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Salvage Anthropology in a City Without History: East London and Photographic Collections of Joseph Denfield, 1950–1969

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Abstract

This paper explores the personal and public photography taken in the 1960s by Joseph Denfield, a well-known South African ethnographic photographer and amateur historian in East London. We argue that his collection allows for a critical reflection on the narratives of the history and culture of East London during this period. Drawing attention to the economic, infrastructural, political and cultural changes that the city underwent from the 1950s onward, we place Denfield's images alongside such changes noting the ways they offer a silent critique of the 'dismantling' of the city's colonial past, and in turn draw on the discursive trope of 'salvage anthropology' to 'redeem' such a past. His images are melancholic and nostalgic, documenting a city in ruins. They lament the passing of an era and the collapse of a particular kind of city. Some of his photographs were deeply personal and private, but they are also of great public significance because they now provide the cornerstone of a heritage-driven representational history of a city which, we argue, effectively has no modern history.

Key words: salvage anthropology; photography; ruins; city

Introduction

This paper offers a critical reflection on the particular narratives of the history and culture of East London which emerged in the 1960s through the work of Joseph Denfield. A medical doctor who was born in England and immigrated to East London after the Second World War, Denfield emerged in the city as a public intellectual on the basis of his work as a photographer and curator who hosted exhibitions depicting the city's past and wrote numerous articles about the city's 'founding'. Throughout the 1960s, Joseph Denfield collected photographs and memorabilia of the city and published many of them in his illustrated history of the city entitled *Pioneer Port: The Illustrated History of East London* (1965). His intellectual work extended to the development of the East London Museum project where a museum hall is named after him featuring his prominently displayed

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collections.[1] Additionally, there is an entire post card collection of his city photographs in circulation. Denfield was also one of the founding members of the Border Historical Society (BHS) in December 1959, comprised of members who were committed to acquiring knowledge about the city's settler past.

It is this particular aspect that is the focus of our paper; that is, the extent to which Denfield and his contemporaries were wedded to a vision of the city as an English pioneer, settler town. Their intellectual project revolved around the recovering of frontier settler histories and narratives that could be incorporated into museum displays, while entrenching notions of East London as a pioneer city. We place such a project alongside the work of the Philip and Iona Mayer who, too, offered a distinct narrative about the city in the same period but from the vantage point of black migrant workers living in townships.[2] We note a definite convergence between these narratives of white life and those of the Mayers, who rendered East London a 'tribal city'. We suggest that, in the absence of competing versions of the city's history, these mid-century constructions and representations have been amazingly resilient and remain dominant inscriptions to this day. In some ways, both emerge from the paradigm of salvage anthropology.[3]

While this particular ideological trope has been more commonly associated with late nineteenth and early twentieth-century anthropological work that sought to document 'disappearing tribes' in so-called primitive societies, we note the extent to which Denfield's own work in visualising East London's past was underpinned by similar anxieties about the fading markers of pastness, thereby leading him to find means of arresting the movement of time through photography. And here one needs to consider the photographic medium's distinct relationship with temporality and knowledge production. The homologies that Edwards draws between photographs and history are useful when considering the fragmented, selective, exclusive, tentative, illustrative and suggestive relations of both, as well as the attempt to arrest time in both despite the elusiveness of certainty.[4] As 'archival' photographs, Denfield's restored images of old East London would be particularly charged

1. The *Daily Dispatch* newspaper reports that by the late 1950s the East London museum attracted around 75,000 visitors every year, making it a significant showcase for the political and cultural history of the region and the city. The city had a population of about 150,000 people at the time. This is indicative of the power of the museum as a site of cultural production in the city.
2. P. Mayer (with I. Mayer), *Townsmen and Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961).
3. For a brief discussion on the emergence of 'salvage anthropology' in Britain see E. Edwards, 'Introduction', in E. Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography: 1860–1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 3–17. For discussions that pay attention to racially informed photographic projects in the nineteenth century that coalesced with the formation of empires and colonial power see also M. Jay, 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity', in H. Foster, ed., *Visions and Visuality: Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Dia Art Foundation and Bay Press, 1989), 3–28; A. Bank, 'Anthropology and Portrait Photography: Gustav Fritsch's "Natives of South Africa" 1863–1872', *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, 27 (November 2001), 43–76; R. Poignant, 'Surveying the Field of View: The Making of the RAI Photographic Collection', in Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography*, 42–73; P. Hayes, 'Northern Exposures: The Photography of C. L. Hahn, Native Commissioner of Ovamboland', in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes, eds, *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town; Windhoek; Athens: University of Cape Town; Out of Africa; Ohio University Press, 1998), 171–187.
4. E. Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photography, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2001).

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as a 'window' through which one could 'witness' the past and in this manner re-constituted the city's identity through historicity.

Contemporary discourses about the city that are articulated in the media reflect in part the extent to which Denfield's visual inscriptions have endured. This is suggested in some reactions following the declaration of East London as part of the Buffalo City Metropolitan (BCM) municipality in April 2011. The declaration followed years of speculation about the status of the city as an emerging 'metro' with a population of around one million people. When the announcement came after the local government elections of 2011, many citizens expressed serious doubts about the readiness and the worth of the city to acquire metropolitan status.[5] The journey into the space of the 'metropole' invoked a fear of the unknown.[6] The long and animated debate revealed a striking lack of confidence in East London's modern urban identity. In fact, there seemed to be some confusion as to whether East London (the urban core of the new BCM area) was a genuine city at all. Many stated that it was no more than a quaint old colonial 'coastal town'.[7]

Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall note a similar lack of confidence in bestowing on Johannesburg the status of a 'global city' or 'African metropolis'. They argue that scholars consistently present Johannesburg as a city of something else – a city of gold; a site of capital accumulation and racial exploitation; an apartheid city; a place for gated communities, epic inequality and violent crime. In fact, they argue that local scholars have conspired to make Johannesburg the 'illusive metropolis'.[8] O'Brien makes a similar argument for Dakar in Senegal.[9] He notes a significant disjuncture between the way the city is represented by outsiders and the way it is imagined and understood from within. For many foreign academics and western scholars, Dakar falls short of the metropolitan mark because of deficiencies in service delivery, sanitation and infrastructure, but locals see their capital city as the epitome of modernity.[10] They view it as an iconic symbol of national pride and an expression of African cosmopolitanism. In this context, O'Brien wonders why

