehension of the material displayed before them. The ostensibly unedited transcripts are, as Exit explain in the book's preface, edited, at times heavily so, so that the material included is most pertinent and addressed what the group described as the 'essential substance… of a given situation'. Exit continue, 'at the same time we have tried to retain the particular spirit and feeling of the occasion and the speakers', for example by maintaining the conversational nature of the accounts and through the inclusion of slang and expletives (*Survival*, 7). Comprised of what Blythe described as an 'irritating' tabloid language, the book's lexis is unquestionably the 'property' of the underemployed.[174]

However, in contrast to Blythe, I do not see Exit's decision to reproduce the so-called 'tabloid' lexicon as a limit. To the contrary, by giving the underemployed the ability to author their own experiences, Exit produce a diverse social portrait that affords an urgent means of testing the authenticity of hegemonic information structures. While in their immediacy, the transcripts cut against monochrome's temporal anteriority. As Stein's analysis of the FSA's use of monochrome demonstrates, the colourless image

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[173] Susan MacGregor, op. cit., p.130.
[174] Roland Blythe, op. cit. Also see: Allan Sekula, op. cit. 1978, p.862.

is by no means an *inherently* oppositional form. Rather, monochrome is made to work politically in *Survival Programmes* through the adjunct of language which functions as an alternative representational register that encodes immediacy. While Exit's negation of colour is at the cost of visual immediacy (it is a conscious choice in favour of history), the transcripts are added in order to add urgency. It is thus not the image itself, as it is in *Living Room*, that affords immediacy in *Survival Programmes*, but its linguistic frame. The shrewd accounts of social disadvantage cohere to produce a complex social portrait of underemployment that renders transparent the structural nature of social inequality.

As Jessica Evans avers, in the early work of the Hackney Flashers, as well as amongst the Leftward-leaning photography collectives surrounding *Camerawork* more generally, there was an earnest concern with 'the relationship between factual and fictional (often commercial) discourses'. Yet, as Evans points out, the belief among many on the Left that, 'with the help of black-and-white film, a wide-angle lens [and] appropriate "victim" subject matter', hegemonic capitalist ideologies could be revealed as "false" through the juxtaposition of opposites – of media fiction and documentary "fact" – was deeply problematic. 'There was at this stage', she notes, 'a residual belief in the evidential efficacy of the black-and-white documentary image'. Calling on Berger, Evans concludes that assuming such a position could only result in a 'gratifying endorsement of one's own views'.[175] Taking such a stance would result, in other words, in a deeply reductive polarity between conflicting positions. That is, between the (quite literally) black-and-white "facts" purported by the New Right press on the one hand, and on the other, the so-called "truths" purported in monochrome by the left. Either way, such assertions undo themselves: if both the Right and the Left assert "truth" via monochrome's supposed facticity, then the irreconcilability of the two positions merely proves their falsity. Yet clearly, as I hope I have demonstrated in this chapter, the differences between the various ways that monochrome and polychrome function are not black and white, or, in other words, binary. Monochrome is not the factual counterpart to polychrome's supposed spuriousness. Nor do I believe, in contrast to Evans, that any of the practitioners active during the 1970s considered this to be the case. The "facticity" of monochrome is clearly not what concerns Exit. I say this because

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[175] Jessica Evans, 'Against Decorum! Jo Spence: A Voice on the Margins' (in) Jorge Ribalta & Terry Dennett (eds) *Jo Spence: Beyond the Perfect Image. Photography, Subjectivity and Antagonism* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2005), p.39-40.

Exit do not attempt to assert any kind of "truth" in *Survival Programmes.* In fact, what is as important as their critique of the New Right, is their implied criticism of the Left itself.

Monochrome's Political Pastness

Crucially, by betraying the complexities of class histories, the transcripts in *Survival Programmes* function to complicate any notion of a "pure poor". Riddled with refutations, internal-conflict, revisions, dead-ends and moments of irony, the utter ambivalence laid bare by the transcripts functions as a critique of our sanitised histories of the working-class, as well as a rejoinder to the Left itself. In his wartime analysis of British politics, *The Lion and the Unicorn,* George Orwell mused that 'one must start by thinking about why it is that English socialism has failed'.[176] Picking up the mantel forty years later, what Hall asks us to acknowledge in the 'The Culture Gap' – and what *Survival Programmes* so effectively reveals – is that it is the Left that is fractured. Rather than whitewash the crisis, Exit reveal as a pipe-dream the possibility of reconciling the Left's romantic image of the working-class with the profound ambiguities that had emerged during the seventies. Namely the muddying by neoliberalism of once distinct class ideologies and the self-cannibalisation of the working-class itself.

In the absence of a convincing Leftist counter narrative to the New Right's apparently persuasive ideology, as Colin Parker, a general studies teacher from London, explains on page 54 of *Survival Programmes*, the students:

> believe in the capitalist system. They all believe the rich are rich because they work hard and got there. They all believe that man is basically greedy, basically unequal… You're fighting rampant individualism… The whole thing's tied up: racism, individualism, anti-socialism – the whole works! All these kids quite happily accept the values of society that are forced on them by the mass media in general (*Survival*, 54).

Turn the page and such moments of affirmation are offset by remarkably lucid reiterations of Marx's theory of saleable labour. As Lee Allane points out in *Back to Square One:* 'if you haven't got too many saleable commodities then I'm afraid, brother, you're on the shit-heap!' (*Survival*, 150). Dudley Dryden, a Jamaican migrant in his mid-forties, neatly unravels the New Right's deceit, arguing that: 'It's easy for the "haves" to say that "have-nots" are not working hard enough or that they are just lazy', he explains, 'but it's not like that in the world today. There's enough for everyone man, but I'm certain that there is not enough for the greed of every man' (*Survival*, 98). Elsewhere, Jenny

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[176] George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (London: Penguin Books, 1941) Available online: http://theorwellprize.co.uk/george-orwell/by-orwell/essays-and-other-works/the-lion-and-the-unicorn-socialism-and-the-english-genius/ (accessed 21/06/2016).

Rossiter, a community worker from Balsall Heath, sums up succinctly the economic prerequisite of negative liberty under capitalism when she states: 'You've got to buy your freedom' (*Survival*, 158).[177] Whilst concurrently, desperate attempts are made to better, or to bury, that which the bourgeois standards tell us is vulgar or shameful, or that which makes the underemployed "undeserving". Intra-class division is apparent when a violent assertion of identity is made against an abject other. In an interview entitled *'This Reputation',* Mrs Stenson utters hesitant phrases such as 'I'm not a snob or anything, but…', while in the same breath she self-consciously confesses to the shame induced by living "over the Border" on one of *those* estates (*Survival,* 34).

Troublingly, during the post-war decades the Conservative "myth of affluence" functioned continuously to obscure the socio-economic currents connecting the thirties and the seventies.[178] Consequently, the structural nature of class inequality was buried beneath the veneer of consumerism; recall Harold Macmillan's famous credo 'you've never had it so good'. By 1956 the writer and politician Wayland Young was already able to make the claim in the literary magazine *Encounter* that Orwell's Wigan had undergone a dramatic transformation 'from barefoot malnutrition to nylon and television, from hallow idleness to flush contentment'.[179] For 'professional social commentators' working in the post-war era, Simon Charlesworth ironically notes, the condition of the working-class could never seem quite as bad as it had in the 1920s and '30s: 'after all, it all happens in colour now'.[180] However, the supposed transformation of fortunes in Wigan was superficial. If Young had found Wigan "flushed" – quite literally *coloured* – by consumerism in the 1950s, this was a transformation that was skin, or more accurately, surface deep. In spite of the proliferation of colourfully tinted consumer durables, what the transcripts reveal is that, by the 1970s, the garish new hue of underemployment signified little beyond a reconfiguration of colour. As Exit Group note in a draft project proposal for the Gulbenkian Foundation:

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[177] In the Anglophone tradition, the concepts of negative and positive liberty were first elaborated by the philosopher Isaiah Berlin at his inaugural lecture 'Two Concepts of Liberty', which was delivered at the University of Oxford on 31st October 1958. See: Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 31 October 1958* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

[178] See: Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working-Class Life 1957-1964* (London: Macmillian Publishers LTD, 1986).

[179] Wayland Young (cited in) Ibid., p.19.

[180] Simon J. Charlesworth, *A Phenomenology of Working-Class Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.184-5.

In this country poverty is essentially cultural rather than material... It can be eliminated but first we must educate people to the fact that it persists and *contrary to popular opinion was heightened rather than removed by affluence.*[181]

Of course, it was not the accumulation of consumer durables among the "poor" that was itself problematic in the seventies, but that, according to the Conservative rhetoric, these objects came to operate as barometers of economic progress, as "emblems" of a less unequal society, and as a reason to vote Conservative. Orwell recognised this deceit even in the thirties, when he astutely noted in *The Road to Wigan Pier* that 'whole sections of the working class… plundered of all they really need are being compensated… by cheap luxuries which mitigate the surface of life'.[182]

This is, of course, something that Waplington was profoundly aware of. As Newbury persuasively asserts, Waplington's use of colour is indicative of his concern with capturing the materiality of the living spaces that his subjects occupy; that is, with capturing the very texture of capitalism and its physical and material excess.[183] Yet, by introducing colour, Waplington mitigates monochrome's anteriority. In his work, more so than in the less chromatically saturated work of, for example, Paul Graham, the shock of colour negates temporality (fig. 1.45). Rephrased, through his use of colour, Waplington "colours over" history and as such, he indicates a break with the past. Waplington's project thus becomes amnesic, his view of history comes to seem myopic. Blinded by the changed complexion of underemployment, he misses the fact that Thatcherism is a red herring that distracts us from the larger problem of capitalism. Put simply, by the time that Thatcher became Prime Minister, consumerism was *already* entrenched. What is important is the recognition that consumer durables merely palliated the surface of underemployment.

By recalling the "grey" inter-war years, Exit subvert the Conservative break-narratives that had developed during the fifties. Distance throws the socio-economic situation of the 1970s into relief, so that the interconnectedness of class histories is made transparent. Against the "post-capitalist" narrative of classlessness, Exit reveal the cosmetic nature of social transformation and in so doing they demonstrate that there is little political valence in the notion of rupture. Indeed, at stake in the transition from monochrome to polychrome is the fact of historical continuity. Whereas the symbols of the Depression had become obsolete, or were perceived as such, during the intervening phase of post-war affluence, as capitalism re-entered a period of crisis during the

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181 Exit Photography Group, op. cit., 1973, n/p.
182 George Orwell, op. cit., 2001, p.83.
183 Darren Newbury, op. cit., 1999, p.33.

seventies, underemployment again became visible. Just as the image of the private, consuming family was central to the ideology being played out on the Right, the image of the thirties – of the depression, dole and of Jarrow – constituted the historical and ideological touchstones of the Left.[184] By formally collapsing the 1970s into the 1930s, Exit give us an image of history repeating itself. As such, they expose unemployment as a necessary by-product of capitalism. In *Survival Programmes,* what we are left with, is an image of history repeating itself, and of the Right re-making itself. By engendering relentless temporal relapses, Exit's use of monochrome encourages a sustained engagement with history, thereby creating a nexus between the past and the present which forces us to treat our history, and our histories of representation, reflexively. Off-set in time, what Exit's use of monochrome indicates is that we *think class historically*.

Part of the "problem" with polychrome, and by implication with *Living Room*, was thus not that it functions unrelentingly as a sullying medium, but its semantic unfixity. Whereas monochrome documentary had accumulated meaning across time, the use of polychrome to document underemployment in the 1980s was – with the exception of the largely unseen "early" colour work – without precedent. As Sekula asserts in 'The Invention of Photographic Meaning', key to comprehending the codes of photographic representation is the comprehension of '*sign emergence'* or the establishment of representational codes. He avers that, 'only by developing a historical understanding of the emergence of the photographic sign can we apprehend the truly *conventional* nature of photographic representation'.[185] The suppression of colour in Britain prior to the 1980s, meant that polychrome was not part of a 'selective tradition'. Polychrome had not yet acquired an established "code" or a discernible cultural logic according to which the viewer could decipher or decode meaning. The problem with *Living Room* is thus, perhaps, not one of excess. It is not that the series is pregnant with colour. But that it lacks a familiar grammar. After all, the most important lesson that Williamson wants us to learn, as the title of the article – 'The Great History Photographs Mislaid' – indicates, is that decontextualised images are not sufficient for the production of knowledge: photographs do not produce meaning in and of themselves, but in relation to a string of signifiers and historical conventions that lend a photograph its message. What *Survival Programmes* gives us, is the history that *Living Room* mislays.

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[184] For more on this see: Stuart Laing, op. cit., pp. 3-30.
[185] Sekula's emphasis. Allan Sekula, op. cit., 1982, p.87.

Mediating the Nation: Representations of race and class at the post-industrial periphery

> The television screen or the page of a newspaper conceals the network of premises, stimuli and constraints which constitute the political character of the nation.[186]
>
> <div align="right">Stuart Hall</div>

As we move through the pages of *Survival Programmes*, through the numerous images of crumbling interiors and stark post-industrial vistas, our steady progress is interrupted, halted even, on page 53 by a different kind of image – an off-kilter, close-up shot of a television screen (fig. 2.1). Frozen upon its surface is an image of Queen Elizabeth II standing before a blurred crowd waving flags and bouquets and leaning forth with arms outstretched. Tightly cropped and framed by a heavy black border, we recognise the photograph as a shot of a television screen through the convex format of the "inner-image" with its subtly rounded edges. The coded nature of the broadcast message is revealed through the prism of the camera's lens which fragments the ostensibly singular image, exposing it instead, as a rough grid comprised of a myriad of minute, illuminated blocks in various gradations of colour, here rendered in a grey scale. Roughly pixilated, Her Majesty's luminous form has been corrupted, or fragmented, through the imperfect process of its mechanical replication.

The photograph, which is captioned *Television programme, 1977*, depicts the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations. As the eye tracks from right to left in pursuit of her ambulant trajectory, the agglutinated mass of blurred forms – the body politic – becomes distinguishable as a multitude of heterogeneous individuals of various ages, classes, genders and races. The image reflects a 'party spirit' that the historian Dominic Sandbrook claims, 'knew no class [or, we might assume, racial] distinction'.[187] What we see in the image of the Jubilee, is an image of a nation at one with itself.

This harmonious image is undone by another photograph that is situated on page 197 of *Survival Programmes*. The image was captured just months after the Jubilee, on 13

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[186] Stuart Hall, cutting of a review by Hall of 'Presse, Radio et Television, En Grande-Bretagne, H. Appia and B. Cassen', the review was originally published in *New Society,* April 1971. UB/CCCS/F, CCS - Records of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

[187] Dominic Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p.634.

August 1977, when anti-fascist protesters clashed with members of the National Front on the streets of Deptford and Lewisham (fig. 2.2). It was here that, a year earlier, far-right candidates gained 40 per cent of the vote in local elections.[188] The photograph depicts a moment during what became known as the 'Battle of Lewisham', when a stand-off occurred on New Cross Road between anti-fascist protesters and mounted police. If, when Harold Wilson launched the Urban Programme in May '68, he envisaged the initiative as a means of ameliorating racial tensions in Britain's inner city, the woefully underfunded programme was evidently unsuccessful.[189] In the decade that followed the Programme's initiation, the Callaghan and Thatcher governments wilfully ignored the urgent recommendations made by the research arm of the Urban Programme, the Community Development Projects (CDPs). Consequently, as this photograph attests, the urban situation entered a period of rapid decline.[190] During the buoyant 1950s, thousands of Commonwealth migrants had settled in industrial areas adjacent to cities such as Bradford, Birmingham and Wolverhampton, where jobs were abundant and housing was affordable. But by the end of the 1970s, the combined effects of the global financial crisis and deindustrialisation had taken their toll. 'It is against this fulcrum – which marks the interconnection between the politics of race and the politics of the inner city – that', Stuart Hall notes, 'the wheel of British racism first begins to turn'.[191] Many people were searching for scapegoats to blame for the nation's decline and resentment began to fester among Britain's white working-class population, particularly in urban areas where competition for jobs and housing was most acute. In fact, an opinion poll conducted by the analytics company Gallup, in February 1978, found that 49 per cent of people surveyed thought that Asian and Caribbean migrants should be offered financial support to return "home". For the 49 per cent, the fact that many of the demographic to whom they referred had been born in Britain was irrelevant.[192] No longer off-set at a convenient distance, the appearance of black and Asian subjects in the mother country – on the streets of Handsworth and Brixton, in newspapers, and at home, in the living room, on one's TV – had the effect of destabilising the essentialist theory that Britishness means whiteness.

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[188] Dominic Sandbrook, pp.588-9.

[189] For more on the Urban Programme see the introduction to this thesis. Also see: Martin Loney, op. cit.

[190] For a critical analysis of the Urban Programme see: Ibid.

[191] Stuart Hall, 'Racism and Reaction' (in) *Commission for Racial Equality*, *Five Views of Multi-Racial Britain: Talks on Race Relations Broadcast by BBC TV* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978), p.28.

[192] Dominic Sandbrook, op. cit., p.580.

The limits of the Government's Urban Programme are born out amongst the pages of *Survival Programmes* which conveys a complex and at times deeply contradictory portrait of life in the inner city. In Exit's project, any notion of a coherent national totality is necessarily problematised, primarily because, as they suggest, social inclusion is preconditioned by an opposing concept of exclusion. Those who cannot see themselves reflected in 'the nation's' homogenising mirror cannot properly belong.[193] It is perhaps strange then, that Exit include this rendering of the Jubilee in *Survival Programmes.* The celebratory tone of the photograph is profoundly at odds with the discursive context within which it sits – namely, a book that addresses 'the less acceptable face of capitalism'. As the Battle of Lewisham attests, during the 1970s the concept of "Britishness" had become profoundly unstable. For the majority of subjects featured in *Survival Programmes*, the singular and homogeneous image of the nation that the Jubilee conjured was increasingly at odds with the reality of how nationhood is lived and experienced on a day-to-day basis. Why, then, do Exit include this seemingly anomalous image in *Survival Programmes*? How does the image produce meaning in relation to, or in tension with, the visual and textual context within which is it situated?

In what follows, I will address these questions through an analysis of the televisual and how the television is framed on the pages of *Survival Programmes*. I am interested in the aforementioned televisual image – the first of five closely cropped shots of television screens included in the project – not simply because it depicts the Queen's Silver Jubilee, but because the image of the Jubilee that it captures is triply mediated: first through the prism of the television's screen, then through the camera's lens and finally, through the page of the book and through the transcribed word. This is, after all, not a straightforward image of the Jubilee taken from amongst the crowd at the roadside. Rather, it is a photograph of the event's televisual *transmission*. While the image in part functions as a historical anchor, it will be my contention that its significant representational inconsistencies exceed its instrumental purpose to situate the viewer in space and time. I will argue that the image of the Jubilee is significant because it draws to the surface complex questions about mediation and the role that hegemonic or "mass" information systems, such as broadcasting and print journalism, play in the construction and consolidation of our idea of the nation and concepts of national identity. Specifically, Exit's insertion of the image draws attention to the fact that, as networks that traverse the nation, mass media assume, or attempt to impose, a coherent concept of national unity. This inquiry prompts questions about the ways

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[193] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1999, p.4.

through which our social and political lives, our homes and the idea of what it means 'to be British' have been both dislocated by, and mediated through the television screen, which comes to stand in *Survival Programmes* for the mass media more generally. As Joe Moran shrewdly urges, we must resist the assumption that the British public were 'united cosily around the TV set in the 1970s'.[194]

In light of its function as a tool for the pervasive distribution of ideological messages, as David Morley has argued in his formative volume *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity,* we must think critically about how broadcasting, vis-à-vis the mass media more broadly, is implicated in the encoding and reaffirmation of existing power structures and social systems.[195] These concerns, I suggest in this chapter, are central to Exit's photobook. The book was envisioned by Exit as an object that would be mobilised discursively in adult education classes, community centres and youth groups and the collective's pedagogic aims were endorsed by Stuart Hall when he championed the book's publication by the Open University Press.[196] I argue that, in its pedagogic potentiality, *Survival Programmes* points towards an urgent return to the social whereby the struggle for and over meaning is established durationally, by and between active viewing bodies within localised geographical space. This localised form of information, I claim, operates in tension with and in opposition to, national information systems, such as broadcasting and print news which were becoming increasingly right-wing after 1968. The massification of television during the 1970s, coupled with Rupert Murdoch's takeover of the *News of the World* (1969), quickly followed by *The Sun* – which, by 1974, had shifted its ideological allegiance from Labour to the Conservative Party – resulted in a homogenisation of the news.[197] In reference to the pervasive practice of discriminatory policing, as Arun Kundnani significantly postulates, what we need is a history of mass media that 'parallels the history of space, understood in terms of

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[194] Joe Moran, op. cit., p.192.
[195] David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), p.118. All the literature that deals with broadcasting in this chapter is indebted to Raymond Williams' seminal book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. See: Raymond Williams, *op. cit.,* 1974.
[196] Stuart Hall, handwritten note from Stuart Hall to Exit Photography Group endorsing the Open University Press' publication of *Survival Programmes*, SURVIVAL/1/1, Survival Programmes: Exit Photography Group, Library Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics, London.
[197] In 1981, Murdoch also acquired the *Times* and the *Sunday Times.* Because of this takeover, the Murdoch corporation became the largest newspaper group in the UK. For a detailed analysis of Murdoch's involvement in British politics see: Owen Jones, *The Establishment: And How They Get Away With It* (London: Penguin/Random House UK, 2014), pp.85-123.

movement… ghettoisation, policing of boundaries, mobility out of boundaries and consolidation within them'.[198] *Survival Programmes,* I contend, initiates this work.

Broadcasting the Jubilee

Whether figured as an object of desire, a vehicle through which to assuage boredom or an object of unwavering contempt, the television is omnipresent in *Survival Programmes.* In a transcript entitled 'Sweet Life', Linda Reeves, a boiled sweet factory worker living alone in a flat in Leytonstone, London, sums-up the domestic turn, the turn to the *television*, succinctly. 'When I come home from work', she explains, 'I sit myself down and the telly goes on *(Laughs)*... Oh I'm glued to it. I'm so contented here, I just don't want to go out… All I want to do is sit in' (*Survival*, 90). Yet Reeves' contentment, afforded in part by compensation received for losing 'about an inch' of her index finger in a workplace accident, is rare amongst the pages of *Survival Programmes.*

Against the overwhelming greyness of the domestic interior, in *Home-bound pensioner,* the television is magnetic in its luminosity (fig. 2.3). Affording 'a private universe of fantasy', the screen depicts the longed-for rural idyll that the pensioner cannot reach. His unfettered capacity to tour the world from the comfort of his armchair exists in contradistinction to his relative confinement: restricted, as this pensioner is, to the interior by his own physical and economic immobility.[199] In the absence of both expendable cash and any predetermined daily structure, for the elderly, those without work and those unemployed in reproductive labour, the television provides both solace, and a vital way of frittering away hours of otherwise unstructured time.[200] On page 36 of *Survival Programmes* Mrs Stenson, a stay at home mum from Middlesbrough, rhythmically captures the monotonous work-a-day routines of low-income parenthood. She recounts her dislocation as follows: 'I get up in the morning. Do the housework. Go to town. Come back. Get his lunch. Sit and watch telly all day and night… That's it, my week. Every day's the same'. Conditioned by the combined factors of introjected feelings of shame, financial necessity and the profound inadequacies of her immediate locale – a space rendered almost uninhabitable by lacerating cuts vested by the government upon public spending – Mrs Stenson's finds herself in a state of relative confinement. In response to the hostilities of her immediate locale, strewn as it is, with 'dog muck, broken glass' and 'half bricks', Mrs Stenson recoils behind closed doors and

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[198] Arun Kundnani (cited in) David Morley, op. cit., p.120.
[199] James Curran (cited in) Stuart Laing, op. cit., p.18.
[200] David Morley, op. cit., p.90.

drawn curtains in self-imposed exile from the estate outside (*Survival*, 36). Inside, she has only her infant son and the TV for company.

Time and again, the accounts included in *Survival Programmes* force to the surface contentious questions concerning community deprivation, socialisation, and the increased *mediatisation* of social relationships. As the British government attempted to reconfigure the economy in the wake of recession and the mass unemployment induced by deindustrialisation, the spaces traditionally associated with working-class socialisation such as the shop floor and the social club entered a protracted and irreversible period of decline. The post-war era thus represented, as I asserted in Chapter One, a moment of profound societal restructuration that would dramatically alter the social fabric and the way that working-class subjects interacted with one another in space, as well as the systems and spheres through which socio-economic and political knowledge came to circulate. As a consequence of its massification, largely enabled by a new affordability, the television came increasingly to serve as the primary mechanism for social exchange through which the public values of the world "out there" were able to permeate the bounded space of the domestic interior, allowing the microcosm within to be integrated into a larger metaphor of public life.[201] In fact, in its capacity to transgress the physical limits of the home, the television had come to represent the foremost "channel" through which the powerful were able to gain access to the powerless.[202] By circumventing working-class spheres of sociability, the mass media, specifically broadcasting, affords immediate entry into the private realm of the individual.[203] In this changed climate, we must therefore retheorise post-industrial patterns of social interaction and the very channels through which people were consuming images and ideologies. Certainly, within the isolated and damp-ridden one-up one-down that Mrs Rogers describes on page 18 of *Survival Programmes,* the television is made responsible for bringing the public world inside and vested with the dissemination of knowledge, as well as the norms and values through which she and her children are socialised. As Mrs Rogers urges: 'They seem to learn things off the

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[201] Between 1971-1974 TV manufacturers experienced their "boom years" and by 1974, the year that Exit began shooting *Survival Programmes*, nearly 18 million households contained a television set. By the time *Survival Programmes* was published in 1982, that number had increased to over 20 million households. For more on television's massification and its social and ideological implications see Raymond Williams, op. cit., 1974. Specifically, see: 'The Technology and the Society', pp.9-31. Also see: David Morley, op. cit.

[202] Stuart Hall, 'Whose Public, Whose Service?', in Wilf Stevenson (ed.), *All Our Futures: The Changing Role and Purpose of the BBC, BBC Charter Review Series* (London: British Film Institute, 1993), p.24.

[203] Alexander Kluge & Oskar Negt, 'The Public Sphere and Experience: Sections', *October* 46, Fall 1988, p.63.

television… Even if you can't see it in real life you can see it on telly. Just switch it on, it's facts' (*Survival,* 18).

During the 1970s, the spectre of national decline – rising inflation, mass trade union unrest and high levels of unemployment – was countervailed in the media through the construction and perpetuation of an increasingly narrow and nostalgic image of Queen and country. In fact, through its denial of the complexities of the socio-political situation, the Queen's Jubilee parade, as well as its televisual reproduction, functioned as a historical gloss that masked rising inequalities and deepening social fissures. At a time of significant social upheaval, James Callaghan, who Sandbrook notes 'made no secret of his admiration for the Queen', saw the Jubilee as an opportunity for rousing national accord through an appeal to the nation's 'appetite for old-fashioned patriotic entertainment'.[204] As such, the Jubilee reflects not a cohesive sense of national unity, but a mood of anxiety engendered by a deepening uncertainty about the "nature" of Britishness. As Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz have argued in 'Scripting Media Events: Contest, Conquest and Coronation', ceremonies such as the Jubilee rarely occur organically, but are the outcomes of careful design and are often conceived with their 'telegenic properties in mind'. The power of the ceremony, they aver, issues precisely from its self-professed "authenticity". By masking the ceremony's own carefully orchestrated choreography and making their stage the street as opposed to the television studio, such events profess their own organicism. The event presents itself, as Dayan and Katz state, as 'narrated – but supposedly not created – by television; their origin is not in the secular routines of the media but in the "sacred centre" that endows them with the authority to pre-empt our time and attention'.[205] Ritualised national ceremonies 'recall and reiterate basic values of the society and offer a shared focus of attention and at least vicarious participation'.[206]

Significantly, in the face of the domestic turn, broadcasting assumes the ideological work of enabling national networks of inclusion. The broadcast image of the Queen's Jubilee dramatises both television's unificatory function and broadcasting's implication in the formulation and propagation of a particular image of the nation and national identity. As we imagine ourselves watching the Queen from our displaced position within the living room, "we", the viewer – the multiple, simultaneous, 'virtual' witness,

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[204] Dominic Sandbrook, op. cit., p.623.
[205] Daniel Dayan & Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p.32-3.
[206] Ibid. p.28.

absent yet present, physically distant but within eye- and earshot – become incorporated within the crowd that lined the invisible street located beyond the camera's lens. We thus become virtually incorporated in the throng that flooded central London in order to observe the Queen's symbolic procession from St Paul's Cathedral to the Guildhall. We are caught up in an event that culminated in the gathering of over one million spectators outside the gates of Buckingham Palace, a space contemporaneously described by *The Times* as the 'tribal arena of British patriotism'.[207] Through the act of collective consumption the viewer, both dislocated and located, thus reaffirms the Queen's sovereignty, thereby becoming part of the harmonious 'whole' posited by the broadcast image. While at the same time we legitimise a particular, historical image of the 'nation' unified through performed tradition. It is, in other words, through the act of witnessing, of being amongst other *viewers*, that we become incorporated within, or socialised into, a national story.[208]

The public arena of national broadcasting culture is, Morley avers, the 'place where Englishness is… articulated and reflected back to the domestic audience in its own leisure time'.[209] As opposed to the very public, *collective* nature of the Jubilee parade itself, Exit capture the ceremony as it is observed in isolation, from within the private realm of the domestic interior, revealing the extent to which broadcasting divides or disrupts immediate space, whilst simultaneously drawing disparate locales together. Broadcasting overlays geographies, collapses them onto one another, reproducing and replicating them, while at the same time, it manufactures the imaginary. Thus, while the ideologies that undergird "domestic" national politics might seem far removed from the politics of the domestic interior, through *mediation*, these apparently disparate spheres are in fact traced onto one another and revealed as inextricable. Importantly then, what this image dramatises is the fact that, by the 1970s, the home, the locality and the nation cannot be considered discrete spaces. Rather, they are mutually conditioned and, as Morley eloquently notes, 'tied together by media messages'.[210]

Crucially, when the ceremonial event coincides with a moment of crisis, the event acquires heightened significance. Having tapped, under these conditions, into the national consciousness and a shared sense of nostalgia, the Jubilee comes to speak the nation's deepest desires and anxieties. In fact, the nation's first major television

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[207] *The Times* (cited in) Dominic Sandbrook, op. cit., p.633.
[208] David Morley, op. cit. See: Chapter 5: 'Broadcasting and the Construction of the National Family', pp.105-27.
[209] Ibid., p.118.
[210] Ibid., p. 7.

broadcast captured outside the BBC broadcasting studios at Alexandra Palace was itself occasioned by a perceived crisis: the abdication of Edward VIII who renounced (or was deposed of) the throne in 1937 in order to marry Wallis Simpson, an America divorcee. The abdication crisis engendered a profound sense of anxiety concerning the fate of the nation, and in an effort to restore national moral, the state organised the televisual transmission of the coronation of Edward's younger brother Albert, who would become George VI (figs. 2.4-2.5). From its conception, the televisual transmission of the royal ceremony was always already bound up with profound social anxieties and a deep sense of romanticism for a more stable nation and national family.

