

**Picturing Imperial Citizenship: the Colonial Office Visual Instruction
Committee's slide lecture series, 1902-45**

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Abstract

Citizenship has emerged as a key term in recent photography theory as way to assert the critical potential of images as tools of civic engagement and political action, insisting that photographs are a forceful language through which subjects and spectators articulate their claims to rights. Important work remains to be done, however, in tracing the historical context in which citizenship was produced as a photographable subject, and in analyzing how spectators learn to identify images of citizenship in the first place. By examining a mode of colonial education created in the British Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century that combined photography with geographical instruction, this dissertation contends that photography's relationship to citizenship is historically constructed, colonially inflected and pedagogically reinforced. Viewers must be *taught* to “see” citizenship in photographs through a pedagogical process that occurs both inside and outside of the literal classroom.

Taking as its case study the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee (COVIC)'s lantern slide lectures, a series of more than 3,000 photographs documenting the land and peoples of the empire that circulated in classrooms between 1902 and 1945, this dissertation traces the construction of imperial citizenship: an abstract, non-legal category of belonging used as both a strategy of colonial management and, conversely, for anti-colonial critique. By reading the COVIC lecture texts against the photographs, the dissertation looks for slippages between what COVIC claimed to do and the meanings that viewers may have created from the photographs' visual evidence. Putting the COVIC images in conversation with concurrent photographic projects—particularly

representations of insurrection, immigration and indentured labour in the empire—I argue the COVIC archive is a site where viewers could contest the empire’s discourses of inequality through a critical visual literacy, reading the photographs as moments when the promises of imperial citizenship were withheld.

While the dissertation finds that photographs are not capable of guaranteeing the rights of citizens, they do offer spectators the opportunity to contest the logic that separates citizens from non-citizens, and to insist on recognizing and making claims for those subjects otherwise obscured within legal framings of citizenship.

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Introduction: Citizenship in and out of sight

At first, the photograph seems to show nothing of interest: in a sparse field of grass, a lone man is stretched out on the ground, seemingly asleep (see Appendix, Figure 1). Behind him, a line of trees dot the horizon, interrupted by several low, utilitarian buildings, a streetlamp and a telephone pole. On the right, another figure is just barely discernible in the background, seated at a picnic table, reading a book. To the left, a playground sits empty of children. Printed in black and white, it is difficult to tell what season we are looking at in the photograph, but the figure's outfit—jeans and a t-shirt, laced-up leather boots and a thin cotton jacket—and his position, lying on the earth, suggest a warm spring day. The grass, trimmed but dry in several places, is not the lush ground of a private garden, but the efficiently maintained space of a public park. Though the man is alone, and sleeping in public, he does not seem there out of necessity or homelessness, but by choice. A small plastic sack, about the size of a lunch bag, is clutched in his right hand, outstretched on the ground, while his left hand gingerly supports a pair of glasses balanced on his stomach.

This seems to be an image documenting nothing, a non-place and non-event in the urban landscape. But the title of Jeff Wall's 1996 photograph, *Citizen*, suddenly changes what it is I think I see. I look again, this time searching for clues that would help me recognize this as a photograph of citizenship. If this man is a citizen, a citizen of where? Though he reads as white, and the setting as vaguely North American (one of the trees in the background is unmistakably a palm tree), it is otherwise impossible to tell where the photograph was shot. A citizen when? The image was made in 1996, but its lack of colour and Wall's penchant for re-staging canonical images from art history makes me

wonder if I have seen this scene before. A citizen how? When I imagine a photograph of citizens, I picture them engaged in active, even violent, forms of protest and resistance: of Susan Meiselas's photograph of a guerilla fighter about to launch a Molotov cocktail in Nicaragua in 1979, or of Charles Moore's image of protestors taunting and confronting police in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. The man in Wall's photograph, however, is in a park rather than on the streets, inactive and unconscious: an everyman on a lunch break from his office job who decided to take a nap. Instead of action, it is leisure, and a feeling of safety in a public space—so much so that one is willing to fall asleep, to become vulnerable to others—that constitutes citizenship in Wall's image.¹ His citizenship is not defined by national borders, nor by his passport, both invisible to the viewer, but by his freedom to choose to sleep in public and by our willingness as viewers to recognize him as a citizen.