5. In the *Daily Dispatch*, 12–17 July 2012, there was an intense debate between councillors and ratepayers concerning the status of the city as a metro municipality. The ratepayers lobby argued that the city hardly had the right to call itself a municipality, let alone a metropolitan one, given the poor state of service delivery. ANC councillors objected, suggesting that the city clearly met all the technical criteria set out in law for metropolitan status to be granted. Many ratepayers argued that the city should reject its metropolitan status.
6. This fear of the 'metropolitan' label was strange given that East London was classified as a metropolitan city in the 1960s in terms of classifications of earlier scholars and officials. In 1970, the metropolitan status of the city was affirmed in a book-length report by H. L. Watts and J. A. I. Agar Hamilton entitled 'Border Port: A Study of East London with Special Reference to the White Population', Occasional Paper 13, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Grahamstown, 1970. The report highlighted the rapid growth of the industry economy in the city and referred throughout to the East London 'metropolitan areas' and compared the city to other metros in South Africa.
7. *Daily Dispatch*, 13 August 2012.
8. S. Nuttall and A. Mbembe, eds, *Johannesburg: The Illusive Metropolis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
9. C. O'Brien, 'A City that Keeps a Country Going: In Praise of Dakar', in P. Ranka, ed., *African City Textualities* (London: Routledge, 2009), 5–14.
10. Modernity here is associated with newness, urbanity and cosmopolitanism in an African context. In Senegal, locals view Dakar in the same way in which Americans view Los Angeles or New York, or Britons view London: O'Brien, 'A City that Keeps a Country Going', 5–14.

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it is so necessary to deny Dakar a metropolitan identity when it is imagined in that way from within Africa. The issue for East London, more recently Buffalo City, is that it appears to have no such imagination of itself, despite a long history of modernisation, industrialisation and development. Why is this so when other cities in South Africa with similar histories find it easier to embrace their city-ness and modernity? The answer we advance here considers the role of salvage anthropology and nostalgia in different constructions of the city's identity.

Considering the classic work of Phillip and Iona Mayer and their 'Xhosa in Town' trilogy is perhaps a useful point of departure in unpacking this tension in that it puts forward an image of East London as a place of rurality. Despite its preoccupation with the figure of the black subject residing in an urban environment, their trilogy reinstates that subject as a 'native' of the rural reserve. Thus, in keeping with the salvage tradition, it constructs the black subject as one 'rooted' in tradition. This body of work was produced in the early 1960s when East London was in the midst of very rapid industrialisation and modernisation.[11] The Mayers insisted that the majority of Xhosa-speaking migrants in town were reluctant urbanites who harked after country life. The disjuncture between the Mayer's representation of township life and the rate of social, cultural and political change has been highlighted by a number of scholars.[12] In his recent restudy of the trilogy, Bank argues that the failure of these anthropologists to capture the cosmopolitan strands of black urban culture and the appetite of the youth, in particular, for political change has denied the city access to 'alternative narratives of modernity and urbanity'. Silences and erasures in the story of the city and its engagements with economic modernity, nationalist politics, sport, music and consumption, he argues, have contributed to its lack of confidence as a South African city.[13] This article adds to this critique by exploring other sites of cultural production which re-enforce and entrench the prevailing narrative of the city.

We unpack such enduring inscriptions, thus, by revisiting their emergence in the 1960s partly through the work of Denfield. He undertook the twin projects of restoring and exhibiting old photographs that depicted East London at the turn of the twentieth century and in turn he took photographs in the same period which constructed it as though in was in ruin. The latter images are filled with nostalgia and sadness, and speak to his sense of personal loss, even rejection. In reading these images, we see Denfield outside of his role as a 'cultural reconstructor', a salvage anthropologist, and encounter a deeper sense of disillusionment with modernism as an urban form. In interpreting the latter we invoke

11. Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*; D. Reader, *The Black Man's Portion* (Cape Town: OUP, 1960); B. Pauw, *The Second Generation*, (Cape Town: OUP, 1963). These three high profile studies were part of a broader research project in the region undertaken by Rhodes University and led by the economist D. Hobart called the 'Border Regional Survey'. The 'Xhosa in Town' trilogy was certainly the most visible and internationally recognised product of the project, but there were others too. These included a small scale study of industrial development in the city, J. P. Barker, 'Industrial Development in East London', Occasional Paper 7, ISER, Rhodes; and the 1970 Watts and Agar Hamilton, 'Border Port'.

12. A. Mafeje, 'The Ideology of Tribalism', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9, 2 (1971), 253–261; B. Magubane, 'A Critical Look at the Indices Used in the Study of Social Change in Colonial Africa', *Current Anthropology*, 12 (1973), 419–445; B. Magubane, 'The Xhosa in Town Revisited: Urban Social Anthropology: A Failure of Method and Theory', *American Anthropologist*, 75, 5 (1973), 701–715.

13. L. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles: Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City* (London: Pluto, 2011), 2, 37–44.

comparisons with the work of Marshall Berman and Jane Jacobs, both of whom expressed deep disillusionment with the unrelenting machine of modernist planning.[14] In the final part of the paper, we note that Denfield's prediction of the destruction of the pioneer city never actually materialised because racial modernism planning shifted away from East London in the late 1960s and into the surrounding ethnic homelands. This left the city and the city centre betwixt and between, in a state of partial modernisation, which is neither fish nor fowl, but something in-between. It is this process of partial, failed or arrested modernity that we argue continues to haunt the city and is a major cause of its lack of confidence as an emerging metro. In this context salvage anthropology has remained the dominant format for the representation of city culture. Let us, firstly, consider East London's rapid industrial growth in the decade preceding Denfield's photographic projects.

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Coastal modern: East London in the 1950s

To think of East London in the 1950s is to imagine it alongside a city like Durban, which has now grown into a major African coastal metropolis. After the Second World War, the industrial economy of East London grew at more than 10 per cent per annum for a sustained period and consolidated the status of East London as a significant industrial city. From a small base of 146 firms with 3,525 employees in 1928, the city's industrial sector grew to over 284 firms in 1954 with 11,299 employees.[15] By 1955, 29 per cent of East London's economically active male population worked in industry, which was in line with the 32 per cent national average for large metropolitan areas.[16] The city had come of age as an industrial centre very quickly with a diverse industrial sector, incorporating food processing, textile production, chemicals and the motor industry. The latter started after the war. By the late 1950s, the city was eight times the size of any of the urban centre in its hinterland, including former Eastern Cape colonial centres like King William's Town. Officials and academics now spoke about East London city as a metropolitan area.[17]

Some of the factors behind this success included, firstly, a strong commitment to improvement in the city and the region predicated on a desire for rapid modernisation in agriculture, industry and the city. Secondly, there was investment in large infrastructural projects like the massive Laing Dam (completed in 1952) and the West Bank Power Plant (completed in 1954). These investments increased investor confidence and attracted new immigrants and entrepreneurs to the city. Thirdly, regional economic planning was underpinned by scientific research with multifaceted studies into the physical, economic and social dynamics of the 'Border Region', with East London imagined as the metropolitan hub.[18] Vibrant connections were imagined and established between town and country to ensure that food processing was the largest industrial sector in the 1950s.

