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Media/Fetish: A Postcolonial Archeology of New Media and Africa

By

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Committee in charge:

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Abstract

Media/Fetish: A Postcolonial Archeology of New Media and Africa

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Film & Media

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Media/Fetish analyzes the history of media technologies in anglophone West Africa with a special emphasis on Ghana from the early twentieth century to the present. Each chapter examines representations of a different media technology—gramophones, cinema, television, and mobile phones—at the time when they were new. Through an engagement with African studies, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies, *Media/Fetish* addresses a recurring deficiency in the history and theory of new media. By reorienting the emphasis from historical moments of invention, which tacitly privilege Euro-American ontologies of new media, to the analysis of the meanings of media technologies once they are adopted and adapted, *Media/Fetish* shows how the world is structured by new media use in Accra as much as it is by new media design in Silicon Valley. I argue that media have, in part, been made "new" by their discursive relationship to racialized development narratives. Be it the colonial civilizing mission to bring Western knowledge to Africans through mobile cinema or the promise of black uplift through the formation of Ghana's national television, race has been crucial to global theories of new media.

Dedicated to Michael Blaylock and Colleen McKenna

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"The bourgeoisie that led the development of capitalism were drawn from particular ethnic and cultural groups; the European proletariats and the mercenaries of the leading states from others; its peasants from still other cultures; and its slaves from entirely different worlds. The tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones."

Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*[1]

Introduction
Unboxing the Mediating Fetish

From an extreme high angle, a fast-motion shot captures MissTechy's hands opening an 8"x5" rectangle black box. Lifting the cover from the left side of the package and pulling it to the right she unfolds the box into three even sections. A mobile phone sits cradled by black plastic packaging in the center while two smaller closed boxes flank it on either side. Each compartment contains delectable electronic accessories not yet visible. Power adapters, plastic protective cases, earbuds, and a sim-card slot opener, all patiently await unveiling. Unexpected excitement and suspense accompanies the familiar action of unwrapping a new mobile phone and its supplementary trappings, leading to the unparalleled global popularity of unboxing videos on YouTube. Videos that feature hosts slowly describing new technological products as they methodically open their packaging may not seem like riveting content, but unboxing YouTube channels enjoy millions of subscribers.[2] The global popularity of the genre began following the much-anticipated release of Apple's first-generation iPhone in June 2007. Google Trends has recorded that global searches for "unboxing" noticeably took an upswing after the iPhone debut.[3] Few of those first-generation iPhone unboxing videos remain on YouTube, but those that do continue to receive techno-nostalgic comments that remark on the speed at which mobile phone technology has changed.

The emphasis on the packaging in unboxing videos demonstrates that the box is fetishized as much as the device. Opinions about the visual aesthetics of the packaging and the phones are important components of the genre, but unboxing videos are different from product reviews. Many show what the box looks like and what is inside without stating their attitudes about the functionality of the product. In iPhone unboxing videos, not only is the commodity divorced from the means of its production, the aesthetics of the technology and the boxes they come in, spectacularly separate it from its use value. This is particularly true of the iPhone unboxing video because of Apple's attention to aesthetics. The meticulous attention to the design of packaging makes the mobile phones within them more desirable. According to Marc Andreessen, the co-founder of Netscape, "The fetishistic unboxing video trend took off only

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[1] Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 26.
[2] For instance, the YouTube channel *FunToys Collector Disney Toys Review* has over nine million subscribers. One of the most popular videos on their channel, "Play Doh Sparkle Princess Ariel Elsa Anna Disney Frozen" has been watched over 500 million times. Some of the most dedicated "unboxing" fans are children but many unboxing channels features "adult toys," namely game consoles, power tools, televisions, computers, and phones.
[3] Google Trends, "Google Trends: unboxing," accessed 3 February 2019, https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=unboxing/.

when Apple made stunning, simple packaging deserving of the device inside."[4] Not only is the iPhone packaging clean and sleek, the distinct sounds that accompany an iPhone unboxing add satisfying pleasure to the haptic genre. When customers lift the top of an iPhone box, there are a few time-extending seconds as the weight of the phone slowly pulls down the bottom of the box. With a "froomp," air rushes in to break the vacuum. During the pinnacle moment before the box opens the unboxer's monolog is temporarily suspended, enhancing the suspense of the unveiling. Similarly, unboxers move the phone close to the digital camera and microphone to capture the sound as they peel back the protective plastic that comes on the outer surface of new phones. Repeatedly, hosts comment on the sense of fulfillment they get from peeling off the plastic. The distinct and prominent sound of the peel-back and the "froomp" of the box as it opens, offers viewers an opportunity to get closer to the object and derive at least some of the satisfaction the unboxer experiences.

Marc Andreessen attributes the "giddily happy" feeling that a customer gets when they open an iPhone box to Steve Jobs' obsessive drive for impressive product design.[5] In the biography of Steve Jobs, former *Fortune* magazine writers Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli describe a forty-five-minute interview that Schlender had with Jobs about NeXT, the failed project Jobs launched during the interim when he was not at Apple. Despite a lack of product to speak about, Jobs enthusiastically discussed his corporate brand. He reportedly spent $100,000 for a trendy logo by leading graphic design artist Paul Rand. Schlender and Tetzeli conclude that Jobs' emphasis on corporate image was an "extravagance" but one "in the pursuit of perfection."[6] The aesthetics of Apple products have been so successful that Apple published a design book called *Designed by Apple of California* (2016), featuring magnified images of its computers, phones, and power cords on blank white backgrounds. The book was dedicated to Steve Jobs. Capitalizing on the delight of unboxing Apple products, *Designed by Apple of California* has also been unboxed on YouTube. Of course, those words—Designed by Apple of California—are the same words engraved on each device making the phrase familiar to anyone who has purchased an iPhone since June 29, 2007.

The emphasis on the location of the design by one of the leading information technology companies contributes to a geographic imaginary that centers new media innovation and development in California's Bay Area. Arising out of the confluence of cold war military-industrial research and 1960s counter-cultural movements, Silicon Valley iconoclasts have a reputation for disrupting old organizational systems. By the mid-1990s, thanks to Stewart Brand's establishment of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* and a series of forums that brought together entrepreneurs, technologists, and countercultural artists, personal computing and the Internet became idealized tools for decentralized and egalitarian global communities.[7] In 1995 Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron called the perception of the Internet as a universal utopia where information technologies are emancipatory and placeless the "Californian Ideology."[8] The California Ideology of Silicon Valley has endured because California's older media center down

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[4] Marc Andreessen, "Forward," in *Becoming Steve Jobs: The Evolution of a Reckless Upstart into a Visionary Leader* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2016), loc. 107 of 7248, Kindle.

[5] Marc Andreessen, "Forward," in *Becoming Steve Jobs: The Evolution of a Reckless Upstart into a Visionary Leader* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2016), loc. 98 of 7248, Kindle.

[6] Brent Schlender and Rick Tetzeli, *Becoming Steve Jobs: The Evolution of a Reckless Upstart into a Visionary Leader* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2016), p. 7 of 434, Kindle.

[7] Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[8] Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, "The Californian Ideology," *Mute* 1, no. 3 (1995).

South has mythologized it through television and movies. Shows like *Silicon Valley* (2014–) and *Betas* (2013–2014) highlight the convergence of (male) nerd culture and American entrepreneurialism in California's Bay Area. The hero of the Silicon story is a young, brilliant, white man, who builds a business from nothing. The new wizards of a West Coast Menlo Park may claim that their technologies disrupt old systems, but like Edison they also participate in a long American tradition of the inventor turned entrepreneur.

"Designed by Apple of California" has made Silicon Valley a media industry tourist destination not unlike the older one down South.[9] At the giant thumbs-up sign in front of Facebook corporate headquarters numerous people queue-up to take pictures daily. In a gesture of world-centering, fortunate Facebook campus visitors are given the opportunity to make a *Powers of Ten* (1977) inspired video of themselves at Facebook.[10] The video starts with the image of the earth then zooms in on California, the Bay Area, and onto Facebook headquarters before penetrating the roof into the room where you stand looking up at a camera. Unlike the well-known film, *Powers of Ten*, which aims to shift human notions of scale, the video is an analogy for how the platform views the world—Facebook becomes the central enabler of their users' connection to the rest of the world. Rather than situate the individual user within a network of rhizomatic connections, the zoom—in both *Powers of Ten* and the Facebook remake—moves vertically to organize the globe hierarchically. However contrived the optical illusion of hierarchy may be, Facebook imagines itself at the center.[11]

The center and periphery of new media are challenged by transnational commodity chains where information technologies are built outside of the United States. Silicon Valley has its counterpart in Shenzhen, China—the Silicon Delta—or as a *Wired* documentary calls it, *Shenzhen: The Silicon Valley of Hardware* (2016). Chinese assembly plants have become increasingly more visible in popular depictions of new media production to the point that the iPhone's now marks its dual citizenship, "Designed by Apple of California. Assembled in China." Yet, Africa and the countries within it, continue to be marginalized in discussions of new media. The assumption has long been that media in Africa, if they are there at all, are not new. Africa, it would seem by many accounts, is on the other side of a digital divide that presents Africa as an underdeveloped information void in desperate need of new media technologies.[12] As such, the history of new media technology is written from centers of invention that rehearse inventor narratives of mostly white men (i.e. Edison, Jobs, Gates). When new media history considers the

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[9] Silicon Valley as a tourist destination is reminiscent of when Universal Studios' director Carl Laemmle started selling public tickets to watch the action happening behind the scenes on movie sets.

[10] *Powers of Ten* was made by the office of Charles and Ray Eames for IBM to deal with "the relative size of things in the universe and the effect of adding another zero." [Quote from film title cards.]

[11] Bruno Latour notes that the Google map zoom effect is an impression of a zoom from a montage of data, "the pixels become increasingly small), whereas, in practice, each stage in the 'resolution' extracts from the new data sets on the server." See Bruno Latour, "Anti-Zoom," in *Scale in Literature and Culture*, eds. M. Tavel Clarke and D. Wittenberg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 94.

[12] Efforts to bridge the divide though humanitarian aid like the "One Laptop per Child" initiative strove to make equal access to technology available globally but inadequately assessed the actual needs of children in the populations they sought to help. The desire to bridge the digital divide by putting more digital products into the hands of children globally is met with the opposite tendency in Silicon Valley. Based on the results of recent studies that have found that screen time should be restricted for children, technology workers in California's Bay Area are increasingly limiting their children's use of screens. Paranoid about their children's exposure, parents spy on each other's nannies at parks and reading hours and post about it on parent forums. [See Mark Warschauer and Morgan Ames, "Can One Laptop per Child Save the World's Poor?" *Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 1 (2010): 33–51 and Nellie Bowles, "Silicon Valley Nannies Are Phone Police for Kids," *The New York Times*, October 26, 2018.]

peripheries of global technological centers—media's margins—the story that is told is often the unidirectional diffusion, adoption, and adaptation of new media. Transnational media studies have shown that the content of media devices flows across international boundaries through transnational productions, distribution, and consumption, but the material history of new media (film projectors, radio boxes, broadcast towers, television sets, and mobile phones) continues to narrate the invention and subsequent movement of new media from the West (and East) to the Global South. Taking Dipesh Chakrabarty's provincialization of European thought as a model, we can ask how might the heritage of European and United States media history and theory "be renewed from and for the margins?"[13] What happens when we provincialize the history of new media? Or more provocatively, how might we reread the history of media from Africa?[14]

To do so, *Media/Fetish: An Archeology of New Media and Africa* analyzes the history of media in Africa at the moment they were new from the early 1900s to the present. *Media/Fetish* is not an historical account of the development of new media technologies *in* Africa (though it does begin to fill out some of those underrepresented histories with details from the archive). To cover the development of every media technology in all fifty-four African countries over the past 100 years would be a herculean task outside the scope any one project. Instead, to reread the history of twentieth-century media from Africa, I approach "Africa" and "new media" as discursive concepts that constitute one another.

Media/Fetish concentrates on globally mobile media technologies of the twentieth century—gramophones, cinema, television, and mobile phones. However, this is the history of how these media technologies have been understood, represented, theorized, and imagined. Therefore, while the focus is on media technologies themselves, this is not a study that proposes to eliminate either human actors or media content from the analysis. This is foremost a study about the social meanings attached to media technologies, specifically as they appear in relation to Africa in popular culture on and off the continent.

Each chapter describes a different media technology when they were new in order to identify how the concept of new media continues to be shaped by the history of colonialism and how Africans have challenged the colonial inflection within new media discourse by theorizing African new media in photography, literature, film, and state media organizations. Attuned to Erkki Huhtamos' concept of media archeology as the study of topos, *Media/Fetish* treats the representation of Africans and new media as a topos. Topoi, as Huhtamos defines them, are "stereotypical formula[s] evoked over and over again in different guises and for varying purposes" that "influence the development of media culture" and "mold the meaning of cultural objects" including media technologies themselves.[15] From the initial contact trope present in Western travelogues of incredulous Africans' encounters with gramophones to contemporary popular images of the Maasai in pastoral African settings with mobile phones, depictions of Africans with new media technologies in global discourse spectacularize representations of the primitive and modern in order to affirm twentieth-century progress narratives. Conversely, depictions of Africans and new media on the continent signified upon the racism of the trope by repeating it with contextual differences that challenged the colonial intentions. An analysis of the

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[13] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

[14] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Theory From the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[15] Erkki Huhtamo, "Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archaeology as Topos Study," in *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 28.

discursive intersections of new media and Africa as topos elucidates a dialectical cycle in which media technologies are imbued with the power to mark racial and geographic difference while simultaneously offering the possibility to signify equality. This cycle, I argue, is what makes new media new.

Africa in Western discourse, as opposed to other geographies of the Global South, has been the exemplary signifier of their primitive past. As Achille Mbembe writes, "Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West's desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world."[16] However, Africans and Africans in the diaspora have confronted that legacy with their own counter-narratives of Africa. Post-independence pan-African projects, especially those of Ghana's first Prime Minister and President, sought to redefine Africa's place in the world. For them it was important to show an Africa rich in arts, culture, and knowledge. Thus, the invention of "Africa" resulted from both the legacy of colonial white supremacy and the decolonial work of Africans to celebrate global black excellence. To understand the meaning of Africa today, Jemima Pierre acknowledges, is to recognize the role colonial violence—physical, cultural, political, and epistemological—has had on efforts to define Africa since.[17] It is within this dialectical history of oppression and resistance that new media have played a particularly important role in both the construct of Africa as alterity of the West and as a unifying symbol of black pride. *Media/Fetish* illuminates the discursive history of Africa by following rhetoric about media technologies as it appears in relation to Africa on and off the continent.

Central to understanding the margins of media history is to attend to the ways that the meanings attached to African new media have been produced within the friction between global discourse about new media in Africa and in local African media contexts that reject, adopt, and adapt new media within specific socio-political circumstances. Meanings of new media circulate the globe with the technology and are activated for different political purposes within specific locations and times. For instance, media technologies of empire have been re-made to embody the current political needs of the post-colonial state. The rhetoric of late-colonial civilizing projects influenced post-colonial development and international goals, like the spread of democracy and protection of human rights. As such, new media carry both the inequalities of global geopolitics while they promote equality.[18] Lasting elements of racism that informed the colonial use of new media have etched racial hierarchies into contemporary media and the social relations they mediate. But new media today are also met with the same optimistic hopes for uplift that African media practitioners and theorists from mid-twentieth century felt about new media. Representations of Africans and media technologies, then and now, are critical for understanding the legacies of colonialism and for imagining new Afro-futures.

Media/Fetish uses Ghana as an important case study because following independence, Ghana challenged colonial discourse about Africa with an emphasis on the richness of African arts and culture through the development of a robust media system. As the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from Europe, Ghana's state film unit was well supplied with one of the only black and white 16mm and 35mm film processing labs in Sub-Saharan

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[16] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 2.

[17] Jemima Pierre, "Africa/African," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Africa*. Eds. Gaurav Desai and Adeline Masquelier (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 23.

[18] Here I am inspired by Anna Tsing's concept of activist packages. However, I am interested in how the movement of media technology carry with them the colonial legacy of global inequality while promising the possibility of equality. [See Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 238.]

Africa and in 1963 the first African television training school was opened in Accra.[19] The creation of Ghana television in the 1960s was a unique moment when Africans challenged the racist legacies of colonialism by changing the narrative about Africa and new media. Concentrating on Ghanaian responses to the legacy of racism in global new media discourse highlights both the strategies of resistance employed by African media specialists and the influences of colonialism that continued after the colonial period. While there remains a focus on Ghana throughout *Media/Fetish*, chapter one takes a broader look at the introduction of gramophones across Africa and in other parts of the Global South, and chapter five analyzes a Nigerian film series form the 2010s that was extremely popular in Ghana and other African countries.

Previously it was accepted that the spread of cultural content from the West to former colonies choked out local media productions and homogenized media content globally. While scholars are now critical of homogenization and instead see the spread of global media content as part of a process of hybridization, the spatial configurations of center and periphery that were fundamental to theories of cultural imperialism still hold. Contrary to public discourse about media technologies annihilating space and time, media technologies also help produce the remote places that they purport to connect. The role that media technology play in demarcating the globe into first and third worlds, modern and developing countries, and technological centers and peripheries becomes clear when we critically look at the intersection of discourse about new media and Africa. What appears to be a hyper-connected world in which the remote village has become global is actually structured by a history of racialized perceptions about what counts as media technology, who has access to it, and where it is invented.

Media/Fetish shows how discourses about Africa and new media reinforce media technologies as material objects that translate and mediate relationships of power. What I have found is that new media, in relation to the concept of Africa have been, and continue to be, the material and discursive means to define and entrench racialized global inequality particularly through visual representations of Africans and new media in film, literature, journalism, and photography. If media supposedly originate from Western centers of technological innovation, then the juxtaposition of the alterity of Africa with the technological sophistication of media from the West spectacularly produces the newness of new media. Primarily, it is difference that manufactures the new in new media and the colonial racialization of Africa has been a durable means to manufacture that difference.

But while new media in the context of Africa have historically marked the West as more technologically sophisticated and occupying a space and time evolutionarily ahead, I have also found that the use of new media technologies in Africa by Africans has activated new political potentials for the development of African nation-states during the post-independence era. The representational absence of new media technology on the continent by Western discourse has catalyzed the imaginative reinvention of the latest technologies by African media professionals to claim inclusion in a modern world. *Media/Fetish* follows both of these discursive threads—the lasting impact of colonialism on contemporary theories of media technology and the decolonial work of African media theorists.

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[19] Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 6.

Unboxing the History of Old New Media

In an emerging subgenre of the unboxing video, unboxers open early models of phones that have remained sealed in their original packaging for years. Watching a first-generation iPhone be unwrapped is like unearthing an archeological discovery from the recent but distant past. Viewers remark that they are transported to the time they opened the package of their first smart phone. These unboxing videos celebrate, with a certain reverence and nostalgia, the old new media of yesteryear.

Media archeologists also delight in the new media of the past. They often relish excavating failed technologies with short lifespans and odd technological imaginaries that were never realized, but media archeology as a field of media studies is notably hard to define. It is a method to some and a symptom to others. Some wear the title media archeologist with pride, others notoriously disavow it.[20] However, there are a set of characteristics that cut across the amorphous field. As Thomas Elsaesser summarizes, "almost every writer's definition of Media Archaeology includes an objection to teleology and linearity" leading him to claim that media archeology is not a methodology but a symptom of the post-Enlightenment loss of faith in progress.[21]

The same celebration of the technological detritus of an earlier age that appears in the unboxing video, a fetishization of the technology itself, is part of the discursive method of media archaeology. Like all good media archeologists, unboxing a "new" 2007 iPhone years later compresses technological time and forces new media out of familiar teleological trajectories. It also confounds the concepts of newness and technological obsolescence. Its material persistence allows technology enthusiasts to imagine the possibility of permanence in the face of accelerating media transformations. Media archeology, according to Thomas Elsaesser, also shares the ideological function to make a fetish out of obsolescence. He writes, "media archaeology in art spaces becomes symptomatic of the material fetishes we require, in order to reassure ourselves of *our* material existence, or rather: in the mirror of these media machines' sculptural objecthood we can mourn and celebrate our own ephemerality *and* obsolescence."[22] To master the unavoidable loss of the digital content of our day due to the passage of time, we linger on the material legacies of the not so distant media technologies of the recent past. The lack of control over the present media landscape is displaced onto the media material that does remain. This is simultaneously a confrontation with death and the process of making dead media fetishes.[23]

But it is also unclear when exactly media are dead. Media tend to come back as zombies after the luster of their newness has past. Zombie media, a term that accounts for media that are resurrected by artists, technophiles, and other techo-nostalgists, are "the living dead of media

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[20] Friedrich Kittler is often cited as an important iconoclast of media archeology, yet he was reluctant to affiliate with the method. [See John Armitage, "From Discourse Networks to Cultural Mathematics: An Interview with Friedrich A. Kittler," *Theory, Culture and Society* 23, nos. 7–8 (2006): 32–33.]

[21] Thomas Elsaesser, "Media Archaeology as Symptom," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14, no. 2 (2016): 8.

[22] Thomas Elsaesser, "Media Archaeology as Symptom," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14, no. 2 (2016): 206–207.

[23] Bruce Sterling, *The Dead Media Project: A Modest Proposal and a Public Appeal*. 1995. http://www.deadmedia.org/modest-proposal.html

history."[24] Bucking the planned obsolescence of consumer commodities, zombiefied media are "repurposed and reused in a more environmental friendly way" by artists.[25] "In the midst of an ecological crisis," Garnet Hertz and Jussi Parikka call for media archaeology to take a "more thorough nonhuman view."[26] Obsolescence, however, is a relative term that is determined by human use and humans use media differently across the globe. The life cycles of media are much longer than some might expect, and the practice of reuse is not just the purview of artists. David Edgerton has shown that when technologies reach the most people globally—the height of their vivacity—is often when they have been determined obsolete in the West.[27] Radio, for instance, is used globally by more people now than it was during the so called "Golden Age" of radio from the 1920s to the 40s. The maintenance and reuse of old electronics from radios to computers is a thriving industry in West Africa, hardly the work of circuit bending techno-artist-archeologists. Dead media appear as specters to those media scholars who neglect to look at the use of media globally. What seems resurrected may have never died.

The colonial origins of the zombie seem particularly relevant to understanding the not-quite-dead media zombies of media archeology. The zombie came out of the creole religious practice of Voodoo, which was influenced by West African religions. In response to the exploitative slave labor of Haitian plantations, the zombie was characterized as someone that continued to work despite being dead. Given that technologies that have been determined to be obsolete in the West continue to be used and reused in West Africa without ever dying, and there is a profitable and lively business in refurbishing used computers from Europe and America for West African markets, zombie media makes monsters out of the living media systems that are familiar to many people across the Global South.

In a response to the theoretical focus of the expanding field of new media studies (or emerging media studies as it is often called), historians have challenged the ahistorical claims that accompany descriptions of media "newness." This approach can be seen in works that write "the history of" a media technology or comparative media histories from one early media to the next.[28] Here the method of media archeology is to work backwards from the contemporary media moment to find just how old new media really are. Yet this method, Siegfried Zielinski points out, is tied to the familiar progress narrative that media archaeologists are supposed to reject: "everything has always been around, only in a less elaborate form; one only need to look."[29] Instead, Zielinski asks media archeologists to look beyond the "old in the new" and instead search for the "new in the old."[30] In other words, media archeology should find those wonderous media inventions that once existed that can expand and contest the media of the present not necessarily explain its lineage.[31] While Zielinski finds his *variantology* of the media through a

[24] Garnet Hertz and Jussi Parikka, "Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art Method" in Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 151.
[25] Jussi Parikka, "Introduction: The Materiality of Media and Waste," in *Medianatures: The Materiality of Information Technology and Electronic Waste*, ed. Jussi Parikka (London: Open Humanities Press, 2011).
[26] Garnet Hertz and Jussi Parikka, "Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art Method," in *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 151.
[27] David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[28] See Brian Winston, *Media Technology and Society: A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
[29] Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media* (Boston: The MIT Press, 2006), 3.
[30] Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media* (Boston: The MIT Press, 2006), 3.
[31] Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media* (Boston: The MIT Press, 2006), 11.

deep dive into the history of Western thought, the geography of his media archeology is quite limited, restricting how varied this media cartography can be.[32]

Siegfried Zielinski's media archaeology, deriving its methodology in part from Michel Foucault, is a critical practice that excavates media pasts in order to re-contextualize the media present and their possible futures.[33] Yet Foucault's own genealogy of knowledge starts with the idea of alterity. Michel Foucault begins his 1966 "Archaeology of the Human Sciences" with an account of an intellectual sensation he feels after reading Jorge Luis Borges' *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins*.

> …all the familiar landmarks of my thought—*our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography—breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things…In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.[34]

Confronting alterity in Borges' speculative fiction, for it was a fictional "Chinese encyclopedia" that provocatively ordered animals in inconceivable ways, the structures of meaning Foucault took as stable—a constant and immovable force—began to dissipate. Thus, Foucault begins an astoundingly detailed "archaeology" of western intellectual thought from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, from his acknowledgement that the precarity of that thought is the result of "the stamp" of temporal *and geographic* specificity.

Like Jorge Luis Borges' illusory Chinese encyclopedia, in the hands of the media archaeologist the unearthed discarded media object destabilizes the presumed order of things. In the case of media archeology, what is unsettled is the assumption of the inevitability of the media of the present. In other words, "the stark impossibility of thinking that" about our contemporary media, demonstrates "the limitation of our own" conventions about what media have been, are, and what they can become.

But it would seem media archeologists have been too preoccupied with time. In their pursuit of the "always already new,"[35] they tend to set aside questions about the impact provenance has on the old new media they uncover. As a result, media archaeologies have often begun and ended in the West. Instead of uncovering odd-ball forgotten media in the depths of European archives, I want to make the case that to know the contours of the present mediatic moment, media archaeology must consider new media geographies as much as alternative media timelines. Postcolonial media archaeology recognizes that time and *geography* matter.

This kind of geographic consideration is not so much concerned with situating media within its material environment like Shannon Mattern's excavation of urban landscapes through deep time, but rather the way location constructs notions of media and the way notions of media

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[32] His own list includes the following cities, not one from the Global South: Krakow, Palermo, Rome, New York, Prague, Florence, Jena, and Wroclaw. [See Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media* (Boston: The MIT Press, 2006), 7.]

[33] Huhtamo, Erkki and Jussi Parikka, "Introduction: An Archaeology of Media Archaeology," in *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, eds. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 28.

[34] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), xv.

[35] Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008).

construct location.[36] As such, *Media/Fetish* teeters between different new media discourses. On the one hand it asks how global new media discourse activated the idea of Africa to define new forms of media. And on the other, how Africans responded to that discourse to situate new media technologies within the African context.

All this focus on the materiality of the media object has left media archeology with a human problem, or rather, the problem of not attending to the human at all. Friedrich Kittler's project was allegedly interested in "driving out the human from the humanities."[37] Similarly, Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message" privileges the technology over producers and their audiences.[38] With postcolonial media archeology, I suggest that we resurrect the fetish as an analytical tool to understand the relations between people that have been forged from the bonds people have with the media machines they build and rebuild.

The Fetish

Pausing to admire the packaging, MissTechy, a leading technology blogger in Nigeria, announces enthusiastically, "Now guys, you have to give it to Tecno phone for an impressive package." It is true. The design of the Phantom 8 packaging is sleek. Embossed on the front of the all black box in copper-gold is the number "8." The font hints at 70s Blaxploitation; a design choice that appeals to consumers in the company's primary market—Africa. Founded in 2004, the Hong Kong based Tecno initially set out to produce mobile phones for emerging markets in South East Asia, Africa, and South America. By 2007 they concluded that the African market promised the best returns, therefore they began to focus entirely on making and marketing mobile phones for African consumers. By 2017 Tecno dominated the highly competitive mobile phone market in African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya and had subsequently also expanded to India and the Middle East.

Impressed with the packaging of the Tecno smart phone, MissTechy declares, "As a matter of fact, I think this calls for a stop-motion animation."[39] In the following shot the box is turned on its side and set in front of a whimsical backdrop. At once the box opens, spilling forth all its magical contents. The phone and its posse of accessories walk themselves into the foreground as if asking the viewer to play. They dance around tantalizingly, like the teddy bears that Goldilocks spies on in *The "Teddy" Bears* (Edison, 1907). MissTechy's stop-motion animation utilizes the magic of cinema to make explicit the fetishistic animism of mobile phones not unlike the "grotesque ideas" germinating from Karl Marx's table.[40] As commodities, both the

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[36] Shannon Mattern, *Code and Clay, Data and Dirt: five Thousand Years of Urban Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017) and *Deep Mapping the Media City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[37] Thomas Elsaesser, "Media Archaeology as Symptom," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14, no. 2 (2016): 192.

[38] I am indebted to John Durham Peters' succinct summary of both theorists' minimalist definitions of media. As he puts it, both Kittler and McLuhan leave "messages and people as add-ons" to definitions of media, privileging the apparatus over all else. [See John Durham Peters, "Mass Media," in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, eds. W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010), 266.]

[39] Tobi Ayeni is the founder of the Misstechy website that features blog posts about technology news, reviews of technology products, tutorials, and highlights on women in the technology sector. [See https://misstechy.com]

[40] "The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary, sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin

mobile phone and the teddy bear are, according to Marx, "nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things."[41] These commodities reconcile the total labor of society by translating individual human labor through the exchange of the products of their labor.[42] It is through the act of material exchange that labor is universalized and different systems can be made comparable within one set of values. In other words, the commodity fetish mediates different forms of labor through exchangeable goods.

The word "fetish" has a long history of being slippery, dubious, and as William Pietz puts it, "discursively promiscuous."[43] The fetish's interdisciplinary is both its problem and its attractiveness as an analytic term. Religious relic, coping mechanism, or an object of economic exchange, the fetish has been so widely used as to become cliché. While many assert an understanding of the fetish as some universal psychological experience (most commonly Freud's phallic symbolism), the idea of the fetish as the ultimate referent of the phallus was a nineteenth century idea. Earlier concepts of the fetish were tied to African witchcraft and the feminine.[44] The idea of the fetish, though often assumed to be a continuation of the Christian ideas of idolatry, has a very specific historical origin separate from this Christian linage. According to Pietz, the fetish came out of the intercultural spaces of the Portuguese colonies along the Gulf of Guinea, including what is present day Ghana.[45]

In the mid-1700s, Charles de Brosses offered the first theorization of the term he coined, "fétichisme."[46] Eighteenth century thinkers were fascinated with de Brosses' theories of fetish worship. Particularly that, "African societies were ordered by mechanisms of chance rather than by morally principled intentions."[47] Fetishism became established by the end of the eighteenth century as a central term in theories about the history of religion and eventually came to represent all that was not enlightenment.

The etymology of the word comes from the Portuguese word 'feitço,' which means "an object or a practice pertaining to witchcraft."[48] The term, when it was taken up by the mulatto populations who worked as middlemen for Portuguese traders and local populations, became "Fetisso" in pidgin. Small gold ornaments in the shape of animals and plants that adorned the hair of Akan women were called *Fetissos*. These ornaments mixed gold, of primary interest to Europeans, with other substances resulting in an adulterated gold that was less desirable to Europeans. This gold became known as "Fetiche Gold," or false gold. William Pietz writes, "The falsity of 'sophisticated' gold in economic transactions inevitably echoed the religious falsity embodied by the gold fetish figures…fetish gold became a sort of synecdoche expressing all the

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dancing of its own free will." [See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), 163–164.]

[41] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), 165.

[42] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), 165.

[43] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 9 (1985): 5.

[44] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 9 (1985): 6.

[45] The Portuguese established settlements along the Gulf of Guinea in 1482. These coastal settlements were occupied by the Portuguese until 1642 when the colony was given to the Dutch.

[46] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 16 (1988): 106.

[47] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 16 (1988): 121.

[48] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 16 (1988): 108.

distrust and suspicion of fraud, all the intense anxiety about judging the commercial value of material commodities, which attends trade across cultures."[49]

The fetish arose out of the cross-cultural problem of assigning common value to objects for exchange in the heterogeneous cultural space of the colony. *Fetissos* referred to a great many different kinds of African objects and practices that enabled commercial exchange between Europeans and Africans. Europeans were quite puzzled by Africans who would trade gold for what that seemed to have little value. Fetishism developed out of European traders' surprise at Africans' attachments to what seemed to them to be trinkets and trifles. According to William Pietz, the materiality of the fetish fixed the translation of radically different social values between cultures so that exchange could be repeated.[50] These baffling commercial decisions were explained as symptomatic of African religious practice which was characterized by the irrational personification of material objects—fetish worship.[51] Uninterested in the social relations that the fetish represented, Europeans imagined the fetish objects were gods to Africans rather than objects that represented new social responsibilities, new associations, and agreements across cultures, as was the custom of the West Africans. Thus, fetish objects miraculously became the material instantiations of mediated power between people and their values.

European travel accounts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows a conflation of several distinct kinds of objects that Africans assigned value into the fetish category, particularly because of European belief in African confusion about religious and nonreligious matters. While the term "Fetisso" described several different value-objects (religious articles, ornaments, gold pendants, talismans), Europeans distilled the uniting principle of fetish worship as the false belief in the powers of inanimate material objects over human life. The technological objects that Europeans brought with them to the Guinea coast were part of this mix of objects that Africans supposedly superstitiously personified.[52] Western science and the media technologies it produced, thus became new fetishes in the spaces of empire.

New media technologies brought to Africa to amuse colonists and pacify unruly Africans acquired the properties of fetishes, or so colonists liked to attest. Repeatedly during the early twentieth century when western explorers, colonial administrators, filmmakers, and ethnologists described Africans' befuddled encounters with gramophones they emphasized that Africans experienced the western media technology as magic. It was African religious systems that gave material objects the powers of the gods that colonists believed led Africans to believe in the magic of gramophones, but as discussed in chapter one, it was colonial belief in the magic of their media that produced the media fetish. Demonstrations of gramophones by colonial officials imbuing the new media technology with spectacular capability to pacify disobedient Africans. Repeatedly referred to as "white magic" by colonial officials, settlers, and explorers the new media apparatus was a symbol of the godlike vision they had of themselves. The idea of the fetish as magic continues in contemporary literature on new media. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun equates the fetish with witchcraft through the pun on the "sourcery" of software code.[53]

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[49] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism" *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 16 (1988): 108–111.
[50] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 9 (1985): 10.
[51] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 13 (1987): 23–24.
[52] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 16 (1988): 109.
[53] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "On 'Sourcery,' or Code as Fetish," *Configurations* 16 (2008): 300.

Fig. 2: DJ STELOO at 2017 Chale Wote Festival, Accra, Ghana

However, what was "white man's magic" in colonial discourse about gramophones in Africa in the early twentieth century was inverted a century later. Extending the common phrase, "the magic of cinema," Ghanaian and Nigerian movies are often viewed from satellite television stations Africa Magic and Africa Magic Plus and since the early 2000s Ghanaians have called witchcraft African electronics. "African electronics," Birgit Meyer writes, is "an efficient and potentially constructive technology that was—alas—used by Africans primarily for selfish and socially destructive ends."[54] Damien Droney notes that during 2011–12, African electronics became an African technology to both make fun of the absence of other forms of "real" technology in herbal medicine laboratories, but also to paradoxically both deride Ghanaian belief in witchcraft and celebrate it.[55] The two-day Chale Wote street art festival in Accra appropriated the joke to re-envision Afrofuturism in their 2015 theme: *African Electronics*. Further entangling magic, spiritualism, and media technologies, the 2017 Chale Wote festival opened with a trance performance by the Hutor Adzimashie Bali from the Torgbui Adzima Shrine in Torgodo, Volta Region and the Hu-Koku Association. Their performance was an interpretation of the 2015 theme entitled "Badboy BODY Electronics." In it the "internal technologies" of trance and African spiritual practice were fashioned into new electronics.[56] Trance induced feats—cutting their bodies with long knives and bathing in fire—were followed by DJ STELOO's trance music procession from Brazil House (the prior home of former Brazilian slaves who returned to Accra in the early 1800s) to James Fort. STELOO, in a white square cape in the shape of a circuit board, road at the front of a trolley outfitted with speakers [fig. 2]. Pulling the trolley was a man wearing a bull skull reminiscent of the skull affixed to Mory's motorcycle in Djibril Diop Mambéty's legendary film, *Touki Bouki* (1973).[57] These artistic renderings of "African

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[54] Birgit Meyer, *Sensational Movies: Video, Vision, and Christianity in Ghana* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 205.

[55] Damien Droney, "Ironies of Laboratory Work during Ghana's Second Age of Optimism." *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (2014): 363–384.

[56] "Internal technologies" is how the performance was described in Chale Wote publicity.

[57] Beyoncé and Jay Z made a similar citation in their promotional materials for their 2018 *On the Run II* tour.

electronics" highlight the conceptual overlap between magic and technology on the continent. As Afrofuturist novelist Nnedi Okorafor has said, "to be African is to merge technology and magic."[58]

But for Marx and Freud the fetish was used to describe peculiar western habits. For Freud it is "an abnormality" that is not necessarily felt as an ailment by the patient.[59] The commodity fetish is a form of mis-value; where the labor of production is hidden from the exchange value of the commodity. It draws on the idea of the primitive other who believes in the power of a fetish to turn the commodity into a dirty thing. As Peitz writes, "The discourse of the fetish has always been a critical discourse about the false objective values of a culture from which the speaker is personally distanced."[60] The fetish is constructed as the antithesis of rationality and modernity. The absorbed gullibility that colonialists projected onto "natives" allowed them to congratulate themselves on their own distanced critical engagement with the world. As Bruno Latour put it, "wherever they [moderns] drop anchor, they soon set up fetishes; that is, they see all the peoples they encounter as worshipers of meaningless objects."[61] David Graeber makes the point that it was "not the 'Otherness' of the West Africans that ultimately drove Europeans to such extreme caricatures" of African fetishism, "but rather, the threat of similarity—which required the most radical rejection."[62] The gold that Europeans fervently sought had as much use value as the trinkets and trifles the Europeans used in trade with Africans.

Media/Fetish argues that the West African fetish is the theoretical origins of what we think of as new media. While constructed as the primitive precursor to the supposedly rational relationship Europeans now had to their things, the fetishes that originated from the coast of West Africa were a thoroughly modern creation. If capitalism arose from racial difference in Europe, the Atlantic slave trade solidified race as capitalism's functioning core.[63] It was in the space between Europe, American, and Africa—the black Atlantic—that new economies of exchange solidified an economy of value along racial categories. It was also the black Atlantic that produced the fetish—a new medium that communicated different values across cultures.

New media mediate social relations, hierarches of power, and different social values just as the fetishes in the Gold Coast came to distinguish Africans from Europeans. While technological machines became "the measures of men" at an earlier date, twentieth-century media technologies both carried sermons of progress in the content they transmitted and were the material expression of that message.[64] The meanings attached to the media technologies of the "civilized world" that came to Africa with European exploration, colonization, and settlement have their origins in the violent colonization of Africa. The theoretical use of the fetish by Freud

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[58] "In my experience as an African, the mystical and the mundane have always coexisted. It's expressed within the explanation of things, in ways of doing things, the reasons for doing things. That's just life. So add the fact that technology is a part of African life, too, and you get a natural merging." [See Qiana Whitted Interview with Nnedi Okorafor, "To Be African Is to Merge Technology and Magic," in *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness*, eds. by Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).]

[59] Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. XXI), trans. J. Strachey, (London: Hogarth and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1927), 152.

[60] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 9 (1985): 14.

[61] Bruno Latour, "Fetish-Factish," *Material Religion* 7, no. 1 (2011): 42–49.

[62] David Graeber, "Fetishism as Social Creativity: Or, Fetishes are Gods in the Process of Construction," *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 4 (2005): 413.

[63] Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[64] Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

and Marx as the irrational over-value of an object is useful for understanding colonial accusations of African's belief in the "white magic" of gramophones and other media technologies they brought to the continent. However, the focus on the African new media context also makes clear the actual power new media fetishes, as discursive objects, wield in challenging global inequality through the reorganization of social relations. Instead of emphasizing the false value of media technology, the magic of new media might be the best way to describe the actual power new media has in organizing the world.

MissTechy's unboxing videos show that devotion to the material world cannot be dismissed as the worship of false idols. As self-fashioned tools of mediation, the fetish analytic acknowledges the hold hand-held technologies have on their users and the very real power they exert over their social lives that cannot be understood through material analysis alone. The ethics of repair, which Steven J. Jackson describes as an "ethics of care" in the ongoing work of technological maintenance, highlights the affective relations people have with their media technologies. As he succinctly puts it, "We care [repair] because we care."[65] Therefore, as Arjun Appadurai proposes, "we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things."[66] Media mean because as fetishes they mediate the social.

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[65] Steven J. Jackson, "Rethinking Repair," in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, eds. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kristen A. Foot (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014), 232.
[66] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: commodities and the politics of value," in *The social life of things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.

Fig. 1: "The Real Digital Divide" *The Economist*, March 12, 2005.

The Media

While MissTechy's blog covers stories on the latest technology news about and for African women in technology, offering a view of African consumption of cutting-edge new media, a much more common image of African new media is one of lack. In the early 2000s, a frequent image that circulated in American discourse about the digital divide that separated places like Africa and the United States was the March 12, 2005 cover of *The Economist*. In the photograph a young African boy in a yellow shirt holds a toy mobile phone made out of mud to his ear and smiles. *The Economist* does not indicate where this boy is from or give any contextual description of the image, but other images of African children playing with mud-mobile phones circulate the Internet.[67] The magazine's title article "The Real Digital Divide" expounds that, contrary to popular opinion, the divide was not a result of a lack of computer supplies: they were available for purchase. Nor was there a problem with demand: the desire for the mobile phone is visible in the toy double. But "The Real Digital Divide" is poverty, illiteracy, and development woes that keep the ability to buy computers out of reach for large populations

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[67] One blog describes the mud-mobile that Seni made as complete with a plastic screen with text from a newspaper under it and a removable dental-floss cord and charger. http://lisajospencer.blogspot.com/2012/06/toys.html There are also several mud mobile phone images on the stock photography website *alamy*: https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-african-child-with-mud-mobile-phone-15467070.html

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of the Global South. The editor explains that the divide cannot be bridged by access to community-funded tele-centers, a popular trend in global development in the early 2000s, but instead by promoting the spread of affordable mobile phones to new markets.[68] The creation of viable consumers for specialized technologies, he argues, are necessary for the emerging African market and the development of the continent. By reiterating a common neoliberal notion that industry and markets can dramatically transform the developing world, the editor sees unequal access to technology as a problem to be overcome by better product development and distribution to new consumers.

The Economist seems like a fitting advocate for the privatization of Internet access that the smartphone promises. The image that graces this issue's cover narrates all too well *The Economist*'s argument that Africans desire individual mobile phone ownership over communal access points. Besides the appearance of upward class mobility mobile phones offer, the mobile phone owner commands personal control over networks of communication with family, friends, and business acquaintances across ever widening distances. The opportunities for new mobilities at the communally owned information center are shared public goods that do not enhance the status or social standing of the individual user. Thus, by coupling the image of the child's fashioning of a mud-mobile phone with *The Economist*'s cover story, the image not only speaks to the child's desire for a mobile phone, but more importantly their desire to be someone who owns a mobile phone.

The absence of the "real" mobile phone on *The Economist* cover, or even a more familiar brightly colored plastic toy model, visualizes the new media fetish. The digital lack that the concept of the digital divide describes exemplifies the cultural/social/and political *difference* that is imagined between the "West and the rest." The digital divide constructs Africa as feminine lack and the mud-mobile phone becomes the fallacious fetish (phallus). According to Sigmund Freud, the fetish replaces the absent female penis, allowing the (male) subject to simultaneously acknowledge and deny the possibility of his own castration. Freud derived the term fetish from the religious practices of the "savage" of West Africa. He writes, "This substitute is not unjustly compared with the fetich [sic] in which the savage sees the embodiment of his god."[69] The sexual perversion (abet quite pleasurable) of the modern man is, for Freud, equally "backward" to Africans' purported ignorant faith in the power of material objects to decide their fate. The threat of castration that feminine lack threatens is mitigated by the presence of the fetish, while still allowing one to derive pleasure from the obvious difference between male and female anatomy.[70] In the image of the mud-mobile phone, the West's fear of digital castration is mitigated by displacing the absence of new media onto the mud-mobile alternative. The threat of

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

[68] Editors of *Information Technologies and Development*, Ernest J. Wilson III, Michael L. Best, and Dorothea Kleine, offered of a rebuke to the Editor of *The Economist*, Tom Standage, writing that the Economist uses, "the success of mobile phones as evidence for the failures and demise of computers and the Internet in development. If there is any broad lesson learned in modern communications research, it is that different media do not displace, but instead, complement each other. Linking the rise of mobile voice telephony to the death of the 'telecentre' is unsupported by the available evidence." [See Ernest J. Wilson III, Michael L. Best, and Dorothea Kleine, "Moving Beyond 'The Real Digital Divide,'" *Information Technologies and International Development* 2, no. 3 (2005): iii–v.]

[69] Sigmund Freud, "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex," in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by Dr. A.A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), 566.

[70] Sigmund Freud writes, "the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and—for reasons familiar to us—does not want to give up." [See Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XXI*, trans. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1927): 152–153.]

African alterity to Western identity is thus inoculated by representing African desire to own new media devices like those commonly used in the West.

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's reading of Lacan's concept of "paranoid knowledge" to understand the marketing of the Internet might be a useful comparison for understanding representations of the digital divide. In *Control and Freedom*, Chun argues that commercials like MCI's "Anthem" which showed happy people of color on the Internet worked as "(antiracist) racist paranoia."[71] The idea being that white consumers would become jealous of people of color who had access to the Internet before they did. For Chun this exemplifies Jacques Lacan's conception of paranoid knowledge, or the desire for an object because someone else desires it. As Chun writes, "This paranoid knowledge propels the never-ending desire for technology within most advertisements/news reports—for technology that the other has, or may use on us, which gives him or her an advantage over us."[72] The images of Cisco Systems' "Empowering the Internet Generation" television commercial series comprised different scenes featuring people from the Global South (Asia, Middle East, and Africa) who address the audience with statistics related to the Internet and demonstrate how the Internet will help them get jobs and employment skills. Again, Chun writes, "These commercials lure people onto the Internet with the threat of being left behind."[73] In the context of Western new media discourse about Africa, visualizations of the digital divide also lure people towards acquisition because they too represent the Other's desire. An Africa without new media reaffirms the power of those locations where media are not only present but new. The discursive reiterations of the not-quite new, African technological adaptation, or mud-mobile approximation of new media technologies becomes the West's fetishes to ward against the vulnerabilities of a technological/linguistic castration that the lack from the other side of the digital divide threatens.

Contemporary photographs of African mobile phone users are built upon themes and formal conventions found in the photographic practices of the early 1900s that portrayed what Lisa Gitelman has called "initial contacts" between indigenous peoples and technology, most often the gramophone. Like early contact photographs, the most popular of the mobile phone images juxtapose Africans in pastoral settings wearing traditional clothing with the new media technology. As scholars have noted, these depictions, like the gramophone scene in *Nanook of the North* (1922), were a way to co-produce ideas of the modern and the primitive. The mud-mobile phone image rehearses this dichotomy between the primitive and the modern by associating the African child with the ancient elements of the natural earth. Thus, the media fetish has a long history that the *Media/Fetish* follows as it appears in discourse about new media in Africa from the 1900s to the early 2000s.

In the first chapter, *"Is she a gramophone?": Initial Contacts in the Digital Age, or, When the Visual Record Skips*, I trace the staging of indigenous initial contacts with gramophones from Martin Johnson's African travelogue film *Congorilla* (1932) to the use of media technologies in West African portrait photography to foreground the dialectical relationship between the two sides of the media fetish. By looking at Johnson's use of the contact trope what I find is that the spectacular divide between the modern and the primitive in the visual

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[71] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), loc. 2317–23 of 3878, Kindle.

[72] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), loc. 2317–23 of 3878, Kindle.

[73] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), loc. 2317–23 of 3878, Kindle.

history of indigenous first encounters with technology, produces the media object as new. In turn, its newness imbues it with the ability to become *useful*—to perform modernity and therefore constitute the modern as something that exists and a necessary export for the developing world. This genealogy also shows that not only do these images repeat over time like a needle stuck on a scratched record, but their repetition was often sponsored by media companies like Victor. Gramophones in colonial Africa muddled the distinction between the fetish as magical object with the power of the gods and a commodity fetish.

Conversely, I show how African photographers in the mid-twentieth century signify upon the initial contact trope by posing studio clients with new media technologies like gramophones, radios, and televisions. The repetition of the trope within the performative space of the African photography studio challenged the colonial narrative that framed the African encounter with new media as a demonstration of their false belief in the media fetish. Instead, the use of media technologies in West African studio portraiture allowed Africans the means to claim an equal place in global modernity. West African studio portraiture offers the historical counternarrative to the colonial impulse within contemporary new media images like that of the *The Economist*'s mud-mobile phone.

While the image of the mud-phone signifies a dearth of digital media on the continent, it also exhibits the ingenuity of African children that make do without the real thing. Fashioning a mobile phone duplicate, especially some of the more elaborate phones that use newspaper and transparent plastic to recreate the mobile phone screen, shows an inventive use of the materials at hand to make an entertaining model of a technological device—hardly indicative of a society without the ability to innovate.[74] As Clapperton Mavhunga points out, imitation, now at odds with the Western focus on novelty, was once a form of innovation during Europe's renaissance.[75] Innovation only became synonymous with technology in the 1860s, when the use of technology was seen as an economical means to ignite industrialization. Technology shifted from a term that described the academic study of the "useful arts" to a term that incorporated the means of industrial production, and eventually the machines themselves.[76] And as Ruth Oldenziel has argued, the tendency to associate "technology" with masculinity arose together with and as a part from the rise of working women in industrial production and their efforts to organize inside and outside of the factory.[77] Unlike the "useful arts," Oldenziel writes, "rather than a neutral term, *technology* is itself part of a narrative production or plot of modernism, in which men are the protagonists and women have been denied their part."[78] By the early twentieth century, technology use was a sign of (white male) capitalist efforts towards greater and greater efficiency and productivity.

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[74] In Daniel Lerner's foundational work *The Passing of Traditional Society*, he attributes the ability to innovate to Westerners: "…whereas traditional man tended to reject innovation by saying 'It has never been thus,' the contemporary Westerner is more likely to ask 'Does it work?' and try the new way without further ado." This failure to innovate, Lerner suggests is the result of "traditional societies" not being able to empathize. [See Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. New York: The Free Press, 1958: 49.]

[75] Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017), 8.

[76] Eric Schatzberg, "'Technik' Comes to America: Changing Meanings of 'Technology' before 1930," *Technology and Culture* 47, no. 3 (2006): 486–512.

[77] Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women and Modern Machines in America, 1870–1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 10.

[78] Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women and Modern Machines in America, 1870–1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 14.

The adoption of the word "technology" also indicated an ideological shift in the concept of social progress. Progress changed from Franklin and Jefferson's republican ideals of political liberation from aristocratic and monarchic oppression to the power of technological innovations to produce social change.[79] Once social progress was tied to industrial advances, the entrepreneurial elite—the Rockefellers and the Carnegies— "assumed that they could fulfill their republican obligations by acts of private philanthropy. They believed that innovations in the mechanic arts could be relied upon, in the long run, to result in progress and prosperity for all."[80]

Not only was the innovation of new technology seen as providing prosperity and progress, turn-of-the-twentieth-century entrepreneurs believed that they were better suited to decide which social services should be financed than publicly elected representatives. In the self-serving tradition of philanthropy started by Andrew Carnegie, the philanthropist dictates what types of organizations get funded. This is a specific type of inequality that maintains a relationship between the funder and the funded in which the funder presumes to know what is best for the recipient. As Carnegie put it, "Thus is the problem of rich and poor to be solved. The laws of accumulation will be left free, the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor, intrusted [sic] for a season with a great part of the increased wealth of the community, but administering it for the community far better than it could or would have done for itself."[81] Andrew Carnegie famously advocated that the rich invest in cultural and educational institutions that would help the poor with their own improvement, namely, the founding of universities, free community libraries, hospitals, public parks, concert halls, and swimming pools. For, according to Carnegie, "in bestowing charity, the main consideration should be to help those who will help themselves."[82]

The appearance of the term "technology" at a moment when industrial innovation gained acceptance as the harbinger of progress, had an enormous impact on philanthropy in the Global South. In chapter two, *"Mobile is Everything": The Infrastructural Absences of Mobile Cinema*, I recount the twentieth century a confluence of philanthropic, Christian, and colonial discourse that cemented the idea that cinema—a new media technology—would bring economic prosperity, Christian civilization, and social progress to Africans through education rather than seen as commodities for entertainment or self-expression. In the 1940s mobile cinema vans traveled throughout the British colonies showing colonial films that taught British methods of governance, agriculture, and health and hygiene to manage the everyday life of Africans through new modes of governmentality. I show that the transnational movement of educational and state-sponsored films by mobile cinema vans manifested the theories of social mobility and modernization that the colonial government wished to impart within the material structure of the cinematic apparatus. Like the fetish which holds both the threat of lack and its nullification, mobile cinema mitigated colonial fear of African alterity by simultaneously emphasizing the intellectual difference of remote Africans and distributing information as means for potential similitude.

The films that they screened—on health and medicine, agriculture, community development, and citizenship—exposed African audiences to the similar types of information

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[79] Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept," *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2010): 565.

[80] Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept," *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2010): 566.

[81] Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1900), 18.

[82] Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1900), 17.

being deployed to Africans today through mobile phone applications. Like with mobile cinema, mobile phones continue to be proposed as essential tools for African development. However, the use of mobile phones for social change takes the role of development out of the hands of the government and puts it into the hands of individual consumers. This shift follows global trends in governance following structural adjustment in the 1990s where state industries were given over to the private sector. With the mobile phone, educational content promises spectacular development through a robust global telecommunications industry rather than through the construction of government funded infrastructure. As in the example from *The Economist* article on "The Real Digital Divide," the informational value of new mobile phones is precisely what allows for market for new media to arise in areas traditionally thought of as lacking consumers. By looking at colonial-era mobile cinema within the context of contemporary international development discourse about mobile phones, I consider how the emphasis on the increasing mobility of information continues to focus social and political change on the transformation of the individual rather than the development of public infrastructure.

A thorough rereading of the history of new media from Africa also requires retuning media theory to include media history from the Global South. Underneath the tendency to focus on the history of new media in Euro-American contexts is the assumption that media are new when they are first dreamt of, patented, or when their material components become tangible, but the distribution and use of technologies in imaginative new ways allows for the continuous reinvention of media. Use-centered histories of media insist that human creativity and innovation are found in the global margins of media history.[83] As Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga argues, the duty of science and technology studies in nonwestern contexts is to take "seriously what technology means from the perspective of people of the South" by "not merely looking at how people respond to incoming things, but placing the latter's arrival, meanings, knowledges, and materialities within the locals' technological *longue durée*."[84] Thus, theories of media technology that are sensitive to non-Western contexts, should be drawn from the history of precolonial African media. They should not only recount the imperial propaganda of Europe and the United States' that they, "alone had a monopoly of technology to 'transfer' to a dark, primitive world."[85]

Therefore, *Media/Fetish* also considers the ways that nonprofit and philanthropic discourse about new media have been incorporated within indigenous media systems. In the third chapter on the origins of television in Ghana, *"This is Ghana Television": An Afrofuturist History of Television*, I show how the theorization of a new television system in Ghana was linked to the *longue durée* of media practice in Ghana. Inspired by ɔkyeafoɔ, the skilled orators who draw on traditional proverbs, royal history, and poetry to translate and interpret the will of the *Asantehene*, and traditional African storytellers, the head of Ghana Television, Shirley Graham Du Bois, shaped existing television systems to draw on traditional media practices while still fitting the needs of the new African nation. Based on archival research and interviews with key Ghanaian television pioneers, I argue that despite Canadian expertise and British and Japanese equipment, the inauguration of Ghana television resulted in the invention of a new

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[83] See David Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017).

[84] Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, "Introduction," in *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* ed. Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017), 4.

[85] Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, "Introduction," in *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* ed. Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017), 5.

television system. This Afrofuturistic era of Ghana's media past provides a counter narrative to new media discourse from the colonial era that positioned Africa as the passive receiver of media machines that were invented in the West, and instead details how Ghanaians negotiated and adapted new technologies from abroad into local new media systems that empowered Ghanaians, Africans, and those of African descent across the world. With the origins of Ghana Television, the racial uplift that African portrait photography aspired in the mid-twentieth century was manifested in the invention of a new media system. Discourse about Ghana television demonstrates the power that the new media fetish had in reorganizing social relations and activating new pan-African identity.

While the Ghana Television media fetish shifted social relations between Africa and the West temporarily, the digital divide moved those relations back onto a familiar imperial track. The absence presence of the mobile phone in *The Economist* image emphasizes the digital divide the cover article discusses within neoliberal capitalist discourse. Yet the image of the mud-mobile phone in the child's hands also materializes a global production chain whose hidden exploitative labor produces the commodity fetish the child desires. Coltan, mined by children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by digging for the mineral in muddy ecologically protected forests, is important for smart phone manufacturing.[86] The mineral is highly conductive making it useful for the small circuitry found in mobile phones and digital devices. The visibility of the child's creative construction of the mud-mobile signals the invisible labor of children working in the mud to supply the raw materials for objects they desire, but do not make enough money to buy. Paradoxically the mud-mobile also represents the interconnected globalized economies of the world in which Africa is a vital part, but seamlessly hides these connections by using the mud-mobile as a spectacular emblem of the digital divide.

Coltan is ever more present within eco-media and media archeology scholarship.[87] Both attend to the material of media. In media archaeologies that account for the materiality of media, Africa is only ever figured through the raw material of coltan or the dangerous ecological waste that media technologies become in their afterlife.[88] The narrative of new media on the continent projects Africa as the location of raw materials, a reminder of colonial exploitation and extraction, or the dumpsite where dead media find their resting place.[89] Journalism on e-waste has grossly misrepresented Accra's Agbogbloshie neighborhood as the largest dumping site in the world for hundreds of thousands of "dead" media from Western Europe and United States. The area is a metal scrap yard used to dismantle everything from bicycles to air conditioners not just e-waste as journalists have claimed. The popular narrative constructs Africans as the victim of the international importation of Euro-American toxic media waste to Ghana when most of the e-waste is domestically produced.[90] To acknowledge that Africans create their own e-waste

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[86] See Blaine Harden, "The Dirt in the New Machine," *The New York Times*, August 12, 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/08/12/magazine/the-dirt-in-the-new-machine.html and Todd C. Frankel, "The Cobalt Pipeline: Tracing the path from deadly hand-dug mines in Congo to consumers' phones and laptops," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/batteries/congo-cobalt-mining-for-lithium-ion-battery/?noredirect=on.

[87] Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[88] This narrative trajectory finds its way into Jennifer Gabrys' *Digital Rubbish: A Natural History of Electronics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

[89] Mari Shibata, "Inside the World's Biggest E-Waste Dump" *Motherboard, VICE media*, June 11, 2015. https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/4x3emg/inside-the-worlds-biggest-e-waste-dump. See also the documentary *Welcome to Sodom* (Florian Weigensamer and Christian Krönes, 2018).

[90] As Jenna Burrell writes, "this e-waste problem reflected not Western excess and exploitation, but the local demand for computers. E-waste was the end outcome of what preceded it, a viable and valued trade in affordable

would mean conceding that Africans participate in the modern technological consumerism. This type of media studies leaves out the mostly living use of new media on the continent and the ways innovative use of new media on the continent leads mobile trends elsewhere.[91]

The visible absence of digital technology in Africa that the *The Economist* reported was exemplified by the mimicry of mobile phone technology in the self-fashioned mud-mobile phone the child holds. The image is illustrative of the absent presence of media technology in discourse about the developing world. If new media are in Africa, they are not as sophisticated, they are dated, and/or behind (i.e. Nokia "brick" phones and BlackBerry). If African media is not old, then the technology is localized in ways that make them vernacular, or alternative doubles to the media technologies in the West. They might mimic technologies familiar to those in New York, London, or Paris, but they are not quite right (not quite white enough).[92]

For instance, during the early 2010s international headlines remarked on the surprising popularity of Blackberry smart phones in Nigeria well after their popularity had dwindled in the United States. African favor for what many in the United States felt was technologically passé continued a long history of imagining Africa as a place without (the mud mobile) or with outdated old media technologies. In the last chapter, *"Who wants a BlackBerry these days?": Serialized New Media and its Trash*, I examine this discourse about mobile phone use in West Africa through the textual analysis of the three-part Nigerian film series *BlackBerry Babes* (2011–12). The video series' celebration of BlackBerry mobile telephones was used as an example in the West of technological lag in Africa. A digital divide was imposed even when the digital was present. In the chapter, I show how within *BlackBerry Babes* there is a deep ambivalence about the spectacular qualities of new smart phones. The seriality of the series becomes a means to reinforce BlackBerry phones as markers of membership within global capitalism, while its trashy aesthetics express a sense of disillusionment with the promise of social and economic mobility that the mobile phones seem to proffer. The contradiction within the film series shows a willingness to participate within a global capitalist system where new media signal and maintain unequal status while playfully exposing the performative history of the new media fetish.