Against the oncoming tide of socio-political antagonism, the Queen's Jubilee celebrations were remade in the exact image of the Coronation – an event described by Dayan and Katz as "the first great television event" – down to the very details of street parties, complete with cucumber sandwiches, caraway seed cake and, of course, coronation chicken. Thus, what the Jubilee manifests is a historically codified, triumphant image of "Great" Britain that functions to mitigate against what was contemporaneously perceived by the social historian, Patrick Wright, as an increasingly bewildering and seemingly purposeless present-day experience (figs. 2.6-2.7).[211] In its timelessness or historicity, the conservative taint of the national ritual thus belies a deep-seated desire for continuity in the face of change. When Wright, who attended university in Canada, returned to the UK in the summer of 1979 – a return that coincided with Thatcher's election as Prime Minister – he observed a nation living wistfully 'in an old country'. England was embroiled in an almost compulsive evocation and mythologisation of its own history.[212] By weaving together significant historical episodes carefully gleaned from the past, through inclusion and purposeful omission – or what Wright describes as the 'stylisation of history' – the pageant functions to sustain a particular bygone, national narrative and with it, a sentimental national consciousness. 'Abstracted and redeployed', as Wright confirms, 'in the political conscription of the past' history is 'purged of [all] political tension' and resurfaces, transformed, into 'a unifying spectacle [for] the settling of all disputes'.[213]

As such, the media performs the ideological work of "blocking", masking or rendering opaque the dense web of socio-economic and political contradictions and class and racial hierarchies that underpin capitalist social relations. If the media constitutes our

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[211] Daniel Dayan & Elihu Katz, op. cit., p.31. Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.25.
[212] Patrick Wright, op. cit., p.25.
[213] Ibid., pp.25-7.

public sphere and the main channel through which our cultural lives are elaborated for us, then we are fundamentally limited by the pools of images, and the explanations of events, social problems, various lifestyles, etc., that that sphere provides. As Hall importantly postulates in 'Whose Public, Whose Service', broadcasting's selective rendering of the world "feeds" the 'social imaginary; it shapes what the public knows, but also gives form to its fears, anxieties and desires and pleasures thereby helping to constitute the social identities through which we experience ourselves and act in the world'.[214] While broadcasting was responsible for providing the nation with an image of itself, the culturally homogeneous image of a specific type of 'white lower middle class national ethnic identity *as Englishness*' was dependent on a series of exclusions.[215]

There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack

On page 56 of *Survival Programmes* we meet Mrs McAlpine, a grandmother in her mid-fifties who lives in a two-bedroom council flat on Noble Street, Newcastle, with her son and his daughters. In the transcript, which is titled 'Give Me the Olden Days', McAlpine makes a deeply nostalgic appeal to an undisclosed moment when the working-class were apparently "better on" or *better off* under capitalism (fig. 2.8). If 'the olden days [were] back', she lyrically laments, 'we'd be better on' (*Survival,* 56). Mrs McAlpine's vague, distinctly wistful appeal to the "Olden Days" is dependent upon a profound myopia. To quote Wright at length:

> It is in the service of the nation that public images and interpretations of the past circulate. If many traditional and community-based forms of cultural integration have been eroded, the nation which replaces them… [enacts] a constant – if also always momentary, fragile and partial – redemption of its unhappy remains. Where… so much contemporary experience in this period of economic and imperial decline can only disappoint or frustrate, the symbolism of the nation can still provide meaning.[216]

During this particular historical conjuncture, **'**the olden days' was a tacitly racialised term used to conjure an image of Britain, or of *England*, that was profoundly exclusory, if not 'synonymous with whiteness'.[217]

In the transcript, Mrs McAlpine describes the multiple break-ins and acts of vandalism to which she has been subject since moving to the flat, as well as her long-relinquished faith that the council might rehouse her. When Exit ask Mrs McAlpine how long she has been on the housing register, her son Glen interjects. His reply is confounding: 19 long

[214] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1993, p.24.
[215] My emphasis. David Morley, op. cit., p.118.
[216] Patrick Wright, op. cit., p.25.
[217] Paul Gilroy, op. cit., 1992, p.vii.

years. 'Everybody calls this 'Apache Town, don't they?', he continues, implicitly linking what was formerly an issue of economics, of a local authority housing programme crippled by austerity, with an immigration problem. 'When I first came here [Newcastle] it was not so bad. It was a nice place', Mrs McAlpine explains, but 'they're letting all the scruff in, and it's getting worse' (*Survival*, 56).

Evoking the coded lexicon through which racism, while not overtly stated, is nonetheless uttered, Mrs McAlpine's use of the word "scruff", like the evocation of the term immigrant, and her son's flagrant use of the designation Apache, stands-in discursively for the black subject.[218] Defining herself against the scruff, she reiterates an emergent and essentialised theory of cultural incompatibility.[219] For McAlpine and her son, the hypervisibility of Commonwealth migrants, both on the streets and in the newspapers, provides the most immediate and palpable rationale for their economic deprivation.

Elsewhere, on page 80 of the photobook, Exit introduce the reader to Roy Barnett; a nineteen-year-old who boards at a lodging house in Handsworth, Birmingham (fig. 2.9). Barnett's transcript, which is entitled 'No Chance', is full of slippages. In overtly jingoistic terms, Barnett laments the decline of Britain, or, more specifically, England. 'Eng-England is all over the place now', he bitterly explains, adding 'Everything's going blinking wrong in England'. He continues:

> Handsworth is the worst area of housing I have ever been in… I hate it around here… everything's the same, you know, Sambos, Pakis all bleeding over the place, you haven't got a chance (*Sniffs*)… You just ain't got a chance, you know (*Sniffs*)… its odd houses here or there with *us* are. You know what I mean? *Us, white people* I suppose (My emphasis, *Survival,* 82).

In his pained attempts to make sense of his feelings of alienation, Barnett's recourse is to a familiar tabloid rationale. Barnett, who is the palpable product of social disenfranchisement, describes a turbulent youth in a beleaguered and authoritarian care system, followed by an adolescence spent in, but more often than not out of, low-paid, low-skilled factory jobs. 'All the jobs I'd had was in factories', he explains, 'I hated working in factories. Oil and everything around you… the same thing happening day after day. I must have had about eighteen jobs… kept on giving in' (*Survival,* 80). On the facing page Exit include a steely photograph of a car worker on the production line at the Ford automotive factory in Dagenham (fig. 2.10). The image of the assembly

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[218] Paul Gilroy, 'The End of Anti-Racism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 17, Issue 1, 1990, p.75.
[219] Ibid.

worker, content in and consumed by his assigned process, stands in contrast to Barnett's frank account of the tedium of industrial toil. His struggle to conform to the repetitive routines required of the labourer under capitalism, as well as his refusal to obey the demands of his superiors or his foster carers, invariably lead to his dismissal from work and his expulsion from yet another foster home. Eventually, we learn, Barnett is incarcerated in Her Majesty's Borstal, where he remains until the age of eighteen. Nonetheless, for Barnett the lack of worthwhile jobs and adequate housing in Handsworth are not consequences of capitalism's shortcomings, of its prerequisite need for a reserve army of labour, but of immigration. His solution to the so-called immigration problem is a simple, if ironic one: emigrate. 'If I-I had a chance I'd emigrate', he asserts, 'honest to God!' (*Survival,* 82).

In Barnett's transcript, the concepts of race and nation collide beneath the sign of culture, and blackness and Englishness are, to quote the black British historian Paul Gilroy, 'constructed as incompatible, mutually exclusive identities'. Like Mrs McAlpine's transcript, Barnett's crass outburst illustrates an important point about the racialisation of the category "British" and the constructed dichotomy between white and black, "us" and "them", the "self" and the "other". For Barnett, the concepts of whiteness and Englishness are so intimately linked that to speak of British people, of 'us English', is to evoke a lexicon that is always already racially discrete.[220] For Barnett, to be British is to be white.

Barnett's attempts to grasp and fix a concept of Englishness tell us something about both the constructed nature of identity and the dramatically altered status of a whiteness rendered precarious by the decline of empire and the concomitant decline of established imperial socio-economic hierarchies.[221] Thus, what Exit are attempting to engage with in *Survival Programmes* is the representational nature of "crisis". Simply put, that a crisis of capitalism was able to take on the image of a potent national identity crisis during the 1970s was a consequence of the New Right's ability to successfully mobilise the media toward the encoding of a necessarily *exclusive* notion of "Britishness". That notion's regressive restoration was pictured as a panacea for national decline. The media 'constituted', as Hall has importantly established, 'its audience by the way it represented them'.[222] What Exit reveal in *Survival Programmes,*

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[220] Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1993), pp.27-8.
[221] Alfred J. Lopez, *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p.5.
[222] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1993, p.32.

is the extent to which xenophobic attitudes towards blackness were bound up with (if not inextricable from), and limited by, mass media representations and interpretations of the prevailing socio-economic situation.

As Gilroy observed in 'The End of Anti-Racism', the 'precious yet precarious Churchillian, stiff-upper-lip culture' born 'underneath the arches, down in the air raid shelters where Britannia enjoyed her finest hours', is a history from which the Caribbean and Asian community are disbarred.[223] In fact, it is precisely through the configuration of so-called vernacular forms of English ethnicity that the media has been able to 'domesticate' what Morley has described as a 'particular, ethnic version of the nation'.[224] Likewise, the red, white and blue flags brandished from the roadside by the Queen's admirers' function as the fluttering markers of empire; to borrow from Gilroy, the all too familiar, historic symbol of British subjugation is now made into an 'iconic signature in the weird post-colonial pageantry of national decline and national rebirth'.[225]

If, for the majority of the population, the Union Jack was a symbol of national identity and of inclusion, for Afro-Caribbean and Southeast Asian communities in the face of their everyday encounter with racism, the Union Jack carried an alternative set of connotations. Gilroy's writings attest to the malleability and the precarity of the meanings attached to signs, and the divergent nature of the way signs produce meanings for different audiences. For the colonial other the British flag is not a symbol of inclusion, but a potent emblem of exclusion. After all, as Gilroy wryly reminds us in his aptly named 1987 analysis of British racism, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack.*[226] In spite of the fact, as Sandbrook points out, that 'not all the faces [at the Jubilee celebrations] were white', many white Britons continued to express hostility to the presence of Commonwealth migrants upon British soil. In particular, their enmity was directed towards those marked as different by the colour of their skin.[227]

What's more, in our present moment, nationalist sentiment continues to be modelled in the hues of the Union Jack. On the eve of the European Union Membership Referendum, on Tuesday, 14 June 2016, *The Sun* called for its readers to "beLEAVE in Britain"; the word "leave" cut from a Union Flag (fig. 2.11). While, in the referendum's fractious wake, former Prime Minister Theresa May exhumed the never-fully-buried

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[223] Paul Gilroy, op. cit., 1990, pp.75-6.
[224] David Morley, op. cit., p.119.
[225] Paul Gilroy, op. cit., 1992, p.xxiv.
[226] See: Ibid.
[227] Dominic Sandbrook, op. cit., p.633.

rhetoric of British superiority. Abstractly brandishing the tricolour once more in defence of Britain, she proclaimed, that 'what we want' – "we", here referring to the nation ventriloquised through the populist discourse of an increasingly hard-line Conservative Party – is a 'red, white and blue Brexit'.[228] Although the object of this jingoistic populism has been displaced from the populations of the Indian Subcontinent and the Caribbean onto those from Eastern Europe, the reactionary message remains the same. We can "Make Britain Great Again" (a maxim itself born of the Conservative Party's 1950 general election campaign) through a return to the sovereign days of Empire (fig. 2.12). In light of the fact that the Conservative Party membership has just elected a Prime Minister who infamously referred to members of the Commonwealth as 'flag-waving piccaninnies', in 2019 *Survival Programmes* continues to elicit uncomfortable questions about the populist image of "England" that crystallised in the wake of the collapse of the Empire and with it, the nation's economy.[229] As Hall notes, 'the erosion of the nation state, national economies and national cultural identities is a… complex and dangerous moment'.[230] Disempowered and set painfully adrift from the once secure moorings of their historical national identity, amongst the economically and ideologically disillusioned there emerged a yearning for an older, ostensibly more homogeneous notion of Englishness.

In its search for salvation against the ravages of decline, this backward-looking ideology takes as its measure that moment of rousing national accord when, to quote Harry Moore, an old age pensioner from Newcastle upon Tyne, we fought 'for England when England was about on the bottom' (*Survival,* 166). It is this moment, so the nationalist narrative goes, that must be recovered if we are to salvage the nation from the melting pot of decline. During this moment, there emerged, to borrow from Bill Schwartz, 'a conservative sensibility, barely articulate but present nonetheless, determined to believe that England, the victor of war, had subsequently had defeat thrust upon her' as the primal colonial encounter was re-enacted in reverse upon English soil.[231] By the 1980s, the Right claimed, Britain had found herself "swamped", to borrow a repugnant

[228] Theresa May (cited in) Jessica Elgot, 'Theresa May Calls For "Red, White and Blue Brexit"', *The Guardian* (online)*,* Tuesday 6 December2016. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/ 2016/dec/06/theresa-may-calls-for-red-white-and-blue-brexit (accessed 01/03/2017).
[229] See: Owen Bowcott & Sam Jones, 'Johnson's "Piccaninnies" Apology', *The Guardian* (online), Wednesday 23 January 2008.
https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2008/jan/23/london.race (accessed 01/08/2019).
[230] Stuart Hall, 'The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity', in Anthony D King (ed.) *Culture, Globalization and the World-system: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997a), p.25.
[231] Bill Schwarz, 'The Only White Man in There: The Re-Racialisation of England, 1956-1968', *Race & Class,* Jul 1996, Vol.38 (1), p.74.

turn of phrase from the Iron Lady herself, "by people with a different culture". As Thatcher explained in an interview for Granada Television's current affairs programme, *World in Action* (27 January 1978):

> I think that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture; and, you know, the British character has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.[232]

Thatcher's use of the term 'swamped' is often described as a blunder. Yet Thatcher was a cautious and deliberate public orator and, in reality, she had carefully calculated the risks of evoking such language and deemed the political gains to be worth the risk. The great irony, Sandbrook observes, of Thatcher's supposed gaffe was that 'it was one of the most effective things she ever said'.[233] By evoking just one word, Thatcher was able to situate herself as a disciple of Powell who, a decade earlier, had stretched the analogy of occupation to the extreme by evoking an overtly belligerent lexicon. During his so-called 'Rivers of Blood' speech, Powell vitriolically proclaimed that, 'in this country, in 15 or 20 years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man'.[234] This image acquires its potency, as Gilroy astutely notes, from the disturbing inversion of the colonial hierarchy and the transposition of the subject positions of master and slave, self and other, white and black, British and "non-British", which of course is to belie the fact that citizens of the Commonwealth were, after the British Nationalities Act was passed in 1948, *British citizens.*[235] In spite of their legal status as such, the news media echoed Powell and claimed that the nation's boundaries had been breached by some alien other prone to the unsavoury habit of mugging old women in the street. Through her utterance of the term "swamped" on *World in Action*, Thatcher positioned herself as an apologist of Powell on national television. Through the medium of broadcasting she sent a simultaneous message to millions of disenfranchised voters that legitimised their fears. The implied message, Sandbrook observes, was this: "This government understands you".[236]

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[232] Thatcher used this term in 1978 an interview with *World in Action*, an investigative current affairs programme made by Granada Television for ITV (7 January 1963 - 7 December 1998).
[233] Dominic Sandbrook, op. cit., p.593-5.
[234] Enoch Powell (cited in) Paul Gilroy, op. cit., 1992, p.108 & pp.124-5.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Dominic Sandbrook, op. cit., p.593-5.

Mugging: 'To use a crude but effective word – its racial'

The deeply disquieting effect of this highly pervasive, tabloid-driven discourse is evidenced on page 106 of *Survival Programmes*. In a transcript intitled 'The Olden Days', Mrs Sephton, an old age pensioner who lives with her husband on the 17th floor of a tower block in the Lozells area of Birmingham, asserts the mugger's "quintessential blackness". As she describes the changing complexion of the community, she explains that there has been an increase in incidences of 'mugging and all this snatching of bags' in the area. 'But it's mainly Jamaicans that are doing that', she explains. 'It's very rare that you find the Indian people in trouble', she says in an authoritative manner, 'once or twice I think they've caught a couple of white people, but it's very rare' (*Survival,* 106).

In the tabloids, "mugging" (a term imported from America at the start of the 1970s) was frequently on the agenda.[237] In an April 1976 report on pickpocketing, the *Daily Mail*, echoing Powell, openly pointed the finger of blame at Britain's black community (fig. 2.13). In bold black typeset, the headline proclaimed: 'Mugging: "To use a crude but effective word – it is racial"'. A banner at the top of the page reads: 'Enoch Powell pinpoints a growing peril'. Alongside the banner, sits a photograph of Powell whose menacing face is set-off against a stark black background. The standfirst reads: 'MUGGING is a racial phenomenon, Mr Enoch Powell said yesterday'. The article, which is almost exclusively comprised of direct extracts from Powell's address to the Cambridgeshire Constabulary, explains:

> That new thing [mugging], as is reasonably being admitted, is connected with the change in the composition of the population of certain of our great cities… I see not the slightest prospect that with the scale of introduction of these alien wedges into the population of our cities, that there is the slightest prospect of a community attitude growing up in the future.[238]

While a *Daily Mirror* headline concerning the infamous mugging case that sparked the seminal volume by members of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts), *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order,* crassly proclaimed: 'Boys

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[237] In *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*, the authors pinpoint the 17 August 1972 as the date that the word "mugging" was first used in a British newspaper. The term was used in a *Daily Mirror* article with the telling headline: 'As Crimes of Violence Escalate, a Word Common in the United States Enters the British Headline: Mugging. To our Police, it is a frightening new strain of crime'. See: Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts (eds) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p.3.

[238] Enoch Powell (cited in) 'Mugging: "To use a crude but effective word – it is racial"'*, Daily Mail*, Monday 12 April 1976, Issue 24840, p.9.

went mugging for "a bit of fun" and 30p' (fig. 2.14). The article's matter-of-fact standfirst reads as follows: 'PAUL STOREY, 16-year-old leader of a gang of teenage muggers, was ordered yesterday to be detained for 20 years. He led an attack on a home-going Bonfire Night reveller, battered him with a brick and riffled his pockets'. The article's author, Keith Colling, goes on to stress that 'ALL' the members of the gang (there were three children involved in the incident, whether or not three youths constitutes a "gang" is highly questionable) 'are either coloured or immigrants and live in Handsworth, one of Birmingham's major problem areas, with a predominantly coloured population'.[239]

Throughout the article, Colling is at pains to highlight the inordinate amount of force used by the assailants, a fact that, he infers, makes their totally unprecedented and absurdly disproportionate sentences completely justified, in spite of the fact that each of the assailants was a minor.[240] School photographs of two of the assailants are reproduced in the article. On the left is a photograph of Mustafa Fuat, 15, whom the article describes as of Turkish Cypriot descent, and on the right, Paul Storey, 16, identified as of 'half West Indian' descent (meaning, one might assume, that he was born in the UK and that one of his parents was in fact *white*). The third assailant, Jimmy Dulgnan is not pictured in the article. This is notable because Dulgnan, who is a 15-year-old migrant from Dublin, is *white*.[241] We might assume, therefore, that Dulgnan's "mugshot" is excluded because his whiteness contradicts the Powellian narrative that mugging is a quintessentially black phenomenon. In fact, it was precisely the emergent and disproportionate hyper-visibility in the tabloids and on the TV news of negative representations of the formally invisible colonial subject that made the presence of black bodies in Britain appear so profoundly disturbing. This mediated hyper-visibility was so extreme, that even for those who rarely or never encountered black subjects in the flesh (perhaps more so, even, for those demographics), "blackness" was perceived as a lingering threat, both to one's personal safety and one's belongings, and to the so-called "British" way of life.

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[239] Keith Colling, 'Boys went mugging for "a bit of fun" and 30p', *Daily Mirror, 20* March 1973, Issue 23894, p.13.

[240] I say that these sentences are disproportionate because, in 2019 by comparison, an *adult* who commits GBH with intent will, in practice, receive a sentence ranging from 3 to 16 years depending on the circumstances and any aggravating factors. While an *adult* in the UK who commits murder will on average serve a life sentence of 15 years. Both these sentences are lesser than that handed out to Paul Storey, a 16-year-old boy who committed GBH. For more information see the Sentencing Council for England and Wales website: https://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/ (accessed 20/11/2018).

[241] Jimmy Dulgnan is also conspicuous via his photographic absence in other newspaper articles dealing with the incident.

Love Thy Neighbour

Through the careful discursive demarcation of spaces – for example, the home and the street, the suburb and the city, the metropole and the dominion – and through the separating out of the bodies that inhabit those spaces, the media has been able to strengthen the perceived boundary between the "self" and the "other".[242] In fact, capitalism is dependent upon the uneven development of power relationships across space between the "respectable white suburb" and "black inner areas".[243] As Sibley observes, 'the purified suburb exists with damaging consequences for the rest of the population in metropolitan areas'.[244] This is because the homogenisation of suburban space is made possible through the exclusion or expulsion of various social and economic others – read, *the less acceptable face of capitalism* – who become colonised within marginalised localities, such as the post-industrial periphery.

In particular, the remote consumption of televisual images from within the discrete, curtained-off space of the domestic interior, meant that broadcasting played an essential part in the crystallisation of racialised stereotypes. This is because, especially within the purified space of the suburb or the gated community, the privatised nature of the spaces within which broadcasting is viewed ensures against an encounter between the viewer and the subject who is characterised as different or other. As Roger Silverstone observes in *Visions of Suburbia*, suburbanisation is compelled by the desire for conflict-avoidance. The withdrawal from the public sphere indicative of privatisation and suburbanisation results in "anti-politics", "conformity", "self-interest" and "exclusion".[245] Consequently, for white subjects with the financial capital to secure a privatised lifestyle, there is a decreased likelihood that they might gain the kind of experiential knowledge of their black and Asian others that is *essential* to their ability to counter the self-professed truths promulgated by the media.[246]

While Barnett's faltering tirade is intensely uncomfortable, it is worth quoting again because it illustrates an important point not only about the constructed dichotomy between black and white, but about the spatialisation of socio-political and economic relationships. When Exit query, 'What do you think about the Queen?' Barnett scoffs:

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[242] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), p.92.
[243] David Sibley, op. cit., p.43.
[244] Ibid., p.40.
[245] Roger Silverstone, *Visions of Suburbia* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.14 & 96.
[246] David Sibley, op. cit., p.60.

> Well I ain't very fond of her I suppose… They're all the same to me, all these people who think they're higher than I am... If her [the Queen] had been born in Handsworth th- then it would be a bit bleeding different, I tell you! You would fucking never know Sambos in Handsworth, I bet, if she had been born in Handsworth (*Survival,* 82)!

A major consequence of the sanitisation of the "royal suburb" – the home of the white, lower-middle-class family – is the concentration of differently disadvantage peoples within impoverished urban space.

The anxiety inducing prospect that the colonial other might spillout of the city into suburbia forms the xenophobic subtext of what Morley describes as 'suburbia's indigenous genre': the sitcom.[247] In fact, Mrs McAlpine and Roy Barnett's derogatory language, though shocking to contemporary readers, is remarkably reminiscent of the monologues routinely spouted by the angry white male protagonists of popular sitcoms such as *Till Death Do Us Part* (BBC1, 1965-1975) and *Love Thy Neighbour* (ITV, 1972-1976). Johnny Speight's controversial *Till Death* centres on the Garnett family who live in a small terrace house in London's East End (fig. 2.15). The family was ruled by the infamous Alf Garnett (Warren Mitchell), a deeply reactionary white working-class patriarch who continuously subjects his family to racist rants, as well as his deeply conservative sermons on topics ranging from social morality, religion and the Royal Family to economics, law and order, and, unsurprisingly, immigration. A staunch supporter of the Conservative Party, Alf is continuously at loggerheads with his daughter Rita's (Una Stubbs) husband, Mike Rawlins (Anthony Booth, the father, ironically, of Cherie Blair, née Booth) who Alf sees as a socialist layabout. While Alf's long-suffering wife Else (Dandy Nichols), is constantly lambasted by her husband who incessantly shouts at her and refers to her as 'you silly moo'.

The following exchange, which opens episode four of the sit-com's fourth season, is typical of the material included in *Till Death Do Us Part* which is usually centred around Alf's anxieties about national decline. I want to quote this scene at length, both to provide the reader with a taste of the kind of material included in *Till Death*, and to demonstrate how Mrs McAlpine's words, as well as the words of Roy Barnett among others, echo Garnett's. The scene begins with the family seated around the breakfast table. The crowded table is strewn with the daily papers, piles of blackened toast, a tea pot, a bottle of milk, salt and pepper shakers, a jar of jam, plates, cups and saucers. Alf is perusing the property section of the newspaper while he enthusiastically mops up his

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[247] David Morley, op. cit., p.129.

egg yolk with a slice of soft white bread. 'Bloody marvellous', he proclaims, in his gravelly cockney accent:

> Alf: 'See, old Mc was right. He said that, old McMillian senior. He said, "Vote Tory", he said… Caw blimey, they haven't been in office two years and already this house is worth twenty thousand pound. *[Pause for canned laughter]* Under ya' Labour Party it was only worth six hundred pound weren't it *[he gestures at Mike who is sitting across the table from him].* And you ask me why I vote Tory? Caw blimey!
> Mike: *[Incredulously]* That's not the real price, the price is inflationary.
> Alf: Of course it's the real price, it's in the paper en'it. Twenty thousand pound this house is worth.
> Mike: *[Bellowing and stabbing his plate with a knife]* Only on paper! Only on paper!
> Alf: It's not only on paper sunny, in my pocket if I wanna sell it… That's what I'm sitting on little darling daughter, that's what your daddy's sitting on, twenty thousand pounds worth of land.
> Mike: Yeah and you couldn't even sell it, buy next door and make a profit could ya'?
> Alf: *[Shouting]* And you couldn't even buy next door, could ya'? No, and I'll tell ya' something else. Neither could ya Coons or ya Pakis. *[Canned laughter]* No. It's too bloody expensive for them. And that's something else that the Tory's have done, 'en it see! Instead of letting ya Coons move in, buy the houses and lower the land values, they put up the prices of your houses and your land, and now Coons can't afford to buy them.
> Mike: Yeah! *[Shouting]* And neither can anybody else'.

The slanging match between Alf and Mike continues in this way for a staggering 16 minutes (the show runs for 30 minutes in total), digressing through various topics – from economics and Party politics, to 'The War', Empire, religion, the Working Man's Communist Internationale, and then to Russia, and so forth. Alf then lambasts the BBC for its supposedly left-wing stance and for their encouragement of communist sentiment and its apparent endorsement of strike action (to which, as a Tory, Alf is opposed). 'I blame the BBC for that', he proclaims, 'they just encourage them [communists]'. Asserting a decline in the standards of TV news and the supposed promiscuous effect that poor television content was having on social morality, Alf claims: 'They have anyone on the telly these days. Rock and Roll, vicars, sex maniacs. Bloody Irish gunman on there the other night!' 'Admitted', he states, in a gesture that in part redeems the broadcaster's misdemeanour, 'the BBC did put a stocking over his head'. Canned laughter ensues, engendered by Alf who naively mistakes the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) statutory garb – the balaclava – as an attempt by the BBC to "muzzle" or mask their controversial guest. Reaffirming his patriotic sentiment, Alf concludes his diatribe against the BBC by expressing his indignation that 'they [the BBC] only let the Queen go on there the once at Christmas. That's all!' Alf's disdain for what he perceives at the BBC's partiality is ironic given his earlier assertion that the newspaper proffers only truths: 'Of course it's the real price', he asserts, 'it's in the paper en'it'.

The scene is incredibly jarring. This is in part because the men are constantly bellowing at one another (yes, for a full 16 minutes), their voices getting progressively louder and hoarser as they become more and more infuriated (the only relief is afforded by Else, whose occasional light-hearted interventions lift the mood). Most obviously, though, it is Alf's vicious and unflinching attitude towards Caribbean and Southeast Asian migrants that causes modern viewers such extreme discomfort, and in several episodes, Alf is even heard to proclaim that 'It's a pity old Enoch ain't in charge'.

It would be erroneous, however, to assume that contemporaneous viewers necessarily felt the same discomfort experienced by those in the twenty-first century. Although Speight claims that he intended the sit-com to function as a satirical critique of reactionary British attitudes (Alf constantly contradicts and conflicts himself and offers nonsensical arguments) many viewers in the 1970s sympathised with Alf and identified with his reluctant attitude towards change and his cut and dry attitudes concerning questions of social morality, immigration and the law. An unintended consequence of the script's ambivalence was that many considered *Till Death* a legitimisation, rather than a critique, of their xenophobic attitudes. This was in part because *Till Death* gave the Afro-Caribbean and Asian community a kind of perverse visibility, while at the same time engendering their almost total erasure. As John Twitchin argues, black viewers had to endure hearing themselves 'being called "wog" and "coon", without ever having a black character in the programme to make them something other than an invisible threat'.[248] In spite of the fact that Alf's ludicrous racist opinions were continuously being called out by Mike, there were no examples of black people "living otherwise" in *Till Death Do Us Part* to counter Alf's – and the public's – view of black migrants in any serious or sustained way. Nor did the caricature-esque nature of Mike's character, the socialist layabout with his bouffant blond hair and flamboyant shirts, lend authority to his counterarguments.

Staggeringly, at its peak, *Till Death Do Us Part* attracted audiences of up to 18 million and although these figures by no means attest to the fact that 18 million Britain's were racist, they do demonstrate the extent to which people were unoffended by, or simply willing to tolerate, the show's deeply contentious content and its vitriolic use of language. In fact, when viewers wrote to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) to complain about the use of racial slurs in another sit-com – the even more relentlessly

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[248] John Twitchin, *The Black and White Media Book: Handbook for the Study of Racism and Television* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1988), p.89.

acerbic *Love Thy Neighbour* – the regulator responded to those concerned with somewhat bizarre "reassurances" such as:

> The intention of the series is to help black and white people get on better with each other. Some people do call coloured people by nicknames and the idea is that by using them in this programme it can take the sting out of them.[249]

While, in response to the concerns of an articulate 11-year-old girl (herself white) who had written to complain that, after watching *Love Thy Neighbour*, children in her class at school had begun calling her Afro-Caribbean peers racist names, the IBA explained: 'It is a fact that some people do call coloured people by nicknames like nig-nog. . . it is very often possible to use such nicknames with people provided they are friends of ours'. As Sally Shore observes, the IBA here adopts the peculiar stance that it is "okay" to refer to people using racist names, as long, of course, as they are your friends; after all, the IBA seems to infer, "nig-nog" is only offensive if used by stranger or a foe, otherwise it is simply a term of endearment. Thus, according to the perverse logic of the IBA and the show's producers, *Love Thy Neighbour* performed a crucial reconciliatory social function that in the end outweighed any immediate harm engendered by the protagonist, Eddie Booth's (Jack Smethurst), use of racist names.[250] This is, of course, to overlook the fact that the intentions of the producer are not always borne out in audience perceptions. Both the BBC and ITV's willingness to sanction the use of deeply offensive racist names functioned to normalise those terms within the public's lexicon. In fact, Mrs McAlpne's assertion that 'they're letting all the scruff in' (note the apparent breaching of a boundary) and Barnett's claim that 'they're all bleeding over the place', could be lines plucked straight from an episode of *Love Thy Neighbour*; the alarming premise of which was the apparently disturbing realisation by a white British couple that – God forbid! – their new neighbours were Afro-Caribbean. The *TV Times* provided the following logline about the show:

> You can choose your friends . . . you can't choose your neighbours. Eddie and Joan Booth are no exception. Hard-working, ordinary people with a mortgage . . . they can rub along with most people, but when Mr and Mrs Reynolds move in next door, well, it's quite a shock.[251]

By insisting on the unremarkable nature of Eddie and Joan's lives, the *TV Times* encouraged viewers to identify with the couple, while at the same time, playing on the

[249] Sally Shaw, 'Light Entertainment' as Contested Socio-Political Space: Audience and Institutional Responses to "Love Thy Neighbour" (1972-76)', *Critical Studies in Television*, Spring 2012, Vol.7(1), pp.70-1.
[250] Ibid., p.71.
[251] 'New Series Love Thy Neighbour'. *TV Times*, 13 April 1972.

prospect that "it might be you next". No longer, the excerpt implies, are black and Asian families conveniently confined to the marginal space of the inner city, neatly sectioned off from the majority of the population. Now they are spilling out of the city, setting up home and settling down on your street, in the "respectable" suburbs where 'hard-working, ordinary people with a mortgage' live. In fact, by emphasising that Eddie and Joan are 'hard working', the *TV Times* plays on prevailing attitudes concerning immigration and notions of supposedly "deserving" and "undeserving" citizens. In the 1970s, a belief fuelled by the Right, spread among much of the population that black and Asian migrants were somehow getting more than their fair share of the benefits offered by an already over-burdened welfare state; that Commonwealth migrants somehow considered themselves entitled to houses and benefits, while white Britain's were forced to humiliate themselves, whiling away their time waiting in dole queues or on the housing register. In the shrewdly titled transcript, 'The Finest Country in the World', which appears on page 104 of *Survival Programmes,* the Sephton's encapsulate this quintessentially Thatcherite attitude perfectly:

> Mr Sephton: … they must think that it's an easy way of getting some money. Immigrants come in this country….
> Mrs Sephton: They get everything, don't they really? Everything they can have.
> Mr Sephton: … go on social security and get their supplementary benefit, can't they?
> Mrs Sephton: Well, this is it you see. They haven't even to be here twelve months, they haven't had to be here twelve hours, and they'll give 'em some money to carry on with. I mean, we couldn't get it in another country, could we? This is really a silly country. It is really a silly country for giving out money (*Survival,* 104-6).

Mr and Mrs Sephton's transcript demonstrates the extent to which perennial economic failure had become discursively racialised and rationalised by the 1970s, through the othering of the black migrant in the media. As Sibley shrewdly points out in his analysis of communication technologies: 'it is [sometimes] convenient to have an alien other hovering on the margins'.[252] During the 1970s, that "alien other" came to stand for, or constitute as Hall states, a 'set of simplifications' which made it possible to account for economic decline. 'After all', he continues:

> Who now wants to begin to explore and unravel the complex tissue of political and economic forces which have created and sustained the poverty of inner-urban working class districts? Who has time for that complicated exercise, especially if it requires us to trace and make connections between things which it is better to keep apart? Above all, is there a simple, obvious and more natural explanation at hand? Of course they are poor because the blacks are here.[253]

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[252] David Sibley, op. cit., p.110.
[253] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1978, p.35.