Citizenship—as a status, a claim, a legal category, a tool of governmentality, and an ideal—seems to lie just beyond our peripheral vision, coming in and out of view as an object of study in disciplines as diverse as education, geography, legal studies, history, postcolonial studies, and, more recently, the history and theory of photography. As a status that must be conferred relationally, by other citizens or by a sovereign, citizenship is invisible, difficult to disentangle from other categories of belonging, and taken up by a wide range of actors to achieve oppositional aims. Citizenship is used to justify tools of control and surveillance employed by the state to manage the population; in liberalist discourses of social improvement through welfare and education; and as a key term for

¹ Here I borrow from Ariella Azoulay's reading of Wall's photograph, in relation to the images of protestors sleeping in public places in the Occupy Wall Street movement. See Thomas Keenan and Ariella Azoulay, "Can Photographs Claim Rights?", The Photographic Universe II conference, The New School for Social Research, New York, April 10-11, 2013, <http://vimeo.com/64313233>, accessed Feb. 4, 2014.

contesting these very practices by their critics (in postcolonial studies, cultural criticism and photography theory, in particular).² Given how difficult it is to conjure a consistent vision of the citizen, and how often scholars struggle to establish a more precise definition of citizenship, it seems strange that the past decade has seen a whole body of research emerge that tries to link photography—an inherently visual medium—with the discourses and practices of citizenship: research that not only makes a case for photography’s role in defining citizenship in the twentieth century, but argues there is something unique that photography shows us about this often invisible category of belonging.³

This disparity between the difficulty pinning down the definition of citizenship and scholars’ sudden desire to “see” it in photographs raises questions about the limits of photographic representation in securing and communicating identities, and about how viewers come to recognize subjects as fellow citizens despite these limitations. A rich body of critical scholarship has explored the processes through which categorical differences (such as race, class, gender and sexuality) were visualized and solidified

² See Lynn Staeheli’s excellent overview of the difficulties in defining citizenship in “Political geography: where’s citizenship?” *Progress in Human Geography* 35.3 (Winter 2011): 393-400. See also Btihaj Ajana, “Biometric citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies*, 16.7 (2012): 851-870; Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Nikolas Rose, “Governing ‘advanced’ liberal democracies” in Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose, eds. *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Self-Government* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996): 37-64; and Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas, “Biological citizenship” in Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier, eds., *Global Assemblages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

³ See Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2008) and *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2012); Erina Duganne, Holly Edwards and Mark Reinhardt, *Beautiful Suffering: Photography and the Traffic in Pain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); *The Human Snapshot*, Thomas Keenan and Tirdad Zolghadr, eds. (New York: Sternberg Press, 2013); Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Thy Phu, *Picturing Model Citizens: Civility in Asian American Visual Culture* (Temple University Press, 2012); Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Jennifer E. Telesca, “Preface: What Is Visual Citizenship?” *Humanity* 4.3 (Winter 2013): 339-343.

through photographic representations in the twentieth century, but more attention needs to be paid to how spectators come to identify and empathize with subjects in spite and in excess of these socially constructed distinctions.⁴ In the colonial context—an historical moment in which race was legitimated as a scientific, as well as social, political and legal, category—, thinking about how citizenship was recognized by spectators seems particularly generative because it opens up the possibility of a kind of disobedient gaze on the part of the viewer.⁵ It foregrounds a mode of looking that refuses the meanings imposed on photographs by the colonial state and insists on activating the photographic evidence these images offer for resistant and oppositional political purposes: resistant readings that may have been harnessed by the historical viewers of these colonial photographs, and that can continue to be recuperated and activated in the present.

Recent photography scholarship, including work by Ariella Azoulay, Tina M. Campt, Thy Phu, Leigh Raiford and Sharon Sliwinski, has examined the various things that spectators *do* with photographs to make political claims for the citizens they represent.⁶ This work has been vital in asserting photography's critical potential as a tool

⁴ See Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: museums, material culture, and popular imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography Along the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2004); Carol Williams, *Framing the West: Race, Gender and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵ I hesitate to use the term “colonial context” here because of its tendency to erase the differences in the ways that colonial and imperial domination were exercised and realized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as though all forms of colonial oppression operated in the same ways and at the same time. Despite these reservations, I think it is useful to stress the transnational nature of colonial discourses and practices, especially as they resonate with the global or universal promises of photographic representation and of citizenship. Throughout the dissertation, I use “colonial context” to consider the particular ways that British colonialism operated over the long nineteenth century, a period that coincides with the legal abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833, the invention of photography in 1839 and the passing of the first suffrage laws in 1918.