Media/Fetish

MissTechy's magical Phantom 8 and the African child's mud-mobile phone discussed earlier are exemplary of the two surfaces of the new media fetish. The mud-mobile phone represents the desire for new media technologies that results from their manufactured absence. As an example of racial uplift, MissTechy's Phantom 8 smart phone is the response to what the mud mobile phone image lacks—black African technological ownership and expertise. The discourse about new media lack in Africa prompts a discourse of acquisition in the pursuit of global equality. MissTechy's post and the image of the African child's mud-mobile phone

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secondhand computers." [See Jenna Burrell, "What's the real story with Africa's e-waste?" Berkeley Blog, September 1, 2016. https://news.berkeley.edu/berkeley_blog/whats-the-real-story-with-africas-e-waste/]

[91] The most notable example is of Kenya's M-PESA mobile banking system. According to a Vodafone 2011 annual report it had over 20 million users in six different countries in 2011. M-PESA and other mobile banking services allow users to send, receive, and save money through their mobile phone. This form of banking is widely used across Africa. [See The World Bank, *Maximizing Mobile: 2012 Information and Communications for Development* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2012).]

[92] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 132.

equally make the mobile phone a fetishized commodity. Each reinforce the mobile phone as a globally desirable thing that can mediate class, racial, and gender differences across the world. As such, hierarchies of being are made and undone by our shared relations to new media technologies. *Media/Fetish* moves dialectically between these two sides of the media fetish—examining the lasting impact of colonial discourse about new media on the continent and African adoption, expert adaptation, and innovation of new media.

Rather than a simple Marxian definition of fetishism, in which the commodity disguises relations between people as the relationship of people to their objects, fetishism *is* about the relationship between people and objects. The media fetish accounts for an understanding of media technology as socially constructed, but also points to the material agency of media as things with power to magically shape the way humans behave because of human attachments to them. To call media a fetish is not to make the claim that media users have perversely been worshiping the false gods of capital, but to recognize the way our affections towards non-human forms grant them powerful agencies of their own. Our connections to our new media devices stem from their ability to mediate cross-cultural social relations. Looking at the history of media technology from postcolonial Africa allows us to see more clearly how our relationship with others and our relationship to things are entangled.

New media have and continue to mediate across race, class, and gender by forging hierarchies of power and instilling hopeful opportunities for equality. Embracing the fetish means abandoning enlightened detachment from the sway our fashioned tools have over us. Rather than simply pointing out the obscured social relations within its material production, calling on the new media fetish brings to the fore how peoples' feelings about technological things enliven them.[93] The fetish reveals how ideas about media are built through maintenance, care, and belief. Whether it is the belief in new media's power to continue globalized structures of inequality, or the belief in new media's power to counter divisive narratives and designate a shared global modernity, media fetishes have tangible effects upon the world. Considering the media fetish from Africa makes those effects more evident.

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[93] Here I am influenced by the response to the KonMari technique of tiding up which draws on Japanese Shinto beliefs that things, like animals and plants, have a divine essence. A backlash against Mari Kondo's method after the release of her Netflix show, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, in January 2019 was, in part, rooted in an opposition to the Japanese acknowledgement of human affection to the things we own. Asked to hold things and see if they "spark joy," to gently tap on our books to "wake them up," and to thank our things before ending our relationships with them, all suggest a very different way of relating to the things than is common in Euro-American culture.

Chapter One
"Is she a gramophone?": Initial Contacts in the Digital Age, or, When the Visual Record Skips

Paradoxically, the abundance of photographs of Africans using mobile phones that circulate the Internet has become a sign of a digitally divided world. A Google image search during the 2010s for "United States mobile phone" yields many graphs of data, while a search for "China mobile phone" results in an endless display of phone models. Search for "Kenya mobile phone" or "Africa mobile phone" and the page fills with photographs of people and their mobile devices. Those places globally perceived as lacking access to new media technologies in the early 2000s occupy digital spaces with the most visible evidence of people using them.

One of the most popular visual tropes—one that is repeatedly staged by stock photographers—is the Maasai warrior in red and magenta shukas and beaded jewelry, holding a spear in one hand and a mobile phone in the other. Variations on this image can be found on development blogs and non-governmental organization fundraising pages. In a 2014 National Public Radio story, "Maasai Warriors: Caught Between Spears and Cellphones," the Maasai are described as "one of Kenya's oldest tribes" whose contemporary "generation straddles the line between preserving their culture and embracing modernization."[94] As the title of the article suggests, dropping the spear and taking up mobile technology represents the transformation of the "oldest tribe" into modern citizen/consumers.

In a less tasteful 2016 *Daily Mail* article, "When tradition meets the modern world," an image of a Namibian woman is ironically captioned: "Old meets new: A Himba woman in traditional clothing has a mobile phone attached to her outfit."[95] Until the image was removed from the webpage, a close-up of her breast and a Samsung mobile phone dangling across it accompanied another photograph of a medium close-up of her face.[96] The clash between old and new in these photos is an aesthetic quality that Bjorn Person, the Swedish photographer, asserts is important to his work. In an interview with *National Geographic*, he explains why he likes a similar photograph of a traditionally dressed Ethiopian woman holding a gun, "What I really like about it is that there are so many conflicting elements. First of all, and most hard to believe, is that it's showing a woman. Then you have the modern weapon clashing with her ancient culture…"[97] The sense of incompatibility between the African woman in his photo and the technology she wields produces for photographers like Person, a shocking clash that ultimately imbues the technology with newness by aligning black female bodies with "ancient culture." Thus, even as articles comment on the modernization of Africans through mobile telephony, the visual images that accompany such claims utilize dramatic juxtapositions between traditional Africa and modern media technology to entrench Africa in a state of eternally becoming modern.

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[94] Linda Poon, "Maasai Warriors: Caught Between Spears and Cellphones," *National Public Radio*, last modified July 10, 2014, http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2014/07/10/330444128/maasai-warriors-caught-between-spears-and-cellphones.

[95] Dave Burke, "When tradition meets the modern world," *Daily Mail*, last modified Sept. 3, 2016, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3772020/When-tradition-meets-modern-world-African-tribeswoman-goatskin-clothes-checks-deals-Namibian-supermarket.html.

[96] Presumably after multiple complaints, the close-up of the woman's breast and all mention of the mobile phone was removed from the article.

[97] "Spotlight: Bjorn Persson," *National Geographic Blog*, last modified May 29, 2014, http://yourshotblog.nationalgeographic.com/post/87205999389/spotlight-bjorn-persson-sweden#notes.

Fig. 3: The description of Sven Torfinn's photograph on several stock-photo websites reveals the artifice of the composition, "20 year old Masai teacher Isaac Mkalia holds a child and uses his mobile phone as he stands next to his pastoralist neighbour's cows."

Nairobi-based Dutch photographer Sven Torfinn has produced a number of popular images of this type. Cropped to bar any reference to contemporary technologies save the phone, his images [fig. 3] recall a long history of conceptualizing notions of media technology as "new" through spectacular visual contrasts. Necessary for the production of "newness" in these images are the various elements of "tradition." Here the child and the cattle become props activated to represent African traditional pastoral life, yet descriptive information on the stock photo website where this image is sold indicates that the man is a teacher; the child and the cattle are borrowed from a neighbor.[98] In Torfinn's photographs, and other popular images that circulate the Internet, contemporary signs of Africa's connections to global capital are removed in favor of a staged pre-industrial, pre-colonial stereotype of Africa as distant, remote, primitive, and natural in order to provide a dramatic backdrop for the spectacular capabilities of the latest communications technologies.

These cell phone images should be unremarkable. The narrative they tell is familiar. They share an organizing logic with Nanook's notoriously staged "first encounter" with a gramophone in Robert Flaherty's canonical 1922 documentary *Nanook of the North.* To make the film, Flaherty painstakingly worked with a group of Inuit in Northern Quebec to re-enact the way they lived, hunted, and traveled before widespread contact with European and American traders and tourists. When Nanook is introduced to a gramophone by a French trader, he responds with surprise and delight upon being presented with the "magical" ability of the phonograph to "can the white man's voice." The French trader, in an attempt to explain the machine, hands Nanook the disc that stores the recorded sounds. In response, Nanook bites the record several times attempting, like an infant, to taste a world beyond his intellectual comprehension.

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[98] Both stockphoto websites misspell Maasai. *Panos Pictures* and *Hollandse Hoogte*, "Image reference: STO05289KEN," *Panos Pictures*, accessed February 19, 2017, http://www.panos.co.uk/preview/00149136.html?p=13 and "Beeldnummer 47973792," *Hollanse Hoogte*, accessed February 19, 2017, http://www.hollandse-hoogte.nl/search.pp?showpicture=47973792&page=1&pos=30.

Unlike the character Nanook, in Robert Flaherty's writing about his Northern travels and the making of *Nanook* he details the proficiency with which the Inuit could operate the gramophone. He even recounted instances of Inuit ownership of the new technology, albeit he did so while emphasizing their outdated models.[99] Palliack, the captain of the *Walrus* a thirty-foot schooner associated with one of Flaherty's early expeditions, was described as playing a "hornless and battered" gramophone.[100] On July 3, 1912, Flaherty notes in his diary, "Palliack's gramophone on the rocks playing to an interested audience. The affair is as ancient and out of date as a street car horse, but withal (under the circumstances) more than tolerable. Though they don't understand the dialogue records, seem fond of them extremely."[101] Even when recounting his "Eskimo friends" familiarity with gramophone technology, Flaherty emphasized their misunderstanding of the content and the technological lag that plagued their "ancient and out of date" gramophone concerts. And yet, on at least one occasion, the gramophone of another Inuit acquaintance, Shenowgook, was suitable enough for Flaherty to borrow for personal needs.[102]

In her pivotal work *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (1996), Fatimah Tobing Rony points out that Nanook's apparent technological naïveté in the film reassures, "the viewer of the contrast between Primitive and the Modern."[103] As Rony argues, Nanook's performed ignorance of the phonograph obscured the pervasiveness of the technology in Inuit life, particularly of those Inuit who had active technical roles in making the film, and thus added to the "authenticity of the image" for European and American audiences.[104] As in the mobile phone images that open this chapter, Inuit and the Maasai are each constructed as the primitive Other through a narrative of visual contrasts; the new media technology in each (the gramophone and the mobile phone) are erected as symbols of the modern West.

While this type of technological first contact appears to begin with the gramophone scene in *Nanook of the North*, as Jennifer Lynn Peterson points out, "what is presented as the height of novelty" in *Nanook* was "actually already a travelogue convention."[105] At the turn of the twentieth century, anthropologists, colonial bureaucrats, and adventurers would commonly stage similar scenes of first, or initial contacts between indigenous peoples and technology— frequently it was the gramophone or the phonograph that was their technology of choice.[106]

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[99] Robert Flaherty, *My Eskimo Friends: Nanook of the North* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1924), 58, 74, and 138.

[100] Robert Christopher, *Robert and Frances Flaherty: A Documentary Life, 1883–1922* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 108.

[101] Robert Christopher, *Robert and Frances Flaherty: A Documentary Life, 1883–1922* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 110.

[102] Robert Christopher, *Robert and Frances Flaherty: A Documentary Life, 1883–1922* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 104.

[103] Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 112.

[104] Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 112–113.

[105] Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 51.

[106] The distinction between ethnography conducted by academically sanctioned institutions and amateur adventurers was less distinct than anthropologists would have liked and the "trope of discovery and 'first contact' has proven to be incredibly resilient," as shown in Joshua A. Bell, Alison K. Brown, and Robert J. Gordon's collected volume, *Recreating First Contact: Expeditions, Anthropology, and Popular Culture* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2013). Anthropology and amateur exhibitions, "arose from the same social formations, which were predicated on obtaining knowledge through travel, and are variant forms of expansionism occupying the space opened up through colonialism" (see page 3 of *Recreating First Contact*).

In this chapter a return to Thomas A. Edison and Emile Berliner's nineteenth-century inventions, the phonograph and the gramophone respectively, and the racial anecdotes that surrounded them as they circulated the globe, open up fresh understandings on contemporary images such as those of Africans and mobile phones still in use. Because of the overwhelming amount of these images circulating in the twentieth-century, I will focus this chapter on unpacking the possible origins of the iconic initial contact scene in Martin Johnson's African travelogue, *Congorilla* (1932) and the subsequent appropriation of the trope by African studio photographers in the mid-twentieth century. Representations in the popular press of the gramophone's arrival in Africa at the turn of the twentieth century foregrounded Africans' belief in the magic of the technology and thus for colonial authorities and explorers its usefulness as tool to pacify Africans. Through these uses the gramophone became a symbol of white supremacy. But by focusing on the colonial origins and the African resignification of the initial contact image, this chapter lays out the cyclical history of racism and uplift which has constituted the dialectical character of the new media fetish for the past one hundred years. If the colonial era initial contact image projected Africa into the primitive past by accentuating racial difference, the performative post-colonial African portrait repeated the trope with a contextual difference to visualize technological likeness and rework the social relations the new media fetish mediated.

By looking at the recurrent use of the contact trope, we see that not only do these images repeat over time, but their repetition was often sponsored by the media companies who made the machines.[107] As if a needle stuck on the same track of a phonograph record, the producers who record cross-cultural initial contacts moved across geography in well-worn paths, compelled to repeat the routes, ideologies, and narratives of their idols. These mechanically reproduced images are the result of a tendency to find authenticity in repetition. If *Nanook* is not the beginning of this timeworn exploration narrative, when was the first bite taken? Does it start four years earlier with pictures of Inuit children huddled around a gramophone in the American Museum of Natural History's May 1918 edition of *The American Museum Journal*?[108] Or does it start in 1903 with the tale of a Zambezi steam captain's bedroom boy who supposedly slipped into the Captain's cabin to take a taste of his "gramophone film" in order to access its spirit?[109] Or perhaps, it begins with the supernatural power of "His Master's Voice" on a grieving and trusting dog?

His Master's Voice

In late 1877 Thomas A. Edison had the sonic world at "Hello" with his new audio recording machine.[110] Charles Cros imagined an apparatus similar to Edison's phonograph before 1877, but it was Edison who was first successful at mechanically recording and

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[107] Not unlike the role of Revillon Frères, the French fur company, in sponsoring the making of Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*. [See Arthur Calder-Marshall, *The Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963: 79.]

[108] Edund Otis Hovey, "Child-life among the Smith Sound Eskimos," *The American Museum Journal* 18, no. 5 (1918): 360. The possible impact of this article on Flaherty is convincing since he is known to have had a relationship with the museum during the 1910s and would have had access to *The American Museum Journal*.

[109] "The Week," *The Central African Times* (Blantyre, Malawi) Jan. 24, 1903: 3.

[110] While Edison claimed that "Mary Had a Little Lamb" was his first recording, experimental recordings made earlier included greetings like "Hello."

reproducing sound.[111] A number of talking-machine inventions followed. In 1885, Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, built the graphophone. A slight improvement on the phonograph, the graphophone recorded on wax-coated cardboard cylinder instead of the tinfoil that Edison's phonograph used. The graphophone's recording instrument was stationary while the drum moved laterally beneath the stylus. Two years later, on November 8, 1887, Emile Berliner patented the gramophone, which unlike the graphophone or the phonograph was designed for playback only and recorded sound on disks rather than cylinders.[112] Despite the use of the term gramophone in Europe and the British colonies, when the gramophone caught on in America, Americans continued to use Edison's term "phonograph" for Berliner's invention.[113]

Fig. 4: Francis Barraud's gramophone Nipper painting.

It was on a business trip to London in 1899 when Emile Berliner's agent, William Barry Owen, acquired a painting of a dog listening to recorded sound by artist Francis Barraud. Barraud originally painted his deceased brother Mark Henry's dog around 1893. This was before the gramophone was commercially available, therefore in the original painting the small terrier cocked his head in front of a phonograph. When Owen saw the picture, he commissioned Barraud to repaint the image with a gramophone instead of a phonograph and purchased the rights to the painting.[114] After Owen returned to the United States with the painting, Berliner

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[111] Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 22.

[112] "The Gramophone: Early Sound Recording Devices," *Library of Congress*, accessed August 28, 2018, https://www.loc.gov/collections/emile-berliner/articles-and-essays/gramophone/. Though Jonathan Sterne shows that Berliner was convinced that local gramophone offices could provide recording space for individuals who wanted to make their own recordings for home use. Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 205.

[113] In this chapter I use the technologically specific term "gramophone" since that is what the technology was called in England and in the British colonies. However, when the technology is referred to as a "phonograph" in source materials, I maintain the term they use.

[114] See Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 303. Stern's telling of Nipper's origins mainly comes from the collector Robert Feinstein's account in "His

quickly submitted it for registration as the trademark for his company. On July 10, 1900 the Patent Office granted him the trademark.[115] Soon, the painting of Nipper the dog inquisitively listening to his absent "Master's Voice" became one of the most famous trademarks of all time.

Much has been said about Nipper and his devout attention to "his master's voice."[116] To write about the history of sound recording, one has to engage with his image. Johnathan Sterne has remarked that in the original Francis Barraud painting, Nipper and the phonograph are placed on top of Nipper's dead master's coffin.[117] Along with John Durham Peters and John Morley, Sterne implores that Nipper is part of a plethora of Victorian imagery of loyal dogs mourning their departed masters at time when "the chance to hear 'the voices of the dead' as a figure of the possibilities of sound recording appears with morbid regularity in technical descriptions, advertisements, announcements, circulars, philosophical speculations, and practical descriptions."[118] The phonograph's ability to record the transient human voice for posterity was an important possibility of the new sound technology. In Sterne's consideration of the Nipper image he points out how little emphasis there was on what "the voices of the dead" asserted, for "when we see a dog listening to a gramophone, we understand that the important issue is the sound of the voice, not what was said, since dogs are known for heeding the voices of their masters more often than their words."[119]

Early interest in the phonograph, according to Johnathan Sterne and Theodor Adorno, lay in the possibility of inscribing a voice, not the message. Notably, Sterne argues that like the transformation of dead bodies for the purpose of mourning through the growing professionalization of embalming, the new recording practice recorded and preserved a transformed voice so that it could continue to fulfill social functions. It was the "context of reproducibility itself that mattered" not what was said, nor by whom.[120] If one did listen, Theodor Adorno surmised, they only listened because of the egotistical desire to hear an ideal record of their own voice preserved for posterity as "the master's voice."[121]

Master's Casket: Notes on Some Phonographic Undertakings," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6, no. 7 (July 1980): 1, 3–6.

[115] "The Gramophone: Early Sound Recording Devices," *Library of Congress*, accessed August 28, 2018, https://www.loc.gov/collections/emile-berliner/articles-and-essays/gramophone/.

[116] See Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Theodor Adorno, "The Curves of the Needle" *October* 55 (1990): 48–51; Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993); Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[117] Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 302–303.

[118] Dogs were depicted at empty cradles and at the funerals of their masters as shown in John Morely's *Death, Heaven, and the Victorians*. [See Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 289, 302–3; John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 161; John Morely, *Death, Heaven, and the Victorians* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), 201.]

[119] Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 303.

[120] Individuals rarely recorded meaningful messages for future generations. Instead, they often left plentiful banal platitudes. See Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 309.

[121] Theodor Adorno, "The Curves of the Needle" *October* 55 (1990): 54.

By the 1890s, a little over one decade after Edison's first recording, ethnographers were inscribing the language and songs of American Indians into phonographic recordings. As early as the 1890s ethnographers rushed to capture vanishing languages and songs from the many cultures that seemed endangered for extinction by modernity. By most accounts, the first anthropologist to use the phonograph for ethnographic fieldwork seems to have been Jesse Walker Fewkes in his work among the Passamaquoddy in Maine and the Zuñi Pueblo in Mexico. Jonathan Sterne argues that the ethnographic recordings made Fewkes and other American ethnographers like Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Frances Densmore, were the result of the "preservative ethos" that characterized American phonographic culture at the turn of the twentieth century.[122] While Americans were fascinated by the phonograph's ability to play back voices of the dead, ethnographers were using the phonograph to "preserve the voices of dying *cultures*."[123] Anthropologists saw the indigenous people they studied and recorded as representatives of their past; existing in a different time than their own. Johannes Fabian named this anthropologists' "denial of coevalness."[124] The assumption was that the ancient ways of American Indians were dying through assimilation and genocide and were thus in need of preserving. The language of anthropological mourning that accompanied the recordings of American Indians structured the way the phonograph's functionality was understood. As Sterne writes, "Sound recording came to take on a whole set of temporal and cultural valences specific to a particular time and place—in this case, the ethos of preservation in the late nineteenth century—that would in turn be reattributed to the machine itself."[125] The phonograph's role was to inscribe and capture the disappearing traces of "native" voices.

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[122] Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 324. Densmore's efforts were part of a larger trend in American anthropology in the 1890s to document American Indian cultures that were perceived to be vanishing. Jacob W. Gruber coined the term "salvage ethnography" to critique these methods. See Jacob W. Gruber, "Ethnographic Salvage and the Shaping of Anthropology," *American Anthropologist* 72, no. 6 (1970): 1289–1299.

[123] Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 311.

[124] Fabian defines the "denial of coevalness" specifically as, "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse." [See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object* (New York; Columbia University Press, 1983), 31.]

[125] Jonathan Stern, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 315.

Fig. 5: Mountain Chief, Chief of Montana Blackfeet, with Frances Densmore, Ethnologist, and a Columbia Graphophone. March 1916 outside the Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives.

With the American ethnographer's "ethos of preservation" came the famous image of Frances Densmore at work with her Columbia Graphophone and Mountain Chief, the Chief of the Montana Blackfeet, in front of the Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives [fig. 5]. Appearing frequently in the press, the image became an example of modern technology being used to record a primitive and dying cultural past. It would appear to document ethnographer Densmore recording Mountain Chief singing a song. However, in Joan M. Jensen and Michelle Wick Patterson's deconstruction of the photograph, they point out that the image is of Mountain Chief listening and interpreting a recording, despite many accounts that claimed otherwise at the time. Densmore was quite vexed by the frequent miscaptioning of the image. When the image appeared in the media, Densmore would always correct the false claims that Mountain Chief was being recorded and insist that he was listening. In her scrapbooks she annotated the image, "He is listening, not recording!"[126] The insistence that Mountain Chief was being recorded by Densmore and her graphophone, rather than being acknowledged as a listener and interpreter of a song being played, reveals a national predilection for imagining American Indians as potential audio content and objects of history, not active users of the technology who interpret history. It was understood that their voices were extractable data for the phonograph to record and the ethnographer to process and interpret. It also confirms Jonathan Stern's summation that the primary attribute of the phonograph in the United States was its ability to inscribe and preserve ephemeral voices of the dead and those of dying cultures.

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[126] Joan M. Jensen and Michelle Wick Patterson, *Travels with Frances Densmore: Her Life, Work, and Legacy in Native American Studies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 417–18.
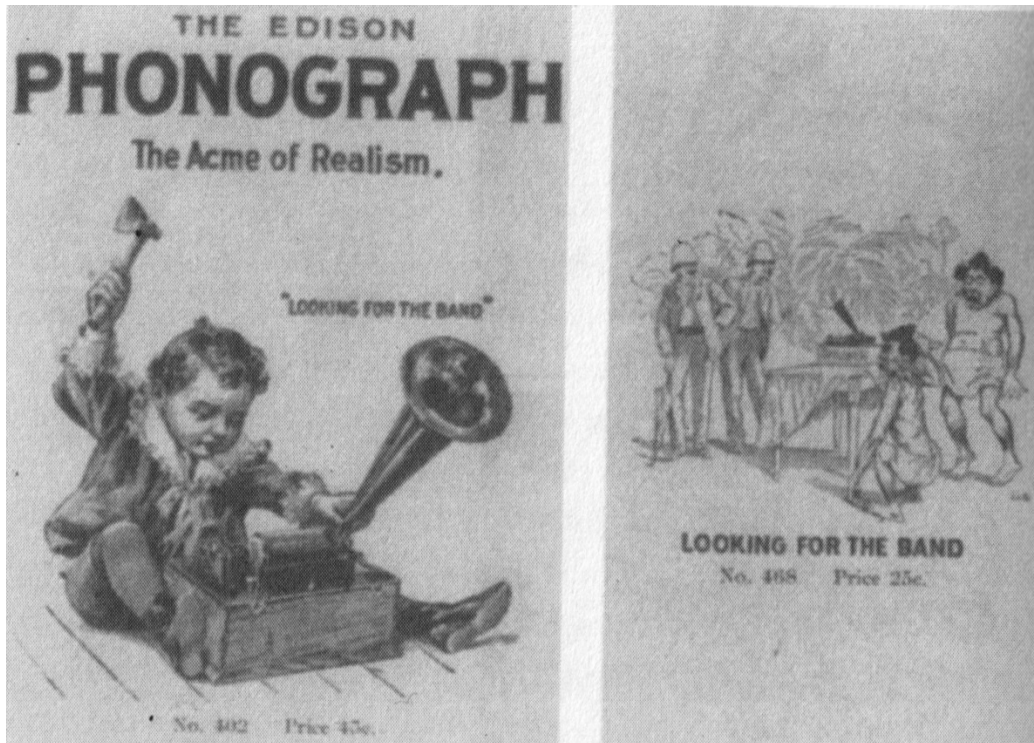
Fig. 6: Electrotypes offered to Edison agents for advertisements (1903).

Yet within the world of twentieth-century corporate sales, encounters between sound recording devices and indigenous people had little to do with the "scientific" work of salvage ethnography. Capitalizing on the success of Nipper, Edison's National Phonograph Company produced a series of "Looking for the Band" advertisements [fig. 6]. This series depicted children and caricatures of "natives" angrily attacking phonographs in search of an audible but absent band.[127] Lisa Gitelman suggests that the Edison and Victor phonograph companies made "mimetic confusion a matter of kitsch in their respective promotional images" providing "comic relief" against the serious work of recording indigenous culture by American ethnographers.[128] But the flyers pushed by Edison's marketeers also constructed "Natives" as dumbfounded listeners, not the type of competent user of the new media technology that the photograph of Mountain Chief's interpretation of the songs played back to him would imply. Generally, contact images of indigenous people and phonographs reduced active users to either living historical data to be fed into the horn (ethnographic recordings) or ignorant "savages" acted upon by mechanical sounds they could not comprehend (corporate advertising).

By emphasizing the technological ignorance of racialized groups, companies were able to insist on the novelty of a technology that was quickly becoming familiar to many American and European consumers. The "native's" failure to understand the recording as a copy, emphasized for the Western consumer the spectacular power of mechanical reproduction which, in turn, ensured the phonograph/gramophone was a desirable commodity. As Michael Taussig explains

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[127] The racial politics of indigenous people looking for an absent band was a distasteful joke that would continue with depictions of the cinema but was reimagined to emphasize the divide between the ignorant and unsophisticated rural "rubes" like Uncle Josh in *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (Edison, 1902) and erudite urbanites.

[128] Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 123.

when the wonder of a new technology wanes and its function becomes routine, the shock lives on in its "mysterious underbelly" to be "eviscerated as 'magic' in frontier rituals of technological supremacy."[129] Performances of [white] technological supremacy, especially with the gramophone, made mimetic faculty—or, the ability to copy—a mystery in the art of mechanical reproduction.[130] Excitement about the magic of the gramophone's ability to reproduce sound was reignited in Africa and repeated in stories across the globe. Copies of the "frontier ritual" instilled the representation of any gramophone with this power.

      When Americans and Europeans traveled to Africa with their phonographs in tow, the inscription and preservation of African voices was occasionally necessary, but it was overwhelmingly the mimetic power that the gramophones exerted that was repeatedly mythologized in newspapers, expedition diaries, photographs, and film travelogues. Unlike in the United States where American Indian cultures were pronounced dead as both the result of and justification for further Western expansion and genocide, visitors to West Africa were frustrated that African cultural practices stubbornly persisted.[131] What might have been a comical joke in the West used to re-mystify a disenchanted technological object in pursuit of profits became an accepted technique to pacify, mollify, control, and dominate black Africans.

White Magic

      An early use of a phonograph to record African language was British administrator Colin Harding's use among the Lozi in 1900.[132] Harding famously used a phonograph to establish indirect rule in North-West Rhodesia (what is now the Zambia). Colin Harding was tasked with getting local chiefs to accept British rule by declaring their allegiance to the Lozi King who had aligned himself with the British government. However, facilitating communication between illiterate chiefs over long distances proved challenging, so Colin Harding decided to try using the newest media technology to solve the problems of communication and distance that were plaguing the solidification of British rule throughout Rhodesia. Using a phonograph he bought in Cape Town, Harding recorded the Lozi King accepting British rule then played his message back for other chiefs. Once each chief had listened to the Lozi King, Harding would record that chief's own message of fealty, thus congealing colonial control over the territory one recording at a time. Here the inscription of African language with the phonograph functioned as a bureaucratic

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[129] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge Press, 1993), 208.

[130] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge Press, 1993), xiii.

[131] On the same page as a *Los Angeles Times* story about encounter between a phonograph and a group of Zulus visiting Earl's Court was a Londoner's account of recalcitrance of Africans to assimilate to white Western culture. He reportedly said that, "while in the United States the negroes have assimilated western ideas and approximate in their modes of life the civilization of the whites, on the African coast, along which Europeans have traded for 400 years and more, since the English first ascended the Gambia, and the Portuguese tried to settle on the Gold Coast, the black man is practically unchanged. The great, black fever belt has proved too strong for our civilization to vanquish and though in the coast towns there are a few educated natives, yet just one mile outside the limits of these settlements the inhabitants are precisely what they were four centuries ago.'" From "Graphic Pen Pictures Sketched Far a-field," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, USA), Oct. 29, 1899: 20.

[132] Silke Strickrodt, "The Phonograph in the Jungle: Magic and Modernity in the African Encounter with the Talking Machine," in *Magical Objects: Things and Beyond*, eds. Elmar Schenkel, Stefan Welz (Madison: Galda and Wilch Verlag, 2007), 114.

memorandum necessary for colonial administration. The preservation of the recording was needed only so long as the chief was still in charge of a given area. Harding's published descriptions of the chiefs' encounters with the phonograph are marked by Harding's fascination with the effect the "magic" of mimesis had on the chiefs. He wrote that Chief Masungundungu responded to "Lewanika's voice in the box," with awe:

> I shall never forget the expression of Masungundungu's face as the phonograph began to reproduce Lewanika's voice and words—the tones he recognized at once; he gazed blankly, wildly, from side to side, looked this way and that, and finally *malgré* rheumatic difficulties rose to his feet and stumbling to the table gazed hard and long down the mouth of the trumpet, with the evident hope of there seeing his master's head. Not finding it he turned away, dazed, and said, "How can it speak? How can it know my language?" then added, with the air of one who has solved all difficulties, "This is witchcraft."[133]

Seven years later, in 1907 the Governor of the East Africa Protectorate, Colonel James Hayes Sadler, set out to tour African provinces actively resisting the colonial government. Throughout the tour, after each official diplomatic meeting was adjourned, Sadler would conclude the proceedings with a gramophone concert. According to the *East African Standard*, the "gramophone concerts had a great effect in promoting a good understanding with these wild and primitive people."[134] Other newspapers reported that Sadler's gramophone could charm Africans "into an appreciation of the white man's supernatural powers."[135] For as much as the news reported that local "natives" were "awestruck and delighted at once" by the "incomprehensible, amazing magic of the white man," the gramophone was instilled with the fetishistic ability to pacify unruly "natives" in the African bush by the white colonial press, not by Africans themselves.[136] This newest media was thus made into a fetish in the sense of the early Portuguese definition, as an object of witchcraft. However, it was the colonialist's belief in African belief in the magical properties the gramophone that made gramophones fetishes.[137]

The use of gramophones and phonographs by the colonial state to control African subjects relied, in part, on the power of, what Brian Larkin calls the "colonial sublime."[138] According to Larkin, dramatic displays of European infrastructural technologies—including communication technologies like the cinema and the radio—were "necessary spectacle[s] of colonial rule" used by colonial administration to provoke in African audiences the sublime feeling of "physical powerlessness … in the face of something overpowering and terrible" and

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[133] Colin Harding, *In Remotest Barotseland* (London: Hurst and Blackett, Limited, 1904), 65 as quoted in Silke Strickrodt, "The Phonograph in the Jungle: Magic and Modernity in the African Encounter with the Talking Machines," in *Magical Objects: Things and Beyond*, eds. Elmar Schenkel and Stefan Welz (Madison: Galda and Wilch Verlag, 2007), 110.

[134] "Governor's Tour in East Africa: Pacification by Gramophone," *The East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), Feb. 23, 1907: 10.

[135] *The Central African Times* (Blantyre, Malawi), April 6, 1907: 8.

[136] Gertrude Page, "The Bone Cave at Broken Hill," *The Rhodesia Herald* (Salisbury, Rhodesia), Oct. 30, 1908: 6.

[137] For Bruno Latour it is a "Modern," who "is someone who believes that other believe." [See Bruno Latour, "Fetish-Factish," *Material Religion* 7, no. 1 (2011): 43.]

[138] The colonial sublime is based on David Nye's concept of the technological sublime which applies Immanuel Kant's idea of the sublime, originally reserved for the natural world, to American technology. See Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 35–47 and David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994).

leading to "feeling[s] of submission and prostration" that delineated and ensconced colonial power.[139] The technological might of the colony would thus reinforce colonial power over the subjugated. The colonial sublime evoked by Harding's and governor Sadler's gramophones were examples of the way media technologies would to be used to justify European superiority.[140] It was the merging of the symbolic power of the colonial sublime and the functionality of the device (to record messages of colonial fealty and entertain chiefs) that made the gramophone such a powerful tool for governance and control throughout the colonial period and across the continent.

However, governor Sadler's gramophone also became a wondrous magical object to the white colonialists as well. In one particularly poetic *East African Standard* article a white settler revered Colonel Sadler's ability to not only pacify Africans but also his skill at wooing Mount Kenya with his gramophone. Personified as a shy mistress whose peak is always in the clouds, the article claimed that Mount Kenya was only visible for tourist eyes when she lowered the cloudy veil that enshroud her to see if her lover, Colonel Sadler was below: "For who could possibly fill the place of the dear gentleman who had so often awakened the echoes of her valleys with the soul stirring and sympathetic strains of his Gramophone."[141] So formidable was Sadler's gramophone that it had the ability to tame and subdue the feminized natural geography of Africa. In the eyes of white settlers, Sadler's gramophone became the symbol of masculine prowess and white supremacy over the mysterious dark continent.

In 1909, when Governor Sadler was preparing to depart from his post in Nairobi, he held a rummage sale to get rid of the things he would not be taking with him. Among the cookware and linens was his renowned gramophone. One local lamented the auction of such a historic media object in *The East African Standard*:

> But you know, darling, the real, real showthing—I might call it practically 'the piece de resistance—was the famous and historical gramophone! There it stood, towering in solitary majesty above till the sordid trash of this earth surrounding it, such as table wines, and cups and bed quilts and things, grew in itself by the dignified look the huge trumpet gave it. Of course, you know, that it is historical, that it was used by our Governor in his diplomacy to soothe the turbulent, excited and warlike native tribes, not only by its magnificent tunes and melodies, but because they thought it a powerful and veritable Ju-Ju. And instead of bidding for it and buying it up at any price for the Museum, they sold it for a paltry 165 rupees. What can the Hon. ……… Have been thinking of! I *know* he was there! Well, well! *Sic Transit Gloria mundi*![142]

Ms. Bridget instills the governor's "famous and historical" sound-reproducing device with an aura-like quality precisely because it is used as a fetish object by the state. It could "soothe the turbulent, excited and warlike native tribes" because "*they* thought it a powerful and veritable Ju-Ju," or fetish [my emphasis]. But Ms. Bridget also attributes the gramophone enigmatic power as it "grew in itself by the dignified look of the huge trumpet" and loomed over Sadler's other paltry household things with "solitary majesty." When Sadler's gramophone made it to the

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[139] Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 36.
[140] See more on the "colonial sublime" in Chapter Two.
[141] Cyclops, "From the Homeland to Mount Kenia," *The East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), Aug. 28, 1909: 7.
[142] Bridget, "Bridget and Sea Supremacy," *The East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), April 10, 1909: 17.

bargain bin it became a commodity fetish in the literal sense. The labor that made the gramophone desirable beyond its use value was its ability to conjure the colonial sublime and affirm these settlers' faith in white supremacy. Yet, as Bridget bemoans, when the gramophone is on the auction block, pathetically sitting next to other items, and away from the devout African who supposedly worshiped its grooves, the power (of white supremacy) that it evoked faded into silence.

  "Pacification by Gramophone" as one headline put it, was common across the continent.[143] As reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, a "short, quiet, unobtrusive Yorkshireman named John Boyes" who was unschooled and from a working-class background purportedly ruled an East African "Savage Kingdom with a Phonograph" from 1898 to 1901.[144] The article quotes from Boyes' published autobiography which exudes hyperbole: "I had a gramophone, which was supposed to be some awful invention of the white man by which some man or spirit was in a box and compelled to do its master's bidding."[145] Again and again, the popular press granted gramophones the ability to endow white male power. The American adventurist, Mr. W.D. Boyce reportedly brought a cinematograph and gramophone with him to "amuse the army of native porters" accompanying their photographic safari "from getting discontented."[146] When Major Powell-Cotton spent twenty months in East Africa, he "Mollified Hostile Natives by Giving a Phonograph Concert."[147] At one point during his expedition he happened upon over 300 fully armed Africans without an interpreter. After turning on his phonograph the Africans began to dance, and all were apparently appeased.[148]

  The pacifying effect that gramophones seemed to have on Africans convinced white colonialists of the magnificence of their own civilization and its technology. This was not an instance of re-ignited interest in the spectacular qualities of recording technology through the wonder of indigenous people as Gitelman argues about the use of "initial contacts" in gramophone advertisements in the United States.[149] In British East Africa, gramophones allowed white settlers to imagine mastery over a technology many of them had yet to use, let alone own. Six years after Colonel Sadler's gramophone concerts for unruly Africans, Mr. W.L. Morris hosted "An evening with the Gramophone" at the Nairobi YMCA. Mr. Morris reportedly, "delighted his audience with a running comment upon the rise of the gramophone and its slow but sure introduction into the musical world, where it now held a high place in the estimation of all…"[150] Like performances for "natives," demonstrations like these publicized the spectacular qualities of the machine for white audiences who were equally delighted by a night of mechanical entertainment.

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[143] "Governor's Tour in East Africa: Pacification by Gramophone," *The East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), Feb. 23, 1907: 10.

[144] "Ruled a Savage Kingdom With a Phonograph," *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, USA) January 21, 1912: 2.

[145] "Ruled a Savage Kingdom With a Phonograph," *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, USA) January 21, 1912: 2.

[146] "The Balloon Party: Le Lion Che Lui," *The East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), September 11, 1909: 16.

[147] "Daring Explorations," *The Washington Post* (Washington DC, USA), Oct. 18, 1903: E4.

[148] "Daring Explorations," *The Washington Post* (Washington DC, USA), Oct. 18, 1903: E4.

[149] Lisa Gitelman, "Unexpected Pleasures: Phonographs and Cultural Identities in America, 1895–1915," in *Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power*, eds. Ron Eglash, Jennifer L. Croissant, Giovanna Di Chiro, Rayvon Fouché (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

[150] "Gramophone," *The East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), Oct. 11, 1913: 33.

Drawing on the writings of Colin Harding, Silke Strickrodt ascribes the magical quality of the phonograph to its ability to manipulate perceptions of time and space.[151] Strickrodt writes, "The quest for immortality, the desire to see things that happen in distant places or in the future, or to achieve things in an impossibly brief period of time, or to travel great distances in no time at all—all these are powerful examples in which the constraints of time and space are overcome by means of magic."[152] Like the phonograph, other nineteenth-century technologies "magically" changed human perception of reality by shifting their relationship to time and space. Most notably theorized by Wolfgang Shivelbush's look at 1800s train travel, the "panoramic view" that the train afforded, shifted riders' relationships to space, making distant lands more convenient to visit and shrinking the time it took to reach them. The mass transportation of goods also meant that the train facilitated the abstraction of products from their places of production.

In many ways the magic of the gramophone was the "magic of modernity" which changed the way both Africans and Europeans perceived the world. "The only difference," according to Silke Strickrodt, was "that it had already changed Harding's world, while it had only just arrived in that of the Lozi."[153] The "magic of modernity," according to Strickrodt, had already sprinkled its reality shifting dust upon Euro-Americans, it was only a matter of time before it fully enchanted black Africans. However, as the evidence in sub-Saharan Africa shows, the "white magic" that emanated from the gramophone originated in the persistent representation of indigenous people as inept users of the new media technology in the popular press. As a new media fetish, Sadler's gramophone and other depictions of the pacifying effect of gramophones on Africans made racial difference material. Phonographs and gramophones were magical in Africa not because they shifted perceptions of space and time, but because they placed Africans in the past indefinitely, making tangible white settlers' belief in racial superiority.

The Londons and the Martins

In addition to many accounts of African initial contacts with gramophones in the news, it also became a popular travelogue film subject from the early 1900s into the 1930s. Rudolf Poch filmed an African "Bushman" speaking into a phonograph in 1908 and a phonograph appears in the 1912 nonfiction film, *German East Africa: A Big Public School in the Usambara Province* to demarcate "the colonizer as the civilized among the 'uncivilized children'" at the school [fig. 7].[154] By the 1920s, American jazz became part of the African gramophone trope. The 1925 Denver African Expedition filmed a scene in which "Bushmen" listen to Al Jolson sing "Coal Black Mammy" as the "Stone Age Flappers" try "to interpret the rhythm of modern jazz" [fig. 8] and between 1928–29 Paul Hoefler repeats the initial contact scene complete with references to

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[151] Silke Strickrodt, "The Phonograph in the Jungle: Magic and Modernity in the African Encounter with the Talking Machines," in *Magical Objects: Things and Beyond*, eds. Elmar Schenkel and Stefan Welz (Madison: Galda and Wilch Verlag, 2007), 112.

[152] Silke Strickrodt, "The Phonograph in the Jungle: Magic and Modernity in the African Encounter with the Talking Machines," in *Magical Objects: Things and Beyond*, eds. Elmar Schenkel and Stefan Welz (Madison: Galda and Wilch Verlag, 2007), 121.

[153] Silke Strickrodt, "The Phonograph in the Jungle: Magic and Modernity in the African Encounter with the Talking Machines," in *Magical Objects: Things and Beyond*, eds. Elmar Schenkel and Stefan Welz (Madison: Galda and Wilch Verlag, 2007), 123.

[154] Wolfgang Fuhrmann, *Imperial Projections: Screening the German Colonies* (NewYork: Berghahn Books, 2015), 212–213.

American jazz but this time with the Maasai.[155] The gramophone scene had become such a regular component in the African lecture films of the early twentieth century that one New York film critic claimed that, "to show a film of Africa the following ingredients must be incorporated: A shot of natives listening to a phonograph…scenes of tribal dances with subtitles comparing them to the Black Bottom and Charleston…a view of several dead lions, tigers, or cheetahs with a subtitle forecasting how natural they will look when stuffed and shown in a museum."[156]
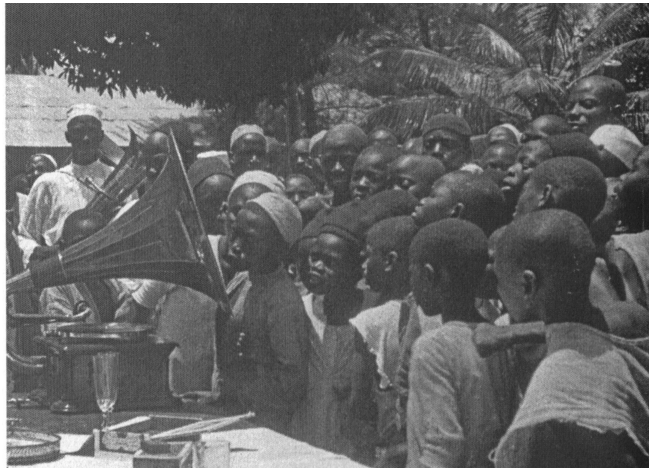
Fig. 7: From *German East Africa: A Big Public School in the Usambara Province* (1912)

Fig. 8: Denver African Expedition (1925)

However, the most referenced cinematic example of an "initial contact" in an African context is the gramophone scene in Martin and Osa Johnsons' African travelogue, *Congorilla*.[157] Martin and Osa Johnson made a number of travel films together, many in Africa. Not only is the scene mentioned with frequency in today's scholarship, the scene was also a popular highlight with film reviewers at the time of its release.[158] As one *Los Angeles Times* reviewer put it, "the

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[155] The title card also included a note indicating that the reference to Al Jolson's song was not a paid advertisement. Hoefler felt the need to inform the audience that it was not a paid advertisement because product placement was common practice in expedition films at the time as we will see in the context of Martin Johnson's African films. Hoefler recounted their experience hearing Jolson in his journal, "we played the phonograph and soon shadows began to emerge from the gloom, each silently squatting around to hear the magic box. It was interesting to watch their faces, every one a study in expression. A song by Al Jolson brought a hearty laugh as did an old southern melody" [see Robert J. Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen: The Denver African Expedition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), 46]. As Robert J. Gordon notes, "it's safe to accept that it was the Westerners themselves who were more impressed by this technology than the 'primitive' audience" (82). This image continues to be a favorite as evidenced by books like Wolfgang Fuhrmann's *Imperial Projections* whose cover image is of the gramophone scene in *German East Africa: A Big Public School in the Usambara Province*.

[156] "Thrills in Motion Picture: 'The Wild Heart of Africa' Shows Game at Close Range. Other Photoplays." *New York Times*, May 27, 1929. Also quoted in Robert J. Gordon, *Picturing Bushmen: The Denver African Expedition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), 98.

[157] See Paul Young, *The Cinema Dreams Its Rivals: Media Fantasy Films from Radio to the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Glenn Reynolds, *Colonial Cinema in Africa: Origins, Images, Audiences* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2015); Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

[158] See "Recent Visitors to the Local screen: The Martin Johnsons' 'Congorilla' the Result of a Lengthy Trip Into the African Jungles." *The New York Times,* Jul 31, 1932. And L.N. "The Martin Johnsons, With Camera and Gun, in the Jungles of Africa" *The New York Times* July 22, 1932 pg. 18

amusing high spots of the film, are those sequences which depict the pygmies' reaction to a jazz phonograph record."[159] The scene was reportedly "immensely funny, and immensely gratifying to the white man's sense of superiority" which made the Mbuti ethnic group "all the rage" in the United States.[160]

The comedic pleasure white audiences seemed to have derived from the scene emerges from its many contrasts, most noticeably between Osa and the Mbuti men who surround her. Like an American Leni Riefenstahl, both feminine and athletic, Osa's role throughout the Johnson travelogues is as an adventurous sharpshooter who can back up her husband's expeditions with both a gun and an apron. In this scene, beyond the familiar contrast between African primitivity and Western technology are contrasts between black and white, male and female, and small and large bodies. Standing several feet above the men, Osa's presence in the frame upturns usual expectations of Western sexual dimorphism. The blithe joy in which Osa moves centers her as a sexualized object, yet the presumed desire barely contained in the African men who dance with her is made ridiculous by their stature. The oft-depicted threat of black sexual aggression to white female purity is here castrated and made humorous. In other words, the American melodrama *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) is mocked and rewritten as a comedy by Osa's confident place in the center of the frame and the presumed impotence of the Mbuti becomes the joke that thrills audiences eager to celebrate "the white man's sense of superiority."

Not only does Osa dwarf the men, but the formidable playback technology also seems to magically make the Mbuti compliant. Martin Johnsons' paternalistic summary of the Mbuti reactions to the machine—"Most savages are greatly puzzled by a phonograph, but the child-like pygmies accept it without curiosity as just another wonder of the white man"—echoes the pejorative and infantilizing rhetoric in Flaherty's staging of Nanook's first encounter with a gramophone ten years earlier. But Martin Johnson's inspiration for the gramophone scene in *Congorilla* can be traced not to Flaherty's famous scene but to Johnson's experiences as a young man traveling the South Seas as Jack London's cook on the decks of *The Snark*.

In 1907 the American adventure writer Jack London, of *Call of the Wild* fame, decided to retrace the steps of American literary giants Herman Melville and Robert Louis Stevenson in the South Seas. The routes of exploration Jack London repeated in his travels was both a token of admiration to intellectual greats and also an act of validation for his own personage. During the trip he and his second wife Charmian relive Robert Louis Stevenson's adventures by sleeping in his former house and chatting with those who knew him before paying their respects to him at his grave. They make a point to visit Herman Melville's Taipee and, once they are sure that they have stood in the same place he stood and have rehearsed his view, they remarked that the effects of time sorely disappointed them. They lament the contamination of the "noble savage" by the diseases caused by both modernity and European microbes. Even the idea for his sea voyage may have been inspired by another writer. Though in London's narrative the idea for the quest arose from dreams of adventure fueled by conversations between himself and his second wife's uncle, other accounts suggest that he came up with the idea in response to the popular reception of Joshua Slocum's book, *Sailing Alone Around the World* (1900), that documented Slocum's

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[159] Philip K. Scheuer, "'Congorilla' On Screen: Criterion Theater Presents Picture Filmed by Martin Johnsons in Africa; Pygmy Life Revealed" *Los Angeles Times* August 16, 1932. Pg. A7
[160] Philip K. Scheuer, "'Congorilla' On Screen: Criterion Theater Presents Picture Filmed by Martin Johnsons in Africa; Pygmy Life Revealed" *Los Angeles Times* August 16, 1932. Pg. A7

three-year trip around the world from 1895–1898.[161] Literary allusions everywhere peppered his travel writing. Jack London's voyage was attempted (for he never made it out of the South Pacific) on a self-made 45-foot boat lovingly named *Snark*, after the poem by Lewis Carroll.[162] Following the sea passages of those writers before him, London asserts himself as the next installment in the history of great American literature. Even the steed in which they entrusted their lives was also authenticated by canonical literature.

Like many twentieth-century European and American filmmakers, historians, writers, and adventurers who searched for real stories of exotic lands by tracing the images, pages, and footsteps of those before them, Martin Johnson too would pattern his travel stories after what he learned from Jack London. After the voyage, Martin Johnson unabashedly capitalized on his relationship to Jack London's celebrity to lend notoriety and credibility to his travel lectures. For nearly ten years Johnson would recount the voyage he took with Jack London on the lecture circuit until he returned to the South Seas to retrace the trip he took with the Londons to make his first film *Among the Cannibals of the South Seas* (1918). London's name and image became a brand that legitimated Johnson's sometimes tasteless shows.[163] On June 16, 1913, after years of roaming the United States with a travelogue show based on his adventures with Jack London, Johnson's big break came. His exhibition, *Jack London's Adventures in the South Sea Islands*, reportedly featured the first moving-images of Jack London to be screened in a theater was highly successful. However, London's involvement was minimal. He only went as far as reluctantly providing some of his still photographs to Martin after their trip.[164] Aware of their value, Jack London tried to protect his image before signing Martin Johnson onto the crew of the Snark by requesting that Martin Johnson limit the reproduction of his likeness after the trip. However, in the years following their return Johnson continued to push their gentleman's agreement. During the time between the end of the Snark voyage and Jack London's death,

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[161] Pascal James Imperato and Eleanor M. Imperato, *They Married Adventure: The Wandering Lives of Martin and Osa Johnson* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 22.

[162] Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1876).

[163] Along with daytime performances that advertised some educational value, Johnson would also perform "Gentleman Only" shows in the evenings that included pornographic images of women. [see French Polynesia, Fiji, Samoa 1908 JLP 429 Jack London Collection, Huntington Library] Interestingly, on the same role of film that pornographic images of women seductively posed in a private room, either naked or with sheer vails coving parts of their bodies, are images of those same women outside, fully clothed, and smiling next to Charmian London. Whether Charmin London knew about the solicitation of the other photographs of these women at the time is unclear. However, Martin Johnson repeatedly asked for copies of them from both Jack and Charmian in letters following the trip. "I MUST have something to fill out my men only show for I have not enough and it means big money to me to get it in good shape and I want something that I know you put a high value on but I want them bad, in fact if I can't get them it will seriously cripple my new show, you know I can't fake so much in New York for someone is liable to catch me and I have got to have everything strictly South Sea Island. I want you to send me every South Sea negative we made since the Snark was built, also the album of Samoan girls (nude studies), I still have about twelve of the men only film that I got while I was in California." Correspondence, From Martin Elmer Johnson to Charmian Kittredge and Jack London, Dec 7, 1912, JL 8449 Box 226 (23) Jack London Collection, Huntington Library.

[164] Aware of the promoter, Al Woods' exaggerated advertising, Martin Johnson wrote to Jack and Charmian to apologize on behalf of Al Woods and to assure them that if they were unhappy with the wording he would have it changed. Although, Martin Johnson makes clear that his name in the papers gives him "a lot of good advertising, and I am putting up a show that you need not be ashamed of." Correspondence, From Martin Elmer Johnson to Charmian Kittredge and Jack London, June 21, 1913. JL 8451 Box 226 (25) Jack London Collection, Huntington Library.

Johnson asked for more and more of the London's photographs to supplement his travelogue show.

Despite London's insignificant role in the production of Martin Johnson's *Jack London's Adventures in the South Sea Islands*, the press often gave London full attribution. The June 16, 1913 *Evening World* wrote, "Jack London did the verifying last night when his wonderful moving pictures of life in the South Sea Islands…were shown at the Criterion Theatre and explained by Martin Johnson."[165] However, the moving-images that were included in the show were culled from a number of sources, none of which were shot by Martin or London. Two of the films Johnson showed came from Pathé Frères cinematographers he met in Guadalcanal: *Dynamiting Fish in the Solomons* and *Making Missionaries Out of Cannibals*.[166] These films were supplemented by other films that Johnson collected, including another film produced by Pathé Frères cinematographers he met in the South Seas. As Marsha Orgeron explains, Jack London's first role in a movie was one "in which he is neither star, director, nor author."[167] Like the American writers Herman Melville and Robert Louis Stevenson that Jack London mentioned in his account of the Snark adventure, Martin Johnson attached London's celebrity and literary credentials to the Pathé films in order to legitimate his use of the cinematic medium itself.

Jack London also leveraged his celebrity for economic gain during the Snark trip. In preparation for his voyage, Jack London solicited companies for in-kind donations in exchange for publicity in his popular writings. In October 1906, months before Jack London planned departure from Oakland, he wrote to the Victor-Victrola Company to inquire about the possibility of the company donating a "Victor talking-machine" for the entertainment on their trip for himself, his wife, and their crew. As a skilled self-promoter London wrote about the plans of his trip in what was then a literary magazine, *Cosmopolitan*, and had several contracts to provide content from the trip to other magazines and news outlets. In his letter to the Victor company he wrote, "Now, you can readily comprehend, without my elaborating it at all, the countless people (of social and financial standing) who will hear this phonograph on my yacht; and also you will comprehend the immense advertising the phonograph will receive."[168] The Victor Company was amenable to London's suggestion and offered to supply his voyage with model number five, yet in response to London's marketing suggestion the Victor company argued that very shortly London would be in territories outside their market and the word of mouth advertising London offered would be valueless. Instead, Victor wanted product placement in London's magazine articles. In response to Victor, London writes that in his magazine articles for the trip he would,

> …promise to make it a point to work in the use of the "Victor" talking-machine, in a description of its effect on savages, etc., which description would be published with "Victor" referring to the machine in my books; and if the editors were hard-hearted, it would be published in the magazines with the "Victor" eliminated. In this latter case, you

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[165] JLS, Box 517, reel 8, vol. 12. Huntington Archives. As quoted in Marsha Orgeron, "Rethinking Authorship: Jack London and the Motion Picture Industry" *American Literature* 75, no. 1 (2003): 92.

[166] Correspondence: Martin Elmer Johnson to Jack London, March 17, 1910, Independence, Kansas, JL 8474 Box 226 (48) Jack London Collection, Huntington Library.

[167] Marsha Orgeron, "Rethinking Authorship: Jack London and the Motion Picture Industry" *American Literature* 75, no. 1 (2003): 92.

[168] "To the Victor Talking Machine Company, October 11, 1906," *The Letters of Jack London Volume Two: 1906–1912*, eds. Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 617–18.

would have my full permission to use said description any way you pleased for advertising, and of course you could again insert "Victor."[169]

For Victor the desired publicity would come in the form of magazine articles that showed not the rich and famous listening to music on the Victor talking-machine but the impact it would have on "savages, etc." Thus, in 1906 a major media company is already scripting Nanook's famous performance to sell its product. Victor's request for London's use the initial contact trope in his writing as payment for their donation of a gramophone shows how the racial difference produced by the new media fetish was profitable.

 Across the pond, the British Gramophone Company was also skillfully using product placement to capitalize on the popularity of the first contact trope and its cuter sanitized cousin, Nipper. Like the many media scholars who return to Nipper's gramophone encounter to revisit its layered and manifold implications, early twentieth-century Euro-American explorers also turned to his image to reenact the Nipper scene with gramophones and their expedition dogs. At the beginning of Captain Robert Scott's ill-fated *Terra Nova* Antarctica expedition (1910–13), Herbert Ponting reenacted the Nipper trademark with a photographic portrait of the expedition dog, Chris, listening to a gramophone [fig. 10]. Images like these may seem to be playful remakes by bored explorers (and perhaps they are to some extent), but the Scott Expedition was well supplied by many sponsors: Huntley & Palmers biscuit company, Heinz, and the JS Fry & Sons donated large quantities of hot chocolate. Product placement in expedition publicity photographs was not uncommon [fig. 9].

Fig. 9: Heinz Baked Beans advertisement. The Herbert G. Pointing collection in The Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge.

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[169] Letter from Jack London to Louis F. Geissler on October 21, 1906 (letter in the Henry E. Huntington Library) but quoted from *The Letters of Jack London Volume Two: 1906–1912*, eds. Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz, III, and I. Milo Shepard (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 618.

In addition to provisions, the Gramophone Company donated two gramophones and a couple hundred records to the *Terra Nova* Antarctica expedition.[170] Tellingly, in a letter to The Gramophone Company, second in command Edward R.G.R. Evans thanked The Gramophone Company for their donations.[171] The letter was subsequently published along with the Nipper-like photograph of their Siberian sledging dog listening to the gramophone as advertisements. The Gramophone Company may not have particularly requested the image, but the company advertised in bold that "his master's voice" had reached the world's end.[172] The repetition of the familiar trademark at the end of the world spectacularly emphasized the familiar companies reach beyond the boundaries of the known.

Fig. 10: Chris, the dog, from the Terra Nova expedition.

Fig. 11: "His Master's Voice" C.T. Lawrence reenacts Nipper in Nigeria. The National Archives, CO 1069/66/104

In the tropics, thousands of miles from the South Pole, C.T. Lawrence, the British Lieutenant, and later Secretary of the Southern providences of Nigeria, also staged his own Nipper scene [fig. 11]. In a scrapbook documenting his time in Nigeria, the company slogan is carefully written underneath the photograph of a dog on a table facing a gramophone horn. It is unclear if Lawrence's reenactment of Nipper was economically motivated. Staged in front of a grass-thatched hut, with Lawrence standing behind in his pith helmet "his master's voice" readily slips between the voice of the dog's master to the voice of the "colonial master."

In the far-off places of Antarctica and Africa the Victorian occupation with the "voices of the dead" disappears with the coffin in Barraud's painting. When Nipper listens to "his master's voice" on foreign soil the racial underpinnings of empire come to the fore. According to Lisa Gitelman, Nipper is one of several trademarks that "tone down and make 'cute' and commercial the exclusionary trope by substituting children and pets for the aliens who were elsewhere

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[170] Robert Falcon Scott, *Journals: Captain Scott's Last Expedition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 480. "The Scott Gramophone" remains in working order in the EMI Trust museum.
[171] Carolyn Philpott, "The Sounds of Silence: Music in the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration," *The Polar Journal* 3, no. 2 (2013): 452.
[172] Locantro, *Scott's Music Box: Music from Terra Nova — The British Antarctic Expedition (1910–1913)*, London: EMI, 2012: 2.

fixtures of distancing between classes and races."[173] Fredrick Kittler's reading of Nipper—"the dog that started sniffing at the bell-mouth of the phonograph upon hearing its dead master's voice"—illuminates how similar he is to Nanook; both use the wrong sense to understand sound. Instead of "looking for the band," Nanook attempts to taste the source, while Nipper tries to smell it.[174] For Gitelman the race and class politics that are "intimated" by Nipper represent the "matters of identity and cultural hierarchy" that "lay buried at different depths in the emergent culture of recorded sound in America."[175] But the sound of "his master's voice" at the edge of the world and the far ends of empire align recorded sound more explicitly with the expression of Western scientific imperialism. In the Antarctic and in the British colonies, the pleasure of knowing that "his master's voice" can speak across time, is doubled by seeing the "master's voice" speak across the globe; a symbol—like that of the never-setting sun—of the global reach of the British empire.

Accompanying the Nigerian reenactment of Nipper in C.T. Lawrence's scrapbooks are several photographs of Nigerians listening to gramophones. Unlike other images that feature the juxtaposition of indigenous people with gramophones within the frame, these photographs depict African listening without visually representing the apparatus. Smiling and expectant Nigerian faces look forward toward the gramophone that projects sound from somewhere behind the camera [fig. 12]. Remarkably it is the point of view of the gramophone, corresponding with his own point of view, that C.T. Lawrence privileges in his documentation. Extending his gaze with the sound waves of the gramophone further aligns the technology with the colonial state and the colonial "master's voice" it projects.

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[173] Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 123.
[174] Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 69.
[175] Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 123-24.

Fig. 12: "Listening to the Gramophone. River Benue." The National Archives, CO 1069/66/89.