An Us and Them Situation

The equivocal transcripts included in *Survival Programmes* are set alongside equally abstruse images. In the final chapter of the book, 'Reaction', the visual tone of *Survival Programmes* shifts, and the otherwise mundane photographs of isolated interiors and children playing on desolate streets or socialising in youth clubs are replaced by a more ambiguous, chaotic set of images. Photographs of police raids on London squats and the force's heavy-handed treatment of pickets are interlaced with images of the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Scenes of young men hurling stones at the police and of vans set ablaze on the streets of Belfast, follow on from an unsettling image of a young Northern Irish boy dressed in smart military garb and a beret, posing in a twee interior with an all-too realistic toy rifle in hand (fig. 2.16). Nearby, a group of stony-faced women – mothers and wives – march the Falls Road clutching posters of a political prisoner, his swollen face painfully disfigured by a brutal beating delivered by British soldiers in the infamous Long Kesh prison, powerfully re-designated 'Long Kesh concentration camp' on the poster (fig. 2.17). Blurred shots such as *Disturbance at Notting Hill* and the ambiguously titled *Looting* are likewise troubling in their indeterminacy (figs. 2.18-2.19). To the extent that such photographs are redolent of tabloid images of social unrest, they threaten to corroborate the stereotypes of blackness and otherness produced by the media. In fact, as the writer and literary critic Roland Blythe contemporaneously postulated in a letter to Exit, these images are characteristic of what had become 'the stock-in-trade of TV and newspaper photographs for the last ten years or more'.[254]

In spite of the fact that *Survival Programmes* opens with an explicitly anti-capitalist 'Introduction', the book constitutes a highly contradictory and contentious text. If proffering an alternative image of the inner city necessitates that image makers wrest the terms of representation from the Right, then how do we deal with this extremely fraught material? What is at stake in reproducing problematic histories such as Barnett's and their ambiguous visual counterparts? Perhaps in their quest to expose the limits of the government's Urban Programme, Exit inadvertently reproduce the tabloid "version" of the inner city and its inhabitants that they had set out to contest. Despite Exit's attempts to deconstruct Powellian mythologies and the numerous lucid attempts made by interviewees to cut beneath its rationale, it pervasively endures. The alternative structural history of economic marginalisation that Exit will their interviewees to recount

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[254] Blythe, Roland, *Letter to Exit* (1981), SURVIVAL/1/1, Survival Programmes: Exit Photography Group, Library Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics, London.

continually collapses, in the project, beneath the weight of ideology; it collapses beneath the inherently reactionary, moralising and xenophobic discourse of the New Right, which functioned, with evident success, to alienate those otherwise united by their shared status as capitalism excess.

Riot in the Living Room!

In the mid-1980s, the Anglo-Indian writer Salman Rushdie launched a critique of sensationalist representations of blackness in his damning review of the Black Audio Film Collective's (BAFC) film *Handsworth Songs* (1987).[255] *Handsworth Songs* was commissioned by the public service broadcaster Channel 4, which is a publicly-owned and commercially-funded platform established under Thatcher's premiership in 1981. The film, which was broadcast on 6 July 1987, is a response to the so-called "race riots" that erupted in Handsworth and Tottenham in 1985 as a result of the repressive police tactics used against black and Asian communities. Through a poetic exploration of Britain's colonial legacy, the film functions to remediate and recontextualise the riots. The film, which has a running time of 59 minutes, uses multi-strand narrative, experimental soundscapes, mixed-media montages and juxtaposition, to weave together a complex picture of the disturbances and how they were experienced in ambivalent, and at times contradictory ways by those living in the areas concerned.

The Black Audio Film Collective combine personal histories and interviews with Handsworth residents with still photographs, probing shots of newspaper headlines, poetic monologues and moving images from the imperial archive. In particular, the film employs archival news footage and British Pathé recordings of smartly dressed Afro-Caribbean's expectantly disembarking from the Empire Windrush in search of a new life in Britain. The rapidly fading memory of the excitement and anticipation engendered by the prospect of a new life in the mother country is set off against the lived reality of the black subject's everyday encounter with racism. The film also includes original footage of the riots and their aftermath captured by the BAFC. These sequences are set in tension with clips of the disturbances broadcast on television. For example, the BAFC include footage of the then Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, conducing a PR exercise on the rubble strewn streets of Handsworth on the morning after the riots. A clip from Thatcher's aforementioned *World in Action* interview in which she asserted

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[255] The members of the Black Audio Film Collective are John Akomfra, Reece Auguiste, Lina Gopaul, Avril Johnson, Trevor Mathison, and Edward George.

that Britons might be "feeling rather swamped… by people with a different culture", is also included in film (fig. 2.20).

The uttered refrain 'there are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories', haunts the film and underscores the BAFC's project: to uncover and examine Britain's colonial past, and the extent to which lingering imperial attitudes continue to shape both public attitudes toward immigration, as well as the government's immigration policy and its aggressive approach to policing. These aftereffects, the film infers, continue to impinge on the lives of Afro-Caribbean migrants long after the end of empire. Although the BAFC resist making definitive statements about the root of the riots – preferring, instead, the ambiguity of lyrical poetic musings – *Handsworth Songs* makes a case for perceiving the disturbances as a consequence of the utter disenfranchisement of a community continuously subject to oppressive policing practices and socio-economic *and discursive* marginalisation. In contestation of British Broadcasting's homogenisation of a singular (read *white*) form of ethnicity within the public sphere, *Handsworth Songs* forms part of a wider project to bring blackness into visibility; affording Britain's black and Asian communities a means of public recognition and identification.[256]

However, for Rushdie the project's ambiguity is troubling. In 'Songs Doesn't Know the Score', a review published in *The Guardian* in January 1987, Rushdie argues a point akin to the analysis that Blyth makes of *Survival Programmes* (fig. 2.21).[257] His point is that instead of deconstructing racialised histories of black Britishness, the Black Audio Film Collective merely reinforce stereotypes of blackness (specifically, black masculinity) through their valorisation of sensationalised episodes of violent unrest. Recalling the aforementioned refrain that forms the kernel of the BAFC's project, he postulates:

> There is a line that *Handsworth Songs* wants us to learn. "There are no stories in the riots", it repeats, "only the ghosts of other stories". The trouble is, we aren't told the other stories. What we get is what we know from TV. Blacks as trouble; blacks as victims.[258]

We must resist, he continues, the Left's tendency to 'cheer just because they managed to get something said, that they managed to get through', precisely because, he opines, such uncritical 'celebration… makes us lazy'. According to Rushdie, *Handsworth Songs*

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[256] See: 'The Whiteness of the Public Sphere' & 'White Broadcasting in the UK' (in) David Morley, op. cit., pp.118-24.
[257] Rushdie's review of *Handsworth Songs* predates the airing of the film on C4. I suspect that Rushdie saw a preview of the film, perhaps on the film festival circuit.
[258] Salman Rushdie, 'Songs doesn't know the score', *The Guardian*, January 1987, n/p.

merely remakes or reaffirms the New Right's assertion of the black subject's intractable otherness. In the face of the extraordinary, Rushdie seeks quotidian accounts of the day-to-day lives of the Windrush Generation and their British born children. Such accounts, Rushdie posits, are otherwise superseded by the BAFC's troubling tendency toward sensationalism. 'If you want to tell untold stories', he writes, 'if you want to give voice to the voiceless, you've got to find a language… It isn't easy', he insists, 'to fight back against media stereotypes'.[259]

However, in contestation of Rushdie's critique, I argue that *Handsworth Songs* is important precisely because, by placing contentious material before the viewer, it forces them into a different relationship with the work presented before them. By affording visibility to opinions that jar with the viewers preconceived interpretation of events and situations, *Handsworth Song* functions, I argue, in contrast to the typically *pacifying* tendencies of broadcasting, which is ordinarily geared towards the reaffirmation of established, hegemonic thought. It is precisely the mass media's reductive interpretation of the riots which is subject, in *Handsworth Songs*, to the deconstructive operations of the camera's ambulant lens. It is not my intention in what follows to add to, or rehash, the numerous, extremely rigorous, critical analyses of *Handsworth Songs* per se.[260] Instead, through the prism of two filmic sequences, I am interested in thinking about the relationship between the film and how it might have been perceived, or *experienced*, by those who viewed it.

A montage sequence that occurs ten minutes into the film begins with an interview in which a West Indian man speaking in patwa (Jamaican creole), explains the origins of the riots. He states:

> Is jus police an dem stupidity wah dem keepin up on black people, an black people yuh jus feel say dey av had enough. Seen? So everybody jus join together fi cramp an paralyse dem stupid sh"tuation.[261]

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[259] Salman Rushdie, op. cit., 1987, n/p.

[260] See, among others: Kodwo Eshun & Anjalika Sagar (eds) *The Ghosts of Songs: The Film Art of the Black Audio Film Collective 1982-1998* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007). Katie Smith, "'Ghosts of Songs': The Haunting Soundtracks of the Black Audio Film Collective', *The New Soundtrack*, September 2015, Vol.5(2), pp. 89-101 & Ifeona Fulani, 'Celluloid Documents: Migrant Women in Black Audio Film Collective's *Handsworth Songs* and *Twilight City*, and Sankofa Film and Video Collective's *Dreaming Rivers*', *Atlantic Studies*, 02 January 2018, Vol.15(1), pp.1-15.

[261] This interpretation of the dialogue is taken from Katie Smith's thought-provoking essay. See: Katie Smith, op. cit., p.95.

This scene rapidly cuts to the static filmic re-mediation of a news sheet bearing the headline '2m[illion] damage in night of violence' (fig. 2.22). The image is off-set by a sudden upsurge of orchestral music. The strange yet familiar tune, is a version of the hymn *Jerusalem* that has been sped-up and distorted by the British post-punk band Mark Stewart and the Mafia, who sampled the song in 1982. The original song, which was set to music by the composer Hubert Parry in 1916, is a poem by the Romantic era poet and painter William Blake. Inspired by the apocryphal legend that Christ travelled to Albion during his youth, Blake's 1804 poem imagines the coming of a new Jerusalem ushered forth by Christ's heavenly presence on 'England's green and pleasant land'; a space that is written against the degradation of the industrial landscape that Blake termed, the 'dark Satanic Mill'.

Blake's poem forms part of a pervasive historic discourse that has discursively situated the countryside and the city in an antithetical relationship to one another. During the industrial revolution, the rural idyll was a mythical space onto which the middle-class projected their fantasies of a space untouched by the depravity of the metropole. A social outcome of the gargantuan upheavals wrought by industrialisation was the purposive and enduring segregation in urban locales of the working-class from their affluent employers. The bourgeoisie retreated to the suburbs where the private, nuclear home was a newly conceptualised cultural ideal. By migrating away from the city, the middle-class strove to uncouple themselves from the degradation of the industrial centre, of which they themselves were simultaneously both engineers, and beneficiaries.[262] By contrast, the under-employed were confined to the peripheries of tumultuous industrial cities such as Birmingham, which was already being vitriolically described, by 1807, as a city where 'the filth is sickening'.[263]

After the disturbing outbreak of World War One, the pastoral acquired a new, patriotic inflection. As a WWI recruitment poster proclaims, it was in defence of England's green and pleasant land that the men had stumbled into war in 1914 and for which they had fought and died (fig. 2.23). It is not insignificant that it was in 1916 that Blake's *Jerusalem* was set to music and monumentalised by Parry, thus securing the rousing subtext that has subsequently made the hymn omnipresent. In the immediate years preceding Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, in the public consensus the conceptualisation of 'Englishness' morphed once more, acquiring its most unsettling

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[262] See: Michael Bunce, 'The Making of an Ideal' (in) *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.5-36.
[263] Robert Southey (cited in) Ibid., p.15.

connotations; *Jerusalem* came to exemplify an ever-inextricable knitting-together of an essentialised white Englishness with an evocative image of a precious yet precarious pastoral landscape. At this moment, a racist discourse was traced onto what had formally been, in essence, a classed antithesis between the city and the countryside. In the harsh light of economic decline, the patriotism associated with the landscape transmuted within the white imagination, becoming a disturbing form of nationalism. The pre-existing hierarchies of Empire were mapped onto the landscape through the discursive demarcation of social space. Like the relationship between the city and the suburb, the rural and the urban became mutually exclusive concepts defined by the polarities of the self and the other, white and black, privileged and underprivileged, oppressor and oppressed.

Thus, while the countryside had historically stood superciliously for all that is proper and pure, during the 1970s, through an emphasis upon its perceived homogeneity, it at the same time came to stand for all that is *white*. In contrast the city, like the "dust ridden" outposts of Empire, was figured – as I have already argued – as an unsanitary, immoral space no-longer besieged by the juggernaut of industry, but by an uncivilised, alien other. Taking as their material the corporeal symbols of flesh and earth, in their 1984 manifesto *On the Green Front*, the National Front argued for a 'Britain where people are united by the eternal bonds of blood and soil'.[264] As far as the National Front was concerned, they would not consent to their hard-won pastures being sullied by the influx of some alien other. The fact that the British landscape had, by this moment, become symbolically fraught is underscored by the fact that the film was broadcast as part of the aptly named series: *Britain: Lie of the Land*. *Lie of the Land* explored the changing nature of contemporary Britain and its cultural landscape through the perspective of minority communities.[265]

The BAFC'S use of Mark Stewart and the Mafia's version of *Jerusalem* is significant because the band's reworking of the song with steel-drums discloses its naturalisation as an emblem of (white) Britishness. As the first line of the score swells the music drops off, electronic reverberations subside disquietingly into silence as the camera begins to track across a blue-tinted tabloid image of a rubble strewn high-street lined with fire-

[264] Ian Coates, 'A Cuckoo in the Nest: The National Front and Green Ideology', (in) Jane Holder, Pauline Lane, Sally Eden & Rachel Reeve (eds) *Perspectives on the Environment: Interdisciplinary Research in Action: Selected Papers* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993), p.15.
[265] Alongside *Handsworth Songs*, the 'Lie of the Land' series included films such as: *Suspect Community*, a film that examined the consequences of the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act' on the civil rights of Irish communities living in Britain, and *Environment of Dignity,* which reveals the isolation of elderly migrants from black and minority ethnic and Irish backgrounds.

ravaged shopfronts. This panning shot eventually runs on to a black screen. As the camera cuts to a further newspaper image – this time, yellow-tinted – the musical interlude is interrupted by the sound of a roaring crowd, overlaid by the rhythmic pulse of Caribbean dub (fig. 2.24). The interjection of the dub beat brings Britain's colonial legacy into visibility, thereby making problematic the song's moralising-veneer. As if barked through a crackling megaphone, in a creolised Jamaican-English a man begins an aggressive rendition of the familiar line, 'bring me my bow, of burning gold…' which reverberates out, becoming a pulsing, drawn-out echo.

As further images cut from newspapers flit in and out of the frame – police in riot gear, a burnt-out car, a defensive line of police riot shields, a man with dreadlocks fleeing police, more flaming buildings – there is a resurgence of the distorted orchestral rendition which forms the underlying melody of the montage. Language fades in and out, swells and falls, as the rousing choir struggles to assert itself from beneath a tormented cry: 'give me my chariots of FIRE'. The line 'Walk upon England's mountains green', although not uttered during the sequence, is nonetheless conjured in the viewers mind because of the song's omnipresence within British culture. As the orchestra drops off, the score is picked up and lyrically reworked through the steel pan; a sound that accompanies the flickering camera as it scans the printed spreads. The lens settles upon the following headlines which become superimposed upon the melody: 'The Front Line', 'Torch of Hate', 'Face of a Bomber', 'The Bloody Battleground', 'Britain Today'. Apocalyptic prophesies, set in bold typeset, read: 'Britain Tomorrow', 'The Bleeding Heart of England', 'the words are just worthless', 'Anger, Frustration, and Destruction', 'Handsworth in Flames'.

Crucially, by inverting or destabilising the historic cultural symbols that have been made emblematic of England, *Handsworth Song* makes both the nation state – the "homeland" – and the private sphere, feel insecure. Thus, pace Rushdie, I want to contend that the BAFC's insistent reproduction of difference – their insistence upon the visibility of angry, but also *articulate,* black subjects – functions subversively. Although broadcasting is a hegemonic information system and, consequently the inclusion of critical and/or experimental content is contingent upon the concession of a marginal timeslot (*Handsworth Songs* aired at 11pm as part of the 'Eleventh Hour' season) and upon content concessions, the televisation of the BAFC's project nonetheless affords

Handsworth Songs an almost unprecedented visibility.[266] I want to assert that, by co-opting the channel of broadcasting – a medium that allows the "public" to permeate the supposedly secure bounds of the home – the BAFC transform the private, neoliberal space of the living room into a site of encounter, though *virtual* and vicarious, between others.

Capturing the modern structure of feeling, the philosopher Ágnes Heller evocatively noted, that: 'Integral to the average everyday life is [an] awareness of a fixed point in space… "Going home" should mean: returning to that firm position which we know… where we feel safe, and where emotional relationships are the most intense'.[267] Yet by making the invisible *visible,* the BAFC reveal that which the middle-class wants to repress or to exclude from the field of vision. If the home both constitutes and reaffirms our mythical 'world of secure and stable identities', then a breach of that space's boundaries is profoundly disconcerting.[268]

The film opens with an elevated shot of a large steam engine being surveyed by a night watchman of West-Indian descent (fig. 2.25). As the camera slowly encroaches upon the subject, we hear the indistinct sounds of machinery – the steam engine's gargantuan churning wheel – which is quickly overlaid by a slow, deep musical score made disquieting through the addition of sudden, jarring strikes of the piano. This harsh, resounding melody persists as the sequence cuts to an unnerving clip of a murder of crows, their black forms silhouetted against the hazy purple sky at dusk. As they scramble to settle upon an overladen tree, wings-beating ferociously, forming an indistinct knot of dense black, their collective screech rises to a crescendo, drowning out the underscore. This sinister call continues as the camera cuts to a sequence of fleeting light. A burst of warm orange, scattered with glancing light, is subsumed

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[266] Over 1.249 million households viewed *Handsworth Songs* when it aired on C4 in July 1987. While this figure is relatively low in comparison to the 26 million who tuned in earlier that day – at 7:30pm – to watch the 'nation's favourite soap-opera' *Coronation Street*, it would be erroneous to dismiss without due consideration the possibilities implicit in broadcasting's mass reach. Channel Four: Audience Network Report, 6 July 1987, BARB Report, Channel Four Archives. In relation to content concession, it is worth mentioning another response to the Handsworth and Tottenham Riots by Ceddo Film and Video Workshop's entitled *The People's Account* (1985). *The People's Account* was an unambiguous condemnation of discriminatory policing practices. The Independent Broadcasting Authority considered Ceddo's frank appraisal of the police force's racist tactics – as well as their rationalisation of the riots as a justifiable act of self-defence against police lawlessness – impossible to endorse and, consequently, they demanded that Ceddo implement significant editorial changes. When Ceddo refused to enact the changes, thereby shifting, or compromising, its stance, the programme was pulled and has, to date, never to be aired on British television. There are, thus, a set of conditions placed upon a counterhegemonic project's capacity to become visible within the hegemonic public sphere.
[267] Ágnes Heller, (cited in) David Morley, op. cit., p.24.
[268] David Morley, op. cit., p.152.

beneath blackness. A resurgence of blurred yellow runs on into green, which fades out into a further black screen punctuated by flashes of white light and surging bands of orange. From the blackness, we make out a neon shop sign and the viewer discerns that the unsteady camera is rapidly tracking a city street at night through the window of a moving car. The bird song dwindles beneath a wailing-cry of a police siren. A close-up of a laughing clown puppet with fixed eyes is spliced into the tracking sequence. This uncanny image is married with dub rhythms which are overlaid by the unearthly, mournful cry of whale song. A voice that speaks the line "part of a coup" continues to reverberate as we pick back up the panning shot of the street. As light darts off the reflective surface of shifting riot shields, from the darkness the viewer can make out a row of helmeted policemen (fig. 2.26). The deafening sound of an agitated crowd is met with footage of uneasy journalists and subsequent low-angle shots of a towering Priestly statue. Sirens wail once more and the clown resurfaces, before a further shot of the screeching birds – this time set at a distance. The bird-cry continues and is off-set against blurred footage of police confronting rioters on the streets of Handsworth. This extremely dense experimental sequence takes only three minutes to unfold.

Casting its dancing light and melodic rhythms beyond the television's frame, *Handsworth Songs* functions, if momentarily, to "colonise" the living room by projecting the street onto the domestic interior. The ambiguous opening sequence and its haunting soundscape unsettle the viewer more familiar with British Broadcasting's linear, unambiguous treatment of material which negates, for the viewer, the unsettling feeling of uncertainty, of the unknown. Whereas, to quote Gilroy, the public locale of the 'mean streets of the decaying inner city' have traditionally constituted the site of the 'most fearsome encounter between white Britons and their most improbable and intimidating other', through the TV the "safe space" of the private, domestic interior is breached and transformed into a space of confrontation in which the colonial subject is allowed to speak to those who are otherwise shielded by privatisation – through the erection of secure boundaries, of locked doors and drawn curtains – or through the preservation of geographical distance.[269]

As Morley has argued, to the extent that the television set is situated at the 'symbolic centre of the home, it can serve to disturb viewers' symbolic sense of community [often homogeneous] by bringing unwanted strangers into their homes'.[270] Broadcasting has the potential, in other words, to enact active interventions within the very 'life context' of

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[269] Paul Gilroy, op. cit., 1993, p.27.
[270] David Morley, op, cit., p.151.

the neoliberal world: the private home. This is, I think, significant, because the unsettling effects of bringing the other inside thus eliminates the distance between "us" and "them". It disrupts and undermines, if only momentarily, the white bourgeois viewer's sense of security, casting the inhabitant as other, as vulnerable to the types of violent intrusion to which black lives are routinely subject. Simply put, for these who are black or minority ethnic, and for those who are homeless, underemployed or have insecure housing tenure, the home has never been a "truly" private space. For those demographics, the boundary between the inside and out, the self and the other is radically permeable.

The danger of living in positions of precarity becomes visible in *Handsworth Songs* through the BAFC's coverage of the death of Cynthia Jarrett on the Broadwater Farm estate, Tottenham. Mrs Cynthia Jarrett – a grandmother – died after suffering a cardiac arrest when police forced entry to her home and pushed her to the ground. They were searching the premises for evidence against Cynthia's son, Floyd (who, incidentally, lived a mile away from the Farm), whom the police had wrongfully arrested earlier in the day for theft of a motor vehicle. This institutional and, most disturbingly, *racialised* example of the home's permeability is a paradigmatic example of the continuous and systematic 'violation of the boundaries between public and private space', through which Jean Fisher shrewdly notes, the black population experiences its vulnerability.[271]

That *Handsworth Songs* had a disturbing impact upon those who viewed it is evidenced by the anxieties of an anonymous viewer who telephoned Channel Four's viewer hotline mid-way through the airing of *Handsworth Songs* to complain about the film's potentially subversive effects*.* Her protest was that the film – and C4 programming more generally – was *itself* the provocative germ of the riots. At 11:45pm, before, that is, the film had run its course (something that in itself attests to the viewer's strength of feeling) the following complaint was lodged: 'We've had enough – all the riots started with the beginning of C4 and its inflammatory prog[ramme]s'. The exchange concluded with the caller's prim caution that she would 'be writing to her M.P'.[272] The caller's assertion that the 1981 riots were caused by the advent of Channel Four is contrary to the fact that the 1981 riots engendered, or more accurately, *hastened* the channel into being.[273]

[271] Jean Fisher, 'In Living Memory… Archive and Testimony in the Films of the Black Audio Collective', (in) Kodwo Eshun & Anjalika Sagar (eds) op. cit., p.22.

[272] Channel Four: *Duty Officers Report*, Tuesday 7th July 1987, Channel Four Archive.

[273] For more on the advent of Channel Four and the socio-political situation that both hastened and underscored its advent, see: Simon Blanchard and David Morley (eds) *What's this Channel Four?: An Alternative Report* (London: Comedia, 1982) and Paul Gilroy, 'Channel Four – Bridgehead or Bantustan?', *Screen*, 1982, vol. 24(4), pp.130-6. Also see: Alex Beaumont, '"New

Irrespective, her complaint brings to light a set of perhaps intractable questions. Does the caller's complaint reaffirm, qua Blythe, Rushdie's critique of *Handsworth Songs*? Does the potentially frightening encounter engendered by bringing the other indoors, through the medium of broadcasting, threaten to merely entrench the subject's radical otherness? Will white viewers simply find resolve in their collective difference from – and fear of – their black counterparts? To that list of question, we might add the following query: Is the vicarious interaction with the other through the mediating lens of the television's screen any substitute for an actual encounter between living, breathing bodies – between subject who might, so to speak, answer back?

Either way, for those who will only ever encounter black lives vicariously – through the prism of the media – projects such as *Handsworth Songs* complicate the presumed neutrality of whiteness. The encounter between the colonial other and the white subject within the living room*,* provides a vital opportunity to dislodge or 'decentre' the white English imagination: forcing what Alfred J Lopez describes as 'a moment of reckoning' for the white subject whose ethnicity was hitherto 'invisible'.[274] It is through this means, through the process of inversion, that whiteness is 'made to see itself – or more accurately, to see itself as others', or rather, *the other* has 'seen it'.[275] Whiteness is revealed, in other words, as a fragile construct dependent upon the historically interlaced regimes of domination and *representation*.

The English

If Exit Photography Group were looking for some innate sense of solidarity at the (post-) industrial periphery, then they were to be disappointed. *Survival Programmes* is not *The English* (1978) Ian Berry contemporaneously imagined in his superficial photographic survey of national eccentricities and of a nation 'at work and at play'.[276] By setting decontextualised images of Royal Ascot and Glyndebourne House next to images of a Salvation Army Hostel and a pithead in Consett, Berry claimed to present a coherent and unifying notion of what it is 'to be' English (fig. 2.27).

On page 171 of *Survival Programmes*, a once fleeting televisual image of Pope John Paul II is remediated through the prism of the camera's lens (fig. 2.28). In the image the

Times" Television? Channel 4 and My Beautiful Laundrette', (in) Louise Hadley and Elizabeth Ho, (eds) op. cit. pp.53-74.
[274] See: Catherine Hall, *White Male and Middle Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p.205. Alfred J. Lopez, op. cit., p.14.
[275] Alfred J. Lopez, op. cit., p.14.
[276] Ian Berry, *The English* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), n/p.

Pope – whose form has been distorted and elongated by the extreme angle of the shot – is depicted raising a benevolent hand to his flock during a pilgrimage to the Republic of Ireland. While visiting Knock, the 'Pope of Peace' made a direct and explicit intervention in the political situation in Ireland, delivering an address that called for an end to the Troubles. Using evocative language, he entreated, 'this great wound afflicting *our people* can be cured… Great is our concern', he continued, 'for those young souls who are caught up in the bloody acts of vengeance and hatred.[277]

In another image, which is located on page 117 of the book, a once fleeting image of Jim Callaghan is frozen in time by the operation of the camera's shutter and enveloped in darkness (fig. 2.29). Immortalised (or mortified, as the case may be) alongside the sound bite, '*There is no perfect justice but we can all move forward in the right direction',* the spectral Callaghan occupies a strange, immaterial space between the living room and television studio. Given the fact that, during his time in office, the Prime Minister repeatedly delegitimised the CDP's findings, Callaghan's nonchalant comment that 'we can all move forward in the right direction' seems little more than a political platitude.[278] The reader is left wondering who, exactly, constitutes the "we" that Callaghan claims to represent. Or who, for that matter, is included in the Pope's concept of "our people".

As I argued in the Introduction to this thesis, *Survival Programmes* is riddled with antagonisms that exceed or blur the long-established designations of class. In fact, there is no coherent community or class identity in *Survival Programmes*, in the prevailing, singular sense in which those terms have been evoked historically. However, this is, I think, precisely the point, or the politics, of Exit's project. Against the decline of the post-war consensus, by the mid-1970s the category "working-class" had lost what Hall describes as its 'stabilizing force'[279] while in its assumed homogeneity, it had come to occlude alternative forms of exclusion. I am thinking here primarily about types of exclusion that are raced and/or gendered. As Gilroy convincingly opines, nothing can be achieved from evoking the concept of class as if its connotations have gone untouched by the rise of neoliberalism and by the unemployment, engendered by globalisation as well as the revolution in new production techniques, that have rendered the "working" function of the working-class superfluous. These shifts, in turn, caused the relationship between white Britons and their black counterparts to become deeply

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[277] My emphasis. Pope John Paul II (cited in) 'Whole World: Thousands Sang it for the Man of Love', *Daily Express,* Monday 1 October 1979, p.2.
[278] Martin Loney, op. cit., p.182.
[279] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1997b, p.45.

precarious. 'The unity of a single working class cannot be assumed', Gilroy enjoins, 'but remains to be created'.[280]

In fact, Exit Photography Group's localised attention to how marginalised space is experienced by those who coexist within it operates in tension with mass media information networks which overlay the nation, and, as such, systematically privilege and homogenise the perspective of the white, lower middle-class hegemony. By acknowledging antagonistic social relationships, Exit render problematic the platitudes of "community" and "class" that have typically formed the kernel of documentary representations of the excluded and their historicisation. Such histories of the inner city's representation have, as I have already averred, with rare exceptions been limited to narrow concepts of "community photography" and the ethics of representing the "poor" or the "other".

By contrast, in *Survival Programmes*, it is the geography of the (post-)industrial periphery *itself* which is the familiar thread that runs through or across a multiplicity of disparate and often antagonistic identities which at times appear both incommensurable and irreconcilable. Thus, what we have, is a photographically and textually mapped geography of difference. The (post-)industrial periphery constitutes, in other words, the common ground upon which disparate social relationships might be reformulated and transformed into political sites of resistance precisely through the mediation of difference. As the political geographer Edward Soja states, a resistant politics 'must encompass and focus upon the vulnerable point: the production of space, the territorial structure of exploitation and domination, the spatially controlled reproduction of the system as a whole'. As such, it 'must include all those who are exploited, dominated, and 'peripheralised' by the imposed spatial organisation of advanced capitalism'.[281] Together, these spatially orientated histories constitute a quasi-cartographic image of socio-economic marginalisation, which itself bespeaks the emergence of a 'politicised spatial consciousness', through which those subject to socio-spatial marginalisation come to recognise their situation structurally.[282] As such, what Exit initiate, is a lesson in mediation. By re-framing the television screen, first through the prism of the camera's lens, and then through the page of the photobook, I claim that Exit point to, or indicate, this mediatory work, quite literally "framing" their discursive project.

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[280] Paul Gilroy, op. cit., 1992, p.9.
[281] Edward Soja, op. cit., p.74 & p.90.
[282] Edward Soja, op. cit., p.73.

'Part of the wreckage of Empire'

In Exit's project, it is the voice of the other, or the *othered* – the subject who has been doubly excluded historically, as a consequence of their race and class – that actuates this mediatory work. By bringing the weight of the colonial legacy to bear on the present, the intimate histories of the Windrush Generation and their children function as correctives to the blind spots in the nation's acutely selective historicisation of itself and of capitalism. Reworking the convergent histories of migration and socio-economic marginalisation, in a transcript entitled 'Enough for Everyman', Dudley Dryden, a Jamaican born shop-owner, describes the grave sense of alienation suffered by West Indian youths who are increasingly becoming part of what he describes as a 'lost' generation. Pointedly situated opposite a photograph of a group of apathetic young Afro-Caribbean boys in a comprehensive school 'remedial class', Dryden recounts the frustration and bitterness engendered by their almost systematic exclusion from the labour force (fig. 2.30). As the account runs on across the following page, it becomes juxtaposed with an image of an older, less acquiescent group of smartly dressed West Indian men. They are gathered in earnest conversation in a cell-like room at a welfare and advice centre in Dalston, a spent game of dominos is arranged on the table before them. At first glance, the dominos resemble the shackles that are often fastened to tables in police interview rooms (fig. 2.31). Dryden states:

> People must accept that since Britain was a colonial power, they will have to accept part of the colonial legacy... You see, when people come here it's really just the colonial history of this country being washed up on the shores of Britain… it's part of the wreckage (*Survival*, 98).

In this passage, Dryden reveals the impossibility of extracting autonomous histories, either black or white, from the ruins of empire. As Hall reminds us, 'there is no English history without that other history', just as there is no middle-class history extricable from the history of their subordinates; the peasants who entered the mills during the eighteenth century to spin and weave the cotton cultivated and picked by slaves in the Caribbean and the southern states of America.[283] The cycle of interdependence continues thusly. The history of empire is tightly woven from an interlaced set of power relations, whereby the dominant narrator comes to veil the history of the subordinate other, with whom his own fate has, for centuries, been inextricably tied. In his deeply personal account of British racism, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities',

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[283] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1997b, pp.48-9.