⁶ See Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography and Civil Imagination*; Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Phu, *Picturing Model Citizens*; Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*; and Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera*.

of civic engagement and political action, insisting that images are a forceful language through which the claims to rights are articulated. Important work remains to be done, however, on how spectators learn how to identify photographs of citizenship in the first place: how they move from seeing an image, to recognizing its subjects as fellow, if distant, citizens. This process is not an inevitable or natural one: it is historically constructed and culturally specific. The specificities of this process need to be considered in our studies of visual citizenship because they challenge the dual promises of universality offered by photography and by modern citizenship. By asking how spectators come to understand photographs of subjects as photographs of citizens, I ask that we contend with the limits of photographic representation in communicating identity (one could argue that the universal promise of photographic legibility is one of the hallmarks of twentieth century visual culture, epitomized by Edward Steichen's 1955 exhibition, *The Family of Man*) and pay attention to the kinds of subjects that are obscured from the frame of citizenship in order for other subjects to emerge as recognizable citizens. The wager of this dissertation is that photography's relationship to citizenship is historically constructed and pedagogically reinforced. Viewers must be *taught* to "see" citizenship in photographs through a lengthy and repeated pedagogical process that occurs both inside and outside of the literal classroom.

Here, I am interested in pedagogy not just as a science of knowledge transmission that takes place in the explicitly instructive space of the school, but as a form of cultural politics where identifications are constructed, solidified and contested.⁷ Rather than

⁷ See, for instance, Deborah Britzman, *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects: Toward a Psychoanalytic Inquiry of Learning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 30th edition, 1970/2000); Henry A. Giroux, "Public Pedagogy as Cultural Politics: Stuart Hall and the 'Crisis' of Culture," *Without Guarantees: In Honor of*

seeing schools as instruments of state ideology where people are taught to subject themselves to rule, as Louis Althusser famously argued, I want to think about pedagogy as an intersubjective process that is always unpredictable, open to disruption by students and teachers despite the state's efforts at uniformity.⁸ For theorists such as Deborah Britzman, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Stuart Hall, Roger I. Simon and others, pedagogy is an aesthetic event, one that is inherently social, affective, and sensorial. As Britzman explains, education is a psychic event that takes place in moments of interference between teacher and student, often through "the intimate staging of attention, affection, surprise and chance."⁹ Pedagogy, whether it emerges as a tool of state control or as a project of universal humanism (projects that are not necessarily mutually exclusive), is therefore not a closed system that can be completely controlled by any one actor. Much like the event of photography, it is marked by contingency, structured by the conscious and unconscious choices of its participants.¹⁰ This means that, like instrumental photography projects produced by the state, pedagogical processes are open for critique and re-instrumentalization by the very populations they are meant to control. This is close to what Henry Giroux, building on the work of Stuart Hall, suggests when he states that pedagogy is the outcome of struggles over representations, identifications and forms of agency. Critical public pedagogy aims to show how notions of difference, civic responsibility, community and belonging are produced in particular historical and

Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy et. al., eds. (New York: Verso, 2000): 134-147; Brian Goldfarb, *Visual Pedagogy: Media Cultures in and beyond the classroom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Tyson Edward Lewis, "Education in the Realm of the Senses: Understanding Paulo Freire's Aesthetic Unconscious through Jacques Rancière," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43 (2) 2009: 285-299.

⁸ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971): 121-176.

⁹ Britzman 1.