In 1925 C.T. Lawrence would again photograph Nigerians amusedly listening to a gramophone, but this time at the 1924–25 British Empire Exhibition in the north London suburb of Wembley. The West African pavilion of the British Empire Exhibition, which included exhibits from Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast (Ghana), and Nigeria, emphasized trade and African arts and crafts. Around sixty West Africans peopled a "native village" and "native workshop" in the West African "Walled City."[176] At the workshop, visitors were able to watch Ashanti weavers, Hausa embroiderers, woodcarvers, potters, and ironworkers demonstrate their skilled craftwork.[177] The village offered views of West African leisure, and it was there that C.T. Lawrence took several photographs of Nigerians listening to a gramophone. One photograph that was included in Lawrence's scrapbooks shows a gramophone perched on a wooden box with ten Nigerians sitting in a semi-circle around it. One Nigerian in uniform stands to the side smiling as he listens. Below the gramophone, in the open space of the semi-circle, is a small sign that announces that the gramophone was donated to the living display by The Gramophone Company. It also indicates where exhibition visitors should go if they are interested in purchasing their own gramophone [fig. 13].

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[176] Daniel Stephen, "'The White Man's Grave': British West Africa and the British Empire Exhibition of 1924-1925" *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 1 (2009): 104.

[177] The press impressed upon readers that these craftsmen who employed primitive tools and used unchanging methods offered a window into the aesthetics of past. [See Jonathan Woodham, "Images of Africa and Design at the British Empire Exhibitions between the Wars" *Journal of Design History* 2, no. 1 (1989): 15–33.]

Fig. 13: The small placard in front of the gramophone reads: "BY COURTESY of The Gramophone Company, LTD. For Further Particulars Apply Stand V.901 Palace of Industry" The National Archives, CO 1069/73/32.

Having been placed in charge of organizing the Nigerian exhibits in the West African pavilion by the colonial government of Nigeria, C.T. Lawrence must have had some hand in orchestrating the demonstration. With the British Empire Exhibition gramophone performance, Lawrence restaged the concert performances he gave along the banks of the Benue River for British exhibition visitors, but neither was an original. Both replayed a strategy of colonial governance and domination and a corporate advertising campaign begun over a decade before. C.T. Lawrence's scrapbooks recorded the new experiences he had during his colonial escapades in Nigeria, but when he played a gramophone for Nigerians at the British Empire Exhibition, that act had already been scripted.

The compulsion to repeat tales of adventure and routes of travel is critiqued by mid-twentieth century anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques* (1955). Fatimah Tobing Rony writes, "[Lévi-Strauss] muses that explorers, anthropologists, and tourists voyage to foreign places in search of the novel, the undiscovered. What they find, he tells us, apart from their own trash thrown back in their faces, is what they already knew they would find, images predigested by certain 'platitudes and commonplaces.'"[178] In literature, history, and non-fiction filmmaking, what is true is constructed by recognizable narratives that correlate to the lived experiences of the readers and viewers. Fittingly, Rony points out that Lévi-Strauss's voyage to

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[178] Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 5l; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 17–18.

Brazil was motivated by the desire to repeat; specifically, to "reenact the 1560 meeting between the Tupi and Montaigne."[179] Literature, anthropology, and visual culture continue to circle in the same monotonous grooves. The contradiction, as Rony illuminates, is that "the exotic is always already known" and codified.[180]

As Hayden White has explained, the familiarity of certain historical narratives dictates the acceptable ways in which historical facts can be told.[181] Often, to the point that once the historical narrative takes hold, the facts within it are repeated without investigation. Timothy Mitchell has shown that certain histories of the Egyptian peasant were repeated by armchair historians, establishing a recognizable truth about Egyptians that was only loosely based on fact and often based on colonial fantasy.[182] He calls this genre of writing descriptive realism. For his example, Mitchell carefully reads Richard Critchfield's book, *Shahhat: An Egyptian*, to reveal that his peasant is nothing more than, "something constructed out of earlier representations, as a collage of familiar Orientalist images juxtaposed with clippings taken—in fact plagiarized— from earlier writings."[183] The ventriloquizing of knowledge that Mitchell uncovers in Critchfield's book, offers a detailed account of the ideological functioning of Edward Said's orientalism. The representation of the Other from Western knowledge that was collected through institutions of colonial domination reinforced and offered justification for colonial rule. Like the vision of the Orient as it appears in the sort of consensus that Edward Said called Orientalism— "a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire"—primitive responses to media encounters seemed correct.[184] The initial contact trope of the native's encounter with a gramophone drew credibility from its repetition.

Nevertheless, in Jack London's nonfiction book, *The Cruise of the Snark*, he never mentions the Victor talking-machine and its "effect on the savages, etc." His wife Charmian and Martin Johnson, however, do extensively.[185] A photograph documenting Marquesans dancing to the gramophone was published in Charmain Kittredge London's book, *The Log of the Snark* (1916). Charmian Kittredge London, Jack London's log keeper, secretary, editor, and wife, describes the effects of the acoustic encounter between Polynesians and Victor in detail. "They turned out in force" even crowding "on the porch where Jack was working the Victor" to listen.[186] Surprisingly Charmian Kittredge London claims the women were only mildly amused with the "man in the box" because they started chatting loudly throughout the audio performances. But with a poetic flourish Charmain Kittredge London includes a familiar

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[179] Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 6; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 335.

[180] Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 6.

[181] Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. by Geoffrey Roberts (London: Routledge Press, 2001), 225.

[182] Timothy Mitchell, "The Invention and Reinvention of the Peasant," in *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 123–152.

[183] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 123–124.

[184] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 202–3.

[185] "These is a room in the house for the Victor and all its records, and word of the talking machine has already gone forth so that there are many peepers through our vine-clad fence" (See Charmian Kittredge London, *The Log of the Snark* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916), 110).

[186] Charmian Kittredge London, *The Log of the Snark* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916), 116.

description of "an old tattooed savage" who "squatting on the floor" stares "dumbly agog at the talking-machine…in front of him, chin in hands, sits a degenerate of French Marquesan stock, with a fine and delicate face marred by a look of concentrated foolishness in the great brown eyes."[187]

Marquesans Dancing a Tahitian *hula* to Hawaiian music on an American phonograph

Fig. 14: From Charmain Kittredge London's *The Log of the Snark* (1916).

Notwithstanding the description of the gramophone party, the photograph published in *The Log* remains without contextualization in her text besides a small caption that reads, "Marquesans Dancing a Tahitian hula to Hawaiian music on an American phonograph" [fig. 14]. The large crowds described in Martin Johnson and Charmain Kittredge London's accounts are absent from the photo. The London image contradicts the myth of ineptitude that Nanook's bite would come to signify. The Marquesans dancing to the gramophone displayed technological competency that racialized images of "initial contacts" were often denied as seen in Nanook and Edison advertisements "looking for the band." The American gramophone's origin is juxtaposed with the three other locations—the Marquesan islands, Tahiti, and Hawaii—indicating a fascination with the trans-regional reach the American technology allows. Here, as with Martin's gramophone among the Mbuti, the recording technology grants communication between and across regions becoming a means for Polynesian cultural exchange.

Though Martin Johnson never mentions "Victor" by name, he discusses the "effect" the phonograph had on the Polynesians they encountered.

But the great attraction for the natives was our gramophone. When evening fell, they came about us in swarms to hear the playing, and they could never get over the belief that we had a little dwarf caged in the "talk-box." At times, there would be as many as two hundred brown people squatting on the grass, and they would never leave until we

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[187] Charmian Kittredge London, *The Log of the Snark* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916), 117.

stopped the gramophone. In the Hawaiian Islands, we had secured records of hula-hula music, which so delighted the Marquesans that sometimes we would have half a hundred dancing in front of the machine.[188]

In his account the Marquesans paradoxically do not comprehend the technology but also, recognize and demonstrate full knowledge of its use by dancing the hula to the music it produced. Paragraphs later, in an attempt to explain away any implied contradictions, Johnson recounts that the Marquesan danced as an animistic reflex not a rational or understandable response to mechanically played music, "A native Polynesian can no more keep from dancing when he hears music than a duck can keep away from water."[189]

White Voices

Nineteen years after Martin Johnson publishes his description of the Marquesans' encounter with a gramophone, the political and cultural impotency of the Mbutis are amplified in his *Congorilla* scene by the contrast between a traditional African drum and a modern gramophone. The gramophone, which sits atop the drum, announces its triumph over the music, communication, and African cultural expression the African drum symbolizes.[190] Paul Young points out that when Martin Johnson claims that the American Jazz emanating from the gramophone is "our modern music," the playback of African American popular music is appropriated as white-American.

It was not uncommon that the gramophone disrupted the visuality of musical performance making recorded voices racially ambiguous. In the United States, "the technology of recorded sound tempered," what Lisa Gitelman has called, "the visuality of music, the sum of visual experience that bolster and accompany musical practice and that extend to the societal norms of visually apprehending racial and other differences" allowing for different kinds of cultural appropriations and ethnic identities to develop.[191] Gitelman argues that the United States recording industry organized and sold different kinds of ethnic music by morselizing ethnic identity into consumable packages in the early twentieth century at the same time that records disrupted categories through their "displacement of visible difference as the root of cultural identity."[192] Because listeners could no longer tell what performers looked like, they "were forced to wonder whether they were being fooled at the same time that they encountered and calibrated sound as a lone marker of cultural identity."[193] Rooted in the visual performance of

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[188] Martin Johnson, *Through the South Seas with Jack London* (London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd, 1913), 171.

[189] Martin Johnson, *Through the South Seas with Jack London* (London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd, 1913), 172.

[190] The talking drum creates sounds that mimic language and can be used as a form of communication. It was an important media technology for spreading information from village to village before print and broadcast. Its importance as a cultural origin of African media appears again and again to legitimate new forms of communication. For instance, the popular South African magazine from the mid-twentieth century was named *Drum*.

[191] Lisa Gitelman, "Reading Music, Reading Records, Reading Race: Musical Copyright and the U.S. Copyright Act of 1909," *The Musical Quarterly* 81, no. 2, 1997: 270.

[192] Lisa Gitelman, "Unexpected Pleasures: Phonographs and Cultural Identities in America, 1895–1915," in *Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power*, eds. Ron Eglash, Jennifer L. Croissant, Giovanna Di Chiro, Rayvon Fouché (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 336.

[193] Lisa Gitelman, "Unexpected Pleasures: Phonographs and Cultural Identities in America, 1895–1915," in *Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power*, eds. Ron Eglash, Jennifer L. Croissant, Giovanna Di Chiro, Rayvon Fouché (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 336.

blackface, recorded minstrel music suddenly separated the voice of performers from their bodies and as Gitelman writes, "amid a national culture in some sense obsessed by complexion and physiognomy as possible markers of bloodlines and character, recorded music offered blackface with no face, cultural difference gone blind."[194] Recorded sound, without the visual presence of the performer, became racially fluid.

Early sound films like *Congorilla* returned the black body to its voice as part of a larger trend in which black performers sold sound film technology. The "fetishization of the 'black voice,'" Alice Maurice claims, "reveals the way in which discourses of race and sound were intertwined during the transition to the talkie."[195] But Maurice points out that racialized bodies were used to spectacularize early silent films with racial gags like those in *A Morning Bath* (James H. White, 1896) and *What Happened in the Tunnel* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903) and blackface and African American performers offered a return to the visual familiarity those films offered during the technological transition to sound. The visual spectacle of race normalized the novelty of sound and deflected "audience attention away from the limitations of early sound technology."[196] Maurice argues that "African American performers 'cured' the ills of the sound cinema in many critics' eyes because the fetishization of racial characteristics made up for what the new technology lacked."[197] The precision of Stepin Fetchit's physical performances, critics surmised, commanded audiences to forget the illusion of cinema.

In a genre full of spectacle, Martin Johnson used the new sound technology to different his film from other gun and safari pictures. Unlike the use of African American performers in early sound pictures to help audiences forget the sound and delve into the narrative, the sound of black voices were used to legitimate Martin Johnson's authority and lend educational credibility to his film. Martin Johnson's voiceover dominates the visual and speaks for the Mbuti. It is, after all, Martin Johnson who tells audiences that the jazz music coming from the gramophone is "our modern music."

As such, jazz repeatedly returns to the African continent through the white explorer and his gramophone as a valorization of Westernization. The jazz voice offered up to Africans by the West's talking-box were not the dead voices from the past, but voices from the future. For *Congorilla* audiences, the sound that rings out from the machine, after it has gone through the recording and playback process, is the voice of Africa transformed by the progress of Western modernity. It is fitting that the modern voices that come from the gramophone in the 1920s travelogue are those of white men in blackface (as in the case of Al Jolson): it is the inverse of a particular Western prophecy of African modernity in which Africans act and sound white, but continue to be black.

When Africans cultivated Western cultural taste, Europeans often marked their adoption with wonder and derision. Dinuzulu ka Cetshwayo, the king of the Zulu nation who often wore English clothes and listened to English music, troubled the British military. The same year as Governor Sadler's pacification by gramophone, Dinuzulu ka Cetshwayo was charged with

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[194] Lisa Gitelman, "Unexpected Pleasures: Phonographs and Cultural Identities in America, 1895–1915," in *Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power*, eds. Ron Eglash, Jennifer L. Croissant, Giovanna Di Chiro, Rayvon Fouché (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 336.
[195] Alice Maurice, "'Cinema at Its Source': Synchronizing Race and Sound in the Early Talkies," *Camera Obscura* 49, vol. 17, no. 1 (2002): 31–71.
[196] Alice Maurice, "'Cinema at Its Source': Synchronizing Race and Sound in the Early Talkies," *Camera Obscura* 49, vol. 17, no. 1 (2002): 38.
[197] Alice Maurice, "'Cinema at Its Source': Synchronizing Race and Sound in the Early Talkies," *Camera Obscura* 49, vol. 17, no. 1 (2002): 43.

orchestrating the 1906 Bambatha rebellion against the colonial government and the murder of the magistrate, Mr. Stainsbank. In *The East African Standard*'s report on the government's inquiry into charges against Dinuzulu the author illustrates Dinuzulu's corpulence and vanity by describing his mimicry of European fashion and taste: "He is vain, but Dinizulu restrains his vanity, though it obtrudes itself a bit in the English general's uniform and helmet which he wears on special occasions. He possesses a gramophone, and all the latest records, with which he entertains his guests, and plays and sings on an English organ: His favourite tune is 'Home, Sweet Home.'"[198] The sophistication of the gramophone makes him vain in the eyes of the writer precisely because his mimicry of white European taste suggests that Dinuzulu considers himself as occupying a role greater than that which the British would attribute to Africans.

Unsurprisingly, in African popular culture gramophones also come to signify upper-class Africans who have assimilated aspects of Western culture. The gramophone in Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow's 1988 film *Camp de Thiaroye* is used to counter the racist colonial assumptions held by a French character. After returning from World War II, a troop of African soldiers await discharge orders in an army camp outside of Dakar. The highest-ranking African soldier, Senegalese Sergeant Major Diatta, not only owns a gramophone, but has also married and started a family with a French woman who lives in Paris, has begun taking classes at a French University, and has cultivated tastes in Western literature and music. When Captain Labrousse visits Camp de Thiaroye, he is shocked to hear classical music and asks the other French officers who is listening to such grand music. When told that it is Sergeant Major Diatta, he responds with surprise and a small chuckle. Confronting Sergeant Major Diatta about his musical taste Captain Labrousse pejoratively asks, "Great music speaks to you, no longer the Tom-tom?" Like the jazz that emanates from the gramophone atop the African drum in *Congorilla*, "great" and "modern" recorded sound is juxtaposed with the essentialized sound of Africa—the "Tom-tom." But Diatta's ownership of the gramophone and his taste in classical music asserts his *évolué* status, his participation in global media networks, and his cultivation of a cosmopolitan sensibility that allows for social mobility despite the color of his skin. Captain Labrousse's mild amusement in the scene eventually builds to resentment by the end of the film when his racist characterization of Africans as "little children" is repeatedly challenged by Major Diatta's superior education and proficiency in both French and English. As Fanon writes, "There is nothing more sensational than a black man speaking correctly, for he is appropriating the white world."[199] The gramophone allows Diatta to speak the language of European cultural taste that further demonstrates his appropriation of "the white world."

Diatta's intelligence and inclusion within Western circulations of knowledge threatened the colonial military officers' commitment to white supremacy. As Michael Tausig formulates about the film, "On the one hand, it is pleasing to the officers to see this man becoming like them through a machine whose job it is to reproduce likeness. On the other, it is profoundly disturbing to them because this man is using this machine to manufacture likeness."[200] In the words of Homi Bhabha the officers' wish for colonial mimicry—"the desire for a reformed, recognizable

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[198] "The World's News By Mail: Dinuzulu," *The East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), Feb. 9, 1907: 5. Persistently popular since 1823, "Home, Sweet Home" had a global audience. The tune was composed by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop, but a Japanese version of the song is known as "My humble Cottage." The fact that Dinuzulu was reported to have favored the tune points the ways that gramophones allowed affluent Africans participation in circuits of global mass cultural production.

[199] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 18.

[200] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993), 206.

Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite*"— are threatened by the ambiguity between "mimicry and menace" in Diatta's *évolué* status.[201]

In the early 1900s African intelligentsia were also critical of Africans who copied Western culture and language.[202] The gramophone and phonograph were often elicited as a metaphor for African mimicry of whiteness. In an article appearing in the Cape Coast based *Gold Coast Leader*, a Gold Coaster rants against West Africans automatic mimicry of the "Whiteman."

> What the Whiteman eats, he [the African Gold Coaster] eats; what he drinks and smokes, he drinks and smokes, thereby securing what, in his deluded opinion, is considered the Hall-mark of respectability, civilization and refinement. If his lord and master holds a cigar in a peculiar manner, it is copied, his gait, mode of expression, his expletives, smiles, laughter and other mannerisms and peculiarities are all taken in, wholesale, and reproduced with the fidelity of an Edisonian Phonograph.[203]

The reproduction of the "Whiteman's" cultural and bodily expressions is reproachfully related to the mechanical reproduction of the gramophone. Like the common exclamations of concern over the inferior fidelity in recorded music, the gramophone becomes the means to express the modern African as the shadowy double, or canned voice of white culture.

Similarly, in Kobina Seyki's 1915 satirical play *The Blinkards*, a gramophone emerges as a metaphor for Gold Coast Anglophile, Mrs. Brofusem. Recently returned from England, she is the upmost authority on England. As a result, a local cocoa magnate hires Mrs. Brofusem to teach his obstinate daughter British etiquette. When the young girl refuses to speak anything but Fanti (an Akan based language spoken on the central coast of Ghana), Mrs. Brofusem laughs, tells her to tidy up before lunch, and exits the parlor while singing an English tune in falsetto. To end the act, the young girl queries to herself while following her instructor, "Is she a gramophone? Well, let those who have been to England please themselves: it is not my affair. When they come back, their voices are changed into something very funny. Perhaps it is the cold that does it."[204] Kobina Seyki's jibe at African "been-tos" echoes the sentiment expressed in the *Gold Coast Leader,* a newspaper of which he was a frequent contributor. In both these examples it is the undiscerning adoption of British style and custom, without discriminating taste, that elicits the gramophone metaphor as an inauthentic copy of whiteness.

Kobina Seyki notably disdained the mechanical imitation of European culture yet was well read in English literature. Like many West African elites, he grew up admiring British customs. However, during his studies at the University of London he quickly became disillusioned by his treatment while living abroad.[205] According to J. Ayo Langley's introduction to *The Blinkards*, Seyki's emphatic rejection of European values emerges after experiencing life-threatening racism. On his way back to the Gold Coast from England his ship was torpedoed by a

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[201] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 126.
[202] Fanon explores how the black Antillean assimilation of the French language signified whiteness in *Black Skin, White Masks*. [See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1967).]
[203] "The Whiteman and His West African Understudy," *The Gold Coast Leader* (Cape Coast, Ghana), October 29, 1910: 2.
[204] Kobina Sekyi, *The Blinkards* (London, Heinemann Educational, 1974), 34–35.
[205] From Kobina Sekyi, "Extracts from the Anglo-Fanti' (a psychological study of a type of present-day Gold Coastian who has been educated partly in the English manor)" in Nancy Cunard: Negro (Wishart and Co., London, 1934), 775; published in full in *West Africa*, May-July 1918.

German U-boat and upon managing to climb onto a lifeboat another passenger yelled at him to get off reasoning that a black man had no right to be alive while white men were drowning.[206]

The gramophone, while not a pivotal plot point in Kwaw Ansah's Ghanaian classic, *Heritage Africa* (1988), is given a place of prominence in the first African district commissioner of Accra, Mr. Bosomfield's new house in the European only neighborhood of Accra. In his desire to please the British government, Mr. Bosomfield embraces European culture and abandon's his African heritage. He changes his African name, Kwesi Atta Bosomefie, to the Anglicized "Quincy Arthur Bosomfield" and only serves European foods in his house.[207] As such, Mr. Bosomfield mimics whiteness with the fidelity of mechanical reproduction.

While African ownership of gramophones in African popular culture often signified African mimicry of whiteness, Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow's 1988 film *Camp de Thiaroye* challenged this notion. Sergeant Major Diatta is able to form transatlantic bonds with an African American soldier by way of his gramophone. When an African American soldier from Detroit named Tom comes to Camp de Thiaroye to apologize to Diatta for an earlier altercation they had, Diatta puts on a Charlie Parker record to ameliorate any lingering umbrage between the two of them. By playing back African American music, his gramophone allows the two men to come together over shared artistic and cultural consumption. Sergeant Major Diatta tries to find other common bonds with Tom by mentioning writers like Langston Hughes, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Marcus Garvey, but Tom, coming from a working-class background, only recognizes Marcus Garvey and they briefly discuss his popular back-to-Africa movement. Tsitsi Ella Jaji describes Diatta's playback of Charlie Parker for Tom as an example of African American music activating pan-African solidarity, or what she refers to as stereomodernism.[208] As "a transnational response to racist discourses," Jaji writes, "African American music mattered to Africans as black music but also as modern music."[209] Charlie Parker, and Diatta's gramophone, allowed them to bridge their different national and class backgrounds to create a transatlantic listening community that permitted them to perform a shared black modernity. The gramophone, as Jaji contends, is as much a "technology of solidarity as the music itself."[210] As a symbol of stereomodernism, the gramophone afforded Sergeant Major the ability to activate different forms of transatlantic global belonging. As we will see with the origins of Ghanaian television, other media become important technologies of solidarity because black ownership of new media technology responds to the racist new media discourse that runs through the initial contact trope.

However, the freedom that the gramophone's transnational steromodernism enabled was met with colonial restriction in Sierra Leone. In 1911 the colonial government in Sierra Leone passed a noise ordinance limiting the hours Sierra Leoneans could play gramophones.[211] Once in the hands of the indigenous population the gramophone became a threat to European superiority.

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[206] J. Ayo Langley, "Introduction," in *The Blinkards* (London, Heinemann Educational, 1974), 7.

[207] As Birgit Meyer has pointed out, Kwesi means "Sunday-born male," Atta means "part of twins," and Bosomefie means "an illustrious ancestor who is born again." [See Birgit Meyer, "Popular Ghanaian Cinema and 'African Heritage,'" *Africa Today* 46, no. 2 (1999): 101.]

[208] Tsitsi Ella Jaji, *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14, 206.

[209] Tsitsi Ella Jaji, *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

[210] Tsitsi Ella Jaji, *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17.

[211] *The Weekly News* (Freetown, Sierra Leone), Jan. 6, 1912: 7.

Africans became subject to the same types of regulations that were exerted upon African bodies. Rumors of the origin of the ordinance circulated across the region to Nigeria, where Abibu reported in *The Nigerian Chronicle* that the "Ordinance was due to the mere incident of a …official complaining that a native who owned a Gramophone and who had his home by the official's residence met the Gramophone playing while the official's wife was ill."[212] For Abibu, this ordinance is the extension of earlier colonial ordinances made to regulate Sierra Leonean bodies and the noises they make, "This we imagine is part of an attempt which was made some time ago to prevent natives whistling within their own compounds, and of another recently made to prevent the same people from either smiling or laughing wherever there was a European near by."[213] In his assessment of the ordinance, the sounds made by the gramophone become an extension of the African owner/operator and the voice of the phonograph becomes the voice of the African who owns it, even when the voice that it projects may not be African at all.[214]

When Africans began to use phonographs for their own pleasure, harnessing the "white magic" for themselves, the phonograph user, who had previously always been presumed white, suddenly became black. The racial ambiguity of the gramophone's "faceless" audio recordings was replaced by the body that performed the machine.[215] Once always the ones operating the apparatus, British colonial administrators Colonel James Hayes Sadler, Colin Harding, and C.T. Lawrence; filmmakers Martin and Osa Johnson and Robert Flaherty; and ethnographers Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Frances Densmore gave repeat performances of gramophones and phonographs actively making the new media instrument they played part of white cultural identity. Unlike in East Africa, in Anglophone West Africa there was no precedent of using "white magic" for its disciplining effect on native's ears, therefore its use by Africans needed to be regulated.

The Phonograph in the "Only Negro store of its Kind"

Another popular stock-photo from the early 2000s [fig. 15] entitled "Smiling African woman in traditional clothes sitting on a rock and using a laptop" follows similar visual tropes in early twentieth-century representations of Africans and technology.[216] The "smiling African woman" sits alone in dramatic mountainous landscape. The dress she wears is brightly printed fabric designated "traditional" by the photograph's title, yet as popular as these fabric prints are in Africa, they are often designed in the Netherlands or other parts of Europe and manufactured in China for African consumers. The subtle flattening of the photoshopped background in contrast to the three dimensionality of the smiling woman recalls taxidermic displays popular in

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[212] Abibu. "Lagos, Yorubaland, and Elsewhere," *The Nigerian Chronicle* (Lagos, Nigeria), May 5, 1911: 7–8.

[213] Abibu. "Lagos, Yorubaland, and Elsewhere," *The Nigerian Chronicle* (Lagos, Nigeria), May 5, 1911: 7–8.

[214] Nathan Plageman shows that in the 1930s Gold Coast colonial administrators in the Central and Western regions also prohibited the production of locally made and marketed gramophone records that were thought to contain references to a political riot happening a decade earlier. The legislation of popular music in the Gold Coast was essential for regulating social change and solidifying new forms of political authority. See Nathan Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 63–66.

[215] Lisa Gitelman, "Unexpected Pleasures: Phonographs and Cultural Identities in America, 1895–1915," in *Appropriating Technology: Vernacular Science and Social Power*, eds. Ron Eglash, Jennifer L. Croissant, Giovanna Di Chiro, Rayvon Fouché (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 332.

[216] "Smiling African woman in traditional dress sitting on a rock and using a laptop" *123RF*, accessed August 28, 2018, https://www.123rf.com/photo_12199694_smiling-african-woman-in-traditional-dress-sitting-on-a-rock-and-using-a-laptop.html

turn-of-the-twentieth-century natural history museums. This ethnographic taxidermy, unlike Fatimah Tobing Rony's, makes the already obsolete technology seem still alive and relevant by using the body of the ethnic "Other" to signify the always present past.

Fig. 15: A photograph that follows the colonial legacy of juxtaposing traditional Africa and modern new media which has been used by websites to promote the role of African women in the technology sector.

What is surprising about "Smiling African woman in traditional clothes sitting on a rock and using a laptop" is that the image was licensed to accompany an article on the technological acumen of African women. *International Business* featured the image, included quotes from African women like Julie Owono, a lawyer from Cameroon and contributor to *Quartz* and *Global Voices* and Marian Diaby, an entrepreneur based in Cote D'Ivoire.[217] The content of an article that highlights African female achievements in the technology sector hardly matches the colonial legacy latent in the "Smiling African women" image. The contradiction within the image between a racist historical precedent of posing Africans with media technology to emphasize hierarchical difference and the celebration of the technological skills of Africans, points to an ambiguity in the image that began at the turn of the century that is still at play in the twenty-first century "initial contact" image.

There is a tension in images like these that circulate the globe. Between, on the one hand the promise of inclusion that they represent, and the problem of colonial representations that presuppose Africa and Africans as "traditional." Like the cell phone image that opened this chapter, travelogue images from the early twentieth century held a similar paradox. Describing a scene of encounter between the Navajo and a cinema performance in Burton Holmes's "Moki Land," Jennifer Lynn Peterson notes that Holmes does not maintain the distinction between primitive/modern that the surface of these first contact tales reproduce. In his lecture the familiar stereotypes about primitive unchanging Indians is repeated, but he also shows them as "part of modern visual culture, even turning them into film spectators...Despite the rigid opposition

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[217] Kathleen Caulderwood, "Three 'Geekettes' Speak Out About Women, Technology and New Media in Africa" *International Business Times*, February 8, 2014. https://www.ibtimes.com/three-geekettes-speak-out-about-women-technology-new-media-africa-1554101

between the 'primitive' and the 'civilized' at work here, modernity repeatedly intrudes on the world of the primitive. Holmes established an enduring travelogue tradition of ambivalence and contradiction."[218] Peterson in effect challenges essentialist readings of late nineteenth and early twentieth century travelogue photography as simply reifying the imperialist gaze. Instead, she argues that the ambiguity of such images helps explain why and how colonial imagery was possible.[219] As Allison Griffiths has noted, the "wonderous difference" of the colonial Other was often regarded with ambivalence in ethnographic film. The condemnation of indigenous laziness was "accompanied by a nostalgia for the less stressful life" native peoples seemed to enjoy in their pre-modern lives.[220] Allison Griffiths and Jennifer Lynn Peterson both locate the ambivalence Euro-American audiences felt toward depictions of native peoples as the result of turn-of-the-century experiences of modernity. However, images of initial contacts with new media technologies within the context of black media history bring about a different set of ambiguities.

Fig. 16: "Only Negro store of its kind in the U.S., at 2933 State St., Chicago, Ill."
[1899?] Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.
LOT 11308 [item] [P&P], http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b15823.

Seven years before Martin Johnson joined Jack London's trip to the South Seas, W.E.B. Du Bois with Thomas J. Calloway designed an exhibit on African American life for the United States hall at the 1900 Paris Exhibition. The exhibit included thirty-two charts, 500 photographs, and numerous maps. According to W.E.B. Du Bois it was designed to show the history of African Americans, their condition at the turn of the twentieth-century, the state of African

[218] Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 20130, loc 1257.

[219] Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), loc 916.

[220] Alison Griffiths, *Wonderous Difference: Cinema, Anthropology, & Turn-of-the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 68.

American education, and their literature.[221] Many of the photographs included in the exhibit were materials regarding the education of African Americans at institutions like Fisk, Atlanta, and Howard Universities, and the Tuskeegee and Hampton Institutes. The photographs depicted African Americans studying various industries often utilizing the latest technological equipment in woodwork, chemistry, and the refinement of cotton. The images also featured African American houses and black owned businesses all, "hardly square with conventional American ideas" of "Negro faces."[222]

Three photographs from the exhibit featured a locksmith store captioned as the "Only Negro store of its kind in the U.S., at 2933 State St., Chicago, Ill." Two of the photographs are of the exterior of the store; one with the owner standing in the doorway, the other with the owner on the right side of the doorframe with two other black men, presumably employees, standing in the middle and left side of the door. The third photograph is of the owner behind the counter inside the store with another man leaning on the glass counter from the other side. Along with lettering describing the various repairs that the store provides, "umbrellas repaired and covered, wringers repaired, all kinds of stoves repaired, all kinds of repairing done here," is the display of various electric equipment including a phonograph. The two exterior shots of black men posed next to technology offer a radically different historical narrative of new media and racial difference. Here, the men have enough expert knowledge about how a phonograph works to sell them and have mastered the technology enough to fix them. Yet, the caption of the store, "only negro store of its kind" situates it as an exception, and a site of black excellence.

W.E.B. Du Bois' 1900 exhibition photographs were part of a visual rhetoric of racial uplift that was built on the chiastic structure made popular by Fredrick Douglass. Allyson Field argues in *Uplift Cinema* that the chiasmus is the formative structure of before-and-after photography central to the visual rhetoric of uplift used by the Hampton and Tuskegee Colleges.[223] For instance, in advertising materials for the Tuskegee, before going to college a student's nearly falling down one-room cabin is juxtaposed with the pristine white house with colonial columns of a graduate's home.[224] Graduates themselves are transformed from slouching, dirty, and unkept criminals into clean, upright citizens in the visual advertisements for the colleges. Referring to the genre Field writes, the "before image demonstrates the need for uplift, and after exhibits its possibility."[225] Theorized by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. as a rhetorical device, the chiasmus was "called upon to reverse the world's order." Douglass' chiasmus was a "repetition with a difference" that always included a form of reversal.[226] Thus the uplift images of Hampton College would repeat the formal structures of the photograph of a student's house before and after attending the college. It was critical for the college publicity that the after image

[221] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The American Negro at Paris." *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 7, no.5 (1900): 575–577.

[222] W.E.B Du Bois, "The American Negro at Paris." *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 7, no.5 (1900): 575–577.

[223] Allyson Nadia Field, *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 65.

[224] Allyson Nadia Field, *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 64–69.

[225] Allyson Nadia Field, *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 67.

[226] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Fredrick Douglass's Camera Obscura: Representing the Antislave 'Clothed and in Their Own Form," in *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015), 34.

proved the transformation of the individual and reversed the stereotype of African Americans depicted in the before image.

In Shawn Michelle Smith's reading of the W.E.B. Du Bois's "American Negro" portraits that accompanied the exhibit she argues that, "through a process of visual doubling" the "portraits engender a disruptive critical commentary that troubles the visual and discursive foundations of white middle-class dominance by destabilizing their oppositional paradigms."[227] Smith shows that the formal style of the Du Bois' "American Negro" portraits mimic with striking similarity the criminal mugshot. Drawing on Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Smith argues, "Du Bois's portraits 'signify upon' the formal visual codes of criminological photography" through "repetition with a difference."[228] The Du Bois images repeat the subject framing of the mugshot with head-on and right-angle shots, and they pose their subjects against stark, plain gray backdrops without props recalling the blank walls prisoners are framed against. Smith highlights that through the doubling of the images' formal qualities they are "Signifyin(g) both as middle-class portraits and as criminal mugshot simultaneously."[229] This concurrent signification makes "explicit the discursive assumptions that situate African Americans beyond the pale of white society, and behind a Veil where they are invisible to white eyes blinded by racist stereotypes."[230]

Smith's reading of the double in the "American Negro" portraits offers a methodology for thinking about how the images of the exterior of the locksmith shop repeat the stereotypes that circulated at the time of brown bodies and media technologies, but with a difference. Here, instead of being the subject of wax recordings, or representative of a confused listener subdued by their inability to comprehend white phonograph "magic," these images documented black phonograph expertise. The new media technology in the W.E.B. Du Bois photographs, becomes the means to see beyond the Veil and "uplift" the race through doubling—the repetition of the image with a contextual difference that recasts African Americans as already modern.

However, in the colonial image of the "native" gramophone listener, the juxtaposition of primitive and modern within the mis-en-scène also implies the "before and after" logic of transformation. Like in the Du Bois photographs, the image is repeated within different contexts, but with a difference—the gramophone is replaced with the newest media technology indefinitely. Therefore, brown bodies are continually cast as before modernity. By adopting the same "before and after" logic the images substantiate each other, the denial of the modernity in one image provokes the claim in the other. Thus, an image like that of the "Smiling African woman in traditional clothes sitting on a rock and using a laptop" ambiguously slides between meanings. At once recalling the long history of exotic racism in staged indigenous encounters with new media *and* the uplift visual discourse of W.E.B. Du Bois 1900s photographs. Each photographic tradition expresses different political commitments, but because they both substantiate the transformative power media technologies can potentially have on black lives, they both constitute the new media fetish.

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[227] Shawn Michelle Smith, "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review* 34, no. 4 (2000): 582.
[228] Shawn Michelle Smith, "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review* 34, no. 4 (2000): 585–586.
[229] Shawn Michelle Smith, "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review* 34, no. 4 (2000): 587.
[230] Shawn Michelle Smith, "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review* 34, no. 4 (2000): 587, drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 2–3.

African Studio Photography

   The visual doubling of the gramophone trope was not limited to the African American experience. In West Africa, there is a long tradition of studio portraiture that has incorporated new media technologies. It was common in mid-twentieth century West African portraiture for photographers to use props and backdrops to photograph clients with various new media technologies—telephones, radios, gramophones, televisions, and VCRs.[231] The trend was far reaching and long-lasting. It moved across the region between francophone and anglophone West African countries and even into Kenyan portraiture of the 1990s.[232] Bamako photographers, Seydou Keïta who started his studio in the 1948 and Malick Sidibé who opened his studio the year Keïta's closed in 1962, each provided sitters with the option of including radios and telephones as props in their photographs [fig. 17].[233] Also in francophone West Africa, the Senegalese photographer Oumar Ly is noted to have made studio portraits of subjects posing with modern commodities.[234] Nigerian born Malian photographer El Hadj Tijani Àdìgún Sitou used communication props like telephones in his popular Mopti studio during the 1970s and 80s and Burkinabé photographer Sanlé Sory, who was trained by Ghanaians and employed Ghanaians to paint his studio backdrops, also provided clients with telephones and radios.[235]

[231] See *Malian Portrait Photography* (New York: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2013), Heike Behrend, *Contesting Visibility: Photographic Practices on the East African Coast* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013), Erin Haney's *Photography and Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[232] See Heike Behrend, *Contesting Visibility: Photographic Practices on the East African Coast* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013), 91–93. Behrend mentions that in addition to radios, cassette recorders, TVs and telephones, mobile phones were eventually offered.

[233] Candace M. Keller, "Malick Sidibé" and "Seydou Keïta," in *Malian Portrait Photography* (New York: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2013), 8, 24.

[234] Antawan I. Byrd, "Amplifications: Sanlé Sory's Great Movements Between Photography and Music," in *Volta Photo: Starring Sanlé Sory and the People of Bobo-Dioulasso in the Small but Musically Mighty Country of Burkina Faso* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2018), 157.

[235] Candace M. Keller, "El Hadj Tijani Àdìgún Sitou," in *Malian Portrait Photography* (New York: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2013), 34–35 and *Volta Photo: Starring Sanlé Sory and the People of Bobo-Dioulasso in the Small but Musically Mighty Country of Burkina Faso* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2018), 53–55, 182. Unlike other photographers, many of Sory's sitters brought their own radios and tape decks to pose with in the studio and to play music.

Fig. 17: Seydou Keita, Untitled (Portrait of a Young Woman), 1956

Media technologies were also evoked in painted backdrops, a practice made famous by the Ghanaian photographer Philip Kwame Apagya, whose work has been featured on several academic book covers.[236] Painted backdrops included other signs of modernity like international cityscapes, airports and airplanes, office buildings, and highways. However, it was the backdrop genre of "room-dividers," which depicted upwardly mobile Ghanaian's living rooms filled with luxury goods like TVs, wall-clocks, flowers, sound systems, telephones, VCRs, books, and fans, that was a mainstay of the Ghanaian photography studio in the 70s, 80s, and 90s [fig. 18]. Photography first came to Ghana in the 1870s and 1880s and soon became part of upper-class urban African life. The European techniques for posing, backdrop design, props, and clothing were adopted by Gold Coast photographers. It was not until the late 1940s that studio portraiture appeared to become "Africanized."[237]

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[236] See Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Brian Larkin, *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and James Ferguson, *Global Shadows* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[237] Tobias Wendl, "Visions of Modernity in Ghana: Mami Wata Shrines, Photo Studios and Horror Films." *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 275.

Fig. 18: Example of Philip Kwame Apagya's "room divider" backdrop.

Like their francophone contemporaries, Ghanaian photographers provided an array of props for studio clients to use to fashion their "modern" identities; watches, radios, newspapers, flowers, handbags, umbrellas, telephones, and televisions all offered sitters symbols to express participation in modernity. According to Tobias Wendl, images of West Africans posed with media technologies in studio portraiture—either through props or painted backdrops—are an example of West African visions of modernity as "an idealized self-image, carefully staged and restaged."[238] Studio portraiture and the accompanying images of self-fashioning corresponded to social ideals, thus reinforcing social norms and values. In contrast, in Yoruba studio portraits of the 1970s the sitters' social position within society was affirmed by the status of the sitter, be it membership in a police force, fraternity club, or as a role as a mother, lover, or chief.[239] Media technologies within the frame allowed sitters the possibility of redefining their identity through consumer goods.

At first, these media infused images suggest the desirability for the clients of West African photographers to imagine themselves as the owners of gramophones, radios, and televisions in order to move up in social standing. Hudita Nura Mustafa argues that European objects, like radios and televisions, "designate high status" for the Senegalese studio clients that used them.[240] Western technology, it would seem, indexed social status across the region.[241]

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[238] Tobias Wendl, "Visions of Modernity in Ghana: Mami Wata Shrines, Photo Studios and Horror Films." *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 269.

[239] Stephen F. Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," *African Arts* 12, no. 1 (1978); 52-9, 108-9.

[240] Haditha Nura Mustafa, "Portraits of Modernity: Fashioning Selves in Dakarois Popular Photography," in *Images & Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Paul S. Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 172–192.

Philip Kwame Apagya, describing the thoughts of his clients, said, "The living room interior with all those valuable consumer goods could be mine—or one day I will possess these things. On the photograph they are already there."[242] While new media commodities certainly signified class, their use within West African portraiture was explicitly a performance of class aspirations. As Tobias Wendl put it, Ghanaian "Photo studios provide access to 'possible worlds'."[243] In these studios, which were at once private and public spaces, West Africans were allowed the technological means to imaginatively engage themselves within Afrofuturist world building.

Tobias Wendl suggests that the Ghanaian photography studio was a space "to escape from the constraints of tradition and social etiquette" where "certain subversive plays and inversions" allowed sitters to explore new identities, and foresee "possible futures."[244] In acts of "play" Ghanaian photographers often incorporated popular global culture into the narrative pictures they staged in the studio. For instance, karate and kung fu films led to a set of popular studio poses,[245] popular Hindi films from the 1960s and 70s led to Ghanaian women dressing in the style of Indian female actors,[246] and Ghanaian studio clients would even restage scenes from Hollywood classics like King Kong.[247] Even when media were not explicitly present within the frame, sitters engaging in global popular culture claimed participation in global modernity. Tobas Wendl argues that, "being modern" in this context is "equivalent with being connected through media to the outside world" be it through the reference of media technologies themselves in the image or the global popular culture that media transmit.[248]

The play with identity through media backdrops continued in digital photography until the early 2010s. On a visit to one of Accra's longest operating photography studios, Modern Photo, founded in 1963 by Samuel Kobian Pobee, Nat Pobee (S.K. Pobee's son) showed me a photo taken in the studio of a woman sitting in what appears to be a high-rise affluent apartment with a large television behind her.[249] The room and television were added digitally by using a green screen. Pobee told me that the woman reported that she sent the picture to her boyfriend

[241] Daniel Leers, "Malian Portrait Photography," *Malian Portrait Photography* (New York: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2013), 7.

[242] Tobias Wendl, "Visions of Modernity in Ghana: Mami Wata Shrines, Photo Studios and Horror Films," *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 281.

[243] Tobias Wendl, "Visions of Modernity in Ghana: Mami Wata Shrines, Photo Studios and Horror Films," *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 281.

[244] Tobias Wendl, "Visions of Modernity in Ghana: Mami Wata Shrines, Photo Studios and Horror Films," *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 276.

[245] Karate poses were popular in Burkina Faso photographer, Sanlé Sory's photographs as well. [See *Volta Photo: Starring Sanlé Sory and the People of Bobo-Dioulasso in the Small but Musically Mighty Country of Burkina Faso* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2018).]

[246] The recent popularity of Indian soap operas has led to the popular adoption of saris by young women in Ghana.

[247] Tobias Wendl, "Visions of Modernity in Ghana: Mami Wata Shrines, Photo Studios and Horror Films," *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 277. Wendl gives several examples in his article photographers using media technologies like radios and telephones in their studio practice during the 1970s. Of note are S. Kwame Nyaletey from Aflao and Steven Abiodou Thomas from Kumasi.

[248] Tobias Wendl, "Visions of Modernity in Ghana: Mami Wata Shrines, Photo Studios and Horror Films," *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 277.

[249] There are some discrepancies between the date that Nat Pobee told me that Modern Photo was founded and what he told Samy Ben Rejeb of Analog Africa record label. According to an excerpt of Samy Ben Rejeb's interview with Nat Pobee, Modern Photo was founded in 1955. [See "Ghana's Independence Era Through the Lens of S.K. Pobee" *Africa is a Country*: https://africasacountry.com/2013/10/ghanas-independence-era-through-the-lens-of-s-k-pobee] Both dates come from Nat Pobee but I have chosen to use the date he gave me. The discrepancy might have something to do with the somewhat fuzzy relationship between Modern Photo and Tip Toe night club that were both run by S.K. Pobee.

and he got mad because he assumed that she had spent money staying in an expensive hotel. Photographs of people in digitally created affluent houses like the one I saw became an excuse for family members to deny their relative money when they asked for assistance. According to Nat Pobee this led to the unpopularity of the trope and its disappearance from studio photography.[250]

Fig. 19: "Group Portrait with Record Player," unidentified artist, postcard, 1920s–30s, Senegal. MET Accession Number: VRA.2014.8.038. Featured in the MET exhibit, "In and Out of the Studio: Photographic Portraits from West Africa" August 31, 2015–January 3, 2016.

Fig. 20: Malick Sidibé, *Les copins à Niarela*, 1967/2008, Jack Shaiman Gallery

Images of Africans and gramophones depicted within the West African photography—be it in images like the unidentified "Group Portrait with Record Player" circa 1920s–30s, or Malick Sidibé's 1967 *Les copins à Niarela*—evoke the image of Osa Johnson playing American jazz to a group of African Mbuti, but with a roaring difference. Like the W.E.B. Dubois *American Negro* portraits, the women in "Group Portrait with Record Player" reinforce their social status through a rhetoric of uplift. Both the luxurious clothing they wear and their confident and casual interaction with the gramophone and records, projects their high status into the photographic print. New media in Africa, while juxtaposed in the image, does not rehearse the modern/primitive trope. Instead, the women appear to own the gramophone and exude their competence as operators of new media. In photographs like Malick Sidibé's *Les copins à Niarela* or Sanlé Sory's dance party photographs, the image of the record player similarly demands acknowledgement of African participation in a global, diasporic stereomodernity. Young people activate their connectedness to the outside world by demonstrating their musical taste—not unlike Major Diatta's playback of Charlie Parker for the American soldier in *Camp de Thiaroye*.

Christopher Pinney argues that colonial photography sought to stabilize colonial schemata and identities in which people could not escape by celebrating the indexicality of the

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[250] Nat Pobee (owner of Modern Photo and son of S.K. Pobee), interviewed by the author, Modern Photo, Circle, Accra, Ghana, August 7, 2017.

image.[251] "Initial contact" images similarly rely on the indexicality of the photographic image to record the moment of perpetual transformation, or stage it spectacularly for the viewer. When the indigenous encounter with new media is used to narrate the process of becoming modern and as a means of preserving the moment, the "saving" potential of the new media technology is reinforced through photographic documentation. However, even in the act of preserving the moment of transition colonial schemata and identities are kept. Africa is forever "traditional" while the new media—standing in for the West—is always "modern."

African studio portraiture, on the other hand offers a fluidity of meanings through their emphasis on surfaces.[252] While for colonial image making the photograph was a direct window onto the world, postcolonial photography by Seydou Keïta [fig. 17], focused on the surface of the image rather than its depth. Since multiple people sat with these new media objects, the portraits do not portend to document the real. Instead they offer a performance of identity. The images are playful and lack the dedication to indexicality in which colonial, ethnographic, and tourist photographers were invested at the turn of the twentieth century. In the Keïta double of the "initial contact" image the authority of the colonial schemata implicit in the trope is unsettled. As Homi Bhabha puts it, "the menace of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority."[253]

West African photographs of Africans with new media are not the indexical recording of a transformative moment of modernity. Rather, the photograph provides a surface on which to perform the identities that new media appear to produce. The use of new media within West African photography demonstrates a playful ambivalence in the power of the technological object to do anything at all, while still invoking the media/fetish. Instead, West African photography acknowledges that it is the images of new media technologies that have the power to reveal the flexibility of identity and the fluidity of social hierarchy. Copying the signs of upper-class individuals—ownership of new media and other "western" technologies—sitters draw on the technologies ability to signify social power and manifest it. As Michael Taussig has argued the wonder of the mimetic faculty is that the copy derives its power from the original.[254]

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[251] Christopher Pinney, "Notes from the Surface of the Image: Photography, Postcolonialism, and Vernacular Modernism," in *Photography's Other Histories*, eds. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 203.

[252] Christopher Pinney, "Notes from the Surface of the Image: Photography, Postcolonialism, and Vernacular Modernism," in *Photography's Other Histories*, eds. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[253] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 129.

[254] Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993), xiii, 47.

Fig. 21: James Barnor, *Nigerian Superman*, c. 1957–58

The photograph *Nigerian Superman* at the old Accra Polo Grounds by Ghanaian photographer James Barnor, emphasizes the surface of the image and plays with technology as signifier [fig. 21]. The absurdity of the gramophone being played while on a bike holding three children in the middle of Accra's Old Polo Grounds reduces the gramophone to a visual object rather than a technology with a purpose.[255] It is a visual prop (a more extreme version of the props used by West Africans in their studios throughout the 50s, 60s, and 70s). The modernity that the gramophone and the bicycle may signify as technologies of communication and transportation are activated yet made explicitly absurd and surreal—the bicycle is not capable of moving Nigerian Superman forward. Nigerian Superman's performance is recorded to "save the moment." But the photograph remains explicitly a record of a performance, rather than a record of a performance that pretends to be reality (i.e. *Nanook of the North*, *Congorilla*).

A 2019 photography exhibit sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für international Zusammenarbeit and Kwaku David Photography called "Chiefs in Tech" highlights a recent use of the trope for uplift in which the indexicality of the image matters. BMZ asked Ghanaian chiefs and Queen Mothers who have demonstrated that they are at the forefront of using digital technologies to serve their communities, to sit for portraits that feature their use of media technologies. Like other examples of this trope the chiefs and Queen Mothers are dressed in traditional clothing, but unlike the Maasai stock photograph they are photographed in their homes, courtyards, and offices and signs of modernity in their rural environments are accentuated rather than hidden (see fig. 22 and 23). However, the depiction of chiefs and queen

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[255] The old polo ground, established for British sportsmen, was where Kwame Nkrumah declared to large crowds Ghana's freedom from British colonial rule. In the 1990s, a mausoleum and museum was built on the site to honor Kwame Nkrumah.

mothers in their actual homes enhances the indexicality of the image increasing their potential as uplift images.

Described as "inspiring" by news outlets, the images sing the praises of digital technology for helping Ghanaians reach their Sustainable Development goals. The exhibit explicitly seeks to counter narratives of the digital divide. The press release states,

> …digital change makers and pioneers are role models who make sure that no one is left behind. They resolve the alleged contradictions between traditional and contemporary lifestyles, between urban and rural areas, and the use of digital technologies in these communities. Because digital change happens in places where you might not expect it…Behind each portrait lies the story of a fascinating individual who functions as a digital pioneer utilizing digital technologies in their communities to close the digital divide. Get inspired![256]

Sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and Deutsche Gesellschaft für international Zusammenarbeit, we can see how international aid organizations repeat the uplift narrative in representations of Africa and media technology. Praising the use of media technology for African development begins in the early part of the twentieth-century with the colonial and missionary use of cinema for African education, as discussed in the next chapter.

Fig. 22: Nana Ogyedm Ama Tsetsewa I, Mankrado of Gomoa Oguan and Osumpahen of Gomoa Akyempim Tradional Council, Central Region.
Photograph by Kwaku David Photography

Fig. 23: Mamaga Akua Sabea Nyabor VII, Paramount Queen Mother of Akrofu Traditional Area, Volta Region
Photograph by Kwaku David Photography

The Maasai image that opened this chapter is an extension of a history of colonial photography of indigenous peoples next to or with new media technologies that differs from the West African portrait which also juxtapose Africans with new media. West African studio portraits activated the mobility of the subject's identity, breaking down the idea that new media are transformative devices that mark the movement between traditional societies and modern life. The history of this type of image ignites the visual rhetoric of uplift, which repeats the narrative of progress within the initial contact trope in order to claim that Africans and African Americans

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[256] "'Chiefs In Tech' Photo Exhibition" *Modern Ghana*, February 10, 2019.
https://www.modernghana.com/news/914751/chiefs-in-tech-photo-exhibition.html

have arrived and are equal participants in global modernity or stereomodernism as we can see in Malick Sidibé's *Les copins à Niarela* [fig. 20]). Racial difference and racial uplift co-exist in the same visual trope as the before and after. There were two conflicting uses of the representation of Africans and gramophones during the twentieth century: imagery and anecdotes that drew on media technologies to prove black racial inferiority and images of black men and women with technologies as part of a discourse of racial uplift. It is unfortunate that, here, repetition with a difference encourages many reprises; etched within the historical record is a cycle of racism and uplift in which each produces the other, while new media continue to be sold as the final solution.

Even when the political underpinnings are derived from very different contexts—the rationalization of white supremacy, or the uplift of African Americans, and an African desire for global class equality—brown bodies continue to be where the meaning of new media is inscribed. The skipping record, repeating with each new media track, guarantees the authoritative authenticity and indexicality of Africa and new media within the initial contact image. The mechanical re-production of that which is authorized promises the delight of something that purports to be new and transformative. The cyclical production of the new through this long history of racialized new media discourse supports the ever-expanding reach of capitalism and the entrenchment of the power of the new media fetish. However, when West African photograph practice acknowledges that the subject's identity is always already mobile or in a continual act of becoming, then the potential for new media technologies to cause social change is diminished. The surface play in postcolonial African photographic uses of new media emphasizes the instability of new media rather than reinforcing its potential to save and flips the history of the fetish in which Europeans landed on African soil and began calling African's fetishists. But it is the sustained belief, or the belief in others belief, which continues to give the new media fetish the power to mediate global power. What is remarkable about the Maasai cell phone image that began this chapter is how far back the racial hierarchy made implicit through the repeatedly staged contrast between brown bodies and new media goes back, and how it continues to haunt our dreams for a better technological future.

Chapter Two
"Mobile is Everything": Infrastructure and Spectacular Mobility in Mobile Cinema

In the January 2016 edition of *Wired* magazine, a full-page advertisement for Mobile World Congress, a trade fair for leaders in mobile-technology industries, claimed at the top of the page in large font and all capital letters, "MOBILE IS EVERYTHING."[257] In much smaller print it went on, presumably for clarification:

> What is mobile? Is it the latest communications device? The health monitor on our wrist? The key to our digital security? Is it the means to connect the unconnected or is it the screen that entertains us? Mobile is all of this. But it's also so much more. Mobile powers our lives. It's an extension of who we are. Mobile is connectivity. Mobile is identity. Mobile is commerce. Mobile is inclusive. There is no clear way to say it. Everything is mobile, but more importantly: Mobile Is Everything.[258]

The advertisement's promise that "mobile is everything" remains unsatisfactorily explained in the descriptive blurb. The exaggerated and broad explanation that it offers—it is an identity, it is commerce, and it is inclusive—is full of optimistic promise rather than substance. Nevertheless, its bloated verbiage, empty of content but full of hyperbole, is perhaps as accurate a representation of what "mobile" means globally as any other description.

With comparable overstatement, American mobility scholar Tim Cresswell claims, "mobility is everywhere."[259] Mobility is particularly hard to define because movement—physical and figurative—comprises such a large part of day-to-day living. Ranging from systems of transportation to micromovements of the body and changes in human and social capital, movement does seem to be everywhere and everything. But unlike movement, which involves the "displacement of an object from A to B," mobility, according to Cresswell, more precisely describes movement through socially constructed time and space.[260] As Cresswell insists, mobility is "given [specific] meaning within contexts of social and cultural power."[261] In mobility studies, scholarship on how these meanings are erected points to the ways relationships of power restrict or enable certain forms of movement globally.

Today, the proliferation of mobile technologies has facilitated the movement of information through new communication networks making the world appear smaller. New media technologies allow traditional borders to be porous enabling capital and information flow. "Mobility," as the corporate jargon above suggests, is endowed with a sense of social progress, individual freedom, and economic opportunity; a set of characteristics familiar to scholars of mobility and modernity.

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[257] The Mobile World Congress is an exhibition and conference for the mobile-technology industry. It is now known as the GSMA MWC series. GSMA represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide and adjacent industry sectors. MWC (Mobile World Capital) is a digital initiative in Spain that focuses on supporting technology innovation, the growth of digital industry, and the empowerment of digital technology users through the support of digital entrepreneurship. The first Mobile World Congress was held in 2009.

[258] "Mobile Is Everything," *Wired*, January 2016.

[259] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1.

[260] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

[261] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

The movement of ideas, concepts, and information through new media technologies, like mobile phones and an increased access to the Internet, have promised new prosperity for communities in Africa considered information poor. In Washington DC on August 3, 2015 President Barack Obama began an address to a group of young African Leaders by stating, "even as Africa continues to confront many challenges, Africa is on the move." Highlighting Africa's fast-growing middle class and their rising access to mobile phones and the Internet, President Obama linked African economic and social movement to the adoption of new technologies—"Africans are beginning to leapfrog old technologies into new prosperity."[262] Emphasizing Africa's leapfrog jump forward, a popular description of Africa's media history, President Obama's statement anchors the adoption of technology to ideas of unilineal progress where skipping an "old" technology on technology's illusory evolutionary timeline equals a rapid step forward. These meanings come from an intellectual tradition of accepting the adoption of new media technology as necessary for the social and economic mobility of modernization.

Worldwide interest in using new mobile technologies to enact social change in Africa is hardly new. The British colonial government began to use new mobile technologies to educate rural colonial populations in the 1930s. Mobile cinema vans, specially designed in England to withstand rough roads in remote areas of the colonies, exhibited informational films to rural African audiences across the continent. These films—on health and medicine, agriculture, community development, and citizenship—exposed African audiences to the same types of information being deployed to Africans today through NGO sponsored mobile phone applications.[263]

In Ghana, the government-run mobile-cinema-van program has been operating continuously since before independence. The first mobile cinema van arrived in Accra Harbor in June 1940. Outfitted with a 16mm Bell and Howell projector, gramophone turntable, speakers, and a movie screen, mobile cinema vans were initially sent to rural populations to exhibit World War II propaganda films meant to encourage British subjects to support the war effort with raw materials and new recruits. After World War II, when the end of colonialism was foreseeable, cinema vans were re-imagined as tools for the development of a modern Africa.

Like mobile phones, this old new media technology offered Africans a way to take part in a wider world; the mobile cinema van annihilated space and opened new worlds that expanded their knowledge beyond the familiar experiences around them. Mobile phones and mobile cinema both offer "virtual mobilities" that unite African audiences and users to new ideas through global information networks, but as mobile technologies they also reproduce the concept of a geographically remote African cut off from the information new media can bring.[264] Critical mobility scholarship stresses the ways that stasis and immobility are fundamental to systems of

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[262] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the Young African Leaders Initiative Presidential Summit Town Hall," The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, given on August 03, 2015. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/08/03/remarks-president-young-african-leaders-initiative-presidential-summit.

[263] Like Peter Bloom's astute observation that contemporary humanitarian imagery has resonances with the imagery used to justify French colonial humanitarian intervention, an echo of British colonial technological determinism is visible in popular enthusiasm for mobile technology's ability to transform social life in Africa. [See Peter Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).]

[264] For the concept of "virtual mobility" see Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006).

mobility (borders, firewalls, etc.) and the ways that mobility is defined by location and embodiment.[265] As new media increasingly deterritorialize the globe through instantaneous connection and an increased sense of mobility, they also produce immobilities and ensconce geographic differences.

Just as contemporary development-focused mobile phone applications, mobile cinema's achievements were premised on the idea that social and economic change in Africa could be accomplished by providing needed information to Africans through global connectivity. The spectacular mobility of mobile media, both its media content and the media technology itself, have long promised the coming of modern infrastructures through the education and transformation of the individual. The aesthetics of mobile technologies and the representation of mobility through mobile screens perform infrastructural development whether or not Africans experience those changes in their communities.[266]

Like other studies of media infrastructure that move away from the study of content toward assessing "how content moves through the world and how this movement affects content's form,"[267] in this chapter I look at the relationship between mobile cinema van technology, the films that were screened, and post-war infrastructure projects to ask, what did the mobility of mobile cinema infrastructure promise?[268] What was mobile media's relationship to other infrastructure projects?

This chapter begins by summarizing the history of educational cinema as a civilizing tool. Like gramophones, it was believed that cinema could be used to justify British authority to govern Africans. Business, missionary, and colonial organizations came together to fund colonial filmmaking for African audiences. With their efforts to "civilize" Africans through the new medium, racist assumptions about the alterity of the African mind and African perception arose. Once again, new media became the symbolic means to entrench racial difference. Using three Gold Coast Film Unit films of the late colonial period—*Amenu's Child* (1950), *A River Creates an Industry* (1955), and *Kofi the Good Farmer* (1952)—as examples, I show how fashioning remote subaltern bodies through spectacular displays of mobile technology validated the operation of the state, reinvigorating its infrastructural promises. I argue that the late British colonial development projects overlooked public infrastructure (better roads, more hospitals, stable power, and clean water)—which would increase the movement of individuals, capital, and goods between cities and villages—in favor of the transformation and edification of the individual through access to information and content. Unlike with the arrival of gramophones in which Africans were often depicted mesmerized media rubes in order to justify colonial power, mobile cinema was used by the colonial state to promise to transform rural Africans through

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[265] Mimi Sheller, "Mobility," *Sciopedia.isa* (July 11, 2011): 1–12. doi: 10.1177/205684601163. Also, of note: Gerard Goggin, *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2006), Gerard Goggin, *Global Mobile Media* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); and Ilpo Kalevi Koskinen, *Mobile Multimedia in Action* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007).