Hall describes the protracted history of colonial entanglement in extraordinarily powerful terms. He explains:

> People like me who came to England in the 1950s have been there for centuries; symbolically, we have been there for centuries. I was coming home. I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children's teeth. There are thousands of others beside me that are, you know, the cup of tea itself. Because they don't grow it in Lancashire, you know. Not a single tea plantation exists within the United Kingdom. This is the symbolization of English identity — I mean, what does anybody in the world know about an English person except that they can't get through the day without a cup of tea?... That is the outside history that is inside the history of the English.[284]

Built off the back of empire and fashioned from sugar and cotton, Britain is a country whose history is indissolubly linked to and undergirded by a history of blackness. If whiteness has been constructed through (economically) and against (culturally) blackness, then the construction of the other – the black subject – is simultaneously the construction of the white self. Any notion of an essential "white Britishness" as an identity in and of itself, is thus dependent upon a profound state of amnesia, or misremembrance. It has been dependent, in other words, upon England's erasure of her colonial legacy, which is, of course, the foundational history of industrial Britain. This history, crucially, pre-dates the prevailing political account of race in Britain that, as Barnor Hesse importantly points out, 'almost always begins, opens, with the framework of post-1945 Britain'.[285] Or, in other words, it begins with the end of war, and the arrival at Tilbury Docks of the HMT Empire Windrush. Our history omits the sacrifice of thousands of men from across the empire who fought and died for Britain in both World Wars, as well as the fact that the presence of black subjects in former slave trading cities such as Bristol and Liverpool pre-dates this moment by many decades, nay, centuries. If, as I argued in Chapter One, Exit's use of monochrome inscribes history then it also insists upon the historical nature of Britain's colonial encounter. To trace the image of Britain's black community onto the 1930s is not in any way untimely.

As Dryden states: 'If this country had made it right for a lot of the colonial people who are here today, no one can ever convince me that they would have left (*Laughs*) their sunny shores for the grey skies of England' (*Survival*, 98). This is an important reparative factor. However, it is, to a certain extent, beside the point. The point is, that migrant workers from the Indian Subcontinent and from the West Indies were

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[284] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1997b, pp.48-9.
[285] Barnor Hesse, 'Black to Front and Black Again: Racialisation Through Contested Times and Space' (in) Michael Keith & Steve Pile, *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.163.

enthusiastically invited to Britain, *as British citizens*, during the post-war economic boom. Their presence was sought, during reconstruction, to occupy menial, low-paid, low-skill shift-work positions such as bus conductors and machinists. Such labour is evidenced as our eyes track numerous images included in *Survival Programmes,* of young West Indian men working as kitchen porters, or clearance workers (figs. 2.32). While in the stifling spaces of domestic interiors, men from the Indian Subcontinent sell their labour for a minuscule return in the underground garment industry (fig. 2.33). Just as Commonwealth citizens were invited to find work in the UK under a flourishing post-war economy, they were likewise made capitalism's cannon fodder when the economy entered a period of decline. The first to be denied or to lose work, or to be refused pay for their work, black lives have been the historic objects of Capitalism excess: its surplus, expendable life, or Dryden 'lost' community (*Survival,* 96). Situated opposite the aforementioned photograph of a West Indian youth stacking trays in a fast food restaurant, in an interview entitled "Lies", Clive Johnson, a 21-year-old from Hackney, details the systematic exclusion of young black men from the labour market. 'I've had a rough time with jobs', he recounts. 'Prejudice – too much of it… I think to myself, "It's really true, it's happening to me?" They say I don't really want to work, but it wasn't that. I just couldn't get a job. I've tried everything' (*Survival,* 94).

Following on from the social historian Edward Thompson, Rushdie shrewdly avers in a 1982 essay that the nation's inner cities had become a new colony *within* Britain. He observes that it sometimes appears that the 'mother of all parliaments', no longer able to export governments, has decided instead to establish a new Empire, here at home, through the importation and oppression of former colonial subjects who have since become Britain's reserve army of labour.[286] Affirming Rushdie's discerning observations, in 'A Tale' Blossom Gonzalez, a 42-year-old Jamaica-born mother of two living on the Edmundsbury Estate in Brixton, problematises the concept of citizenship and the very status "post-colonial": 'To me, England's like a prison', she states, 'I've a life sentence, because I can't afford to go home' (*Survival*, 108). Unable to meet the expense of a return ticket to Jamaica, Gonzales finds herself inadvertently interned in a country in which she is all but excluded from the labour market, and where her presence is continually made unwelcome. Her experience is echoed amongst the transcripts of West Indian migrants that sporadically pepper the pages of *Survival Programmes*, complexly and contentiously interlaced with the histories of white marginalisation and misdirected antagonism. As Dryden explains, despairingly, 'my

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[286] Salman Rushdie, 'The New Empire Within Britain' (in) *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta in association with Penguin, 1991), p.130.

intention was… to spend about five years in this country and then go back to the West Indies… Well, after the years went on, a lot of us realised that going back was a *myth*' (*Survival,* 98). What Dryden reveals is the very impossibility of return.

Paradoxically, it was precisely through the promise of 'return', through the mythology that the Windrush Generation might be repatriated, and that 'black' and 'white' histories might somehow be rendered discrete entities, that the National Front consolidated its ideology after Powell. While, staggeringly, it is through the enforced repatriation of the Windrush Generation that the Conservative government *continues* to organise its Home Affairs, fifty years on from Powell's speech and seventy years since the arrival of the Empire Windrush. In fact, between 2012 and 2018 the government's "hostile environment" policy saw dozens of British-Caribbean's stripped of their right to work or claim benefits in the UK, and some were even subject to what was, in effect, enforced repatriation. Likewise, the recent case of the so-called "jihadi bride"[287] Shamima Begum, has brought 'Clause 60' to the public's attention. Clause 60 gives Minister's the power to deprive a person of their citizenship on the premise that they have "reasonable grounds" to believe that the person in question might be granted citizenship elsewhere. Yet, this law – which discriminates, disproportionately, against black and minority ethnic communities – has resulted in some 180 British citizens (mostly men) being made stateless since the legislation was introduced by Theresa May in 2013, when she was Home Secretary. Thus, for those who migrated to the UK after 1948, the myth of return that Exit so successfully chase-out in *Survival Programmes*, has become an alarming possibility. While for some, it is a terrifying actuality. Clause 60 only reminds us that for many in the UK, citizenship is conditional: To quote Theresa May, 'citizenship is a privilege, not a right'.[288]

When interpreted alongside, or in tension with the transcripts, the images of social unrest included in *Survival Programmes* tell us not about a crisis of law and order or morality, but about England's protracted and enduring colonial encounter. In contrast to hegemonic mass media news channels, *Survival Programmes* works not through what Hall describes in 'The Manufacture of the News', as 'actuality time' but, as I argued in Chapter One, through '*historical* time'. Actuality time, Hall explains, is newspapers'

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[287] See: Azadeh Moaveni, '"Jihadi Bride" Doesn't Fit: We Need a New Language for Female Militants', *The Guardian (online)*, Tue 26 Feb 2019,https://www.theguardian.com/commentis free/2019/feb/26/jihadi-bride-shamima-begum-female-militants (24/07/2019).

[288] Theresa May (cited in) James Bridle, 'Shamima Begum's Case Shows Us Citizenship Can Never Protect Our Rights', *The Guardian (online)*, Tuesday 5 March 2019, https://www.the guardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/05/shamima-begum-citizenship (20/07/2019).

chosen temporality, 'is foreshortened time'. The news photo, Hall avers, following on from Roland Barthes, continually divests itself of its historicity. As opposed to 'unveiling historical realities', the news photo is enmeshed in the work of myth making.[289] By contrast, historical time, Hall explains, 'takes account of development, of structures, interests and antagonisms'.[290] Indeed, as opposed to actuality time, what we see in *Survival Programmes* is the long-drawn-out struggle for independence in Northern Ireland on the one hand, and on the other, the struggle for justice waged by migrant communities on the mainland, within Britain's inner cities. These tensions are underscored by a fragmented account of the 'Save Our Cities' conference held in Bristol in 1977, the aim of which was to alleviate the pressure within Britain's fraught inner cities. Yet, what we are confronted with, is page after page of faltering transcripts, each wrought by conflict and the frustration of numerous abortive attempts to reach an agreement about the best way to proceed. The result, perhaps not unsurprisingly, is a dead-end, stagnation, failure and a resounding sense of desperation coupled with impossibility.

On page 213 we are confronted by the final and perhaps the most haunting photograph in *Survival Programmes*. It is another closely cropped shot of a television screen veiled in shadow (fig. 2.34). The screen's luminous surface bears the image of a stooped figure. By the familiar makeshift balaclava, we recognise the figure as a member of the IRA. Eyes hollow beneath his skull-like mask, his image is distorted by pixels, which settle upon his eerie form like fine flecks of snow. This image is juxtaposed with a frank analysis the urban situation entitled 'If Only They Knew' in which West Indian community worker Ashton Gibson warns of the consequences of our failure to decolonise the inner city. The implications are clear. In the absence of action, we risk allowing history to repeat itself. Recalling an earlier conversation with Gibson, Exit state: 'You spoke about the situation developing into something that's intractable, insoluble as that which exists in Northern Ireland'. Gibson's reply is worth quoting at length because it ties together, and draws equivalences between, two of Britain's protracted colonial encounters. 'But even more tragic', he states:

> the demarcation line is one of colour… The West Indians in this country find ourselves under severe pressure, and find it oppressive indeed. How could you fail to appreciate

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[289] In this section, Hall draws heavily on Barthes' essay 'Myth Today' (in) *Mythologies* (London: Cape, 1972). He is also influenced by Barthes discussion of history in: Roland Barthes, op. cit., 1977. See Chapter One of this thesis for an analysis of Barthes treatment of time in the aforementioned essay. Stuart Hall, 'The determinations of news photographs', (in) Stanley Cohen and Jock Young (eds) *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media* (Constable: London, 1981), p.241.
[290] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1981. p.242.

the bitterness and the indignation and the rejection that West Indians like myself feel?... The only reason I'm talking to you is that maybe you will be able to convey to the British people the bitterness we feel as a group… The point of no return is closing, ever so quickly… steps have got to be taken to reverse the patterns now taking shape… For I can tell you, the cost of doing nothing is going to be far costlier. If only they knew (*Survival*, 212).

Taken together, and read against Gibson's fraught plea, the images of civil unrest included in *Survival Programmes* at the same time augur and caution against the irruption of violence within Britain's inner cities.

Arriving After the Fact - The Politics of Belatedness

However, Exit's project suffers from belatedness. 1979 – the year Exit Group downed their cameras – was a moment of political contingency. '79 it was the year that Thatcher was elected Prime Minister. Yet, due to funding issues (Exit were determined to find a publisher who would agree the photobook's sale at a price affordable to their target readership: the communities they had photographed) *Survival Programmes* was not published until 1982, a year after riots had swept the country from Tottenham to Toxteth.

After Thatcher's election to office in June 1979, one of the first acts of her authoritarian Conservative government was to secure a staggering 45% pay rise for the police force. In doing so, the government won (or bought) the favour of an institution whose authority was supposedly premised upon its impartiality and its autonomy from the state. Against the apparent "permissiveness" of post-war Britain and the looming prospect of industrial unrest within the mining sector, the loyalty of the newly politicised and militarised police force was assured.[291] Before the miners strikes ensued however, Thatcher set her newly militarised police force to work actualising her law and order agenda, which had been framed by a highly loaded discourse on deviance that emphasised the need to tackle criminality in the "inner city". The term 'inner city' had by now become a code word for ethnic minorities. Through powers afforded them by the 'sus' law – an archaic law dating back to the Vagrancy Act of 1824 that 'allowed police officers to stop or even arrest a citizen merely on suspicion of a crime being committed' – the police embarked on a regime of harassment and intimidation in areas such as Brixton and Handsworth where stop-and-search missions were disproportionally used to target young black males.[292] The increased presence of police in urban areas with high ethnic minority populations caused tension in the community, and the climate of mutual mistrust fomented unrest.

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[291] Owen Jones, op. cit., p.129.
[292] Ibid., p.145.

These tensions reached a breaking point in April 1981 when Lambeth police launched operation 'Swamp 81'. The exercise 'flooded' areas of the south London district with plain-clothes police officers whose objective was to detect and detain 'burglars and robbers'.[293] In the space of five days, 943 people were stopped and searched, the majority of them black. Of those stopped by the police, only eighty-two were arrested, mostly for minor offences. Fuelled by the injustice of the police's overtly discriminatory behaviour and their disproportionate use of force during stop-and-search missions, just days later riots erupted in Brixton and 'civil war' swept through the nation's former industrial heartlands. While in Northern Ireland that same summer, ten republican paramilitary prisoners at HM Prison Maze (previously Long Kesh) died as a consequence of coordinated hunger strikes.[294] The prisoners had been involved in a longstanding dispute over the withdrawal in 1976 of Special Category Status for convicted paramilitary prisoners. While the hunger strikes were ongoing, an unwavering Thatcher declared, in her typically moralistic, typically cut and dry tone, that 'We are not prepared to consider special category status for certain groups of people serving sentences for crime. Crime is crime is crime, it is not political'.[295]

Given the worsening socio-economic and political situation in the inner cities and in Northern Ireland, what bearing does the fact of Exit's belatedness have on the status of the artwork as political object? Does the fact of coming "too late" demonstrate little more than the relentlessly ineffectual nature of social art practices? At the very least, the events of Toxteth and Brixton tell us something about the unhappy fate of the Urban Programme**.** As Martin Loney wrote in the introduction to *Community Against Government* – which was published a year after *Survival Programmes,* in 1983 – the riots in Britain's inner cities 'will provide a regular reminder, to the more affluent sections of society, that the findings of the Community Development Projects *continue to have salience* for contemporary political debates'.[296]

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[293] See: Lord Scarman, *The Scarman Report: the Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Inquiry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

[294] During the hunger strikes, Bobby Sands – the most high-profile of the strikers – was elected Member of Parliament under the label "Anti H-Block/Armagh Political Prisoner" for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. His campaign and election prompted media interest from across the globe. When Sands eventually died in the Maze prison hospital, on 5 May 1981, he had been on hunger strike for 66 days. He was 27-years-old. His funeral was attended by 100,000 mourners. A more serious and sustained examination of how the Troubles are represented in *Survival Programmes* is needed. Unfortunately, within the remit of this thesis, I have been unable to engage in this important work. Partly because of the sensitivity and the complexity of the history in question, I have been reluctant to comment in depth on the Northern Ireland images. I hope in the future to develop this line of inquiry more satisfactorily.

[295] Margaret Thatcher, Press Conference, 3 October 1981.

[296] My emphasis. Martin Loney, op. cit., p.2.

Looking back with eyes narrowed by hindsight, it is hard not to see *Survival Programmes* as anything other than an exercise in futility. In 1981, Thatcher's Government passed the British Nationality Act. By way of the Act, the status of 'British subject', which had previously been commensurable with 'Commonwealth citizen', was terminated. The Act overturned the long-established Anglo-Saxon tradition of *jus soli,* where citizenship is principally an outcome of one's place of birth, and exchanged it for a membership regime grounded in the principles of *jus sanguinis*, where citizenship is a result of parentage.[297] In 1982, the spectral image with which I opened this chapter, of the Queen greeting her adoring subject's during the Jubilee parade, is a bitter irony. In fact, in anticipation of the book's publication, Blythe penned a letter to Exit in which he advised:

> You will… need to make it plain that your investigations took place over the given period [1974-9] because by the time the book comes out prices, the Tory housing policy and the enormous increase in unemployment are likely to have expanded the whole sad scene.

'Your book', he concludes, 'is already historical'.[298] In light of the reactionary events that unfurled during the 1970s, it is necessary to return to the question that I posed in the introduction to this thesis: Is it possible to write social histories of photography without reverting to the duality between the naive celebration of community photography on the one hand or, on the other, deterministic accounts of the inevitable failure of documentary's part in actual political transformation? As I have already postulated, deterministic accounts of the rise of Thatcherism result in a concept of her inevitability. For obvious reasons, such accounts are unproductive. As Max Haiven decisively argues, forgetfulness or renunciation work to the advantage of a neoliberal paradigm that endures because of our inability to recall alternative ways of living and of structuring socio-economic relationships.[299] We must, therefore, resist art histories that are made pessimistic by the foreclosure of past events and insist, instead, upon the political potentiality of Exit's project.

In particular, I am interested in the potentiality of the photobook as a pedagogic object. As I have noted, in their 'Project Proposal' Exit Photography Group envisioned *Survival Programmes* as an object that could be mobilised organisationally, as an educative

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[297] The Act made it obligatory for at least one parent of a child born in United Kingdom to be a British citizen or have "settled" status. See: Christopher Rudolph, 'Security and the Political Economy of International Migration', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.97 (2003), p.612.
[298] Roland Blythe, 'Letter to Exit', np.
[299] Max Haiven, 'Are Your Children Old Enough to Learn about May '68? Recalling the Radical Event, Refracting Utopia, and Commoning Memory', *Cultural Critique,* Vol.78 (April 2011), p.84.

book. And when Hall endorsed the book's publication by the Open University Press, he did so on the grounds that it would be used pedagogically, in the dialogical context of community groups, youth centres and adult education classes (fig. 2.35).[300] Within this context, the book becomes what the educator and philosopher Paulo Freire describes as the cognisable object around which a group might engage in the praxis of 'vocabulary building'.[301] The book thus intermediates – to use Freire's term – between cognitive actors, engendering a crucial moment of encounter between subjects, while simultaneously providing a mutual point of critical reflection around which the educative practice of 'problem-posing' ensues. During this process, the cognising actors engage in dialogue and reformulate and rework their reflections, their preconceived assumptions becoming problematic in the process. As concrete social and economic realities are disentangled from the myths perpetuated by the media, the co-investigators attempt to overcome the contradictions implicit among the pages of *Survival Programmes*. Through dialogue, the subjects work toward the demythologisation of reality and unite 'together in the cognition of a knowable object that mediates between them'.[302] *Survival Programmes* thus constitutes a diverse and unbounded site for the stimulation of conversation and the telling of untold histories. Indeed, problem-posing practices take as their starting point, the subject's *historicity* and as such, vocabulary building is based on the authority of experiential knowledge.[303]

In fact, it is precisely the historicity of Exit's project that is important. The passage of the British Nationality Act (1981) demonstrates the extent to which notions of citizenship and national identity remained inextricable from the question of race during the 1980s. As Imogen Tyler poignantly observes, Powell was in many ways the true architect of the 1981 Act. In fact, on receiving the news that the Act had passed, Powell proclaimed, that 'from the humiliation of having no nation to which we distinctively belong, the people of the United Kingdom are now setting themselves free'. The Act's establishment, he declared, signalled 'the end of our brief imperial episode... and the laying of that ghost, the Common-wealth'.[304] The riots functioned not only as a powerful reminder of the

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[300] Exit Photography Group, 'Project Proposal' (1973), SURVIVAL/1/1, Survival Programmes: Exit Photography Group, Library Archives and Special Collections, London School of Economics, London, n/p.
[301] Jo Spence (cited in) John Roberts, op. cit., 1997, p.161.
[302] Paulo Freire, Donaldo Macedo (trans.) *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation* (Hadley, Mass: Bergin & Garvey, 1985), p.49.
[303] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1st ed. 1970, London: Penguin, 1996), p.65.
[304] Enoch Powell (cited in) Imogen Tyler, 'Designed to fail: A biopolitics of British Citizenship', *Citizenship Studies,* Vol.14, February 2010, p.64.

saliency of Exit's project at that historical juncture, but as an urgent rejoinder to the perceived hegemony of the New Right's ideological project.

In an article published in *Screen* in 1982 – just months after the 1981 riots had swept through Britain's inner cities – Gilroy observed that it was precisely those uprisings among Britain's black communities that had engendered the entry of black subject into the televisual field. Paradoxically perhaps, he observed, it was 'the storm that swept through Britain's inner cities in July 1981… which blew black television onto our screens'.[305] Reaffirming this sentiment, Morley notes, that 'if' for the Conservative Home Secretary, William "Willie" Whitelaw, 'the price of keeping black people off the streets... after the 1981 riots was their greater visibility on the screens of the nation… this evidently was a price he was willing to pay'.[306] It was this supposed newfound 'liberalism' that apparently ushered critical-oppositional projects such as *Handsworth Songs* onto the public stage and into visibility. Thus, as a project that arrived after the fact of *both* the 1981 and the 1985 riots, *Handsworth Songs* functions, like *Survival Programmes*, through a politics of belatedness. The film reminds us that the relative liberalisation of broadcasting that was signalled after 1981, by the advent of Channel 4, did not equate to a transformation of actual social relationships. As Morley notes, drawing on Kundnani's important work on race and the public sphere:

> If we understand the media as layers of public sphere that extend and connect with geographic space, then the demands for better, fuller, and more varied representations of black and Asian peoples on and in the British media have to be seen as continuous with the parallel demands for less discriminatory policing of public and private space.[307]

Survival Programmes is one such project that coterminous argues for a fuller representation of marginalised communities and the less discriminatory policing of urban space. What images from *Survival Programmes* such as *Disturbance at Carnival*, *Looting* and *Lewisham, 1977,* as well as *Handsworth Songs* disclose, is that the 1970s birthed not only a reactionary post-Powellian politics but a spirit of revolt that, although nascent, was nonetheless extant.

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[305] Paul Gilroy, op. cit., 1982, p.139.
[306] David Morley, op. cit., p.120-1.
[307] Ibid.

Chapter Three

Shall I Be Mother? On Working-Class Women, Embodied Knowing and Unbecoming Middle-Class

> The feminist working-class academic is an exemplary queer subject, someone whose presence (and practice) questions the norms of the academy without ever being able to completely occupy the 'other' term.

Valarie Hey, 2003[308]

Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities opens with a transcript of an interview with Susan Rogers, a twenty-six-year-old council tenant who lives with her husband Raymond and their two daughters in a two up, two down on Baccus Road, Winson Green, Birmingham (fig. 3.1). Mrs Rogers' account begins as follows:

> There was *Love Story* on this afternoon, my little girl was sitting here watching that. And she watches plays with sex in it when she's up, before she goes to bed. So I mean it's nothing to be ashamed of in her eyes, cos it's on the television and that's what we got to try and make her understand, that it can't harm her more watching it on the television than in real life. Sometimes I switch it over and watch something that's worse standard but more interesting. Like *Survival*. I watch a lot of those *Survival* programmes (*Survival*, 14).

It is from this perhaps quotidian description of watching television that *Survival Programmes* takes its name. Elaborating upon her interest in the popular ITV wildlife series, Mrs Rogers' description of her captivation at watching animals attempt to negotiate the hostile terrain of the natural world – to provide food and shelter for their young – casts in a stark light her own social reality. Through the iridescent prism of the television screen, the fraught scenarios of the Serengeti are collapsed onto the domestic interior and come to mirror, disturbingly, Mrs Rogers attempts to 'live, survive and cope' in the degradation, the 'mould and mildew', of what she herself describes as 'slums like these'.[309] 'Cos we do manage to survive', she asserts:

> even if it is on a low income. We do manage to survive till the next week… although we have to stretch from one week to another… even though I've had two nervous breakdowns since I lived in this house, we've still got to live with what you've got, *even if you don't want your children to* (My emphasis. *Survival*, 16).

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[308] Valerie Hey, 'Joining the Club? Academia and Working-class Femininities', *Gender and Education*, 01 September 2003, Vol.15(3), pp.319-36.

[309] Valerie Walkerdine, Helen Lucey & June Melody, *Growing Up Girl: Psycho-Social Explorations of Gender and Class* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.27.

Juxtaposed with a photograph of a family playing outside a row of condemned terrace houses on Mozart Street, Liverpool, Mrs Rogers' account of life lived on Bacchus Road forces to the surface contentious questions concerning community deprivation, socialisation, and the future prospects of a generation growing up in the throes of deindustrialisation. Situated within the public sphere of the street, the photograph depicts a scene of familial and community affirmation. Despite the coded signs of their subsistent existence – the father's tattooed arm and steel-toed work boots, a child's scrawny leg, the threadbare fabric sagging around the neck of the toy dog and the give-away location of the redbrick terrace street – the scene is one of exultation.

In this spread, the contrast between the public space of the street as a site of jubilation, and the cramped, anxiety inducing conditions of the domestic interior is a dramatic one. Whether through a concern for demarcating the parameter between the inside and out, or between the self and the other – *herself and her child* – in Mrs Rogers account the theme of spatial delineation, or more specifically, the disquiet engendered by the inability to "sure-up" the boundaries between spaces and bodies as discussed in Chapter Two, is pervasive. Trapped by their housing situation and the sluggish rate of urban redevelopment, the Rogers and their two children are forced to sleep in the same room, while Raymond's brother, John, occupies the second bedroom. Under the conditions of absolute, inescapable proximity, Susan Rogers' aforementioned description of her attempts to teach her child the normative circumstances of sexual relationships through the medium of the television screen is riddled with anxieties: fear for her daughter's future and the long-term effects of over-occupation, and her exposure, from an early age, to the sight of her parents' unclothed bodies. As Mrs Rogers disquietingly states, 'when she's older, she'll already know what the human being's about'. She continues:

> That's what I'm embarrassed about. I mean, if she gets herself into trouble when she's older it'll be us, practically, to blame. I made a mistake when I was young, and I wouldn't like my daughter to make the same mistake… Now I've got the *Books of Life* upstairs. I've kept them volumes for me child when she's older, so she'll be able to sit down and understand the way the world goes today. Now I get anything like that, you know, with some sense in it. I don't buy the trashy stuff that doesn't give you knowledge of any sort (*Survival,* 18).

Poignantly encapsulating the nexus between the family, the home, and social deprivation, this disquieting account, told through the voice of the mother, is disturbingly typical of the testimonies that constitute *Survival Programmes*. Tinged with regret, Mrs Rogers imagines, or wills, a future for her daughters that exceeds the limited circumstances of their upbringing; one that promises the opportunities that are more

often than not curtailed for those working-class women who, like Mrs Rogers, found themselves pregnant soon after leaving school. Armed with the *Books of Life*, she attempts to teach her daughters to live life otherwise, to provide them with the knowledge to live lives divergent from, or "Other" to, their mother. Simply put, surviving in a world that systematically refuses to attribute value to working-class lives necessitates that the working-class subject must "become" middle-class. With working-class presented as a category that must be "escaped" or in fact *denied*, we are fed the myth that the only normative or desirable lifestyle is a socially (read "upwardly") mobile one.

This chapter is about gender and how working-class women's lives have been represented on the television screen and through the camera's lens. As I argued in Chapter Two, the media plays a fundamental role in determining how subjects come to understand themselves and position themselves in the world. As Susan Rogers explains, her daughters 'seem to learn things off the television more than what you can learn 'em'. She continues, 'even if you can't see it in real life you can see it on the telly. Just switch it on, it's facts' (*Survival*, 18). Continuing my critical assessment of mass media representations (or a lack thereof) of the less acceptable face of capitalism, in my final chapter, I examine the historical omissions that have determined working-class women's lives and how they are situated socially. In turn, I consider how the bifurcation of the issues of gender and class in documentary histories has compounded the problem of the absence from the public sphere of realistic, or, to use a more pertinent term, "ordinary" representations of working-class women.

As the sociologist Valarie Walkerdine recounts: 'When I grew up in the post-war period, stories abounded of affluent workers, of workers becoming bourgeois, of mothers who were inadequate, of mothers who could make or break their children's educational path to upward mobility'.[310] During the 1950s a huge volume of scholarship emerged on the question of motherhood, the negative effects of maternal deprivation and the necessity, both social and economic, of the production of "good" middle-class mothers who, through their unwaged labour, could ensure the educational success of their children, and by implication, the success of post-war liberal democracy.[311] A profusion of

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[310] Valarie Walkerdine, *Daddy's Girl: Young Girls and Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p.27.
[311] See: Valerie Walkerdine & Helen Lucey, *Democracy in the Kitchen: Regulating Mothers and Socialising Daughters* (London: Virago, 1989) & Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Neo-Liberalism and Morality in the Making of Thatcherite Social Policy', *Historical Journal*, Volume 55, Issue 2, June 2012, pp. 497-520.

literature including educational leaflets and self-help guides extolled the virtues of good mothering. Whilst working-class women were frequently placed under the surveilling eye of regulatory figures such as social workers and health visitors.

Just as heteronormative gender identities have been established, historically, as the "original" or "natural" gender identity, capitalism has set up "middle-class" as the normative, desirable or "proper" subject position. The production of the "normal" family has meant the divergent disciplining and regulation of classed femininities. The working-class subject is actively produced as the deviant or pathological other of the normalised or regulatory figure of the good middle-class mother. Despite her own construction – her fallacy – the good middle-class mother has been positioned by the state and the media alike, as "origin": as the natural subject position. As a 'body that governs', the good middle-class mother is vested, as the philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler has noted, with a 'power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies that it controls'.[312] The materialisation, or the actualisation of class, is thus an immediate effect of discourse, with the working-class mother presented as a derivative, or a "bad copy" of the good middle-class mother who herself functioned, by implication, as a 'correctional strategy' vested with the promise of "becoming": of, that is, becoming *respectable*.[313]

Yet, as an anonymous teacher (and self-confessed 'defunct socialist') employed at St Hilda's Primary School, Middlesbrough, bleakly notes on page 24 of *Survival Programmes*: 'The future for most of the kids [in this school] is the future for all the kids in this area – they're written off. They're written off from the time they were born' (fig. 3.2). Notions of "becoming", it seems, apply only to the few. Speaking paternalistically, from a position of relative privilege and, not to mention, authority, he goes on to lament: 'But they're not even aspiring, some of them couldn't even give a monkey's. They couldn't give a monkey's about their kids… they [the kids] get cheated. And they get cheated very, very badly, by everybody, not least their family' (*Survival*, 24). This distinctly unforgiving account exists in tension with Mrs Rogers conceptualisation of her own situation and the day-to-day struggle to make-do, and *make-good*, for her children. As opposed to a serious structural critique of social deprivation, the teacher reproduces the problematic class stereotypes crystallised by the tabloid press, which figure underemployment as a symptom of an essential "class attitude".

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[312] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York, London: Routledge, 1993a), p.xi-xii.
[313] Valarie Walkerdine, op. cit., 1997, p.29.

In his divisive 'human stock' speech, delivered just weeks after his Luton address (cited in the Introduction to this thesis) on 19 October 1974, Conservative MP Keith Joseph warned:

> The balance of our population, *our human stock is threatened*. A recent article in *Poverty,* published by the Child Poverty Action Group, showed that a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world and bring them up. They are born to mothers who were first pregnant in adolescence in social classes 4 and 5. Many of these girls are unmarried, many are deserted or divorced or soon will be. Some are of low intelligence, most of low educational attainment. They are unlikely to be able to give children the stable emotional background, the consistent combination of love and firmness which are more important than riches. They are producing problem children, the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, sub-normal educational establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters.[314]

Although there was little support for Joseph's vitriolic "anti-permissiveness" stance among Conservative Party colleagues, the tabloids showered Joseph with approval. In December 1977, the *Daily Express* warned that moral degeneracy had breed 'more violence, more venereal disease, [and] more unmarried mothers and one parent families than ever before'.[315] With the emergence of the New Right during the 1970s, social anxieties about permissiveness had taken on a new urgency; however concerns about the perceived breakdown of the family had been on the public agenda for decades.

The choice of working-class mothers to venture into the workplace was likewise met with derision in the press. Working mothers were regularly figured amongst the pages of women's magazine's such as *She* and *Woman's Own* as the dangerous, self-concerned and neglectful fosterers of child delinquents. In a 1956 issue of *Picture Post*, reporter Venetia Murray queried: 'Is it *really* necessary in this Welfare State for women to go out to work, or do they do it for the ice-cream and the TV?'[316] Reverting to the "pure poor" stereotype so often espoused by those who have themselves never been forced to go without, Murray implies that it is impertinent for working-class subjects to pursue the same basic pleasures as their middle-class others. It is, according to Murray, presumptuous for working-class women to desire ice-cream for their children, or, heaven forbid, for themselves. A by-line quoting 'one of the great experts on the care of children', Doctor Ronald MacKeith, accompanies a monochrome image of a group of

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[314] My emphasis. Keith Joseph, 'Speech at Edgbaston', 19 October 1974, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/101830 (accessed 17/07/2019).
[315] *Daily Express,* 29 December 1977, n/p. Cited in: Dominic Sandbrook, op. cit., p.401.
[316] Venetia Murry, 'The Children of Women Who Work', *Picture Post*, 7 January 1956, p.7.

women and young children being bussed to the mill where the infant children attend an on-site nursey while their mothers work (fig. 3.3). It reads:

> For a mother of children between five and ten years old to have to park her children and go to work is a moderate pity. But for a mother of a child under five to have to leave her baby is a tragedy that can have disastrous consequences.[317]

Overleaf, a photograph depicts a small, bereft looking baby sitting in a desolate cot, the railings in the foreground evoking the bars of a prison cell (fig. 3.4). A further caption introduces the infant as: 'The child whose home life, on many days of the week, begins at five-thirty in the evening'.[318] Neither in the media's sensationalised representation of the scrounging mother nor in the liberal humanist view of abject working-class femininities is there space for quotidian accounts of the mundane routines and actions through which working-class women "make do", make ends meet or simply put dinner on the table.