¹⁰ For more on the "event of photography," see Ariella Azoulay, "Photography: the Ontological Question," *Maft'e'akh* 2 (2011), 65-80.

discursive sites, institutions and practices.¹¹ To critically examine the role that photographs play in this struggle is to “inquire into the conditions of the possibility of agency,” and to question how and where citizenship emerges as both a teachable and photographable subject.¹²

To think about the conditions that make citizenship possible as a subject of photography, this dissertation examines a little-studied series of lanternslide presentations produced by the British government’s Colonial Office beginning in 1902. Organized by the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee (COVIC) and advertised as a set of geography lectures for colonial and English schoolchildren, the COVIC lectures used more than 3,000 photographic lanternslides and seven textbooks to describe the British Empire to its student viewers in classrooms all over the world from 1907 to 1945. Designed to “illustrat[e] life in the different parts of the British Empire, as an educational means of strengthening the feeling of Imperial unity and citizenship,” the COVIC project not only attempted to capture the empire and its people, but to build a photographic catalogue of what it meant to look and feel like an imperial citizen.¹³ Though there are no sleeping figures pictured in the COVIC lectures, the series shares with Wall’s photograph an interest in trying to represent the behaviours and affects that permit a subject to enter into the community of citizenry. The COVIC photographs picture people from all over the empire in the midst of their daily activities: working, shopping, farming, traveling, raising children and going to school (Figs. 2-3). The COVIC textbooks, read aloud by the classroom teacher, directed students on how to understand the hundreds of images

¹¹ Giroux 140.

¹² Giroux 135.

¹³ Michael E Sadler, “Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902,” CO 885/8/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London, 1.

projected onto the screen by a magic lantern, stressing the differences between the peoples and cultures of England, India, Canada, Australia, Africa, the West Indies and “the Sea Road to the East” (Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong) while also insisting on their membership in the invisible community of imperial citizenship. Notions of civic duty and responsibility were integral to the project’s goals. As Michael E. Sadler, director of the department of Special Inquiries and Reports at the Board of Education, wrote in his proposal for the COVIC project in 1902, “The object in view is to give *every citizen of the Empire* an opportunity of seeing what the different parts of the Empire are like... and of learning what duties its possession entails.”¹⁴ From its inception, the very premise of the COVIC project brought together the discourses of imperialism, education and photographic representation as concomitant forces in the making of imperial citizens.

The COVIC project has so far received little academic attention, appearing only in histories of British imperialism and geographic education, and has yet to be formally analyzed from the perspectives of art history and visual culture.¹⁵ This is perhaps because no surviving set of the lanternslides is known to exist, forcing scholars who want to examine the COVIC images to reconstruct the lectures from the various archives in which the committee’s materials are now stored, sorting through the more than 7,600 images produced for the project in an effort to match them up with the slide lists in the printed textbooks and recreate the original presentation of 3,000 slides. My dissertation

¹⁴ Sadler 2, emphasis added.

¹⁵ John M. MacKenzie’s *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and James R. Ryan’s *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) are the only two studies to directly address the COVIC project, from the perspectives of history and geography, respectively.

therefore makes a unique contribution to the literature about the Colonial Office's use of photography as a mode of visual education by aggregating this material into a cohesive case study, while also providing a visual analysis of the images. I trace how the COVIC photographs were produced, but also consider how they were circulated and interpreted by the public, asking how they might be relevant to contemporary studies of art history, photography theory, citizenship studies and visual culture. Rather than reading the COVIC images as illustrations of the textbooks' rhetoric, I treat the committee's photographs as rich, generative texts of their own: aesthetic lessons in imperial belonging and exclusion that may have communicated much more than the lecture texts instructed viewers to see. Such a reading emphasizes the COVIC lectures as an aesthetic, as well as didactic, method of colonial education that was convincing not just as an ideological message, but because it offered a pleasurable and collective viewing experience.

By reconstructing COVIC's photographic archive of imperial citizenship and emphasizing the aesthetic, affective dimensions of viewing the lectures, my dissertation foregrounds what Sukanya Banerjee calls the "extralegal life of citizenship," paying attention to the ways that citizenship was pictured and negotiated through photography before it was guaranteed by law.¹⁶ It asks how citizenship was seen to be guaranteed through the making, circulation and viewing of photographs at a moment when it was not yet enshrined in legal code. In focusing on COVIC, and on the representational modes of imperial citizenship, I want to suggest that our understanding of the modern citizen as a photographable subject emerged not as a critique or dismantling of British colonialism, but as a complicit and integral part of colonial consolidation: a process that brought together visual culture, immigration and labour laws, education and the rhetoric of

¹⁶ Banerjee 7.