[266] 2016 research from AfroBarometer shows that while cell phone access across 35 African countries reached 93% of citizens, electricity only reached 65%, piped water 63%, paved roads 54%, and sewage a mere 30%. These numbers vary dramatically from country to country, but the overall averages give one a sense of how far some infrastructures fall behind the penetration of mobile phone services. [See *AfroBarometer*, Dispatch no. 69, January 2016.]

[267] Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski, "Introduction," in *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, eds. Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 1.

[268] Here I am drawing on Hannah Appel, Nikhil Anand, and Akhil Gupta's question, "What do infrastructures promise?" in their edited volume, *The Promise of Infrastructure*, eds. Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 4.

modernization. As a media fetish it projected a possible technological future with social and economic mobility for all, while reinforcing unequal power relations between the metropole and rural peripheries. In other words, mobile cinema made it possible for the British and their African colonial subjects to be nothing alike and almost, but not quite, the same. As such, colonial power could be maintained.

According to colonial ideology, films like *Amenu's Child* exposed Africans to Western science, technology, and medicine to encourage Africans to adopt Western economic and social systems. The provision of educational content through the mobile cinema van was meant to inspire Africans to use the West as a model to develop their own communities through co-operative means.[269] But colonial mobile media opened a window onto new infrastructural possibilities without necessarily providing the services or economic support necessary to achieve them. Other films like *A River Creates an Industry* assured the Gold Coast public that they could have industry and infrastructure comparable to the West by showing spectacular examples of infrastructure and industry in Canada. By visualizing what the Gold Coast could have the new independent government proved its legitimacy as a state. In *Kofi the Good Farmer*, a film which was used long after the colonial period ended, the state constructed the character of a remote rural farmer in need of information on the cultivation and preparation of cocoa to reinforce the state's role in relation to rural populations. While the cinema van apparatus and the films they showed often performed infrastructural development, in the post-colonial era the mobility of African public servants, facilitated by the mobile cinema vans, resulted in small infrastructure projects through personal commitments. The mobility of individuals as part of the mobile infrastructure of mobile cinema vans may have had more of a lasting impact on development than the mobility of the media apparatus and its content.

A Cinema for Enlightened Salvation

Long before the first cinema van, cinema was mobile. Salesmen and showmen brought moving picture machines all over the world to the delight of global audiences. In 1895 an enterprising salesman appeared in Johannesburg selling kinetoscopes. Once a kinetoscope was bought the first viewing of moving pictures on the continent occurred at the Grand National Hotel on April 4, 1895 to members of the press. After showing the machine to Paul Kruger the State President, it was then opened to the public on April 19, 1895 in the Henwood Arcade.[270] Projected moving images were first shown a year later at Johannesburg's Empire Theater. Notably, all five films that were screened had ties to the British Isles: *A Highland Fling* depicted a Scottish couple dancing, *Tommy Atkins with his Girl in the Park* showed a British soldier flirting in Hyde Park, *A Scene from Trilby* in which the main character is Irish, *Street Scenes in London*, and a *Military Review*.[271] A year later, Alexandre Promio, a filmmaker representing the Lumière Brothers film company, began his African tour with stops in Egypt, Algeria, and

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[269] For a discussion of the role of cooperatives in colonial development projects see Aaron Windel, "Mass Education, Cooperation, and the 'African Mind,'" in *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa*, eds. Peter J. Bloom, Stephan F. Miescher, and Takyiwaa Manuh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 89–111.

[270] Three pictures were shown: a cockfight that lasted 33 seconds, Buffalo Bill firing off his guns, and the vivid movements of a skirt dancer. See Thelma Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895–1940* (Cape Town: Citadel Press, 1972), 8–9.

[271] Thelma Gutsche, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895–1940* (Cape Town: Citadel Press, 1972), 13–14.

Tunisia.[272] Egypt became a favorite shooting location for early cinema companies. Following Promio, A.C. Abadie, working for the Edison Company, shot films in Egypt in 1903 and Pathé made films there in 1905.[273]

These globe-trotting cameramen would screen their films for local audiences, but outside of South Africa and North Africa before 1918, Africans would hardly have the opportunity to experience cinema exhibition. Cinema was absent from the cosmopolitan West African cities until after World War I. The first cinema shows in Southern Rhodesia where limited to white settlers. However, in 1917 African troops from Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were invited to watch movies in Salisbury as a reward for their service.[274] Private cinema houses in South Africa offered segregated whites-only and coloreds-only screenings, but some of the earliest movie shows specific for African audiences in anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa began through a combination of missionary work, corporate philanthropy, and the colonial governments.

In the 1920s, colonial officials in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa began experimenting with using instructional films in African health campaigns. Health officers in Kenya and Nigeria were responsible for some of the first films made with the intention of African development. Dr. A.R. Paterson working for the Kenya Department of Medical and Sanitary Service made a 16mm film to be used in a campaign against hookworm.[275] Also, in 1926, William Sellers, then working as a health official for the Nigerian government, made a film to help fight a plague outbreak in Lagos. With the help of the Colonial Development Fund in 1932 Sellers made fifteen health films to screen around Nigeria with the use of a mobile cinema van.[276]

Also experimenting with film screenings for Africans was the American missionary, Rev. Ray E. Phillips. Charged by the Rand mine owners in South Africa to control the drinking and fighting that mine owners complained occupied their African workers, he began showing films to provide clean entertainment after working hours.[277] Inspired by Rev. Phillips' example of an "energetic mission co-operation with a large industry," in 1932 the Department of Social and Industrial Research of the International Missionary Council determined that Christian adult education in the copper-belt could be supported by cinema. Fearing the negative impact of the copper-mines on indigenous populations, it concluded "that the only hope of progress for the people of these territories is through Christian education; that this is the sole means of bridging the gulf which separates the outlook of the Bantu tribe from that of the modern world to which it is being progressively introduced, and that education is the foundation of the structure of Christian society that missions are building in Africa."[278] As with gramophones, in the hands of white settlers cinema was utilized to control Africans. Cinema, however, maintained colonial rule not only through displays of technological superiority, but also by promising media technology's ability to bring about social betterment. Thus, Christian civilizing efforts and

[272] Michael Allan, "Deserted Histories: The Lumière Brothers, the Pyramids and Early Film Form," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 6, no. 2 (2008): 159.

[273] Antonia Lant, "The Curse of the Pharaoh, or How Cinema Contracted Egyptomania," *October* 59 (1992): 101.

[274] James Burns, *Cinema and Society in the British Empire, 1805–1940* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 38.

[275] Rosaleen Smyth, "Film as Instrument of Modernization and Social Change in Africa: The Long View," in *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa*, eds. Peter J. Bloom, Stephan F. Miescher, and Takyiwaa Manuh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 66.

[276] Rosaleen Smyth, "Film as Instrument of Modernization and Social Change in Africa: The Long View," in *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa*, eds. Peter J. Bloom, Stephan F. Miescher, and Takyiwaa Manuh. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 66.

[277] James Burns, *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 8.

[278] J. Merle Davis, *Modern Industry and the African* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 387–388.

corporate interest in making docile employees merged in colonial experiments with educational cinema.

The use of new media technologies for evangelical purposes was not new. Carolyn Marvin has shown that even with earlier telecommunication technologies enthusiasts believed that "instantaneous long-distance communication" would usher "in a 'new era' of evangelism."[279] Quoting telephone inventor Amos Dolbear, "Any device that enlarges one's environment and makes the rest of the world one's neighbors…is an efficient mechanical missionary of civilization and helps to save the world from insularity where barbarism hides," Marvin argues that with the coming of new communications technologies, "the idealized world of technologists" was seen as extending "automatically to the less fortunate periphery."[280] Here the telephone, a device arguably designed for dialogue, is envisioned as a broadcast technology to be used in unidirectional evangelizing. Thus, the material capabilities of the telephone were ignored when it came to ideological understandings of the barbarism of distant lands.

Emphasizing the cinema's broadcast capabilities, missionaries presented it as an ideal medium for African salvation because it could be used to proselytize to illiterates. Film, it was hoped, could instruct large groups of individuals efficiently and effectively through engaging stories. Thus, in their report the Department of Social and Industrial Research of the International Missionary Council suggested that every mission in the copper-belt use cinema equipment as a tool to preach.[281] The Christian use of cinema was also suggested by the International Missionary Council to counter what they dreaded were the harmful effects of commercial film: "Unless prompt measures are taken to enter the Central African field with wholesome films, the commercial exploitation of the Native will proceed with a type of picture that caters to his worst instincts and depicts an unreal and corrupt European civilisation."[282] For these missionaries, the image of European civilization and the Christian faith was at stake in the distribution of film in Africa.

Christian institutions were not the only transnational groups to be involved in making instructional films for African audiences. James Burns and Rosaleen Smyth have pointed out that American philanthropic organizations gave critical support to early communications for development projects in Africa. In the 1920s, the Rockefeller Foundation made two of the earliest films to promote better health in the British Empire—*Unhooking the Hookworm* (1920) and *Malaria* (1925).[283]

With the successful distribution of Rockefeller films across the colonies, by the 1930s the British colonial government was convinced of the potential of film to persuade colonial audiences. When the Rockefeller Foundation stopped funding educational films, the British government turned to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust to finance the 1932 report *The Film and National Life* which detailed the role of film in education in the United Kingdom. *The Film and National Life* later became the justification for the foundation of the British Film Institute

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[279] Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 192.

[280] Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 192.

[281] J. Merle Davis, *Modern Industry and the African* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 324.

[282] J. Merle Davis, *Modern Industry and the African* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 325–326.

[283] James Burns, "American Philanthropy and Colonial Film-making: The Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and the Birth of Colonial Cinema," in *Empire and Film*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 55–56.

and the early origins of a mandate to serve colonial populations.[284] In *The Film and National Life* section on cinema and the empire, the early rationale for educational colonial films was articulated. Quoted in the section, Sir Hesketh Bell expresses regret that demoralizing films, "representing criminal and immodest actions by white men and women" had already damaged the "prestige of Europeans in India and the Far East," but that, "*there is yet time*, to see that the same harm shall not be repeated in our Tropical African Empire."[285] In order to encourage positive perceptions of "white civilization" the report deemed it necessary to counter unsavory images coming from Hollywood popular cinema. It stated,

> The backward races within the Empire can gain more and suffer more from the film than the sophisticated European, because to them the power of the visual medium is intensified. The conception of white civilisation which they are receiving from third-rate melodrama is an international menace, yet the film is an agent of social education which could be as powerful for good as for harm.[286]

Film was particularly important because there was an assumption that Africans visually experienced the medium with more intensity. African susceptibility to the cinema became justification for colonial management of African screens. To promote the right types of films in the colonies, the report suggested censorship boards in all British territories, quotas protecting British film distribution across the empire with a preference for educational films, and the production of instructional films designed for colonial audiences.

    The Film and National Life prompted government investment in colonial film. Shortly after the report was printed, The Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) began. BEKE produced and distributed thirty-five educational films for African audiences with the goal of introducing the new medium to new audiences, reporting on African reactions to cinema, and transforming African attitudes toward medial systems, religion, and labor.[287] The experiment was proposed by retired Major Leslie Alan Notcutt, a sisal plantation owner in East Africa. He was inspired to make amateur films with African actors to maintain a content plantation workforce after reading Julian Huxley's *Africa View*. After gaining the International Missionary Council's support, advisement from the Colonial Office, and $55,000 from the Carnegie Corporation, G.C. Latham joined L.A. Notcutt from March 1935 to May 1937 in East and Central Africa to work on the project.[288]

    As Aboubakar Sanogo succinctly put it, the "educational impulse" of BEKE was "wedded" to missionary, anthropological, and philanthropic discourses as evidenced by the

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[284] Rosaleen Smyth, "Film as Instrument of Modernization and Social Change in Africa: The Long View" in *Modernization as Spectacle in Africa*, eds. Peter J. Bloom, Stephan F. Miescher, and Takyiwaa Manuh (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 67.

[285] *The Film and National Life* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1932), 133.

[286] The global menace of "third-rate melodrama" seems to be an indictment of Hollywood exports rather than distain for the genre. [see *The Film and National Life* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1932), 126.]

[287] Aboubakar Sanogo, "Colonialism, Visuality and the Cinema: Revisiting the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment," in *Empire and Film*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 228.

[288] Specifically, Tanganyika (present day Tanzania), Nyasaland (now Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Kenya and Uganda.

membership of the BEKE board of advisors.[289] Membership included the Chairman, Lord Frederick Lugard the former colonial governor of Nigeria and Hong Kong, three members from religious institutions, two representatives from the British Film Institute, one individual from the Royal Anthropological Institute, two representatives from the University of London's Institute of Education, a member of the British Social Hygiene Council, a representative from the Geographical Association, a representative from the Rhodesian Copper Mines, and the film company, Gaumont-British Instructional.[290] Like the gramophone before it, the introduction of the cinema to African audiences involved the intertwined interests of imperialism and capitalism, but with the support of the International Missionary Council the educational content of early cinema programs was legitimized by the humanitarian morality of Christian organizations.

L.A. Notcutt and G.C. Latham's 1937 report on the results of their cinema experiment, *The African and the Cinema*, explains why cinema should be introduced to African populations.[291] Continuing arguments made earlier in *The Film and National Life* report, Notcutt and Latham rehearsed prevailing fears of the American film industry's cultural (and economic) domination over cinema in the colonies and a concern for the effects of modernity on the 'native' mind. Notcutt and Latham advocated for a government-controlled film industry in the colonies that could cultivate a taste for educational cinema: "The cinema is new to the rural African, who does not expect to be amused and is quite satisfied with educational and improving films. Keep the standard high from the first, never show anything in the way of farce or thrillers, and the Native will never want these in his cinema programs."[292] The new medium should, according to Notcutt and Latham, be primarily a pedagogical tool to encourage Christian behaviors, docile employees, and loyal subjects of the British crown. Cinema was to only be educational and never thrilling.

Early forms of humanitarianism motivated by colonial economic interest also appeared in Francophone Africa. Peter Bloom argues that international efforts to find a cure for sleeping sickness in Uganda, Angola, and the French Congo, not only justified "the suspension of sovereignty rights under the colonial administration," but that it also continued "a system of inequality founded on the magical promise of technological modernity."[293] Like mobile cinema van screenings in the British colonies, French mobile health campaigns during the 1920s that included the arrival of automobiles, educational film screenings, and details about French medical science contributed to "the spectacle of modernity."[294] Films depicted French medical interventions as the means to restore and preserve the "uncivilized" Arab stereotype that represented preindustrial, primitive "natural man"—a figure that was a model for French masculinity from the 1870s to the 1940s.

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[289] Aboubakar Sanogo, "Colonialism, Visuality and the Cinema: Revisiting the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment," in *Empire and Film*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 233.

[290] Aboubakar Sanogo, "Colonialism, Visuality and the Cinema: Revisiting the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment," in *Empire and Film*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 235.

[291] L.A. Notcutt and G.C. Latham, *The African and the Cinema* (London: The Edinburgh House Press, 1937), 21.

[292] L.A. Notcutt and G.C. Latham, *The African and the Cinema* (London: The Edinburgh House Press, 1937), 104–105.

[293] Peter Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), VIII.

[294] Peter Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 96.

Convinced the lure of cinema could influence African audiences, the British Ministry of Information started using film shows to get their World War II message to the people living in their African colonies and across the world.[295] The Ministry of Information established the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) to handle the production and distribution of educational films throughout the colonies. In 1939, the CFU began producing 16mm films with African branches in present day Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Ghana.[296] To acquire footage from the colonies, CFU started the Raw Stock Scheme in 1942. Cameras and film stock were sent to colonial information offices. With some guidance from the London office, information officers were to collect footage for the CFU. Exposed film was shipped to England to be developed and made into educational films that were then sent back to the colonies to be distributed by mobile cinema vans. The Raw Stock Scheme allowed local colonial governments minor control over the films CFU produced but with little investment in local film production facilities or the training of African staff.

After World War II, the British Film Institute hosted a conference called "The Film in Colonial Development" where John Grierson advocated for a new Colonial Film Unit that would have a "true regard for decentralization and the part which natives will play in it."[297] The new colonial cinema was to inspire Africans to develop their communities for themselves, especially in West Africa where indirect rule meant the United Kingdom kept control over the colonies through local chiefs. The CFU was subsequently reorganized as a development film organization. In addition to the shift in focus from war mobilization to catalyst for modernization, film production was decentralized with the establishment of regional film units. The modifications to CFU followed wider changes in the policies of the British government toward its African colonies, namely the Africanization of colonial governments.[298] Tom Rice has described the continued role of the CFU in colonial film making as representative of the, "ongoing negotiation between the centre and periphery, between broader colonial film policy and local practices, between transnational exchanges and emerging regional cultures" offering "a microcosm of the political processes of decolonialization."[299] Despite ceasing to produce films in 1950, the CFU continued to co-ordinate the processing of film from regional units, and the exchange of personnel and equipment throughout the colonies.[300] In the Gold Coast, after the success of the 1948 film training school in Accra, the film section of the Public Relations Department was reorganized into the Gold Coast Film Unit.

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[295] Demonstrated through the following film titles: *We Want Rubber* (1943) made, according to *Colonial Cinema* 1 no. 3 (1943), for "stimulating the production of rubber in the Colonies…emphasis is laid on the urgent need for rubber by showing some of its multifarious uses in the equipment of the fighting services; *Africa's Fighting Men* (1944) shows the efforts of the African population in British service; *Food from Oil Nuts* (1944) demonstrates the importance of African raw produce in the manufacture of the important war ration, margarine; *African Timber* (1945) this film shows follows the production of timber from the moment it was cut in the African jungle until being made into landing craft needed for the invasion of enemy territories.

[296] Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 3.

[297] As quoted in Tom Rice, "From the Inside: The Colonial Film Unit and the Beginning of the End," in *Film and the End of Empire*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 135.

[298] Tom Rice, "From the Inside: The Colonial Film Unit and the Beginning of the End," in *Film and the End of Empire*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 135.

[299] Tom Rice, "From the Inside: The Colonial Film Unit and the Beginning of the End," in *Film and the End of Empire*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 136.

[300] Rosaleen Smyth, "The Post-War Career of the Colonial Film Unit in Africa: 1946–1955" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 12, no. 2 (1992): 174.

Mobile Cinema for a Mobile African Personality

The Gold Coast's first mobile cinema van, which began operation in 1940, was operated by three African staff members: one interpreter, one driver-operator, and one assistant operator. Many of the early British colonial films were silent, so interpreters were required to translate film scripts and perform them live. In 1944, John Wilson, a Gold Coast Public Relations Officer, described the interpreter's role as giving, "specially prepared commentary in the correct African language, full of local references, fable and traditional lore. He cracks topical jokes and even introduces his own sound effects."[301] When a new interpreter went out on his first trek, a cinema officer (who were at this time white expatriates) accompanied him for the first two to three weeks to make sure that the screenings ran smoothly. Besides this initial supervision and periodic observation for several days every three months, the mobile cinema van crew was autonomous.[302]

Cinema van driver Mr. E.A.D. Newman was the first African responsible for a mobile cinema van. Pleased with Newman's efficient work, a report in *Colonial Cinema*, a journal on filmmaking and film distribution in the British colonies, explained, "Breakdowns can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand. This is a proud record considering that expert supervision of the vehicle and equipment has generally been limited."[303] "Expert" here refers to the white cinema officers that ran the cinema division, despite their lack of film experience. The article goes on to praise Mr. A. K. Hanu, the operating assistant, explaining that the two of them were "capable of putting on without pauses as slick a show as anyone could desire."[304] During its first four and a half years of operation Mr. E.A.D. Newman and Mr. A.K. Hanu worked six days a week to give "nearly fifteen hundred performances to an aggregate audience of just over a million people."[305]

In 1945 an unnamed African author from the Gold Coast, contributed an article to *Colonial Cinema* summarizing in creative detail what happened when mobile cinema vans arrived in West African villages. After describing a screening that included "several newsreels," a locally made film depicting palm oil production, and the very popular Charlie Chaplin film known as *Charlie the Rascal*, the author narrates the audience's hypothetical reactions to the cinema show.

> "Kofi! What did you see?" "Oh, I saw the big white man from that place—Australia— making the Japanese run." "I also liked to see the soldiers making bridges in that other place—Burma." Another boy said, "It was exciting to see what the people did in England when they thought their enemies might try and come there early in the war." A young girl joined in, saying, "Did you see Nurse Ademola?"[306] "I wish I could go to England to be trained as a nurse. Then I could be a nursing sister in the Gold Coast one day." An elderly

[301] John Wilson, "Gold Coast Information," *African Affairs* 43, no. 172 (1944): 111–115.

[302] "Reports from Overseas: Gold Coast, Mobile Cinema Van No. 1," *Colonial Cinema* 3, no. 4 (1945): 86.

[303] "Reports from Overseas: Gold Coast, Mobile Cinema Van No. 1," *Colonial Cinema* 3, no. 4 (1945): 86.

[304] "Reports from Overseas: Gold Coast, Mobile Cinema Van No. 1," *Colonial Cinema* 3, no. 4 (1945): 86.

[305] "Reports from Overseas: Gold Coast, Mobile Cinema Van No. 1," *Colonial Cinema* 3, no. 4 (1945): 86.

[306] The nurse Ademola to which this article refers is most likely Omo-Oba Adenrele Ademola the daughter of the Alake of Abeokuta, the paramount chief of Northern Nigeria. She was sent by her father to London Hospital to complete nurse training and bring back information to Nigeria about health and hygiene. She was twenty-two at the time. For more information about Ademola see: "African Princess as Nurse" *British Journal of Nursing*, January 1938 and "A Chief's Daughter" *Children's Newspaper*, January 22, 1938.

person talks about the picture showing farmers in the Keta district cracking palm kernels. Another says, "We must write more letters to our soldiers in Burma to show them we have not forgotten them."[307]

In these representative responses the audience discloses a perceived relationship to an assortment of places—Australia, Japan, England, Nigeria, and Burma—in which the Gold Coast is globally networked through the British Empire and the context of the Second World War. Audiences of mobile cinema localized their relationship to distant places through participation in global society—a little girl is inspired to become a nurse by seeing images of a Nigerian woman getting nurse training in England, while an elder is reminded to send communication to a loved one in Burma.[308] By bringing images of distant places to the Gold Coast village and juxtaposing different parts of the world within one cinema show, the mobile cinema screen seems to have made the world smaller through a mobilized view.[309]

Mobile cinema screenings were a vital part of the burgeoning Gold Coast public sphere. Some educational films were shown in urban movie theaters, but most Africans in the Gold Coast saw films in their rural communities when the mobile cinema van came to town. Mobile cinema screenings were designed as a place for public debate and democratic involvement, where audiences were encouraged to ask questions about the content and imagine themselves as part of a cohesive community addressed by the film. But as the example above demonstrates, these screenings often went beyond creating a space for local civic involvement; many screenings included films that were produced in other countries and colonies, local economic and development issues were consequently contextualized within a global perspective.

Recognizing the unreciprocated flow of communication, the author cited above also wonders, "if Charlie Chaplin knows how many ardent fans he has in the Gold Coast." In his statement he depicts a mobile cinema that increases global connectivity and yet is characterized by unidirectional communication. The concern of the writer is not of the cultural dominance of Hollywood as African filmmakers and scholars would later lament, but rather the fear that West African fans were somehow not counted, and thus not equal to other fans across the world. The author expresses his feeling of being on the periphery receiving media, but not necessarily being received back.[310] This illustration shows a historic precedent for how excitement over new media's world-connecting potential is also anxiously experienced as an expression of African exclusion and exception. The mobile cinema technology facilitated the feeling of being on the periphery.

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[307] "The Mobile Cinema Van in the Villages," *Colonial Cinema* 3, no. 1 (1945): 13.

[308] Gold Coast and Nigerian soldiers actively fought for the British in the Second World War under the 82nd West Africa Division. This quote probably refers to one of two films produced by the Colonial Film Unit around the time of the published account: a section called "Gold Coast Sappers Build a Ferry" in the film *Africa's Fighting Men* (1943) or less likely, it could refer to the film *82nd West African Division Near Tamandu* (March 22, 1945). Both documented Gold Coast soldiers' contributions to the fighting in Burma. Or it could refer to the British Movietone film *West Africa Was There* (1945) also about the 82nd West Africa Division.

[309] See Anne Friedberg's definition of "virtual mobility" in *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[310] It is interesting to note that at least one article in the United States reported on the fervor of Gold Coast-Chaplin fans. [See Erick Berry, "Charlie Captures Africa's Gold Coast: When a Chaplin Film, However Tattered and Patched, Is Shown Savages Roar and Shout with Delight," *New York Times*, July 5, 1925] As this title suggests, while highlighting the universal qualities of Chaplin films, the article uses racist descriptions of Gold Coasters to describe their unrefined enthusiasm for Charlie. Throughout, the author likens the appreciation of Chaplin by Africans living in the Gold Coast to that of American children.

Not only did cinema van screenings open African audiences to new ideas, films from abroad inspired African audiences to imagine themselves traveling to Europe and in some cases encouraged Africans to become internationally mobile. For instance, military films coaxed Africans to travel the world in the British military with the guarantee of attractive wages by the war's end—a promise that was notoriously *not* upheld leading to the Accra riots of 1948 of which I will discuss later. The program included the screening of a film about Nurse Ademola in London. Films representing London as the center of the Empire were common in early screenings for African audiences. Like the London films that concluded BEKE screenings, cinema van shows in the Gold Coast often included images of England, British royalty, or Africans visiting London.[311] Tom Rice argues that these London films "appear to mirror the conventions of early colonial travelogues, imagining a world that is deemed 'exotic' and remote to its viewers. While those earlier films of foreign spaces represented the 'primitive' to British viewers, these British travelogues inverted this, providing a visual interpretation of a British notion of 'civilisation' to their African Audience."[312]

Important to mid-twentieth century concepts media and its relationship to mobility was the theories of Daniel Lerner. The modern individual, according to Lerner, was defined by their ability to incorporate visions of the unknown into one's own worldview. In his influential book, *The Passing of Traditional Society*, Lerner described how people from traditional societies could become modern. Lerner's modernization theory postulated that mass media could spark modernization by exposing "traditional societies" to Western ideas and ways of thinking. He explains that people from Western cultures grew accustomed to different ways of living when they moved in large numbers from agrarian to urban life. New experiences in cities prompted an acceptance of change. "Physical mobility so experienced naturally entrained social mobility, and gradually there grew institutions appropriate to the process."[313] As the wants of people who succeeded in cities grew, soon conveniences and securities like neighborhood banks and neighborhood police became desirable. "It was by protecting every man's *opportunity* to gain that the modern West turned decisively in the direction of social mobility."[314] Thus, for Lerner, actual physical mobility results in social mobility and a capitalist economic system based on personal gain. In Daniel Lerner's concept of the "mobile personality," empathy results from identification either through projection (giving attributes of the self to others), or introjection (others are incorporated into an idea of self because of a desire to be like them). A mobile personality is not only necessary for traditional societies to become modern, a "high empathic

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[311] During the first mobile cinema tour in the Gold Coast two programs which combined live address, the playing of gramophone records and films. Each program was focused on military and ended with a recording of the King. Program A was as follows: 1) Military music, 2) Introductory address, 3) Military music, 4) Royal Review (film), 5) Local music, 6) News of the week, 7) Military music, 8) Heritage of Defense (film), 9) Local music, 10) Address by the Governor on the "Spitfires Fund," 11) Military music, 12) The Navy at Work (film), 13) Rule Britannia music, 14) Closing address, 15) Local music, 16) Entertainment film Charlie Chaplain in "The Man Hunt," 17) The King. [See CO 323/1742/1, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.]
[312] Tom Rice, "From the Inside: The Colonial Film Unit and the Beginning of the End" in *Film and the End of Empire*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 137.
[313] Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 48.
[314] Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 48.

capacity is the predominate personal style of modern society."[315] "The high empathizer," Lerner tells us, "tends to become also the cash customer, the radio listener, the voter."[316] The goal, then, was to show Western life to "primitive" societies in order to encourage their identification with Western modernity.

Therefore, the visions of the West that African audiences were shown had to be tightly controlled by the colonial government. The Gold Coast mobile cinema programs were carefully selected and the fiction films that were screened in Gold Coast commercial theaters were censored.[317] The Cinematograph Exhibition Board of Control, which consisted of Africans and Europeans, consistently rejected films based on violence, cruelty, sexual indecency, religious offense, disregard for the rule of the law, and/or their potential to cause racial misunderstanding or hostility. Board members were particularly careful about the ways Africans and Europeans were represented on Gold Coast screens. For example, *Congo Maisie* was rejected in 1952 for offensive representations of Africans, while *Shark God* was deemed, "unsuitable for display" because of "the strong element of witchcraft prevailing over ordinary medicine."[318] Other films were rejected for their depiction of violence between white settlers and native communities. For instance, the Board agreed that the film *Bitter Springs*, which told the story of an Australian family's establishment of a new farm on aboriginal lands by any means necessary, was "calculated to arouse feelings of racial hostility" that would "cause offence" in the Gold Coast.[319]

The board was often unanimous in their decisions regarding racial misunderstanding in the films they reviewed between 1951 and 1953, however, *Thunder in the East* caused an uncommon rift between board members. *Thunder in the East* is a fictional tale of the role of an American arms dealer in Indian politics shortly after India's independence from Britain. The

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[315] Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 50.

[316] Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 50.

[317] The censorship in the Gold Coast was dissimilar to censorship in East Africa. Africans were barred from the theaters in Nairobi. Accustomed to visiting the cinema, when West African troops fighting for the British were stationed in Nairobi there was considerable colonial concern about whether or not they should be allowed to attend the cinema there. On June 30, 1941, J.L. Keith wrote, "From my experience in Africa, I gather that the real reason why Africans are excluded from the principal cinemas in Nairobi and elsewhere (e.g. Northern Rhodesia) is that Europeans object to their presence in places of amusement which the European community regard as their own. This is pure selfishness on the part of the European community, or profit mongering on the part of the cinema owners, who wish to maintain high prices and fear that the admission of Africans will mean decreased attendance in the more expensive seats. I fear that the Kenya experiences of colour prejudice will mean that the West Africans will take back to the West Coast an unhappy impression, unless we can get this state of affairs corrected, at least as far as Nairobi is concerned. The 'colonial' European also dislikes the idea of Africans looking at pictures which portray white man and woman in love, or in comic scenes. This objection is based on prejudice and ignorance. The educated African has got to know his European pretty well without the aid of the cinema. Acting and comedy appeal to him very strongly and, provided that the films are reasonably straight-forward, e.g. those like Rebecca, the Great Dictator, and so on, it is just hypocrisy to withhold them form him. I am afraid that the censorship people in East Africa and in the Rhodesias will not agree with this view. I think the telegram should go on to say at 'Would it not be possible to make arrangements for public cinemas to open their doors to parties of West African troops at normal performances. It should be remembered that educated West Africans are accustomed to seeing ordinary films supplied for commercial purposes." [See CO 859/80/15, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.]

[318] "Shark God" Censorship notes from Information Services Department, Cinema Division, Accra. March 10, 1952.

[319] "Bitter Springs" Censorship notes from Information Services Department, Cinema Division, Accra. December 20, 1951.

Prime minster struggles to maintain peace while a local rebel leader attempts to take power through violence. Three members of the board objected to the film's screening "on the grounds that it portrayed violence and bloodshed as a result of independence being granted by the British."[320] A European member of the board dissented. It was eventually rejected because it "featured crime, violence and anti-British feeling as a result of freedom being granted to Indian state."[321] The Gold Coast government was particularly concerned about African audiences seeing content that negatively represented the British. Cinema for Africans was, above all, supposed to foster devout respect for western moral superiority and a desire for Western modernity.

Other films made by the state depicted aspirations for a better life through rural migration to urban centers. The film *The Boy Kumasenu* (Gold Coast Film Unit, 1952) follows the story of a young boy who leaves his small fishing village for adventure and fortune in Accra. In *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History* (2013), Carmela Garritano argues that *The Boy Kumasenu* depicts, "modernity as a relationship between space and time; the journey from village to city functions as an allegory for the evolution from African tradition to European modernity."[322] Kate Skinner and Peter Bloom similarly interpret "the road from the village to the city" as the "path from tradition to the modern."[323] However, they notably depart from Garritano's claim that the film depicts modernity as the "gift" of colonialism. Instead, they show that through Kumasenu's story the road to modernity is not one in which he must give up ties to his village life, but rather a process of "finding the correct blend of old and new."[324] The movement depicted in films like *The Boy Kumasenu*, signals the transportation from one era to another (traditional to modern) by means of geographic movement.

But just as colonial films enticed audiences to visit the metropole and adopt new ideas, film titles shown by mobile cinema vans often capitalized on technological differences between Africans and Europeans to justify and solidify colonial rule by classifying Europeans as technologically superior. War films were shown during early cinema van programs as propaganda for the war effort, but many also introduced the violent power of foreign-made lethal military technologies to African audiences. Films that demonstrated British war technologies, like *This is a Barrage Balloon* (1942), *This is an Anti-Aircraft Gun* (1942), *These are Paratroops* (1942), and *These are Bren-Gun Carriers and Tanks* (1942), evoked what Brian Larkin calls the colonial sublime. However, the sense of difference generated from African audiences' awe and fear of these British technologies on display at the mobile cinema show was accompanied with films that encouraged Africans to volunteer for military service to learn to use those same technologies. Films like, *Early Training of African Troops* (1942), *African Troops on Active Service* (1942), *Africa's Fighting Men* (1944), and *West Africa Was There* (British Movietone, 1945) were popular with Africans in the Gold Coast.[325] Colonial administrators used

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[320] "Thunder in the East" Censorship notes from Information Services Department, Cinema Division, Accra. August 7, 1953.

[321] "Thunder in the East" Censorship notes from Information Services Department, Cinema Division, Accra. August 7, 1953.

[322] Carmela Garritano, *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 26.

[323] Peter J. Bloom and Kate Skinner, "Modernity and Danger: *The Boy Kumasenu* and the Work of the Gold Coast Film Unit," *Ghana* Studies 12/13 (2009/2010): 147.

[324] Peter J. Bloom and Kate Skinner, "Modernity and Danger: *The Boy Kumasenu* and the Work of the Gold Coast Film Unit," *Ghana* Studies 12/13 (2009/2010): 148.

[325] *West Africa Was There* highlights the bravery of the 81st and 82nd West African Divisions of the RWAFF who fought the Japanese in Burma. In addition to showing them fight, West Africans are depicted using radio communications and the troops are thanked throughout for their courageous contributions. [See Peter J. Bloom and

demonstrations of European science and technology to highlight the sharp difference between the technology-wielding European colonizer and the African colonized, but since these technological spectacles were presented as educational and part of African training, there was also an implicit assurance that the colonized could someday master these technologies and be equal to the colonizer in the near future. As these technologies produced insurmountable difference, they also promised development and a way of becoming equally modern.[326] Put another way, the colonial sublime encapsulated the promise of temporal mobility and its resulting infrastructure by instilling a desire to be like the West. The African viewers who empathized through introjection, by incorporating Western culture into their idea of themselves, could be modern.

Ironically, British colonial officials working in film systematically showed their inability to empathize through projection. That is, they rejected humanistic ideals of universal similarity in preference for the racial alterity of Africans. The colonial government saw the production and distribution of educational materials as particularly important in the moral uplift of Africans, yet discussions of how that education should occur were drenched in racist ideas about the "African mind." The resulting early films made in the colonies for native instruction were constructed upon fundamentally paternalistic and condescending rhetoric. In a *Colonial Cinema* article, an anonymous author praised the September 1948 opening of a new film training school in Accra. The author emphasized the importance of Africans' making films for Africans because they have the same "mental processes":

> One of the long-range objectives of the Colonial Film Unit and perhaps its most important one is the creation of an organization in each colony to produce its own films. It is logical to assume that if the films are to achieve their purpose they must be made by those who have a thorough understanding of the mental processes of the people for whom they are being made. No colony will be wholly satisfied with many of its films, particularly those dealing with social problems, until they are made in their own territory by their own people.[327]

While encouraging African film production, the author assumes that Euro-American "mental processes" are fundamentally different from African ones to the extent that translation between African and European mental processes is insurmountable.

The underlying racism in the above statement has a long history in British colonial filmmaking. Not only was it seen as necessary to prioritize educational content for Africans over entertainment, specialized filmmaking techniques were developed for the "African mind." The most illustrious proponent of the "specialized technique" was William Sellers. William Sellers, the medical officer with the Nigerian colonial government who was later the head of the Colonial Film Unit, became the leading expert in making films for Africans in the 1930s and 40s. After observing that Africans, "looked upon the films as a collection of animated photographs…unable to link the scenes together to form any kind of story," Sellers concluded that films for Africans needed to be specially crafted for African minds.[328] These films lacked complex transitions,

Kate Skinner, "Modernity and Danger: *The Boy Kumasenu* and the Work of the Gold Coast Film Unit," *Ghana Studies* 12/13 (2009/2010): 127.]

[326] Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 36.

[327] "The School of Instruction, Accra, Gold Coast," *Colonial Cinema* 6, no. 4 (1948): 78.

[328] William Sellers, "Films for Primitive Peoples," *Documentary Newsletter*, Sept. 1941: 221, quoted in James Burns, *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 46.

elliptical or parallel editing, and close-ups. Additionally, background details were minimized because they were believed to distract African audiences from comprehending the story. Sellers based his theories of African spectatorship on grossly misinterpreted African reactions to films. When an African watching a film about malaria responded to a close-up of a mosquito by exclaiming aloud that there was no reason to fear mosquitos in Africa because they were much smaller than the giant European ones depicted on screen, rather than recognize the joke Sellers assumed that Africans could not mentally comprehend visual changes in scale.[329]

The popularity of William Sellers' specialized technique with African audiences is debatable. In an audience report from the colonies as early as 1942, European cinema officers identified the popularity of films featuring African and European ways of life. Films that compared Europe to Africa were particularly popular. A report from Nigeria claimed that Sellers' first CFU film, *Mr. English at Home* was "bad propaganda" because audiences laughed at British life with "derision."[330] Cultural difference was very entertaining, but perhaps did not demand the respect the official had expected. William Sellers, on the other hand, had reported a few months earlier that Nigerians loved the film because of its slow tempo. Self-aggrandizing, he wrote that his film was "in a class by itself and considered an outstanding success."[331] In 1943, Echoing Mr. Lironi who was in charge of the Gold Coast Mobile Film Unit, reported the extreme popularity of *Mr. English at Home* because,

> The tempo of these films is apparently slow, judging by normal standards, but from the African's point of view, it is correct; for the slow tempo is the result of good continuity and movement, of keeping each shot on the screen for a sufficient length of time for the audience to appreciate and understand it, and for the interpreter to give his explanation. The normal documentary film has far too fast a tempo, and is just not understood.[332]

It is debatable whether the pleasure Africans seemed to get from this film was due to its tempo. Instead, it seems much more likely that the film offered a joyful opportunity to laugh at European culture as the September report from Lagos suggests. The congratulatory reports about the success of the slow technique probably had more to do with colonial determination to see African cinematic perception as inferior.

Aboubakar Sanogo has argued that the slow pace of the films represented the colonial wish for African traditional societies to slow their dangerously rapid movement towards modernity for fear that they were losing important African values. This is what he has called a cinema of incrementalism. Colonial filmmakers constituted themselves as "mediators between the old and the new in Africa. To do so, they created the figure of the illiterate and visually impaired African peasant as representative of a certain essence of Africa, who should be the

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[329] James Burns, *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 44–47.

[330] Nigerian Secretariat, Lagos, September 19, 1940, CO 323/1742/1, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[331] William Sellers, "Report of visit of W. Sellers to West Africa (Nigeria and Sierra Leone) May 31st to August 14th, 1940," CO 323/1744/13, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[332] Mr. Lironi, "Information Department, Gold Coast Colony, Answers to Questionnaire" July 23, 1943, CO 875/10/11, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

object of filmic intervention in the form of educational cinema."[333] According to Sanogo, this "essentially fictional figure of Africans" as illiterate peasant was made visible by making invisible "the domestic multi-secular, precolonial traditions of literacy, including several centuries of Islamic literacy" and the "evolving political, historical and cultural dynamics in Africa itself."[334]

By 1945 Sellers' specialized filmmaking principles for African audiences had become orthodoxy.[335] Sellers' fallacious observations went without researched proof until the Colonial Office hired British anthropologist Peter Morton-Williams (at Sellers' suggestion) to conduct observations on the effectiveness of colonial cinema on African audiences. Peter Morton-Williams' definitive report, *Cinema in Rural Nigeria: A Field Study of the Impact of Fundamental Education Films on Rural Audiences in Nigeria* is often cited as the symbolic "nail in the coffin" of William Sellers' "specialized technique."[336] Morton-Williams writes, "It seems quite evident that the physiological aspect of the problem can be ignored; that all audiences can see what is projected on to the screen, after a very short period."[337] He also denies the necessity for simple transitions and a specialized film language:

> The means by which the transition from shot to shot is accomplished do not seem important for the audience's understanding. Mixes, fades, cuts are all acceptable, provided that shot succeeds shot in the order dictated by the logic of the events in the action. Within this condition, audiences were not baffled by rapid changes of scene that took them over long distances or that compressed time.[338]

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[333] Aboubakar Sanogo, "Colonialism, Visuality and the Cinema: Revisiting the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment," in *Empire and Film*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 240.

[334] Aboubakar Sanogo, "Colonialism, Visuality and the Cinema: Revisiting the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment," in *Empire and Film*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (London: British Film Institute, 2011), 240.

[335] William Sellers' stories about African audiences' inability to understand moving images and still photographs were repeated within colonial bureaucracy ad nauseam. In 1961 John Wilson, the former Gold Coast Public Relations Officer, published an article in Canadian Communications journal on film literacy in Africa that was based on Sellers' claims. By this time Morton-Williams report was already out, but raciest assumptions about African mentalities die hard. Wilson's article was later taken up by Marshall McLuhan as evidence for the orality of African societies. [See John Wilson, "Film Illiteracy in Africa," *Canadian Communications* 1, no. 4 (1961): 7–14 and Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 35–40.]

[336] See Brian Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), James Burns, *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), and Birgit Meyer, "Ghanaian Popular Cinema and the Magic in and of Film," in *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*, ed. Birgit Meyer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). The date of *Cinema in Rural Nigeria*'s publication is something of a mystery as several leading scholars have cited a variety of dates: 1952 (Tom Rice), 1953 (Birgit Meyer, James Burns), 1954 (Brian Larkin). I couldn't find a publication date on the copy of the report that I viewed at University of Ghana's Balme Library except for "1956" handwritten in pencil across the cover. However, based on the project timeline Morton-Williams gives in the report the most probable date is 1952.

[337] Peter Morton-Williams, *Cinema in Rural Nigeria: A Field Study of the Impact of Fundamental Education Films on Rural Audiences in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Federal Information Service, 1952), 44.

[338] Peter Morton-Williams, *Cinema in Rural Nigeria: A Field Study of the Impact of Fundamental Education Films on Rural Audiences in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Federal Information Service, 1952), 45.

Elsewhere in the report, Morton-William's blames poor colonial filmmaking for the miscomprehension of African audiences, not mental inferiority.

Peter Morton-Williams' conclusions—by refuting Sellers—helped initiate the adoption of new cinematic methods for filmmaking in the colonies. However, his report did not provide straightforward guidelines for making effective educational films. Throughout, there is a tension between Morton-Williams' anthropological inclinations and colonial realities. On the one hand, he suggests films should be made culturally specific for particular ethnic audiences, and on the other acknowledges the impossibility of colonial administration to make culturally specific films for such wide and diverse audiences. Peter Morton-Williams argued that many of the films screened in Nigeria by mobile cinema vans were unsuccessful at changing social habits because their stories were not specific to the cultural/social norms of Nigerian audiences. According to his study, Nigerian audiences received the Gold Coast Film Unit film *Amenu's Child* (1950) poorly because the film's story gave no cultural reference points for Nigerians watching the film. This resulted in awkward laughing at emotionally charged segments of the film and the misinterpretation of cultural references such as the yam festival and the traditional clothing worn by the actors. To solve this problem, he suggested that colonial filmmakers avoid cultural detail in films made for multiple ethnic audiences. He wrote, "If the problem concerns people of the most varied culture, one such as overcoming a reluctance to be vaccinated, it must be treated in terms which can be understood by them all. This suggests that the treatment of the theme must be broad, and that the background which is likely to be full of all sorts of unfamiliar and distracting detail, must be very much subordinated to the actors whose behaviour is to communicate the message of the film."[339]

Somewhat contradictorily, Peter Morton-Williams writes later in his report, "In deciding what weight to give to the various aspects of his material, the film-maker should dissociate it from its context in his own culture, and try…to see it in the new environment in which he is attempting to plant it; it is otherwise unlikely to take root."[340] Here he expresses the very necessity of culturally specific filmmaking techniques. He also writes, "With more knowledge of the people themselves, it should be possible to explain to them why they must come into new relationships with the world, to make them aware of whatever benefits they may expect and how to get them. But it will need much careful research before ways can be found of transforming their societies."[341] Therefore, according to Morton-Williams, if we recall his earlier critique of *Amenu's Child*, filmmaking must be broad in its address and limit distracting detail, while also being culturally specific to the group being addressed.

Nevertheless, the failure of *Amenu's Child* to elicit social change in Nigeria may have had more to do with the how the film was screened than the cultural specificity of its content. Identification with images and extensive in-person instruction were both necessary. The cultural specificity of the film in the Gold Coast allowed audiences to identify with the people in it, or so it was reported. As a report on mass education in the Gold Coast put it, "From the start it was evident that the film 'Amenu's Child' was of tremendous value in such a training course; seeing *their own people* facing up to situations of which they were all too well aware, and solving the

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[339] Peter Morton-Williams, *Cinema in Rural Nigeria: A Field Study of the Impact of Fundamental Education Films on Rural Audiences in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Federal Information Service, 1952), 38. [John Wilson makes a similar claim in "Film Illiteracy in Africa," *Canadian Communications* 1, no. 4 (1961): 7–14.]

[340] Peter Morton-Williams, *Cinema in Rural Nigeria: A Field Study of the Impact of Fundamental Education Films on Rural Audiences in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Federal Information Service, 1952), 41.

[341] Peter Morton-Williams, *Cinema in Rural Nigeria: A Field Study of the Impact of Fundamental Education Films on Rural Audiences in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Federal Information Service, 1952), 39.

problems shown in the film, was an experience that imprinted itself deeply on their minds."[342] In addition to seeing their own people on screen, the film was part of comprehensive multi-media training course. A team of instructors were gathered from the Medical, Public Relations and Social Welfare Departments to conduct courses on the care and feeding of new-born babies. As a supplement to the training and *Amenu's Child*, pamphlets, and photo displays were used to reinforce lessons from the health courses to participants.

The same mass education report also explained that an essential aspect of the success of training course on changing local attitudes about infant nutrition was the inclusion of midwives in the program. Health extension workers feared that participants in the program would return to their villages and face opposition from midwives. Therefore, incorporating midwives into the program was essential.[343] This extensive contextualization and community building through the participation of local experts was not provided at Nigerian screenings and could explain why the film was less effective.

Amenu's Child was touted by the Gold Coast Film Unit as an appropriate African alternative to William Sellers' simple and didactic Colonial Film Unit films precisely because it was specific to African culture. G.B. Odunton, an African member of the Gold Coast Film Unit, described the new technique used by the Gold Coast Film Unit in the making of *Amenu's Child* as employing "the local idiom of the people" and using a local, "story-telling technique." He goes on, "By casting films in the traditional pattern of story-telling we hope to speak in a manner which is familiar to indigenous African culture, and is traditionally a form of instruction and entertainment."[344] Elsewhere in mid-twentieth century Ghanaian popular culture, creators embraced a "didactic tone" that was similar to the entertaining instruction that the Gold Coast Film Unit sought to attain.[345] Ghanaian popular literature often had a "learn by example framework" that combined entertainment with education.[346]

The cultural specificity of *Amenu's Child* in G.B. Odunton's account is juxtaposed to European storytelling, not to those narrative devices from different ethnic groups across Africa. Peter Morton-Williams' critique of the "African" story-telling techniques in *Amenu's Child* was that they were not familiar enough to audiences in Nigeria to provide legibility. *Cinema in Rural Nigeria* argues that media can only stimulate social change and community development if new ideas come in the familiar forms. Therefore, Peter Morton-Williams' findings determined that Nigerian audiences lacked what Daniel Lerner called a "mobile personality"—or empathy for different ways of living. But unlike Lerner who promoted the expansion of media as a way to encourage "traditional societies" to empathize with modern Western culture, Morton-Williams advocated that colonial filmmakers incorporate the Western ideas they wanted audiences to adopt within culturally specific narratives.

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[342] My emphasis. Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, *Welfare and Mass Education in the Gold Coast 1946–51* (Accra: Government Printer, 1953), 55.

[343] Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, *Welfare and Mass Education in the Gold Coast 1946–51* (Accra: Government Printer, 1953), 55.

[344] G.B. Odunton, "One Step Ahead," *Colonial Cinema* 8, no. 2 (1950): 31.

[345] Peter J. Bloom and Kate Skinner, "Modernity and Danger: *The Boy Kumasenu* and the Work of the Gold Coast Film Unit," *Ghana* Studies 12/13 (2009/2010): 144.

[346] See Stephanie Newell, *Ghanaian Popular Fiction: 'Thrilling Discoveries in Conjugal Life' & Other Tales* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 19.

Infrastructure be Dammed

Instilling empathy—a mobile personality—in the people of traditional societies through new media technologies was thought by Daniel Lerner to bring about the innovation needed to spark modernization. In his technological deterministic media theory, the spread of media technologies globally would soon be followed by modern infrastructure. In the British colonial context, films taught Africans how to build better homes (*Mr. Mensah Builds a House*, 1955), how to organize community development projects (*Daybreak at Udi*, 1949 and *Community Development in Awgu Division, Nigeria*, 1949), or how to avoid disease by changing hygiene practices (*Fight Tuberculosis in the Home*, 1946) with the underlying premise that teaching (presumably ignorant) Africans how to build, eat, and stay healthy would give them the means to become self-sufficient and lift themselves up out of underdevelopment.[347] However, some films were deeply connected to infrastructural projects, like *A River Creates an Industry* (Gold Coast Film Unit, 1955).

During the transitional period before independence, the Gold Coast Film Unit made a film to gather public support for the construction of a dam across the Volta River. While colonial films promised change through the development of the individual (teaching infant nutrition for example), *A River Creates an Industry* advocated for change, through what would become Ghana's largest infrastructural project of the twentieth century. The dam was meant to harness enough power to process 200 million tons of high-grade bauxite into aluminum and to develop an aluminum industry in the colony. Uniquely, *A River Creates an Industry* incorporates a significant section of a Canadian industrial film produced by Crawbery Films for Aluminum Limited of Canada, also titled *A River Creates an Industry*. The Ghanaian *A River Creates an Industry* is not a collage film insomuch as two separate films that are spliced together. The entire first half of the film is composed of the Canadian film, which documents a similar dam project on the Saguenay River in Quebec, Canada. After seventeen minutes, the Gold Coast film is spliced onto the Canadian picture. The second half of the film uses animation to show how the proposed Gold Coast Volta River Project would work. The inconsistent edge-code dates on each half of the film copies in the Information Services Department library, show that the two halves of the film were printed separately, at separate times and spliced together afterward. The splice marks a movement through time and space, between former British territories. It signifies the transnational mobility of film, capital, and ideas between the two territories and the chasm of difference between them.

Since *A River Creates an Industry* was not a new print made from the two films, but was literally two different films spliced together, it is both an industrial and government sponsored film. In *Films that Work*, Hediger and Vonderau argue that industrial films must be historically contextualized both by the situations of their production and the circumstance of their use, and by the company or organization responsible for their production. For Hediger and Vonderau, the industrial film is an "interface" between company discourse and changing forms of social and industrial organization. Because *A River Creates an Industry* is the result of both industrial and colonial filmmaking practices, the way in which it is *useful* is multiple and layered. Its hybridity allegorizes the shared interest between a global industry and the post-colonial state in modernization.

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[347] See the discussion of James Ferguson's summary of a "productionist premise of development" in the introduction. James Ferguson, *If You Give A Man A Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

Aluminum Limited of Canada flirted with investment in the Volta River Dam project from 1951 to 1956. The plans for building a dam on the Volta River in order to process bauxite into aluminum were in the works as early as 1915. However, it was not until 1948 that the British government officially expressed interest in the development of the Gold Coast bauxite deposits. The Gold Coast hired British engineers to determine whether the development of the Volta River Basin was feasible. They produced a substantial report in 1951, at which time Aluminum Limited of Canada and the British Aluminum Company assessed whether they would become involved in the project. Negotiations began in 1952 and gained momentum in 1953 when the Gold Coast National Committee visited aluminum smelting plants in Canada that were similar to the proposed project in the Gold Coast. But by 1956, Aluminum Limited of Canada and the British Aluminum Company lost interest in the project due to a drop in the price of aluminum.

The use of the Canadian picture within the Gold Coast film was sanctioned by Aluminum Limited of Canada. We can trace the channels of global capital that dictated large-scale global industry by the travel of the Canadian film across the Atlantic to the Gold Coast. The splice between the two halves of the film represents the intended union between the Gold Coast government and the Canadian and British aluminum companies. *A River Creates an Industry*'s structure makes visible the globalization of industry and its connection to global politics.

The moving images represent a globalized system of capital, where one massive industrial project is juxtaposed with another in a vastly different part of the globe, placing the industrialization of the Gold Coast in direct relationship with similar processes in Canada. Immediately following the splice, at the beginning of the Gold Coast section of the film, intertitles announce, "You have seen what the Saguenay River has done for Canada. But all big rivers are much alike, and year after year their waters flow swiftly down to the sea. We have such a river here in the Gold Coast—The Volta River." In truth, all big rivers are not alike. But by drawing physical similarities between the rivers, the film expresses to Gold Coast viewers that industrialization can be achieved in the Gold Coast in the same way it has been accomplished in Canada. Geography is offered as a *tabula rasa*, in which the colonial past and the accompanying social and developmental disadvantages can be forgotten. While the colonial sublime in *A River Creates an Industry* creates a conscious distinction between the colonized and colonizer, it also offers colonial subjects a vision of a possible technological future. Underlying this logic is the promise of infrastructure. Damming the Volta River, like it was done on the Saguenay, could transform the Gold Coast through modernization and once the Gold Coast harnesses the natural resource by technological means, the Gold Coast will be equal to Canada.

Upon appointment as prime minster, Kwame Nkrumah took up the Volta River dam project as a cornerstone of his vision of a new modern Ghana, but opposition leaders were quick to criticize the cost and benefits of the project. The British government's white paper on the Volta project in 1952 was criticized by the Gold Coast press because it did not include plans for training Africans, nor did it outline sufficiently how much revenue would be generated from the scheme that depended on loans to fund.[348] Bediako Poku demanded that the Gold Coast should own half of any aluminum smelter. Both opposition leaders J.B. Danquah and K.A. Busia questioned whether the scheme bound the Gold Coast in a neo-colonial relationship to British investors.[349]

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[348] Stephan F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 346.

[349] Stephan F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 357–48.

To push the project through Kwame Nkrumah sought approval from the people. To do so he launched a two-year long exhibition promoting the Volta Dam scheme. From 1954 to 1956 an exhibition on the Volta River Project travelled to over sixty towns and two million people.[350] The exhibition included a fifty-foot marquee, two cinema vans, tents, models, loudspeakers, and a staff of twenty. The exhibition would stay in a town for one week with three days of exhibition and four days of mounting and dismantling the equipment.[351] The program included lectures and cinema programs. Films like *Packaged Power* (Crawley Films, Ltd., 1951) that surveyed Alcan's global projects and *Man Has a Thousand Hands* which described Alcan's Kitimat-Kemano-Nechako project in British Columbia accompanied screenings of *A River Creates an Industry*.[352]

While the Volta River Project may have been dreamt with colonial extraction in mind, it quickly became instrumental in Nkrumah's nationalist vision of an industrially modern Ghana. The colonial sublime worked only when technological power remained in the hands of the colonizers and was only a mere promise of a future modernity filled with modern African infrastructure projects. However, by juxtaposing the Canadian dam project with animated depictions of the proposed Volta River Project in *A River Creates an Industry*, the possibility of an African-run industry was manifested visually. The splice, then, in *A River Creates an Industry* should not be read only as a symbol the potential international joint venture between Aluminum Limited of Canada and the Gold Coast, but the aggressive assertion by the Gold Coast of modern nationalism equal to that in other parts of the world. As Stephan Miescher put it, "A River Creates an Industry, along with the traveling exhibit's displays, raised the hopes and desires for a modern, industrialized, and independent nation of Ghana."[353]

A River Creates an Industry was created at the intersection of trans-national capitalism and globe-spanning media networks. Key to Kwame Nkrumah's political rhetoric, as we can see from the quote mentioned earlier, was the cultivation of a public sphere in which the Gold Coast—and later Ghanaian—citizen was involved in the democratic process of the state. It is also evidenced by Nkrumah's deep investment in the success of a national film unit to replace the colonial era Gold Coast Film Unit. Upon independence, just as the economic ties between Ghana and Aluminum Limited of Canada were breaking, the government of Ghana requested technical assistance from the National Film Board of Canada (NFBC). Hector Lemieux, a French-Canadian filmmaker who gained experience producing several films for the NFBC, was sent to Ghana to aid the Gold Coast Film Unit's transition into a national unit. As production manager of the Ghana Film Unit from 1958 to 1961, Lemieux had a significant impact on Ghanaian filmmaking during the early days of nation building. Not only did Lemieux reorganize film production, linking it more tightly to the needs of the Ministries, he explicitly worked to model the new Ghana Film Unit on the National Film Board of Canada. He proposed that the Ghana Film Unit, while state funded, should be autonomous from government management, in a relationship similar to National Film Board of Canada. The splice that joins the Canadian industrial film and the Gold Coast government-sponsored film is not only a physical manifestation of the economic relationship between Canadian industry and the Gold Coast

[350] Stephan F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 352.

[351] Stephan F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 352.

[352] Stephan F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 352.

[353] Stephan F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 353.

government, it is also symbolic of the mirroring work that Lemieux was doing to transform the Gold Coast Film Unit into a state filmmaking organization reminiscent of the National Film Board of Canada. The splice is a simile in the future conditional tense, between Canada and the Gold Coast: the Ghanaian film industry and its infrastructure could be like Canada's. Therefore, there is more in the splice than a national project. It also represents an aspiration for recognition in a global system mediated through media technologies.

The splice links the two locations like the dam links the two sides of a river. Between the splice the film moves from two different countries on different continents instantaneously. This cinematic movement facilitates the practice of Daniel Lerner's "mobile personality." In Lerner's schema, the movement from one location to the next encourages identification through introjection—or the incorporation of characteristics of the other into an idea of self because of a desire to be like them. The structure of the film suggests that the Gold Coast is like Canada and that a dam could make them even more similar.

The film shored up Nkrumah's policies by igniting the imaginations of the people. When the Akosombo Dam was eventually built, *A River Creates an Industry* delivered on its infrastructural promise even though it took ten more years before it would become operational and it would take even more time before the power that the dam generated benefited anyone other than those elites whose political weight was used to insure that electrification happened in their urban communities. The dam itself would never look the way it was proposed in *A River Creates an Industry*, but it did garner enough public support to silence opposition to the project. By the time a second traveling exhibition finished, Kwame Nkrumah successfully created a one-party state with a tightly controlled press that censored any disapproval to the dam. An enthusiastic press coupled with the popular spectacle of the mobile Volta River Project film exhibitions, helped make the dam a reality.

The distribution of images of infrastructural development under Kwame Nkrumah, especially publicity about the Akosombo dam, tied infrastructure projects to the maintenance of power by Nkrumah's political party. As Stephan Miescher put it, "Promoting the Volta project, Nkrumah's government was not only *seeing* like a state in the sense of James Scott (1998). Rather, by staging public spectacles Nkrumah's government *performed* like a state."[354] Preforming like a state became particularly critical at times when state power was questioned. Whether mobile cinema encouraged the mobility of Africans by soliciting their involvement in the World War II, encouraged the transformation of individuals through the adoption of Western medicine, or promised infrastructural development, with each mobile cinema show spectacular displays of media technologies and their infrastructural promises justified and solidified state power.

Cultivating the Remote Farmer

As seen with *A River Creates an Industry*, the projections of modernity depicted on screen in post-colonial state-sponsored films had just as much to do with consolidating state power as producing social change or promoting infrastructural development. The instructions they gave—how to wash your hands, how to build a house, how to cultivate your farm—were

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[354] These state performances were modern expressions of the colonial durbar which honored chiefs, governors, and district officers in displays of power. Stephan F. Miescher, "'Nkrumah's Baby': the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana, 1952–1966," *Water History* 6 (2014): 360-361.

never as important as the work the films did extending the visibility and justification of the state to rural audiences. The use of the 1952 colonial film *Kofi the Good Farmer* into the 1990s offers an example of how the value of colonial films went beyond the distribution of informational content.

In 1950 the Gold Coast colonial government published a fifty-two page pamphlet titled *Kofi the Good Farmer* to help instruct farmers in the proper methods of cocoa cultivation.[355] With the intent of increasing the production of affordable, quality beans for export to British and American companies, the story follows a farmer named Kofi as he demonstrates correct farming procedures.[356] Kofi's "good" farming permits him to receive a high price for the cocoa he grows while his friend Kwabena, who fails to follow colonial farming instructions, gets a low price for his beans. Depicted as a rural, uninformed farmer who only becomes successful because of his adoption of foreign farming techniques and his acceptance of the colonial government's authority to determine and control the cocoa grading scale, Kofi's story conveys a subtext of British colonial paternalism that institutionalizes a racial hierarchy similar to other colonial instructional texts of the time.