14. See J. Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961); M. Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (London: Penguin Books, 1983).
15. G. Minkley, 'Class and Culture in the Workplace: East London, Industrialization and the Conflict over Work', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 4 (1992), 739–760.
16. Watts and Agar Hamilton, 'Border Port', 78.
17. *Ibid*.
18. The Hobart Houghton 'Border Regional Survey' under taken from Rhodes University and referred to above formed part of this process.

These links stimulated rapid growth in the textile industry, which became the largest employer after 1960. Another factor that drove the post-war boom was the commitment to investment in training skilled and semi-skilled workers.[19] By 1964, a survey of the city industrialists and the white middle class revealed that 88 per cent were confident in the future of East London as an industrial hub.[20]

As new industrial parks opened, investment poured into the city centre and the burgeoning suburbs. Old colonial buildings were torn down and replaced by new, modern multi-storey buildings, including banks, cinemas, hotels, garages and department stores. Many national retail firms, including Garlicks, Edgars, Bradlows and Lewis Stores, flocked to Oxford Street at this time, while new car dealerships opened on Cambridge Street in response to growing demands. In the 1950s, the city also experienced suburban sprawl, especially after the completion of the Nahoon River Bridge in 1956, which opened up suburbs like Beacon Bay, Beaconhurst and Bonza Bay to the east. Sunnyridge grew in the west and Amalinda to the north of the city. For 250 pounds, new families could buy a house from plot and plan schemes advertised in the press.[21] It was boom time for real estate agents and house builders in East London as the new white middle and working classes moved away from the old inner city.

The arrival of suburbia dramatically changed the culture and layout of the city. By the 1950s the compact colonial city had become a more open, American-style, automobile city with new roads, open parks and suburbs. A city department of parks and recreation was set up to carve 'green lungs' into older city suburbs, like Southernwood, and create new parks and open spaces in the suburbs. The shift to the suburbs also involved what George Lipsitz has called in his writing on America a 'possessive investment in whiteness'.[22] Suburbanisation created separate enclaves where privatisation, patriarchy and patriotism, law and order, hard work and self-help were inculcated in a reconstructed ideal of whiteness. It also generated a greater sense of white 'classlessness' than was the case in the colonial city with its variegated and ornate architecture and differentiated urban landscape.[23]

But one critical difference between the American and the East London experience was that whites did not generally take 'flight' from the city centre. They did not enter the 'vanilla suburbs' to get away from the 'chocolate city' as was often the case in America.[24] To be sure, the access of black workers to the city was regulated and controlled by pass laws and curfews. As a result, white movement to the suburbs was not based on a rejection or

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19. Watts and Agar Hamilton, 'Border Port', 78.
20. *Ibid.*
21. E. Nel, 'The Spatial Planning of Racial Residential Segregation in East London, 1948–1973' (MA thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1990); Minkley, 'Class and Culture in the Workplace', 739–760.
22. G. Lipshitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
23. See M. Pattillo, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).
24. The image of the 'chocolate city' and 'vanilla suburbs' was invoked in many American cities where the inner city was predominantly black, such as Washington, Detroit, Atlanta, New Orleans, Baltimore, Memphis and New York. In the academic literature the idea of the 'vanilla suburb' is associated with white flight from the city centre, which was driven by fears of the possible blackening of city centres in America after the war.

fear of the inner city. In fact, in East London most whites retained emotional and practical connections to the old settler centre long after they had left for the suburbs. It is precisely this connection, as we will see, that made Denfield's 'restorationist' photo history of the city such a popular project with a certain section of the white public.

In East London suburbanisation initially led to surprisingly little commercial and retail decentralisation. The city centre remained the primary retail hub and social heart through this period, despite the white drift towards suburbia. Restaurants, cinemas, hotels and shops aggregated downtown, creating a dynamic vibe that spilled over onto the Esplanade and the beachfront. American-style diners, like the Manhattans, replaced the old-fashioned colonial tea lounges. Likewise, newly-styled hotels, like the eight-storey New Deals Hotel in the city centre, replaced the two-storey colonial-style hotels, while flashy new cinemas, like the Coliseum, brought Hollywood right into the city centre too.[25] Other movie houses included the Springbok bioscope, which attracted multi-racial crowds off the main city drag. The tourist trade was also a critical part of the economy at this time and, by 1960, there were no fewer than 72 hotels. In December 1955, the East London Public Association established that there were over 6,000 tourist in the city during December and that over 60 per cent of the visitors were from places outside of the Eastern Cape.[26] Tourism gave the city centre life because most of the hotels were located either there in the city or on the nearby esplanade.

Beyond the city centre, in between the suburbs and the city, a new white middle class cultural precinct emerged in the 1950s close to the established colonial city high schools and a campus of the East London Technical College, set up in 1931. It was here that the Museum erected a 'fine new block' in 1949 and the Guild Theatre was built shortly afterwards. The latter was described as 'a well-designed building beside the Museum' and as a 'monument to what can be achieved by personal enthusiasm and initiative'.[27] The precinct was begun and supported by the city council, but, as Watt and Agar Hamilton explain, 'nothing would have been forthcoming without the energy of its supporters, the generosity of fellow citizens in firms and societies through the city'.[28] Indeed, it was in this place, between the suburbs and the city, that the settler city was to be (re-)produced and feelings of nostalgia for 'what was being lost' were articulated, discussed and expressed.

This is where Dr Joseph Denfield, Marjorie Latimer and other architects of this city museum project were based at that time and it was in this period that they established the BHS in 1959 with the distinct objective of 'recovering' the city's past in both a material and literary sense. The Society included figures such as history school teacher Mark Taylor, director of the East London Municipal Library Margy van Deventer and town clerk Hilton Driffield. Members were concerned with refurbishing and restoring various buildings and graves deemed historically significant and generating publications through the Museum that often told the story of the 'founding' and establishment of the city through such sites and individuals. And while a more comprehensive discussion on the work of the Society is beyond the confines of this paper, it is worth pointing out that

25. The popular South African pop band the Dealians adopted their name because they made their name at the New Deals hotel in East London.
26. Watts and Agar Hamilton, 'Border Port', 40.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, 34.