Nonetheless, it is precisely by situating contentious, tabloid-driven perspectives – such as that articulated by the anonymous teacher – in tension with accounts such as Mrs Rogers' that Exit Photography Group chase out poststructuralist concerns pertaining to the politics, or the *ethics,* of documentary. For poststructuralists, how documentarians might make visible the social and psychological effects of what it means to live as a working-class subject in a society that necessarily represents the working-class as other, was a central concern. As Simon Charlesworth writes in his shrewd 1999 volume, *A Phenomenology of Working-Class Experience*, 'being-in-the-world' is increasingly problematic for those whose lives are most bereft of social acknowledgement, that is, for those sentenced to live their lives through, and in relation to, notions of utility and stigmatisation.[319]

With poststructuralist concerns about the moral and ethical implications and potential political and coercive consequences of photographing the other quickly gathering pace, by the end of the decade a kind of representational paralysis had ensued. For many on the left, raising a camera to the working-class, as well as society's "raced" and gendered others, became unconscionable.[320] If representations of class and gender have always almost without exception, existed in a problematic state of bifurcation, then, during the

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[317] Doctor Ronald MacKeith (cited in) Venetia Murry, op. cit., p.7.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Simon J. Charlesworth, op. cit., p.6.
[320] Jo Spence and Terry Dennett, as well as Victor Burgin (among others) are prominent examples of practitioners who retreated from social documentary and representations of class in the "anthropological" sense. I will discuss Burgin and his influence on Spence later in this chapter.

1980s, the former concern dropped out of representation almost entirely. Representations of class have been all but written out of photographic histories of the 1980s. With that in mind, I am concerned with the following question: What does it mean to live as a classed and gendered subject when being "written off" – or *written-out* of representation – is a precondition of that subject's very existence? If, according to post-structuralists, social documentary was no longer a viable representational modality by the 1980s, then how can we understand the class predicament, or more specifically, the predicament of being both classed and gendered? How might we bring that subjectivity back into vision in the absence of images of the underemployed classes, except, that is, for the pathologising images pervasive in the media? There is a radical disjunct between the hypervisibility of sensationalist mass media representations of working-class women, and the invisibility of profoundly ordinary images of that demographic living their lives day-to-day.

To answer these questions, in this chapter I will consider the work of one of the most important documentarians of the period: the Marxist-feminist photographer and theorist, Jo Spence. Specifically, with the figure of the mother in mind, I want to think about the questions that Susan Rogers' transcript raises – and that the accounts of working-class women included in *Survival Programmes* bring to the fore more generally – in relation to Spence's phototherapy projects, with a focus on what I will be calling her 'mother work' (c1985-89).[321] Spence's mother work is comprised of a series of performatively staged photographs that deal with, or attempt to suture, the representational "gaps" in the family album. As Spence asserts in *Phototherapy. Notes*: just because we do not possess images of our mothers at work, or labouring in the home, 'it doesn't mean we can't start now, and re-create photo memories of things that *should* have been photographed'.[322] A collaborative photographic practice enacted in the studio in/between the photographer and the subject, phototherapy begets the opportunity for the imaginative restaging of moments or relationships that would otherwise have remained unseen. As Walkerdine posits, phototherapy allows the photographer/subject to retrospectively "cover a [representational] gap… Where there once were images of

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[321] I use the term 'mother work' to describe the body of work that Spence dedicated to an exploration of her relationship with her mother (c1985-89). The work, which forms part of Spence's phototherapy corpus, was not referred to collectively by Spence in these terms, however a selection of works do include, in different variations, the phrase 'mother work', for example: *Phototherapy: Mother Work* (see figure 3.20). These individual works, when referenced, will be indicated by italics. I have chosen to refer to the work collectively as 'mother work' for clarity of argument. Where the term appears but is not italicised, it refers to the total body of work concerned with Spence's mother.

[322] My emphasis. Jo Spence, op. cit., 2005a, p.337.

nothing (no culture)', she notes, 'let there be performances'.[323] Phototherapy functions, thus, as a means of imagining the past, or what has been excluded from our understanding of the past historically, while at the same time, by performing the studio, Spence draws attention to how the classed nature of that space compounded such omissions. For Spence, central to the process of becoming is not an attempt to relive the past, but to re-examine its significance in the present so that an alternative field of possibilities might present itself in the future.

Beyond the Family Album

In 1979, at a moment characterised by a profound distrust of documentary positivism, Spence turned to the aforementioned set of questions. Shifting her camera away from the communities she had photographed with the Hackney Flashes in social documentary projects such as *Women and Work* (1975) and *Who's Holding the Baby* (1978), Spence turned her camera inwards: toward herself and her working-class family. She also left the street and turned to the studio. For Spence the studio became a space in which she could explore how she had been positioned by others as a classed and gendered subject. Building upon emergent poststructuralist discourses, she explained that in order to comprehend the political implications of representing other people, the photographer must first understand how his or her own image is produced 'through other people's representations', and through a series of pre-scripted constructs or classifications.[324]

Spence's critical examination of images of herself and her working-class family led her towards, or *beyond,* the family album, that deeply loaded site upon which social and familial fantasies and desires are elaborated. Suspended in a web of signification, their purpose and form culturally assigned, family albums are, for Spence, a fictional and ideological space conditioned by the twin processes of elaboration and erasure. She thus set about systematically dissecting her own family album; pulling it apart, piece by piece, she probed it for its inclusions and omissions, in order that she might recover and comprehend the social and cultural decisions and value judgements that underscore and determine its production. The result was *Beyond the Family Album* (1979): a series of panels combining text and images. In the series, early photographs of Spence selected from her family album, later images captured by friends, lovers and

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[323] Valerie Walkerdine, 'Coming to Know, *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge'*, Issue 27. http://rhizomes.net/issue27/walkerdine/index.html (accessed 17/07/2019).
[324] Jo Spence, 'Visual Autobiography: Beyond the Family Album', in Jo Spence, *Putting Myself in the Picture* (London: Camden Press, 1986a), p.82.

acquaintances and images captured during phototherapy sessions, are pasted onto plain paper and bracketed by Spence's personal responses to, and reflections on, the photographs. Simple captions such as 'Five years: "mother's little helper" walking brother Michael in the park', describe the photographic subject matter, while more extended musings describe what the photographs omit, or the social, familial or economic tensions that they actively work – through their positivism – to bury (fig. 3.5). Above the aforementioned photograph, Spence recollects her early childhood experiences during the Second World War (fig. 3.6):

> In 1940 I was sent from London, this time alone and even further away. I lived for a while with a family of Cornish agricultural workers, sharing a room with another unhappy child. Later my mother rescued me from an isolation hospital where I had been sent with 'skin trouble'. A week after I was back with my family it cleared up. For a while before going into a munitions factory, my father was a rent collector. Ironically, during his time we were homeless and lived with my grandparents.

Spence's textual interventions uncover the experiences that are excluded or erased from cultural memory by the images carefully selected for inclusion in, and by implication, exclusion from the family album. In the same panel, Spence explicates her project for the reader thusly: 'WHY would I want to put my "private" photographs on show for everybody to see? Maybe it's because this record of my life lacks so much that I want to share its gaping holes with others'. Through this confessional work, Spence points to the omissions, or the 'gaping holes', that trouble family albums more generally.

The representational conventions, Spence observes, that produce family albums function to fundamentally shape a family's image of itself, and its ideas about what constitute "normative" or "desirable" familial behaviours. Family albums thus contribute toward the establishment of a series of mystifying, universalising assumptions about the "normal" British home and family, and its culture of consumption that is in fact often at odds with the realities of one's material, social and cultural existence. Family albums are burdened with images of family gatherings – weddings, holidays, birthdays and Christmases; occasions that are centred on consumption as opposed to production. Through the fetishised promise of titillation, family albums offer an escape from the here and now, and from the drudgery of everyday life, allowing the viewer and author to forget – if only momentarily – their dissatisfaction with the mundane routines that constitute day-to-day life under capitalism. While at the same time the subject is reminded why they buy-in, quite literally, to neoliberalism: for the next party, for the goods and the prestige, and for the photographic reminder. The cycle repeats.

Erased from the pages of the nation's family albums are the interlopers whose presence threatens to undermine the myth of familial harmony. In our pursuit of the ideal (that which is "respectable"), family members and acquaintances fall in and out of history. Moments of conflict – tears, tantrums, traumas – are rendered structurally absent. While events that are too painful to remember, such as illness, death and divorce, are edited out. Likewise, images of labour, whether formal, emotional or reproductive, go unseen. Absent are not only images of the field or the factory, but photographs of the monotonous, day-to-day routines that determine the lives of working-class women under capitalism. Consequently, the 'passive visual moments which do exist' in a family's album, Spence concludes, show only 'surface information… [they] give no indication at all of the wider social, economic and political histories of our disgusting class divided society'.[325]

As sites of censorship – inverse images of the monotonous, often fraught circumstances of day-to-day existence – family albums separate the familial from the social and economic, causing our inability to situate ourselves and our family life politically. While family albums present us with an image of what we yearn for our family to be, as Marianne Hirsch poignantly asserts, they more often reveal precisely what it is not.[326] It thus follows that those who cannot reconcile themselves with the images included in their family album, for example, those working-class subjects who, like Spence, do not see themselves reflected in their album's distorted mirror, cannot properly belong. As Spence regretfully observes in *Phototherapy. Notes*: 'People are not encouraged to photograph many situations radically for the family album. My mother was never photographed at work, or in the home as a housewife'.[327]

If the working-class subject learns, is *taught*, to disavow their working-class background even within the pages of their very own family album, then, as Spence queries in 'The Walking Wounded?', 'how do you know anything about your own history – most of all the history of your subjectivity'?[328] How can working-class subjects situate themselves historically when they are continuously told by their parents – by their mothers – that they should act otherwise, that they should disavow their parents' classed histories and ways of being and knowing and act their way out of, or "above" the working-class? By

[325] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1986a, p.83.
[326] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.8.
[327] Jo Spence, 'Phototherapy. Notes', in Jorge Ribalta (ed.) op. cit., 2005, p.337.
[328] Jo Spence, 'The Walking Wounded?' in Jo Spence, op. cit., 1986b, p.214.

dissecting her family album, Spence was able to identify photographic omissions, but not to suture their absence.

As Spence stresses, family albums, as well as standard histories of class and gender, fail to investigate or account for the specific positioning of working-class women, or the mundane routines and habits through which working-class women live, survive and cope under capitalism. The supremely unremarkable regimes of regulation and discipline through which working-class women are formed as subjects and against which they live, think and feel their oppression, have been deemed unworthy of attention. While, Spence recalls, feminism had made her conscious of her 'socialisation as a woman', it had simultaneously, though inadvertently, engendered a 'process of "bourgeoisification" which had', she states, 'taken me away from the working class roots and struggles of my own family'.[329] Affective histories of working-class women's lives, she insists, are yet to be written or imagined through images.[330]

We must, therefore, put pressure on post-'68 feminist histories of gender which are, more often than not, inattentive to the specificities of working-class women's lives. The question of gender is not, as feminist histories have assumed, homogeneous across class and therefore histories of gender must not be monologised. As Walkerdine (Spence's collaborator) insists, we cannot come to terms with our classed histories if we are unable to situate ourselves within and through our familial history. Thus, if we want to correct this representational occlusion, we must begin, as Walkerdine posits, with the profoundly ordinary.[331] We must begin, as Spence begins, with the family album, and with our mothers.

While it would be easy to reduce Spence's mother work to an investigation of the private yet universal struggles over abandonment, differentiation and self-definition that trouble the relationship between daughters and their mothers, I want to propose that Spence's exploration of the mother-daughter dyad stages something more complex. By retrospectively staging the identifications and dis-associations that trouble the ambivalent, often fraught relationship between the university educated, 'hopefully soon-to-be-socially-mobile' daughter (as Spence designates *herself*) and her working-class mother, Spence examines how classed and gendered subjectivities are formed

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[329] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1986a, p.82.
[330] In respect of written histories, there are some exceptions to the rule. The work, cited in this chapter, of Valarie Hey, Steph Lawler, *Angela McRobbie,* Diane Reay, Beverley Skeggs and Valarie Walkerdine among others. See bibliography for details of selected works.
[331] Valarie Walkerdine, op. cit., 1997, p.21.

through, against, and in tension with their mothers.[332] Contextualising Spence's mother work through an engagement with the illustrative essays on phototherapy produced by Spence and her various collaborators (prominent among whom are Rosy Martin, David Roberts, Tim Sheard and Walkerdine), I will argue it functions not only to fill the gaps in the family album, but as an autoethnographic investigation of the psychic trauma that is symptomatic of being positioned as a working-class woman when that subjectivity is lived and experienced through multiple repressions.

Key to my analysis will be how humour functions as a central part of Spence's performance of her mother. I insist that, in Spence's work, laughter functions as a means of contesting the mass media's abject representation of working-class women's lives, and of uncovering and undercutting assumptions about what it means to live as a working-class woman. In Spence's work, the everyday – or that which is *profoundly ordinary* – is played out against sensational representations of deprivation. My interest in the ordinary is compelled by a desire to rethink the category of the political, and what I consider to be the problematic assertion that quotidian or day-to-day acts are *always necessarily opposed to the political*. By focusing on the familiar acts bound up with the struggle to live, survive and cope, I situate the ordinary, qua Spence, as a category that might challenge established ideas about precisely what gestures constitute political acts. It is precisely such everyday acts that pervade the transcribed accounts of working-class women included in *Survival Programmes*. These vernacular histories bring into visibility aspects of these women's lives that have typically gone unseen not simply because they have been deemed unworthy of being photographed, but because such photographs have been excluded from the history of documentary. For reasons pertaining to the regulation of certain class position and hierarchies, these representations and the quotidian acts that they record have been regarded as undeserving of public attention.

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[332] Spence uses the term 'hopefully soon-to-be-socially-mobile' daughter in: Jo Spence, 'Shame-Work: Thoughts on Family Snaps and Fractured Identities', Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (eds), *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago Press, 1991b), p.232.

'Being my Mother as a Working-Class Woman'

> As a child I did everything possible not to be like my mother. Fairy, ugly sister, Cinderella - I tried them all.[333]
>
> Jo Spence, c1986

In images from her phototherapy series such as *Early Mother* (1986-88), *My Mother, Gladys Clode, ca. 1938* (1985), and *Mother and Daughter Shame Work* (1988), Spence imagines various banal scenes from the life of her working-class mother, now deceased (figs 3.7, 3.8 & 3.9). Dressed, in turn, in a twee floral apron, her mother's Sunday best, and a formal dress suit with padded shoulders and coiffed hair, Spence – face twisted in frustration – slices bread, poses submissively for the camera and weeps into a handkerchief; a white bone china tea cup and saucer is positioned at her neatly arranged feet. Tinged by the ridiculous, *or ridicule,* Spence's infantile performance of her mother, at once playful and aggressive, makes a travesty of Gladys Clode. Meek, snivelling and prim, Clode comes to stand for the pathological working-class mother. As Spence dejectedly explained in an incisively titled essay, '"Cultural Sniper": Passing/Out (Thoughts on Split Class Subjectivity)', published in the radical photography quarterly *Ten:8*, in the absence of a 'new language about class… when I work on being my mother as a working-class woman… I'm stuck with a range of stereotypes;' the submissive mother, the tearful, timid mother, in short, the reactionary working-class mum.[334]

In a self-reflexive caption that accompanies a photograph of Spence "dressed up" as Gladys, Spence confessed: 'I have internalised my image of her [Gladys Clode], as seen through the eyes of my middle-class friends, while I treated her like a servant, I hoped, in my shame, that she would remain unseen' (fig. 3.10).[335] Dressed in a yellow apron, quilted slippers and greying socks, in the photograph, an exhausted and aging *Spence-cum-Gladys* leans heavily on the handle of a broom as she stoops to place two empty milk bottles on the floor, returning them to the doorstep of an imagined red brick terrace to be retrieved by the milkman during his early morning round. "Gladys", who's body is ravaged by the combined effects of time and the abiding consequences of her labour, leans awkwardly toward the ground; her knees are stiff, her body heavy and slow. Craning her neck toward the camera, she glances up as if interrupted, or "caught

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[333] This epigraph is from 'Transformations 1', a text panel in Spence's phototherapy series *A Picture of Health*. Jo Spence*, A Picture of Health*, 1982-6.
[334] Jo Spence in conversation with John Taylor, '"Cultural Sniper": Passing/Out (Thoughts on Split Class Subjectivity)', *Ten. 8*, vol 2, no.1, (1991c), p.9. & Andrea Liss, op. cit.
[335] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1991b, p.231.

in act" of her labour. Her hair tightly manipulated into rollers, her brow deeply furrowed, and dressed in the rough clothes she sets aside for housework, Gladys is ill-prepared for guests. She is not, in other words, fit to be "seen". The working-class woman who labours is a subject who must be expunged from public view, except for when she is seen through the pathologising prism of the media.

Elsewhere, in her confessional essay, *Shame-work: Thoughts on Family Snaps and Fractured Identities*, Spence recalls nervously glancing at the clock after inviting a childhood friend in to play: 'calculating exactly how much time we can have together until I must hustle her out before my parents get back from work in their filthy overalls'. Spence experienced 'feelings of shame', she explains, 'as the daughter of parents who earned their living through the sale of their manual labour'.[336] Such instances of shame induced by one's familial or domestic situation pepper the pages of *Survival Programmes*. On page 36 Mrs Stenson describes the shame associated with living 'over the border', on the "wrong" estate. 'My husband… won't go for a drink on this estate', she admits, 'He won't tell anybody at work where he lives. As for bringing anyone home, he wouldn't' (*Survival*, 36).

Whereas for Mrs Stenson, it is the Middlesbrough estate on which she lives that renders her other, for Spence, the self-professed 'working-class girl made good', it is Gladys Clode – who worked full-time as a coil winder in a battery factory – who reveals her daughter's otherness.[337] For Spence, being seen in proximity to Clode, or as her daughter, is to be "found out" or exposed as other from her middle-class friends. Like the 'Angry Young Men' of the 1950s, the upwardly mobile, post-war generation learned, *were taught*, to despise their class, and in particular, their working-class mothers who, 'with their piles of ironing and lack of conversation', were said to lead a stultifying existence that was of little worth or value to their aspirant children.[338] As Spence concedes, 'the last person on earth I wanted to emulate was her'.[339] Yet, considering she had spent so much of her life trying not to be like her mother, Spence spent much of the eighties doing just that: playing – or dressing up as – mum. Her clumsy, repetitive attempts to render Gladys Clode visible, or precisely *seen*, thus countervail Spence's

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[336] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1991b, pp.227-8.
[337] Spence refers to herself in these term in an interview with John Roberts, see: John Roberts and Jo Spence, 'Interview with Jo Spence' (in) Jorge Ribalta & Terry Dennett, op. cit., p.96.
[338] Valarie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey, op. cit., p.2.
[339] This quote is from a phototherapy panel in the series: Jo Spence, *A Picture of Health*, 1982-6.

confession of her adolescent desire that her mother would be removed from public vision.

By calling on Butler's theory of performativity (1990), in what follows I claim that Spence's repetitive, frankly funny performance of her mother functions transgressively to reveal the performativity of class and, by implication, to contest and deconstruct the female stereotypes that have both displaced and limited our comprehension of working-class women's lives. By paying attention to her shifting bodily comportment and dress, I assert that Spence points to the fact that class difference in the psychosocial sense is, like gender, a social construct.[340] If class is reproduced and re-inscribed, moment-to-moment, gesture-to-gesture, through the stylised repetition of embodied class and gender traits that have been arbitrarily encoded and ascribed the power to establish and organise material relations, then there is an imperative to denaturalise the subject positions that govern.[341]

If "playing" at being classed, like performing one's gender, is ordinarily deep-seated, unconscious, or *barely* conscious play, when the subject finds him/herself in between subject positions and classes, the assumed neutrality of classed ways of being and acting in the world become denaturalised, and the performativity of class begins to surface, becoming more readily apparent.[342] For Spence, it is precisely through the precarious, painful process of passing "out" of, or "above", the working-class and entering an although marginal position within the middle-class, that the economic, emotional and *representational* mechanisms through which working-class subjects are disciplined and regulated are thrown into relief. If class is lived and actualised *relationally,* that is, in relation to other classed bodies, then it is in stepping outside of one's class, out of that which is perceived as "normal" and "ordinary", and thus not ordinarily perceived at all, that the subject recognises their difference. It is through the comprehension of *difference* and through the painful interactions and entanglements in between bodies that are differently classed, as well as raced and gendered (as I asserted in Chapter Two), that we might trace the structuration of power. By working from a contingent and contradictory position of relative privilege in between classes –

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[340] I am referring here to the felt sense of class, as opposed to its material condition, which of course, does not pass as natural, except according to the sensationalised mass media accounts in which the "poor" are pathologised and made responsible for their own condition.

[341] Diane Reay, 'The Double-bind of the "Working-Class" Feminists Academic: The Success of Failure or the Failure of Success' (in) Pat Mahony and Christine Zmroczek (eds.) *Class Matters: Women's Perspectives on Social Class* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1997), p.20.

[342] Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination' (in) Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David Halperin (eds) *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1993b), p.311.

that is, a position that is free from, yet perpetually regulated by the anticipated return of repressed trauma (of being "found out") – Spence prepares the ground for an affective history of class oppression.

In fact, Spence's exploration of the mother-daughter dyad forms part of a wider, still nascent body of quasi-autobiographical scholarship that works towards an affective history of the cumulative experience of being classed and gendered that is performed in the shadow, or in the name, of the mother. Produced by a small group of '("ex"-)working class women academics', this confessional work evokes the experience of "educational social mobility" as a reflexive lens through which to explore the profound psychosocial effects of being born into, and living as a member of a class whose being is continuously denied worth. While they also seek to explore the profound sense of loss felt in the wake of reclassification.[343]

Spence herself described entering a higher education system that had abandoned investigations of class in favour of explorations of masculinity and femininity as akin to being 'pulled sideways', or *pulled apart*, 'by a great gust of wind'.[344] As Spence elucidates in *The Walking Wounded*, while:

> I yearned to be a "good" academic (another working class fantasy) ... [I] felt completely isolated and marginalized. Additionally, like other students, I was still trying to address the demands of my own internalized parental figures. In short, an utterly impossible crisis of identity occurred.[345]

'Later in life', she elsewhere states:

> it felt so painful to even think about the ideological gulf between us [herself and her parents] that I found excuses to see them less and less. When I did see them, I protected myself by splitting off my feelings, speaking only of "safe subjects".

'I manifested', she explains, 'the fast-growing seeds of anger and discontent of a subjectivity beginning to be split across irreconcilable class positions'.[346] This splitting, the violent severance of two conflicted and seemingly irreconcilable classed selves is, as Diane Reay poignantly notes, 'the double-bind of the academically successful

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[343] Michelle M. Tokarczyk and Elizabeth A. Fay use the term '("ex"-)working class women academics' in: Michelle M. Tokarczyk and Elizabeth A. Fay. *Working-class women in the academy: laborers in the knowledge factory* (Amherst, Mass: University of Massachusetts Press), 1993.
[344] Jo Spence & John Roberts, 'Interview with Jo Spence' (in) Jorge Ribalta & Terry Dennett, op. cit., p.96.
[345] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1986b, p.212.
[346] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1991b, p.230.

working class' or, to borrow a phrase from the seminal psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, part of their "schizoid condition". According to Klein's object relations theory the paranoid-schizoid condition is caused by splitting, a process during which the subject splits off, to borrow from Klein – or *kills off* – those objects or others that are perceived to threaten the subject's existence or, in Spence's case, that threaten to expose her subordination. Hence Spence's assertion, that she 'hoped, in her shame, that she [Gladys Clode] would remain unseen'.[347]

During the paranoid-schizoid position, as Klein's object relations theory asserts, the ego is incapable of splitting the object/other, without a concurrent rupture occurring within the ego itself. For the subject who is "upwardly mobile", to use an ugly Thatcherite neologism, surviving in a world that figures 'middle-class' as the only desirable identity necessitates that members of the working-class subject themselves to multiple repressions. Reclassification necessitates the repetitious performance or mimicry of the gestures and acts that constitute normal or desirable middle-class identities.

In *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (1996), the cultural historian Annette Kuhn teases out this problematic in an extract in which she describes passing the eleven-plus in the 1950s and entering the grammar school system. The daughter of working-class parents who were unable to afford new uniforms annually, Kuhn arrived on her first day at her new school in a uniform that was several sizes too big. As she poignantly states, 'These clothes, in every sense, decidedly did not fit'. Like her new identity, she could not, and would not, grow into these clothes. 'I was different', she explains, 'being born of inferiority, this difference was the source of the deepest shame'. Might 'I be stripped of my shoddy disguise', she speculates, and be 'shown up as an imposter, passing for something I was not?'[348]

Consequently, an effect of reclassification is an incessant sense of watchfulness lest one's performance falters (even momentarily); a consequence of which is that the subject is found out, "caught" out, or even "outed".[349] A mode of self-regulation, this classed performance – like our performance of gender – is compelled by the persecutory fear of the shame induced by being exposed as other or different from those who command power. In *Survival Programmes*, Mrs Rogers sums up this

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[347] Diane Reay, op. cit. 1997, p.20. & Melanie Klein, 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms' in Juliette Michell (ed.) *Selected Melanie Klein* (London: Penguin: 1986), pp.176-200.
[348] Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 1995), p.93.
[349] Judith Butler, op. cit., 1993b, pp.314-5 & Valerie Hey op. cit. p.331.

impasse eloquently. When asked by Exit, 'How do you see your own situation?', she responds:

> I mean, we're a lower down class to anybody probably, but we *dress up* just the same when we go out. We try to make ourselves just as good a class as what they are when they go out, even though we don't live like 'em. We've got to come back and face reality just the same.

Yet, for Mrs Rogers, the regulatory forces that bear down on her are not simply imposed from without, as a consequence of inter-class antagonism. She is also subject to the censorious, intra-class gaze of her family. 'It brings you down lower', she explains:

> cos my mum and dad never come down here… Me brother is in the army, he does the same – he's never stepped into the house. He's come down in his car, sat in his car outside. Now me mum and dad, they're not posh or anything, they just like a nice built house. And when they get into it, they carpet it out, and have a television and a nice three-piece suite, and they sit there, proud of it. But when it comes down to bottom sizes like us, who can't afford a bit of luxury, they look down on yer, enough to say, "*Well, we could do it, why can't you do it*" (*Survival,* 16).

The internalised feelings of shame induced by the inability to live up to familial expectations is made explicit in Susan Rogers' account of the sense of inferiority engendered by her family's refusal to enter her home, thereby breaching the boundary between capitalism's included and its economically excluded. Just as being seen in proximity to Clode was, for Spence, to be classed by her, entering the home of their daughter is, for Mrs Rogers' mother and father, a source of disrepute.

Thus, while for Klein, as for Walkerdine, splitting functions defensively as a mode of self-preservation, it simultaneously engenders a splitting of the ego into good and bad parts. By alienating the "good" and "bad" parts of the self, the 'schizoid mechanism' thus causes the disintegration of the ego which, to borrow from Klein, 'falls into pieces'.[350] This splitting is, as Valarie Hey contends in her 2003 essay 'Joining the Club? Academia and Working-class Femininities', what makes the academically successful working-class woman an 'exemplary queer subject'.[351] As Hey postulates, working-class women academics speak to a broader set of political defeats that are experienced through loss, 'so that what begins as grief for the lost self encompasses grief for the lost class, the lost welfare subject and the lost politics of hope'. It is thus unsurprising, she explains, that the voices of working-class women academics 'are strident, contrary and split' across a multiplicity of subject positions and class tropes.[352]

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[350] See: Diane Reay, op. cit., 1997. Melanie Klein, op. cit., pp. 176-200.
[351] Valerie Hey, op. cit., 2003, p.319.
[352] Valerie Hey, 'Getting over it? Reflections on the melancholia of reclassified identities', *Gender and Education*, 01 May 2006, Vol.18(3), p.303.

Crucially, if Spence's relationship with her own mother was, as she observed, mediated through, and regulated by, a series of stereotypes, then Spence's exaggerated performance of her mother, I contend, functions as a means of exorcising the multifarious mass media stereotypes of working-class femininities. These stereotypes have displaced, in the public imagination, the reality of how working-class woman live, survive and cope as subjects.

Performing the Trope: The Hilda Ogden "Type"

The "version" of her mother that Spence performs in *Early Mother* and *Mother and Daughter Shame Work* is remarkably reminiscent of the pathological female characters who came to stand in for working-class women and were almost invariably made the butt of the nation's joke in the popular television sit-coms and soap operas of the period. The arrival of Hilda Ogden (Jean Alexander) on Britain's longest running soap opera, *Coronation Street* (December 1960–), provided the nation with a paradigmatic example of the downtrodden and subservient working-class woman "type"; a subject who simultaneously embodies the nation's fears and fantasies (fig. 3.11). Hilda Ogden was the wife of Stan (Bernard Youens), a work-shy window cleaner. Stan, who drifted in and out of work, spent many an afternoon in the local pub, the Rovers Return, leaving Hilda to pick up the bill and, on occasion, Stan stole from his long-suffering wife to indulge his habit. In her struggle to make do and make ends meet, Hilda was frequently getting into quarrels at the local shop and with the milkman when she tried to procure jars of piccalilli, tinned meat and cherry yogurt "on the tick".

When Hilda and Stan first arrived on the street in 1964, they were in search of their estranged daughter Freda (Sandra Gough). Freda, who was the eldest of four children, had fled the family home to escape Stan's alcoholism and physically abusive behaviour which, it transpires, had caused Freda's two youngest siblings (Tony and Sylvia) to be taken into care. Thus, from the off, Hilda was presented as the pathological working-class woman whose motherly inadequacies threatened not only her children's existence, but to fundamentally destabilise the post-war conceptualisation of motherhood itself.

Hilda's motherly unbecomingness was reaffirmed when, aged fourteen, her second born child, Trevor, fled the family home with money he had stolen from the neighbours. Soon after their son's departure from the street, the Ogdens' received a letter from

Trevor asking them to forsake him and never to contact him again. Several years later Hilda and Stan managed to trace their estranged son to a house in Chesterfield where Trevor lived with his wife and children. However, when Stan and Hilda visited the house, Trevor's bewildered wife answered the door, only to inform the couple that Trevor had intimated that his parents were dead. When Hilda was finally reconciled with her son, Trevor, who now lived in a semi-detached house – a symbol of post-war social mobility – was deeply ashamed of his mother: a charlady who occupied multiple precarious cleaning posts, most notably at the Rover's Return and at the local textile factory. Consequently, his visits were made begrudgingly and were infrequent.

The veritable poor relations on the street, Hilda and her husband regularly quarrelled with their neighbours and the show's comedic scenes were frequently produced at Hilda's expense. An unapologetic eavesdropper and a habitual gossip, with a shrill voice and limited lexicon, Hilda was continuously the butt of her neighbours' jokes; 'if you can dig for spuds like you can dig for gossip', a neighbour commented, 'you'll make Percy Thrower look like a beginner'.[353]

Hilda's sartorial code was also a source of ridicule; she perpetually wore her hair in curlers which protruded from beneath a headscarf, leading her daughter's boyfriend to christen her 'brush head'. While the fact that she always wore a pinafore continually marked her out as different from, or "lesser than", her female neighbours who worked in more 'respectable' professions, such as shop assistants or, as was more commonly the case, didn't work at all. As such, she was subject to the oppressive, regulatory behaviours of other women on the street who constantly tittered behind her back. On the street "clacking" (gossiping) frequently functioned as a means of disciplining behaviour that was perceived as deviant or immoral. And the fear of being clacked about engendered in the female residents an internalised form of self-surveillance, lest one become the object of tomorrow's news. In a scene from an October 1976 episode of the soap in which Hilda discovers that Stan has drunk-away their Christmas fund, Hilda demands of Stan:

> What have you ever brought me, eh? Nothing! Nothing! Oh, a couple a kids, yeah. Yeah, we mus'n't forget them I suppose. One doesn't know us're alive, and the other one what looks down his nose at us because he thinks we're muck. And you know what Stanley, he right isn't he? Because that's just what we are, muck!... Don't you ever take your nose out of your rotten beer pot long enough to look around ya? Do you ever look back on us married life Stan? Life?! Knocked around from pillar to post, in work, out'a work, dole, dole, rotten dole… everybody out there laughing at us. "Oh, you wanna good

laugh? Go find Stanley Ogden! Oh, and don't miss her what's with 'im, her in the red rotten mack… I'm sick of being walked on. I'm sick of being the mug 'round here.

This impassioned monologue reveals the extent to which the scornful gaze of Hilda's neighbours has been internalised and transformed into a repressive form of self-regulation. In turn, the often-derisive treatment of Hilda by her neighbours functioned to regulate female viewers through the binary articulation of enviable and unenviable female types. Attention to the Hilda Ogden "type" tells us something about how working-class women's subjectivities have been produced and regulated through mass media representations.