Yet, in spite of the booklet's early imperial agenda, Kofi continued to work in government service for another forty-five years, well after British colonial rule came to an end in 1957. In 1953, while then Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah was preparing the Gold Coast for independence, *Kofi* was adapted into a thirteen-minute instructional film of the same name.[357] In early 1957, during Nkrumah's administration, the booklet was republished in several Ghanaian languages (Akan, Ewe, Fanti).[358] Eventually, in 1987, amidst neo-liberal structural readjustment, the Ghana Cocoa Board republished the booklet yet again, with subtle but significant changes to the cocoa production technologies depicted and the costuming of the characters.[359] In addition to the circulation of the 1987 pamphlets, government film rental records for *Kofi the Good Farmer* show that he was being used to instruct in Accra and Kumasi as late as 1995.

While the 1953 Gold Coast Film Unit film catalogue highlights *Kofi the Good Farmer*'s educational content over its narrative qualities—describing *Kofi* as the demonstration of the "correct method[s] of harvesting, drying, fermenting and grading of cocoa"—by looking at the various iterations of *Kofi* across and beyond the colonial period, it is *Kofi*'s effective reconstitution of the state in moments of crisis far exceeds the usefulness of his farming instruction.[360] Like *A River Creates an Industry*, *Kofi* performed the state. As the African colony became the independent nation-state, *Kofi the Good Farmer* may have been transformed into a nationalist story, but *Kofi* also continued to depict the unequal relationship, initiated during colonialism, between the rural immobile subaltern and the development state. *Kofi the Good Farmer* was more than a colonial film; through its persistent use and reuse by the state, it also became an articulation of the constitutive practices of the African post-colony.[361]

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[355] Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board, *Kofi the Good Farmer* (Accra: The Public Relations Department, 1950).
[356] At this time, British confectionery company, Cadbury, was not only invested in the Gold Coast cocoa industry, they were also making industrial films in Gold Coast. *Drums for Holiday* (Arthur R. Taylor, 1950) is a key example of the overlap between the global cocoa industry and filmmaking in the Gold Coast.
[357] *Kofi the Good Farmer* (Gold Coast Film Unit, 1953).
[358] Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board, *Kofi the Good Farmer (In Ashanti Twi, Fante and Ewe)* (Accra: Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board, 1957).
[359] Ghana Cocoa Board, *Kofi the Good Farmer* (Accra: Cocoa Services Division, 1987).
[360] *Films from the Gold Coast 1949–1953* (London: British Film Institute, 1953).
[361] Acknowledging the "intertwined histories" of Britain and India during late colonialism, Priya Jaikumar's attention to contestation and hegemony in late colonial cinema is a model approach for thinking about *Kofi the Good*

Kofi started his career in government service in 1950 with the publication of the booklet *Kofi the Good Farmer.* He was employed to raise the overall quality of Gold Coast cocoa by instructing rural farmers on suitable cocoa harvesting and processing, and by explaining the new cocoa grading process that was designed to increase the quality of cocoa. Cocoa was the Gold Coast's principal export and in the early years of production its quality was poor. During the 1948–49 season, the year before *Kofi the Good Farmer* was published, only 14.4 percent of the total cocoa produced in Ghana was graded as the highest quality (Grade I). By the 1949–50 season the amount of Grade I cocoa had nearly doubled to 27.3 percent.[362] Throughout the 1950s Grade I cocoa continued to constitute around half of the total cocoa produced.[363] The overwhelming change in the quality of cocoa at about the same time Kofi began instructing suggests his success as a development tool. However, historian Benjamin Acquaah identifies two other possible reasons for the improvement of cocoa quality during the 1950–51 season: exceptional weather, and the professionalization of graders and the grading process.[364] As Acquaah point out, "good farming" isn't an isolated process that can result from an individual's diligent implementation of a set of methods; external factors like weather and the competence of agricultural extension staff all contribute to the productivity of a farm. Yet for colonial administrators, the economic and social development of Africa was perceived to rest on the transformation of uneducated individual Africans.

Written in plain English and accompanied with large illustrations, *Kofi the Good Farmer* was produced by the Gold Coast colonial government to provide legible and clear instruction to rural cocoa farmers. However, the large colorful images and the simple diction address its audience as if they were children pointing to the pathological paternalism underlying colonialist discourse in which Africans were perpetually infantilized.[365] Kofi, a malleable, hardworking, meticulous, obedient, and thankful imperial subject, has only become economically successful because he has adopted and mastered foreign cocoa production methods and technologies. Within the text Kofi symbolizes the promise that education offers—economic prosperity equal to that of Europeans—but through his acceptance of the colonial government's authority to determine and control the cocoa grading scale, his good farming also reinforces fundamental inequality between cocoa farmers and the colonial state. Kofi is depicted as having command over his cocoa farm and his family, but his power and pride is authorized by the British colonial system. Colonial texts like *Kofi the Good Farmer* encourage a sense of locally sanctioned agency and power within a larger structure of colonial domination.

Farmer as a "contention *between* a fragmenting empire and nascent nation, as well as *within* them." However, unlike the films Jaikumar considers, *Kofi the Good Farmer* spans nearly half a decade of use by the state, well beyond a colonial transitional period. Thus, its place "between" British colonial and Ghanaian governments is decidedly more complicated. See Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the end of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

[362] T.M. Kodwo Mercer, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board Fifth Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 30th September 1952* (Accra: Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board, 1952), 4.

[363] Depending on sources, these numbers vary. Quality control from the Ministry of Agriculture Annual Reports show the Grade I cocoa for 1948/49 season coming in at 9.6 percent, which is much less than the 14.4 percent touted by the Cocoa Board. However, both sources indicate around half of the crop was Grade I by 1950.

[364] Benjamin Acquaah, *Cocoa Development in West Africa: The Early Period with Particular Reference to Ghana* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1999), 62.

[365] The paternalism inherent in the style and simple diction of the *Kofi the Good Farmer* booklet is made apparent by the fact that contemporary libraries identify *Kofi* as "juvenile literature" in their catalogues. See University of California, New York Public Library, and WorldCat for examples.

On the surface this story demonstrates how to farm correctly, but it also demands dutiful behavior from farmers at a moment in Ghana's history when cocoa farmers were politically motivated against the colonial state. Kofi started his career as an instructor when rural cocoa farmers' discontent with the colonial government's handling of Swollen Shoot—a cocoa disease spread by mealybugs that began ravaging farms in the late 1930s—were politicized by growing nationalist political parties.[366] Thus, Kofi's educational campaigns were not only designed to teach new grading techniques; Kofi was also there to assure farmers that colonial policies on cocoa were made on the behalf of farmers.

With cocoa production around 70% of the Gold Coast's total exports in 1935, the 1936 discovery of Swollen Shoot threatened to devastate the Gold Coast economy.[367] Once a tree was infected, the disease would rapidly reduce the yield of cocoa each year. Since there was no known cure for the disease, stopping the spread of Swollen Shoot was imperative. The colonial government recommended immediate removal of the diseased trees as the primary means to stop the spread of infection.

Most farmers, however, choose not to cut out diseased trees unless their farms had already severely suffered from the virus because, as Francis K. Danquah argues, the rise in world cocoa prices after World War II made it more cost effective for cocoa farmers to keep their trees producing as long as they could.[368] In response to a lack of cooperation with government recommendations, the colonial government passed the *Swollen Shoot Disease of Cocoa Order Number 148 of December 1946*, which ordered farmers to remove all infected trees and gave government-appointed farm inspectors the power to enter all plantations and destroy infected trees at their discretion. However, the government agriculture officers were never properly staffed leading the Agricultural Department to hire untrained groups to do the cutting. These "cut-out gangs" often misidentified healthy trees for infected ones and cut out more trees than needed. Cocoa farmers began to mistrust the project feeling personally affronted by the colonial policies. In response they organized their resistance to the cut-out polices through farmers' unions and cocoa farming associations.[369]

Around the time that farmers in rural communities were protesting the state's Swollen Shoot procedures, anti-colonial political parties were gaining purchase in urban centers. Dr. J.B. Danquah, one of the founding members the first nationalist party, United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), saw the farmer's discontent with the government's Swollen Shoot policies as a useful issue to rally cocoa farmer support for independence. Farmers who felt that the colonial government's Swollen Shoot policies disregarded their interests saw self-rule as a useful alternative.[370]

Growing unrest toward Swollen Shoot eradication polices found a political outlet in the 1948 Accra riots. On February 28, 1948 Gold Coast World War II veterans marched on the colonial seat of government at Christiansborg Castle to demand the pensions they were promised

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[366] Francis K. Danquah, "Rural Discontent and Decolonization in Ghana, 1945–1951," *Agricultural History* 68, no. 1 (1994): 1–19.

[367] Benjamin Acquaah, *Cocoa Development in West Africa: The Early Period with Particular Reference to Ghana* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1999), 71.

[368] Francis K. Danquah, "Rural Discontent and Decolonization in Ghana, 1945–1951," *Agricultural History* 68, no. 1 (1994): 3.

[369] Francis K. Danquah, "Rural Discontent and Decolonization in Ghana, 1945–1951," *Agricultural History* 68, no. 1 (1994): 8.

[370] Francis K. Danquah, "Rural Discontent and Decolonization in Ghana, 1945–1951," *Agricultural History* 68, no. 1 (1994): 19.

during wartime. Government soldiers met their demands by firing into the crowd of protestors. As a response, passionate riots broke out across the city eventually extending to rural towns in the cocoa growing Eastern region. After the riots died down in Accra, the violence continued in the cocoa region against the enforced cutting of diseased cocoa trees. As a result, the compulsory removal of diseased trees was suspended in April of 1948.[371] However, colonial officials refused to take farmers' concerns seriously. The Watson Report claimed that the opposition to cutting down infected cocoa trees was "politically inspired." The report states that, "No complaints about the methods used were received until the late summer [of 1947] and it was not until January, 1948, that serious opposition arose as a result of political agitation."[372] Dr. Danquah famously stated before the 1948 Watson Committee of Enquiry that, "the government's policy for the eradication of CSSV [Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus] disease was scientifically sound but politically inexpedient."[373]

Kofi the Good Farmer appeared at this tumultuous time to educate farmers about cocoa production for the colonial state. The absence of Swollen Shoot in the narrative shifted the conversation away from highly politicized and controversial policies to aspects of cocoa farming that were readily agreed upon: the harvesting, fermenting, drying, and grading of the beans. Kofi—the imagined innocent and simple rural subject whose personal transformation into a "good farmer" through his diligent mimicry of colonial instruction—maintains a fantasy of flawless and apolitical colonial development.

In 1953, the Gold Coast colonial government produced the thirteen-minute film version of *Kofi the Good Farmer*, which utilized the good farmer/bad farmer narrative structure. To illustrate suitable farming techniques, colonial films often relied on heavy-handed fictional narratives that juxtaposed a "good" farmer with a "bad" farmer. In these narratives the "good" farmer successfully implements modern colonial farming techniques and is rewarded with higher profits, while the "bad" farmer's laziness and indifference to colonial instruction results in the failure of his crops. This narrative structure can be seen in agricultural films made across the colonies—*Fuseni's Cash Crop* (Gold Coast Film Unit, 1953), *The Two Farmers* (Central African Film Unit, 1948), and *Farmer Brown Learns Good Dairying* (Jamaica Film Unit, 1952). These films circulated widely across the British African colonies.

Unlike the colonial-era booklet, the film *Kofi the Good Farmer* was produced at a time of transition between semi-self-rule and independence. The nationalist leader, Kwame Nkrumah, was elected as prime minister in 1951, one year after the publishing of *Kofi the Good Farmer* booklet and two years before the production of the film in 1953. Yet the methods of harvesting, fermenting, and drying cocoa are identical between the film and the instructional booklet and the booklet's settings and costumes are uncannily replicated in the film's mise-en-scène. Kofi wears the same pinkish-red polo shirt, has the same 1950s part in his hair, and the same bushy mustache. Kofi's wife and son also appear in the film wearing similar clothing and accessories to those in the 1950 booklet. The staging and composition of most of the film's scenes replicate the book bringing the colonial images "to life" in moving image form.

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[371] Colonial Office: Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances in the Gold Coast (Watson Commission, 1948), June 1948, CO 964, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[372] Colonial Office: Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances in the Gold Coast (Watson Commission, 1948), June 1948, CO 964, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[373] Francis K. Danquah, "Rural Discontent and Decolonization in Ghana, 1945–1951," *Agricultural History* 68, no. 1 (1994): 11.

The adoption of the *Kofi* narrative by Nkrumah's administration parallels their continuation of colonial Swollen Shoot policies and the focus on the education of rural farmers as a means for cocoa productivity. After criticizing colonial policy and encouraging farmer agitation and anger toward the insensitive colonial Swollen Shoot policies, once elected Kwame Nkrumah reinstituted the same methods for dealing with the epidemic by recommending that all infected cocoa be cut out. On April 4, 1951 Nkrumah declared to the Legislative Assembly:

> We must not play with something on which the future prosperity of our country depends. I want to make it quite clear that scientists have so far produced no effective treatment for Swollen Shoot other than cutting out. The Government therefore must accept cutting out as the only possible treatment unless science can produce a better one.[374]

However, Nkrumah offered considerably more compensation for each infected tree that was removed. Records show that after Nkrumah took office the total yearly amount paid out to farmers who destroyed infected trees and replanted doubled from approximately five hundred thousand in 1950–51 to over one million pounds during the 1951–52 season. By the 1953–54 season that number had doubled again—the Gold Coast Marketing Board was paying farmers over two million pounds for the Swollen Shoot Rehabilitation project.[375]

While the duplication of the booklet's narrative in the film seems to signify the continuation of colonial policy by the Nkrumah administration, there are significant changes between the 1950 booklet and the film. The most notable departure from the booklet's narrative is the development of Kwabena (the "bad" farmer) as a more significant character in the film. In the booklet Kofi hypothetically questions the cocoa grade he receives while in the film it is Kwabena who is resistant and skeptical of the grade he is given. While originally seeming to fulfill the common good versus bad instructional genre, Kwabena's "bad" character is arguably the most likable. Kwabena may be likened to the lovable antics of Ananse, a trickster character in traditional Ghanaian storytelling whose schemes to "get to the top" often backfire. Like Ananse, Kwabena's attempt to reap the benefits of work that he has not done is ultimately unsuccessful. Kwabena is seen visually contesting his cocoa's grade with numerous officials, but as the voiceover explains—"If Kwabena is not pleased with the outcome, he can send it to the district cocoa affairs director"—his arguments are conditional. Visually, each time he addresses a more prominent government official he becomes more outlandishly emphatic until eventually the final verdict of the district director settles the matter. Kwabena's obvious bad behavior codes his hypothetical arguments as exaggeratedly inappropriate and thus offers audiences comedic relief to an otherwise drab and moralizing tale without tarnishing Kwabena's character. Kwabena becomes Africanized in the Ananse tradition corroborating Odunton's claims that Gold Coast Film Unit films follow "traditional pattern of story-telling" and spoke in a way "familiar to indigenous African culture."[376]

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[374] Appendix I paragraph 2, of *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Existing Organization and Methods for the Control of Swollen Shoot Disease by the Compulsory Cutting Out of Infected Cocoa Trees*, ADM 5/3/76, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana. As quoted in Francis K. Danquah, "Sustaining a West African Cocoa Economy: Agricultural Science and the Swollen Shoot Contagion in Ghana, 1936–1965," *African Economic History*, no. 31 (2003): 55–56.

[375] G.K. Amegbe, *The Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board Seventh Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 30th September 1954* (Accra: Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board, 1955): 4.

[376] G.B. Odunton, "One Step Ahead," *Colonial Cinema* 8, no. 2 (1950): 30–31.

In addition to adding African story-telling techniques to the Kofi narrative, *Kofi the Good Farmer* was the first Gold Coast Film Unit film to be made entirely in an indigenous language. Making the film in Twi goes against the production methods of most colonial filmmaking at that time. Typically, colonial instructional films were made in English and then translated live to non-English speaking audiences through a Mobile Cinema Commentator. The Gold Coast Film Unit's choice to record in Twi limited the films reception in other cocoa growing colonies, but demonstrated the government was dedicated to the development of the Gold Coast cocoa farmer. The Twi dialect used for the film's voiceover came from the Akwapim region, the region where cocoa growing originated in Ghana and the region with the most damage done by Swollen Shoot. Akwapim is also where violence against cutting out programs was the most pronounced, therefore producing "good farmers" in that region was of particular importance to the new state.[377] In this way Kofi was again used to assuage resistance to Swollen Shoot eradication. While the story of *Kofi the Good Farmer* never lost its colonial origins, the production of the film with Twi narration repackaged Kofi as an African nationalist. Continuing with the general Africanization of Kofi, in 1957 the same year as Ghana's independence, the original booklet was translated into Ashanti Twi, Akwapim Twi, Fante, and Ewe with no changes to the story or images.[378] With the promise of Africa's new state, Kofi's colonial message was transformed. Kofi was re-envisioned as the ideal rural citizen whose good farming would contribute to Ghana's success.

As we have seen, Kofi may have been born in the Gold Coast, but he lived through independence and into the nationalist era led by Kwame Nkrumah. He also served the Ghanaian government throughout various military dictatorships after the National Liberation Council 1966 coup of Kwame Nkrumah and on into the Fourth Republic of Jerry John Rawlings. *Kofi the Good Farmer* continued to be shown to Ghanaian farmers by the government as an instruction tool into the early 1990s, well beyond Ghana's Independence in 1957. Early film rental records for *Kofi the Good Farmer* have been lost, but later records indicate that the film was shown in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Ghana Armed Forces, a hospital in Accra, private individuals, and government information officers in Northern Ghana, locations all notable for their lack of cocoa farming. This suggests that Kofi's lesson did little to teach farming methods in that period. The rental of *Kofi* by these diverse institutions in the 70s and 80s may be because Ghanaian film production had slowed, and new films were unavailable. However, to only read *Kofi* as a colonial instruction film is to miss the way his story continued to have meaning to diverse audiences in post-colonial Ghana.

In 1987 in an effort to increase steadily falling cocoa production rates, the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) revived Kofi's career as part of a major campaign designed to invigorate the

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[377] Another possible reason for Akwapim Twi soundtrack is the long history of colonial instruction and research at the Aburi botanical gardens, located in the Akwapim region not far from Accra. Aburi was used as an agricultural training center for colonial officers to give local farmers supplies and advice on proper cocoa farming techniques. Additionally, the Akwapim region is closer to Accra than the Ashanti region (the primary region of cocoa production) meaning the transportation of the crew and film equipment to the region would have been relatively easy in comparison.

[378] Efforts to translate the *Kofi The Good Farmer* booklet into Twi had been in process since 1951 when the Department of Social Welfare urged the Cocoa Marketing Board to translate *Kofi the Good Farmer* into Twi as part of an effort to increase rural literacy. See Gold Coast Department of Social Welfare, *Plan for Mass Literacy and Mass Education* (Accra: Scottish Mission Book Depot Printing Department, 1951), 17 and Imoru Egala, *The Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board Eleventh Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 30th September 1958* (Accra: Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board, 1959), 10.

cocoa industry. In May 1987, four cinema vans were launched at a special ceremony at Assin Fosu in Ghana's Central Region. Education teams made up of staff from Ghana's Public Relations Department, the Cocoa Services Division (a subdivision of COCOBOD), and the Produce Buying Co. Ltd. toured with the mobile cinema vans in the six cocoa and coffee growing regions of Ghana. Not only was the campaign designed to "teach farmers the accepted current agronomic practices and effective systems of pest and disease control" but public screenings of *Kofi the Good Farmer* and educational demonstrations were also used as public forums to give farmers the opportunity to voice their concerns to the Ghana Cocoa Board management.[379] As part of the general campaign the Ghana Cocoa Board republished the *Kofi the Good Farmer* pamphlet with minor but significant changes. The pamphlet was reprinted again in 1989 and the Ghana Cocoa Board continued to screen *Kofi the Good Farmer* until 1995.

Revamping the *Kofi* booklet was undoubtedly more economically feasible than producing a new film. But according to A.A. Gyamfi, the executive director of the Cocoa Services Division in 1987, the cocoa-farming methods explained in *Kofi the Good Farmer* were still "modern and scientific."[380] Comparing the images from the 1950 booklet, the 1953 film, and the 1987 booklet, what becomes apparent is that while the farming methods stay the same from one version to the next, the farming equipment does change. The scales used to weigh cocoa were updated in 1987 with contemporary models and instead of taking home a bag of money to his family Kofi takes home an Akuafo check.

The replacement of the bag of money with the Akuafo check denotes structural shifts in Ghana's agricultural economy without straightforwardly addressing the issues and benefits of those institutional changes within the text. In 1982 the Akuafo ("farmer" in Akan) Cheque System was started to encourage cocoa farmers to save their money in rural banks and to maintain better control over the supply of money in the economy. In the past farmers would be paid in cash or government IOUs but the government did not always have the funds to pay back IOUs when farmers wanted the money.[381] The cheque system was implemented to correct the problems that arose with the IOUs. In 1987 the COCOBOD indicated that farmers had, "undisputed confidence in the Akuafo cheque system. The cash flow is continuous and there are over 280 commercial and rural banks which service farmers."[382] However, the system, with all its benefits proved troublesome in practice. In 1988 the COCOBOD reported that they were paying high interest rates to banks because funds were not available to pay farmers until enough cocoa had been sold on the international market. Banks were reaping the benefits of the new system at the expense of the government.[383] Rather than tackle the concerns that farmers may have with the system, or explain how it worked, *Kofi the Good Farmer* normalized the Akuafo system within the story, thus diverting the responsibility of African development from national and international political organizations and economic institutions onto the development of individual farmers through instruction.

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[379] Ghana Cocoa Board, *23rd Annual Report and Accounts for the Period Ending 30th September 1988* (Accra: Ghana Cocoa Board, 1988), 9.

[380] A.A. Gyamfi, "Forward," *Kofi the Good Farmer* (Accra: Cocoa Services Division, 1987).

[381] Bruce H. Dunson and Kofi Dadzie, *A Proposal to Undertake a Quantitative Analysis of the Akuafo Cheque System* (Texas: Prairie View A&M University, 1986), 3.

[382] Ghana Cocoa Board, *22nd Annual Report and Accounts for the Period Ending 30th September, 1987* (Accra: Ghana Cocoa Board, 1987), 19.

[383] Ghana Cocoa Board, *23rd Annual Report and Accounts for the Period Ending 30th September, 1988* (Accra: Ghana Cocoa Board, 1988), 6.

These changes to *Kofi* are important, but there are other striking alterations that reveal details about the relationship between the colonial subject and post-colonial citizenship. The clothing in all versions of *Kofi the Good Farmer* demonstrates intrinsic attitudes about class, power, and race. Thus, the subtle changes in wardrobe in the 1980s booklet come to signify significant changes in the state's conception of the Ghanaian farmer, his family, and their relationship to the government. Certain aspects of costuming stay the same across adaptations. Kofi maintains the same hairstyle and mustache as he wore in the 1950 pamphlet through to the 1987 publication. His wife Ama wears the same head-wrap and skirt. Even Kofi's son and daughters seem timelessly stuck wearing the same fashions.

Changes in the government official uniforms however, signify changing power relations. In the 1950 pamphlet and the 1953 film the colonial officials wear uniforms and hats that signal their rank. The buying agent who is without a hat is the lowest ranking governmental official. The Produce Examiner is slightly more official looking, wears a soft hat. The Inspector of Produce for the district in the 1950 booklet is white, re-enforcing his ultimate authority, but by the time the film was made, Africans had replaced many British officials so the visualization of colonial rank needed to be maintained in other ways. In the film, the African Inspector of Produce is depicted wearing a typical wide-brimmed cloth-covered hard-hat—the pith helmet commonly associated with British colonial uniforms. The hat, resting snuggly on the new African government official, symbolically imbues him with colonial authority by donning him in colonial costume.

In the 1987 reprinting the formal uniforms of colonial government are dropped but the rank of government employees is maintained through other means. The buying agent is without a belt or watch and wears loafers, while the Produce Examiner wears a Rolex-style metal watch and dapper oxford-style shoes. While we cannot see the Inspector of Produce's shoes, he too wears a belt and wristwatch symbolic of upper-class fashion. But most striking is the Inspector of Produce's white button up shirt, which like a lingering afterimage seems to symbolically refer to the white man who previously filled the role in the 1950 and 1957 booklets. Thus, the assertion of power and authority within different levels of the state is not abandoned with colonialism. But, rather than signifying those relationships through government uniforms or the British pith helmet, power and status are enforced by global markers of class.

In the original 1950 booklet and the 1953 film, Kofi and his family are all visually marked as lower class through their clothing. Throughout the book when Kofi and his son harvest, ferment, and dry their cocoa they are barefoot and wear short-pants—each of which are signs of deprivation. The poor are barefoot and short pants are suitable attire only for schoolboys. It is notable then, that in 1987 Kofi has put on pants and new western style work boots. These changes in the 1987 booklet highlight the state's investment in portraying an empowered Ghanaian farmer.

It is easy to see *Kofi*'s reemergence in the period of structural readjustment as a sign of neo-colonialism. The 1983 Economic Recovery Program initiated by Jerry John Rawlings with the guidance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) started a new phase in Ghanaian history. By 1987 the government was divesting its assets into private hands at the same time that it began to rebuild economic infrastructure. The IMF and the World Bank funded the rehabilitation of parts of Ghana's industry namely mining, utilities, and agriculture. The cocoa industry's historic place as Ghana's most successful export crop made it a prime candidate for IMF and World Bank support. Interested in macroeconomic restructuring, the World Bank focused on the once flourishing cocoa industry even though food production at the time

contributed more to Ghana's overall gross domestic product. As a result Ghana spent more government money and aid on resources for export crops like cocoa while the total governmental budget for agriculture fell from 10 percent in 1983 to 4.2 percent in 1986 and down to 3.5 percent in 1988.[384]

On October 19, 1987, the president of the International Development Association proposed World Bank funding for a massive Cocoa Rehabilitation Project in Ghana.[385] The proposal was eventually passed in December 1987 but became effective in November 1988. Funding from partner organizations was not received in Ghana until 1989.[386] While actual funds from the World Bank and other lenders didn't enter Ghana until after the resurrection of *Kofi the Good Farmer* by the COCOBOD in 1987, the timing suggests that he was part of the COCOBOD's efforts to invigorate the sector and demonstrate to the farmer the importance of cocoa farming in the neo-liberal state.

The main goal of the Cocoa Rehabilitation project was to raise Ghana's production of cocoa to three hundred thousand tons, a level that was common in the early 1950s which could suggest a reason for the COCOBOD's return to *Kofi* whose 1950s origins are ripe with colonial nostalgia. Other goals, determined and outlined by the International Development Association, included a restructuring of the Cocoa Services Department, the wing of COCOBOD responsible for the training of farmers, distribution of farming inputs like fertilizers and sprays, and the inspection and identification of diseased trees. The restructuring of the department meant a reduction of extension facilities, firing of staff, and combining some local district offices of the Cocoa Services Department with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture extension facilities. In other words, the jobs of the government staff that educated farmers through publicity programs like the one in 1987 that revived *Kofi*, were threatened by neoliberal reform. The 1987 publicity campaign can be read then as part of a last effort by the Ghanaian state to show the relevancy of the Cocoa Services Department to Ghanaian farmers and outside economic funders like the World Bank.

While the thirty-seven-year-old methods that *Kofi* teaches may not have been outdated in 1987, farmers were not learning new methods from Kofi as evidenced from the problems that farmers expressed to COCOBOD staff during the 1987 publicity campaign. Farmers' main concerns were the high cost of insecticides, spraying machines, cutlasses, and tree pruners; inadequate supply of hybrid Swollen Shoot resistant seedlings; inadequate supply of spraying oil; the inferior quality of cutlasses supplied by the government; and the destruction of cocoa farms by timber contractors.[387] These concerns do not relate to the farming methods depicted in *Kofi the Good Farmer*: Kofi does not spray his cocoa trees, he does not use hybrid seedlings, nor does he have problems with timber contractors. But as A.A. Gyamfi writes in the foreword to the reprinting, "*Kofi the Good Farmer* is a revival of earlier prints which had made the Ghanaian cocoa farmer a kind of special breed."[388] The rebirth of *Kofi* is an effort to remind the Ghanaian cocoa farmer of their farming heritage as a "special breed" and to re-imagine the modern farmer through colonial nostalgia. *Kofi the Good Farmer* continued to be useful precisely because it did

[384] La Verle Berry, ed. *Ghana: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994).

[385] Barber B. Conable, *Memorandum and Recommendation of the President of the International Development Association to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Credit of SDR 31.3 Million to the Republic of Ghana for a Cocoa Rehabilitation Project* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1987).

[386] World Bank, *Ghana: Cocoa Rehabilitation Project* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1997).

[387] Ghana Cocoa Board, *22nd Annual Report and Accounts for the Period Ending 30th September 1987* (Accra: Ghana Cocoa Board, 1987), 9–10.

[388] A.A. Gyamfi, "Forward," *Kofi the Good Farmer* (Accra: Cocoa Services Division, 1987).

not speak directly to the conditions of farmers' lived experience. Instead, *Kofi* presented, at least for the state, a displacement of the pressures of global development reforms on national institutions, onto a romanticized rural citizen who is in perpetual need of developing through educational initiatives.

While in 1987 Kofi is coded as a modern farmer when he is in the fields, every time he goes to the market to have his beans graded by government employees, Kofi is once again "native." The juxtaposition between Kofi's African cloth and the government employees' wristwatches, slacks, button-up shirts, and other markers of global professionalism, produce visual reminders of insurmountable difference. These unofficial uniforms emphasize and maintain a strict visual divide between the rural citizen and the state, a distinction that the state cultivated. Farmers have been given shoes, a modern identity, and self-respect on the farm but when they face the state, structures of power constructed during colonialism reveal Kofi as forever rural and "traditional."

The changes that Kofi endures during his forty-five-year career as an agricultural instructor force us to question the assumption that the relationship between African cinema and colonial film is necessarily antagonistic. The 1987 booklet acts like a post-colonial amendment to the 1953 colonial film. The updated government pamphlet, distributed and read alongside the film, did work to patch over the film's colonial anachronisms but it did not significantly alter the film's structure. It is noteworthy that *Kofi* is revived in the neo-liberal moment, a moment when structural readjustment mimicked colonialist economic interests. One may assume that his amended reemergence during structural readjustment reveals the neo-colonial underpinnings of neo-liberalism reform, but *Kofi* is changed upon revival. His modern appearance establishes Kofi's transformation from empire's imagined ideal subject, barefoot and infantilized, into Ghana's modern citizen with the "high morale" that the Executive Director of the Cocoa Board assures will "increase their productivity."[389] Therefore, the 1987 booklet is not a patch or amendment to the film; like the Ghanaian government that was refashioned from colonial scaffolding, the booklet and the use of *Kofi* into the postcolonial moment arguably transforms *Kofi the Good Farmer* into a new and modern African work that is made of the same hybridity that is constitutive of the post-colony.

Kofi reemerges at moments when the state—colonial or independent—needs to assert itself. Whether it is to assuage political unrest, re-imagine the rural Ghanaian as a vital citizen in a newly independent nation state, or make itself relevant when economic policies of a neo-liberal Ghana threaten to minimize the role of government—Kofi's persistent instruction on the "correct method[s] of harvesting, drying, fermenting and grading of cocoa" is only a minor point in the lesson being taught.[390] More imperative is *Kofi*'s effort to establish the social relations that constitute "Africa's place-in-the-world."[391] By producing the idea of a persistently remote Ghanaian who is outside state infrastructure, continuously cut off from "progress" and awaiting transformation through media development, *Kofi* is both constitutive of and constituted by the state and the global development projects that structure world relations. Thus, the vestiges of colonialism in contemporary African political and social life are visible in Kofi's long employment as a government official and *Kofi*'s movement through time. *Kofi* did little to teach new methods of farming over his lengthy career, nor did his lessons provide farmers with the

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[389] A.A. Gyamfi, "Forward," *Kofi the Good Farmer* (Accra: Cocoa Services Division, 1987).
[390] *Films from the Gold Coast 1949–1953* (London: British Film Institute, 1953).
[391] James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) 23.

plows and fertilizers they requested. *Kofi* did, however, work to reinforce state power in times of political uncertainty.

Mobile Infrastructure for "People on the Ground"

While early colonial films encouraged Africans to develop their own infrastructure projects through the cultivation of modern subjects and the use of colonial films in the post-colonial era legitimated the post-colonial state in moments of uncertainty, mobile cinema's relationship to infrastructure in Ghana was more than virtual promises. Mobile cinema constituted its own media infrastructure. Infrastructures are "built networks" that enable the movement and exchange of commodities, people, or knowledge across space.[392] Despite its mobility, mobile cinema was just as material as fiberoptic cables, but it relied on the roads that connected a network of villages and towns.

Automobility was critical for mobile cinema to function. Cinema vans were designed to withstand the rough, unpaved terrain to get to inland villages that were not accustomed to automobile traffic. Photographs depicted the durability and spectacular mobility of the vans as they traversed the landscape. When roads were poorly maintained or non-existent, villagers felt neglected by the state. For example, on August 9, 1947 Togbi Kwasi Abliza III, the president of Tongu Confederacy of the Native Authority Council wrote to the Pubic Relation Department in Accra to ask for a "static cinema" because without roads connecting their territory the they were not able to enjoy the benefits of the mobile cinema van education. He wrote:

> It is regrettable that up to this present day many people in the Tongu Confederacy have not realised the importance of the Mobile Cinema Vans because we all live along the Volta River and there is no motor road in our District except the Launch. That gathering from the fact that The Public Relations Department is responsible for the operation of these Vans in the Gold Coast the Cinema Vans educate the masses in pictures specially during the second wide world war, is now counted upon as one of the best education, or the great task of educating the people in this Country by its Mobile Cinema Vans….That it is a laborious pains to us of not deriving the benefit, whilst we are also the British Subjects. That I humbly request that Static Cinema be established at Volo by the Government to fill our hearts with joy as the distance between Ada and Akuse is too great to mention.[393]

The mobile outdoor screen brought moving images to remote areas without permanent theaters, and portable generators brought mobile (and temporary) electricity to towns unaccustomed to its marvels. Like contemporary mobile phone assisted banking, mobile banking systems accompanied cinema vans to provide rural Africans without access to a bank the means to save. Togbi Kwasi Abliza III's plea illustrates how mobile cinema vans may have "comprised the architecture for circulation" but rather than transforming the environment in which they appear, they relied on other infrastructures (roads, cleared spaces for temporary cinemas,

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[392] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, 2013: 328.
[393] "For the Information of the Government" 9 August 1947. Letter from Togbi Kwasi Abliza III, the president of Tongu Confederacy of the Native Authority Council to the Pubic Relation Department in Accra. Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

temporary accommodations for cinema van operators and commentators) to build a flexible information network and participate in the politics of selective development.[394] Mobile cinema, and the various forms of mobile infrastructures that accompanied it, were a sign of the governments' ability to reach beyond urban centers to those members of the public in the far reaches of the empire. Inclusion in the network of cinema van screenings was felt as necessary for inclusion as British subjects especially when the lack of a static cinema resulted in the affective and embodied experiences of inequality.[395]

Even after colonialism ended, mobile cinema continued to be an important symbol of the Ghanaian state's investment in local communities. Cinema vans went on tour from February 2–18 in 1968 for the celebration of the two-year anniversary of the overthrow of Nkrumah. The cinema van that toured the Ho district, starting in Leprosarium and ending in Afifekope, gave a total of fourteen shows to an average audiences of 550. According to cinema commentator R.K. Ayim, "the crew took it upon themselves to explain the importance of that day and pointed out that it was on that day that Ghana was really reborn…The people were urged to enjoy the day with great jubilation and they assured the crew of celebrating the day with much happiness. The Film 'Thursday 24th February 1966' was greatly enjoyed by all and this made the memories of E.K. Kotota to be fresh in their minds." Cinema commentators, E.K. Danku and R.K. Ayim, and mobile cinema operator, G.K. Adiase reported that everywhere they went audiences appreciated the film shows and expressed their desire for more frequent visits. R.K. Ayim writes,

> In nearly all towns, the chiefs lamented over the long period of time it takes the Ministry of Information to give them a film show. Most chiefs expressed gratitude of the visit but urged that there should be more regular film shows since they would be at an easier position to express their views on the government and at the same time express their difficulties to the government through the van crew. Most towns took it for granted that they have not been given film shows because the government has neglected them.[396]

As Hannah Appel, Nikhil Anand, and Akhil Gupta note, "infrastructures are critical locations through which sociality, governance and politics, accumulation and dispossession, and institutions and aspirations are formed, reformed, and performed."[397] Here the cinema van show not only performed political allegiances toward the new government, but it also performed care as shown by the towns feeling neglected when the cinema van did not visit. It was at cinema van screenings that relations between the state and its citizens were enacted.

Mobile cinema also worked, as shown in the earlier examples, aesthetically to show the sublime power of the colonial state and support the democratic legitimacy of the post-colonial state. Material infrastructures are social, aesthetic, and political formations that effect

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[394] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, 2013: 328.
[395] Hannah Appel, Nikhil Anand, and Akhil Gupta, "Introduction: Temporality, Politics, and the Promise of Infrastructure," in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, eds. Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 3.
[396] R.K. Ayim, Summary Report on Cinema Van WR 5634 Which Toured Ho district on General Tour From 2nd To 18th February 1968. February 21, 1968. Cinema Section, Information Services Department, Accra, Ghana.
[397] Hannah Appel, Nikhil Anand, and Akhil Gupta, "Introduction: Temporality, Politics, and the Promise of Infrastructure," in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, eds. Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 3.

experiences of the everyday and anticipations of the future.[398] As such, mobile cinema was sustained by its ability to supply content in areas lacking critical infrastructures, while the mobile aesthetics of mobile cinema infrastructure contribute to the experience of mobility and modernity in everyday life.

Brian Larkin argues that infrastructure can be activated in the poetic mode. The poetic mode loosens infrastructural form from technical function. For example, the presence of infrastructure in the post-colonial African state has less to do with their purported function and more to do with representing the presence of infrastructure to signify satisfactory governance.[399] Mobile cinema vans in colonial Ghana performed the miracle of modernity the state hoped it could deliver without investing in permanent cinema facilities. The mobile cinema films offered promises of infrastructure that the form of mobile cinema materialized. But as mobile media its form was always promissory and intermittent, never offering the guarantee of civic inclusion that a static cinema could provide.

However, people living in small towns were able to exert pressure on mobile cinema operators to ask the government for development projects in their communities. As shown by the report from the 24th February celebration tour. Cinema commentator S.J. Oduno-Boateng and assistant cinema operator D.M. Koranteng returned from a three-week trek through the Eastern Region. Upon returning, the report they filed proposed that the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development immediately assist the people living in the Afram plains who were without water.[400]

Mobile cinema allowed government officials to engage with the public person to person. It was not only a movement of virtual windows onto the wider world, but a network forged between representatives of the state and local communities through interpersonal relations. The cinema van brought entertainment and instruction, and the opportunity of recognition from the state of local infrastructural need.

In 2011, the Ghana government's Information Services Department mobile cinema vans functioned much like they did before independence. A mobile cinema operator and a mobile cinema commentator ran each mobile cinema screening with their duties divided between the technical work and verbal translation. When they arrived in a village, they would begin by announcing over a loudspeaker the cinema show that would be held that evening. Instead of showing instructional films, they would screen a Nigerian movie on VCD. Once a large audience had formed and when the movie reached its climax, the cinema operator would stop the movie so that the commentator could present the public service announcement. Sometimes there would be a short documentary and pamphlets in support of the campaign, but in 2011 this was rare. After answering questions from the audience and recording their comments on the new policies, the operator would resume the movie. When the mobile cinema returned to its regional headquarters the commentator would compile attendance numbers, discussion comments and concerns, and general reactions to the government policies into a report that was sent to Information Services Department Head Office in Accra.

In a report from the Hohoe municipality a Regional Information Officer wrote, "As one of the responsibilities of every citizen to be fully abreast with Policies and Programs that are

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[398] Hannah Appel, Nikhil Anand, and Akhil Gupta, "Introduction: Temporality, Politics, and the Promise of Infrastructure," in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, eds. Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 3.

[399] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, 2013: 335.

[400] S.J. Oduno-Boateng, Report. March 12, 1968. Cinema Section, Information Services Department, Accra, Ghana.

undertaken by every Ruling Government, the above Public Education Campaign was conducted in the Hohoe Municipality for two weeks aimed at breaking the 'BARRIER' of information flow between the Government and the people on the ground."[401] In conversations with mobile cinema commentators they would discuss their role in connecting with "people on the ground." Historically this barrier was the physical lack of viable roads to reach remote areas in the interior and northern parts of Ghana. The cinema vans traversed these rough or nonexistent roads as a means of crossing the information barrier to reach rural Ghanaians and incorporate them into the new political system.

Today it is difficult to imagine this information barrier in the same way. Television and radio broadcasts span the country, and access to the Internet via mobile phone use is on the rise. However, in 2011 the government continued to highlight the distance between the "people on the ground" and the state, in order to display state authority through its ability to span those barriers with the use of mobile cinema technologies. Like the colonial government before them the Ghanaian state's performance of mobility became a central part of Ghanaian governance.

In early 2000s cinema van reports generated by the Information Services Department there is a surprising amount of attention given to the details of audiences' concerns. In a public education campaign about the 2010 national census, there is evidence that cinema van audiences reacted in mixed ways. Some were enthusiastic while others "snubbed the crew and made disparaging remarks about the current administration's failure to provide jobs for the people."[402] Regional Information officers list the names of the would be subaltern and explain their concerns about the renovation of their schools, where to acquire subsidized fertilizers, and how to obtain small loans to expand their businesses. This attention to the remote citizen or "the person on the ground" asks us to consider the radical democratic potential of this method of government communication.[403]

While public servants are supposed to represent themselves as apolitical at all times, politics often gets in the way when they are perceived as representing the party currently in power. This often manifests itself in communities mistaking the Information Services Department cinema van personnel as agents of the political party in power. This happens particularly in campaigns that are perceived as supporting the government like the campaign to explain the national budget. When cinema van crews have visited regions where the political affiliation of the community is with the opposition party, cinema vans crews have come under physical attack. Cinema van commentators have described knives being drawn on them, stones being thrown at the van, and being angrily yelled out of town.

The imagined physical embodiment of the state through the cinema vans allows the population to act out political frustrations against the state that may otherwise seem unreachable. When information officers discuss the relevancy of cinema vans today when there is a proliferation of other media technologies available, this people-to-people interaction is what they claim as the key advantage. With cinema van technology the idea is that voice of the government is brought to the people and the voice of the people is brought back to the government. Whether

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[401] Regional Information Officer, Information Services Department, HoHoe, *Summary Report on Public Education Campaign on Government Policies and Programmes held in May/June 2008 HoHoe Municipality*, June 16, 2008.
[402] Regional Information Officer, Information Services Department, Kumasi. *Second Week on Publicity Campaign on the 2010 National Population and Housing Census in Ejisu-Jauben*, September 22, 2010.
[403] However, as always with government bureaucracy there is an unsettled question about whether these reports were ever read. Cinema van commentators say that they have seen public toilets and roads built because of complaints filed in mobile cinema van reports. However, finding evidence of results beyond the antidotal remain elusive.

their voices are heeded or not it ever does anything beyond that is less important than the way in which citizens are included in a public performance of democracy, a performance that allows citizens to imagine a democracy where their voice matters even while their local needs may be ignored.

While broadcast media have been important for development in Africa, the mobile screen that characterizes mobile cinema and mobile phones offers a striking comparison between two types of mobile media from different eras. These devices are not only connected through shared content, but they also both offer a particular type of democratic engagement. Yet, the anticipation by the Ghanaian government that mobile phone technologies will reach even further into the remote than the anachronistic mobile-cinema-van technology (perhaps bolstered by excitement coming from international NGOs), legitimizes the idea of the development state by recapitulating and reaffirming the existence of the marginalized citizen. The mobility of these media contributes to their interactivity and an increasingly individualized relationship to capitalist means of development. Unlike the mobile cinema vans, which provided citizens with the opportunity to interact directly with government employees and describe their communities needs, mobile phone and online communication changes the relationship between the citizen and the state. The development of the community through public infrastructure (better roads, more hospitals, stable power, and clean water), which would increase the mobility of individuals, capital, and goods between cities and villages, is minimized for the transformation, edification, and development of the individual through the increasing mobility of information and content. The movement of information without the advocacy of mobile cinema personal continues a characteristic of mobile media infrastructure started during the colonial era. However, the development resulting from the social relations created and retained by mobile cinema contributed to the spectacular power of mobile media to create social change. New media would continue to signify social change with Ghana's new sense of nationalism after independence. Television, the newest media of the time, would become a technology that signaled a new future for Ghana and Africa.

Chapter Three
"This is Ghana Television": An Afrofuturist History of Television in Ghana

On the Fantastic Four's first visit to Black Panther's technologically advanced African homeland in the 1966 issue of *Fantastic Four*, a linguist for King T'Challa (the Black Panther's alter ego) announces to the visitors that, "Though the *Wakanda tribe* lives in the tradition of their forefathers, they possess modern *super-scientific wonders* we can only marvel at! There's incredible mystery here—and only the *Black Panther* himself knows all the answers!"[404] In addition to interpreting King T'Challa's message for the Fantastic Four, the linguist seems also to be laying out the organizing principles that will define the *Black Panther* series for the comic book reader. As an introduction to Black Panther and the Wakandan people, the linguist promises the reader familiar stereotypes of mysterious African traditions *and* the fantastical, scientific wonders of a technologically advanced society.

The linguist's verbal juxtaposition of the old—the "tradition of their forefathers"—and the new "modern super-scientific wonders" is reiterated on the following page with remarks made by members of the Fantastic Four team. Acting as surrogates for the reader, the Fantastic Four are given a ceremonial welcome and then introduced to Black Panther through a personalized tour of T'Challa's jungle mansion. Spotting a wall of state-of-the-art audio recording and playback technologies, Reed Richards (Mister Fantastic) muses, "Still *another* example of the old and the new, darling! Look at that elaborate *stereo* music system—complete with *tape recorder*!" Sue Richards (The Invisible Woman) incredulously adds to her husband's observation, "I just can't believe we're in the heart of the jungle!"[405] The surprise that Sue Richards registers at finding new audio recording technology in the heart of the jungle should, by now, be familiar. As earlier chapters have shown, the visual spectacle of the newest media technologies in the wild jungle alongside performances of "ancient African traditions," relies on a long-established trope in Western colonial discourse about media technologies in Africa. Unlike Osa Johnson's submissive dancing pygmies or the colonial sublime of early mobile cinema shows, T'Challa has shown mastery over the technologies he possesses. Yet the narrative attention to the spectacular juxtaposition of the old and new in T'Challa's home by the Fantastic Four allows the reader to linger through the white gaze of the characters at the impossible fantasy of African technological superiority.

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[404] In the phrase, "we can only marvel" there is a small wink to Marvel comics' singular role in bringing Black Panther into existence. Stan Lee, "The Black Panther!" *Fantastic Four* 1, no. 52, July 1966: 1.

[405] Stan Lee, "The Black Panther!" *Fantastic Four* 1, no. 52, July 1966: 2.

Fig. 24: Stan Lee, "The Black Panther!" *Fantastic Four* 1, no. 52, July 1966: 2.

"The Black Panther!" issue number 52 of the *Fantastic Four* series hit the stands in July 1966, thus introducing *Black Panther*'s technologically advanced Wakanda to the world a year after Ghana's first television broadcast. Unlike the origins of radio and cinema which were initiated under British colonial rule, the first official Ghanaian television broadcast on July 31, 1965 came out of a radical time when Africans across the continent were boldly and creatively inventing systems of governance intended to contest imperialism and racial inequality. Alongside the formation of the new state, the new medium was designed to help realize the vision of African socialism promoted by Kwame Nkrumah. When Ghana Television began it defied assumptions about Africa and technology. A new state of the art television station, run by an all-black staff, was a very real corrective to an Africa the imperialist world had imagined to that point. Sue Richardson's amazement about finding advanced media technology "in the heart of the [African] jungle" in 1966, it turns out, was a fantasy that pretended that African technology could only exist in the Marvel universe, when in fact newly independent African countries across the continent were quickly adopting and building new media communication systems that dwarfed T'Challa's stereo.

While Ryan Coogler's 2018 *Black Panther* also offer an outsider's view of Wakanda through the white CIA agent, the audience's first vision of Wakanda comes through the perspective of T'Challa who is returning home after a successful mission freeing captured Nigerian school girls.[406] The first glimpses of Wakanda T'Challa sees from below his flying

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[406] This scene is a reference to the April 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls by the terrorist group Boko Haram from a secondary school in Chibok, Nigeria. When the Nigerian military failed to find the schoolgirls, parents and activists carried out demonstrations in Abuja calling on the government and military to find and save the schoolgirls. The hashtag "#bringbackourgirls" was started by a Nigerian lawyer on April 23, 2014 and soon spread globally. What started as a referendum on the incompetency of Goodluck Jonathan's government, became a global call for women's rights. Unfortunately, the celebrity of the girls gave Boko Haram leverage and increased the duration of the students' captivity. In *Black Panther* the impotence of one African government is exchanged for Wakanda's quick and successful management of a comparable situation. Black Panther is the African superhero that the Chibok schoolgirl's parents wanted but could not find in the Nigerian government or military.

airship are herds of sheep roaming rocky grasslands and riders on horseback cheering his return. The view matches the cultivated image Wakanda has projected to the outside world for centuries—that it is a pastoral country riddled with poverty. This image doubly fits within the diegesis of the film and global misconceptions of Africa as a technologically poor continent in contemporary mass media. The illusion Wakanda has projected about itself is shattered when T'Challa flies into what looks like a mountain but is revealed to be a holographic image camouflaging a vibrant city. At that moment T'Challa confesses, "This never gets old." Soon they are flying over the city of Wakanda with its vibranium-run transportation and communications systems. Here, the technology revealed in Coogler's Wakanda is still spectacular, but its presentation through T'Challa permits the viewer to approach the technological wonders of the nation as a welcome return to the familiar rather than a marvel to be met with skepticism or surprise.

In Coogler's *Black Panther*, the signs of traditional Africa in the mise-en-scène—clothing, architecture, and safari landscapes—become the symbolic register with which contemporary African American and pan-African identities can coalesce around a shared Afro-future filled with technological wonders. Here signs of Africa are not evocative of the primitive past as they are in the juxtapositions of Africa and new media technology in initial contact scenes like the gramophone scene in Martin Johnson's *Congorilla*. Afrofuturism, coined by Mark Dery in 1994, refers to "speculative fiction that treats African American themes and addresses African American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future."[407] Dery conjures up the problem of history as the precise question addressed by Afrofuturism: "Can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures?"[408]

Afrofuturism itself seems like an oxymoronic word, where "Afro" implies a primitive past that appears to negate the speed of modern "futurism," or at least draw it into relief.[409] Remarking on Afrofuturism Kodwo Eshun writes, "science fiction was never concerned with the future, but rather with engineering feedback between its preferred future and its becoming present."[410] In other words Afrofuturism is time travel in the service of forming a more perfect present, not unlike the proverbial Ghanaian Sankofa bird.[411] But the conjoining of "Afro" (a presumed past tense) with "futurism" (future tense) disrupts models of progressive linear time. Instead, the construction of the compound Afrofuturism—where "Afro" precedes "futurism" and thus qualifies, controls, and defines the future—works to deconstruct the hegemonic semiotics of its constituent parts, turning the spectacle of juxtaposition, which has long worked as a tool for racial capital, into something more akin to its critique.

In a review of *Black Panther* (2018), *The New Yorker* writer Jelani Cobb elucidates that the "Africa" in it is just as imaginary as the "dark continent" "without a history" that was invented by white men to justify colonialism hundreds of years ago, but with a difference.

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[407] Mark Dery, "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel A. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose," in *Flame Wars*, ed. Mark Dery (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 180.
[408] Mark Dery, "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel A. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose," in *Flame Wars*, ed. Mark Dery (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 180.
[409] Adriano Elia, "The Languages of Afrofuturism," *Lingue e Linguaggi* 12 (2014): 84.
[410] Kodwo Eshun, "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 2 (2003): 290.
[411] Sankofa, meaning "go back and get it," represents the idea of returning to the past to gather what is useful in order to move forward into the future.

Wakanda, the pan-African techno-utopic Marvel invention, "is a redemptive counter-mythology."[412] Thus, an Afrofuturist film like *Black Panther* appropriates a racist colonial trope in order to demand recognition of black ingenuity, imagination, and innovation. Writing about a lineage of pan-African superheroes like Marcus Garvey and John Henrik Clarke, Cobb postulates, "If the subordination of Africa had begun in the minds of white people, its reclamation, they reasoned, would begin in the minds of black ones."[413] As with Major Diatta's gramophone in *Camp de Thiaroye*, representations of black use of new media not only open up forms of stereomodernism through their content, but also by envisioning black technological superiority. *Black Panther* imagines such a Afrofuture, but Afrofuturists have drawn on pan-African thinkers, like Kwame Nkrumah, who were envisioning such a future in the past.[414]

The origin of Ghanaian television came out of a similar reparative gesture to declare for those across Africa and the diaspora, the brilliance of Africans and those of African descent through the establishment of a new television system.[415] Like Afrofuturist writers, the leaders of Ghana Television sought to rewrite the narrative of new media and Africa that had begun during the colonial era with the pacifying "white magic" of gramophones and the civilizing mission of mobile cinema. With Ghana Television, Africans could redefine their relationship to media as active users, innovators, and experts, rather than passive receivers of colonial technologies that acted upon them. Television becomes useful as a tool to fight racism and imperialism while building a new modern nation and pan-African transnational solidarity. Like *Black Panther*'s fictional vision of an African country that leads the world in science and technology, the adoption of a new cutting edge media system in Ghana, run by an all-black staff, upset racial hierarchies implicit in global new media discourse. However, unlike the imaginary worlds of Afrofuturist writers, the leaders of Ghana Television were using their imagination to construct institutions that actively fought white supremacist structures for the liberation of Africa and the diaspora.

In this chapter, I suggest that we read the first seven months of Ghana television as an Afrofuturist era of Ghana's media past. As a counter-narrative to the previous two chapters which describe new media discourse from the colonial era that positions Africa as the passive receiver of media machines, this media history shows how television was invented in Ghana. Television was made new through the theoretical and historical process of indigenization. Like the use of gramophones in Africa the new medium of television evoked racial difference, but this time rather than new media being an instrument for colonial domination an all-black television system was a tool for social justice. In socialist Ghana, television was not an overvaluation of an empty commodity. Instead, it was an example of the actual influence of new media to shift global power through the dedicated fabrication, maintenance, and care of media fetishes.

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[412] Jelani Cobb, "'Black Panther' and the Invention of 'Africa'," *The New Yorker* 18 February 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/black-panther-and-the-invention-of-africa.
[413] Jelani Cobb, "'Black Panther' and the Invention of 'Africa'," *The New Yorker* 18 February 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/black-panther-and-the-invention-of-africa.
[414] Kodwo Eshun describes futurism fatigue setting in among African artists following the 1966 coup of Nkrumah. He writes, "For African artists, there were good reasons for disenchantment with futurism. When Nkrumah was deposed in Ghana in 1966, it signaled the collapse of the first attempt to build the USAF [United States of Africa]. The combination of colonial revenge and popular discontent created sustained hostility toward the planned utopias of African socialism." [See Kodwo Eshun, "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 2 (2003): 288.]
[415] Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

However, after the February 24, 1966 coup d'état, only seven months after programming began, Nkrumah was overthrown, and Ghanaian socialist television came to an end. With the end of socialist television, modernization theory continues to reassert itself within information and communications for development rhetoric. The educational content that promised racial uplift in Nkrumah's Ghana became coupled with consumerism in the post-socialist era and the media fetish once again became the commodity fetish.

"A Lively Interest in the World Around Us"

The inauguration of Ghana Television happened at four o'clock in the afternoon on July 31, 1965. Thousands of individuals came to Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) to celebrate the first television transmission. Parliamentarians, diplomats, chiefs and other distinguished guests attended the "simple but very impressive" 90-minute ceremony while countless other Ghanaians watched live from television sets across the country.[416] In President Kwame Nkrumah's speech to inaugurate Ghana Television there was a tension that characterized both the development of television and Ghana's political situation in the 1960s. Though choosing to remain unaligned during the cold war, Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) government increasingly became more socialist as the decade wore on. His attack on Western capitalism in his 1965 book *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* soured Ghana's relationship with the United States, the United Kingdom, and other capitalist countries. And yet television was established over seven years through an assortment of transnational economic and political relationships, which in some cases resembled the neo-colonial dependencies Nkrumah despised. With the use of British equipment, Canadian expertise, and a Japanese industrial partnership to develop Ghana Television it was necessary for Nkrumah to acknowledge these international associates at the inauguration.

After a brief introduction on the origins of Ghana television, Kwame Nkrumah thanked the Canadian Government for being "so generous" with their "equipment and personnel."[417] He then expressed his gratitude to the British electronics company Marconi who "assisted in no small measure" with the construction of Ghana's television transmitters and the Television studio complex.[418] A delegation of three, led by Mr. B.N. MacLarty, a consulting engineer from Marconi, sat in the audience to receive his thanks.[419] Nkrumah also went on to acknowledge the Japanese Sanyo Corporation who were partners with the Ghanaian Government in establishing a local television factory in Tema, before thanking the many Ghanaian staff involved in making television a reality despite the many "sceptics [who] declared that the establishment of a truly indigenous Television Service, organised and staffed by Ghanaians was an impossible task."[420] Nkrumah's acknowledgement of Marconi, the Canadian government, and the Sanyo corporation's role in Ghana Television only a few lines earlier would suggest that Ghana television's indigeneity came out of collaborative global media relationships, not in spite of them.

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[416] "TV Day," *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 6, no. 24, 6 August 1965, 12.
[417] Kwame Nkrumah, "Inauguration of Ghana Television Service," 31 July 1965: 1. ADM 5/4/238, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.
[418] Kwame Nkrumah, "Inauguration of Ghana Television Service," 31 July 1965: 1. ADM 5/4/238, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.
[419] "Marconi delegation to watch TV opening," *Daily Graphic*, 29 July 1965: 3.
[420] Kwame Nkrumah, "Inauguration of Ghana Television Service," 31 July 1965: 1–2. ADM 5/4/238, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

The heavy involvement of international collaborators meant that neo-colonial entanglements were bound up within the history of Ghana's new medium that are difficult to disentangle. British interests in Ghana Television were there from the beginning.

Following Ghanaian independence on March 6, 1957, there was some talk amongst Ghanaians of starting a national television service, but most of this talk was more exploratory than resolute. In 1957, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) was strained with the process of launching their external radio service to the rest of Africa. A considerable amount of resources and publicity were being directed towards making that venture a success; television was something to aspire to, but not yet feasible. As the GBC put it in one of their institutional histories, "A few years back, talk of Television in Ghana sounded a wild dream."[421]

Toward the end of 1958, two British electronic equipment companies, Marconi Co., Ltd. of London and W.G. Pye & Co. Ltd. of Cambridge, began lobbying the Ghanaian government to start a national television service, but without much avail. Though, when it became clear that Western Nigeria was embarking on television broadcast, the race to be the first country in West Africa to have a television station prompted Ghanaian Ministers to heed Marconi and Pye's arguments. In April 1959, the Ghanaian government accepted a joint proposal from the two companies for limited television coverage of the royal visit to Accra scheduled for November 1959. Around 50 television receivers would be made available to the government with additional receivers available for hire. The royal visit was to be aired live with a three-hour recap in the evenings.[422] In presenting the proposal to Parliament, the Minister of Education and Information, Mr. Kofi Baako, explained that, "Although the experiment will be limited to Accra I hope that it will give people here some idea of what television is like. As a result I believe hon. members will be interested when later on I bring before them my proposals for the establishment of a national television service."[423] The scheme was designed as a trial run, which would come to an end after the royal visit. There would be no obligation for the Ghanaian government to commit to either firm if and when a contract for a permanent television service was initiated.[424] However, doubtlessly both companies wagered that their demonstration of cutting-edge broadcast equipment would curry favor with the nascent government securing them with a coveted contract. When the royal visit was postponed to early 1961 the arrangements were canceled. Alternatively, on September 21, 1959 Minister Baako invited Ghanaian Ministers, foreign dignitaries, and members of the press, to a small reception in honor of Founder's Day at the Broadcasting House where Ghanaian Broadcasting engineers demonstrated a closed-circuit television system that had been set-up by Marconi for training purposes.

The early efforts by Marconi to woo Ghanaian officials had G.W. Marshall, the UK Trade Commissioner in Accra, convinced that British companies would win any bid that was solicited. On October 24, 1959, he gathered and sent a detailed intelligence report about the development of Ghana television to A.B. Savage at the Board of Trade in London. Marshall suggested that Ghana would pursue a commercial television system but would certainly "want a good slice of public service time for news bulletins, schools broadcasts and Government and/or

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[421] *30 Eventful years of Broadcasting in Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1965), 8. ADM 5/4/239, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

[422] Kofi Baako, "Supply: Committee—Broadcasting and Printing," *Parliamentary Debates: Official Report* 16, no. 15, 16 July 1959: 631.

[423] Kofi Baako, "Supply: Committee—Broadcasting and Printing," *Parliamentary Debates: Official Report* 16, no. 15, 16 July 1959: 631.