citizenship as interweaving technologies for managing the empire's population at the beginning of the twentieth century. As an abstract, universal ideal, imperial citizenship promised equality to all subjects of the British Empire, a promise underwritten through a series of state-produced photographic representations. In practice, however, this citizenship was always partial, precarious and doubled: constantly contradicted by colonial decrees, state education initiatives, government immigration policies, and transnational labour laws. Building on economist T.H. Marshall's provocative argument that after the Second World War, citizenship in the United Kingdom has "become, in certain respects, the architect of legitimate social inequality," I argue that photographic citizenship likewise emerged as a way to manage and maintain the inequalities of colonial rule at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁷

This is not to say that photographs of citizens cannot be re-instrumentalized by viewers for critical or political aims, or that photographs of citizens are only ever tools of imperialist propaganda or colonial management. Instead, I want to draw out how the legacies of colonialism shape contemporary understandings of how photographs represent citizenship. Conjuring the spectre of colonialism allows the uneven and unequal functioning of citizenship to come more clearly into view, prompting us to address viewers' complicity in these structures of inequality. It also urges us to consider which (non-)citizens might be made invisible, obscured from public view, when we too easily assume that citizenship is a legible, universally recognizable subject in photography.

My study of the COVIC project therefore contributes to contemporary discussions of photography and citizenship by stressing the medium's use as a technology of colonial

¹⁷ T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950) 7.

government, while also underscoring the role pedagogy plays in processes of photographic (mis)recognition. Imperial citizenship, as it was defined by the COVIC lectures, was a category of belonging premised on the need for everyday subjects to be seen and recognized as citizens by distant spectators; it therefore prioritized representations of everyday life over the “big events” of history. But without a clear source of trauma that separates victim populations from their perpetrators, or a state-made disaster that distinguishes refugees from citizens, COVIC’s photographs also made imperial citizenship difficult to “see.” Since it was not reliant on the visual markers of race, class or gender for its identification, imperial citizenship had to be conferred by other British or colonial subjects through a process of mutual recognition. The conditions of this recognition were not strictly visual but also affective: imperial citizenship was something that viewers had to be taught to see, to feel, and to recognize. This recognition was often difficult to puzzle out, especially in colonies where the population was largely non-white and did not immediately, visibly conform to stereotypical expectations of what an ideal British citizen looks like. Moreover, the spaces in which viewers encountered the COVIC photographs—through repeated, narrative presentations, in public and private venues, and in highly affective, collective environments—were spaces of pedagogical encounter. The didactic nature of these spaces needs to be addressed, alongside the content of the COVIC images, if we are to think seriously about how photography has operated in both state-sponsored and critical forms of pedagogy, and how citizenship has both been both constructed by and elided in photographic representation. If COVIC is any indication, the process through which viewers learn to recognize citizenship in photographs is a halting, recursive practice, requiring repetition, supplementation with

texts and appeals to the viewer's imaginative faculties. And, like most experiences of learning, it is a practice that prompts confusion, resentment and dependence alongside feelings of identification, empathy and belonging. Perhaps most importantly, because it is learned, recognizing citizens in photographs is a practice open to intervention and contestation by students and viewers, who might insist on seeing citizens where the state would like to represent only subjects.

The pedagogical structure of the COVIC lectures raises larger questions about the relationship between photography, education and citizenship: What are the pedagogical dimensions of looking at photographs? How do viewers learn to view, relate to and negotiate photographic depictions of themselves and others? Why has the pedagogical dimension of looking at photographs received so little attention in theories of visual citizenship? Through a sustained investigation of one case study, this dissertation attempts to answer some of these questions, drawing on the genealogy of citizenship in social and political thought, methodologies from the history of photography and ideas from critical public pedagogy to examine the COVIC project. The renewed interest in citizenship in contemporary photography theory brings together the universalism promised by the language of rights claims and the accessible visual language promised by the camera. But the way the COVIC project cobbles together imperial citizenship through photographs and texts shows that photography's relationship to citizenship is a precarious, historically constructed one. To put it in terms recently used by cultural geographer Lynn Staeheli, if "citizenship is always a fragmented status" then its photographic representation is equally tenuous.¹⁸ We can only "see" citizenship in photographs at particular places and moments in time, and even then we need to be taught