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inevitably its members' work was oriented around the city's settler past with one of the 'crowning' achievements being the re-instatement of the home of John Gately, the first mayor of the city whom they regarded as the 'father of East London', as an extension of the Museum.[29] Subsequently, through the Museum, the city was endowed with a particular historicity that directed one's gaze to 'pioneers' and 'foundations'.

As can be seen, the intellectual work of the Society contrasted sharply with the structural re-planning that looked towards the future and the cultural atmosphere into which the city was morphing. The spread of American-style consumerism had a huge impact on urban culture as small shops made way for large department stores and even the first supermarkets in 1955. In the poorer suburbs, like Milner Estate and West Bank, a serious problem emerged with American-style Ducktail gangs terrorising segments of the white community. These 'juvenile delinquents' were the suburban equivalents of the *tsotsis* gangs in the East Bank location. In1958, city police beat back the 'ducktail threat', while older black men in the locations took their sticks to the youth, whom they claimed were 'out of control' and had 'lost respect for tradition'.[30] Ducktails and the *tsotsis* were examples of Americanised social change and of new urban cultural styles based on jazz, rock and roll, gangsterism and automobiles, from Hollywood to Harlem. In fact, by the 1950s East London was a melting pot of cosmopolitan cultural influence from across the Atlantic and not just the old English colonial city of yesteryear. Social upheaval, consumerism, political agitation and generational conflict unsettled the city as a whole and challenged the old colonial order as the white and black working class grew. Viewed from such a perspective, thus, the BHS's efforts in 'restoring' the city's 'neglected' sites was partly an antithetical reaction to the numerous changes which the city was undergoing. It became a primary focus because this is where piecemeal transformation was well underway as many old colonial buildings were being torn down and new ones put up in their place.

At another level the English settler colonial city also had to deal with the 'intrusion' of Afrikaner nationalism and a new bureaucratic culture. White voters in the city were largely behind the United Party and its affiliation to the Union Jack and the British Commonwealth and thus did not necessarily support the Nationalists' policy of apartheid. On the other hand, Afrikaner bureaucracy threatened the dominance of English settler heritage: new Afrikaans schools, churches and civic associations opened up in what had been historically English-settler suburbs. Moreover, the Nationalist Party used the 300th anniversary of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in South Africa to celebrate white settler unity and achievement.[31] But this was viewed with suspicion by some English-speaking residents in East London, who saw the new government jobs in the police force, railways and postal service going to Afrikaners and not English speakers.[32] To the shock of many,

29. S. Dickie, 'Battle of Gately House', *The Coelacanth*, 1, 1 (1963), 3.
30. *Daily Dispatch*, 25 March 1958; 30 June 1958.
31. See L. Witz, *Apartheid's Festivals: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003); G. Minkley and L. Witz, 'Sir Harry Smith and his Imbongi: Local and National Identities in the Eastern Cape, 1952', History Workshop, 13–15 July 1994, University of Witwatersrand (1994); *Daily Dispatch*, 4 April 1952.
32. *Daily Dispatch*, 20 June 1956; 18 May 1957. There were many cartoons in the *Daily Dispatch* during the late 1950s that dramatised this sense of threat and displacement amongst English-speaking whites in the city.

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Mr Robbie De Lange, an Afrikaner, was elected as mayor for one term in 1955. He was the first Afrikaner to be city mayor and was to remain a long standing MP for the city.

It is in this context of change that Joseph Denfield drew the attention of the public through his ‘recovery’ of East London’s British colonial past through photographs. While the city administration of the 1950s and 1960s tore down markers of a settler past, Denfield became more despondent and melancholic, and deployed the camera’s somewhat precarious tool in preservation to re-visualise the city in ruins under the weight of racial modernism, a practice which, as we shall see, he had deployed in his earliest days as a photographer.

Joseph Denfield: salvage photographer

Joseph Denfield arrived in East London in 1947 from post-war England and was followed by his wife, Lea, soon after in 1948. Over approximately 15 years following his arrival, Denfield would develop photographic projects about the city that were parallel to the work of the Mayers, with the three authors’ respective bodies of work culminating within only a few years of each other. The Mayers’ *Townsmen and Tribesmen* was published in 1961. Four years later Denfield’s *Pioneer Port* came out. And while the two texts both took East London as a key subject matter, there was little else that implicated the two books in a pronounced manner. After all, the Mayers’ work was a rich ethnography based in the designated Locations of the city and was concerned with recording what the authors called ‘the interplay between “urban” and “tribal” phenomena’ in the lives of black migrant workers.[33] On the other hand, Denfield’s publication offered a history of East London through a series of photographs taken at the turn of the twentieth century and supplemented with descriptive text. Thus the two books stood at diametrically opposed ends, with the former concerned with the black urban subject in the context of social change, while the latter was invested in the city’s past through the spaces that had been occupied by colonial white subjects.

When placing the basic conclusions of the Mayers’ work alongside Denfield’s images, such a diametrical positioning of the two texts, however, begins to unravel. Briefly, by drawing attention to the persistence of ‘doggedly tribal behaviour’ of their subjects and their resistance to urbanisation, despite participating in wage labour,[34] the Mayers authenticated the existence of the rural in the urban with their emphasis on the salience of sociological features of ‘tribal’ life. That is to say, despite its concern with documenting change, the Mayers’ book drew attention persistently to lack of change and it is in this manner that homologies may be drawn with Denfield’s *Pioneer Port*. A project which Denfield described as a ‘labour of love’,[35] *Pioneer Port* was the culmination of approximately seven years of research into the history of East London. It emerged somewhat fortuitously in the late 1950s when Denfield developed an interest in the earliest photographers in South Africa. In the process he encountered photographic material in the form of glass negatives taken by individuals who had lived in East London in the late

33. Mayer and Mayer, *Townsman or Tribesman*, .
34. *Ibid*., xv.
35. J. Denfield, ‘Speech at Pioneer Port Book Launch’, 17 June 1965, uncatalogued, East London Library.

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nineteenth century and early twentieth century. For Denfield these negatives were 'invaluable historical documents, which could tell the story of East London far more authentically than the written word'.[36] He took upon himself the task of cleansing and reproducing the negatives into prints. He also wrote to the *Daily Dispatch* bemoaning the loss of such material and appealed to residents in East London and the BHS to share with him images of old East London they had, including photographs from private family albums. Additionally, Denfield extended his search to the Cape Archives and National Library for any information he could find that pertained to sites that had been captured on the glass negatives.