[424] Kofi Baako, "Supply: Committee—Broadcasting and Printing," *Parliamentary Debates: Official Report* 16, no. 15, 16 July 1959: 631.

party propaganda."[425] With hindsight, G.W. Marshall's confident pronouncement that Ghana would implement commercial television seems like wish fulfillment on the part of the British government. They also expected that the government might, "not be so lavish in this one as they have been on other prestige projects, and are likely to want a programme company to bear the major cost."[426] This too turned out to be false. Ghana would spend 1.5 million Ghanaian pounds on television infrastructure proving, "beyond any doubt," that it would, "stop at nothing to bring a fuller life to the people of Ghana."[427] And contrary to Marshall's prediction it would pursue a non-commercial system in line with Kwame Nkrumah's socialist policies.

The Trade Commission report made clear England's vested economic interests in the development of Ghana Television. They saw it as an opportunity to sell program material, transmitting and receiving equipment, and technical advice. Acknowledging that with services and equipment would come political favor, G.W. Marshall predicted that the United Kingdom had a favorable advantage over competing companies. The lasting impact of British colonialism meant that Ghana's official language was English and the long association between British Broadcasting Corporation, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, and Marconi, Marshall assumed, made British companies more attractive partners. Believing in the superiority of their own television model, Marshall also presumed that the Ghana Government would want to retain state control over television broadcast through legislation similar to the United Kingdom's Television Act. However, Marshall urged the trade commission not to underestimate the competition coming from West Germany who were reportedly, "desperate to get into this market on both sound and television because of the long term advantages" they could afford.[428]

G.W. Marshall also noted that the greatest difficulties a British company would have in securing a bid with the Ghanaian government would be the finding the technicians needed to operate the service, train Ghanaian personnel, and acquiring a supply of programs with suitable African content. He wrote, "programmes will have to have a good proportion of African content (i.e. film material with white faces would not do for all of the time). This means that much of the programmes will have to be prepared on the African Continent, although in the beginning sound programme material will probably be inconsiderable use."[429]

The production of suitably African content by white British television experts was a challenge that the Western Nigeria Television Service, which was largely run by British expatriates, experienced at the start of its service on October 31, 1959. The Western Nigerian government partnered with Overseas Re-diffusion Limited, a British based subsidiary of the British owned Associated Re-diffusion, to establish the Western Nigeria Television Service. Overseas Re-diffusion Limited provided engineering expertise and ran the news and programs departments.[430] While they did offer in-house training to some Nigerian staff and the occasional

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[425] G.W. Marshall to A.B. Savage, 24 October 1959, GHA 382/6, Dominions Office, and Commonwealth Relations and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices 1959–1960, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[426] G.W. Marshall to A.B. Savage, 24 October 1959, GHA 382/6, Dominions Office, and Commonwealth Relations and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices 1959–1960, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[427] *30 Eventful years of Broadcasting in Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1965), 22. ADM 5/4/239, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

[428] G.W. Marshall to A.B. Savage, 24 October 1959, GHA 382/6, Dominions Office, and Commonwealth Relations and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices 1959–1960, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[429] G.W. Marshall to A.B. Savage, 24 October 1959, GHA 382/6, Dominions Office, and Commonwealth Relations and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices 1959–1960, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

[430] Nnamdi I. Nwulu, Adeyemi Adekanbi, Tochukwu Orangugo and Yemi Adewale, "Television Broadcasting in Africa: Pioneering Milestones," (Lefkosa: Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Near East University, 2010): 2.

professional development course abroad, Nigerians were not hired to technical positions and more than 50% of the broadcast content was imported entertainment from the United States and the United Kingdom.[431] Like the operation of the Western Nigeria television station, G.W. Marshall's report on the development of a Ghanaian national television station suggests an assumption that whichever company won a government contract, they would have considerable control over the station and its content. For Marshall, good will efforts towards training African staff and creating film material with black faces instead of white ones was a cosmetic necessity to win the bid. Ultimately, he imagined Ghana television would be little more than an African copy of the BBC.

Eventually, Marconi did win a contract with GBC. Not only would GBC accept British equipment they would also welcome numerous consultants and experts from England and abroad. The Canadian government, in particular, became an important resource and influence on Ghana Television, especially during the early days of its development, not unlike the Ghana Film Unit. The close partnership with Canada made sense for a number of reasons. Both countries spoke English and were members of the British Commonwealth. Minister Baako explained in an address to Parliament, that the Ministry, "sought advice as to the problems involved in television from the Government of Canada," because it, "is a developing country, like ourselves in many ways, and may be able to help us to decide how best to go about the complex process of introducing a television service."[432] Dealing with an English-speaking country that was not a former colonial ruler allowed, at least in theory, Ghanaians to avoid outwardly appearing to fall into a neo-colonial relationship with Britain.

Therefore, following the successful consultation work of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) employees A.L. Pidgeon and J.L. Marshall on the establishment of Ghanaian international radio broadcast, Ghana invited two more consultants from the CBC to advise on the development of a television system. On November 6, 1959, R.D. Cahoon and S.R. Kennedy arrived in Ghana to make their practical recommendations for the establishment of a television system in Ghana. Cahoon and Kennedy were tasked with several items, namely the evaluation of several proposals submitted to the Ghanaian government by equipment manufacturers and suppliers, to prepare a report on the best implementation practices while noting what risks Ghana might need to mitigate against, and lastly, providing recommendations for the organizational structure of the new department. During their five-week assessment, Cahoon and Kennedy met with a number of local stakeholders: government representatives, local business councils, and educational specialists. They also visited potential transmission sites in Kumasi, Tamale, Takoradi-Sekondi, and Cape Coast in addition to numerous locations around Accra. They even took a quick trip to Nigeria to see the newly inaugurated Western Nigeria Television Service station at Ibadan and Abafon. Their visit to Nigeria was, "extremely valuable for comparison purposes" and they reported appreciating, "the very full explanation of operations given them by

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[431] Excluded from technical and executive positions, Nigerians were reportedly hired as sound men, performers, and directors. [See "Television on the African Continent," *Meeting on Educational Broadcasting in Tropical Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1961). UNESCO/EDBC/AFR/5.] Additionally, a UNESCO survey reports that most Nigerian television stations programing was 40–50% from the United States and 15% from the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries. [See "Television in African Countries" *Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964). UNESCO/TV/AFR/4.]

[432] Kofi Baako, "Supply: Committee—Broadcasting and Printing" Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, 16 July 1959: 631.

the Chief Executive of the system, Mr. Arthur Mathers."[433] While Cahoon and Kennedy found their meeting with Mathers useful, Ghanaians would eventually use the Nigerian television model as an example of what to avoid.

R.D. Cahoon and S.R. Kennedy were given certain parameters by the Ghanaian government. Ghana stressed that they had already decided to establish a state-owned television service that would be integrated within the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. They also insisted that the Ghana television should be "African in content and not simply a reflection of television services in other countries."[434] In other words, Ghana wanted a unique television system, not the wholesale adoption of a BBC or CBC model like G.W. Marshall had predicted. Ironically, asking Canadian Broadcasting Corporation employees to propose the foundations of an appropriately African television system was perhaps an unfair challenge for the two Canadian visitors.

However, after a month of research, R.D. Cahoon and S.R. Kennedy filed their report on December 11, 1959 and the Ghanaian government largely accepted the proposal with some minor changes. Notably the Canadian report suggested offsetting cost by allowing commercial content, but Ghana decided to make their television commercial free. Additionally, in an effort to make "television for everyone," instead of installing only three transmitters in the southern and central parts of the country and waiting to broadcast to the northern part of Ghana in a second stage, a Northern relay station was added to the plans to ensure that television would be beamed to nearly two-thirds of the country upon inauguration.[435]

Following the acceptance of the R.D. Cahoon and S.R. Kennedy report, close ties with Canada continued. Under the Technical Assistance Agreement between Canada and Ghana, Frank Goodship and Wes Harvison, also from CBC, arrived in late 1961 to assist with the development of a television training school. During 1962 the school was constructed at the GBC Broadcasting House and outfitted with television equipment for the instruction of new students. It was not until January 28, 1963 that the new Minister of Information and Broadcasting, L.R. Abavana, officially opened what would be the first sub-Saharan television training school.[436] Frank Goodship was in charge of training the television production staff and advised on all aspects of television programming, while Wes Harvison trained technical staff.[437] In early 1964, four more Canadian Broadcasting Corporation employees would become instructors at the television school: Harry Heywood, a technical advisor; Pier Castonguay, television program advisor and production training officer; Harry Makin, film manager and in charge of training television news cameramen and film personnel; and Burns Stewart, a news training officer.[438] According to Harry Makin in the early days of the training school, instructors had to use improvisational teaching methods because the school lacked important supplies, "We had no motion picture film. So, I got a few still cameras and sent everybody out to shoot stories and documentaries by story-board. They would shoot wide and medium shots, and then sit there and edit them into the story."[439]

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[433] R.D. Cahoon and S.R. Kennedy, *Recommendations on the Establishment of Television Service in Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1959).

[434] R.D. Cahoon and S.R. Kennedy, *Recommendations on the Establishment of Television Service in Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1959).

[435] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 7.

[436] "What is Television?" *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 4, 22 March 1963: 4.

[437] *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 5, no. 8, 17 April 1964: cover.

[438] *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 5, no. 8, 17 April 1964: cover.

[439] Philip McPhedran, "Personality Focus: Harry Makin C.S.C." *Cinema Canada* 2, no. 1 (March 1972): 22.

The initial pupils were mostly culled from the ranks of Radio Ghana employees and later, to the chagrin of C.C. Lokko, the Director of Information Services Department (ISD), from the Photography Division of ISD.[440] After six months of basic training, twenty-four trainees from the Ghana Television School, twelve producers and twelve technicians, were sent to Canada for further studies and on the job training.[441] Before their departure, on June 1, 1963, the Canadian High Commissioner, Mr. Donald M. Cornett along with his wife, bid the Ghana Television School graduates farewell at a send-off party organized at the Broadcasting House.[442] Several Ghana Television students took courses at the Ryerson Institute of Technology in Toronto before practical assignments at CBC.[443] By 1965 when television began, fifty Ghana Television men and women had been trained in Canada.[444]

Alex Quarmyne, who would become the Assistant Director of Television, joined Ghana Television in September 1963.[445] Young Alex Quarmyne grew up as a true technophile. In 1937, when Quarmyne was a boy around six or seven, his father signed up for the colonial radio rediffusion service. This was Quarmyne's first experience with broadcast. He became fascinated with the mechanics behind the technology. As he grew older he began to play and experiment with all sorts of new media technologies. When he went away to secondary school at Mfantsipim, one of the top secondary schools in Ghana, Quarmyne observed that right outside his dormitory was a rediffusion line going to a speaker somewhere within the school. Using a telephone handset he acquired, he tapped into the school's line, gaining personal access to the service in his dorm room without having to pay the service fee. When he was not in classes he would spend time in his room listening to the radio on his handmade listening device.

As he grew, Alex Quarmyne's interest in broadcast persisted. He and some of his classmates became acquainted with the engineers stationed at the Cape Coast rediffusion station. They started occasionally visiting the station to observe and learn about the equipment. Later, Quarmyne went to Liberia and began working at the ELBC radio station, a private station run by an American expatriate. It was there that he became interested in going to school in the United States to study broadcasting electronics. He began his formal studies at National Technical Schools in Los Angeles before deciding that he wanted to go to university. While raising funds for tuition, he started taking classes at Los Angeles City College, and then after his first two

[440] On the 21st of February 1966, C.C. Lokko wrote a long letter to Shirley Graham Du Bois about the loss of talented Information Services Department officers to television. These staff members that were trained by ISD applied to positions at Ghana Television without passing their applications through ISD. One employee, Mr. R.M. Adu, apparently applied to a job at Ghana Television without telling his superiors at ISD to avoid a post to Northern Ghana. Mr. C.C. Lokko wrote, "I only wish the various constituent organisations within the Ministry of Information would come to some working agreement to halt, at least, the rapid movement—I am almost tempted to say, drain!—of staff which can be quite embarrassing to departmental plans and programmes sometimes." [see C.C. Lokko to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Ghana TV," 21 February 1966. MC 476 Box 44.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.] Shirley Graham Du Bois wrote back with complete support, but it is certain that given her closeness with Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana Television was given certain privileges over other Ministry of Information departments. [see Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Ghana TV," 22 February 1966. MC 476 Box 44.13, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.]
[441] *30 Eventful years of Broadcasting in Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1965), 20. ADM 5/4/239, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.
[442] *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 15, 7 June 1963.
[443] *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 20, 12 July 1963.
[444] *30 Eventful years of Broadcasting in Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1965), 20. ADM 5/4/239, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.
[445] Alex Quarmyne, interviewed by the author, East Legon, Accra, Ghana, July 13, 2017.

years transferred to University of Southern California's communications program. Los Angeles, still a segregated city in early sixties when Alex Quarmyne was in school, was experiencing both a rise in the African American population and fomenting animosity over police brutality by the militarized LAPD. In 1962, Nation of Islam member Ronald Stokes was shot and killed by the police. A large funeral, presided over by Malcom X, shook the Los Angles African American community. While Quarmyne was in school he worked at the left-leaning, public-supported Pacifica radio affiliate, KPFK Los Angeles. At the station he undoubtedly was kept abreast of the growing racial tension in Los Angeles that would eventually explode in the Watts riots. While at KPFK Quarmyne produced several programs before hearing that Ghana was in the process of starting their own television station. He applied for a position and was eventually offered a job at GBC. He returned to Ghana just as The UK based Centre for Educational Television Overseas (CETO) was starting up their twelve-day Educational Television Seminar on the educational potentials of the new medium.

At the Educational Television Seminar, held at the Accra Television Training School from September 2–13, 1963, thirty Ghanaian secondary school and training college teachers were encouraged to develop teaching materials for the television schools broadcast component of Ghana's new television system.[446] The Seminar was primarily designed, "to emphasise the educational values of Television."[447] In Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. L.R. Abavana's opening speech, he attempted to assuage teachers' fears by emphasizing that television would not take jobs away from teachers and would instead "offer additional advantages" to education, namely "in geography a whole world of illustrative material is available."[448] He insisted that with the teachers' participation they could potentially avoid some of the problems plaguing the radio schools broadcast, which teachers had complained did not fit into their curriculum or their timetables.[449] Seminar instructors included two educational television experts from the United Kingdom, Miss Charlotte Reid, a language instructor, and Mr. Tony Gibson, the director of the Centre for Educational Television Overseas (CETO). Also participating in the opening day program was Dr. J.C. de Graft Johnson of the Institute of Adult Education, and Shirley Graham Du Bois, the second wife of W.E.B. Du Bois and the future Director of Ghana Television.[450]

The Du Boises had defected to Ghana in the early 1960s to escape political restrictions in the United States for their involvement in the communist party. W.E.B. Du Bois' radicalization later in life has often been attributed to Shirley Graham Du Bois' beguiling Leftist influence.[451] However, the eminent historian of black radicalism, Gerald Horne, takes a more nuanced stance. He writes, "the idea that a weak-minded Du Bois was seduced into joining the party does not do justice to him and, perhaps, overstates Graham's powers of political persuasion. On the other hand, it would be naïve to underestimate her dynamic influence on him, particularly her ability to bring him into radical circles that he otherwise avoided."[452] On her request, W.E.B Du Bois joined her on a world tour that included trips to the Soviet Union, which during their stay was

[446] *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 28, 6 September 1963.
[447] "TV Training for Teachers," *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 27, 30 August 1963: 7.
[448] "Ghana's First TV Seminar," *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 29, 13 September 1963: 13.
[449] "Ghana's First TV Seminar," *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 29, 13 September 1963: 13.
[450] "TV Training for Teachers," *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 4, no. 27, 30 August 1963: 7.
[451] Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 31.
[452] Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 32.

still celebrating from success of sputnik, and China, of which the United States government still prohibited its citizens to visit. Their voyage perturbed the United States, resulting in the Du Bois' passports being revoked and solidifying their resolve to live abroad. With the invitation from Kwame Nkrumah who had studied with W.E.B. Du Bois during his college days, they chose to make their home in Accra and became Ghanaian citizens. For W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois and a number of other international black Marxist thinkers who composed Kwame Nkrumah's intellectual circle (notably George Padmore and C.L.R. James) there was a consensus that capitalism was inextricable from global white-supremacy and therefore the need to forge a new pan-African future was imminent.

Shortly after W.E.B. Du Bois' death, Kwame Nkrumah appointed Shirley Graham Du Bois as the Director of Ghana Television out of loyalty to W.E.B. Du Bois.[453] On the first of February 1964, she became Director of, as she recounted, "Ghana's 'non-existent' Television."[454] Her first fifteen months, she described, "went into constructing, organizing, planning, training personnel and all the other activities necessary for building television in an ambitious, but un-developed country."[455] With little background in television, Shirley Graham Du Bois, was sent by the Ghanaian Government to study different television systems around the world with stops in Great Britain, France, Italy, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Japan. When she returned she applied the knowledge she gained to invent, as she put it, "a *specifically Ghanaian* approach to Television organization and programing."[456] Many people would be intimidated by starting a job with as little experience as Shirley Graham Du Bois had, but as Maya Angelou once quipped, Shirley Graham Du Bois had, "the confidence of Mount Kilimanjaro."[457]

Shirley Graham Du Bois' trip began in England on October 28, 1963 and ended in early December in Italy. In London, Shirley Graham Du Bois visited the Centre for Educational Television Overseas (CETO), the same organization that was responsible the Educational Television Seminar she participated in September 1963. CETO was a non-profit organization founded in 1962 to promote the use of television as a tool for education in developing countries.[458] Funded in part by the Ford Foundation, the organization researched the needs of developing nations and offered advice on how to implement educational television programing. They provided their own educational content in the form of "special programme kits" which included film and graphics that could be easily modified by producers in overseas countries.[459] While at CETO, Shirley Graham Du Bois sat in on a CETO produced lesson on cartography. In it an Indian teacher used a map of India to give a televised lecture for a class in New Delhi. Despite the material being geared for an Indian classroom, Shirley Graham Du Bois saw the potentials for Ghana, "the various pieces and illustrations used to explain map making could just

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[453] Genoveva Marais, *Kwame Nkrumah: As I Knew Him* (Chichester: Janay Publishing Company, 1972), 19.

[454] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Mikhail Kotov, "Correspondence 1965," 7 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[455] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Mikhail Kotov, "Correspondence 1965," 7 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[456] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 9.

[457] Maya Angelou, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* (New York: Random House, 1986), 141.

[458] L.J. Lawler, "Television's Educational Role in the Developing Commonwealth," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 113, no. 5105 (1965): 359.

[459] L.J. Lawler, "Television's Educational Role in the Developing Commonwealth," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 113, no. 5105 (1965): 360.

as easily apply to a map of Ghana."[460] Responding to the potentials of the medium, Du Bois was excited by the potential to use television in Ghana to broadcast visual aids like the maps used in the CETO productions to "hundreds of viewing centers at the same time!"[461]

In fact, this was the type of translation work Shirley Graham Du Bois would do throughout her trip. In each of the places she visited she would take stock of how each country was approaching television in order to appropriate methods that might work in a Ghanaian context. In Italy she would visit the Telescuola Centre in Rome and would come away from her visit speaking highly of the novel Italian approach to reducing illiteracy. Initially she visited the Telescuola studio observing the production of the classroom lesson. There a "vivacious teacher" gave a history lesson to eight students seated at desks in a classroom setting, from which the teacher's lesson would be broadcast to hundreds of television schools in nearby towns. After two days at the studio, Shirley Graham Du Bois, along with five other observers from different countries, traveled to viewing centers to see the children who received the broadcast lessons. The Telescuola model would become extremely important in Du Bois' vision for television in Ghana. In particular, she would borrow the idea of using monitors at viewing centers to interpret televisual lessons for adult audiences from the Telescuola's own Educational Programme for Adults called "It's Never Too Late." Shirley Graham Du Bois wrote of the Telescuola, "One senses immediately that this approach to television teaching has the simplicity and directness which is needed to combat illiteracy anywhere."[462]

Following Ghana's policy of non-alignment, in addition to visiting England and Italy, Shirley Graham Du Bois would also visit Czechoslovakia where television was also being used for education. Television's role in public education was a central part of the development of television across Europe—on both sides of the iron curtain. As television scholar Anikó Imre demonstrates in her book *TV Socialism*, television systems under Soviet authority developed at the same time and through transnational collaborations with television systems in Western Europe.[463] Imre argues that there was a shared pre–Cold War "ethos of public service broadcasting" across Europe that saw national television as possessing a "government-led mission to inform and educate while promoting nationalism."[464] Similar to efforts in Western Europe, the Eastern Bloc considered educational television a critical tool in social transformation, modernization, and development. School television programs were seen across Europe as a means to accelerate learning in poor performing school districts.[465]

In Czechoslovakia, Du Bois would meet with representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture, but she was most impressed with her visit to the famous Kudlov Film and Puppet Studio where she noted the importance that imagination plays in both television and puppetry. Shirley Graham Du Bois was delighted by the inventor of the puppets and director of the studio, Madam Tyrlova. Du Bois wrote, "first of all, [Madam Tyrlova] loves children and

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[460] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Report on Television Survey," 15 December 1963: 1. MC 476 Box 44.7, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[461] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Report on Television Survey," 15 December 1963: 1–2. MC 476 Box 44.7, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[462] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Report on Television Survey," 15 December 1963: 13. MC 476 Box 44.7, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[463] Anikó Imre. *TV Socialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 13. See also Heather L. Gumbert's work on television in the German Democratic Republic, *Envisioning Socialism: Television and the Cold War in the German Democratic Republic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 4.
[464] Anikó Imre. *TV Socialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 17.
[465] Anikó Imre. *TV Socialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 45.

understands them (which is not always the same). And she also knows that something of the child lingers in grown-ups—if only the imagination can be stirred and the fancy set free. Her puppet films are for all people whose hearts would be young…In this Film and Puppet Studio the imagination, so important for television, reigns supreme."[466] Du Bois' love of puppetry would inspire her again when she observed the use of puppets for educational television programing during her visit to Japan. Her interest was significant as one of Ghana's earliest children's programs included puppets.

In her first month as Director, Shirley Graham Du Bois took Alex Quarmyne and Jacob Dentu, Director of Engineering, on a twenty-day trip to Japan. From February 24th to March 15, 1964, the small Ghanaian cadre visited numerous electronic factories and Japanese television stations. Du Bois was particularly delighted with the use of puppets in NHK's primary school educational broadcasts. She reported to not have "seen this anywhere else" and found that the NHK's puppets gave Ghana a solution to the problem of retaining, "young pupils full attention throughout a television lesson."[467] Indeed, GBC would go on to incorporate puppets into their educational television repertoire in late 1966.[468] On February 27, the group visited the NHK's Technical Research Laboratories where they examined the Separate Luminance Color camera which was introduced at the Olympic Games and, as Shirley Graham Du Bois put it in her report of the trip, "may well revolutionise television everywhere."[469] Alex Quarmyne and Jacob Dentu also picked up programing ideas from NHK. For instance, Ghana Television modeled how they assigned personal to productions and the way they drew up their production schedules on the methods used at NHK.[470]

On their visit to Nippon Television Network Corporation on March 3 they were given a tour of the studio and a color television demonstration. While Canadian and European television experts emphatically noted that the cost of color television would be too prohibitive for Ghana, Shirley Graham Du Bois found Japanese manufactures who understood the symbolic power color television could play in shifting global attitudes towards the new nation. In a memorandum to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting Du Bois emphasized the Japanese willingness to help Ghana Television start in color. According to Du Bois, Mr. T. Iue, President of Sanyo Electric Company said, "If Ghana becomes the first country in the world to *start television in color*—it will seize a psychological leadership which will be world-wide. Think of the impact this would have on Europe! And the standard it would set for Africa! I'd like to see it done—and

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[466] See Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Report on Television Survey," 15 December 1963: 12. MC 476 Box 44.7, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[467] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Radio Report to Japan," Tokyo, March 14, 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[468] Shirley Graham Du Bois would work to bring puppet theater to Ghana Television's children's programs but they would not go on air until after she departed Ghana. Ghana Television Puppet Theatre, with the comedian puppet Kofi Brokeman, could be seen at 6pm every Wednesday from December 1966 at least to July 1968. See the cover of *Ghana Radio & Television* 8, no. 28. 1 September 1967.

[469] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Radio Report to Japan," Tokyo, March 14, 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[470] Alex Quarmyne, interviewed by the author, East Legon, Accra, Ghana, July 13, 2017.

I promise you every possible assistance."[471]According to Du Bois, Mr. Matsutaro Shoriki assured her, "You can have color television if you really want it, plan for it and work for it!"[472]

Shirley Graham Du Bois was interested in color for a number of reasons. The "psychological leadership" it would give Ghana was important, but she also felt that the vibrancy of Africa could not adequately be represented by black and white. "It's bright sunshine, rich foliage, tropical flowers, blue skies, skin coloring, golden seashores and vivid clothing—all cry out for color."[473] To showcase the beauty of Ghana, Du Bois considered color an essential element. However, given that color television was still only used in the United States and Japan at the time, the beauty of Africa that color television made visible was not as important as the impact it would have in moving Ghana forward to take their "place in the foremost ranks" of global communications technology.[474]

The small Ghanaian television group also visited Sanyo Electric, where they were given a warm welcome and through tour of the factory. Describing her time at Sanyo Electric, Shirley Graham Du Bois wrote,

> We learned why your [Japanese] companies can produce equipment of high quality to sell cheaper than similar equipment produced in other countries: You take unskilled workers, train and educate them and give them the opportunity to join the ranks of skilled workers. Through cooperative effort the workers earning capacity is increased. Ghana, where most of its workers are unskilled, can learn from you.[475]

Captivated by the training of workers in Japan's factories, Du Bois began brokering a deal with Sanyo Electronics to open a factory for radio and television assembly in Ghana. She was impressed by Japan's improvements upon American television equipment and their success at exporting Japanese electronics to the United States.[476] Motivated by Japan's rapid industrialization, Du Bois saw a partnership with Japanese manufacturers as an attractive alternative to economic relationships with European or American television manufacturers. An agreement with Japanese electronics companies offered Ghana a means to avoid a neo-colonial relationship like that which shaded their work with Marconi. Eventually a deal was made to form a company that would be equally financed by the Ghanaian government and three Japanese companies—Sanyo, Marubeni-Iida, and Nichimen Jitsugyo. The establishment of Ghana Sanyo Electrical Manufacturing Corporation was signed into effect on December 8, 1964 by Ghanaian Ambassador to Japan, William Baidoe-Ansah; Emo Kamuro, managing director of Sanyo;

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[471] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Minister of Information and Broadcasting – Memorandum, "Ghana TV," 16 March 1964. MC 476 Box 44.13, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[472] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Radio Report to Japan," Tokyo, March 14, 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[473] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Radio Report to Japan," Tokyo, March 14, 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[474] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television*. Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964: 17.

[475] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Radio Report to Japan," Tokyo, March 14, 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[476] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Radio Report to Japan," Tokyo, March 14, 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

Shigeo Yano, executive director of Marubeni-Iida; Junichi Tsuji of Nichimen; and Albert Quainoo, a Ghanaian Information attaché.[477]

On May 7, 1965 Kwame Nkrumah broke ground in Tema on the Sanyo radio and television factory that cost the Ghanaian government approximately 36,000 pounds.[478] However, the factory would not produce televisions until April 1966 shortly after the February 22 coup d'état.[479] In a July 4, 1966 letter to Shirley Graham Du Bois, K. Funabashi reported that the Ghana Sanyo Electrical Manufacturing Corporation was able to sell 600 of the television sets they had produced since April and that production had reached 300 units a month since June.[480] However, under the National Liberation Council (NLC), the new military government would roll back support for state-owned industries. Funabashi expressed his concern in his letter to Du Bois, "As for business, it became very much harder without you as a matter of course."[481] Funabashi informed Du Bois that the new government proposed to cancel the provision in their Joint Venture Agreement that gave Ghana Sanyo the exclusive right to manufacture and sell televisions in Ghana. Leading up to the negotiations, Ghana had already allowed the importation of large quantities of Philips and other European televisions.[482] Despite the new government's decision to abandon trade protections for the state-owned factory, Funabashi naively remained optimistic, "The future of Ghana Sanyo is not hopeless however it will not be easy either."[483] In the end, without the economic protections of the state, the Ghana Sanyo factory—Shirley Graham Du Bois' "baby"—would quietly close without lament.[484]

The Socialist Transformation of Ghana

Kwame Nkrumah's thank you list would suggest that Ghana television was the result of a familiar narrative of technology transfer—where media technologies are created elsewhere by experts, designers, and engineers and dispersed to Africa as charity, along with a hyperbolic discourse about how these technologies will transform underdeveloped communities on the continent. However, by drawing on pre-colonial communication systems to justify different types of distribution methods and by making visible black African expertise, Ghana Television centered the invention of new media in their implementation, organization, and use.

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[477] William Baidoe-Ansah to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Trip to Japan, 1964; includes clippings, itineraries, correspondence, lists, receipts, report," 9 December 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[478] "Seven Days More for Ghana Television," *The New Ashanti Times*, 24 July 1965: 12.

[479] K. Funabashi to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Correspondence 1966," 4 July 1966. MC 476 Box 19.4, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[480] K. Funabashi to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Correspondence 1966," 4 July 1966. MC 476 Box 19.4, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[481] K. Funabashi to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Correspondence 1966," 4 July 1966. MC 476 Box 19.4, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[482] K. Funabashi to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Correspondence 1966," 4 July 1966. MC 476 Box 19.4, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[483] K. Funabashi to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Correspondence 1966," 4 July 1966. MC 476 Box 19.4, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[484] William Baidoe-Ansah to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Trip to Japan, 1964; includes clippings, itineraries, correspondence, lists, receipts, report," 9 December 1964. MC 476 Box 44.18, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

After Kwame Nkrumah's acknowledgement of the many international collaborators that helped the development of Ghana television, he went on to declare in his speech that, "Our Television Service should be African in its outlook; and in its content," and "should remain geared to the needs of Ghana and Africa." This sentiment was echoed in the writings of Shirley Graham Du Bois. With the publication of *This is Ghana Television* in 1965 she solidified her theorization of the new medium. In it she definitively argues that television is a weapon in the struggle for African unity against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism and its ammunition is Ghanaian, African, and Socialist content.[485] But drawing on international communications for development discourse prevalent at the time, Du Bois articulated ideologies about new media that were evident decades earlier in the missionary and colonial experiments with educational cinema to transform living conditions, health, and agricultural practices. In a statement reminiscent of contemporary enthusiasm for the power of mobile phones in developing countries, Du Bois at one point exclaimed to a crowd of GBC employees, "Television can save lives!"[486] However, the educational potentials for television were not limited to teaching science, health and hygiene or new agricultural methods. For Du Bois television was political and insisted that it be used to prepare, "Ghanaian children for service in a dynamic, forward-looking socialist state."[487] Television also had the power to unite; it would send out "its beams of light as a unifying force for all Africa."[488]

Television content was geared toward Ghana and Africa, but Kwame Nkrumah and Shirley Graham Du Bois also resituated the medium within Ghanaian indigenous media systems. In the inauguration speech, Kwame Nkrumah likened the Ghana Broadcasting Service to *ɔkyeafoɔ*, the skilled orators who draw on traditional proverbs, royal history, and poetry to translate and interpret the will of the *Asantehene* (the Ashanti king).[489] In *This is Ghana Television*, television was written into an indigenous history of media that challenges Euro-American media histories that focus on technological invention. "Television in Ghana," it says, "will be the heir to a long tradition of journalism that goes back to the talking drums which have been used to transmit and receive messages for several hundreds of years."[490] The "talking drums" which were used to communicate from village to village became the call signal for Ghana radio and television and were incorporated into the Ghana Broadcasting Logo.[491] Visitors to Ghana Broadcasting Corporation are greeted by "the proverbial 'gong-gong' beater standing elegantly on the green turf in the middle of the compound."[492] Those that tuned into Radio Ghana's Farm Forum on Sunday evening would hear Kwadwo Osae, the town-crier of Aburi in Akwapim, "intone the call sign" using a double flanged bell for the show.[493] In this way television was not just an incoming device from abroad, but remade in Ghana within the technological longue dureé

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[485] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 5.

[486] From a speech delivered to television workers on 8th January 1965. [See Shirley Graham Du Bois, "T.V. in Ghana," *The Spark* 12 March 1965: 4.] Headlines from articles like "The tech saving lives in Africa" from CNBC or a *Quartz* article, "Here's how mobile technology is saving Africans," the sentiment is the same.

[487] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 22.

[488] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 22.

[489] Kwame Nkrumah, "Inauguration of Ghana Television Service" 31 July 1965. ADM 5/4/238, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

[490] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 28.

[491] William Gardner Smith, *Return to Black America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 106.

[492] *30 Eventful years of Broadcasting in Ghana* (Accra: Government Printer, 1965), 5. ADM 5/4/239, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

[493] *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 6, no. 18, 25 June 1965: cover.

of indigenous media systems.[494] Local broadcast systems, like the talking drums, the town-crier, and even the ɔkyeafoɔ, shaped the way television was innovated by Ghanaians in the 1960s to predominantly share information, educate school children and adults, and to explain and translate government policy to the people.

Besides being a non-commercial television system, a significant way that television was conceived differently from its capitalist counterparts was in its distribution method. To ensure that television was accessible, the government instituted numerous official public viewing centers, especially in those parts of the country that were further from urban Accra.[495] Television receivers were set up in schools and in chief's palaces. During the day the televisions at schools would be for classroom use, but in the evenings, they would be open to the public.[496] At official television viewing centers "monitors," modeled, in part, on traditional African storytellers, were employed to translate English content into local languages. As described in *This is Ghana Television*, the use of monitors to interpret television programs combined "one of the oldest traditions of Ghana with this newest scientific invention."[497] Ghana was not the only place that public television viewing centers were initiated. By 1964 there were community viewing centers in Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and fifteen community television centers in Sierra Leone.[498] A 1961 UNESCO document suggested that group viewing was essential for insuring that television in Africa reached "those sections of the population for who [sic] educational television is particularly designed."[499] The emphasis on community viewing to reach remote Africans recalls the practice started by the British colonial administration of radio diffusion boxes in chief's courtyards and their use of mobile cinema vans to bring educational content to rural communities, in addition to the more recent call in the early 1990s for the development of information communication technology (ICT) community centers to address the digital divide.

However, through extended family and neighbors, there was an aspect of communal television reception in both the Ghanaian and the Nigerian domestic sphere. In Ghana, individuals with private television receivers, would welcome their neighbors to come watch. Alex Quarmyne recounted to me that his brother who lived in Kaneshie "encouraged anybody in the neighborhood who wanted to watch television to come to his house. He later had to stop, because his furniture was all broken." To preemptively try to manage the ruckus that hordes of excited children might cause, *The Ghanaian Times*' warned children "not to be too noisy" when they watch television in a neighbor's house.[500] Nevertheless, Martin Loh a television producer, who would leave his window open so that neighbors could come and watch, liked his neighbors' chatter. He would listen to their comments and use them "to realign" his "own thinking about things" he was producing.[501] According to Oluyinka Esan communal television viewing in Nigeria "can be attributed to the transporting to urban living, a rural mindset that respected

[494] Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, "Introduction: What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?" in *What Do Science, Technology, and Innovation Mean from Africa?* ed. Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017), l4.

[495] "TV Viewing Centres to be Set Up." *The Ghanaian Times*, 10 July 1965.

[496] Alex Quarmyne, interviewed by the author, East Legon, Accra, Ghana, July 13, 2017.

[497] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 15.

[498] "Television in African Countries," *Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964). UNESCO/TV/AFR/4.

[499] "Television on the African Continent," *Meeting on Educational Broadcasting in Tropical Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1961). UNESCO/EDBC/AFR/5.

[500] Auntie Merya, "Ghana Television Begins Tomorrow." *The Ghanaian Times*, 30 July 1965: 5.

[501] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

communal living and sharing of assets. Neighbours maintained an open-door policy, and often, family resources such as radio, and, later, television, were placed at the disposal of all."[502] Esan concludes, that despite the fact that television was a "modern artefact" it was adapted and used in "still largely traditional societies" and as such, Nigerian television was both a domestic medium and a "group/public medium as well."[503]

Kwame Nkrumah's theories of African socialism in his 1964 book *Consciencism* similarly grounded sharing communal assets in pre-colonial African societies. Kwame Gyekye calls this idea of communalism Akan humanism. "Akan thought," he writes, "sees humans as originally born into a human society (*onipa kurom*), and therefore as social beings form the outset."[504] Therefore, because humans are naturally social according to Akan thought, guaranteeing the wellbeing of each member of their society is essential. This aspect of African philosophy shaped the invention of the new medium in the form of viewing centers and in the domestic spaces that became communal.

Conversely, as Raymond Williams noted in his seminal work on television, in capitalist democracies the privatized set sold a consumer product to the masses but was never a *mass medium*—certainly not in the way that Ghanaian television was designed to be experienced collectively. In the United States and Europe, Williams notices that earlier "public technologies" like the railways and city lighting, were being replaced by new "private" technologies which were "at-once mobile"—connected to the desire to go out and see new places—"and a home-centered way of living." He called this tendency "mobile privatization"[505] and argued that television broadcast, is a social product of this trend. It is not hard to see international development NGOs shift from supporting community ICT centers to their support for the educational potential of privately owned mobile devices in the early 2000s as a move away from the support of public infrastructure. Williams warns that despite the fact that, "universal domestic television" became the dominant form that television took, there were other television systems that might have developed.[506] The first seven months of Ghanaian Television offers a glimpse of a distinctive televisual alternative that drew on imaginaries of pre-colonial African social relations to imagine a television system opposed to the capitalist alienation that Williams had identified.

While Ghana television did emphasize education like other socialist television systems, a critical aspect of Ghana Television that was exceptional was the representation of black broadcast expertise in front of and behind the camera. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the preparations for and the broadcast of the Organization of African Unity's African Summit Conference, only three months after the inauguration of television. At the African Summit Ghana Television would have the chance to prove itself as a fully independent African television station and demonstrate its commitment to advancing the principles of socialism and pan-Africanism to an international audience. "Hardly had we begun," Shirley Graham Du Bois wrote to a friend in the USSR, "than we were faced with preparing for a supreme test—coverage of the African Summit Conference, along with presentation of programs which would involve all the

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[502] Oluyinka Esan, *Nigerian Television: Fifty Years of Television in Africa* (Princeton: AMV Publishing, 2009), 40–41.

[503] Oluyinka Esan, *Nigerian Television: Fifty Years of Television in Africa* (Princeton: AMV Publishing, 2009), 40–41.

[504] Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 155.

[505] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 19–20.

[506] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London, UK: Routledge, 2003), 23.

independent African States."[507] The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded two years earlier, on May 25th 1963, to promote the emancipation of all African countries and work toward joining all of Africa under one Union. By the 1965 conference, Kwame Nkrumah hoped that the organization would resolve to become one "United States of Africa."

All over Accra, improvements were made for this important event. In less than a year a $24 million State House and a twelve-story hotel block containing sixty deluxe three-room suites to house the visiting African dignitaries were constructed.[508] Ghana's modern splendors were everywhere on display. One enterprising neon company made a large, bright map of Africa and erected it along the road headed to the city center from the airport in order to welcome arriving African dignitaries. The sign was notably "designed, manufactured and erected…by Ghanaians in 14 days."[509] (see figure #) Describing the sign, Shirley Graham Du Bois wrote to a friend, "I have heard the boast that this is the largest neon sign in the world. Remembering neon signs in New York City, I don't know about that. But this map stands out alone against the black sky and certainly is impressive."[510] It was, quite literally, a sign of African participation in global modernity. The company's emphasis that it was Ghanaians who designed and engineered the sign demonstrates the importance of Ghanaian science and technology at this moment. New technologies, in particular, were central to projecting a confident, modern, African state and Ghana Television would have an important role to play on this international stage. As Kwame Nkrumah said at the inauguration of television, "All who are employed in our Television Service and our Sound Broadcasting Service have a unique opportunity…to play a vital role in the development of Ghana…and create in the minds of our people, through television and broadcasting, an awareness of the benefits to Ghana of modern science and technology."[511]

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[507] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Mikhail Kotov, "Correspondence 1965," 7 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[508] Charles L. Sanders, "Kwame Nkrumah: The Fall of a Messiah," *Ebony* 21, no. 11, September 1966: 138–146.
[509] Advertisement, *Daily Graphic*, 30 October 1965: 4.
[510] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Berny, "Correspondence 1965," 21 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[511] Kwame Nkrumah, "Inauguration of Ghana Television Service," 31 July 1965: 6. ADM 5/4/238, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

Fig. 25: "BIGGEST IN THE WORLD!" *Daily Graphic*, 30 October 1965: 4.

Before the inauguration of television, President Kwame Nkrumah visited GBC and in a speech to the gathered crowd of broadcasting employees, Nkrumah explained why he decided to set up a television system in Ghana. Nkrumah said that he had traveled all around Africa and had not seen one black cameraman. In addition, the programs were all being produced by European staff and were not geared towards the uplift of the continent. Martin Loh recounted that Nkrumah wanted Ghana to, "develop television programs that would make our country feel proud of themselves" and to inspire us "to be as good as any nation of the world."[512] Part of this pride would come from the visibility of a television station run by all black technicians, directors, broadcasters, and editors.

The power that black men and women in front and behind the television camera imparted, was not lost on Shirley Graham Du Bois. In a January 1965 speech Du Bois described Ghana Television as, "the first indigenous Television System in Africa—indigenous in that the content of our programmes will come out of Ghana and Africa—indigenous in that our System will be manned in all its extended parts by Ghanaians or by workers from Sister African States."[513] In

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[512] Martin Loh, interviewed by author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.
[513] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "T.V. in Ghana," *The Spark* 12 March 1965: 4. From a speech delivered to television workers on 8th January 1965.

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the introduction to her book, *This is Ghana Television*, Du Bois asserts that the invention of Ghana television defied "experts'"—here coded as white foreigners—predictions about the possibility of a "young African country's" ability to "develop its own original television" with "its own trained Ghanaian engineers, producers," and "cameramen." Du Bois, as an African American political activist who followed closely the civil rights movement in the United States, was very aware of the radical implications of the formation of an all-black television station in the year 1965. Thus, what made Ghana Television different was not just African programs telling African stories, but also the powerful statement that Ghanaian ownership and command over "the best equipment money can buy" "in studios second to none" signaled to the world.[514]

Despite being an African American herself, Shirley Graham Du Bois was constantly turning down African Americans who wrote offering their services to Ghana Television. "I am constantly receiving letters from Afro-Americans who want to come to Ghana. Particularly, since I have been in television," she wrote to a Ghanaian Minister of Parliament.[515] For example, the African American performer Loretta Pauker wrote asking if she and Laurence Brown (a composer known for his work as a pianist accompanying Paul Robeson), could perform a series of concerts in Ghana. Shirley Graham Du Bois wrote back, "Our feature programmes will be made here and will be indigenous to Africa. This kind of emphasis is extremely important at this time. Later we will be in a position to broaden our production so that we could include concerts such as you and Laurence Brown would put on." She goes on to explain that Ghana hopes to eventually be a "strong, prosperous and enlightened homeland" for other Africans and "ambitious peoples" of African descent.[516] But it remained Du Bois' policy that, "jobs must go to Ghanaians unless no Ghanaian can be found, or trained quickly enough to fill the post."[517]

In need of specific expertise, on several occasions Shirley Graham Du Bois requested the help of Americans to fill positions at Ghana Television. However, she was careful to select Americans that shared her commitment to socialist ideals. William Gardner Smith, a prominent African American journalist and novelist was invited to help organize the television news department. Upon arriving in Accra, Smith was "struck by the visible signs of black sovereignty: the black ministers, heads of corporations, managers of big department stores, customs officials, bank clerks, salesmen, and the producers, directors, technicians, and journalists at the radio and television studios."[518] He described the training program at Ghana Television as, "the most comprehensive I had ever seen: every journalist, every producer and actor, learned not only the techniques of his specialty, but also all of the other aspects of television: directing, the use of film and video tape, the handling of cameras and lights, the preparation of sets, etc."[519]

In late 1964, Shirley Graham Du Bois hired another American expatriate, the blacklisted American screenwriter Donald Ogden Stewart, to teach television screenwriting to a select group of twenty-five Ghanaians. To translate MGM practices for Ghanaian television, Stewart tried, "to get the students to write interestingly about their own lives."[520] At first Stewart felt that they

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[514] Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 3.
[515] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Regina Asamany, "Ghana TV," 4 July 1964. MC 476 Box 44.12, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[516] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Loretta Pauker, "Ghana TV," 15 June 1965. MC 476 Box 44.13, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[517] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Regina Asamany, "Ghana TV," 4 July 1964. MC 476 Box 44.12, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[518] William Gardner Smith, *Return to Black America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 96.
[519] William Gardner Smith, *Return to Black America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 97.
[520] Donald Ogden Stewart, *By a Stroke of Luck! An Auto-Biography* (New York: Paddington Press, 1975), 300.

were not very good, "but little by little something began to happen, and the scripts started to get better."[521] To Stewart's disappointment, as soon as he returned to England, "the government made a contract with an American company to get American and English television programs on Ghana's stations. The woman who was in charge said that she did not want anything about Ghana. So they got *Dr. Kildare* and I got very upset."[522] While *Dr. Kildare* was not the content that Shirley Graham Du Bois advocated for, there were other occasions when the Ghana television content fulfilled Nkrumah's African socialist vision.

The emphasis placed on Ghana Television's OAU coverage came directly from Kwame Nkrumah. He made clear that televised broadcast of the OAU meeting was critical by personally looking into the matter. In preparation for the conference, Nkrumah requested that the young television producer, Martin Loh, meet him in his office at Flagstaff House to discuss his broadcast plans. Martin Loh, only twenty-six at the time, had been tasked with directing the OAU conference coverage. In his meeting with the president, Nkrumah gave him a lecture about his expectations for Africa and what he wanted the visiting African leaders to gain from the conference. Loh remembered that Nkrumah was emphatic that, "his vision of African independence and redemption" would "fire on" once the leaders headed home. Nkrumah insisted that Ghana Television had a duty to demonstrate to the other Heads of State, "that we as Africans can manage these things and do them well." Martin Loh explained the feeling of responsibility that he and other Ghana Television employees experienced at the time, "We didn't have any foreign experts supporting us, helping us anymore. We were on our own; we were on our feet. We must show that we can do it. And at an important function like that…we couldn't fail."[523]

At the OAU conference Ghana Television staff were expected to interact with the visiting African leaders. The engagement between television technicians and producers with African Heads of State was part of an effort by Kwame Nkrumah to use television to show the capabilities of independent Africans; to break the colonial mentality that presumed that technology could only be wielded by white men. There were two television studios set aside at the conference to interview the Heads of State about, "their commitment to African unity and the emancipation of Africa."[524] But the crew was also encouraged to casually converse with leaders when the opportunity availed itself. Many of the dignitaries were interested in television and engaged staff in discussions about the medium. As Loh described, "Some of them had television already, but they were just showing films from France…They hadn't developed their own indigenous programs to meet the demands of the day."[525] Ghana Television staff asked many questions and an informal exchange on the status of African television and engineering in different parts of the continent developed.[526]

In addition to covering all of the open sessions of the conference live, Ghana Television collected and presented, for the edification of the African leaders and their delegations, programs from every independent African country participating in the conference.[527] They also produced summary and analysis of the proceedings for special news programs. Notably, television personality Sam Morris hosted a show called "Today at the Conference" every evening after the

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[521] Donald Ogden Stewart, *By a Stroke of Luck! An Auto-Biography* (New York: Paddington Press, 1975), 301.

[522] Donald Ogden Stewart, *By a Stroke of Luck! An Auto-Biography* (New York: Paddington Press, 1975), 301.

[523] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

[524] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

[525] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

[526] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

[527] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Berny, "Correspondence 1965," 21 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

proceedings. In addition, entertainment programs highlighted a pan-African solidarity with African Americans and the African diaspora more broadly.[528] For the opening ceremony Ghana invited the provocative, internationally celebrated Josephene Baker from Paris and Mariam Makoba from New York to perform as special entertainers.[529] Despite describing Baker and Makoba as "temperamental dames"[530] Shirley Graham Du Bois declared Baker's performance "a tremendous success."[531] On October 24 during the Sunday conference hiatus, Ghana Television featured a "special OAU audience participation programme with famous Ghanaian comedian Bob Cole, the blind composer-vocalist Dokyi Appenteng, an African theater troupe, and the Black Star Line highlife band." Followed later in the evening by a special screening of the internationally acclaimed Ghana Film Industry Corporation adaptation of Hamlet called *Hamile* (1965) with an introduction by Genoveva Marais.[532] To close the night Du Bois read a poem by her late husband called "Ghana Calls" with charcoal illustrations by African American artist, Herman Bailey.[533] The entertainment programs effectively presented pan-African unity through its diverse presentation of global black excellence.

To make sure that the visiting African dignitaries saw Ghana Television's productions, television sets were mounted along the main corridor connecting the hotel where the leaders were staying to the main conference hall.[534] There were three cameras in the main hall, two in the onsite studios, and one outside the convention to interview people on the street. "We virtually moved GBC to that place," recalls Martin Loh.[535] The televisions distributed around the conference grounds not only presented what Ghana, and by extension, what Africa was capable of, but it also broadcast a diverse array of African cultures through the newest mass media communication system. As Martin Loh put it, "they would watch all these productions of African concepts," that announced to the viewer, "'You are in Africa, these are Africans!'" and the Heads of State were able to, "believe in themselves."[536]

In the end, Ghana Television coverage of the OAU meeting was a success. President Nkrumah personally came to GBC to congratulate the crew and nominated each of them for a raise. Shirley Graham Du Bois was also impressed. Writing to friends and family, "Television

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[528] The artistic presence of the African diaspora was also felt at the conference through the fine arts. For instance, in addition to being featured on Ghana Television, African American artist Herman Bailey showed his work at an art exhibition during the Summit Conference. See Shirley Graham Du Bois to Vivian Schuyler Key, "Ghana TV," 14 October 1966. MC 476 Box 44.13, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[529] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Berny, "Correspondence 1965," 21 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[530] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Berny, "Correspondence 1965," 21 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[531] Shirley G. Du Bois to Josephine Baker, "Correspondence 1965," 14 November 1965, MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[532] The film was written by Terry Bishop, a British expatriate, and was produced by the Ghanaian writer, Joe de Graft. It stared Kofi Middleton-Mends as Hamile/Hamlet, Mary Yirenkyi as Habiba/Ophelia, and Ernest Abbequaye as Abrahim/Polonius. As Camela Garritano puts it in her exceptional book on Ghanaian film, "the Africanizing of Shakespeare by well-educated members of the African elite was meant to demonstrate Africa's civility and humanity." The gesture towards racial uplift of Hamile was extended through the new medium of television. [See Camela Garritano, *African Video Movies and Global Desires: A Ghanaian History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 52.]

[533] *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 6, no. 35, 22 October 1965: 14.

[534] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

[535] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

[536] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.

did me proud!"[537] Du Bois said, Ghana Television "won praise for itself"[538] and, "established itself as the first real African Television Service on the continent."[539]

The height of success Ghana Television celebrated after the OAU conference would seem like a distant dream four months later on the morning of the February 24th coup d'état. Television announcer, Samilia Karji described being woken by gun shots on that morning. The broadcasting flats, where GBC employees were housed, were located next to the President's offices at Flagstaff House and the Accra Police living quarters, two locations targeted by the National Liberation Council military. To avoid the harassment and violence as a result of military confusion, GBC employees painted the letters G-B-C on the outside of their homes.[540] Shirley Graham Du Bois was put under house arrest until her lawyer negotiated permission from the new military government to leave Ghana on March 12, 1966.[541] On the morning of the coup, Alex Quarmyne was on his HAM radio, as he often was during his time off. He had made contact with a man in England when he heard in the background a radio broadcast from GBC announcing the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah's government. Shocked, Quarmyne reported the news to his radio contact in England. The Englishman called the British authorities right away and the news broke internationally that the Convention People's Party had fallen.[542] President Kwame Nkrumah, who was out of the country at the time, had been overthrown and Ghanaian socialism was at an end.

Education in the Broadest and Purest Sense

During Kwame Nkrumah's speech at the inauguration of Ghana Television, he repeated several important lines from an address he made to parliament two years earlier on the fifteenth of October 1963. These four sentences became the guiding principle behind Ghana's national television service and continue to orient Ghana Broadcasting Corporation today. Speaking to the crowd at Broadcasting House and those watching on television across the country on July 31, 1965, he recounted:

> When I addressed Parliament in October, 1963, I stated then the basic purposes behind Ghana's Television. This is what I said: Television will be used to supplement our educational programme and to foster a lively interest in the world around us. It will not cater to cheap entertainment nor commercialism. Its paramount objective will be education in the broadest and purest sense. Television must assist in the Socialist transformation of Ghana.[543]

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[537] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Berny, "Correspondence 1965," 21 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[538] Shirley Graham Du Bois to Mikhail Kotov, "Correspondence 1965," 7 November 1965. MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[539] Shirley G. Du Bois to E. Ablade Glover, "Correspondence 1965," 28 October 1965, MC 476 Box 18.15, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[540] Samilia Karji, interviewed by the author, Osu, Accra, Ghana, July 18, 2017.
[541] T.K. Impraim to Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Correspondence 1966," 12 March 1966, MC 476 Box 19.1, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.
[542] Alex Quarmyne, interviewed by the author, East Legon, Accra, Ghana, July 13, 2017.
[543] Kwame Nkrumah, "Inauguration of Ghana Television Service," 31 July 1965: 3. ADM 5/4/238, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

According to Nkrumah, GBC waited to go on air until these values could be met and they could, with certainty, provide a television service in agreement with Ghana's "national aspirations" and their "socialist objectives."[544]

The four lines above would be printed in the days following the inauguration ad nauseum. They appeared in publications of Kwame Nkrumah's full speech: there was a special publication of the speech as a booklet and on the following Monday, August 2, 1965 the speech was published in its entirety in both *The Ghanaian Times* and *The Daily Graphic*. In the various state-controlled newspaper editorials, Nkrumah's words were reiterated and the language of his speech—especially from the lines quoted above—appeared over and over again. In most of the press, socialism appeared in relation to Ghana Television with frequency. In Shirley Graham Du Bois' *This is Ghana Television* the four lines of Nkrumah's speech form an epigraph at the beginning of the booklet and Nkrumah's statement—"Television must assist in the Socialist transformation of Ghana"—is used to justify the types of programs Ghana television would go on to produce.[545] This tendency played out in artistic works as well. For instance, in a poem published following the inauguration in *Ghana Radio Review and Television Times* television is described as "socialist in content to the cream."[546]

Nevertheless, the 1965 coverage of the inauguration of television by one of the only non-state-owned newspapers had a different focus. *The New Ashanti Times*, which was started by General Sir Edward Spears as a circular for the British-owned Ashanti Goldfields Corporation in Obuasi, took a more international approach to the development of Ghanaian television.[547] The article, "Television in Africa," speaks more broadly about the role of UNESCO in bringing television to Africa, and the specific influence of Canada, England, and Japan on the development Ghana Television. In the article, the lines from Kwame Nkrumah's parliamentary speech are again repeated, but end before the socialist pronouncement.[548] Certainly the politics of the new Ghanaian state were increasingly diverging from the values of the white, foreign-owned *The New Ashanti Times*. Thus, the omission of the line is not surprising. However, UNESCO did play a significant part in the adoption of television in Ghana, Africa, and across the globe during the mid-twentieth century.

From its founding in 1945, UNESCO had a strong mass media focus. By 1964 the organization was working with a number of newly formed independent countries across Africa and Asia to develop national mass communications systems. An essential part of their efforts to promote new media technologies was making information about mass communication projects initiated in developing countries widely available to mass communication researchers, government officials, and international aid groups. In the 1950s UNESCO began compiling and

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[544] Kwame Nkrumah, "Inauguration of Ghana Television Service," 31 July 1965: 3. ADM 5/4/238, Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana.

[545] "Ghana Television will be Ghanaian, African and Socialist in content. Ghanaian, because, as President Nkrumah said in the speech cited on the title page of this booklet: 'Television must assist in the Socialist transformation of Ghana.' Our aim is to produce programmes based on the needs and interests of our people, which lift the level of understanding and broaden horizons, which spur patriotism and engender pride." [see Shirley Graham Du Bois, *This is Ghana Television* (Tema: The State Publishing Corporation, 1964), 1, 5.]

[546] The first part of the three-stanza poem reads: "Television sets Ghana in clear sight,/ Through the ideology of her creed;/ With brain and brawn teach her faithful strife,/ Socialist in content to the cream." [see Bonsra Koji Appiah, "Ghana on Screen," *Ghana Radio and Television Times* 6, no. 25 13 August 1965: 11.]

[547] John D. Chick, "The Ashanti Times: A Footnote to Ghanaian Press History," *African Affairs* 76, no. 302, 1 January 1977: 81–83, 89.

[548] Ben, "Television in Africa" *The New Ashanti Times*. 28 August 1965: 2.

publishing statistics on the status of media in each nation of the world.[549] UNESCO's influence on the establishment of new media in developing nations arose from its role in encouraging global participation in UNESCO-sponsored education and mass communication conferences, its research program in new media for education and development, and the publication of its research findings in widely disseminated guides for state employees in communications, information, and educational ministries.

As newly independent countries were tasked with finding cost effective means to educate and prepare their citizenry for new political systems and new economies, the drastic shortage of qualified teachers became a prominent justification made by international television experts for the use of a new medium like television. Specifically, in *The New Media: Memo to Educational Planners*, a UNESCO memorandum summarizing the findings from twenty-three case studies on the use of new broadcast technologies for education, it was argued that television could both increase the standards of instruction and teach untrained teachers more rapidly. While drawing on case studies conducted in seventeen countries around the world between 1965 and 1966, *The New Media* drew heavily from the implementation of educational television in American Samoa to assure educational planners in post-colonial nations that the problems of undereducated teachers could be solved through television. In American Samoa a specialist teacher from the mainland would broadcast a lesson to classrooms across the islands. Undereducated Samoan teachers would work with students to practice applying the theoretical content from the broadcast through practical assignments in the classroom. The emphasis on using one specialist for many classrooms was described as a cost-cutting strategy for resource poor countries.[550] In later years the centralized control of content by white, mainland educational experts drew criticism from Samoan teachers, but in the beginning years the television project was heralded as a technological solution to making global education more accessible.

Shirley Graham Du Bois' would adopt a similar perspective on the democratic and cost-cutting qualities of educational television after attending a conference at UNESCO headquarters on the use of Audio-Visual Aids in Education on November 12, 1963. Du Bois would come away from the UNESCO conference assured that the international community viewed television as playing an essential role in adult education and had a critical place in the development of responsible citizens in newly independent countries. Educational television, she reported from the conference, could bring about "a transformation in living conditions, in agriculture, in patterns of work"[551] and it was television that could democratize education by taking it, "to the people wherever they are."[552] Most importantly, using television as a visual aid meant that many pupils could be "reached at the *same time* and with *one* Specialist Teacher," making the number of students reached "multiplied by the hundreds."[553]

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[549] The UNESCO division of Free Flow of Information under the department of Mass Communication would publish new editions of *World communications: press, radio, television, film* from the late 1950s to the mid 1970s. This book contained statistical data on mass communication systems (newspapers, cinema, radio, and television) in nearly 200 countries.

[550] Wilbur Schramm, Philip H. Coombs, Friedrich Kahnert, and Jack Lyle, *The New Media: Memo to Educational Planners* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1967): 17–21.

[551] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Report on Television Survey," 15 December 1963: 6. MC 476 Box 44.7, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[552] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Report on Television Survey," 15 December 1963: 6. MC 476 Box 44.7, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

[553] Shirley Graham Du Bois, "Report on Television Survey," 15 December 1963: 6. MC 476 Box 44.7, Shirley Graham Du Bois Papers, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, Harvard, Cambridge, USA.

Around a year after Shirley Graham Du Bois' participation in a UNESCO event, W.F. Coleman, the Director of Sound Broadcasting at GBC and President of the Union of Radio and Television National Organizations of Africa, and Frank Goodship, a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation employee working in Ghana as the head consultant at the Ghana Television training school, attended the UNESCO Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa in Lagos, Nigeria from September 21–29, 1964. There W.F. Coleman and Frank Goodship were in dialogue with television visionaries and leading television professionals from across Africa. Through this exchange theories of communication and development were diffused among state practitioners in mass media and education. Theoretical trends in mass communication appeared in conference publications that circulated during and after the conference.

For instance, the trailblazer in French Television broadcast, founder of Eurovision, and Director of the Radio and Visual Services Division of the United Nations, Mr. Jean d'Arcy, was in attendance at the conference. In preparation for the meeting, UNESCO published Jean d'Arcy's *The Statutes and Financing of a Television Service*. Within the text are a mix of influences from popular communications scholars of the time, specifically Marshall McLuhan, Daniel Lerner, and Wilbur Schramm. Like Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm, Jean d'Arcy argued that despite early adoption of television as an object of leisure in the USA and England, "television's value as an entertainment medium is in no way comparable to its potential power as an instrument for national unification, social development, education and the general dissemination of information."[554] The emphasis on using the new medium for education is consistent with international communications for development theories of the time, appearing in the international literature as an important means to national development.