It is significant then, that the mother Spence imagines in *Mother and Daughter Shame Work* and, in particular, in *Late Mother* (c1986-88) strikingly resembles Hilda Ogden (fig. 3.12). In *Late Mother*, a weary looking, aged and bespectacled *Spence-cum-Gladys* presents herself, like Hilda, with hair bound by a headscarf from beneath which a single, comically large roller protrudes, taming the sparse strands of her forelock. Like the impoverished Hilda, who is always on the lookout for extra work, Gladys Clode appears to be in a fix. A flimsy coin purse made limp by a tangible lack of contents is anxiously clasped to her chest by lined, work-worn hands. Protectively guarding its contents from the eager fingers of her children, Spence-cum-Gladys quite literally tightens the purse strings. Spence's mother, who is unable to provide adequately for her children, comes to inhabit the position of the abject mother described by Joseph in his Birmingham speech.

For a different set of reasons, the deeply abrasive form of acquiescent working-class femininity enacted by Spence in *Late Mother*, was also a source of disdain among feminists. As Andrea Liss notes in *Feminist Art and the Maternal*, while the Women's Liberation Movement set about deconstructing the systems of domination enforced by the patriarchal father, the mother – in particular, I would argue, the working-class mother – was subject to fierce scrutiny. Subsequently, a generation of unforgiving feminists born of the opportunities of the post-war educational meritocracy so hard won by their parents, came to look upon their working-class mothers with disdain. They figured them a reactionary group of naive women unwittingly duped into a life of domestic drudgery or, worse, willing in their subservience to their husbands and children. As Liss notes, in the uncomfortable intersection of feminism and motherhood, the latter term became an obscenity that could only disrupt and problematise the 'retrograde myths' of the avant-garde.[354] For the (overwhelmingly university-educated, in essence middle-class)

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[354] Andrea Liss, op. cit., p. xvi.

members of the Women's Liberation Movement, how working-class women continued to live and perform their gender in the post-war era was perceived in terms of an entrenched conservatism.[355] While Spence herself confessed, 'never, throughout those sexually monogamous years of falling in and out of love, did I ever plan that one day I would be married and have babies, or in any way be like my mother'.[356]

If, on initial inspection, Spence's work seems to make a travesty of the Hilda Ogden "type", her satirising of Clode, I contend, draws attention to the fact that the Hilda Ogden trope is always already parodic: it is already an absurdist rendering of working-class women's lives that tells us very little about how working-class women live, survive and cope under capitalism. Thus, Spence's parody simultaneously operates in tension with the bourgeois construct of "good" middle-class motherhood and feminist histories of gender in which working-class women are figured as the reactionary others to, or the veritable "poor relations" of, their radical feminist counterparts. While at the same time, Spence's work also draws attention to, and puts pressure on, the Leftist, predominantly masculinist histories of class, in which the working-class mother is eulogised for her self-sacrifice in the name of her family.

On the Left, instilled in the figure of the working-class mother is a fantasy about a certain, soon-to-be-bygone way of life. For those demographics discussed in Chapter One, who perceived "affluence" as a threat to the morality of the working-class – as well as a danger to Labour Party itself – the Hilda type came to function as little more than a screen onto which the Left could project their fantasies about a certain working-class way of life born of simpler times and unsullied by modernity. Critiquing what Stuart Hall described as the liberal Left's 'inverted puritanism' – its encoded, austere image of a sufficiently downtrodden, suitably grateful (if soot-covered) proletariat – Walkerdine shrewdly notes that the suburban semi in which she had grown up 'could hardly be described as a back-street slum from which I could have claimed a romantic poverty'.[357] Nor did the aesthetics of the sprawling new build estate – what Spence described as her 'two-bedroomed, semi-detached, mock-Tudor, tree-lined, unfenced, garden-suburb flat' – fit comfortably with the deeply sentimental image of the honest to God, working-class woman scrubbing the front step on bended knee; a trope made familiar during the

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[355] Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite & Natalie Thomlinson, 'National Women Against Pit Closures: Gender, Trade Unionism and Community Activism in the Miners' Strike, 1984–5', *Contemporary British History*, 32:1, pp.78-100. & Andrea Liss, op. cit.

[356] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1991b, p. 232.

[357] Valerie Walkerdine, 'Dreams from an Ordinary Childhood' in Liz Heron (ed) *Truth, Dare or Promise: Girls Growing Up in the Fifties* (London: Virago, 1985), p.64.

1930s by Humphrey Spender's *Mass Observation* photographs which were published among the pages of *Picture Post* (fig. 3.13).[358]

Thirty years later, the by now antiquated and deeply nostalgic image of a robust, 'salt of the earth' working-class femininity became the subject matter of Shirley Baker's Salford photographs which I mentioned in Chapter One (fig. 3.14). Baker wandered the streets of Greater Manchester attempting to capture images of a working-class lifestyle that was thought imperilled by impending post-war clearance programmes. Her deeply romanticised images capture vigorous working-class women standing guard at the doorways of their redbrick terraces, conversing with neighbours or tending their babies as their children play in the street beyond with stray dogs and toy perambulators. In another image, a stern looking matron strides down an alley, her ample body clad in an apron and fur-trimmed slippers (fig. 3.15). These garments, akin to the garb worn by Spence in *Mother/Daughter Shame Work* and *Early Mother*, have become the romanticised metonyms of a certain, northern, working-class femininity. Ashen hair swept back from her face, she frowns directly down the camera's lens. Her puffy flesh creased by wrinkles, her broad hands worn by work, she is a personification of left-wing fantasies about working-class femininities.

The cobbled streets lined with red brick one up, one downs captured by Baker were the very same Salford streets that inspired *Coronation Street* and, across the decades, the programme's opening credits have invariably featured nostalgic shots of terraced streets and sweeping views across the roof tops of densely arranged Victorian houses and their back-to-back courtyards (figs. 3.14).[359] Informed by the conventions of kitchen sink drama*,* programmes such as *Coronation Street* skilfully offer their viewers, Spence writes, affirmation of the supposed "problems" of the working-class audience that they claim to represent, whilst at the same time opening up for viewers 'who have already crossed class boundaries', the prospect of becoming romantically reconciled with their forgotten roots.[360] In fact, the nostalgic appeal of the Hilda "type" was affirmed when, in

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[358] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1991b, p.232. Also see: 'Life in the Lambeth Walk', *Picture Post*, December 31, 1938, pp. 47-53.

[359] In turn, *Coronation Street* prompted Daniel Meadows and Martin Parr's 1973 project *June Street.* Compelled, like Baker, to capture Salford's terraced streets before they were levelled and redeveloped, Meadows and Parr selected June Street as their subject matter precisely because it was one of the sole remaining streets to provide location shots for *Coronation Street*: thereafter, the soap moved to a purpose built studio. http://www.britishphotography.org/artists/19177/ei/2087/daniel-meadows-and-martin-parr-daniel-meadows-and-martin-parr-june-street-salford-1973.

[360] Jo Spence, 'Soap, Family Album Work… and Hope', in Jo Spence and Patricia Holland (eds) *Family Snaps: The Meaning of Domestic Photography* (London: Virago Press, 1991a), p. 201.

1982, Hilda came fourth in a poll of the most recognisable women in Britain, losing only to the Queen Mother, Queen Elizabeth II and Diana, Princess of Wales. And in a 2005 survey conducted by the *Radio Times* she was voted the greatest soap character in history, despite having left the show 17 years prior, in 1987.[361] In the face of deindustrialisation, Hilda's supposed familiarity was a source of comfort for the nation.

Nonetheless, the romanticised Leftist trope of the salt of the earth working-class woman and her domain, the Salford mill cottage, tells us very little about the realities of what it means to be a working-class woman. As Richard Hoggart observers in *The Uses of Literacy*, 'the lines on the face of an old working-class woman are magnificently expressive – but they are hard earned'. Accordingly, 'we need to avoid any suggestion of heroism in the people who actually live this kind of life'.[362] What Walkerdine describes as the 'obvious ordinariness' of working-class women's lives has been buried beneath, on the one hand, the notion that working-class women are pathological social deviants, and on the other, the Left's fascination with the figure of the working-class mother as a veritable class martyr. Spence's mother is at once a doltish and reactionary classed subject and a repository of Leftist fantasies.[363] Historically, such representations have 'regulated', 'victimised' and 'patronised' working-class women, colonising and controlling them through the encoding and reproduction of a set of sensationalised stereotypes that classify the body as that which is other.[364] If we are to produce representations of the working-class that are useful, then we must dispense with the antithetical notions that that class is either 'proto-revolutionary fodder' or the 'duped masses'.[365]

Through exaggeration and parody, Spence simultaneously problematises the abject and aestheticising tropes through which working-class women's lives have been imagined through images, and consequently, misunderstood. We cannot and *must not,* she insists, take these fallacious classed representations at face value. As Spence's attempt to work through and *against* sensationalised images of working-class women

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[361] See: Ian Youngs, 'Coronation Street legend on playing Hilda Ogden', 9 December 2010, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11942041 (accessed 18/07/2019).
[362] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life* (London: Penguin, 2009), p.36.
[363] Valarie Walkerdine, op. cit., 1985, p.65.
[364] Siona Wilson, 'White Metonymy: A Discussion around Jo Spence and Terry Dennett's Colonization', (in) Jorge Ribalta & Terry Dennett, op. cit., p.250.
[365] Valarie Walkerdine, op. cit., 1997, p.22-3.

indicates, if we want to decolonise working-class women's lives, then we must first problematise and decolonise our representations.

On Unbecoming Mothers, or Acting *Out* of Class

While Spence's shifting performance functions to chase-out the trope of the 'salt of the earth' working-class woman and her pathological counterpart, it likewise functions satirically, as a critique of the reactionary good middle-class mother espoused by none other than Thatcher herself, who – with hair coiffed and a sycophantic smile – was regularly figured as the dutiful middle-class mother washing dishes or peeling potatoes at the kitchen sink, clad in a gingham apron (fig. 3.17 & 3.18).

In contrast to Thatcher's seemingly effortless performance of domestic chores, Spence's chaotic attempts to wrestle Gladys into an apron and make her perform the domestic tasks bound up with 'good' patriarchal motherhood invariably end in comic frustration. The bodily gestures through which domestic labour is enacted are not effortless, nor are they smooth or continuous, but jittery and disjointed. Like a broken automaton, Spence's frenzied body and unruly limbs refuse the mechanical patterns of work. As Angela McRobbie observes in 'Notes on *What Not to Wear* and Post-Feminist Symbolic Violence', working-class women are painfully aware of the routine judgements to which they are submitted. In particular, working-class women's bodies have been regulated through the public derision of what Robbie usefully described as "body failings", which are written against notions of respectability that are themselves constructed by the relative few who have the power and authority to designate others.[366] The so-called "psychic symptoms" of a certain classed "pathology" are written onto the body and produced in, through and on the flesh; they are seen in the way that a subject carries herself, in her gestures, postures and manners, in the shape and weight of her body, as well as in the way that her body is maintained and marked – pierced, punctured and tattooed – and the garments that the body is clothed in. The dressing of social and politically situated bodies according to what Andreas Behnke describes as 'socially mediated sartorial codes' is a constitutive element of both gender and class.[367] As is the accent through which a subject vocalises their thoughts, as well as the lexicon through which they speak.

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[366] McRobbie, A. 'Notes on 'What Not to Wear' and Post-Feminist Symbolic Violence', *Feminist After Bourdieu,* Vol 52, p.100.
[367] Andreas Behnke (ed.) *The International Politics of Fashion: Being Fab in a Dangerous World* (London: Routledge, 2016), n/p (e-book).

In the series *Dashing Away with the Smoothing Iron* (c1986-88), an ungainly Spence inexpertly works away at a crumpled shirt (fig. 3.19). Face-in-pout, she stares disobediently at the camera, frustratedly cups her head in her hands, before checking an imaginary watch and proceeding to clumsily wrap the shirt in brown paper, thereby reintroducing its creases. Elsewhere, in a series entitled *Phototherapy: Mother Work* (1986-88), Spence proudly models a plate of sausages, mash and peas (fig. 3.20). Striking the familiar pose adopted by the likes of celebrity chefs, such as the ever-poised Delia Smith, and the women who populated the pages of glossy magazines – body erect, bust-forward, head tossed back in frivolous laughter – she effortlessly presents herself, like her meal, as good enough to eat (fig. 3.21). Like a narcissistic child, or the eager-to-please wife, she keenly seeks praise and approval from her own imaginary mother, holding the fruits of her labour aloft for the viewers' inspection. Yet, on closer examination her performance is found wanting. Supper, like the sitter, has passed its best. Over-done, the sausages are burnt and blackened, the peas yellowing and overboiled. Ever the rebellious child, Spence takes an awkward bite of one of the sausages nonetheless and as viewers, we laugh; after all, as mother used to say, 'waste not want not'.

Through the infantile compulsion to "dress up" and "be mother", Spence draws attention to the customary games of 'mummies and daddies' routinely played by children, and through which girls, in particular, are socialised into their prescribed roles as mothers and homemakers. In fact, the series *Dashing Away with the Smoothing Iron* derives its title from a nineteenth century folk song of the same name that bequeaths to the singer – the peasant or the servant – the knowledge of how to launder. Each verse describes a different stage in the laundering process – washing, shaking, drying, airing, ironing, folding and, finally, wearing – which the child commits to memory by singing as they labour alongside their mother. It is through practice, through watching our mothers and working together with them in the kitchen, as well as through mass media representations of "good" mothering, that we learn and are indoctrinated into our role as mothers.

Likewise, in her video *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), by working her way begrudgingly through the repetitive routines of female socialisation in the context of "child's play", the important American artist and theorist Martha Rosler calls attention to the regimes through which children are socialised into their gender and class positions. Crucially by donning an apron and "dressing up" as another 'good middle-class mother' – the eccentric, exuberant and always breathy celebrity chef Julia Child, who created and

starred in the long running American TV show *The French Chef* – Rosler demonstrates how sartorial performances might become playful sites of subversion (fig 3.22 & 3.23).[368]

The black and white film opens with a close-up shot of Rosler holding a chalkboard which doubles as a teaching aid (fig 3.22). Upon it, scrawled in chalk, is the title of the work, *Semiotics of the Kitchen,* the date, and Rosler's name. As the camera slowly zooms out, Rosler's location – the kitchen – and the workbench before her come into frame and we see arranged upon the bench a plethora of utensils and cooking implements. Silently putting the chalkboard to one side, Rosler picks up a pinafore which she puts on and ties neatly behind her neck and back, dully stating: 'Apron'. The word 'Apron' – with the initiating letter "A" – forms the first term in an alphabetical sequence, the like of which is typically used to teach children their 'ABCs'; thereby socialising them into patriarchal language. The sequence conventionally begins: "A" is for Apple, "B" is for Ball, "C" is for Cat, and so on. Rosler's roll call, however, works through the contents of the kitchen cupboards. According to Rosler's alphabetic system, 'Apron' is followed by 'Bowl'. After 'Bowl', the system monotonously continues thus: 'Chopper', 'Dish', 'Eggbeater', 'Fork', 'Grater'. As she moves through the alphabet, listing off utensils and demonstrating their usages, her wooden performance becomes progressively more exaggerated, her gestures larger and more absurd. At 'F' Rosler takes up a fork, vigorously thrusting it into the air, swiping it from left to right; belligerently stabbing the space immediately between herself and the camera. She then takes up the grater, scraping it up and down with the fork, producing the jarringly sound of metal clashing on metal.

In the artist's alphabetised list 'Hamburger Press' follows on from grater. Rosler mechanically picks up the press from the counter and begins aggressively snapping the contraption open and closed in mid-air; tearing chunks out of imaginary lumps of meat. She turns the contraption toward the viewer, slowly manoeuvring it so that it comes to comically resemble a pair of false teeth (fig 3.25). Later a stony faced Rosler uses a ladle to scoop imaginary liquid from a large (imaginary) urn, before quickly flinging the ladle's contents – in a frustrated, jerking motion – over her shoulder, throwing out her middle-class domestic mores with the metaphorical dishwater. The demonstration stops at "T" for "Tenderiser" and Rosler takes up a knife and fork which she expressively holds aloft. Using the knife and fork as prosthesis, she moves the utensils through the air so

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[368] See: Margot Berrill, *The Host and the Roast: Kitchen Humor in Feminist Video Art and Pop Culture* (unpublished PhD thesis, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2016).

that they spell out the remaining letters of the alphabet: U, V, W, X, Y and Z (fig 3.26). Slowly and silently she places the knife and fork back on the counter before folding her arms and, after several seconds pass, giving a droll shrug. In total, the sequence lasts six minutes and nine seconds.

In the performance, Rosler's lexicon is limited to the contents of the kitchen, or the "tools" of so-called "women's work". If, for Julia Child, the kitchen is a space of creativity and of joyous expression, then for Rosler it is an oppressive vacuum. In contrast to Child's exuberance, Rosler's performance is decidedly unenthusiastic. For Rosler, "dressing up" in an apron – the statutory garb of the "good" middle-class mother – is to don a straitjacket. As she moves through the alphabet, a disinterested Rosler pours scorn on Child and the "role" that she occupies; a role in which Child instructs the female viewer in how to become a good housewife and hostess, and how to 'master' the art of French cooking.[369] If learning and performing our class and gender roles, like learning our ABCs, is child's play, for Rosler it is a form of "play" that schools the subject in self-regulation. Yet, by refusing to perform her labour with a *smile* – as the mass media tells women they must – Rosler reveals the absurdity of the bourgeois pretence of the convivial, accommodating and contented middle-class mother. Thus, although it is through play that we are socialised into our assigned class and gender positions, play is nonetheless fundamentally compelled by desire and fantasy. Against the closed possibilities of post-war gender and class identities, Rosler and Spence afford a liminal space where one might imagine and assume innumerable subject positions and partake in a range of experiences, amongst which we might count the potentially subversive or transgressive.

Unmaking Maggie

For Spence, as for Rosler, the good middle-class mother is an object of parody and Spence's decidedly unstable performance of Gladys Clode relentlessly shifts between exaggerated middle-class tropes. Indeed, Spence's almost compulsive performance of her mother functions subversively, as a varifocal lens through which to problematise, disrupt or disorganise class designations, as well as the ways in which we differently assign "value" to subjects according to a series of classed tropes. Contained in the figure of Gladys Clode are characters such as Lynda Bellingham's 'OXO mum' (1983-99) – who, poised and dutiful, was always waiting at the stove, ready to whip up a meal

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[369] *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* was a cookbook collectively authored by Julia Child, Louisette Bertholle, and Simone Beck. It was intended for American audiences (read *housewives*).

at a moment's notice – and Penelope Keith's imperious Margo Leadbetter (figs 3.27 & 3.28). Always dressed in the latest 'exotic' fashion trends, in lapis blue kaftans and swathes of tangerine, Margo was the shrill, robustly powdered, eccentric and snobbish social climber in the aptly named sit-com *The Good Life* (1975-8). Spence's performance of these tropes – both of whom resemble the Iron Lady herself – is forever trapped in a volatile and erratic to and fro with the Hilda Ogden type, within whom they comedically collide and from whom they eventually becoming indistinguishable.

Indeed, Spence's performance oscillates, erratically and inexorably between regulatory and regulated subject positions, shifting between the double-consciousness of the "reactionary" working-class mother and her 'good' middle-class counterpart. The performance shifts as well between the figure of the radical feminist mother, and that of the disapproving internalised or embodied mother and the contemptuous, inescapably present adult-infant daughter. With the category of the "queer" working-class woman academic in mind, I contend that Spence provokes laughter through multiple acts of playful transgression. In particular, Spence uses cross-class-dressing to perform an absurd, apparently "vulgar", "out of control" working-class femininity. In its fallacious "derivativeness", to evoke a Butlerian term, this caricature is deployed as a means of dislodging or denaturalising the trope of the good middle-class mother.

In fact, Spence's performance draws attention to the mediated nature of Thatcher's very own supposedly unselfconscious class and gender performance which was, in actuality, carefully stage managed and filtered through the prism of the media. Thatcher was the first Prime Minister to fully utilise the media and, in particular, broadcasting as a tool through which to negotiate the political field and appeal to different demographics and constituencies.[370] With the assistance of Gordon Reece – Thatcher's close ally and political strategist during the Conservative Party leadership race and Director of Publicity during the 1979 general election campaign – and Andrew Rutherford, the creative director at the advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi, Thatcher learned to use the visibility afforded her by a now predominantly rightward-leaning media to her advantage. The 1979 Conservative Party election campaign was an event created not so much for people that Thatcher would encounter on doorsteps across the nation, but for the media. What seemed like spontaneous photo opportunities were in fact carefully planned and choreographed media events.

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[370] Daniel Conway, 'Margaret Thatcher: Dress and the Politics of Fashion' (in) Andreas Behnke (ed.), op. cit., n/p (e-book).

In her attempt to win the women's vote in the North, Thatcher performed for the television cameras in the role of '"our Maggie" the housewife's friend'.[371] This softer, more accessible version of our Maggie was concerned with the intricacies of domestic life that she and her male colleagues considered important to "ordinary housewives". In widely circulated footage captured on a campaign trail visit to Rington's tea factory in Byker, Newcastle, Thatcher was pictured asking a group of female workers in factory-issue coveralls whether they prefer tea bags to loose-leaf tea (fig. 3.29). 'It's so much more convenient to wash up in teabags', she earnestly tells one woman in her cloying voice. To another she explains: 'It's so much more convenient, and weight for weight its quite economical if you think because you don't put in more than you need. It is much easier!' she concludes in a knowing tone. Meanwhile, in another carefully staged public appearance on the eve of the 1979 election, Thatcher was photographed in Halifax holding aloft two string-shopping bags (fig. 3.30). In her right hand she held a blue string bag swollen with boxes of cereal, bread and pats of butter and cheese and labelled "February 1974". In her left hand, she clasps a sparsely filled, red string bag labelled "Today". The blue bag represents a pound's worth of shopping under Edward Heath's Conservative Government, while the red bag represents the same value of shopping purchased with an inflationary "Labour pound".

In interviews printed among the pages of women's magazines and broadcast on the television, she continually drew on her adolescent experience working in her father's grocery shop and managing a household budget as a means of demonstrating that she understood the impact that inflation was having on the price of a family's weekly shop (Thatcher prided herself on always knowing the price of a pint of milk). And in an attempt to make herself identifiable to female voters, she drew on the domestic secrets imparted to her by her mother, such as how to darn worn clothes, how to press a man's shirt collar, how to embroider and sew a clean seam, as well as how to polish mahogany with vinegar, seizing every opportunity to demonstrate her domestic wisdoms before the camera.[372] For Thatcher, who was no proponent of women's liberation, penetrating questions such as how women like to take their tea represented the absolute limit of what she considered issues important to women, among whom she considered herself an exception. Playing the housewife was a political strategy that she employed, in spite of herself – and in spite of the rest of the female population – not only to make her experiences resonate with the female electorate (even though her household "budget"

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[371] *Campaign '79*, BBC, Friday Apr 27, 1979, BBC Archive: BBC Motion Gallery.
[372] Heather Nunn, *Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy: The Political Culture of Gender and Nation* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002), p.80.

was that of a millionaire) but as a means of demonstrating her credentials for the role of managing the nation's "domestic" budget. Through this means, Thatcher was able to tap into a conservative cultural sensibility concerning the veiled yet omnipotent power of the wife and mother.[373] Indeed, throughout her career, Thatcher insisted on the centrality of motherhood to the British way of life.

Whereas Rosler's performance plays on the tedium of the day-to-day existence of the "good" middle-class housewife and the work she performs while killing time, by contrast, Spence's performance excites laughter because it casts as absurd the very expectation that working-class women might inhabit the role of the "good" middle-class mother espoused by Thatcher. In contrast to the self-possessed, reasoned, rational and respectable middle-class mother lionised among the pages of lifestyle magazines and in motherhood primers, Gladys Clode is distinctly unbecoming. Excessively emotional, Spence's mother bears the signs of her unbecomingness upon the fleshy surface of her body as neurotic symptoms, or 'body failings'.[374] At times angry, absurd, anxious, infantilised and irrational, as the subject who cannot "become" other, or live life otherwise, Spence's mother 'impedes, confuses, deranges and complicates'.[375]

A Working-Class Woman's Work is Never Done

If, vis-a-vis the gay and lesbian subject, the working-class subject is the epitome of what 'calls to be classified, regulated, and controlled', then as Butler insists, 'there remains a political imperative to use the necessary errors or category mistakes' – McRobbie's "body failings" – as a 'rallying point for a certain resistance to classification and to identity as such'.[376] While the 'I' is constituted through repetitive play, it is, paradoxically, precisely the repetition of that play that denotes the instability of the very identity that it establishes. For, as Butler argues, if the 'I' only attains a semblance of identity through the repetitive citation of itself, then the 'I' is ceaselessly displaced by the repetition that upholds it and by the 'prominently non-self-identical status of the 'I''.[377] Like gender, class is performative to the extent that it manifests-as-*effect* the naturalised or ascribed subject that it appears to express. If we can understand the body as a site of cultural inscription, as Spence's long term collaborator Rosy Martin has argued, then we might

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[373] Daniel Conway, op. cit., n/p (e-book).
[374] Angela McRobbie, op. cit. It is worth noting that McRobbie was a post-graduate student at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies during the 1970s, when the centre was administered by Stuart Hall.
[375] Andrea Liss, op. cit., p.xvi.
[376] Judith Butler, op. cit., 1993b, p.309.
[377] Ibid. p.311.

understand those inscribed meanings as performed rather than essentially contained.[378] It is through the discursive representation of the body as a bearer of ideological messages that might be "read off" its surface that the working-class body is aesthetically classed and made to produce meaning under capitalism.[379]

As I have argued, through exaggeration, repetition and the stylisation of "madness" (or absurdity) upon the bodily surface, Spence's parodic performance of her mother problematises the idealised conceptualisations of female domesticity espoused by the media during the 1950s and renewed by Thatcher during the 1970s. This is important because the trope of the good middle-class housewife belies the fact that the neoliberal economy was dependent upon the *formal,* as well as the informal*,* (re)productive labour of working-class women. Contrary to Thatcher's rhetoric, under her watch the majority of working-class women were not housewives but occupied unskilled, low paid positions, typically within the service sector (as cleaners, carers, retail assistants etc.,) in order to supplement the fall in, or eradication of, household incomes engendered by the obliteration of the industrial sector. So much so, that between 1951 and 1971 the number of women working part-time rose from just nine per cent of the work force to a staggering 38 per cent and the overwhelming majority of those women were married.[380]

Spence's assertion of the impossibility of effective labour is, thus, deeply ironic, given that working-class women's bodies are the epitome of functional tools, their rhythms and gestures actively produced and contained in and by work. These pre-scripted embodied or bodily actions and corporal "styles" determine the limits of being-in-the-world for the working-class. Through her crazed and exaggerated repetition of labour, Spence makes her mother's existence appear absurd. As Charlesworth notes, under the condition of absurdity, looking beyond the here and now and the urgent and irreducible demands of the present becomes a near-impossibility. Many un- and underemployed subjects exist in conditions akin to this; their lives consumed and limited by the struggle to cope and "get by". For the subject who lives hand to mouth, day-to-day, the absurdity of their apparently endless present becomes the 'inescapable context

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[378] Rosy Martin, 'Looking and Reflecting: Returning the Gaze, Re-enacting Memories and Imagining the Future Through Photography', in Susan Hogan (ed) *Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.154.

[379] For more on this see: Angela McRobbie, op. cit. & Steph Lawler, 'Rules of Engagement: Habitus, Power and Resistance', *The Sociological Review*, 2004, Vol.52(2), pp.110-28.

[380] Dolly Smith Wilson, 'A New Look as the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2006, pp. 206-29.

of life'.[381] Both bourgeois notions of self-actualisation on the one hand, and post-'68 feminist histories of gender on the other, occlude or fail to acknowledge the forms that humanity assumes for those whose very being is produced by what Charlesworth describes as 'the absence of freedom to become other than they find themselves *having to be*'.[382] 'Well, I mean you've just got to carry on, ain't ya?' explains Dolly Granner, a single mother of two whose transcript appears on page 136 of *Survival Programmes* (fig. 3.31). She candidly continues, 'I mean, if you've ever had any knocks, you've just got to bounce back. That's all you can do'. When Exit ask Dolly if she worked while her children were young, she recalls: 'When our Betty was ten weeks old I started down New Street, cleaning the trams, and I worked for 'em till a fortnight before our Tina was born… I had Tina', she continues, 'and then and only then did I start to go on social security. I'd always worked' (*Survival*, 136).

In chapter nine of *Survival Programmes*, which is entitled 'Mothers Alone', a series of transcripts demonstrate the struggle that working-class women routinely face in their quest to live, survive and cope in the absence of an adequate income. On page 156 of the book, in a transcript entitled 'The Kids Think It's a Joke', Mrs Green details the forceful eviction by bailiffs of herself and her five young children after their private landlord (a personal friend of Mrs Green's) defaulted on his mortgage repayments (fig. 3.32). Without legal or financial recourse, Mrs Green is left to spend the following night in the back garden of her former home in defence of her and her children's sparse belongings which, having been tossed on the lawn by the bailiffs, lay exposed to thieves and vulnerable to the elements. As a clearly tired and frustrated Mrs Green explains, between numerous interruptions and the innocent screams of her excited children:

> It rained last night… You see, everything's wringing wet. Look at it! Mattresses are no good… They might as well just be left and dumped. Everything's damp... They ripped all the three piece you know, the bailiffs… It's going to stink like the clappers, isn't it?... All the clothing's wet because the plastic bags haven't kept water out… I wouldn't have gone into the hostel if they hadn't sorted it. I would have sat here every night. I wouldn't 've moved… Then by the time I got pneumonia they would have to do something, wouldn't they?... And I'll bloody sit here and always come back every day till I get somewhere… The kids think it's a joke! (*Survival*, 156-8).

By revealing the porosity of the boundary between inside and out, private and public, Mrs Green's account reveals *as-myth* one of the major leitmotifs of neoliberalism, that of negative liberty: the neoliberal conceptualisation of 'freedom' as defined by the right

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[381] Charlesworth's notion of the absurd is taken from Albert Camus' theorisation. See: Simon J. Charlesworth, op. cit. p.197.
[382] Ibid., op. cit., p.4.

to privacy ascertained through the consumption and accumulation of private property.[383] In the absence of a steady income and, by implication, the capacity to consume privacy, Mrs Green is unable to distance herself from the world – to negate her immediate proximity to the outside world - through the 'shoring-up' of the parameter between the self and the other, inside and out. Indeed, the boundary between that which is private and public becomes ever-permeable, and is eventually invasively and aggressively breached by bailiffs who enter Mrs Green's home in defence of the capital interests of the lender. As I argued in Chapter Two, for the less acceptable face of capitalism, the home has never been a truly 'private space'.

Whether the boundaries of the home are breached by burglars, vandals or debt collectors, or by disciplinary public figures such as police officers, social workers and health visitors, the physical porosity of the home becomes self-evident time and time again amongst the pages of *Survival Programmes*. On page 148, in a transcript incisively entitled 'The Wrong Class', Helen Coleman describes an invasive and belittling encounter with a social worker who visited unexpectedly on washing day, finding the beds bare of linen (fig. 1.17). As Coleman recounts, 'She [the social worker] said, "Your beds are disgraceful. No sheets, no pillow cases"'. Having been on the housing register for nine years, Mrs Coleman's spare sheets and blankets had been destroyed when tar used by the council to repair her leaking roof seeped in through gaps in tiles and on to the beds below. 'She was no more than about seventeen or eighteen years of age' Mrs Coleman explains, 'and she said to me, "You'll never do anything better than where you are and don't expect to". Now I got up… and honest to God, all I could do, oh, I got that tense' (*Survival,* 150).

As Mrs Rossiter – a volunteer community worker from the Balsall Heath Association – explicates, Mrs Green's case contains a further, disturbing example of the permeability of the fragile boundary between private and public space, between inside and outside and between the self and the other. 'This all came about', Mrs Rossiter explains, because Mrs Green's 'husband left her with five kids. He just walked out. I don't think she gets any money from him'. Mrs Green, she continues, 'was on social security and she couldn't manage so she went on the game… She was a prostitute. But she only did that occasionally' (*Survival,* 158). For Mrs Green, a disturbing slippage occurs between the permeability of the economically insecure social space that she and her family inhabit(ed), and the economically vulnerable classed and gendered body. In the face of

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[383] For more on the concept of negative liberty see: Isaiah Berlin, op. cit., Also see Simon J Charlesworth, op. cit. pp.168-70.

economic turmoil, the boundary or the edge of her body became, like her home, a space that is permeable.

In the absence of economic security, in their quest to live, survive and cope on a day-to-day basis, working-class women are routinely forced to put their bodies – their flesh – on the line in the name of their own survival and for, and *on behalf of*, their children. In a transcript titled, 'For Your Kids' Sake', Exit interview Jillian, a mother of two in her late twenties who had fled to the Woman in Need refuge, Newcastle, in order to escape her abusive husband. Her faltering and hesitant account – born of what Charlesworth refers to as 'vulnerability-bound inarticulateness' – details the dissent of the couple's relationship into increasingly violent episodes.[384] 'When he first started', she explains:

> he were just giving me a smack around the ear-'ole every now and then which… you know, I can stand that. But then he started fisting and cutting me… you'd… try to protect everybody else, and take it yourself… So you stand there and take it for the kids' sake more than owt else. And then you just had enough (*Survival,* 146).