The end-product was a story of East London's past told largely through pictures that were supplemented with textual narratives related to each site that had been photographed. Two key tenets of the book are worth highlighting. The first is the narration of the past through the depiction of public sites and spaces. The book drew attention to those visible sites that characterised East London as in fact a city, including hotels, public parks, municipal offices, main streets, medical centres, schools and churches. Much attention was drawn to the *establishment* of these sites and the 'pioneering' figures that enabled their existence, thereby offering an image of heroism through accounts of failures and eventual successes. Secondly, far from representing those spaces arbitrarily, the book deployed the images as quotidian displays of colonial East London through which the viewer was given a glimpse of the urban routines that residents participated in. For example, the reader could witness residents in leisurely pursuit along the beachfront or camping close to Eastern Beach, gathering in vegetable markets in Market Square or strolling casually in Park Avenue. Figure 1, for example, is a photograph taken in Park Avenue originally in 1805, where, according to Denfield, 'the elite of the town used to gather on Sunday afternoons'.[37] Men and women stroll in the area casually. Some travel by horse and carriage while others are on bicycles on a sunny afternoon. It is a scene of leisure and contentment where residents convene in pairs and groups. Others wander aimlessly alone. Denfield noted that Park Avenue was the fashion centre of East London in this period,[38] thus one imagines the elite gathering there while being aware of their peers' scrutiny. Far from being a space of idleness, Park Avenue was a performative space of class and supremacy. The photograph introduced nobility into East London's history, constituting it as an Europeanised space. Fittingly, in the background the steeple of the Lutheran Church peers through the tree tops almost as a reminder of the town's colonial history.

Elsewhere residents took part in seasonal events such as band performances or watched military parades such as that in Figure 2, taken in 1906. The parade took place in the town's Market Square, while the photographer is said to have positioned him/herself from the old Lloyd's Building. The building is a significant site, which former town clerk – and member of the BHS – Driffield regarded as 'one of the City's well known landmarks and most beautiful edifices' in 1958.[39] The civic exercise drew a significant crowd that stood on the sidelines surrounding the performers who are in the centre of the Market Square. The photographer of the military parade captured the event panoramically and included

36. J. Denfield, *Pioneer Port* (Cape Town: Timmins, 1965).
37. *Daily Dispatch*, 3 December 1962.
38. *Ibid*.
39. *Daily Dispatch*, 23 July 1958.

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Figure 1. A scene in Park Avenue in 1895.

unceremonious incidents as well, such as two figures strolling at a pavement on the left casually and various spectators who stand away from the crowd. Arguably, the combination of emphasis on ritual in subject matter and the happenstance appearance of other figures reinforced the historicity of East London through the realm of familiarity, where members appeared to be going through discrete public rites that formed part of early urban culture.

It is through such a representational strategy that parallels can be drawn between Denfield's and the Mayers' texts. While for the Mayers the black migrant worker remained largely a fixed subject of the rural reserve involved in the task of preserving one's cultural milieu, Denfield's colonial subjects were too constituted through the framework of cyclical routines. In drawing attention to spaces of the everyday in Victorian East London, the book intimated the sense of a calm sociality in this period. Indeed subjects in photographs appear at ease with their surroundings, as though going through the rituals of urban life, not unlike the subjects of the Mayers, who, despite occupying the urban sphere, appeared as though committed to an unchanging traditional way of life. Both groups, in other words, were represented as caught in cyclical cultures, unending and repetitive rituals. Through different entry points, all authors reached in some ways similar conclusions about the city

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Figure 2. The military parade at the market square in 1905.

and its relationship to change. With sameness and consistency as underpinning themes in both studies, both texts struggled to move beyond a conception of the city outside the notion of preservation. In other words, even though the colonial white subject of the city appeared indeed as an urban figure, he or she was constructed through a framework comparable to the Mayers' configuration of the black migrant worker in terms of tribalism, that is, with an emphasis on sameness, familiarity and routine, rather than the task of change and innovation to which the city managers had assigned themselves.

To appreciate such an inclination in Denfield's work, one needs to it locate within his longer career trajectory as a photographer. After all, prior to undertaking such a project in East London, Denfield had established himself a self-proclaimed 'native photographer' approximately over a 10-year period. He began dabbling with photography whilst stationed as a medical doctor at Kaduna in northern Nigeria as part of the Royal Army Medical Corps during the Second World War. From 1944 to 1946 he amassed a series of images that captured 'primitive tribes' with intentions of 'improving [. . .] knowledge of primitive races at first hand, at the same time making a permanent record with my camera of one of the most fascinating and interesting people'.[40] Denfield described his aim in the photographic exercise in Nigeria as an attempt 'to record as artistically as possible a civilisation which,

40. J. Denfield, Untitled Manuscript, n.d., Joseph Denfield Collection, East London Library.

under approaching modern influence, must one day inevitably end',[41] and operated within a largely imperialist ethnographic framework that was suspicious of European modernising projects and instead attempted to 'preserve' the 'primitive' dying cultures. Indeed, in an article of the British magazine *Today* that featured a spread of Denfield's photographs in his early days as a photographer, he stated:

> With a patronizing air the European speaks of the African as 'uncivilized'. He believes that he has reached the peak of civilization: for by pressing a button, he can blast a city to shreds, or spread propaganda through 3000 miles of space. That, he trumpets, is progress. He boasts of living in a highly civilized community, when nothing could be less communal than life in a great city, where no man knows or cares about his neighbor, and the code of life is every man for himself. Is this civilization? Those who know the isolated African tribes doubt it. For the natives, branded as uncivilized, have developed what those who know them and have studied their way of life consider to be a far more genuine civilization. It is little realized that in many British Colonies there are still to be found primitive communities, upon which the coming of the European brand of civilization has had but little effect.[42]

Denfield denounced this prized modernisation seeing it as a step towards inevitable human destruction instead. When he arrived in these parts of the northern territories, he saw the anticipated subjects for his photography as relatively untouched by modernisation, a view that profoundly shaped the ways in which the subjects under study were framed. His statements of course reflect the aforementioned discourse of 'disappearing tribes' which had been a stock motif of salvage anthropology of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[43] Subsequently, he created a series of images that constructed the people of the northern plateaus in terms of enduring conditions of the societies under study and a narrative of a people without a history that could be understood in terms of surviving practices and customs that could be discerned from visual signifiers.[44] In his depiction of their dress, housing and various social rituals, subjects were in turn arrested in time, placed in an earlier period than their European counterparts in the ideology of progress (see Figure 3).