International aid experts along with information and education ministries drew on the link between communication and modernization established in Daniel Lerner's 1958 book, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, to justify expanding communications infrastructure projects in the Global South. Modernization, according to Lerner, began by emulating the history of Western industrialization. Urbanization would lead to higher population density, which in turn would necessitate the formation of more schools, mass media, free-markets, and an array of democratic institutions. Accordingly, with these changes rising economic activity would convert largely agrarian "traditional" societies into "modern" industrial ones. Lerner's emphasis on this relationship between media and modernization—that new media could spark through empathy the desire to modernize—has led to *The Passing of Traditional Society* becoming an important precursor for global communications studies.[555]

In addition to Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* discussed in chapter two, another important moment in the formalization global communications studies was the publication and wide distribution of Wilbur Schramm's 1964 *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the Developing Countries* by UNESCO. UNESCO's global influence led to Schramm's ideas becoming significant for the types of approaches postcolonial countries would take towards new communications technologies.[556] Building on

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[554] Jean d'Arey, "The Statutes and Financing of a Television Service," *Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964), 3. UNESCO/TV/AFR/5.

[555] Hemant Shah, *The Production of Modernization: Daniel Lerner, Mass Media, and The Passing of Traditional Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 6.

[556] Emile McAnany, *Saving the World: A Brief History of Communication for Development and Social Change* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 25.

Daniel Lerner's theories, Wilbur Schramm makes the claim in his field-defining book that, "mass communication, if used adequately and well, can indeed make a substantial contribution to national economic and social development."[557] Schramm argued, following Lerner, that people living in traditional societies had the talent and innate abilities to do great things but lacked the skills to innovate. Television and radio, however, could bring new ideas to a community and spark that innovative tendency. Building on Daniel Lerner's notion that the difference between highly developed states and underdeveloped ones was whether or not they had experienced industrialization, Schramm advocated for the mobilization of human resources through education, information, technical training, and literacy to prepare individuals for modern industry. Unlike formal education which benefits the youth and takes time to impact the professionalization workers, the swift ability of modern communication technologies to educate adult populations would ensure that a nation's population would play an important role in bringing technological change.[558] In Schramm's words, "the task of the mass media of information and the 'new media' of education is to speed and ease the long, slow social transformation required for economic development, and, in particular, to speed and smooth the task of mobilizing human resources behind the national effort."[559] Important to Schramm was that the type of content prepared for educational television and the method of distribution (for instance, broadcasts should be accompanied by monitors, teachers, or other trained staff to help interpret the programs) is inseparable from the effectiveness of the new media. New media, according to Schramm, do allow for modernization, but not by themselves. They must be part of comprehensive programs planned between communications and education ministries.

Unlike Wilbur Schramm, Jean d'Arcy believed that the type of television system and, in McLuhanesque fashion, the message transmitted did not matter. He offers examples of various models from Europe, the United States, the USSR and Japan as possible structures that a new television system might follow but insists that "the final decision should be made not in terms of accepting or imitating patterns from abroad, but in terms of defining on a national level the particular requirements of the country in question."[560] What mattered to d'Arcy was that,

> …the introduction of television is in itself a step forward. It is not true, as certain people contend, that the very presence of television does not represent progress, or that television's value depends upon the message it transmits. The simple fact of providing a country with a new nervous system constitutes progress, because that country with it will have at its disposal a new organ of perception, a new medium of expression, a new means of self-awareness.[561]

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[557] Wilbur Schramm, *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the Developing Countries*, (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964), 252.

[558] Wilbur Schramm, *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the Developing Countries*, (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964), 19.

[559] Wilbur Schramm, *Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in the Developing Countries*, (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964), 27.

[560] Jean d'Arcy, "The Statutes and Financing of a Television Service" *Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964), 4. UNESCO/TV/AFR/5.

[561] Jean d'Arcy, "The Statutes and Financing of a Television Service," *Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964), 26–27. UNESCO/TV/AFR/5.

For d'Arcy, the development of a national television system could transform the nation's ability to perceive itself and the way it represents itself. Thus, the media system becomes progress in and of itself without needing to justify changes in development measures like the increase in wages, a decrease of infectious diseases, or overall well-being of the country. Instead, he argues that "each country gets the kind of television it deserves. Any country which truly wants to break out of the cycle of underdevelopment can triumph with the help of television and its own will to victory."[562] Therefore, television may signal progress on its own, but it is necessary for countries to pull themselves up by their boot-straps, work hard, and dedicate themselves to using television to break "the cycle of underdevelopment." At work in this contradiction are two established lines of thinking about Africa and development. On the one hand, d'Arcy expresses hyperbolic techno-optimism where new media, in and of themselves, are thought to have the ability to magically transform societies and propel them forward towards a progressive future. The remedy for underdevelopment is a technological product. On the other hand, d'Arcy excuses the new media from inadequately stopping the cycle of underdevelopment by condemning any failure of the media on the poor work ethic of the country and its people, not on the technology itself—a strategy of blame that comes out of a long history of racially charged stereotypes of the laziness of Africans and those of African descent.

Jean d'Arcy and W.F. Coleman both came to the meeting with different approaches to international collaboration that demonstrate the different expectations Africans and Europeans had about the role of UNESCO in developing mass communication globally. W.F. Coleman's own approach to the meeting would focus on the problem of raising funds to pay for national television stations, particularly the economic difficulties of creating enough African programs to supply a station. He suggested that UNESCO and URTNA partner with the OAU to develop a broadcast film and tape library that could facilitate programming exchanges between African broadcast stations as well as a training center for all national radio and television organizations in Africa.[563] UNESCO would not take up Coleman's practical request for financial and institutional support.

The difference between Jean d'Arcy and W.F. Coleman's approach to the UNESCO meeting underscores the different expectations each had about the role of UNESCO in media development. Jean d'Arcy came to the meeting sharing advice and information to encourage and guide the development of African television while W.F. Coleman came requesting fiscal commitments. UNESCO would, like d'Arcy, be an active disseminator of popular communications for development theory rather than a major funder of media infrastructure. The educational use of mass communications for the advancement of developing countries was the gospel of the burgeoning communications field and UNESCO was instrumental in spreading that message.

In fact, Ghana was extremely receptive to UNESCO's message. Since its first conception Ghana Television was envisioned as an educational medium. Contemporary descriptions of Ghana Television's roots remain tethered to Nkrumah's 1963 proclamation, but it is the third line—that television's "paramount objective" is "education in the broadest and purest sense"—

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[562] Jean d'Arcy, "The Statutes and Financing of a Television Service," *Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1964), 27. UNESCO/TV/AFR/5.

[563] W.F. Coleman, "TV has Immense Benefits for Africa," *Ghana Radio Review and TV Times* 5, no. 34, 16 October 1964: 16.

which is repeated with emphasis today. Instead of the revolutionary rhetoric of socialist transformation, education is divorced from the ideological project that was so important to Kwame Nkrumah's politics in the mid-1960s. For example, the erasure of socialism's role in the history of Ghana television is removed in the biography of David Ghartey-Tagoe, the famous television news announcer and later director general of GBC. His biographer and son, David Kwesi Ghartey-Tagoe gives Nkrumah's quote from the inaugural address primary importance in the history of television but he rewrites the socialist line. "Television must assist in the socialist transformation of Ghana" becomes "television must assist in the social transformation of Ghana."[564]

During the 2015 celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, GBC drew on Nkrumah's speech a number of times to describe the aim of Ghana Television at its inauguration, but always omitted the socialist content from his speech. In the GBC Chairman of the Board's speech that launched the 80th anniversary celebrations, Kwame Nkrumah's lines are paraphrased, politely leaving out the essential role socialism played in Ghana television's origin story. Richard Kwame Asante said, "Ghana Television was to supplement the country's educational programmes and foster a lively interest in the world around the people at the time. Its paramount objective was to provide public education in its broadest and purest sense without any element of commercialization."[565] In a television documentary made to commemorate the first eighty years of GBC, Kwame Nkrumah's language is again used, but reworded slightly, "the basic aim of Ghana television would be to supplement Ghana's educational programme and to foster an interest in world affairs. It would not cater for cheap entertainment and communication."[566] While the phrase parallels the language of the first two sentences of the Nkrumah's speech, this time in addition to leaving out television's role in the socialist transformation of Ghana, the word commercialism has been changed to communication further removing Ghana Television from its socialist origins. The change is significant since GBC commercialized their content shortly after the 1966 coup d'état.

In the short institutional history written in the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation's 80th anniversary celebration booklet, the transitional moment following the Kwame Nkrumah coup d'état is remembered as a business opportunity:

> In view of the growing economic activities in the country, it was found necessary to give the business community and other individuals the chance of selling their goods and services through the fastest available media (radio and television). Thus, the GBC Commercial Service was launched on February 1, 1967 by the Vice-Chairman of the erstwhile National Liberation Council.[567]

Even though the National Liberation Council is mentioned, the history is written in such a way that the move toward commercialization is described as the natural result of a growing Ghanaian

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[564] David Kwesi Ghartey-Tagoe, *David Ghartey-Tagoe: A Broadcast Icon* (Self-pub., Xlibris Corporation, 2010), loc 1314.

[565] Richard Kwame Asante, "Speech delivered by Mr. Richard Kwame Asante—Board Chairman at the Launch of GBC's 80th Anniversary Celebrations," in *GBC Anniversary Edition: 80 years of dependable broadcasting: evolving into the digital age* (Accra: GBC Publications Department, 2015), 18.

[566] Abibata Mahama, *A Documentary on GBC at 80*, Accra: GTV, 12 September 2015. Television broadcast.

[567] "The Humble Beginning of GBC," *GBC Anniversary Edition: 80 years of dependable broadcasting: evolving into the digital age* (Accra: GBC Publications Department, 2015), 11.

economy instead of a conscious effort to reverse the political-economic direction of the country that was in place before the coup.

By emphasizing the part of Kwame Nkrumah's speech that focused on "education in the broadest sense" as the main characteristic of Ghana Television, members of the staff like Alex Quarmyne, were able to project continuity between television before and after the '66 coup d'état. Quarmyne explained, **"**Many people tend to think that the character of television broadcasting in Ghana changed because of the coup which overthrew Nkrumah. But really it was not the coup…Because after the overthrow of Nkrumah the government maintained the same policies in terms of using television for development. Educational content for development, mainly."[568] He went on, "it was the deregulation of broadcasting which brought about the greatest change on the character of broadcasting in the country. Because once private stations came in commercialism grew."[569]

Communications scholar Amin Alhassan has also pointed out the continuities between colonial and postcolonial communications policy immediately following Ghanaian independence. He writes, "The colonial state was not building a nation-state in the postcolonial sense as such, but it articulated its policy in the same frame that the postcolonial state was to adopt."[570] This was the emphasis on the democratization of mass media by the state in the service of national development. However, he argues that the "structurally adjusted postcolonial state has succumbed to the lure of the market logic."[571]

Television remained a state monopoly until broadcasting was deregulated with the adoption of a new constitution in 1992. The constitution guarantees the "freedom and independence of the media" and stipulates that there should be "no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a licence as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper, journal or other media for mass communication or information."[572] This marked the end of state-controlled media and opened up broadcast waves to a different set of voices and new audiences. However, independent broadcasting, Alex Quarmyne contends, led to television becoming increasingly commercial: "along the way somehow the education focus of television in Ghana seemed to have disappeared."[573] As Amin Alhassan has shown, broadcasting policy in the early 1990s was guided by the privatization policies of structural adjustment often at the expense of earlier policy that advocated for democratic access to media for all citizens.[574] And yet, as demonstrated in chapter one, a market logic has been inherent in the adoption of new media technologies in Africa from the beginning. Media technologies as commodities have played an important part in communications for development discourse. As Jean d'Arcy wrote, the adoption of "a new nervous system [television] constitutes progress" thus imbuing the ownership

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[568] Alex Quarmyne, interviewed by the author, East Legon, Accra, Ghana, July 13, 2017.
[569] Alex Quarmyne, interviewed by the author, East Legon, Accra, Ghana, July 13, 2017.
[570] Amin Alhassan, "Market valorization in broadcasting policy in Ghana: abandoning the quest for media democratization" *Media, Culture & Society* 27, no. 2 (2005): 218.
[571] Amin Alhassan, "Market valorization in broadcasting policy in Ghana: abandoning the quest for media democratization" *Media, Culture & Society* 27, no. 2 (2005): 227.
[572] *Constitution of the Republic of Ghana*, "Freedom and Independence of the Media," art. 162, sec. 3. Accra: Assembly Press, 1992.
[573] Alex Quarmyne, interviewed by the author, East Legon, Accra, Ghana, July 13, 2017.
[574] Amin Alhassan, "Market valorization in broadcasting policy in Ghana: abandoning the quest for media democratization" *Media, Culture & Society* 27, no. 2 (2005): 227.

and application of new media with the important transformative potential that others would stress was attached to educational content.

On June 17, 1966, a few months after the February 24, 1966 coup, the covers of *Ghana Radio & Television Times*, GBC's radio and TV guide, began to feature female employees posed next to new media technologies. The photos continue intermittently into late 1967. The women featured ranged from GBC technicians like Miss Dick to television program editors like Lorna Wordie, receptionists like Mabel Quartey to television announcers like Samilia Aryee. These women, neatly coifed in professional dresses, projected confidence and competence over the gramophones, ¼ inch tape decks, microphones, telephones, television control panels, and film projectors that constituted their professional lives. In many ways these images of female media professionals are a continuation of the Nkrumah-era policies that prioritized making visible black broadcasting expertise at GBC. The images offer a retort to the imperial visual discourse from the early 1900s that depicted astounded Africans suspiciously listening to the "white magic" of imported gramophones. Instead, these African women are not only experts on a variety of state-of-the-art media technologies but are also represented as actively part of the national production of local media content around the same time that Marvel is imagining an "elaborate stereo music system—complete with tape recorder" in Black Panther's inconceivable jungle lair.[575]

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[575] Stan Lee, "The Black Panther!" *Fantastic Four* 1, no. 52, July 1966: 1.

Fig. 26–29: A few "cover girls" of *Ghana Radio & Television Times*.

The photographs on the cover of *Ghana Radio & Television Times* recall W.E.B. Du Bois efforts to uplift African Americans in the eyes of the world through photographic representation

at the 1900 Paris World's Fair. As mentioned in chapter one, the "American Negro" portraits that accompanied Du Bois' exhibit destabilize white middle-class visual discourse about African Americans through visual doubling of criminal mugshots, but with a difference.[576] Similarly, the women of GBC repeat the visual structure of colonial initial contact images, but with their own empowering difference. The constructed rupture between opposites—the sensual, feminine beauty of GBC employees and the cold and mechanical new media they use—echoes the spectacular juxtaposition of "primitive" and "modern" that was exaggerated in images of indigenous people and gramophones in the early 1900s for advertising purposes, but their prideful expertise using the technology troubles and critiques the vestiges of colonial racism latently lingering in discourse about new media.

Yet, these female employees begin appearing on covers of the guide in the post-Nkrumah era precisely at the moment when Ghana Broadcasting Corporation was trying to increase the circulation of its publication and find new sources of revenue through advertisements. The commercial sponsorship of *Ghana Radio & Television Times* coincided with the commercialization of GBC radio and television programs. The GBC "cover girls"—as one image caption described them—were often accompanied by advertisements about these changes (see figures 28 and 29).[577] The cover images of GBC's female staff posed next to new media technologies marked a transition toward more explicit sexist commercialism, as these women's bodies were used to sell a number of things. Most unambiguously the many radio programs that feature their voices, but they are also used sell the new regime. In one image, a female Television Assistant Film Editor who is threading a projector is described in the caption as representing the mobilization of women towards "national reconstruction" in the post-Nkrumah era.[578] Like the popular cover girls of the South African based *Drum* magazine, the GBC cover girls are used to sell the publication itself. This moment marks the use of black female bodies in the commodification of the Nkrumah era racial uplift discourse that saw the representation of black technological expertise as essential for the development of socialist Ghana.

The marketability of the GBC cover girls may be due to the internal narrative of progress within the uplift image. As Allyson Field has argued in her book on African American uplift cinema, the formative structure of before-and-after photography is central to the visual rhetoric of uplift where one image offers the "before" to the second image's "after."[579] I contend that by doubling and signifying upon the colonial images of African encounters with new media that circulated in the early twentieth century, the GBC cover girls become the "after" image to the racist "before." In each image, new media are the fulcrum upon which claims of exclusion and inclusion teeter. But, the exclusion of before and the inclusion of after, are linked together by a transition in acquisition. Together they reinforce new media as spectacular fetishes of progress

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[576] Shawn Michelle Smith, "Looking at One's Self Through the Eyes of Others': W.E.B. Du Bois's Photographs for the 1900 Paris Exposition," *African American Review* 34, no. 4 (2000): 582.

[577] The cover of *Ghana Radio & Television Times* 7, no. 27, 26 August 1966 mentioned the cover girls: "And to make you feel at home this week, Gladys Kwafo, our cover girl, and TV Script Assistant has a lot up her sleeve for you with Kids Fun-Fare—an item of the programme—on Wednesday, 6:00pm."

[578] "In our national reconstruction era no girl in Ghana is leaving any stone unturned. They could be seen moving abreast with their counterparts in almost every field of our national endeavor. Pictured left is Lorna Wordie, Television Assistant Film Editor, threading a film in the screening laboratory." [From the cover of *Ghana Radio & Television Times* 7, no. 34, 14 October 1966.]

[579] Allyson Nadia Field, *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 65.

whose procurement promises social transformation. Yet with each new media, the cycle of "before" and "after" begins again.[580]

Despite the addition of some commercials to Ghana Television after the coup, Alex Quarmyne maintained that the primary focus at Ghana Broadcasting Corporation continued to be on education. Similarly, in David Kwesi Ghartey-Tagoe's biography of his father, he writes that after the 1966 Nkrumah coup d'état the structure of Ghana Television changed, but the "programme policy, nevertheless, remained intact essentially. Education remained a prime concern."[581] Ghana television's operating principle thus shifted from mainly being a tool to "assist in the Socialist transformation of Ghana" in 1965 to a that of "education in the broadest and purest sense."

The phrase, when uttered by Kwame Nkrumah, was originally sandwiched between a declaration that "it will not cater to cheap entertainment nor commercialism" and an appeal for television to assist in the socialist transformation of Ghana suggests that, at least initially, there was a connection between the purity of its educational objective and its relationship to socialism. The reference to cheap entertainment and commercialism positions Ghanaian television as antagonistic towards an American model of television. According to Kwame Nkrumah, the broad education that television would provide is pure because Ghana television opposed commercialism and embraced socialism. In Kwame Nkrumah's 1964 book *Consciencism*, education is the means by which political consciousness takes place. He writes that education is the instrument of the mass party used to counter the forces of neo-colonialism.[582] The adoption of the decontextualized "education in the broadest and purest sense" in the post-coup era becomes a way to superficially depoliticize education by embracing the dominant neo-liberal political framework of UNESCO while privatizing state infrastructure.

Yet, Ghana Television's content during its first seven months under Shirly Graham Du Bois' leadership was only occasionally outwardly socialist. A typical week of programing included an Accra stadium soccer match on Sunday, performances by Ghanaian musicians on Saturday and Sundays, and school programing during the week in the mornings (this only lasted from the end of January to the end of May 1966). Educational content included English language instruction for adults (the program was called *I Will Speak English*—A title that it shared with a colonial film made in the Gold Coast in 1954), public health programs, rural programs focusing on farming and fisheries, homemaking programs, and cultural heritage shows. Socialism rarely explicitly entered the content of television, except in the discussion of politics in the news program "Ghana '65." Ghana '65 featured occasional programs like "The Role of the Press in Socialist Ghana" and "The Role of the Co-operative in the movement in Socialist Ghana." There was also content from England: shows like *Supercar* (1961–1962, UK), *Silas Marner* (1964, UK), *The Brothers Karamazov* (1964, UK) would play weekly on Saturday nights.

Nevertheless, the focus was on informative content and the educational potential of broadcast as a means for development, before and after the coup d'état concealed the loss of the radical socialist angles of Ghana television. UNESCO's role in shaping African governments' attitudes towards new communications technologies cannot be underestimated. UNESCO's emphasis on mass communication for education and development seemed, at least semantically,

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[580] The relationship between the black female body and new media technologies will continue to be explored in the next chapter with an analysis of the Nigerian video film series, *BlackBerry Babes*.

[581] David Kwesi Ghartey-Tagoe, *David Ghartey-Tagoe: A Broadcast Icon* (Self-pub., Xlibris Corporation, 2010), loc 1422.

[582] Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964), 100.

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aligned with Nkrumah's focus on "education in the broadest and purest sense." The elimination of the socialist line from Nkrumah's speech in official and personal histories of Ghana television since the 1966 coup, signals the erasure of the creative media theory of Shirley Graham Du Bois which strove to incorporate UNESCO-infused "communication for development" media theory, despite its post-Cold War capitalist agenda, and fit it for African socialism.

Television in Ghana mediated two seemingly divergent ambitions; to produce a fundamentally novel African socialist media system that would promote empowering images made by and for Africans while also actively hiring British, Canadian, and Japanese experts for technical consultation and financial assistance in order to ensure that Ghana television met modern global standards. GBC's simultaneous invention of African socialist television while still embracing international expertise afforded institutional histories of Ghana Broadcasting Corporation that emphasize the continuity of the organization's public broadcasting mission over the rupture following the 1966 coup d'état.

When Ghana Television began it defied assumptions about Africa and technology. A new state-of-the-art television station, run by an all-black staff was a very real corrective to a "backward, primitive" Africa the colonial world had imagined to that point. The emphasis on black media production in the implementation of Ghanaian Television, shows how Ghanaians worked to invent television that challenged the institutionalized whiteness of new media technology. African post-colonial statecraft was a technology of Afrofuturism and television was a key component of the development of an emancipated Afro-future. For the average Ghanaian television was, Martin Loh straightforwardly stated, "an instrument of their liberation."[583]

Ghana Television reminds us about the imaginative process in which technologies are constantly made and remade through use outside of the presumed centers of innovation in ways that demand attention. If media scholars want to understand how media mean in any given moment, they must look at the ways media are invented in different global contexts. As long as we continue to think of the "new" as tied to the formation of the material components of media objects, instead of in the interpretive reading, translation, and application of that material within new cultural-historical contexts, then it will be impossible to separate the "new" in new media from the double "neo" in neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism. In a moment when, as Mark Fisher puts it, "capitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable,"[584] turning towards the invention of television in Ghana, reminds us that the failure of Silicon Valley to sincerely disrupt the market beyond a techno-darwinist survival of the newest and most fittest innovation most likely stems from an absence of imagination.[585] The project of Ghanaian television to actively disentangle new media technologies from racial capitalism offers an optimistic reminder that media technology that resists the neoliberal "mobile privatization" Williams warned against can still be invented.

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[583] Martin Loh, interviewed by the author, GBC Clubhouse, Accra, Ghana, August 18, 2017.
[584] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 8.
[585] "Disruptive innovation" was coined by Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen to describe a phenomenon when established products or service providers who control markets are displaced by newer smaller rivals who offer more affordable alternatives [see Clayton Christensen, *Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 1997)]. "Disruption" became a mantra of the Silicon Valley technology industry in the later 2000s.

Chapter Four
"Who wants a BlackBerry these days?": Serialized New Media and its Trash

       After the disappointing unveiling of the BlackBerry tablet PlayBook in April 2011 and the global three-day Research in Motion (RIM) system failure in October 2011, the popularity of the Canadian company that brought the world "CrackBerry" was in decline without promise of recovery. Much to the disappointment of BlackBerry customers, RIM's answer to the iPad was plagued with functionality issues. When the PlayBook tablet was released on April 19, 2011 it did not have native email. For users to access their email on both devices, they were required to download a bridge app to link BlackBerry email to the PlayBook. Furthermore, since the PlayBook and BlackBerry used different operating systems, the apps that BlackBerry users enjoyed on their phones would not function on the PlayBook. Several months later, customer dissatisfaction was exacerbated when BlackBerry's global Internet service went down for three days. Offended customers took to Twitter with the mutinous DearBlackBerry hash-tag to vent their frustrations.[586]

       By 2012, Nicole Perlroth writing for the *New York Times* declared that BlackBerry, once a symbol of wealth and power for executives in the United States, was now the "black sheep" of smartphones. United States BlackBerry users were so ashamed of their phones that they were reportedly hiding them under more fashionable Apple products during business meetings.[587] In an online video accompanying the article, New Yorkers described BlackBerry users as stuck in the Stone Age with those other obstinate luddites who still used AOL and Myspace.[588] By 2012, BlackBerry appeared to be an artifact from another era destined for history museums, the archeology classroom, or the Facebook headquarters empathy labs.[589]

       Following the *New York Times* piece, headlines across the blogosphere began to exclaim with incredulity, "BlackBerry Dead? Don't tell Africa," "BlackBerry is doing incredibly well—in Africa," and "BlackBerry Finally Gets Some Love…in Nigeria." Noticeably all of these headlines followed a similar dramatic logic in which the inherent absurdity of BlackBerry as "an object of desire" is discovered to still occur in a world that is technologically distant—in "a world where people still dream of new BlackBerry."[590] A slippage between elsewhere and else-

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[586] For more information about the rise and fall of BlackBerry see Jacquie McNish and Sean Silcoff, *Losing the Signal: The Untold Story Behind the Extraordinary Rise and Spectacular Fall of BlackBerry* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2015).

[587] Nicole Perlroth, "The BlackBerry as Black Sheep," *New York Times*, 15 October 2012.

[588] Joshua Brustein, "The BlackBerry Stigma," *New York Times*, 15 October 2012. Video.

[589] Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park has several "Empathy Labs" throughout the campus that allow employees the opportunity to experience the Facebook interface in various modes of accessibility. The Empathy Labs are a project started by the Facebook accessibility team. The accessibility team works on designing Facebook for differently abled individuals and those users largely from the Global South who have different technology capabilities, i.e. slow Internet speeds or older models of phones. The "labs" are not specifically designed for engineers to consult. Instead they are strategically set up in centrally accessible areas around the campus to permeate the "hacker" culture with a sense of ethical acknowledgement that not everyone experiences Facebook in the same way. For more information see Cade Metz's "Meet the Team that Makes It Possible for the Blind to Use Facebook" *WIRED*, 22 February 2015 and Hayley Tsukayama's "Facebook's 'Empathy Lab': How Facebook Designs for disabled users" in *The Washington Post*, 31 March 2015.

[590] Wall Street Daily, "BlackBerry Finally Gets So Me Love…in Nigeria" March 11, 2013. Fung, Brian. "BlackBerry is doing incredibly well—in Africa." *The Washington Post* 13 November 2013: Web. McCaskill, Steve. "BlackBerry Smartphones Still an Object of Desire in Africa." *TechWeek Europe*. 27 November 2013: Web.

when runs under the surface of this language. This projection of Africa into the past through its juxtaposition to new media recalls the modern/primitive themes in depictions of gramophones in Africa a century earlier. On the one hand these articles offered a depiction of modern Africa connected to global capital through smart phone information and communication technologies, but they also rehearsed a vision of a unilineal technological evolution in which Africa, marked by technological lag, is the brutal punch-line. The butt of the joke may be BlackBerry, but with it, so is Africa.

New media continue to demarcate African difference by relegating Africa to the temporal and geographic margins. Around the time of the #DearBlackBerry fiasco and RIM's subsequent fall as the world's leader in smartphones sales in 2011, the phrase "first world problems" entered the American lexicon.[591] Still a thriving meme and a popular hash-tag on Twitter, the phrase is used to qualify complaints about the small inconveniences that sometimes come with the consumption of high status goods, particularly coalescing around the latest media technologies. For instance, "when you're just trying to watch *That 70s Show* but too many people are on Netflix" you have a "first world problem."[592] The joke is in effect a humble-brag about overindulgence. In response to the popular 2011 coinage, Nigerian-American author Teju Cole wrote a biting critique of "first world problems," appropriately, on Twitter:

> I don't like this expression "First World problems." It is false and it is condescending. Yes, Nigerians struggle with floods or infant mortality. But these same Nigerians also deal with mundane and seemingly luxurious hassles. Connectivity issues on your BlackBerry, cost of car repair, how to sync your iPad, what brand of noodles to buy: Third World problems. All the silly stuff of life doesn't disappear just because you're black and live in a poorer country. People in the richer nations need a more robust sense of the lives being lived in the darker nations. Here's a First World problem: the inability to see that others are as fully complex and as keen on technology and pleasure as you are.[593]

As Teju Cole pointed out, "first world problems" works on the assumption that the third world is overly occupied with serious problems like famine, disease, and corruption to have time to engage in the trivial technological indulgences of the First World. The popularity of the "first world problems" hashtag and its verbal equivalent in everyday speech, demonstrates that for many who imagine themselves as living in the First World, the coupling of the words "technology and pleasure" are incompatible in the Third World context. "First world problems" suggests that if people in the Third World do use new technologies it is inconceivable that they might use them for pleasure. Instead, Non-Governmental Organizations, sociologists, and start-

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"BlackBerry Dead? Don't Tell Africa" *Tech Central*. April 7, 2015. Cotris, David. "A World Where People Still Dream of New BlackBerry." *Sectornomics, CNBC*. 27 February 2014: Web.

[591] The earliest definition on Urban Dictionary is from 2005 with definitions as recent as January 2015. The First World Problems subreddit began in January 2011. Google trend analytics show that search interest spiked in December 2011 and then again in July 2014 with the release of Weird Al's song by the same title.

[592] dominic frissora "When you're just trying to watch *That 70s Show* but too many people are on Netflix" 3 January 2015. There are also others that stand out like, Kayleigh Johnson "I'm always sooo critical of my instagram feed and think it looks crap in comparison to everyone else's!" 3 January 2016; Helen Freer "I miss that new phone feeling…When you'd spend a day figuring out how it all worked. But now it's just another iPhone."

[593] @tejucole. *Twitter*, 19 November 2011. As quoted by Alexis C. Madrigal's "What's Wrong With #FirstWorldProblems" in *The Atlantic* November 21, 2011.

up technology companies confront the digital divide by targeting "Third World problems" like infant mortality, poor agricultural production, the spread of Ebola, and the underselling of market goods as design based problems with new media technological fixes.[594] Thus, mobile media are made useful in Africa through neoliberal development ideals that sidestep the role of the state in privileging social transformation through individual consumers, a strategy that finds its origins in an earlier mobile media—mobile cinema. In fact, international press about new media in Africa repeatedly highlight the utopian role that mobile phones and their accompanying applications will have in solving delayed development by providing access to mobile banking, and providing information to farmers and expectant mothers.[595] The use of cutting edge media technology in Africa often assumes that Africans need new media technology to resolve "Third World" problems, but ignore what Teju Cole pleads for at the end of his tweet—for people living in the First World to recognize that people in the Third World are also consumers. Cole exposes the snag of capitalism: when repeatedly represented as excluded from access to the newest forms of media technology, one is prompted to have a blasé desire to be depicted as a consumer.

Yet in the early 2000s instead of being viewed as global consumers, West African IP addresses were barred from digital marketplaces[596] and new media technologies were made especially for West African markets.[597] Combined, "first world problems" and the sardonic "BlackBerry Dead? Don't tell Africa" headlines of the early 2010s established new media technologies as the material means to define, rank, and maintain hierarchical relationships between ideological binaries like rich/poor, first/third world, and white/black, even as Africans saw themselves participating within a shared system of global capital. Discourse about BlackBerry in Africa shows how the seriality of new media continues to project Africa into the geographic margins and a distant past.

A few months after the *New York Times* reported on the American publics' revulsion toward BlackBerry phones, *The Economist* published an article relating the shocking rise of BlackBerry popularity in Nigeria and other parts of Africa to the Ubong Bassey Nya's three-part Nigerian film serial *BlackBerry Babes* (2011–12). In this chapter, I also use *BlackBerry Babes* to unpack global trends in mobile telephony, but with an aim to critique a history of media discourse that projects African new media use as the delayed, shoddy sequel to a series of media inventions originating in the contemporary Western world. *BlackBerry Babes* shows the two

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[594] There has been a large interest in mHealth (mobile health), mAgri (mobile agriculture), and mPesa (mobile money) spawning many new innovations mostly involving SMS (Short Message Service) to connect mobile phone users to information. For an mHealth example consider mHero, a software suite designed to help Ministries of Health stay in contact with health professionals in the field. It was built by UNICEF and IntraHealth International in 2014 to support communication between health workers during the Ebola outbreak (http://www.mhero.org).

[595] Stephanie Novak, "Exploring the Role of Mobile Technology as a Health Care Helper." *The New York Times*. May 13, 2012. Anmar Frangoul, "The tech saving lives in Africa" *CNBC*, 12 May 2016. http://www.cnbc.com/2016/05/12/the-tech-saving-lives-in-africa.html; Rupert Neate, "Africa is saving lives by turning mobile phones into hospitals" *The Telegraph*. 11 October 2010. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/mediatechnologyandtelecoms/telecoms/8053964/Africa-is-saving-lives-by-turning-mobile-phones-into-hospitals.html

[596] While doing fieldwork in Ghana in 2011, I attempted to buy a wedding gift online for a friend in the United States but my purchase was denied. I called the company and was told that people with IP addresses from Ghana were not allowed to purchase items on their website.

[597] During the excessive power-outages in 2015 (known as dumsor, in Twi dum means "turn off" and sɔ means "turn on") the power bank phone became popular for its long battery life, three sim card slots, FM radio, and LED flashlight. Its ruggedness was specifically marketed in countries with power fluctuations.

sides of the media fetish—the way that new media are used to manufacture difference through racial and economic hierarchies and the affection for new media that these hierarchies engender.

BlackBerry Babes follows a clique of upper-class, trend-setting college girls who deny friendship to anyone who does not own a BlackBerry. Desperate for social mobility and inclusion, the girls engage in petty-theft, credit card fraud, and prostitution in order to secure the latest BlackBerry model. The "BB" Babes are eventually punished for their lewd actions, but the absurdity of their laughable exploits to obtain a BlackBerry—ultimately an empty signifier of class—is the joke that fuels this serial comedy across three two-hour parts. Analyzing the seriality in *BlackBerry Babes* expands contemporary debates about media seriality that have been largely based on early silent cinema serials and American prestige television from the 1990s through the 2010s. Like the new models of BlackBerry phones the girls fetishize, the *BlackBerry Babes* serial becomes a means to reinforce both the phones and the Nigerian video industry as evidence of equal participation within global capitalism, while still expressing cynicism towards the potential of social and economic mobility that these screen technologies seem to proffer. This chapter addresses the ambiguity of the media fetish expressed within *BlackBerry Babes*— between disillusionment and the lasting desire for the techno-utopian promise of new media.

Mobile

The Economist article about *BlackBerry Babes* and BlackBerry sales claimed, "the plot may be absurd, but its sense of fashion is spot on."[598] Reports about Nigerians' obsession with BlackBerry accompanied discussions of the film. Young men and women reportedly would only consider dating another if they had a BlackBerry and entrepreneurs found that they weren't taken seriously in business if they did not have a BlackBerry phone.[599] Not only did the characters' obsessions with BlackBerry parallel the rising sales of BlackBerry in Nigeria and across Africa during the early 2010s, but the Babes are also frequently concerned about the fashionableness of their BlackBerry model. In fact, the Babes control all aspects of their appearance—hair, shoes, clothing, purses, and jewelry—to exude the affluence associated with the most up-to-date trends. Always in their hands, and thus always visible to onlookers, the BlackBerry adorns the women like electronic jewelry. Thus, in this fashion-conscious campus clique BlackBerry phones are another accessory to complete their wardrobe, but it is the ownership of a BlackBerry that confers "Babe" status.

In the second part of the first film, Vivienne, one of the main BlackBerry Babes played by the Nigerian star Tonto Dikeh, asks her wealthy uncle for a new BlackBerry. When her uncle points out that she already has four, Vivienne explains, "Uncle, what I'm asking for is the BlackBerry Torch. It's high resolution. It's new! It's not here. It's different. My messages can go faster, I can reach the world faster. The fashion is incredible." Her Uncle asks if her other phones have stopped working. But Vivienne, dodging the question, repeatedly insists that her other phones are "out of fashion" and therefore she needs the newest model. Even as Vivienne's uncle

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[598] "BlackBerry babes." *The Economist*, 8 December 2012.

[599] While these claims circulated like rumors, they did so along the distribution of the film at least signaling that Nigerians saw some semblance of reality in the hyperbolic story. See "'BlackBerry Babes'—What Does This Movie Say About Us?" *BellaNaija*, March 18, 2011. https://www.bellanaija.com/2011/03/blackberry-babes-what-does-this-movie-say-about-us/

advises that, "Life is not all about new models of phones," the film series seems to suggest otherwise.

Fashion has long held a special relationship to conceptions time. Fashion is the "incessant, cyclical pursuit of the 'new,'"[600] and it is that relationship to time that makes it such a "quintessentially modern form."[601] As Jean Baudrillard has declared, "Modernity is a code, and fashion is its emblem."[602] If fashion is mercurial, then modernity too is eternally ephemeral. Fashion, like a medium, continually broadcasts its content as the perpetual present event. But rather than mediate between temporalities, a process which would allow time to exist outside of linear progression, mediums categorize and codify time through the present-ness of their broadcasts. Even when archival material is replayed, the act of transmission or projection reanimates the past into the present. The transmission of the new and now leaves in its wake content which at once becomes destined, at least until fashion returns to cannibalize itself, to static periodization.

In *BlackBerry Babes*, the emphasis on the fashion of the mobile phones tethers the new telecommunications technology to a model of time in which some mobile phones represent the recent past and others the contemporary moment. When Vivienne teaches her uncle about how social networking allows her to stay in touch with the rest of the world, her uncle responds, echoing the *New York Times*, "So, that means the rest of us [those not using smart phones] are living in the Stone Age?" Her uncle's description of himself as stuck in another epoch for not owning a BlackBerry parallels what New Yorkers were contemporaneously saying about BlackBerry users. Both texts refer to people who use out-of-fashion technologies as coming from the Stone Age making BlackBerry simultaneously both anachronistic and cutting-edge in different parts of the world.[603] As historian of science and technology David Edgerton explains, histories of technology also stipulate "invention-centric" progress narratives, like the one depicted in *BlackBerry Babes*. Invention-based timelines contribute to popular representations of historical eras—the Iron Age, the mechanical age, the information age. But as Edgerton remarks, "invention-centric" histories of technology leave out vast regions of the world because each new technology structures understandings of that age regardless of whether the invention was experienced and used on a global scale during that time. Thus, through BlackBerry we get an example of how 2011 mobile phone trends defined geographic space; some places, those where BlackBerry remained fashionable, were projected further into the past than others.

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[600] Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), xvii. As she describes, fashion often recycles and revisits past trends rather than only ever representing the utterly novel: "This fashion quality is held in place by the multitude of choices and decisions that momentarily secure the particular appeal and celebrate it as the new." Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), xv. See also Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), and Ilya Parkins, *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli: Fashion, Femininity and Modernity* (London: Berg, 2012).

[601] Ilya Parkins, *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli: Fashion, Femininity and Modernity* (London: Berg, 2012), 2.

[602] Jean Baudrillard, "Fashion, or the Enchanting Spectacle of the Code," in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, (London: Sage, 1976), 111. See also Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (1863), trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London, Phaidon Press: 1995), 12.

[603] In addition to the evocation of the "Stone Age" in language about outdated technologies, a popular way of visualizing media change over time is by paralleling it with the evolution of man. Each stage in the development of the Homo sapiens corresponds to the "evolution of media"—an ape reads a paper, prehistoric man watches television, a Neanderthal works at a computer, while Homo sapiens hold a smart phone. These images make explicit the ways that old media get tied not only to historic periods, but also to human development.

Jean Baudrillard's emblem of modernity has long participated in structuring geopolitical space through fashioned time. Fashion scholars have stated that fashion was a system exported by the West as part of the Imperial "civilizing process" of colonial populations.[604] At the turn of the twentieth-century Georg Simmel laid out the role fashion played in making a distinction between the upper classes in modern civilizations and the lower classes "among primitive races." In Africa, as he put it, fashion was "less numerous and more stable."[605] The dichotomy that shapes his argument—between nervous, individualistic, independent, and inventive urbanites in the metropole and rural colonized people of color that he presumed to be more homogenous, unchanging, traditional, and "afraid of strange appearances"—endures in the presumption that what is fashionable in the West will dictate what becomes fashionable in the Global South.[606]

Simmel explicitly sets up fashion as an event upon which to gauge the distinction between times and peoples. He states that, "fashion always occupies the dividing-line between the past and the future, and consequently conveys a stronger feeling of the present."[607] Georg Simmel's description of indigenous people evokes a use of time in anthropological discourse that Johannes Fabian has called typological time: "a use of Time which is measured, not as time elapsed, nor by reference to points on a (linear) scale, but in terms of socioculturally meaningful events or, more precisely, intervals between such events."[608] Rather than measuring movement from one period to the next, typological time underscores a series of dichotomous states that characterize societies before and after moments of social change, such as preliterate vs. literate, traditional vs. modern, peasant vs. industrial, tribal vs. feudal, rural vs. urban. Thus, it is not that Simmel uses typological time, he creates it by insisting that fashion is the mediating interval that is always present. In the troughs on either side of a fashion wave, an unequal typology of dichotomous states of being form. Fashion then, for Simmel, in its preeminent presentness, is thus both modern and western, while African clothing, always following in fashion's wake, is woven from the timeless form of "tradition."

However, tradition is itself "a thoroughly modern construct."[609] As scholar of African fashion Victoria Rovine suggests, while fashion may be modernity's corollary, "the past— recorded as history—may be both the inverse and the animating core of fashion."[610] It is the ability to juxtapose the old with the new which makes it fashionably modern. Fashion makes "implicit reference to the past as a marker of the distance traveled from what has come before."[611] In the case of mobile phones, the small but enthusiastic supporters of the flip phone as a fashion choice is relevant.[612] However, in the *BlackBerry Babes* series and the popular press

[604] See Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), Ilya Parkins, *Poiret, Dior and Schiaparelli: Fashion, Femininity and Modernity* (London: Berg, 2012).
[605] Georg Simmel, "Fashion," *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 6 (May 1957): 546–47.
[606] Georg Simmel, "Fashion," *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 6 (May 1957): 546.
[607] Georg Simmel, "Fashion," *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 6 (May 1957): 547.
[608] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 1983), 23.
[609] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Theory From the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 8. See also *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). We can also see this in the rupture produced from the photographs analyzed in the first chapter.
[610] Victoria L. Rovine, *African Fashion, Global Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 160.
[611] Victoria L. Rovine, *African Fashion, Global Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 160.
[612] See Michael Musto, "Are Flip Phones Having a Retro Chic Moment?" *The New York Times*, November 26, 2014. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/27/style/are-flip-phones-having-a-retro-chic-moment.html

about mobile telephony trends in Sub-Saharan Africa, "the distance traveled" is just as much temporal as it is topographical.

BlackBerry phones in *BlackBerry Babes* are not only tied to particular temporalities and geographies, their relative newness instills them with different class possibilities. For example, Vivienne's first lines of the film are her snarky response to a proposition for a date from a suave-looking stranger. She responds:

> Mister, in my hand here I have the BlackBerry Javelin; I have the BlackBerry Bold 1; the BlackBerry Bold 2; and I also have the BlackBerry Curve. And if I was to get anything new for myself, obviously it would be something higher than what I have here, which is the BlackBerry Bold 3. So, if you really want to talk to me, you'll get me the BlackBerry Bold 3, with a four-year internet connection.

The bluntness with which she makes her demands coupled with the ridiculousness of the request is the punch-line of the joke. Within her exaggerated requests she linguistically arranges the different BlackBerries models hierarchically. The Bold 3 is "something higher" than the BlackBerries she already possesses. This hierarchy sets up a corollary between models of phones and the social standings of each of the *Blackberry Babes* throughout the film, but also prompts recognition of global technology discourse that extends these relationships between Africa and the West.

The relational model between phones is reminiscent of the post-World War II model of modernization that sought to describe the world at different stages of development. Some nations were ahead on the track to a universal "modernity"—which was actually a very specific set of characteristics that described nineteenth-century European industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, and the post-sacred—while others struggled to "catch up." The idea was that eventually all nations would reach "modernity"; it was just a matter of time.[613] Now the once Eurocentric telos of modernization has been replaced by ideas of alternative, multiple or parallel modernities in which all nations are already modern (or never were).[614]

As Vivian lists all the many models of BlackBerries that she owns, a film like *BlackBerry Babes* unveils that the fetishization of mobile phones means that the ideology of modernization theory continues within new serialized commodities. As Arvind Rajagopal argues, "By the end of the Cold War, modernization theory had succumbed to its critics; today it has few overt defenders in the academy. Many of the ideas it helped to launch remain in orbit, however, embedded in objects that appear immune to criticism. 'Media' are one such class of objects."[615] As such, modernization theory remains unencumbered, and so disguised it goes underground into the objects of media theory: the logic of modernization continues in the guise of the fetishization and commodification of mobile phones. If we imagine the line between "modernity" and "tradition" as symbolized by different models of mobile phones, modernity as the global end

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[613] James Ferguson, *Global Shadows* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 177–178.
[614] See Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) for more on alternative modernity, S.N. Eisenstadt's "Multiple Modernities" in *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29 for a discussion of multiple modernities, Brian Larkin's "Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities" in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 67, no. 3 (1997): 406–440 for parallel modernities, and Bruno Latour's provocation in *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) that modernity is actually a matter of faith rather than a historic transition brought about by scientific enlightenment.
[615] Arvind Rajagopal, "Putting America in Its Place," *Public Culture* 25, no. 3 (2013): 388.

point is accessed through the acquisition of the "newest model." It is only a matter of time before Nigerian and Ghanaian BlackBerry love transfers onto the iPhone.

While the characters emphasize their use of the "virtual" qualities of their BlackBerries, it is the visual presence of the BlackBerries throughout the film that foregrounds the importance of their affordances as technological objects, not just their capability to offer a window onto the world. The functionality of BlackBerries allow the Babes critical new mobilities that have real consequences in their lives—social and class mobility and the ability to move across politically restricted borders. For instance, Damisa plans a trip to America with her sugar daddy and Nicole is able to apply for a fellowship to get her MBA at a university in the United States. Possession of virtual mobility may be a fashion accessory, but the presence of the phone in the Babes' hands makes materially present the possibility of other types of mobilities for the Babes.

Repeatedly throughout the series, gaining ownership of a "higher" model catapults the owner to a higher social level. For instance, Kaisha steals a BlackBerry Torch from a stranger; it propels her from the bottom of the social ladder to the near top. After Kaisha announces her newly acquired BlackBerry status, Kimberly tells her that she has, "stepped up so high." When Damisa drives to school in a Hummer she bought with money she extorted through smartphone-enabled credit card fraud, her friends pop champagne and cheer for her, "This is another step up!" and "Here is to the step-up, girl!" Even Apolonia's purchase of a "dummy" BlackBerry propels her higher than her peers.

Eager to be one of the BlackBerry Babes, Apolonia attempts to buy a BlackBerry at a local kiosk but grossly miscalculates how much they cost. Wanting to make a deal, the phone salesman offers to sell her his nonfunctioning "dummy" BlackBerry. Apolonia buys it and shows it off to Vivienne and her friends; only they are not fooled and continue to ridicule her. However, Agnes (also known as Aggie), the maid, is very impressed and follows Apolonia out of the house excitedly hoping to get a glance at the fetishized phone. Apolonia, mimicking the Babes, scoffs at Aggie, exaggerating their sudden class difference, "Do we belong in the same class? Aggie, look at me, look at me very well." As Apolonia spins around for Aggie to consider, the camera tilts down to survey her figure, "Aggie, look at Apolo very well, we don't belong on the same level." Apolonia demands that Agnes recognize her higher-class status, and Aggie seems willing to do so, but Apolonia's direct invitation to pass judgment on her extends to the camera and the audience. The camera tilt treats Apolonia as it would one of the other BlackBerry Babes, but Apolonia's plus-size body, ill-fitting clothes, and poor command of English exposes the supposed class mobility the new "BlackBerry" affords, as empty posturing. Apolonia struggles to speak the polished English that the other BlackBerry Babes stick to, often slipping between pidgin and Yoruba. Her "hip" clothes are indicative of high fashion but are ill fitting and wrinkled. Even worse, her wigs are made of cheap synthetic hair. Apolonia is like the "dummy" and the Chinese "knock-off" BlackBerries she buys. The not quite real BlackBerry is doubled in the woman who is physically and socially not quite a Babe.

Apolonia's character is reminiscent of a stock character in Ghanaian concert party theatre from the 1920s and 30s that became popular in Nigeria after several Ghanaian concert party shows were held in Nigeria in the 30s.[616] The character was based on a colonial stereotype of a formally educated Ghanaian man who wore western clothing, worked in trade or for the government, but maligned anglophone mannerisms by overdressing and speaking with an

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[616] The Axim Trio concert party toured Nigeria with the Cape Coast Sugar Babies dance band in 1935 (Sutherland 1970, 16-20) and Hubert Ogunnde took his Nigerian theater company, Ogunde Concert Party, to Ghana twice and gained a knowledge of the Ghanaian concert party tradition on those trips.

attempt at the lofty Queen's English. The concert party "Gentleman" aspires toward whiteness through mannerisms and style, and his failure to achieve verisimilitude—inevitably "not quite" white—is the joke. He wears coat and tails, but a crumpled shirt. He speaks upper class inflected English, until in his anger slips into a local dialect. Catherine Cole describes the concert party characters as depicting a "contrast between surface and substance, between their performed exteriority and their interior ontological status."[617] She argues that by mimicking colonial stereotypes, the concert party resembled a drag show that "revealed the imitative structure of colonialism itself, as well as its contingency."[618] Cole argues that concert parties showed that "civilization was something one did, rather than something one *was* or was not."[619] Like a female version of the concert party "Gentleman," Apolonia's performance as a BlackBerry Babe always falls short. If the BlackBerry Babes aspire to be modern, Apolonia reminds us that to be modern is something that one does, not something one is. Or perhaps, even more concisely, modernity is something one buys.

Acknowledging a global system in which the use of old media technologies can transport users into a primitive past ("the Stone Age"), the social and class mobility BlackBerry proposes is a tantalizing way to declare equal status with the West. Apolonia's performance enacts the same joke about technological lag that opened this chapter. If Apolonia is in drag, her performance reveals that all of the BlackBerry Babes are in drag. Her outlandish performance that mimics Vivienne and the other Babes exposes how much their aspiration for class mobility by means of a mobile phone—within a system of global capitalism whose animating core is still based on global white supremacy—is just as foolish as Apolonia's. Apolonia's "not quite/not white" act of mimicry,[620] like a moment of détournement, breaks the spectacle of the phones and the conventions of Guy Debord's society of the spectacle that naturalizes and perpetuates capitalism as the dominant ideological system of control.[621] Since her performance plays on the unfitness of her body it is not only the ideology of capitalism that is detoured but also the racial politics with which that system is entwined. Rather than being the punch line, her performance mimics the foolishness of fetishistic technology-based hierarches begun with colonial belief in the fetishistic power of gramophones. *BlackBerry Babes* thus acknowledges fetishists have always been those who believe that others believe.[622] The ridiculousness with which the film treats the mobile-phone-based social hierarchies that the Babes adhere to, allows audiences to laugh at their own desire for global consumerism while seemingly participating in it. *BlackBerry Babes* turns the system of global capital in upon itself by mocking the ability for new media technologies, like the BlackBerry, to signify the modern, the post-modern, or any post-post variant yet to be determined.[623]

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[617] Catherine Cole, *Ghana's Concert Party Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 129.

[618] Ibid.

[619] Ibid, 129–130.

[620] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" *October* 28, (Spring 1984), 132.

[621] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994*).* See also Leigh Raiford's use of Guy Debord to discuss the photographic practices of the Black Panther movement in *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 147–148.

[622] See Bruno Latour, "Fetish-Factish," *Material Religion* 7, no. 1 (2011): 43.

[623] I use the term "post-post" to highlight the seriality of cultural theory. In studies of American literature post-postmodernism has been suggested (for lack of a better word) to describe an aesthetic practice that reengages with the social world as a response to the frustrations caused by post-modern irony. This term has largely circulated around the writings of David Foster Wallace. [See Robert McLaughlin, "Post-Postmodern Discontent:

Serial

Fittingly, the film *BlackBerry Babes* joins in the spectacle of modernity through its own serial form. Like the phones the film mocks, *BlackBerry Babes* is sold in multiple editions. *BlackBerry Babes* was released on video compact discs (VCD) in three parts over 2011 and 2012. Each part was approximately two and a half hours long for a total running time of seven plus hours. As such, Nigerian video films, like *BlackBerry Babes*, do not fit within conventional North American notions of either television or cinema. Video films are both too long to be screened as typical stand-alone film at a festival or in a classroom (at least two hours long and across multiple parts), and too short for broadcast as a typical television series while also lacking the production value expected by American television audiences.[624]

Serial storytelling has been a standard practice in the West Africa commercial film industry since the mid-1990s when the video-boom began.[625] From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s African nations began massive structural adjustment programs. The privatization of state-owned broadcast lead to an influx of American soap operas and Latin American telenovelas which created a dedicated fan base across anglophone West Africa. In the early 1990s, the availability of affordable VHS video equipment transformed Nigerian and Ghanaian filmmaking. Influenced by the popular soap operas and telenovelas narratives that West Africans were watching, the new video industries broke their stories into segments and suspended the resolution of dramatic action across multiple parts.[626]

Moradewun Adejunmobi argues that with the rise of video-filmmaking in Sub-Saharan Africa there has been a "televisual turn" in African cinema. For Adejunmobi this move is characterized by both the episodic production of popular African movies and the distracted viewing habits of African audiences on their television or computer screens.[627] Adejunmobi argues that video-films are televisual because of "their potential for televisual recurrence," or what she defines as "the ability to attract similarly constituted publics to the same or similarly themed and styled audiovisual texts on a fairly regular and recurrent basis."[628] In other words, the likelihood of the repetition of "the latest interpretation of a familiar story" across different films or the practice of breaking stories into multiple parts are the defining features of these televisual movies. For instance, Kwaw Ansah, African cinema pioneer and founder of TVAfrica, capitalized on the status and prestige that comes with big movie premiers and the potential of return viewers offered by televisual serialized narratives to produce the three-part series *The Good Old Days* (2010–2012). During the early 2010s, Ghanaian filmmaker Shirley Frimpong-Manso also developed the ten-part movie series *Adams Apples* (2011–2012) which follows the love lives, secrets, and intrigues of the Adams family before launching a television series set a

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Contemporary Fiction and the Social World" *symplokē* 12, no. 1/2 (2004): 53–68 and Nicoline Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too? The Post-Postmodern Syndrome in American Fiction* (New York: Rodopi Press, 2010).]

[624] Jonathan Haynes, "Introduction." *Nigerian Video Films*, Ed. Jonathan Haynes. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 1.

[625] Arguably, the adaption of *Kofi the Good Farmer* across media formats and over forty years might be considered a type of seriality. Like Marvel's reboot of *Spider Man*, audiences are asked to return to the same stories with familiar characters who have undergone costume changes to match the contemporary moment.

[626] Jonathan Haynes, "Introduction," in *Nigerian Video Films*, ed. Jonathan Haynes (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 22. In Ghana, Spanish-language telenovelas retained popularity into the early 2000s. While studying at the University of Ghana, Legon in 2004 it was not uncommon to see at least twenty students gathered around televisions in dormitory common areas watching the Venezuelan telenovela *Juana la virgin* (2002) dubbed into English.

[627] Moradewun Adejunmobi, "African Film's Televisual Turn," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 2 (2015): 121.

[628] Moradewun Adejunmobi, "African Film's Televisual Turn," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 2 (2015): 121.

year after the tenth movie ends in 2013. Kwaw Ansah and Shirley Frimpong-Manso both utilize televisual and cinematic structures to adaptively situate their work between either medium.

Initially conceived as a two-part series, *BlackBerry Babes*'s overwhelming popularity eventually spawned a third part. Part one of *BlackBerry Babes* ends on a cliffhanger making it necessary to watch part two for narrative resolution. At the end of part two the Babes are arrested and punished. Nevertheless, with the popularity of the show a third part was made to extend the story. A signal to the "televisual turn" in African filmmaking, part three of the *BlackBerry Babes* film series was entitled, "BlackBerry Babes Season 2." While Adejunmobi emphasizes the episodic quality of Nollywood video-films, with the trend for "open-ended" narrative structure "to accommodate the possibility of deferred resolution," *BlackBerry Babes* and other televisual African films resemble the structure of contemporary American serial television or the soap operas and telenovelas that influenced Nollywood style, rather than the episodic tendencies of classic American television sitcoms like *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961–1966) in which narrative conflict arises and is resolved in one episode.[629]

Scholarship on contemporary American serial television has tended to focus on valorizing prestige television shows since the 1990s as exceptional and novel examples of narrative complexity or conjectural narratives.[630] Jeffrey Sconce associates the extension of narrative in American prime-time television as a move away from the "amnesia television" of *Gilligan's Island* towards greater "realism."[631] Previously, shows that continued the story through narrative contrivances like cliffhangers and episode-ending dramatic revelations designated the unrealistic forced extension of a story as a means to sell a product. Sconce argues that serial realism has given way to moments of "conjectural narrative"—narratives in which the architecture of the series becomes a means of "performative exercises in character, style, and narration" in which variation is reflexive of the show itself.[632]

Jason Mittell describes these narrative changes as "narrative complexity" or the redefinition of "episodic forms under the influence of serial narration."[633] In *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*, Mittell's approach to the study of serial television is through poetics, which focuses on how the formal elements of texts mean rather than taking an interest in how content or cultural context impact society. Mittell's dedication to exploring serial television's formal structure means that the social and political contexts upon which serial television has emerged as the darling of the United States press are sidelined. He maintains that "narrative complexity" is not synonymous with "quality television," while he also admits "complexity can be a virtue" and that its use as an adjective suggests a type of television with "sophistication and nuance."[634] While he may argue convincingly that "complex television" is not value-laden, he does little to assuage the implied prestige of a television show's narrative

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[629] Moradewun Adejunmobi, "African Film's Televisual Turn," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 2 (2015): 123.

[630] Prestige television is characterized by higher production values, shorter seasons, often made by HBO, Showtime or other premium cable channels. Notable recent series are: *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), *The Wire* (2002–2008), *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013), and *Game of Thrones* (2011–).

[631] Jeffery Sconce, "What If? Charting Televisions New Textual Boundaries," in *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 99–101.

[632] Jeffery Sconce, "What If? Charting Televisions New Textual Boundaries," in *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 107.

[633] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 18.

[634] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 216–217.

complexity versus those shows from another era, like *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965–70), however pleasurable he admits to finding them. Inherent in his comparison between "complex" and "simple" television is a familiar progress narrative where the underlying assumption that the new is better remains undisturbed.[635] Television's newly acquired "complexity"—which could be summed up for Mittell as its clever self-referentiality and demand for "viewer engagement focused on both diegetic pleasures and formal awareness"—assures the continuation of technologically centered progress narratives that find their greatest expression in contemporary American serial television dramas.[636]

As has been pointed out, the serial-driven complexity that Mittell and Sconce describe mimics the narrative structure of "lowly" female-centered melodramas and repackages this narrative strategy into masculine stories: The top four shows of *Rolling Stone*'s 2016 "100 Greatest TV shows of All Time—*The Sopranos* (1999–2007), *The Wire* (2002–2008), *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013), and *Mad Men* (2007–2015)—are all based upon a male protagonists' wavering morality.[637] Sconce writes, "The very serial elements that have been so long reviled in soaps, pulps, and other 'low' genres are now used to increase connotations of 'quality' (and thus desirable demographics) in television drama."[638] Linda Williams speculates in her book *On The Wire* that "part of the reason for the masculine dominance of so many contemporary serials…is the desire to disassociate such work from the taint of the feminine family melodrama and their earlier soap-opera origins."[639]

Scholars have emphasized the impact of soap operas and telenovelas on Nollywood televisual style but mid-twentieth-century print sources like *African Film*, a photographic novel, may have also had significant influence. *African Film* was a para-cinematic text that drew on the serialized form. The magazine, whose title suggests that it be read as a "film," most closely resembles a comic book with photographs instead of drawings. Before the mass accessibility of film and television, *African Film* was one of the most popular photo novels in anglophone sub-Saharan Africa. This serial magazine, published by the popular South African *Drum* magazine, featured Lance Spearman, described by fans as "the African James Bond." The story incorporated several popular American film genres and modes; the hard-boiled detective story, science fiction themes, and melodrama. At one point in the series Lance Spearman's arch nemesis binds him and his girlfriend and leaves them on train tracks to be crushed by an

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[635] As Linda Williams mentions, "Complex is the positive that refutes the older negative judgment that TV is a simplistic wasteland." See Linda Williams, "World and Time: Serial Television Melodrama in America" in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 177.

[636] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 53.

[637] It is important to note that this list was made based on surveys completed by 52 writers, showrunners, actors, producers, and critics. Yet of those 52 participants, only 8 were female.

[638] Jeffrey Sconce, "What If? Charting Televisions New Textual Boundaries," in *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 99.