Like Jillian, Sandra Howard had been married to an abusive husband whom she had eventually managed to flee after waiting for two and a half years to be rehoused by the underfunded, under resourced council. When Exit interviewed her, she was living with her two children in a privately rented house in Wilson Green, Birmingham. When she moved in, she explains, the gas was not connected and the house had no inside bathroom. The family survived on social security benefit. Left on her own to care for her children, Sandra suffered a nervous breakdown; an example of how 'inequality manifests in the mental and physical ill health that afflict' the underemployed.[385] 'I always thought I was strong, strong willed, and I thought I could cope' she explains in a transcript tellingly named 'In Front of the Children'. She continues, 'but you don't know what you're thinking subconsciously do you?' (*Survival*, 138-40). For underemployed women, life is lived in and through a continuous state of vulnerability; a vulnerability that is produced by the inescapable necessities that precondition and determine their being-in-the-world.

But the uncomfortable transcripts included in *Survival Programmes* are also peppered with laughter. In a conversation with Exit about her appalling living conditions, Helen Coleman recalls viewing a property offered to her by the council. 'There was no door!' she incredulously recalls. 'The doors was down in the hall, the windows was all out and, you know, dossers in there – they'd used the front rooms as a toilet and all this', she

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[384] Simon J. Charlesworth, op. cit. p.4.
[385] Ibid. p.6.

explains matter-of-factly. 'Honestly', she quips, 'I wouldn't have felt it if two Midland Red buses had got together and spread me tight… It's not fit even for a dog', she laughs, 'cos a dog would be shocked to be brought down here!' Elsewhere, in 'Golden Days', Exit interview Pat Granner about the challenges of bringing up seven children on her own. When Exit ask Pat why she never married, she remarks: 'I don't think there's any that's worth marrying. (*Laughs.*) They're either drunk or on drugs. Mind you', she jests, 'I'd like to go on a few drugs myself. Forget about everything. (*Laughs.*) I'd like to go on them for about six weeks. Ooh, lovely!' (*Survival,* 138).

As Umberto Eco argues, qua Luigi Pirandello, 'humour is the "sentiment" of the opposite', by which he means that the humorous is that which we simultaneously laugh at and identify with. That which is, in other words, caught between tragedy and comedy. 'In humour we smile', he notes, 'because of the contradiction between the character and the frame the character cannot comply with': between the unattainable Thatcherite trope and the absurd nature of how that trope manifests in actuality (figs 3.8 & 3.33).[386] Thus, by playing through and between the realities of working-class women's lives and the contradictions that pervade how they are represented, "kitchen humour" provides the means through which working-class women might live, survive and cope under capitalism. As Spence notes in an interview with John Roberts, within working-class communities the telling of 'extraordinarily funny stories' about the contradictions under which you're living operates as a means of dealing with adversity'.[387] The laughter-inducing stories that are typically made the stuff of working-class women's humour often involve self-depreciation centred around the routine humiliations engendered by the inadvertent transgression of middle-class mores and codes of respectability. While these deeply uncomfortable incidents, played out in the spaces between the trope of the ideal housewife and that of the pathological working-class mother, are lived, experienced and remembered as acute moments of shame, when recounted amongst friends and family and met with the laughter born of mutual understanding and recognition, their regulatory potency loses its sting. Born of necessity, humour becomes a mechanism or 'strategy' for coping with the routinised oppression of classed and gendered subjects. Cue the familiar maxim, *If you don't laugh you'll cry*.

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[386] Umberto Eco, 'The Frames of Comic "Freedom"' (in) Thomas Sebeok (ed.) *Carnival!* (Amsterdam, Berlin, New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984), p.8.
[387] John Roberts and Jo Spence, 'Interview with Jo Spence' (in) Jorge Ribalta & Terry Dennett, op. cit., p.88-9.

In fact, the near impossibility of working-class women occupying the role of the 'good' middle-class mother provides the subtext for Spence's performance. In a further image from the *War Worker* series, Spence makes her critique of the 'good' middle-class mother explicit. We are left with an image of Gladys – dressed in work overalls – hysterically laughing at a spread of *Housewife*; a glossy magazine that functioned during the post-war era to sell affluence and as a primer for 'good' middle-class motherhood (fig. 3.34). As a smile creeps across Spence's face, the veneer of the 'good' middle-class mother cracks, and the mother breaks out in subversive laughter.[388] As opposed to reaffirming the trope of the pathological working-class mother, Spence's schizoid, endlessly *shifting* performance functions, through laughter, to disturb the 'claim to coherence', to borrow a Butlerian term, through which the "good" middle-class mother is produced and assigned authority.[389] Her wry performance is a transgression of the good middle-class mother; it is a role that Spence literally and metaphorically 'tries on' – dresses "up" in – and subsequently *casts off.*

"Coming Out" or *Turning In* - The Self as Other

As Butler theorises in 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', the issue bound up in the question of performativity is not of 'avowing or disavowing the category lesbian or gay' but of uncovering *why* it is that the designation is transformed into a site of "ethical" decision making.[390] When, as the sociologist Steph Lawler argues, your attire, your accent and your appearance, as well as the very body that you inhabit, is denigrated, the temptation to jettison those marks of difference – to "dress up just the same", as Mrs Rogers does – and to assume a desirable middle-class habitus is overwhelming.[391] Yet this apparently liberatory act or defensive gesture, a shedding of one's classed skin, is to concede political and symbolic ground. As Spence confessed in *A Picture of Health*, 'Removing myself from the battlefield will not end the war'.[392]

Thus, if putting on and *pulling off* ("passing" with) a middle-class accent for example, does not represent a threat to established social hierarchies, Lawler asks – qua Butler – to what extent would the affirmation of working-class subjectivities perform this work? Lawler quickly shuts down the subversive potentiality of reappropriating working-class identities. In relation to working-class women, she concludes, it is hard to comprehend

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[388] Mignon Nixon, 'Bad Enough Mother', *October*, 1 January 1995, Vol.71, p.84.
[389] Judith Butler, op. cit., 1993b, p.309.
[390] Ibid., p.310.
[391] Steph Lawler, op. cit., p.122.
[392] This quote is from the phototherapy series: Jo Spence, *A Picture of Health*, 1982-6.

how Butler's concept of resistance through resignification might operate given that working-class women's habitus (above and beyond that of their male counterparts) is established exclusively in negative terms.[393] Following on from Skeggs, she explains, working-class women often pursue paths based upon their disidentification with, or – as this chapter has argued – their *disavowal of* their classed histories. Given that working-class lives are systematically devalued both discursively and in terms of the devaluation of their labour, Skeggs concludes, 'Who would want to be seen as working-class?' Who would want, in other words, to (re-)present, or reposition him/herself, as other? 'Possibly', Skeggs adds as a parenthesis, 'only academics'.[394]

While Skeggs' wry assertion self-reflexively conjures up questions of, and claims to, "authenticity", as well as images of academics masquerading as working-class subjects – that is, "slumming it" – I want to argue that the insistent reclamation of classed histories by working-class women academics is significant precisely because it represents a refusal of what Spence described as the introjected self-censorship that at risk identities are subject to and *must* defensively enact in order to survive in the world.[395] As the literature of the working class-women academics attests, disidentification with, or the disavowal of working-class identities is not always necessarily final, nor is it total or complete. Rather, their work is compelled precisely by their inability to split off or "kill off" those parts of themselves that are considered socially undesirable or unbecoming. Paradoxically then, for working-class women academics, there lies a liberatory possibility in reappropriating the signs of one's classed pathology.[396] For it is precisely by "coming out" as working-class, that working-class women academics gain the capacity to speak to and of the *affective* regulatory regimes that perpetuate the oppression of working-class women. This is, in part, the problematic – or the *privilege* – lodged in Spence's work, for it is in "becoming other" through higher education, as well as through the continuous and prolonged disavowal of her working-class family, that Spence acquired as 'cultural capital' the authority and the lexicon through which to speak *for* – or to speak on the behalf *of* and *with* – those working-class

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[393] Steph Lawler, op. cit., p.123. Since the entrenchment of deindustrialisation, masculine working-class identities have likewise been discursively stripped by the media of *all* value. Working-class men are presented as thugs, football hooligans, and layabouts. See for example: Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 2016).
[394] Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997), p.95.
[395] Spence uses the term 'self-censorship' in Jo Spence, 'Beyond the Family Album' (in) Jorge Ribalta and Terry Dennett (eds) op. cit., 2005, pp.172-213.
[396] Steph Lawler, op. cit., p.123.

women whose speech is otherwise disavowed or silenced by the absence of an authoritative listener.[397]

Moral misgivings surrounding the issue of who gets to speak for and on behalf of whom likewise informed the concerns that, as I mentioned in the introduction, turned so many photographers, Spence included, away from social documentary and the quasi-anthropological documentation of the less acceptable face of capitalism after the 1970s. One of the most prominent practitioners and theorists to influence this departure was Victor Burgin. In a 1979 interview with Tony Godfrey, Burgin had this to say about the power relations implicit in the factory photographs he produced in conjunction with Coventry Workshop:

> The fact remains that I was free to walk out of that place and they [the workers] weren't – a fundamental distinction. The work I was doing was intended to support them, the same goes for the art piece that some of the images were subsequently used in, but the fact remains that my intervention there, if not actually exploitative, was politically irrelevant; that's how I feel about it now, and that's how I feel about the work of other "artists" who take their cameras into such situations.[398]

For Burgin, the power of the photographer over *his* subject is redoubled, not only because of his privileged status as a middle-class photographer, but because of the fact of the workers' gender (female) and race (Asian). In a 2010 interview entitled *Art and Politics: A Reappraisal,* he vehemently, and I would suggest reductively, reasserts this position, querying: 'In what circumstance is it acceptable for a middle-class photographer to point a camera at a wage-slave?'[399] Rather than presenting this concern dialogically, as a point of debate or serious inquiry, Burgin poses his question rhetorically, closing down the conversation, and by implication, the very possibility of representations that take the less acceptable face of capitalism as their subject. For

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[397] Steph Lawler, op. cit., pp.123-4.

[398] This interview was originally printed in: Burgin, V. & Godfrey, T. 'Interview', recorded 1979, published in *Block 7,* 1982. It is interesting that when extracts from this interview were reproduced in Burgin's 1986 volume *Between*, Burgin included a partial retraction, stating: 'I no longer have such a "negative" view of such photographic interventions. Some are useful, others not – only specific circumstances decide, and it is wrong to generalise. However, I would still say that it is *particularly* wrong to make the sort of generalisations that assume that the photographer in this sort of situation is politically useful'. Interview with Tony Godfrey recorded in 1979, published in *Block 7,* 1982; reprinted in V. Burgin, *Between* (London: Blackwell/ICA, 1986), p.39. This partial retraction gains further intrigue, given that in 2010, Burgin doubled-down once more on his initial assertion, stating that: 'I find something profoundly distasteful in the spectacle of workers having a last increment of value extracted from them by "political artists" parading their moral narcissism in pursuit of their careers'. Victor Burgin & Hilde Van Gelder in conversation, 'Art and politics: A reappraisal', *Eurozine,* 30 July 2010. https://www.eurozine.com/art-and-politics-a-reappraisal/(accessed 30/08/2018). An image from the 'factory photographs' project is repurposed in Victor Burgin's now seminal work *UK76*. I can otherwise find no trace of the factory photographs.

[399] Ibid.

Bergin, such images are monological, reflecting only the voice of the photographer and his power to exercise authority over his subject. John Tagg doubled-down on Burgin's assertion in *The Burden of Representation* when he postulated, as I stated in the Introduction, that the documentary mode favoured by the Left during the seventies cannot disrupt the social order because it is always already enmeshed in techniques of surveillance and domination. Thus, for Tagg as for Burgin, documentary is inextricably bound to the system that it seeks to overturn.[400]

Considering Burgin's vehement critique of the uneven relationship between the photographer and their subject, it is worth noting that Burgin had been Spence's informal mentor since the mid-1970s and Burgin was a lecturer at the Polytechnic of Central London while she was studying the Theory and Practice of Photography there as a mature student (1979-81).[401] Given that this moment coincided with Spence's turn to the studio and the autobiographical, it seems credible that her own transition away from social documentary was informed by the same set of theoretic debates that preoccupied and determined Burgin's practice. As Spence explained in *Beyond the Family Album* (1979):

> I began to have serious doubts as to my right to continue with my work – to act on behalf of those I photographed, who had no control of what I did with the images, or who do not decide what words we would put with their image. As a result of these doubts, I eventually gave up being a photographer.[402]

At the risk of reducing a complex issue to an either/or question, we might ask whether or not removing the other from the realm of representation entirely is always preferable to making the other visible, even if that visibility is compromised to varying degrees and for a multitude of differing reasons, including, for example, the context within which images are used, and/or appropriated? Turning that enquiry on its head, we might ask: Is it better to speak on behalf of, or for, than to render the already voiceless, completely silent? To what extent are such facile polarities truly reflective of the documentary

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[400] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*: *Essays on Photographies and Historie*s (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), p.102.

[401] Siona Wilson notes that Spence and Bergin's first interaction was during Spence's time with Hackney Flashers. Bergin was a member of the Arts Council panel that awarded funding to Half Moon Photography Workshop for *Women and Work*, and he also served as the project's 'advisor and informal overseer' with Spence becoming his main point of contact for the group. Wilson notes that, 'in the mid-1970s Bergin… served as an informal mentor and Spence recounts feeling particularly intimidated at the prospect of these meetings, since along with Dennett she was familiar with his considerable reputation both as a conceptual artist and as a theorist'. Siona Wilson, *op. cit.,* 2015, p.152.

[402] This extract is from the introductory text (panel one) to: Jo Spence, *Beyond the Family Album*, 1979.

practices that were taking place on the Left during the 1970s? Few of the Leftist projects produced during the 1970s appeared in such radically decontextualised terms. As Spence implies, the problem was photography, not documentary as such. As I argued in the Introduction, Exit did not believe in the capacity of photographs, in and of themselves, to account for the socio-political situation that they sought to explore. *Survival Programmes* is a photobook: a densely layered and complex discursive object. Thus, although the images included in the project were taken by photographers from "outside" the communities the book records, the photographs were nonetheless accompanied by oral transcripts that countered, or at least problematised, the uneven power relationships between photographer and photographed. It is not in spite, but because of mediation that the subjects whose histories are included in *Survival Programmes* assume a voice. Moreover, Exit's willingness to enter Mrs Rogers' home and the space they give her voice in *Survival Programmes* is in contradistinction to her parents' own refusal to cross the threshold of her home. Exit thus put pressure on one of documentary history's founding myths: that the photographer must be *of* and *from* the underemployed classes in order to capture its image in a way that was morally irreputable.

During the 1930s, the founder of Mass Observation, Tom Harrison, 'prohibited' Humphrey Spender from taking photographs of 'domestic interiors because it would require the cooperation of the subjects involved'.[403] Reflecting back on the limits of his project, Spender concludes:

> I always come back to the factor that I was constantly being faced with – class distinction, that fact that I was somebody from another planet, intruding on another kind of life… I felt very much a foreigner… A constant feature of taking the kind of photographs we're talking about… was the feeling that I was intruding, and that I was exploiting the people I was photographing.[404]

The emergence of social "documentary" as a category during the 1930s coincided with Spender's involvement with Mass Observation.[405] Accordingly, Mass Observation's self-conscious, self-imposed limits, have come to constitute the formative premises of documentary histories. Ensconced, in other words, is Harrison and Spender's shared belief that the relationship between the middle-class photographer and their subject, the "foreigner", can only ever be exploitative due to the uneven nature of their class

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[403] Geoffrey Batchen, 'Guilty Pleasures' (in) Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel (eds) *Ctrl(space): Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* (Karlsruhe: ZKM; Cambridge Mass; London: MIT Press: 2002), p.456.
[404] Humphrey Spender (cited in) Geoffrey Batchen, op. cit. p.456.
[405] Film maker John Grierson coined the term 'documentary' in 1933. See: John Grierson, 'The Documentary Producer', *Cinema Quarterly* (1933), 2:1, pp.7–9.

status. In contrast, Mrs Rogers grants Exit's entry to her home regardless of the group's class status. In fact, that Exit's willingness to enter Mrs Rogers' home is in contradistinction to her own family's reluctance to do so muddies the assumed bonds between communities and between kith and kin.

In his important essay, 'The Machine's Dialogue' (1990), Steve Edwards presents a convincing counterargument to the anti-realist claims made by both Burgin and Tagg. He redirects the question of the dialogical back on to the picture's surface. By doing this, he refuses the irredeemable reification of the photographic subject or 'object-body': a term that Edwards evokes, by means of Andre Rouille, to refer to the subject who is disempowered, or *objectified,* before the camera. In the face of the poststructuralist turn, throughout his work Edwards strives to rescue a voice for the 'object-body' thereby insisting on the agency of the other. 'So much post-structuralist work', he writes, 'has monologised photography and silenced its *multiple "voices"*'.[406]

By contrast, Edwards insists upon the dialogism of even the most disciplinary documentary practises. He makes this claim by deploying Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "reported speech" which he uses to theorise the "speech" – or gesture – of the object-body that is photographed. For Edwards, the reported speech of the object-body, though subsumed or co-opted by the photographer, retains a trace of the person who spoke. This trace rubs against, however subtly, the grain of the power relationship between photographer and photographed. By reading photographs thusly, in terms of 'reported speech', we might be able, Edwards postulates, to think about how the 'author' and the 'character' might speak simultaneously, at one and the same time. Discourse, Edwards argues, 'could then be grasped as Janus-faced in which two differently orientated utterances are maintained within the same construction. This of course would make looking at photographs difficult and messy'.[407] Yet it is precisely this messiness that makes the photograph *dialogical* therefore allowing it to enter into what Hall famously described as an 'unfinished conversation'.[408]

Importantly then, Edwards argues that all photography, including deeply coercive practices such a prison photography, is dialogical. There is an exception, however, and this is key. The exception, for Edwards, is studio portraiture. The subject of the studio

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[406] My emphasis. Steve Edwards, 'The Machine's Dialogue', *Oxford Art Journal,* Jan 1, 1990, Vol.13(1), p.74.
[407] Ibid.
[408] Stuart Hall uses this term in an interview, footage of which is featured in: John Akomfrah, Lina Gopaul, David Lawson, Dewald Aukema, Nse Asuquo & Trevor Mathison, *The Stuart Hall Project* (London: British Film Institute, 2013).

portraiture produced at the end of the nineteenth century – which Edwards takes as his example – was not an object-body but a subject-body: a subject who is empowered as opposed to disempowered and *acts as co-author* of the photographic process. A contained and managed space that is distinct from the realm of the social sphere, which is itself deeply unpredictable, the studio is a space that can easily be ordered and "cleaned up". Free from contradiction or conflict, it is a space in which the subject-body can determine its own representation.

In the absence of opposition or social contradiction, images produced in the studio have, historically, belied the fact that, as I asserted in Chapter Two, democratic culture is necessarily grounded in difference: in precisely that which is *incoherent*. The portrait studios of the nineteenth century instilled the Western, Hegelian mode of thought vested in the belief that, as Hall explains in 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', we are becoming more and more like ourselves every day. Humanist discourse expounds the notion that we are somehow moving gradually towards some zero-point of selfhood, when we will finally – to the relief of ourselves and those around us – know our "true" selves.[409] This mode of thought collides with the myth of photography's objectivity: the positivist belief that a photograph might be genuinely monological, that it might convey some kind of irrefutable "truth" about its subject. As a collaborator, or, to put it more starkly than Edwards does, a *paying customer*, the subject is able to 'determine the codes of their own appearance, producing a self-image invested with confidence'.[410] Indeed, the photographs that issued from nineteenth century portrait studios constituted precisely the coherent or regulatory subjects who came to occupy a naturalised position of authority (bourgeois) according to which social relationships have been organised, or more specifically, *hierarchised* under capitalism.

However, as Edwards asserts, in the absence of a more apposite or democratic representational model, the studio retains currency, because it allows otherwise marginalised subjects a position from which to speak.[411] Crucially, by entering the studio Spence points to the classed nature of that space which has, historically, omitted the working-classes and, by implication, prevented their entry into the field of visibility. By performing the studio and by performing in such a way as to subvert the codes and conventions of studio portraiture, Spence chases out the myth of coherence that portrait studios have afforded their subjects historically.

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[409] See: Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1997b, pp.41-68.
[410] Steve Edwards, op. cit., p.68.
[411] Ibid. p.64.

Monologue's opposing and preferable term, Edward's argues, is dialogue. Following on from Bakhtin, he asserts that dialogue constitutes a reciprocal discursive model that requires the subject to situate him/herself in relation to the other. The other's word is integrated into our utterance which only assumes a form through (or against) and in conversation with the other. Hall concurs, arguing that our relationship to and with the other is an essential prerequisite of one's ability to locate oneself in the world.[412] The dialogical nature of Spence's incoherent performance of her own split subjectivity functions in tension with the monological studio practices that Edwards describes in 'The Machine's Dialogue' and at which Spence takes aim. As Hall claims, identities are never "whole" or absolute. Rather, identity is, like subjectivity itself, permanently 'in process'.[413] Feminism and psychoanalysis have taught us that identity is invariably structured through ambivalence. He continues, identity is:

> Always structured through splitting. Splitting between that which one is, and that which is other. The attempt to expel the other to the other side of the universe [recall Klein] is always compounded by the relationships of love and desire. This is a different language from the language of, as it were, the Others who are completely different from oneself. This is the Other that belongs inside one. This is the Other that one can only ever know from the place from which one stands. This is the self that is inscribed in the gaze of the Other.[414]

By insisting that the other belongs, *is born*, inside one, Hall troubles the perceived polarity between the self and the other, and by implication, between that which is inside and out or internal and external. Likewise, in 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', Butler avers that:

> Identification and, in particular, identificatory mimeticism, *precedes* "identity" and constitutes identity as that which is fundamentally "other to itself". The notion of this Other *in* the self, as it were, implies that the self/Other distinction is *not* primarily external… the self is from the start radically implicated in the "Other".[415]

A question thus presents itself: Have histories of documentary made too much of the move from photographing the other, in the anthropological sense, to photographing the self? Certainly, this debate requires context specificity; we must look carefully and with a sustained gaze at the individual projects under scrutiny. What seems clear is that the structural absence of the "signs" of underemployment, and of labour, from the family album is not a conscious consequence of the moral or ethical misgivings experienced by a photographer towards their subjects, in this instance, their family.

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[412] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1997b, pp.41-68.
[413] Ibid., p.47.
[414] Ibid., p.47-8.
[415] Judith Butler, op. cit., 1993b, p.316.

The problem of the *total societal devaluation*, and occlusion from representation, of realistic images of working-class lives – in this instance working-class *women's* lives – from the family album, is, as Spence was all too aware, an unconscious problem of the psyche. It is a problem that both exceeds and *precedes* the relationship between the photographer and photographed to the extent that it precedes the very decisions we make as to whether or not certain subjects warrant representation. The occlusion of the work performed by working-class women from the family album was and remains a consequence of the working-class subject's internalised *self*-devaluation, or of the working-class' own transformation of *itself* into that which is other (he or she who is the object of shame or ridicule and should thus go without representation). It is precisely the stifling silences that surface in/between working-class mothers and their daughters – produced in part through representational omissions, and the habitual feelings of shame and inadequacy engendered by these omissions – that function regulatorily as the mechanisms through which class and gender hierarchies are produced and maintained across time. As I already asserted, if Spence lacked images of 'her mother as a working class woman', it was because her mum designed it that way: because Gladys Clode insured that those images did not exist.

In 'Minimal Selves' (1987), Hall's reflective autobiographical essay on identity formation and migration, the author poignantly notes that:

> From the first, in relation to them [his parents], and then to all the other symbolic "others", I certainly was always aware of the self as only constituted in that kind of absent-present contestation with something else, with some other 'real me', which is and isn't there.[416]

In fact, Hall's entire critical corpus is shaped by his own deeply ambivalent relationship with his search for 'origins'. Growing up in Jamaica under colonial rule, he explained, 'I lived through the most exquisitely differentiated class and caste system in the world'. In a system in which you could read-off a person's class, education and status from the gradation of their skin tone, Hall recounts, 'I was bought up in the middle-class to look down on anyone… who was not as near to white as I'. Yet, as Hall explained in a remarkably frank interview: 'I was three shades darker than my family… and it was the first social fact I knew about myself… I was too black in my family, so I was an outsider from the day I was born'.[417]

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[416] Stuart Hall, 'Minimal Selves' (in) *Identity: The Real Me* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987b), p.45.
[417] Stuart Hall describes his troubled familial relationship in footage featured in: John Akomfrah et al., *The Stuart Hall Project* (London: British Film Institute, 2013).

From birth, the gradation of Hall's skin marked him as radically other to, or "lesser than", his family. Thus, the first social fact Hall new about himself, was regulatory – it was a fact that marked him as different, and thus, split off from, his parents. 'I've known this tension throughout my whole life', he mournfully mused, 'between what I thought I was – a young, bright Jamaican – and this refusal of my family really to live in that world at all'.[418] As a subject split between multiple internalised and contradictory identities and subject positions, Hall is always already, inescapably other. He plaintively explains:

> I wasn't joking when I said that I migrated in order to get away from my family. I did. The problem, one discovers, is that since one's family is already 'in here', there is no way in which you can actually leave them. Of course, sooner or later, they recede in memory, or even in life. But these are not the 'burials' that really matter. I wish they were still around, so that I didn't have to carry them around, locked up somewhere in my head, from which there is no migration.[419]

As Hall poignantly states, and as those who have lost their parents know all too well, the burials occasioned by death are never final. We carry our parents within our imagination, locked within a reliquary of memories from whence there can be no escape. As Spence's mother work attests, in spite of death, we cannot "kill off" our parents. Indeed, like Hall, Spence is always already other both in relation to herself and to her family. Yet she is hewn not only in relation to the representational omissions and silences produced by her mother, but in relation to her imaginary/imagined mother who is also always already othered through misrecognition. As Spence observed of Gladys Clode, 'even though she'd been dead for nineteen years' my internalised mother – remembered, imagined, *phantasmagorical* – 'continued to inform how I lived my life, both consciously and unconsciously'.[420] As she mournfully mused in a typed text panel from *Beyond the Family Album* (fig. 3.35):

> Any work I do in the future will revolve around ways of understanding and articulating this struggle between parents and children: between families and the wider social and economic spheres: between ideology and actuality: between classes. My continual rethinking of the past, as my consciousness changes, is impossible to stabilize. This reworking is initially painful, confusing, extreme… there is no peeling away of layers to reveal the 'real' self, just a constant reworking process. I realise I am that process.

This text is encircled by photographs that situate Spence in the reconciled role of friend, sister and lover, as well as a subject that is self-reflexively produced in and through the camera (fig. 3.34). Language also affords a means of becoming, as does juxtaposition and the slippages in/between image and text. Spence's phototherapy work is, thus, far from monological. Her identity is continually formed and reformed through an endless,

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[418] Stuart Hall in *The Stuart Hall Project* (London: British Film Institute, 2013).
[419] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987b, p.45.
[420] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1991b, p.228

unfinished conversation; it is, consequently, always perpetually in a state of becoming. The negotiation of her newly assumed class position necessitated by the act of crossing class boundaries is fundamentally conditioned by her past which inevitably, *invariably*, informs her present and will continue to inform her future indefinitely. Spence is formed "out of" and with/in, through and against, an ever present and immediate past, as well as in conversation with a present/absent, real and/or imaginary mother. The politics of voice, Hey insists, following on from Skeggs, is thus essential to our comprehension of the politics of affective class histories, and the inescapable, destabilising pull of class subjectivity.[421] As Spence explained in 'Disrupting the Silence: The Daughter's Story', through phototherapy 'it has become possible for me to be conscious of my own contradictory interior speech, shifting from a monologue into dialogic states'.[422]

As Spence's subjectivity shifts across time through a precarious politics of desire, as the abandonment scenario gives way to a feminist awakening, the infantile fantasy of the good middle-class mother is superseded by an antithetical adult desire for the 'bad enough [feminist] mother'.[423] Given that the moment of transition from infantile to adult desires coincided, for Spence, not only with a feminist awakening but with an emergent, highly politicised interest in her class history, I want to insist that for Spence, the figure of the bad enough mother is not irreconcilable with the figure of the working-class mother. By arguing that we attend to the social and economic limits that prevent working-class women from 'become[ing] other than they find themselves having to be', I propose that we read our histories of resistance, and more importantly, of *resilience* differently. By doing this, we might locate, in the small gestures associated with "merely" making do, getting-by, and putting dinner on the table, another type of political action that is specific to the limited conditions of living, surviving and coping in an economic system that positions working-class women as *excess*. If, as Liss importantly argues, the mother – in particular, the working-class mother – is 'no longer placed in opposition

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[421] Valarie Hey, op. cit., 2006, p.301.
[422] Jo Spence, 'Disrupting the Silence: A Daughter's Story', *Women Artists Slide Library Journal*, No. 29 June/July 1989, p.15.
[423] Mignon Nixon uses the term in her seminal essay of the same name. It is a play on Donald Winnicott's conceptualisation of the 'good enough mother', a figure who relinquishes herself almost entirely to her child and its needs. She is a figure akin to the 'good patriarchal mother' or the 'good middle-class mother' (the OXO mum type) that I described at the beginning of this chapter. By contrast, the 'bad enough mother' is a 'strong individuated figure' who provides a subversive example for her daughters. See: Mignon Nixon, op. cit. pp.80-81. Also see: Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London, New York: Tavistock Publications, 1971).

to feminism (that is, held in contempt of feminism), a redefined field of possibilities opens up'.[424]

'Shall I Be Mother?' On the Compulsion to Repeat and Un/becoming as Becoming in *Itself*

As Spence regretfully explained in 'The Picture of Health'*,* in the process of becoming other, 'Heroine? Victim? … [I] erased my own class history'. She writes, I came to the 'realization that I had negated my old working class roots and empathies'.[425] Reaffirming this sentiment, Kuhn explains that the price working-class girls 'were asked to pay for their education was *amnesia*'. Working-class girls who become – *are made* – amnesic, are thus left bereft of certain classed types of knowledge and suffer from their incapacity to call on the knowledge, resources and resilience of their mothers in the process of forging their paths to womanhood.[426] This embodied, class-specific knowledge is a type of devalued, uncertified 'sense-currency' that has been made other by history. As Spence explained 'I was never able to draw on any real strengths from people in our family because our knowledge as class members was never validated' or substantiated through representation. 'It all seemed fairly normal', she recounts, 'that I should grow up feeling ashamed of my parents, my home, my brother, our accents, our manners, our class'.[427] Drawing on a Kleinian lexicon, Kuhn recounts:

> Many years were to pass before I saw the positive values of her [her mother's] way of knowing, understood where it came from, and learned that this was a birth right that I had been enjoined to cast a side. My own quest for knowledge was, and is, driven more or less consciously by a desire to heal the breach between ways of knowing and bodies of knowledge that in our culture are split off from one another.[428]

If, in hierarchical societies, the body or the flesh inscribes the limits of possibility imposed upon classed subjects, then it is through the 'primacy of perception', through the flesh and through flesh covered bodies – with callused hands, torn, stained and scarred skin and blistered feet – that the working-class subject sustains life through a labour that is corporal or embodied, as opposed to the labour of the privileged which is more often than not theoretical, disembodied, intangible or undergirded by what Kuhn describes as "book learning".[429] Produced through the 'primacy of perception', these

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[424] Andrea Liss, op. cit., p.xvi.
[425] This quote is from one of the panels in the series: Jo Spence, *A Picture of Health*, 1982-6. This extract is from the introductory text (panel one) to: Jo Spence, *Beyond the Family Album,* 1979.
[426] Annette Kuhn, op. cit., p.98.
[427] John Roberts and Jo Spence, op. cit., p.99 & Jo Spence, op. cit., 1991b, p.229.
[428] Annette Kuhn, op. cit., p.101.
[429] Ibid., p.89.

intimate, embodied types of knowledge are undergirded by a necessity of being that *precedes* "book learning". 'Nowhere', as Hoggart asserts in 'Shared Rituals', are these types of knowledge written down. These '*lived-into* structure[s] of value', as Hoggart describes them, defy books. It is a 'whole code of assumptions… [that] is expressed in gestures, rituals and speech (or in silence) and not much articulated'.[430] My claim thus, is that by speaking *as and through* the mother – through embodied play and the play of positions – Spence works towards an embodied language about class that acknowledges and gives a renewed agency to other (read *classed*) types of being and knowing that have historically been *split off from*, disavowed, or devalued under advanced capitalism.