¹⁸ Staeheli 397.

to see it. If this is the case, then when viewers draw on the language of citizenship to understand and activate photographs for political claims, it is an invested move: one that implicitly draws on pedagogical models, even as it simultaneously critiques forms of state education. As an archival researcher looking for citizenship in the COVIC archive, this dissertation is also a pedagogical project. I want to “see” and help others to see citizens in the COVIC material, especially in places where they are not immediately visible, because this process of recognition casts doubt on the assumptions that colonial photographs are always instruments of hegemonic power, that identities can ever be secured through visual representation, or that a pleasurable affective engagement with an image of another subject is only indulgent, insufficient or apolitical. The production, circulation and archiving of the COVIC project demonstrates that viewers can find political agency and belonging in the promises of photographic citizenship even as that same rhetoric is used to limit their sovereignty.

Imperial citizenship as a technology of government

If learning to see citizenship in photographs is a difficult, protracted process, it is perhaps in part because pinning down the definition of citizenship in language is an equally fraught project, one that has long preoccupied philosophers, political theorists and geographers. Though it seems like well-tread, even clichéd, territory to return to the ideas of Greek philosophers and Enlightenment thinkers in a project about twentieth century photography, in the context of the British Empire, where citizenship laws were not passed until after the Second World War, these political theories are essential to understanding how imperial citizenship was seen to operate before it was legally

codified. Unlike the United States and France, which had passed laws to define and guarantee the rights of citizens by the end of the nineteenth century, the United Kingdom's first citizenship laws only emerged with the passing of the British Nationality Act of 1948. In the place of citizenship, the British Empire used an ambiguous "British subject" status that extended a form belonging to all people born in a territory under the sovereignty of the Crown, but guaranteed them few rights. According to British subject law, all peoples born in the empire were subject to the laws and policies adopted by the British government (particularly those mandated by the Foreign Office, Colonial Office and India Office), which enforced strict controls over land ownership, the extraction of resources, military defenses and imperial trade and commerce. But British subjecthood also allowed limited self-sovereignty in the areas of religion, cultural practices and language, especially in the colonies that had an intermediary ruler, such as the British Raj in India, who could set some domestic policies separately from the colonial government. Citizenship in the British Empire was therefore nothing but an idea and political philosophy—much discussed, represented and debated, but with no legal guarantors—until 1947, when Canada passed its first citizenship laws.¹⁹

To examine imperial citizenship in the British Empire before the Second World War is therefore to study how citizenship was imagined, pictured and circulated rather than studying official government policies, suffrage or nationality law. Because it aimed to encompass people living in more than a quarter of the globe, rather than being defined

¹⁹ See Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*; Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Rieko Karatani, *Defining British Citizenship: Empire, Commonwealth and Modern Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); and David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

by the borders of a nation-state, it also could not be determined by place of residence alone: imperial citizenship had to accommodate the constant circulation of bodies that kept the empire running and profitable. In other words, imperial citizenship was not a legal or civic status in need of illustration, but a mode of belonging constituted by its very representation. The COVIC lectures and photographs are therefore rich deposits of how imperial citizenship was negotiated through images and texts at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their production, circulation and reception suggest that photography—as the preeminent mode of visual representation in the modern colonial era—was vital to this process.

Locating the “when” of imperial citizenship is also difficult. As a term, Banerjee has charted its emergence as far back as early Victorian literature, but imperial citizenship was also inflected with earlier political philosophies, borrowing ideas from figures as diverse as Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others.²⁰ As Banerjee explains, by preserving a sovereign ruler to whom all subjects must pledge allegiance to maintain their status as member of the political community, imperial citizenship was a paradoxical discourse that “argue[d] for formal equality only on the basis of allegiance to the monarch, imbricating a post-Enlightenment discourse of liberal citizenship with a discrepant familial loyalty.”²¹ It therefore had to reach beyond the nationalist discourses used by the Americans and the French and return to pre-modern thinking to constitute a coherent and legible imperial citizenry. Greek philosophers, who imagined citizenship as a status that carried with it both rights as well as duties to the greater political community, were useful in imagining a form of transnational citizenship

²⁰ Banerjee.