[639] Linda Williams, *On The Wire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 46. This critique was also made by a group of feminist television scholars at the 2013 conference, *Television for Women: An International Conference*, held at the University of Warwick, "My personal favorite critique was of the idea (that some straight male scholars promote) that narrative complexity did not occur in television until *Lost*. There was a big laugh from the audience when we gals all agreed that these men do not realize the shows they are fetishizing are soap operas." As quoted by Mittell. Mittell also offers Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine's chapter "Not a Soap Opera" in *Legitimating Television* as a counter to his argument about narrative complexity that arises in late 1990s television. Newman and Levine argue that disavowing narrative similarities between primetime serial structure and that of soaps helped legitimate social dramas.

oncoming train. Like the classic trope in American silent cinema serials it mimics, "The Spear" and his "gal" escape at the last minute.[640]

The seriality that Moradewun Adejunmobi has identified as televisual in African movies like the video-film series *BlackBerry Babes*, may also maintain some affinity with American silent era serials, particularly serial queens like Helen Holmes and Helen Gibson of *The Hazards of Helen* (1914–1917), and Pearl White of *The Perils of Pauline* (1914), *The Exploits of Elaine* (1914), and *The New Exploits of Elaine* (1915). Serial stories of plucky young women demonstrating their mastery of new technologies (often new telecommunications technologies like the telegraph and telephone, and new transportation technologies, particularly the train) dominated screens.[641] The role of women in rapidly changing social situations that arise from the proliferation and use of new media appear in both early American film and a number of Nollywood films besides *BlackBerry Babes*.[642]

Like these serial queens, the BlackBerry Babes are highly competent users of new media technologies, often exuding expertise that surpasses the men around them. Rather than use technology to save the day, these women use technology to extort favors, money, and grades from the men in power that surround them. For instance, in the first scene of the series Damisa uses her BlackBerry to scam money from a wealthy and arrogant man. When the credit card machine is down at a local gift store, Damisa offers to let the man use her phone to make his purchases through the Internet. Unbeknownst to the man, Damisa steals his credit card information and pays off the female gift store clerk who was in on the scam.

What is interesting about this scene is the way it imitates both a BlackBerry advertisement and a public service warning against advanced-fee email scams, known colloquially as 419 scams, while still aligning the viewer with the criminal element.[643] The opening sequence at once imparts the wonders of mobile phones. When the man is told that the credit card machine is down, Damisa suggests: "Why not pay online" "Online?" he responds. "Yeah." Still incredulous he retorts, "but there are no Internet connections around here." Knowing she has caught her prey, "So why not use my phone then?" The dialogue, delivered in a stilted, demonstrative way, lays out the conveniences and dangers that BlackBerry provides. The film appears to teach the viewer what a BlackBerry is capable of—you can buy merchandise online! No Internet connection, use a BlackBerry. "One cannot underestimate these new devices," declares the man as Damisa hands him her phone. At once the audience can read the line as a positive pronouncement about the astonishing hassle-saving possibilities of the new technology, but, steeped in rumor and news stories about the copious amounts of infamous Nigerian 419

[640] For more information about Lance Spearman and the *African Film* publication see Matthias Krings, "A prequel to Nollywood: South African photo novels and their pan-African consumption in the late 1960s," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22, no. 1 (2010): 75–89.

[641] However, according to Miriam Hansen, to appeal to women viewers a "basis of domestic ideology—sexual purity, passivity, emotional superiority, and moral guardianship" had to counter the adventurous, active, and resourceful new characteristics that the heroines of the silent serial possessed. See Miriam Hansen, *Babel & Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 120.

[642] Notable examples include *Fazebook Babes*, *Twitter Babes* and a Ghanaian remake of *BlackBerry Babes*.

[643] While advanced-fee scams are not new to the Internet—they started in letter correspondence—email has allowed Nigerians to be some of the most prevalent scammers globally. Thus, the popularity of the phrase "419 scam" which refers to the article number in Nigeria's criminal code which concerns fraud. A familiar advanced-fee email fraud is one in which an email is sent from someone claiming to be a Nigerian prince who offers to pay you to move a large amount of his money from one location to another but needs your bank account number to do it. For more information see Stephen Ellis, *This Present Darkness: A History of Nigerian Organized Crime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

scammers, the line has a double meaning. It is both a warning about the illegal ways "these new devices" can be used, and a subtle invitation to the viewer to explore the illegal potential associated with the BlackBerry mobile phone. The scene closes with Damisa celebrating her successful scam and by extension her technological aptitude.

The moral boundaries the Babes cross to exert control over their financial and social status both horrifies and titillates. In *BlackBerry Babes* technology in the hands of young women becomes a tool for revenge. They punish lecherous and abusive male teachers, possessive boyfriends, and selfish uncles. While the technologies have changed—BlackBerries have replaced the telephone—in both the American serial queen melodrama and the Nollywood serial, female sexuality is often the means by which fears about technological change are expressed and ameliorated through the restoration of morality by the story's end. Nollywood is often considered amoral, and its emphasis on sexual deviance and witchcraft results in lambaste from Nigerian critics.[644] However, as Moradewun Adejunmobi asserts, open-ended serialized African movies, "aim for decisive ideological closure" in order to "reaffirm conservative social values."[645] The tendency for a moralizing conclusion is a hallmark of melodramatic Onitsha Market literature, popular ephemeral chapbooks sold in the Nigerian market from the 1940s through 70s, of which the Nigerian film industry drew early influence.[646] The BlackBerry Babes mastery over mobile technologies through nefarious dealings in crime and prostitution educates viewers on what *not* to do with new technologies. Damisa's use of her BlackBerries to steal money, run a prostitution ring, and extort straight A's from her professors are countered by Natalie's normal, positive use of her BlackBerry. Natalie, a minor character in the film, appears multiple times throughout the series as the voice of reason. In her hands, BlackBerry is a tool to help her study for exams, apply for graduate school, and, by accessing publicly searchable databases, protect herself and her friends from potential sex offenders. Like the serial queen who drove automobiles across the country and jumped from train car to train car, for these women technologies were adeptly used to prevent male aggression.

Scholarship on early film serials suggests that intertextuality and complexity were key aspects of the film serial of the mid-1910s. As Ben Singer writes, "Just as the rise of the metropolis involved an infinitely busier and more varied arena of human intersection, so too did the rise of modernity involve a much more active and complex network of interconnections among texts."[647] Serial melodramas often tied in stories from dime novels, newspapers, magazines, and other popular print fictions that required an understanding of the content from multiple textual sources. Roger Hagedorn, taking an economic approach to describing the rise of serial storytelling in the movies, claims that the serial came into existence for three reasons: to get audiences to consume later episodes of the same serial, to promote product loyalty, and to get audiences attracted to new mediums. He suggests that film serials began as supplemental to newspaper serials, designed to sell papers as much as they were to sell movies.[648] A common

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[644] Onookome Okome, "Nollywood and Its critics," in *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-first Century: Art Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution*, eds. Mahir Saul and Ralph A. Austen (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 26–40.

[645] Moradewun Adejunmobi, "African Film's Televisual Turn," *Cinema Journal* 54, no. 2 (2015): 123.

[646] Afolabi Adesanya, "From Film to Video," *Nigerian Video Films*, ed. Jonathan Haynes (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2000), 49.

[647] Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 263.

[648] Roger Hagedorn, "Doubtless to Be Continued: A Brief History of Serial Narrative" in *To Be Continued: Soap Operas around the World*, ed. Robert Allen (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995), 33–34.

advertising ploy for silent film serials was the "traveling star" campaign. In 1915 Anita King was sent on an automobile trip across the country in a Kissel Kar. Pearl White performed an aerial stunt in 1916 by dangling from the roof of the Gregory Building in New York to the delight of five New York newspapers.[649] The actual peril to the stars' bodies added to the spectacular realism of the movies and the mass circulation of the stars' image in moving pictures and the press.

  The mutually beneficial cross-media pollination of early silent serials is similar to the cross-marketing of *BlackBerry Babes* between the telecommunications sector and the Nigerian movie industry. Noah Tsika has written compellingly about the series in *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and the Diaspora*. He argues that the film satirizes BlackBerry while also making positive pronouncements about the democratic potentials of information technologies.[650] As Tsika points out, because the *BlackBerry Babes* series is dependent on stars that represent Globacom (Glo), the popular Nigerian telecommunications company, but had no direct commercial relationship with Glo or BlackBerry, the film is free to satirize cellphone fetishism while still maintaining a nuanced relationship to telecommunications that that does not outright reject it.[651] Tsika shows how *BlackBerry Babes* star, Tonto Dikeh, appears as "an instantly recognizable (albeit unofficial) ambassador for BlackBerry" as she appears on MTV Base Africa holding a BlackBerry to promote Nollywood and sell BlackBerry across the continent.[652] While not sponsored by Globacom or BlackBerry like Kunle Afolayan's contemporaneous film *Phone Swap* (2012), in *BlackBerry Babes* Glo appears as the "gift of life" that delivers the service that lets characters talk, text, and visit the Internet on their BlackBerry phones.[653] Like the cross-over stories of serial heroines American movies and newspapers, The prevalence of mobile phones in Nigerian films from the 2010s attracted audiences to the new medium; the serial form of Nigerian movies helped sell mobile phones as much as it sold more movies.

  The parallels between *BlackBerry Babes* and a silent serial like *The Hazards of Helen* (1914)—two serials made almost one hundred years apart that come out of vastly different social, historical, and political geographies—may seem to suggest that West Africa is only now experiencing cinematic modernity. This would support diffusion models of modernity from a Euro-American center to the periphery like those of Anthony Giddens, but would project a temporal lag between the United States and Nigeria through a familiar techno-hierarchy that was established in the global headlines that opened this chapter. But as Jonathan Haynes has noted, the "popular social origin of the Nigerian videos tends to disrupt the application of the notion of melodramas as conveyor belts of modernity."[654] In the 1990s, when Nigerian video-films first became popular, Nigeria was experiencing a downturn in their economy. The "modernity" that

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[649] Jennifer Bean, "Technologies of Early Stardom and the Extraordinary Body," *Camera Obscura* 48, no. 3 (2001): 22–24.

[650] Noah Tsika, *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 26.

[651] Noah Tsika, *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 137.

[652] Noah Tsika, *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 117.

[653] Noah Tsika, *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 147.

[654] Johnathan Haynes, "Introduction," in *Nigerian Video Films*, ed. Jonathan Haynes (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 30.

was promised upon independence in 1960, by either capitalism or socialism, never arrived. "There is," as Haynes puts it, "something like a crisis, then, not only in the process of modernization but also in the concept of modernity as applied to Africa."[655] Relatedly, as Paul Gilroy has argued, the "supposed novelty of the postmodern evaporates when it is viewed in the unforgiving historical light of the brutal encounters between Europeans and those they conquered, slaughtered, and enslaved. The periodization of the modern and the postmodern is thus of the most profound importance for the history of blacks in the West and for chronicling the shifting relations of domination and subordination between Europeans and the rest of the world."[656]

The hazardous juxtaposition between serial queens and BlackBerry babes might throw the concept of modernity and its privileged relationship to particular media technologies into crisis in a productive way. That the comparison is easy should be a warning against the idea that these serial films demonstrate that Africa is finally becoming modern, or modernity's serialized second part (post-modernity). Read against the blog headlines that opened this chapter, *BlackBerry Babes* seems to point out the ways that the serialization of mobile phones perpetuates the idea of a unitary progressive history of development indefinitely. The critique of the social rankings the Babes make through their various models of phones extends out to the way that Africa's place in the world is also symbolized through the serializations of mobile technology.

As a serial video-film, certainly any critique capitalism in *BlackBerry Babes* is contained within that same system. As Tsika describes, "a certain satirical dialectic renders the trilogy simultaneously pro- and anti-BlackBerry—both invested in the capacity of lawful telecommunications service to improve Nigeria's global image and allergic to the absurd lure of commodity fetishism."[657] However, I contend that in addition to leveling a critique on the "lure of commodity fetishism," *BlackBerry Babes* reiterates the power of mobile phones to transform the personal lives of their users by engaging in the rhetoric of ICTD (Information and Communication Technologies for Development) discourse so prevalent in discussions of new media technology use in Africa. On the surface, the narrative structure of *BlackBerry Babes* seems indebted to the pedagogical trope of African colonial cinema described in chapter two, but the positive pronouncements about telecommunications throughout the film have much more in common with commodity fetishism than one would assume.[658] As seen in chapter three, educational uses of new media in Africa are not separate from capitalist interests. At the founding of Ghana Television, the promotion of educational broadcasts in Africa was good for Marconi's business. An attachment to the mission of educational programing also allowed a post-Nkrumah Ghana to proclaim continuity across the ideological shift away from African socialism. Rather than "reaffirm conservative social values," the *BlackBerry Babes* points to the ways that "good" telecommunications use—i.e. for education—is part of the same system of techno-fetishization in which the Babes participate.

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[655] Johnathan Haynes, "Introduction," in *Nigerian Video Films*, ed. Jonathan Haynes (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 30.

[656] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 44.

[657] Noah Tsika, *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 141.

[658] In the tradition of colonial cinema in Africa, "good" British methods of farming, cleaning house, or taking care of children are juxtaposed with unsavory "bad" African methods as a means to teach. The following are film examples of the genre: *Kofi the Good Farmer* (1953), *Fuseni's Cash Crop* (1953), and *Mr. Mensah Builds a House* (1955) from the Gold Coast Film Unit, *The Two Farmers* (1948) from the Central African Film Unit.

Natalie, the studious and determined college girl mentioned above, resists the fetishization of BlackBerry. During the early part of the series Natalie is shown repeatedly withstanding the verbal assaults the BlackBerry Babes level at her for not owning a BlackBerry. When her fiancé buys her a BlackBerry and insists that she accept it even after she first prudently refuses it, Natalie eventually acquiesces. She then proceeds to demonstrate its transformative power to her friends. Each of her scenes didactically ventriloquizes the discourse about telecommunications that permeates West African media and the international development discourse that promotes information technologies as devices that can provide real social mobility through education. Take, for instance, the scene where Natalie demonstrates to her friend Emily that the Internet can be used to do her homework. Emily asks, "What site are you browsing?" Natalie responds, "I'm actually doing Dr. Fabian's assignment—Principles of Public Relations. I don't have enough money to buy the textbook, so the Internet comes to my rescue." The dialogue in the scene imitates the language and scenario of an infomercial for smartphones. Disbelieving that the Internet can be used to do homework, Emily reacts, "We can't get the whole materials we need from the internet. It's not possible." Natalie shows Emily her phone screen. The audience gets a close-up of the words, "Advertising vs. Public Relations." The words themselves are a suggestion to read the scene critically drawing connections between the way public relations bolsters corporate sales by providing information about the product in the guise of useful information. This scene highlights the fact that telecommunications sales benefit from an international development discourse that supports the use of smartphones for e-Learning, mobile banking, mobile health, and agriculture development.

One could read Natalie's story as an example of how to use new technologies correctly, but this would mean ignoring the way that Natalie's story is the exaggerated opposite of the other BlackBerry Babe stories. Natalie is too good, too pure, and too moral to be taken as a realistic depiction of telecommunications use in Nigeria. The perfect world that she inhabits reveals how both nefarious and righteous uses of BlackBerry have similar spectacular results—the socio-economic mobility of the individual user. At the end of the second part of the *BlackBerry Babes* series, Natalie receives an email from a United States university on her BlackBerry that informs her that she is the recipient of a full scholarship for an MBA program. The scene ends with a lingering image of her embracing her fiancé in their bedroom both holding the BlackBerry in front of them and looking on it with fondness, love, and excitement. Presumably they are looking at the letter on the device, but the audience only sees their downward gaze toward the BlackBerry. The scene is composed like a family photo. Instead of a new infant, they cradle their BlackBerry phone.

Fig. 30: *BlackBerry Babes* (Ubong Bassey Nya, 2011)

Fig. 31: Mark Zuckerberg and Pricilla Chan "A letter to our daughter," *Facebook*, Tuesday, December 1, 2015.

The composition of the shot is similar to the photograph accompanying Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan's public Facebook post entitled, "A letter to our daughter."[659] In the photo the two of them cradle their newborn child, Max, as they look down at her closed eyes. In

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[659] The Zuckerburg/Chan letter was released after *BlackBerry Babes*, thus while the composition is similar to the film it is not a direct reference to the famous Facebook image. However, it is clear that *BlackBerry Babes* is playing with the idea of BlackBerry as the newest member of the family and as such both images represent the future. I am using the similarities between these images as a means to transition towards a general discussion on global discourse about telecommunications in Africa.

the sentimental text Zuckerberg and Chan express to their daughter (and their customers) that Max's birth makes them consider the impact of technological progress on all on her future: "While headlines often focus on what's wrong, in many ways the world is getting better. Health is improving. Poverty is shrinking. Knowledge is growing. People are connecting. Technological progress in every field means your life should be dramatically better than ours today."

The purpose of their optimistic letter was to announce that they would donate 99% of their Facebook shares to the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a limited liability company with the aim of "advancing human potential" and "promoting equality" in areas such as health, education, scientific research and energy. Zuckerberg and Chan's highly publicized decision to donate and manage most of their wealth during their lifetime follows the main commandment from Andrew Carnegie's "The Gospel of Wealth." Andrew Carnegie, one of the most influential American philanthropists of the nineteenth century published "The Gospel of Wealth" in 1889. In the "Gospel" Carnegie pronounces the nobility of administering one's wealth during their lifetime as the "most fruitful for the people." [660] For Carnegie the equal distribution of wealth would have disastrous effects. It is only through the administration of wealth by "the hands of the few," that the poor who are willing to "help themselves" can be elevated.[661]

> …the best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise—free libraries, parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the public taste; and public institutes of various kinds, which will improve the general condition of the people; in this manner returning their surplus wealth to the mass of their fellows in the forms best calculated to do them lasting good.[662]

Andrew Carnegie assumes that the calculations of the extremely wealthy are the most suited for determining the rungs upon which the poor need to climb in order to succeed, and yet the examples he gives—the establishment of universities, free libraries, hospitals, public parks and concert halls—would seem to most benefit the middle class, not the very poor.

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative announced that it would focus investments on areas that involve technological progress. Each of these initiative areas—health, energy, and telecommunications—aligns with major industries in the United States. Even education, while appearing to have few ties to industry, is an investment in human capacity to produce and innovate. Advances in medicine and health, "as technology accelerates," explain Chan and Zuckerberg, gives us "a real shot at preventing, curing or managing all or most of the rest [of the world's diseases] in the next 100 years." Not only is technology accelerating, technology for Zuckerberg and Chan has the real potential to solve the world's problems, particularly those unfortunate "third world problems" mentioned at the start of this chapter. Ending the letter, Chan and Zuckerberg write, "Max, we love you and feel a great responsibility to leave the world a better place for you and all children." The progress narrative—that is still very invested in

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[660] Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1900), 12.

[661] Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1900), 12–13.

[662] Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth," in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Co., 1900), 18.

capitalist values of production, market reach, and development—is alive and well in contemporary American philanthropy.

The idea that technology and innovation can "leave the world a better place" is the ideological mantra that permeates Silicon Valley, so much so that the HBO show *Silicon Valley* (2014–) satirizes the language in a montage of startup hopefuls promising to "*make the world a better place* through Paxos algorithms for consensus protocols," or to "*make the world a better place* through canonical data models to communicate between endpoints" [my emphasis]. The scene is set at TechCrunch Disrupt, an actual event in the Silicon Valley for start-ups to pitch their ideas to venture capitalists in competition for their investment. Reportedly as part of research for the show, frontrunners Mike Judd and Alec Berg attended TechCrunch.[663] Of the experience Judd said, "That's the first thing you notice. Its capitalism shrouded in the fake hippie rhetoric of 'We're making the world a better place' because it's uncool to just say, 'Hey, were crushing it and making money.'"[664]

Mark Zuckerburg's "A letter to our daughter" is the expression of the neoliberal idea that "making the world a better place" can be achieved through products. Facebook's Free Basics initiative (known as Internet.org until 2015), as outlined in his letter, is a step towards providing Internet access for all by using Facebook as an enticing free sample of the Internet. Through the program, Facebook has partnered with local telecommunications service providers in specific countries—mainly those in the Global South—to allow residents to receive access to specific websites free of data charges. The web content provided by the service is largely non-profit, government sponsored, and of course includes free access to Facebook.

Free Basics' advertisements on the internet.org are structured like the scene in which Natalie shows Emily how to use the Internet to do homework in *BlackBerry Babes*. One video on the website profiles a young man named Kenner who uses Free Basics to do his geography homework. "In school, we don't have books for this type of work. We have to look thinks up on Internet.org." In other short videos on the website, the positive impact of Free Basics in the lives of users from across the Global South is demonstrated. Riza uses Free Basics to write her computer science thesis. Jesus and Marissa need Free Basics to help them with their jobs. Elisha, through Free Basics learns the value of his daughters. Each webpage advertisement ends with onscreen white text that declares, "This is happening now."[665] This text appears to offer another headline about mobile technology in the Global South in opposition to the discourse of temporal lag produced by technology headlines that opened this chapter. That technology use is happening "now" emphasizes simultaneous Internet access as a means to imagine a globalized community.

Yet the advantages of imagining a community on a global scale where members share equal access to information is enacted through social networks owned and operated by a corporate entity. It is for this reason that Facebook has come under criticism for using philanthropy to secure a global monopoly on social networking.[666] Many have claimed,

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[663] On October 11, 2017 TechCrunch hosted "Startup Battlefield Africa" in Nirobi, Kenya. Facebook sponsored the competition offering the overall winner $25,000 in no-equity cash plus an all-expense paid trip for two to San Francisco to compete in Battlefield at TechCrunch's Disrupt SF in 2018. See "Startup Battlefield Africa" *techcrunch.com* https://techcrunch.com/event-info/tc-startup-battlefield-africa/ for more information.

[664] Andrew Marantz, "How 'Silicon Valley' Nails Silicon Valley" *The New Yorker* June 9, 2016.

[665] "Our Impact." *Internet.org*, 3 October 2017, https://info.internet.org/en/impact/

[666] For a review of popular debates about Free Basics see articles "Facebook in India: Can't give it away" *The Economist*, January 9, 2016 and James Titcomb, "Of course Facebook's free Internet is self-interested. That doesn't make it wrong" *The Telegraph*. February 14, 2016. Also, for a summary of the debate in India see Subhayan

particularly in India where Free Basics was rejected after a long contentious public debate, that Facebook has spread the idea of free access to cover-up telecommunications deals designed to secure their domination over emerging markets and essentially end net neutrality. Some have even highlighted the potential of political censorship by Facebook and its often state-owned or partially state-owned telecommunications partners.[667]

Notwithstanding its impact on the value of Facebook's stock, Free Basics may do more to undercut nations in the Global South than help. In an exploratory study on the implementation of Facebook's Free Basics and Wikipedia's similarly structured Wikipedia Zero in Ghana, it was found that "respondents perceived zero-rated applications as part of a larger experience of Ghanaian exclusion" and "were more concerned that it represented the most recent elaboration of Ghanaian's marginalization and discrimination on the web" than a viable means to bridge the digital divide.[668]

Programs like these assume that when it comes to Internet and the developing world, or Africa more specifically, what is needed is educational content, which can help transform and develop countries and their people. However, Facebook's initiatives not only choose what counts as educational content, but also bypass improving traditional government-funded schools in favor of information dispersal through private companies. Disrupting state-funded educational systems is also about disrupting publicly funded institutions in support of private enterprise. The idea that private industry can solve the problem of providing inexpensive quality education for all better than institutions that have been providing instruction and learning for decades can be traced back to turn-of-the-twentieth-century ideological shifts that equated advancement in industrial technologies with social progress.[669]

Today, the world's billionaires are increasingly engaging in philanthrocapitalism—turning from the direct donation of their wealth to setting up their own philanthropic organizations that are controlled by the billionaires themselves.[670] But the popularity of running philanthropic organizations cannot be separated from the tax breaks that come with it. When Zuckerberg and Chan donated stock to their new philanthropic organization they likely gained tax credits equal to the stock market value. While it may seem that philanthrocapitalism is the latest expression of late capitalism, a for-profit approach to charity has been the operating principle of large-scale philanthropy for over a hundred years since Carnegie declared that millionaires know how to spend money to benefit the people better than the state or the people themselves.

Mukerjee's "Net neutrality, Facebook, and India's battle to #SaveTheInternet," *Communication and the Public* 1, no. 3 (2016): 356–361.

[667] See Nanjala Nyabola's "Facebook's Free Basics Is an African Dictator's Dream," *Foreign Policy* October 27, 2016.

[668] Zero-rated services offer users access to the Internet without financial cost but may restrict access to only certain websites or may use advertising to subsidize the cost of the service. Genevieve Gebhart, "Zero-rating in emerging mobile markets: Free Basics and Wikipedia Zero in Ghana" *ICTD'16* June 2016, Ann Arbor, MI.

[669] Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept," *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2010): 566.

[670] The term Philanthrocapitalism comes from Matthew Bishop and Michael Green's book *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the World* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008). Linsey McGoey describes this book as "something of a bible for a new breed of philanthropist vowing to reshape the world by running philanthropic foundations more like for-profit businesses" from *No Such Thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and the Price of Philanthropy* (New York: Verso, 2016), loc 124. See also John Cassidy's "Mark Zuckerberg and the Rise of Philanthrocapitalism" *The New Yorker*. December 2, 2015.

Africa becomes for Silicon Valley the site where "fake hippie rhetoric"[671] historically understood as progressive era philanthropy, is dispersed as a means to experiment with new technological fixes. Africa becomes the petri dish of conscious capitalism where governments let international business test new techniques in the hopes their countries will be modernized.[672] While scholars have announced the end of grand narratives, what we see in the language of Silicon Valley is an earnest and continued faith in a grand narrative of technological progress in which Adam Smith's invisible hand will place newly trained workers in a job that will "make the world a better place" for all. The *BlackBerry Babes* narrative is based on the similarities between techno-fetishism *and* international telecommunications development discourses, which both suggest that ICT can catapult individuals from underdeveloped societies into modernity. The film shows, quite convincingly, that these two aspects of telecommunications discourse—the commercial and foundation/non-profit sectors—are intricately interconnected.

Seriality is not medium-specific. Serialization scholar, Roger Hagedorn argues that "serials are introduced in order to stimulate consumption of that medium's product" especially when the technology is new.[673] As he points out the serial is a modern form that cannot be disassociated from capitalist modes of production.[674] But rather than being a formal trait of television or cinema, the serial is the narrative structure of industrial capitalism.[675] As such, the recurrent proposition that new communication technologies will develop African communities is the narrative commodity being sold. This is not to suggest that the information that new media technologies bring to rural populations does not offer transformative potential, but to stress that these high-minded intentions for social betterment are central to the serial consumption of new media commodities in the Global South.

By comparing current debates on seriality in contemporary American television with West African televisual filmmaking the politics in poetic readings of current American television, like that of Jason Mittell's that focuses on uncovering changing art forms outside the influence of social-cultural change, is laid bare. Complex television takes the potential critique of the narrative form of capitalism (seriality) and devours its structure through bourgeois sense of aesthetic achievement. *BlackBerry Babes* with its African black female cast and overtly "trashy" melodramatic appeal is the antithesis to the American white male centered dramas of "quality"

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[671] Andrew Marantz, "How 'Silicon Valley' Nails Silicon Valley" *The New Yorker* June 9, 2016.

[672] In *Theory from the South*, the Comaroffs cite a *Washington Post* article from 2000 in which Tom DeLay, the then US Republican Senator and House Majority Whip, countered legislation that would end sweatshops in American territories in the Pacific because, "the low-wage, anti-union conditions of the Marianas constitute a 'perfect petri dish of capitalism'…" (see page 5 of *Theory*). The Comaroffs use the metaphor of the "petri dish of capitalism"— where the experiment of free capital is practiced in the Global South unhampered by governments—to articulate, more for provocation than for fact, "how Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa." CEO and co-founder of Whole Foods advocate for "conscious capitalism," the idea that good businesses serve all their stakeholders including communities and the environment.

[673] Roger Hagedorn, "Doubtless to Be Continued: A Brief History of Serial Narrative" in *To Be Continued: Soap Operas around the World*, ed. Robert Allen (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995), 40.

[674] Roger Hagedorn, "Doubtless to Be Continued: A Brief History of Serial Narrative" in *To Be Continued: Soap Operas around the World*, ed. Robert Allen (London: Taylor and Francis, 1995), 29. He writes, "Historically, for this to occur, one needs a social context characterized by three essential elements: a market economy, a communications technology sufficiently developed to be commercially exploited, and, as Barthes suggests, the recognition of narrative as commodity."

[675] Frank Kelleter makes a similar claim in the first chapter of *Media of Serial Narrative*. He argues that seriality should be understood as "a practice *of* popular culture, not a narrative formalism *within* it." See Frank Kelleter, "Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality," in *Media of Serial Narrative*, ed. Frank Kelleter (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2017), 15.

primetime American television. A look at a series like *BlackBerry Babes* shows us that trash is just as complex and, perhaps, has the political potential to burst asunder a system of power that maintains itself through the perpetuation of the new.

Trash

Midway through the series, in a contradictory move, Damisa insists that BlackBerry is nothing. She asks Nicole, "Come on. What is all this BlackBerry stuff? What is a BlackBerry phone? It is nothing." Nicole is confused by Damisa's flippant disregard for the technology that has given her prestige and the device that she has used to keep everyone within tightly ranked relationships. Nicole expected Damisa to ridicule her as she does with Kaisha. But instead Damisa gives Nicole her oldest phone, while complaining that there is not a fifth telecommunications network to use it with. Accepting the phone, Nicole thinks to herself that she is worried that Damisa will tell everyone that Nicole's phone is Damisa's discarded one, making Nicole a charity case. This scene, placed within a discourse on charity and recycled smartphones, further analogizes the class system developed by BlackBerry seriality through global telecommunications.

Damisa's gift and Nicole's reluctant acceptance recalls the trade in secondhand computers and other electronic equipment that dominates West African markets whether in Dakar or Lagos. Secondhand computers in West African markets commonly have property tags indicating their previous lives in American or European institutions. Ethnographer Jenna Burrell describes seeing computers in Ghanaian Internet cafés with labels from such miscellaneous institutions as New York Public Library, Anne Arundel Community College, or the United States Environmental Protection Agency.[676] The secondhand status of the equipment, according to Burrell's research, was a negotiating point for sellers and buyers of used electronic goods. Sellers would positively inflect their products with the term "home used" which signified that the computer was "affordable and also a high quality and reliable good."[677] Buyers, however, hoping to negotiate prices down, called secondhand electronics *aburokyire bola* (meaning "garbage from abroad" in Twi). As Burrell notes, the positive inflection of "home used" is expressed in English, while the insult is communicated in Twi.[678] Again, like the Gentleman character in the concert party, or Apolonia's "BlackBerry Babe" performance, language itself imparts social standing. Burrell's account of secondhand electronics demonstrates that "consumers of this class of goods [secondhand electronics] are reduced to the level of selling or using the (literal) garbage of more privileged others" that explicitly reside elsewhere in the world as the property tags that remain on the computers indicate.[679] Implicitly at stake in Damisa's hand-me-down BlackBerry are the politics of the global electronic trade in which West Africans are reminded of their second-class status through the materiality of the secondhand goods that fill marketplaces. The phone Damisa offers is not donated "from abroad" but it similarly comes with

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[676] Jenna Burrell, *Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafes of Urban Ghana* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 160.

[677] Jenna Burrell, *Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafes of Urban Ghana* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 171.

[678] Jenna Burrell, *Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafes of Urban Ghana* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 172.

[679] Jenna Burrell, *Invisible Users: Youth in the Internet Cafes of Urban Ghana* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 173.

a second-hand label that makes visible power relations in which the recipient is obliged to accept a diminutive position through the material object.

"Garbage from abroad" is also the claim once made against Nollywood film.[680] Focused on entertainment and commercial value, Nollywood is full of Hollywood remakes and draws on American popular genres. Just as *African Film*'s Lance Spearman was James Bond's black double, Nollywood may be the global shadow of the American film industry.[681] Like India's Bollywood, even the name of the Nigerian film industry—Nollywood—with its one consonant difference mimics Hollywood. Sub-Saharan African popular cinema, it turns out, is full of Hollywood's bastard siblings: Kannywood (Kano, Nigeria), Ghallywood (Accra, Ghana), Kumawood (Kumasi, Ghana), and Swahiliwood (Tanzania).[682] According to Manthia Diawara, Nollywood's appropriation of Hollywood, the thing that makes it bad, is actually what makes it so iconoclastic:

> The digital revolution we are talking about here, which makes everything available everywhere, has at the same time been characterized by some as a bad imitation of Western consumerism and an alienation from pure African values. But as an avid consumer of Nollywood videos, I consider it subversive, an attack on the Western monopoly on consumption. By stealing from Hollywood the star system, the dress style, the music, by remaking Western genre films, and by appropriating the digital video camera as an African storytelling instrument, Nollywood is, in a sense, a copy of a copy that has become original through the embrace of its spectators. [683]

As Manthia Diawara has noted, Nollywood borrows special effects, costumes, and mannerisms from American popular cinema. The "trashy" plots—filled with tacky characters who sleep with married men and women, use Juju against their rivals, or extort money from wealthy individuals—adapt soap opera melodramatic twists for African audiences.[684] *BlackBerry Babes* might contain "garbage from abroad" but that is also what makes it reliably good.

While the "trashy" low-budget Nollywood serial continues to fill marketplaces in Lagos, during the early 2010s a select group of Nigerian filmmakers started producing larger budget features calling their movement the "New Nollywood." Along with higher budgets, instead of distribution on VCD (Video Compact Disc), New Nollywood films were released in the cinema

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[680] In the late 1980s there was a crisis of authenticity. Hollywood's cultural imperialism coupled with the "McDonaldization" of the globe seemed to threaten the cultural production of filmmakers in the Third World. As a response to the universalizing film language of Hollywood, filmmakers ascribed to African film language. The Nigerian and Ghanaian video films of the early 1990s that unabashedly mimicked Hollywood film grammar, Bollywood romance, and Hong Kong martial art action, were associated with the trashy genres they drew on. This "garbage from abroad" was also highly commercial. An African film language, as it was expressed in *Questioning African Cinema* a collection of interviews with African filmmakers, was in opposition to the base whims of commercial filmmaking.

[681] Ghanaian filmmaker Kwah Ansah as quoted in Onookome Okome's "Nollywood and Its critics" says, "Hollywood has made so much against the black race and when we have the opportunity to tell our own stories, we are confirming the same thing!" See Onookome Okome, "Nollywood and Its critics," in *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-first Century: Art Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution*, eds. Mahir Saul and Ralph A. Austen (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 32.

[682] Let us not forget that Silicon Valley has its own proximate doubles in Nairobi, Kenya's "Silicon Savannah" and Shenzhen, China's "Silicon Delta."

[683] Manthia Diawara, *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 185.

[684] Manthia Diawara, *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 183.

or streamed online by companies like iROKOtv, which caters to diasporic audiences. However, campus films, like *BlackBerry Babes*, continue to be made in the old Nollywood style where quantity appears to rule over quality.[685]

Originally distributed on VCD, a CD with video files, the image quality of *BlackBerry Babes* is noticeably inferior to the New Nollywood productions that use top-of-the-line digital video cameras and editing suites. The image quality for each *BlackBerry Babe* VCD would vary depending on the production of the VCD. A poorly compressed video file becomes pixelated, jumpy, and often blocky. The lasting effects of piracy in the form of video artifacts are also not uncommon. The *BlackBerry Babes* production at times suffers from inconsistent sound mixing, inaudible dialogue, and washed-out images. Debuting in 1993, the VCD itself was an inferior byproduct of DVD research and development. Deciding that DVD would be in the international standard, Dutch and Japanese electronics companies Philips and Sony decided to dump the VCD format on poorer economies.[686] The VCD format then was obsolete technological detritus even when it was new.

Despite its revenue generating popularity, *BlackBerry Babes* is a "trashy" series. The Babes, whose moral impropriety is the primary spectacle of the film, are themselves "trashy" characters—extorting good grades from their teachers, stealing BlackBerry phones, and cultivating flashy displays of wealth through their clothes and automobiles. Their outlandish actions seem to compound with time. Trash piles up as each plot twist reveals a new madness. Even the cinematic style of the series follows what some might describe as "trashy." Melodramatic acting, affected pauses, and heavy-handed musical cues, recall the "lowly" status of soap operas. The emphasis on commodities—Hummers and BlackBerries—appears to suggest that *BlackBerry Babes* is a series of advertisements, complete with the series' own tiresomely catchy jingle.

BlackBerry Babes seems to hawk all its wares in the basest way possible, but its trashy aesthetic could be the site of its revolutionary redemption. Trash has commonly been associated with the alternative practices of American avant-garde filmmaking from campy trash cinema of Kuchar brothers, Andy Warhol, and John Waters, to the recycled found footage of Joseph Cornell and Craig Baldwin. George Kuchar's campy films, which influenced Andy Warhol's pop-camp films and John Waters' "white trash" epics, mimic Hollywood genres with miniscule budgets resulting in cheap sets, over-the-top melodramatic acting, and outrageous costumes. As Scott MacDonald describes, Kuchar's hilarious imitations also educate: "Once I had laughed at Kuchar's use of Hollywood sound and image conventions, I found that the essential absurdity of many of these conventions was more evident to me than ever before."[687] Like Kuchar's films, found footage filmmaking repurposes Hollywood's products through re-contextualization turning the message of the media in upon itself. Craig Baldwin describes the San Francisco Bay area found footage movement as neo-dada, and an illegitimate response to the legitimate film industry five hours south.

In "Palimpsestic Aesthetics: A Mediation on Hybridity and Garbage," Robert Stam points out that garbage is the central metaphor in a host of revolutionary Latin American and Caribbean cinematic theories. He argues that trashy aesthetics take, "what had formerly been seen as negative, especially within colonialist discourse," and revalorize it through a process of

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[685] Jonathan Haynes, "'New Nollywood': Kunle Afolayan," *Black Camera* 5, no. 2 (2014): 60.

[686] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 50–51.

[687] Scott MacDonald, "George Kuchar: An Interview," 4.

inversion.[688] As Stam puts it, the aesthetics of garbage "deploy[s] the force of the dominant against domination."[689] In the redemption of detritus, be it the intertexual mixing of jazz or the salvage work of quilting, discarded commodities are re-made, re-envisioned, re-fashioned through artistic practice. Centering on trash shifts our vantage point from the site of commodity production to its margins. The garbage dump, according to Stam, "reveals the social formation as seen 'from below.'"[690]

The redemption of detritus plays a critical role in postcolonial film history. "Imperfect cinema," Julio García Espinosa expounds in a treatise against Hollywood and art film, "is no longer interested in quality or technique…Imperfect cinema is no longer interested in predetermined taste, and much less in 'good taste.'"[691] Instead, imperfect cinema opposes a system in which "the 'cultured' elite audience" is privileged to define what counts as artistic work in the first place.[692] As such, imperfect cinema revels in bad taste and poor image quality. It celebrates the amateur as a salve to the burn of bourgeois Euro-American exclusionary tastes.

Following Julio García Espinosa's definition, Manthia Diawara has called Ousmane Sembène's film language "imperfect." He argues that Sembène "defined African cinema" by using "his film language against the evolution of modern and postmodern cinemas of the West."[693] For Diawara, modernism and postmodernism in art are the styles of imperialism, and must be countered with African alternatives. The imperfection of Nollywood directly challenges the aestheticization of exotic black bodies found in popular "calabash cinema," what Diawara defines as, "a cinema made for tourists, depicting an a-historical Africa, with beautiful images of primitive-looking people."[694] Therefore, even though Nollywood recycles Hollywood style and genres, it recombines them to challenge European stereotypes of African villages. Nollywood's cannibalism of Hollywood, becomes an example of taking the discourse of the West and radically employing it to new ends.

Glauber Rocha identifies a similar conundrum in the Brazilian mid-twentieth century cinema movement, Cinema Novo: "while Latin America laments its general misery, the foreign observer cultivates a taste for that misery, not as a tragic *symptom*, but merely as a formal element in his field of interest…For the European observer, the process of artistic creation in the underdeveloped world is of interest only in so far as it satisfies his nostalgia for primitivism." The social problems, namely that of hunger, depicted by Brazilian artists are aestheticized by the European art circuit through exoticism. Rocha imagines Cinema Novo resisting bourgeois taste through the dedication of a filmmaker who is "prepared to stand up against commercialism, exploitation, pornography and the tyranny of technique."[695]

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[688] Robert Stam, "Palimpsestic Aesthetics: A Mediation on Hybridity and Garbage," in *Performing Hybridity*, eds. Joseph May and Jennifer Natalya Fink (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 59.

[689] Robert Stam, "Palimpsestic Aesthetics: A Mediation on Hybridity and Garbage," in *Performing Hybridity*, eds. Joseph May and Jennifer Natalya Fink (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 59.

[690] Robert Stam, "Palimpsestic Aesthetics: A Mediation on Hybridity and Garbage," in *Performing Hybridity*, eds. Joseph May and Jennifer Natalya Fink (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 59–78.

[691] Julio García Espinosa, "For an imperfect cinema" translated by Julianne Burton from *Jump Cut*, no. 20, 1979: 24–26.

[692] Julio García Espinosa, "For an imperfect cinema" translated by Julianne Burton from *Jump Cut*, no. 20, 1979: 24–26.

[693] Manthia Diawara, *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 95.

[694] Manthia Diawara, *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (Munich: Prestel, 2010), 96.

[695] Glauber Rocha, "The Aesthetics of Hunger" in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Scott MacKenzie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 219.

It would appear that read along with Robert Stam, Julio García Espinosa, Manthia Diawara, and Glauber Rocha, *BlackBerry Babes* not only critiques the insidious workings of globalized commodity fetishism through parody, but its "imperfect" aesthetics resists the commercial "tyranny of technique" as well. What better way to accentuate the serial quality of the mobile phones than to invoke the piles of eWaste that occupy Accra and Lagos' poorest districts? Trash is the double, the shadow, or the afterimage of a commodity that has out-lived its usefulness. Arguably *BlackBerry Babes* revolutionary potential is in its ability to offer views not just *of* trash, but *from* the vantage point of the trash heap.

"Trash," Kenneth Harrow argues, "has haunted African cinema from the start."[696] Drawing on Robert Stam's "Beyond Third Cinema," Harrow identifies that trashy aesthetics inform African cinema when the promise of independence has been compromised by the autocratic monstrosities of the post-colony, but he emphasizes the impossibility of thinking trash without evoking its opposite. Indeed, Nollywood scholarship tends to celebrate the political potentials of West African serial melodrama, but the "redemption of detritus" for political or social means inevitably leads to its recommodification.[697] Once "trash" becomes political critique, it is repositioned as art—a commodity that has its own consumer base. Yet, an exploration of trash can help "redefine African cinematic practices in all their vitality."[698] Discussions of trash are indivisible from confrontations with the "regimes of value" that arrange the world into hierarchies, even those based on models of phones.

Perhaps Brazilian filmmaker Rogerio Saganzerla's response to Glauber Rocha through his cinematic manifesto *The Red Light Bandit* (1968) offers a better model to understand *BlackBerry Babes*. According to Ismail Xavier, Rogerio Sganzerla's "aesthetics of garbage" interrogates the "political aspirations of the 'aesthetics of hunger'" that Rocha popularized in 1960s Brazil. Third Cinema rejected Hollywood and European art cinema, but Sganzerla's film rejects the very possibility of an alternative by expressing "its skeptical view of the destiny of critical, dissident film production within the capitalist system."[699] Thus, *The Red Light Bandit* embraces a pastiche of trashy Hollywood genres—western, gangster, and sci-fi genres—that are combined within a violent mess. Full of narrative holes and digressive elements, the noirish protagonist meanders meaninglessly, much like the plot, around São Paulo's "Boca de Lixo" (mouth of trash) killing, raping, and stealing money, while still having time to appreciate the cinema and go to the beach with his girlfriend. As Ismail Xavier has pointed out, *The Red Light Bandit*, while deliberately lacking plot or coherence, opts "instead for a ludic arbitrariness of collage."[700] The "arbitrariness of collage" brings us back to the garbage dump.

Like art récupéré, fashion returns to the past to remake, revisit, and recall romantically and nostalgically that to which we cling. If the serial return to trash for up-cycled inspiration is the narrative form of capitalism, is there any hope for the type of revolutionary cinema that Julio García Espinosa imagined? Resisting the need to make the view from below into a productive counter-discourse one might turn to the idea that films like *BlackBerry Babes* make the system of

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[696] Kenneth Harrow, *Trash: African Cinema from Below* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 1.

[697] See Geoffrey Kantaris's argument about the 2010 Lucy Walker documentary *Waste Land* in "Waste not, want not: Garbage and the philosopher of the dump (*Waste Land* and *Estamira*)," in *Global Garbage: Urban Imaginaries of Waste, Excess, and Abandonment*, eds. Christoph Linder and Miriam Meissner (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[698] *Trash: African Cinema from Below* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 282.

[699] Ismail Xavier, "Red Light Bandit: Allegory and Irony," in *Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 109.

[700] Ismail Xavier, "Red Light Bandit: Allegory and Irony," in *Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 96.

global capital in all its obscurity more legible. Yet, this too falls into a productionist model where legibility becomes information with the potential to transform individuals and societies. *BlackBerry Babes*, as Tsika remarks, "acknowledge[s] some of the pains of media imperialism without providing a deadly didacticism."[701]

  BlackBerry Babes, like Nollywood more broadly, celebrates a mimetic relationship to Hollywood. *BlackBerry Babes* repeats but does not re-present.[702] The melodramatic bigger-than-life entertainment of *BlackBerry Babes* strategically resists revolutionary usefulness much like Rogerio Saganzerla's *The Red Light Bandit*. Both films acknowledge they are products and as such do not pretend to be outside the system of global capital. Yet each maintain a critical distance from capitalist ideology while refusing to be politically didactic to the point of being hypocritical. This is not Third Cinema, but it is not quite Hollywood either. It is *too* trashy. Any hope for a counter-cinema in a film series like *BlackBerry Babes* is probably misplaced. Its politics, if there is hope for any at all, may be in cultivating its ambiguity.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

  Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control," new media scholars Alexander Galloway and Wendy Chun have applied Deleuze's concept of a control society to elucidate new forms of power operating in the era of the Internet, information theory, and contemporary forms of computing.[703] Delueze tells us that technologies are related to different eras, though he is careful to assure the reader that they are not determining. He explains that Foucault's sovereign societies made use of "simple machines—levers, pulleys, clocks." The disciplinary societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used "machines involving energy" or the combustion engine. And lastly, societies of control use computers. According to Deleuze this "technological evolution" is equivalent to the "mutation of capitalism." The physical enclosure of the factory that makes material products has given way to the diaphanous corporation, which he describes as a spirit.[704]

  Yet, what remains in Gilles Deleuze's history of capital is a periodization marked by geography, in which technology, time, and place are muddled in contradictory ways:

> Capitalism is no longer involved in production, which it often relegates to the Third World, even for the complex forms of textiles, metallurgy, or oil production. It's a capitalism of higher-order production. It no longer buys raw materials and no longer sells the finished products: it buys the finished products or assembles parts. What it wants to sell is services and what it wants to buy is stocks. This is no longer capitalism for production but for the product, which is to say, for being sold or marketed.[705]

Capitalism, for Deleuze, has changed. But the intrinsic change of capitalism is derived from a geographically specific place. He seems to want to describe a universal change in its nature even

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[701] Noah Tsika, *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and the Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 141.

[702] Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" *October* 28, (Spring 1984).

[703] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005) and Alexander Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004).

[704] Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (1992): 6.

[705] Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (1992): 6.

as he sets spatial limits to his claim. In the same breath that he uses to declare that capital is something new, he acknowledges that the Third World still produces in those old manufacturing spaces that box in individual workers. As media theorist Arvid Rajagopal writes, "although we are told [by Deleuze] control societies recognize no borders, the sense of place continues to divide the world into intimate and remote spaces."[706] Deleuze goes on to maintain that while capitalism (in the West) has changed, "one thing, it's true, hasn't changed—capitalism still keeps three quarters of humanity in extreme poverty, too poor to have debts and too numerous to be confined."[707]

Gilles Deleuze's blind spot, and it is the blind spot of many media scholars, lies in not explaining how control works in those "three quarters of humanity in extreme poverty" they relegate to the past. Arvid Rajagopal suggests that we might assume, based on Deleuze's typology, that the "older forms of power" correspond "to the obsolete forms of capitalist production carried on" elsewhere.[708] Michel Foucault, after all, said that new forms of power did not necessarily replace older ones but incorporated them. Still, Deleuze's capitalism is serialized.[709] Like BlackBerries and Nollywood movies, the serial persistence of new definitions of power, new phones, and new types of audio-visual serials reminds us that capitalism continues to play out its own logic.

In conclusion, let us consider the beginning of the film. In the first sequence of the serial, after a man successfully uses Damisa's phone to make an online purchase of items at a gift store, he hands her back her BlackBerry and asks, "Wa's the name?" Damisa scorns his grammatical imprecision by following up with, "Excuse me. Is it the phone or is it me?" Thus, the film series begins with a confusion between the BlackBerry phones the girls possess and the Babes themselves. Even the title bonds Blackness, BlackBerry and Babes through cleverly arranged alliteration.

Damisa's question, "Is it the phone or is it me?" is the lingering question that confronts global ideas about the relationship between technology, time, geography, and the modern that are embedded within an all too present headline like "Who wants a BlackBerry these days?" While the phones remain as fetishized objects, acknowledgement of their history as symbolic representations of global inequality atrophies any belief in the fetish. Desire is directed instead toward the pretense of equality that the newest media object represents, even as a persistent feeling of exclusion undermines faith in its potential to democratize.

What *BlackBerry Babes* demonstrates is that the image from the trash heap might not offer a revolution: the look of consternation left on a soap opera star's face at the end of an episode raises an ambivalent eyebrow to capitalist means of production but sassily speaks, "Is this the end? Of course not, more product means more profits." However, it does offer the means to understand where a reorganization of power could begin to dissolve the problem of global inequality. Gilles Deleuze shows us that theory is often seduced by the new, obscuring the

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[706] Arvind Rajagopal, "Imperceptible Perceptions in our Technological Modernity," in *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, eds. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (Routledge: New York, 2006), 280.
[707] Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (1992): 6.
[708] Arvind Rajagopal, "Imperceptible Perceptions in our Technological Modernity," in *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, eds. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas Keenan (Routledge: New York, 2006), 280.
[709] Just like the "evolutionary cultural stage theories" of Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) and Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991) that Anna Tsing warns us about which "tell us of the transition from modernity to postmodernity." See Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "From the Margins," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 283.

repetition of semantic structures of inequality that are maintained over the longue durée. His societies of control are characterized by the transition from the machines of disciplinary societies to the use of computers. As Wendy Chun has written, freedom in the era of fiber optics has unfortunately become a "gated community writ large."[710] The paranoid concern for national and personal security have trumped self-determining autonomy and mobility. It is time to acknowledge that the figure of the gate has been there from the beginning as the exclusionary inverse of the promise of new media technologies, and it is time for it to be dismantled.

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[710] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005), loc. 2697 of 3878, Kindle.

Conclusion
Charting the Frontiers of Big Data

During fieldwork in Ghana in 2017, I attended an open data conference at the large International Conference Centre in Accra. I was one among hundreds of attendees. Usually my work as a historian is solitary. I delve into the worlds within aging letters, brittle newspapers, and government memoranda. I spend my days reading texts both written and visual, speaking only to request the next box or folder from an archivist. But on occasion, I emerge out from behind dusty documents that whisper of the past into the vibrant mediatic moment of the present. The Africa Open Data Conference I found myself attending that summer was a high-profile event. H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, the president of Ghana, made the keynote address on a day dedicated to the policy and politics of open data. Hosted by Ghana's Ministry of Communications and the National Information Technology Agency the stakes of the conference were high. The aims of the event were even higher: to create awareness of the use of open data in Africa, support the African open data community, develop international collaborations, support open data initiatives in African countries, demonstrate the role of non-governmental data, demonstrate the role of a civil society that can drive institutional change in governments, and build a plan for future open data.[711] These lofty goals were faintly reminiscent of the investment in new media for social change that kept arising in the archive. UNESCO's mid-twentieth century focus on freedom of information had found new expression in neoliberal open data initiatives.

In the main hall, a Ghana Community Network Services Limited (GCNet) representative affirmed that "Data is the new oil."[712] The familiar comparison was coined by the British data scientist who established Tesco's Clubcard loyalty program, Clive Humby, in 2006. He argued that like oil, data needed to be refined, or mined and analyzed to become valuable. This analogy has since been criticized, but at the Africa Open Data Conference data seemed just as valuable as oil.[713] Everywhere digital technologies, the Internet of things, and drone surveillance, were heralded as new instruments for harnessing data that could optimize production; to help farmers better manage crops, fisheries to produce more fish, and governments to manage its citizenry more efficiently. This rhetoric was not met with outward critique (though I must admit that my observation was limited to those sessions that I attended, only a small fraction of the five-day multi-session conference). Data, it seemed, would be mined, pumped, and distributed openly for the development of Africa. The Ghanaian government stated its commitment to implementing open data practices across all government ministries, departments, and agencies. Not only would they prioritize data-based governance, they would also share its data with entrepreneurs, journalists, and civil society.

The colonial exploitation of Africa's natural resources lingered in the recesses of the conference halls. The reference to "data is the new oil" brought the colonial legacy of extraction through the specter of neo-colonialism to the fore. Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias have

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[711] These objectives were expressed in the 2017 Africa Open Data Conference Program.

[712] GCNet is a public-private organization focused on ICT capacity-building for facilitating business and trade within Ghana. For example, they have supplied the electronic system for customs clearance.

[713] "Data is the new oil," though used often across the world, had a particular resonance in Ghana where oil was discovered in 2007 and began to be produced in 2010. Since oil output has increased expanding the Ghanaian economy.

coined the term "data colonialism" to describe a form of colonialism characteristic of the twenty-first century that combines "the predatory extractive practices of historical colonialism with the abstract quantification methods of computing."[714] They write, "a political rationality operates to position society as the natural beneficiary of corporations' [data] extractive efforts, just as humanity was supposed to benefit from historical colonialism as a 'civilizational' project."[715] Not unlike the combined interest of colonial governments, missionary organizations, and private industry in the implementation of educational cinema in Africa, civilizing or developing Africa has long correlated with what is best for corporations. With the basic assumption that the essential feature of capitalism, "is the *abstracting force* of the commodity, the possibility of transforming life process into 'things' with value," Couldry and Mejias argue that, "data colonialism is changing society by transforming *human life* into a new abstracted social form that is also ripe for commodification: data."[716] In this reading of Marx' commodity fetish, data transforms social relations, not labor relations, into an abstract and commodifiable thing. Content—for data is media content—becomes the new fetish and the devices that capture data, the algorithms that process it, and the databases that store it hide behind its spectacular value. Data at the conference miraculously promised better governance and the expansion of economies while hiding the social relations that would go into creating them.

The 2019 special issue of *Television & New Media* on "Big Data from the South(s)," of which the Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias article is a part, identifies the Euro-American-centricity of critical data studies and argues for a decolonization of its Western universalisms. Editors Stefania Milan and Emiliano Treré write, "while the majority of the world's population today resides outside the West, we continue to frame key debates on democracy, surveillance, and the recent automation turn by means of 'Western' concerns, contexts, user behavior patterns, and conceptual frameworks…"[717] The big data issue in the West hinges between privacy rights and a willingness to relinquish that privacy for the "care" corporations can bestow on their consumers through big-data mining. Books like Roberto Simanowski's *Data Love* cleverly highlight the ambivalent love consumers in the United Sates have for new forms of datafication that fill their lives. As Simanowski writes, "Corporations love big data because it allows them to develop customized products, and consumers love big data for the same reason…Data love is a phenomenon not only of the society of control but also of the consumer society."[718] The Fitbit and other self-tracking devices that monitor human biological rhythms (pulse, footsteps, breath) show yet another way individuals have fallen in love with data. Self-tracking has turned "seeing like a state" onto personal self-improvement.[719] Data sets become necessary for the optimization of the self and to govern the body.

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[714] Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, "Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's relation to the Contemporary Subject," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 337.

[715] Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, "Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's relation to the Contemporary Subject," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 340.

[716] Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias, "Data Colonialism: Rethinking Big Data's relation to the Contemporary Subject," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 433–4.

[717] Stefania Milan and Emiliano Treré, "Big Data from the South(s): Beyond Data Universalism," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 320.

[718] Roberto Simanowski, *Data Love: The Seduction and Betrayal of Digital Technologies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), loc. 109 of 3575, Kindle.

[719] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

But this data quandary often at the center of debates about new mediating technologies hardly addresses the big data issues debated at the Africa Open Data Conference where state transparency, better governance, and public/private partnerships for the alleviation of poverty were the explicit goals of using open data. "The persistence of digital inequalities," as María Soledad Segura and Silvio Waisbord point out, "…in much of the Global South, reminds us that capitalism is not similarly interested in the datafication of all social groups, whether for commercial or political goals."[720] In other words, not *all* data is loved. Deeply felt concerns about the preservation of individual privacy in the era of the Internet of Things, self-tracking, and the commodification of search histories are hardly universal when, "like previous forms of capitalism, digital capitalism selectively targets publics while completely ignoring others."[721] Those whose data are not counted are not the recipients of corporate care. "Digital exclusion," writes Segura and Waisbord, "is another form of social marginalization."[722]

What *Media/Fetish* makes clear is that the experiences of media exclusion typified by selective datafication have precedent in the history of new media in Africa. The initial contact trope found in representations of the gramophone and Africa in the early 1900s invented a media divide that separated Africa from the West. Africans were characterized as believing the new recording technologies were magic. As such, new media were used to entrenched geographic and temporal difference along racial lines where Africans occupied a primitive past outside of Western modernity. Mobile cinema too was used by the colonial state to position Africa outside of modernity not because Africans were stuck in a primitive past, but because they were geographically remote. The mobility of the cinema constructed the idea of an inaccessible African on the other side of a media divide that needed state sponsored mobile media to initiate social change through the transformation of the individual. The narratives of media lack constructed during the colonial period necessitated a national agenda that included a robust media policy. Thus, the desire for an all-black African television system that would allow a newly formed Ghana the chance to claim inclusion in global modernity. Today, we see the media fetish play out in discourse about the digital divide. In Freudian terms, digital divides (or the fear of digital castration/exclusion) produce a desire for the media fetish. Data lack makes data love.

At the African Open Data Conference, access to better data and better use of data meant gaining methods of statecraft hitherto unavailable to African governments. The idea of open data at the African Open Data Conference fell into what Paola Ricaurte claims is the "epistemological ground of our historical moment." This epistemology is based on three assumptions: "(1) data reflects reality, (2) data analysis generates the most valuable and accurate knowledge, and (3) the results of data processing can be used to make better decisions about the world."[723] Ricaurte calls the embrace of the dominant epistemology of datafication originating in the West by "governments, technocrats, and academics in non-Western countries" a process of internal data colonization.[724] But as Stefania Milan and Emiliano Treré recognized, "digital technology is far

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[720] María Soledad Segura and Silvio Waisbord, "Between Data Capitalism and Data Citizenship," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 415.

[721] María Soledad Segura and Silvio Waisbord, "Between Data Capitalism and Data Citizenship," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 416.

[722] María Soledad Segura and Silvio Waisbord, "Between Data Capitalism and Data Citizenship," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 416.

[723] Paola Ricaurte, "Data Epistemologies, The Coloniality of Power, and Resistance," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 351.

[724] Paola Ricaurte, "Data Epistemologies, The Coloniality of Power, and Resistance," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 356.

from being just 'imported magic' (Medina et al. 2014), 'travelling' unchanged from the North to the South. Instead, the social and cultural appropriations of technology in the Global South often unsettle hegemonic conceptions of innovation," as the example of Ghana's invention of television in *Media/Fetish* demonstrates.[725]

Milan and Treré draw similar conclusions about how digital technology and big data are understood today. They argue, "that the main problem with data universalism is that it is asocial and ahistorical," presenting datafication, "as something operating outside of history and of specific sociopolitical, cultural, and economic contexts."[726] Similarly, *Media/Fetish* has emphasized that media technologies and media content must continue to be interrogated through specific sociocultural contexts rather than focus on the materiality of media alone as many media archaeologies tend to do.

But big data pushes the limit of the media/fetish. Digital lack characterizes the desire for open data solutions in places like Ghana, but the visual representation of data does not follow the familiar trope of African users juxtaposed with new media as seen with gramophones, cinema, television, and mobile phones. Data seems to exist without materiality. Big data is spectacular not as a form of the colonial sublime, but an instantiation of Immanuel Kant's mathematical sublime. The inability to imagine and comprehend all the data is met with an awakened appreciation of the human mind's ability to reason. In this case, big data reaffirms the idea that the governing of nature and society is based on human reason. *Media/Fetish* has focused on the relationship between people and media technologies and the relationships between people that those media technologies mediate. Big data forces the conversation away from the media machine and onto the machine's relationship to the content it produces. A further exploration of big data within the media fetish analytic would need to determine whether the media fetish is possible without an apparatus.

The central argument of *Media/Fetish* is that media have, in part, been made new by their discursive relationship to racialized development narratives. Be it the colonial civilizing mission to bring Western knowledge to Africans through mobile cinema or the promise of lack uplift through Ghana's national television, race has been crucial to global experiences of new media. Rather than being ancillary to the history of media technology, discussions about new media use in Africa are central to understanding how new media have contributed to the maintenance of racialized global capitalism, and how they have also offered the hopeful means to its undoing. The analysis of new media discourse in and about Africa untangles the lasting impacts of imperial capitalism on global theories of media. Conversely, an evocative look at mid-twentieth century Afro-futuristic media discourse reminds us of a time before the end of possibility, when African intellectuals invented media technology anew through the incorporation of global development discourse and through imaginative forms of resistance. Even as the cycle of racism and uplift embedded in the history of new media in Africa allows the media fetish to continue to be sold as the solution to the global inequality that it creates, media technology matters to the people who use them. As long as media users feel new media's power to mediate the social, the media fetish will continue to spectacularly organize the world into "first" and "thirds." But as *Media/Fetish* exhibits, that order is subject to change.

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[725] Stefania Milan and Emiliano Treré, "Big Data from the South(s): Beyond Data Universalism," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 324.

[726] Stefania Milan and Emiliano Treré, "Big Data from the South(s): Beyond Data Universalism," *Television & New Media* 20, no. 4 (2019): 325.

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