As I have already insisted, the compulsive nature of Spence's *Mother Work* demonstrates that we cannot simply or straightforwardly step over or "above" class. In spite of Spence's claim that 'As a child… I did everything possible not to be like my mother', her 'defensive aggressive melancholic' performance reveals the impossibility of extricating herself from her past and from her classed history. Phrased differently, Spence's *Mother Work* is characterised precisely by an inability, or a *refusal,* to forget. The repetitive defensive aggressive melancholic mechanisms that drive Spence's urge to restage imagined moments from her mother's life is compelled by the *pull* of history and an attempt to recover a form of embodied or corporeal pre-linguistic, pre-intellectual knowledge that was split off, or *killed off*, in the act of "becoming" other. What if Spence's performance is not compelled by a desire for obliteration (to split off or kill of her mother), but for reparation? As Klein argues, sadistic attacks upon the object, at once both loved and loathed, are often followed by feelings of mourning and guilt and the desire to recover the expelled or injured (split) object, which in Spence's case is tied to a desire to recover or reincorporate a repressed class and familial history for which her mother is made emblematic. As Klein explains, in the process of recovery, the production of pictures, especially in the absence of extant images, is continually evoked as a means of making the mother anew.[431]

Indeed, by performing for the camera as and through the voice of her mother, Spence works backwards, *into history*, in order to produce an image of her mother as she had previously gone unseen. Likewise, the images of working-class women and mothers that Exit include in *Survival Programmes* give an image to the deeply familiar acts through which working-class women live, survive and cope but that otherwise go without

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[430] My emphasis. Richard Hoggart, 'Shared Rituals', *New Statesman*, 3 May 1968, n/p.
[431] Melanie Klein, op. cit., p.93.

representation. A photograph captioned *Tea, refuge for battered women, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1975*, depicts residents at the Women in Need refuge (fig. 1.40). In the foreground a young woman is consumed by the ritual of spooning porridge into her infant daughter's mouth, her hand lightly resting on the chair behind her daughter as she crouches down close beside her. Another woman holds a stainless-steel tea pot aloft in one hand, while her other hand sits tenderly upon another young girl's head; a cigarette is carefully balanced between her delicate fingers. As a brilliant morning sun seeps in from the window, rendering the tranquil scene in dappled light, the solitary indicator of the women's displacement – given significance only by the photograph's caption - is the cluster of tea-filled mugs in the immediate foreground that suggest mass cohabitation. In this intimate scene, which makes visible the day-to-day acts of care tenderly performed by mothers for and on behalf of their children, we read the women's trauma only in the quiet closeness of the scene which is born of an unspoken understanding of the urgent necessity of their being-in-the-world-together.

Although it is unlikely, perhaps for obvious reasons, that Mrs Green – the tenant who, along with her children, had been evicted from a privately rented house in Balsall Heath – is pictured in *Survival Programmes*, an image from the project's archive is noteworthy because it appears to depict her children (fig. 3.37). Two girls with heavy fringes and dark trench coats stand confidently in the foreground, boldly staring at the camera as they try to supress their smiles. Behind them, their ringleted brother grins broadly as he holds their younger sibling proudly aloft on his shoulder. The youngest child gasps revealing a missing front-tooth. The jubilant children are surrounded by a sea of white bin liners which we might presume – if they are in fact Mrs Green's children – are stuffed with their sodden clothes. To the left of the group lies a mattress and divan, while boxes and other miscellaneous objects occupy the background.

This image is significant because it disrupts our assumptions about how underemployment is experienced. Mrs Green's transcript is deeply fraught, however her children, by contrast, seem naively unaware of the precarity of their situation. If 'the kids think it's a joke', to quote their mother, it is precisely because Mrs Green engineered it that way, ensuring that they remain blissfully unaware of the fact that they are, after all, homeless. This image complicates mass media stereotypes that vilify working-class mothers, making them scapegoats for a perceived failure of morality. These are not, in other words, the delinquent, irrevocably damaged 'hand-out kids' described in Chapter One, that tabloid papers such as the *Daily Express* pictured as the inevitable products of so-called "pathological" working-class mothers.

Elsewhere, in *Single-parent family, Bordesley Green, Birmingham, 1975,* Exit capture a young mother and her child in a tender moment of intimacy. Wearing a fashionable flower-patterned mini dress, the image depicts the mother, towel in hand, as she lifts her son from the sink where he has been bathed by her (fig. 3.38). The two embrace tightly, their faces in absolute proximity to one another. A shock of black hair framing her warm face, the woman looks contentedly down the camera's lens as the child – naked and pressed close against her – smiles broadly, her muscular arms supporting him as he clings to her neck. In another image, a West-Indian mother of three from Brixton watches television with her children (fig. 3.39). Seated in a broad leather armchair, the bespectacled mother has her young, pyjama-clad son seated between her legs. Head cocked, she stares in concentration at the ceiling as another child clambers on her. Cupping her small hands around her mother's ear, the child leans in close to whispers secrets to her mother as she glances self-consciously towards the camera. Before them, an infant girl lays on a pillow on the floor with her thumb stuck contentedly in her mouth, her gaze transfixed by the television. As in *Single-parent family, Bordesley Green,* the group is captured in absolute proximity to one another. Their bodies pressed tightly together; barefooted, their legs are intertwined, each body entangled with the next. While *Survival Programmes* is not without its problematic images**,** these frank photographs of women and mothers run against the grain of the media's sensationalised image of pathological working-class femininities. While in contrast to the paternalistic representations of abjection produced by organisations such as Shelter discussed in Chapter One, the carefully framed photographic portraits included in *Survival Programmes* afford an alternative history of underemployment that is less wretched than mere hopelessness.

In the absence of such images of her own mother, Spence performs for the camera to suture the gaps in the family album. In fact, as Susan Suleiman argues in her influential essay, 'Playing and Motherhood', for those who lack a self-consciously playful maternal role model, girls can derive strength from imagining their mothers playing, or, as in Spence's case, by quite literally embodying their mothers in and through play.[432] In fact, enacted through the gender specific medium of kitchen humour, Spence's performance of Gladys Clode adheres with Suleiman's vision for a creative female practice, that is playful and 'especially humorous about, and *in* the voice of the mother'.[433] As Mignon

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[432] Susan Suleiman, "Playing and Motherhood; or, How to Get the Most of the Avant-Garde", in Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey, and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan (ed) *Representations of Motherhood,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p.281.
[433] My emphasis. Ibid. p.279.

Nixon suggests, following on from Suleiman, laughter effects a 'displacement' from the patriarchal mother to the playful and rebellious 'bad enough mother'.[434] When Spence dons her mother's clothes, she explained, 'I inhabit her, in a sense, I am my mother'.[435]

According to Klein's object relations theory, the desire for reparation is never solely aimed at the mother. For it is, to borrow from Klein, not only about the object toward whom guilt is experienced, but also the fractured part of the *self* that the subject is compelled to repair and reincorporate.[436] As Spence explained, the processes of "unconsciousness raising" or "radical remembering" engendered by her experimental photographic work function, in her words, as a means of 'putting myself back together'.[437] Indeed, as Hoggart observes, the threads of knowledge that flow between working-class mothers and their daughters, are never broken – or split – 'but only casually covered over'.[438] An intimate series of photographs of labouring hands, reminds us, as Charlesworth poignantly contends, that the consciousness of the working-class subject is produced corporeally, through ordinary acts of labour, and 'experience[d] through a sensuous awareness that involves flesh as a totality of self-realizing form' (fig. 3.40 & 3.41).[439] By rehearsing the corporeal forms of knowledge imparted by Gladys Clode, I contend that Spence reincorporates those parts of her herself – *of her mother* – that she had split off in the process of crossing class boundaries. Spence thus unearths the threads that bind her to her mother, and that bind the subject to their class history.

I want, thus, to return momentarily to Butler's assertion that the issue bound up in the question of performativity is not of avowing or disavowing a category (in Butler's case, the categories of lesbian and/or gay) but of determining *why* it is that the designation is transformed into a site of ethical decision making. What are the ethical implications vested in the decision to avow the category working-class? In respect of Spence's work, I aver that the ethical decision bound up with the question of class is to do with competing versions of the social.

As Raymond Williams importantly observes in his seminal volume, *Culture and Society*, since the Industrial Revolution, the discriminating factor in English life is not, as it has

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[434] Mignon Nixon, op. cit., p.85.
[435] Jo Spence, 'Putting Ourselves in the Picture', documentary film for BBC Two's Arena One, 20 March 1987.
[436] My emphasis. Melanie Klein, op. cit., p.187.
[437] Jo Spence, op. cit., 1989, p.15.
[438] Richard Hoggart, op. cit., 2009, p.39.
[439] Simon J. Charlesworth, op. cit., p.169.

so often been made to seem, a matter of lexicon, accent or sartorial code: it is not, as I argued in Chapter One, to do with the look of things. The crucial distinction is between competing conceptualisations of the social world and the nature of social relationships.[440] "Bourgeois", he explains, retains saliency as a term because it designates the version of the social otherwise known as individualism, or negative liberty. Negative liberty represents the idea of society as a neutral arena within which, vis-a-vis Thatcherism, every individual has the freedom to pursue his or her own advancement in the absence of state interference (in the form, for example, of taxation) or obstacle, so long as their behaviour does not contravene the law.[441]

The opposing version of the social 'properly associated with the working class', Williams continues, considers the 'provision of the means of life' as communal. This version of the social aligns most closely with the concept of positive liberty whereby "progress" is sought not in the prospect of escaping or "rising above" one's class – it is sought not in individualistic mechanism of "the ladder" – but in the steady but sure improvement of the living and working conditions of each and every member of a society in a way that is collective and mutual.[442] By dressing up in and casting off her middle-class garb, through her performance of Gladys Clode, Spence's affirms or avows working-class ways of being and knowing and of structuring social relationships.

Through her abortive attempts to uphold the presupposed standards of post-war bourgeois femininity, *qua Hilda*, Spence troubles the neoliberal discourse on social mobility and individual self-actualisation. While the notion of "becoming" assumes that working-class women might easily and uncomplicatedly step out of or *above* class, as Spence's work attest, class is not simply a material condition. Rather it is undergirded by complex psychological processes, by a set of regulatory behaviours and *emotions* – guilt, loss, shame and desire – that situate the subject as *classed* and position them within a matrix of power. If working-class culture is a 'whole way of life', as Williams so famously proposed in *Culture and Society*, then it is a myth that subjects can simply extricate, or "free" themselves, from the classed histories into which they are inextricably woven, and by which the working-class subject is apparently constrained, limited or *disadvantaged*. As Charlesworth posits, class is 'social difference' or 'categorization' realised in the very 'being of beings;' it is embodied, lived, felt and

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[440] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Chatto & Windus, 1971), p.311.
[441] See: Isaiah Berlin, op. cit.
[442] Raymond Williams, op. cit., 1971, p.310-18.

inhabited.[443] As a 'mode of being', working-classness continues to inform what Williams described as our 'habits of thought' as well as the way that we live and act in the world; it leaves its residual trace long after we have been "reclassified" as different from, or "*better than",* our working-class mothers.[444]

Subject to the regulatory gaze of her own daughter, Spence's mother – like Mrs Rogers – would partake in cross-class-dressing, 'cleaning herself up', Spence explains and 'destroy[ing] the evidence' of her labour, so that 'by the time I saw her she was back into being a mother and a housewife'.[445] If Spence lacked images of her mother-*as-a-working-class-women*, it was because Gladys Clode made sure of it. By dressing up as the good middle-class mother and disguising the evidence of her supposedly shameful labour, Gladys Clode attempted to conceal the nature of her employment so that Spence wouldn't recognise her own "otherness" as the child of a mother who sold her labour for a living. When the lives of working-class women are continuously and invariably denied worth, and thus lived through multiple acts of *repression*, it is a political choice to avow our mothers. Contrary to Mrs Rogers self-depreciative assertion that her children could learn more from the television than from their working-class mother, what Spence's work tells us is that, in the absence of realistic representations of working-class women's lives, in order that a subject might get to know them self and their class, they must get to know their mother.

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443 Simon J. Charlesworth, op. cit., p.9.
444 Raymond Williams*,* op. cit., pp.310-17.
445 Jo Spence, 'Putting Ourselves in the Picture', documentary film for BBC Two's Arena One, 20 March 1987.

A conclusion of sorts

A single scene from Amber Film and Photography Collective's 1997 film *The Scar* underscores the arguments about history, temporality and mediation that I have attempted to theorise in this thesis. The film is set a decade after the 1984-5 miners' strike: a bitter industrial dispute that lasted three days shy of a year and ended with the devastating defeat of the miners. During the strikes, which were deeply significant ideologically, Thatcher utilised the newly politicised police force, described in Chapter Two, and Murdoch's press to cripple the modern trade union movement which had, until that moment, represented the last serious and formidable bastion of opposition to Thatcher's free-market economics. In the wake of the miners' defeat and the subsequent closure of collieries across vast swathes of Northern England and Wales, *The Scar* explores the impact of pit closures on mining communities through the prism of Easington Colliery, Country Durham.[446]

The film focuses on the day-to-day life of May Murton (Charlie Hardwick) and her attempts, in the wake of the miners' defeat, to come to terms with the changed socio-political landscape in Easington. Like many couples in Easington, the emotional toll of the struggle to withstand the economic hardship engendered by the long and bitter dispute and the subsequent feelings of disillusionment and disconsolance suffered in the strike's aftermath, caused May and her husband to separate. Now the sole breadwinner in a single parent household, May works as a carer in a residential home for the elderly in order to provide for her two teenage children: Dale (Darren Bell), who like most of the young men in Easington, is unemployed, and Becky (Katja Roberts) who, though still at school, is despondent about her future. May's estranged husband Tony (Brian Hogg) has taken up residence at the local allotment where he lives in a shed with a single homing pigeon, the sole remaining bird from his racing flock.

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[446] *The Scar* is the first film in Amber's *Coalfield Trilogy.* The second film in the trilogy, *Like Father* (2001), explores how the pit colures impacted the male population of colliery communities and notions of masculinity. The question of masculinity is a much under-theorised aspect of the history of deindustrialisation and attention should be devoted in the future to how this theme is played out among the pages of *Survival Programmes. Shooting Magpies* (2005), the third in the series, looks at how substance abuse has impacted a generation growing up in colliery villages and in the total absence of formal labour. The last deep coal mine in Britain, Kellingley Colliery in North Yorkshire, was closed in December 2015, bringing to an end centuries of deep coal mining in Britain. In the late 1970s there were around 250,000 people working in the UK coal industry. See: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-35803048.

The closure of the colliery around which Easington was built, Amber make clear, has left the community almost completely untethered from the rhythms and patterns of daily life associated with pit culture and the networks of sociability that grew out of the colliery. Through the figure of May, the film deals with the community's attempt to make sense of itself and to reimagine a future in the absence of the institution around which the community had cohered in the past. The levelling of the pit, which had previously provided Easington with a positive point of communal identification, left a scar not only upon the landscape, but upon the collective consciousness of the community. For those people profoundly disempowered by the pit closures – in particular, for those men who, like Tony, had been consigned to a decade of unemployment – the past has become untethered from its mooring in the present. As a despondent and decidedly dishevelled Tony explains to his daughter one evening as they sit on the stoop of the shed that he now calls home, 'look pet, when you're young, you think you can relive the past. When you get to my age, you realise that the past is the past, and you have no claim on it'. For Tony, the past and the present are distinct entities and, as such, 'reliving' or *remembering* the past has little baring on the future. 'Reliving' the past is an exercise in futility, which can result in little more than disaffection.

Yet, the untethering of the past from the present, and by implication *the future*, works as I asserted in Chapter Two, to the advantage of a neoliberal paradigm that functions by exorcising the memory of other, alternative ways of living and of structuring socio-economic relationships.[447] By focusing on a scene that occurs toward the beginning of the film in which May and her friends meet on the eve of the annual Durham Miners' Gala to view documentary footage of the 1984-5 miner's strike, I want to argue that *The Scar* affords a framework for a collective mode of what Jo Spence described as 'radical remembering' or 'unconsciousness raising' that is enacted through the screen. Indeed, the viewing scene – which is about *mediation*, and how history and memory are mediated through the camera's lens – is played out in conversation, or in tension with, Tony's assertion of the foreclosure of history.

In the scene, May and her friends, all of whom were formerly associated with the 'Women Against Pit Closures' Action Group, gather in the drab function room at Easington Colliery Officials Club to view documentary footage captured during the 1984-5 miners' strike. As May enters the room, her friends, whom she greets as her comrades – a mechanism through which Amber align their project with the radical Left

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[447] See: Max Haiven, op. cit.

– are laughing and joking together, sharing stories and reminiscing as wisps of cigarette smoke wind into the air around them. As the television crackles into life, footage of the 1984 Durham Miners' Gala appears on the screen and the women fall silent, then become still. Upon the screen, which is reframed by the camera's lens, we see footage of men filing towards the camera carrying union banners and 'Victory to the Miners' placards (fig. 4.1). As the upbeat rhythms of the colliery band fill the air, a relay begins between close-up shots of the footage being screened on television and shots of the watching women. The camera settles on the captivated faces of May and her comrades who eagerly lean towards the set, straining as they attempt to identify the banners that fleetingly enter and exit the screen. The women laugh raucously as members of the viewing party recognise their younger selves reflected back at them – across history – on the television screen. The passing of time is indexed by their changing hairstyles and choice of dress. May's once shoulder-length, permed red hair is now tightly cropped and shorn at the sides in a style that was typical among middle-aged working-class women during the nineties. Another bespectacled woman with a rubescent face and bleach-blonde hair self-consciously mumbles: 'I've put a lot of weight on', while another of May's comrades exclaims 'Me Mam!', eagerly pointing at the screen in recognition.

As the camera returns to the television set, the Dalkeith Miners & Women's Support Group's banner fills the screen. Shouts of 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie', emanate from the set, and after an exchange of roguish glances, the watching women join in with the chorus, laughing as they complete the chant by crying: 'Out! Out! Out!' (fig.4.2). The women share jokes and exchange warm smiles and knowing glances as they gesture at one another and at the screen, attempting to recall the long-forgotten names that belong to hazily remembered faces. Footage of the Gala gives way to grainy shots of a make-shift community canteen. Children and men with plates of food line vast tables, as women in aprons move between them.

As the footage on the screen unfolds, the tone shifts. The jaunty compositions of the colliery band are replaced by a chorus of women singing a rousing rendition of *We Shall Not Be Moved*. As the camera shifts back and forth between footage of the gala and the viewing women, countenances of joy and excitement turn to expressions of sorrow. The women – now aged by the ravages of time and labour – are chocked by the energy and the optimism of the youthful women who gaze back at them, waving banners that read 'United We Will WIN' and 'Coal not Dole'. Grainy footage of May at a women's action group meeting is interlaced with images of police marching the streets in formation and a sequence that depicts strike-breakers being bussed into a colliery

through a dense crowd of angry pickets. The pickets' deafening shouts form the fraught scene's score (fig. 4.3).

The final shot is of May standing at a microphone wearing a checked suit, her lapels adorned with protest pins. The camera glances back to the room and to a close-up shot of a stilled and silent May and her companion who clasps her hand over her mouth to supress sobs. Her body trembling as she watches and weeps. The camera slowly closes in on the television screen as a visibly bereft May begins to speak in a thick Mackem accent: 'There's been a lot of suffering over the last few months'. As May speaks these words, the camera turns to her onscreen audience and begins to scan a crowd of miners' wives and their female relatives before the camera cuts back to the Colliery Club and begins to slowly pan across the faces of the watching women, carefully tracing their expressions. Stilled and deadly silent, the women watch on, some stoic, with brows furrowed, while behind large round glasses, others' eyes brim with tears. Others bow their heads to wipe tears from their eyes, carefully dabbing at their face with ringed fingers to prevent mascara tracks down ruddy cheeks. 'But what we've gotta remember', the young May continues:

> is, [that] we've gained a lot from that suffering. All members of our community have come together, and it weren't like that before the strike. And we've gotta continue. Don't be down hearted, because I'm not. Because it's not finished yet, and it won't be finished until we get Thatcher out, until we win the case for coal, and until we win a good working-class society for all. Again, from the bottom of me heart, thanks very much for showing what good people you are, I only wish the press had put it over.

The viewing-sequence, which lasts approximately six minutes, ends in the silent wake of May's speech, with a lingering shot of the television screen, and the young May standing behind the microphone looking bereft (fig. 4.4).

In this sequence, Amber situate the screen, and by implication, their film, as a conduit of memory that mediates between the subjects as well as backwards into history, allowing May and her comrades a mechanism through which to revisit the past within their present. While at the same time, the sequence points to the central role that representation performs in mediating the past and our memory of it. Specifically, by knitting together actual archival footage captured during the dispute with staged scenes produced in 1997, Amber afford the viewer with a means of reimaging, and attributing renewed importance to, a formative moment of class struggle. Indeed, the staged

scenes draw heavily on, and evoke, footage mobilised in another film: the documentary short, *Not Just Tea and Sandwiches* (1984)*.*

Not Just Tea and Sandwiches is one of six *Miner's Campaign Tapes* that were produced by Trade Films in collaboration with Amber Films and a plethora of regional grassroots film workshops (fig. 4.5).[448] The short *(Not Just Tea and Sandwiches* has a running time of approximately 12 minutes), somewhat crude agitprop-style tapes were produced in 1984 in an urgent response to the miners' dispute. They were intended to foster solidarity among the mining community and to function as correctives to the media's sensationalised representation of the strike, the most shocking example of which was the BBC's manipulation of footage captured at Orgreave.[449] Some 4,000 VHS copies of the tapes, which were sponsored by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), were produced and circulated among mining communities through the NUM, as well as through informal channels such as colliery clubs and Women's Action Groups.[450] The films were screened and viewed collectively in these locales, and then passed on once they had been watched to ensure that they reached as many viewers as was possible.

The direct aim of *Not Just Tea and Sandwiches* was to redress mass media representations of the miners' wives, who were featured in the tabloids as fierce opponents of their husband's actions. Examining – and giving representation to – the active role played in the dispute by striking miners' wives and other female members of the colliery community, the tape sought to foster solidarity across all sectors of the mining community, not just among miners themselves. The tape interweaves interviews with women from colliery communities with footage of their activities. We see the women coordinating a makeshift community canteen, fundraising, organising and distributing food packages, vouchers, money and other essentials, as well as providing

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[448] The other workshops were: Platform Films, Nottingham Video Project, Open Eye Film, Video Workshop, Chapter Community Video Workshop, Edinburgh Workshop Trust, Birmingham Film and Video Workshop, Films at Work, Active Image and the London Media Research Group.

[449] The BBC re-sequenced footage aired on the Six O'clock News so that the report showed miners apparently provoking the police by throwing missiles in response to which police officers in riot gear and on horseback aggressively charge the pickets. The events happened in reverse: the police charged the pickets who responded by throwing missiles.

[450] The films were made on Sony U-matic devices which were portable, easy to use and produced instant playback videotape, as opposed to 16mm film cameras which required developing at a later stage. Because the film was instantly developed in-camera, the U-matic device also removed the necessity for a specialist film processor and democratised filmic possibilities. In contrast to the reel-to-reel or open-reel formats common at that time, the U-matic contained a videotape inside a plastic cassette. The videocassette format was more hardwearing and easier to transport which better suited the need for portable, highly durable material.

advice concerning social security and the rights and entitlements of striking miners and their families.

Many of the women in *Not Just Tea and Sandwiches* picket and, significantly, the film features clips of the prominent activists Mary Young and Kay Sutcliffe delivering rousing speeches in order to generate publicity around the struggle and to raise money. It is this footage, I believe, that inspires the staged scenes of May that are incorporated into the archival film sequence in *The Scar* (figs. 4.6 & 4.4). Also reproduced in *The Scar* is actual archival footage of Young marching with a placard at the 1984 Gala. This is derived from extended documentary footage of the rally captured and added to a catalogue of footage pre-emptively produced by Trade Films (fig. 4.7-4.10).[451] By staging the scenes of May in such a way that they recall already extant footage of radical working-class women, Amber vicariously situate Young and Sutcliffe in *The Scar* through the conduit of May. In *The Scar*, Young and Sutcliffe are positioned, like Jo Spence's mother, Gladys Clode, as the radical foremothers of the next generation of working-class women.

In turn, in *Not Just Tea and Sandwiches*, the members of the Women's Action Group are situated as the radical daughters of the women who took to the streets during the Depression and whose legacy has been marginalised, not only within popular history, but within histories of the Left. This lineage is made explicit in the opening sequence of *Not Just Tea and Sandwiches* in which archival footage of the 1926 General Strike is juxtaposed with footage of the Women's Hunger March in 1930 and contemporaneous shots of the Miners' rally in 1984 (fig. 4.11). Through the mobilisation of archival footage both *Not Just Tea and Sandwiches* and *The Scar* draw out a history of resistance that foregrounds the historical as well as the matrilineal precedent of class struggle. Through their awareness of film's capacity to foster collective memory and to actively produce and shape national and historical narratives, Amber self-consciously mobilise the screen to stake a claim on the past, and as such, they counter Tony's assertion that the 'past is the past', and that it is, as such, something that 'you have no claim on'.

In fact, the collective act of not-forgetting or radical remembering that Amber imagine in *The Scar* initiates a moment of reckoning akin to that which I described in Chapter Two. Collective viewing, as I have already asserted, necessitates the 'profound and unceasing work of negotiating responsibility… to each other, to the past', and

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[451] This footage of the Durham Miners Gala, 1984, can be accessed via the Yorkshire Film Archive and the North East Film Archive Online.

importantly, as Max Haiven argues, to 'the future'.[452] Indeed, the viewing scene in *The Scar* provides the viewer with a model for precisely the kind of collective, dialogical work that I argue takes place on the pages of *Survival Programmes* and through the collective comprehension of the book. The importance of collective viewing or reading is not that it affords a means of community affirmation. Rather, as I argue in Chapter Two, the dialogue that is born of the collective analytical process is important because it enables those involved to comprehend, as Paulo Freire asserts, the objects that mediate between them.[453] Collectively revising, and retheorising the past within the present might provide an impetus, not simply for community affirmation, but for community formation.

As the young May insists in her closing speech, which is performed in the shadow of the miners' defeat, in spite of, or in the face of failure, 'we've gotta continue... Because it's not finished yet, and it won't be finished until we… win a good working-class society for all'. Unlike her estranged and reclusive husband, May chooses not to simply opt-out of, or withdraw from the social realm or to succumb to the histories that have been written for her by the veritable "victor". In a scene that unfurls later in the film, May stands among a sparse crowd who have gathered at sunset to commemorate the anniversary of the pit's closure. The colliery band play a mournful tune as the camera scans the crowd before tracking along an imposing slatted-metal fence, beyond which we see the wasteland left barren in the wake of the colliery's closure. Finally, the camera settles on the village's union banner which ripples in the wind (fig. 4.12). As she surveys the scene May spots Tony, who watches the band from a distance. In the encounter that follows, May repeats "mother-taught" words of subversion to her deeply disillusioned husband: 'There's somethings we should never forget... "The working class must always hold a little bit of bitterness in their hearts". Do you remember?' she elicits, 'Bell always used to say that?' By imparting to Tony the knowledge she learned from his mother Bell, May reminds him that it is necessary that the working-class resist the political pessimism born of deindustrialisation. The working-class must not resign themselves to a fate that has become their reality but not because it was in any sense inevitable or irrevocable. The discursive foreclosure of the past is mediated among the pages of Rupert Murdoch's newspapers as well as in mainstream histories. As May defiantly proclaims, the working-class must hold on to a 'little bit of bitterness', precisely because this bitterness – the scar that marks the consciousness of the less acceptable face of capitalism – signals a historical consciousness that remembers and is wedded

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[452] Max Haiven, op. cit., p.83.
[453] Paulo Freire, op. cit., 1985, p.49.

to an alternative way of being-in-the-world that exceeds the limited possibilities of the present.

Indeed, while the Easington community collectively mourns the decline of a certain way of life associated with pit villages, as May maintains, the collective way of being-in-the-world-together fostered during the dispute did not, in fact, precede the strike. Rather, it was born of contingency. As she asserts, during the strike 'all members of our community have come together, and it weren't like that before the strike'. Thusly, Amber point to how nostalgia for a supposedly bygone way of being-in-the-world masks the fact that the collectivist social ideal is not something that has been lost, that is confined to history. Rather, it is *yet to be realised in the future.* [454]

The year of *The Scar's* production is significant. In May 1997, Tony Blair's 'New Labour' Party won a landslide election victory, ostensibly drawing a line under 18 years of Conservative rule. The outgoing Tory government lost in excess of half its parliamentary seats, retaining 165 seats in comparison with New Labour's 418. New Labour was championed as a departure from the ruthless politics of Tory grandees, and in 1997 the atmosphere in 'Cool Britannia' was an optimistic one. However, Blair's New Labour was simply Thatcherism by another name. The primacy of the market was by now an accepted wisdom.[455] As Hall had warned a decade earlier in 'Gramsci and Us', Thatcherism is bigger than the Iron Lady herself. Eventually, he observed, she will relinquish her premiership. But there are plenty of 'third, fourth and fifth generation Thatcherites', he wrote, waiting in the wings to assume her position.[456] The significance of the fact that *The Scar* was produced in 1997 is not that the film signalled the closing of that chapter in British history loosely titled 'Thatcherism', but that it underscored the renewed urgency of memory work – of remembering the protracted precedent for class struggle in Britain – despite, or perhaps because of, Tony Blair's election as Prime Minister. Histories of the decade that situate Blair's election as a moment of rupture function as a smoke screen that obscures the threads of continuity that inextricably bind New Labour to the Thatcherite project.

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[454] This is the futurity – the "Not Yet" – that Jorge Ribalta points towards in his 'political history of the "documentary idea"' (c1968-91) which Ribalta explored through an exhibition of the same name at the Renia Sofia in Madrid (2015). 'Not Yet', Manuel Borja-Villel explains in the exhibition catalogue, is a directive. It is a statement of intent that enjoins us to interpret documentary work with an urgent sense of the present, of 'a present full of legacies' he writes, 'and promises that have not yet been unravelled'. Manuel Borja-Villel, 'Preface' (in) Jorge Ribalta op. cit., 2015, n/p.
[455] Maria Teresa Grasso, Stephen Farrall, Colin Hay, Emily Gray & Will Jennings, op. cit., p.21.
[456] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1987a, p.21.

If, as I argued in the Introduction to this thesis, Thatcherism was enabled by the widespread retreat during the 1980s from the language of class, then that ideology's success was compounded by the foreclosure of social documentary practices. As Hall asserted on the eve of the millennium, missing from hegemonic accounts of the rise of Thatcherism is the history of struggle.[457] However, as Amber's vast corpus of documentary work that deals with the less acceptable face of capitalism in the North East of England (1968-) demonstrates, documentarians did not down their cameras after 1979 but continued to produce social documentary throughout the eighties and nineties. It is not simply the case that documentarians stopped taking photographs of classed subjects, but that those extant representations were rendered, as a consequence of poststructuralism's totalising discourse, unethical or disinteresting, and written out of history. Amber's corpus, like Exit Photography Group's, is yet to receive the serious critical attention that it warrants. It is perhaps easier to dismiss such objects as mere reflections of the system that they seek to contest and to consign them, literally and metaphorically, to the dust laden shelves of the library's Store, than it is to begin to account for them in all their complexity. Through the prism of *Survival Programmes: In Britain's Inner Cities,* I have attempted to engage in this work.

This thesis, which was conceptualised and written during what David Cameron referred to as the 'age of austerity', forms part of a wider body of recent scholarship that seeks, in the wake of the 2007-8 financial crisis, to reposition the question of class at the centre of debates about representation.[458] Through my study of documentary work produced during a previous moment of economic collapse, I have been concerned with comprehending how the media has been able to script how crises of capitalism have been lived and experienced in relation to questions of sovereignty, nationhood and identity. In turn, I have reflected on how this rhetoric is being mobilised again in our present moment of profound political uncertainty. As I write, Boris Johnson is seeking the Queen's approval to prorogue parliament, an unprecedented move designed to thwart attempts to stymie his hard-line Brexit strategy. By reflecting on Exit's project during our contemporary socio-political and economic situation, I assert that histories of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries must be conceived not in terms of rupture, but of continuity. By reading *Survival Programmes* alongside mass media

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[457] Stuart Hall, op. cit., 1999, p.6.
[458] The term the 'age of austerity' was popularised during the twenty-first century by David Cameron while he was Leader of the Opposition. In a keynote address to the Conservative Party Forum in April 2009, he pronounced that the decade of what he characterised as 'fiscal irresponsibility' was giving way to the 'age of austerity' and vowed to end the supposed "excessive" spending of the New Labour government. See: Nick Anstead, 'The Idea of Austerity in British Politics, 2003–2013', *Political Studies,* 2018, *66*(2), pp.287-305.

modalities, qua Hall's seminal work, I have sought to reveal for the reader, the book's dialogical force as an object that both structures and reveals *the structures of* mediation. This project derives from an attempt to comprehend the consequences of historical omissions, and how the absence of 'ordinary' images of the less acceptable face of capitalism in the public sphere has compounded the New Right's capacity to make the hegemonisation of Thatcherism, and by implication our current political system, seem natural to the point of inevitability. At stake in this thesis is one of the many social documentary histories that poststructuralism mislaid.

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