²¹ Banerjee 27.

that was defined by one's relations with others and not by one's place of residence. Aristotle's thinking, in particular, stresses the importance of the public nature of citizenship, defining citizenship as the subject's capacity to give judgment and to hold public office: requirements that implicitly limited citizenship to land-owning men (women, who functioned only in the private sphere, were automatically disqualified, as were slaves and workers, who had no time to serve in public office).²² The civic duty to fulfil public office was paired with the duty to submit oneself to the rule of others in Aristotle's thinking: a good citizen is a man who both rules and *is ruled* well, exercising his good judgment and even disregarding his personal desires to obey the law of his fellow rulers when it benefits the common good.²³ Imperial citizenship implicitly borrows from Aristotle's thinking by emphasizing that citizenship is constituted by both the exercise of and submission to sovereignty, insisting that British subjects will be guaranteed equal rights so long as they swear allegiance to the monarch. Enlightenment-era terminology, such as the social contract, as well as Hobbes's championing of monarchic sovereignty as the most effective form of rule for the commonwealth, also appears in popular conceptions of imperial citizenship, as a way of folding agency and rationality into a model that was otherwise defined by subjects' blind loyalty to the king.²⁴ Imperial citizens had to be willing citizens, subjects who had seen that another form of political rule—epitomized by American constitutional democracy—was possible, but had *chosen* to remain under a monarchy.

²² Aristotle, *Politics*, trans Ernest Barker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 169.

²³ Aristotle, 181.

²⁴ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Book 1" of *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Thomas Hobbes, "Of Commonwealth," *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin, 1985). Both Hobbes and Rousseau used models of the social contract in their writing about sovereignty, arriving—albeit through quite different arguments—at theories of governance in which subjects optimize their interests by giving over some of their natural, individual freedoms to one another through a social contract that also produces an absolute sovereign.

While these dimensions of imperial citizenship might make it seem anachronistic, a kind of holdover from Romantic thinking used to justify the continuation of monarchic rule, other aspects are premonitory, foreshadowing post-war conceptions of liberal citizenship and more recent models of global citizenship. As Banerjee notes, by promising a universal equality to subjects whose daily lives were actually structured by the unequal application of the law and an uneven distribution of wealth, the effects of imperial citizenship were always double and partial.²⁵ It was not unusual, for instance, for imperial citizens, who were promised free and easy travel to any of the empire's holdings, to find themselves unwelcome strangers when they attempted to enter the dominions and settler colonies, which used restrictive, racially-motivated immigration policies to consolidate a homogeneous national culture (an occurrence I chart in more detail in chapter two). This disjuncture between the promises of imperial citizenship and the realities of life in the empire—conditions that point to the precarity of citizenship as a guarantor of equality—was not an accident or oversight of colonial rule, but one of its foundational logics. The empire's population would tolerate some of the inequalities of the colonial system (however temporarily or strategically) so long as the promise of the equality of citizenship was recognized, even rhetorically, by the colonial state. As Marshall argues, this double standard of citizenship would become a defining feature of capitalism and the emergence of the welfare state in Britain after 1945. For Marshall, the social rights of citizenship enshrined in the welfare state emerged as a tool “necessary to the maintenance of that particular form of inequality” brought about by capitalism.²⁶ The COVIC lectures were produced before capitalism became the dominant economic mode

²⁵ Banerjee 21.

²⁶ Marshall 20.

in the United Kingdom and its colonies, but their construction of imperial citizenship set the stage for the formulation of a liberal democratic citizenship on the same uneven terms. Both imperial citizenship and liberal democratic citizenship offer subjects a set of imaginary, rhetorical rights that do not have to be guaranteed through economic or political rights.