In part, this framed Denfield's pictorial work in Basutoland. Following the war Denfield relocated to South Africa and settled in East London in 1947. Though he continued with medical practice, his photographic career continued and indeed flourished with his display of photographs in art exhibitions or salons in different parts of the world. The notion of a 'primitive sanctuary' which he had promoted in his work on Nigeria was foundational in the series he created of Basutoland in the 1950s. Like the earlier images, they featured centrally the rural black subject but offered a more heightened sense of a rural idyll informed by the visual grammar of 'authentic Africanness'. To accomplish this Denfield took pains in posing his subjects and making use of numerous objects of material

41. J. Denfield, 'Recording Life in Nigeria', *Photography*, November–December 1946, 19–23.
42. J. Denfield, 'Pagan Sanctuary', *Today*, Autumn 1947, 53–56.
43. Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography*.
44. We argue that his work intersects with a much older tradition of photographing and writing about colonial subjects through the lens of 'difference' and 'primitiveness'. See for example, P. Landau, 'Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa', in P. Landau and D. Kaspin, eds, *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 141–171.

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Figure 3. Taken between 1944 and 1946, Denfield originally captioned this 'Nigeria, three-quarter profile, three quarter length portrait of adult female'.

culture – from blankets, to beads and bracelets, to calabashes, to producing photographs that would appear as both representations of the real or quotidian display and pictorial images that displayed his artistic skills.

Yet, for Denfield Basutoland offered more than a photographic experimental field in that his pilgrimages to Basutoland were avenues where he could retreat from modernity. Of his photography there Denfield stated:

> We are becoming over ambitious and discontent. The strain of life is increasing and so is the tendency to various neuroses, we are manufacturing them ourselves, but above all we are losing the art of finding our pleasures in the simple things of life.[45]

45. J. Denfield, 'Speech at "Beauty of Basutoland" exhibition', Joseph Denfield Collection, East London Library, 1953.

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Figure 4. Taken in the early 1950s, Denfield captioned this photograph 'Song of Basutoland'.

For Denfield, the mountains of Basutoland offered him a space to express a poetic sensibility, a refuge from rapid change where he could literally recreate in image distinct idylls. Thus he offered photographs 'where time vanishes in favour of a timelessness which encourages contemplation and the transformation of reality into poetry'.[46] In turn, his photographs conveyed the sense of stillness of place and subjects, both in imaging an *arrest* of time and in deploying *familiar* material objects to construct the rural idyll (see Figure 4).

It is this struggle with temporality as expressed in these two photographic projects which also characterised his salvage framework in his later photographic studies of East London. In reading this latter collection alongside his earlier ethnographic work, we draw attention to the negation of change that was figured partly through the mode of the solitary wanderer, no longer in the form of pilgrimages through the Basotho Mountains but

46. J. Gautrand, 'Looking at Others: Humanism and Neo-realism', in M. Frizot, ed., *A New History of Photography* (Koln: Konemann, 1994), 631.

through the seemingly 'empty' streets of East London. While he shifted his attention away from the black subject of the rural reserve towards East London's past figured through an urban landscape in the 1960s, Denfield failed to move beyond the 'salvage' paradigm that had informed his earlier studies and instead what endured was the 'tribalisation' of the subject. By offering a history through the photographs centred on 'activities', 'scenes' and 'figures', Denfield refigured East London's past in terms of a 'timeless' present, with an emphasis on unchanging conditions rather than a city in transition. Thus when the city underwent significant spatial and political configurations in the 1950s and 1960s, the sense of historical retreat that had informed his Basutoland studies and the critique of modernity that he had expressed with regards to 'dying' tribes would then be transposed to sites and structures in photographs of East London where modernist planning was configured visually as an instrument of ruin.

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Imagining the city in ruins

Denfield's photographs of Victorian East London were widely circulated in the city and appeared not only in *Pioneer Port* and in the permanent gallery constructed in the East London Museum, but were also published frequently in the *Daily Dispatch*. In this manner, they helped to constitute him as a public figure with an authoritative voice about the city's past. On the other hand, another collection that depicts East London's past which he took himself typifies, perhaps, a more obscure subjectivity and in turn provides a 'hidden transcript'[47] of change in the city. This is a series of images taken in the early to mid-1960s that depicts the city in ruins. Though the collection was never formally circulated and is devoid of the exegesis characteristic of his earlier work, it remained deeply intertwined with his vision in *Pioneer Port* by bringing into visibility in large part those sites and structures that pertained to East London's colonial history from the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed it is as if Denfield viewed and captured the city through the imagery of the glass negatives. Yet, much of the town appeared devoid of the sociality that characterised the earlier collection. Denfield moved through the city capturing dated buildings in the process of destruction and ruin. He thus appeared to be moving through different temporalities by directing the viewer's gaze away from the present towards the city's architectural indicators of the past in ways that negated the newness of the city, persistently concerned with the salience of form.

Three distinctive and at times overlapping motifs characterise the collection: periodisation, ruin and death. These can be discerned in the three forms of built environment that appear consistently, namely the 'historical' but functional site, the building in ruin or decay and the historical grave. Viewed through this framework, the sites evoke temporality in a chronological manner, suggesting a path towards decease, with burial as the culmination point. Collectively, therefore, the photographs provide an image of the city that contrasted with the grand narratives of development, growth and newness in this period by pointing towards the gradual decay and death of the city. Indeed, the covert aspect of such a transcript is brought into sharp relief through the depiction of each site in desertion. One imagines the silence that permeated through the location, reconstituting the sites under

47. J. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

study as subjects of neglect whose potential loss was to be mourned. The photographer's journey through different locales emerges as a lonely endeavour, an urgent task by an estranged figure to restore the city's history through its architecture and image.

Such an anxiety manifested in different characteristics of the collection. Firstly, Denfield was insistent on capturing each site from multiple angles (Figures 5 and 6). The Beach Hotel, for example, appears numerous times as it was captured from different perspectives as though to contain as much of its materiality as possible on camera. Incidentally, Denfield had written about the Beach Hotel in *Pioneer Port* and included two photographs, one near its completion in 1893 and another taken five years after its opening in 1899. These contrasted with the hotel now not only in desertion but partly in ruin. Denfield wrote of the Beach Hotel in the book as 'one of East London's most cherished landmarks',[48] thereby ascribing it with gravity with regards to the city's past. By turning his camera to its material traces as it existed in the 1960s, Denfield refigured the site through the realm of loss. This is reinforced in one photograph of the hotel taken while in the process of destruction. Evidently, Denfield visited the site on more than one occasion, suggesting a concern with the building as an object of historical process and the transience of its form.

This is suggested again in the persistence in directing one's gaze towards markers that betray a site's age and historicity, the second manner in which anxiety of loss was expressed. In numerous photographs, the plaques and inscribed dates on each building became the focal point to which the eye is drawn. One example is a photograph of a plaque on a nondescript building that indicates that its stone was laid in 1887. Others include photographs of the Carrington Building with the plaque 'Edworks'. Denfield did in fact write about the building in *Pioneer Port*, noting its significance for being one of East London's oldest buildings and having 'solid concrete walls which are simply indestructible'.[49] Note again the photographer's insistence on foregrounding the building's pastness, despite signs of commercial activity. In the first, the shops on the ground floor and right of the building suggest the building has in fact become a place of daily occupation (Figure 7) but this is negated in the second photograph, where the eye instead is drawn to the building's 'archaic' intricate architectural form and its date in the centre of the frame (Figure 8). It expresses Barthes' 'tense of fascination' where the object 'seems to be alive and yet it doesn't move; imperfect presence, imperfect death: neither oblivion nor resurrection; simply the exhausting lure of memory'.[50]

In addition to drawing attention to the each site's pastness, the third way in which one can discern anxiety of loss is in reading proximity between the photographer and the photographed. Patricia Hayes argues that proximity in photographs is one key aspect in aiding analysis of the 'the social distance between the photographer and the photographed'.[51] One example is a photograph of the Johnson & Johnson building which reveals a dilapidated site that appears uncomfortably in the sectional view provided (Figure 9). The viewer is directed to its upper part of the site thereby 'suspending' it in air, temporarily

48. Denfield, *Pioneer Port*, 64.
49. *Ibid*., 118.
50. Quoted in L. Buckley, 'Objects of Love and Decay: Colonial Photographs in a Postcolonial Archive', *Cultural Anthropology*, 20, 2 (2005), 256.
51. P. Hayes, 'Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography', *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, 33 (2007), 154.

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Figure 5. An image of the Beach Hotel while still in operation.

Figure 6. The Beach Hotel in the process of demolition.

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Figure 7. The Carrington Building in the centre of the frame.

removed from its surroundings. It is an image that traverses multiple temporalities, captured in the photographer's present time but in revealing the building's transient and processual character it is simultaneously endowed with pastness, removed in both time and space from the city's shifting topography. Similarly, he zoomed in closely to tombstones in a few photographs of graves to draw attention to the names of those buried. The dates reveal a temporal distance between the subjects and the photographer, a distance that was simultaneously emphasised and abridged by the latter's proximity. His proximity suggests an urgency to bring to memory the lives of those buried as if there was the threat of amnesia amongst his imagined viewers (Figure 10).

Here, one may draw parallels with the work of Jane Jacobs and her more aggressively reactionary work against 'master builder' Robert Moses in New York. Moses literally transformed the entire city after the 1930s through major infrastructure projects, including massive new bridges, multi-lane highways, high-rise residential and office precincts, as well as cultural centres and playgrounds. He famously claimed to that one cannot 'make an omelette without breaking some eggs' and heralded a new order that 'integrated the whole nation into a unified flow whose lifeblood was the automobile'. 'It conceived cities principally as obstructions to the flow of traffic', he argued, 'and as junkyards of sub-standard housing and decaying neighbourhoods from which America should be given a chance to escape'.[52] Jacobs

52. A. Merrifeld, *Metromarxiam: A Marxist Tale of the City* (London: Routledge, 2002), 162.

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Figure 8. Drawing the viewer's attention to the historicity of the building.

was stunned by the speed and impact of his interventions. But in an extraordinary rear-guard action, she mobilised against Robert Moses and his associates, launching protests, sit-in and media events against the destruction of Manhattan neighbourhoods in the 1950s and 1960s. Notable for her preoccupation with the 'death of the city',[53] her resistance culminated in

Figure 9. The Johnson & Johnson building in decay.

53. A. Flint, *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs took on New York's Master Builder and Transformed the American City* (New York: Random House, 2009).

Figure 10. The grave of an early settler.

part in her urban classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* which configured modernist planning as a machine that devours and destroys everything in its path, both physical and social. Similarly, New York-based academic Marshall Berman decried such changes, and reflected on how the modernity of an earlier era, of the 'old city boulevard' and the 'splendid 1930s apartments', created a much more humane and habitable city than the new world of flyovers and characterless apartments.[54] He noted that the 'price of

54. M. Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (London: Penguin, 1988).

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on-going and expanding modernity is the destruction not merely of traditional and the pre-modern institutions and environments', but – and here is the real tragedy – of '*everything most vital and beautiful in the modern world itself*'.[55]

Denfield's twin projects of visualising East London through its Victorian past and in a state of ruin took place parallel to the work of the New York academics. Jacob's volume was published in 1961, at virtually the same period that Denfield began circulating the restored prints from glass negatives in newspapers. Despite differences in form and scale of changes in their respective cities (and most likely no awareness of each other's work), Denfield's work on ruins reiterated the very same theme of death that permeated throughout Jacob's own. Indeed, one is tempted to read his photographs of historical graves as not simply another instance of reinstating a settler past but an imaging of the inevitable death which the city faced. Moreover, the uninhabited cityscape he presents to us almost assumes that the social damage has already been done, and that all that remains is for the bulldozers to wipe the slate clean and pull down the last vestiges of the Victorian city.

Jane Jacobs famously wrote that 'unstudied, unrespected, cities have served as sacrificial victims' to the power of the new modernist planners.[56] Denfield felt that his city was destined to be a victim too. Moreover, just as Berman wrote more overtly about the aesthetic appeal of the past that had been erased, Denfield regarded his prints of the reproduced images of Victorian East London as being of 'salon quality'[57] and indeed his first exhibition of the collection at the East London Museum was called East London's 'Early Days: A Photographic Salon of the Rise and Progress of the City of East London'. This invoked his experience as an art photographer who used to exhibit his Basutoland photographs in salons as objects of beauty. In this manner, thus, the deployment of the term 'salon' in reference to the Victorian points to ways in which the viewer, in a manner akin to Berman's musings, was persuaded to gaze at the pictured past partly through the aesthetic realm, where beauty was entangled with pastness. He articulated a similar sense of the great civility and humanity of the old Victorian settler modernity over its uncouth and brash replacement. To be sure, like Berman, Denfield did not reject urbanity in favour of rurality (how could he, he was a man of progress); he merely expressed his admiration for urban civility and the beauty of the public, pioneer city.

What Jacobs and Moses observed in New York soon spread through American cities like wildfire, magically integrating, as Robert Moses had predicted, the nation into a unified flow within a single historical moment. A similar process happened in South Africa, where many of the historic city centres in the country were radically transformed in the 1960s. The Foreshore project in Cape Town created a highly modernist city centre by stealing back acres of land from the sea.[58] In Johannesburg, enormous wealth in the 1960s simply transformed the city centre into a dense forest of multi-storey glass, iron and mortar buildings, many over 10 stories high.[59] Similar transformations occurred in Durban and

55. *Ibid.*, 299. Emphasis added.
56. Jacobs, *The Death and Life*, 25.
57. *Daily Dispatch*, 18 December 1962.
58. J. Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1997).
59. L. Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1998); J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); J. Robinson, *Ordinary Cities* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Port Elizabeth, where spaghetti freeways wrapped themselves around a new, rising city centre in the 1960s and 1970s. Denfield's fear of the same occurring in East London was not entirely unfounded; there was certainly enough evidence at home and abroad to show that the relentless machine of modernism could wipe away the core of any old city.[60] Denfield's photographic portfolios of the city anticipated that East London would be no different.

But the history of modernisation in East London changed course in the late 1960s because the apartheid project in the Eastern Cape shifted attention and resources to creating the Transkei and Ciskei homelands. Ethnic nationalism and ethnic modernisation required new villages, towns and industrial areas in rural areas. The state started to build massive townships outside East London and offered lucrative incentives for industry to relocate to new rural industrial parks situated in small towns like Dimbaza, Mdanstane, Butterworth and Umtata. The ease and speed with which the state shifted gear was greatly aided by the sub-suburban focus of the apartheid racial modernism model.[61] The logic of apartheid planning was driven by the consolidation of suburbs and townships along racial and ethnic lines. It was not essentially concerned with city centres, which developed more organically than the fringes of the cities. Thus, while suburban development and township developments continued at some speed in East London in the 1970, the city centre stagnated and even declined. As a result, the transformation that Denfield feared so much, the *urbicide*, the assumed murder of Victorian settler city, never fully materialised, leaving East London in a state of partial ruin, which is the way it has stayed.

Conclusion

In the 1960s Denfield developed two homologous sets of images of the city: the Victorian images of a newly forming East London at the turn of the twentieth century and a collection that depicted that same city centre in ruins. While the former persistently inscribed the city centre and its built environment as a key junction in the city's commercial and cultural life which drew together the city's elite, the latter collection suggested that much of this sociality had been lost in the 1960s. It is when taking into account the actual modernist planning of the 1950s and 1960s in the city that both collections emerge as a silent critique of rapid changes to which citizens were subjected. As apartheid planning introduced American-style suburbia and increased Afrikanerisation of the city, public intellectuals such Denfield and fellow Border historians sought means to reinstate the city's British heritage. Frequently, the Border historians wrote letters to the media bemoaning the loss of sites that had been established by British settlers. Similarly, Denfield too directed his camera towards the built environment that formed part of the city's colonial foundations. All actors were involved in different projects of 'salvaging' the city.

We have argued that for Denfield this formed part of a much longer trajectory of 'salvage anthropology' that had been most explicit in his earlier ethnographic work in Nigeria and Basutoland. Furthermore his photographic work intersected with the work of

60. P. Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).
61. Bank, *Home Spaces, Street Styles*, 60–88.

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the Mayers who reinstated the 'unchanging' lives of the Red migrants in locations despite their proximity to the city and participation in wage labour. In other words, parallel to the Mayers' reconstitution of the life of the black subject as cyclical, Denfield in turn 'recycled' old East London and re-presented it through circular urban rituals and further negated modernist planning of the 1960s. Instead, such change was refigured through the realm of loss, decay and death of the city. It is precisely this discourse of ruin that saturates the current debate about East London in a metropolitan municipality. Letters from citizens to the newspapers declare that the city is not ready for metropolitan status and that the ANC city council, through corruption and mismanagement, has effectively 'ruined the city'. Many protest that the suburbs and the beaches, which have historically been the heart of white East London, are in a state of terminal neglect, decay and ruin. The private pictures of Denfield in the 1960s have been replaced by a torrent of images and articles that denigrate the city council for its failure to deliver services, fix potholes, collected garbage, repair sewerage plants, upgrade electrical substations and generally prevent infrastructural and environmental damage to beaches, parks and nature reserves.

Arguably, the legacy of the 'arrested' development of apartheid modernist planning remains imprinted throughout the city centre's configuration. In the post-apartheid period East London is once again experiencing significant growth and investment because of the location of the regional political capital at Bhisho, half an hour's drive from the city, and because of the revival of the automotive sector led by Mercedes Benz. Thousands of government bureaucrats moved into the city after 1995, many taking up residence in the former white suburbs, like Amalinda or Beacon Bay, while the closure of the industrial decentralisation parks in the former homelands also led some industry to return to the city. Modest foreign investment, together with considerable state investment in the form of bureaucratic wages, government contracts and consultancies, has transformed many parts of the city, especially the leafy suburbs which now have their own business centres, retail malls and private hospitals. The increased size of the local consumer market has once again attracted national retailers back into East London. Massive new malls, like Hemmingway's, the largest in the Eastern Cape, are full of new national franchise stores that would not have looked at East London a decade and a half ago. However, between the revitalised industrial areas to the west and the flourishing suburbs to the east lies the decaying rump of the old city centre and the adjoining beachfront and esplanade, which appear as if they have been literally frozen in time, locked in a state of 'arrested development'.

In this context it is not surprising that old Victorian images of the city continue to circulate unopposed, recalling a time when the centre of the city was the focal point of public and civic life. It is also little wonder that the heritage industry in the city and the province has found it difficult to move beyond the colonial project of the museum and the settler histories it celebrates. As long as the hybrid and inchoate modernities of mid-century East London remain hidden and suppressed transcripts that have yet to be uncovered and revealed, this history will not be contested. The transcripts we can see point to an extraordinary convergence of cultural forms, desires and practices within and between population groups that forged in a common cultural sensibility and social embrace of modernity that has not yet been fully recognised. To discover those sensibilities would be to open the door to a possible metropolitan future.

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