Much like imperial citizenship, political scientist Barbara Cruikshank has shown that democratic citizenship emerges as a technology of government in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: a way of securing the voluntary compliance of subjects within a liberal and capitalist paradigm without the explicit threat of state violence or overt forms of control. “My argument is that citizens and subjects are not opposites,” Cruikshank writes, “that citizens are made and therefore subject to power even as they become citizens”²⁷ Indentured labour was one phenomenon in the British Empire where this coercive yet voluntary force of citizenship was most clearly felt. As I chart in chapter three, foreign and indentured workers in the empire had contractually agreed to their conditions and terms of work: they were rhetorically participating in a form of the social contract, even if the effects of this agreement resembled the slavery practices of the previous century. For Cruikshank, governance through the rhetoric of citizenship is effective because it combines agency with submission to a sovereign power, while also instilling the importance of self-sufficiency at the level of each individual citizen. Democratic governance works by “(re)produc[ing] citizens who are capable of governing themselves, of acting in their own interests and in solidarity with others. Citizens are not

²⁷ Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) 20.

born; they are made.”²⁸ As a precursor to these formations, imperial citizenship appears in the COVIC lanternslide lectures as a technology of colonial governance which, alongside education initiatives and photographic archives, were used to produce cooperative, self-governing imperial subjects.

Teaching imperial citizenship

If, following Cruikshank, citizens are made rather than born, it is unsurprising that education has played a central role in the theorization of modern citizenship. The COVIC project, which was designed for, implemented in and often represented schools, was an explicit attempt to use education as a tool of imperial management, but it also drew on earlier fantasies about how education might be used to train future citizens. Though the notion of childhood as a special period in life that should be protected from the ills of a society was a distinctly Victorian invention, children still appear in many political and philosophical models of citizenship. For Aristotle, children were potential citizens, needing to be realized through their entry into adulthood: “(Nor yet are children citizens in an unqualified sense, like grown men; children can be called citizens only in a hypothetical sense: the *are* citizens, but incomplete ones).”²⁹ If Aristotle’s model of citizenship was an individualistic one that was not concerned with social engineering or state policy—citizens were expected to arise naturally, as men exercised their inherent moral judgment—then Rousseau was more explicit about how citizens could be developed through education, particularly in his writing about childhood development. His 1762 treatise *Emile, or On Education*, which argued for the importance of education

²⁸ Cruikshank 3.

²⁹ Aristotle 184.

in the development of all areas of a citizen's life, was a foundational influence in the creation of a national education system in the French Revolution, and also achieved a kind of renaissance in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century British culture when it was cited in the establishment of the first mandatory public schools. Rousseau's writing, which insisted that a social education (where students learned together, outside of the home) would lead to the child's proper moral and rational development, helped to intertwine the technologies of citizenship with the technologies of state education. "The virtuous citizen [for Rousseau] is the one who experiences the [intersubjective bonds of union and love and respect] as his or her own desires, aspirations and guilt, and thus evinces the capacity for self-policing," pedagogical theorist James Donald explains.³⁰ Rousseau's approach to education in many ways foreshadowed Michel Foucault's writing on the transition from a disciplinary society (where the management of human bodies is maintained through firm rules and institutions) and toward what Gilles Deleuze called the society of control (where human behaviour is managed through the "flexible and fluctuating networks" of capitalism, democracy and self-regulation).³¹ To produce good citizens, according to Rousseau's theories, required encouraging an affective attachment between the student and the greater political community that he would one day join: affective attachments that would tacitly shape the citizen's behaviour while allowing him to feel he was acting of his own free will.³²

³⁰ James Donald, *Sentimental Education: Schooling, Popular Culture and the Regulation of Liberty* (New York, Verso, 1992) 7.

³¹ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. I: The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998) and Giorgio Agamben, *What Is An Apparatus? And other Essays*, David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

³² Rousseau's model citizen, like that of Aristotle, was implicitly male, allowing him access to the public sphere.

The desires, aspirations, and other affective responses that Rousseau considered important to an Enlightenment-era education became central to colonial education practices, which aimed to secure the hearts and minds of imperial subjects. To mould imperial citizens was to not just encourage students' moral development, but to initiate a new set of sympathies designed to separate them from their "original" cultural and familial attachments and ensure their continued loyalty to the sovereign state. As anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has shown, colonial archives are full of policies, plans and memoranda that obsess over interracial marriage, child-rearing practices and the need for a uniform education system.³³ Public schools—which enforced which language was spoken, how students dressed and how they carried themselves publicly—were an antidote to the familial attachments formed in the intimate sphere of the family home: a site where race seemed to be naturally learned by the empire's subjects. For Stoler, the centrality of education and children in colonial paperwork points to the instability of race and citizenship as categories of belonging. Colonial bureaucrats' constant worrying about and revision of educational practices are evidence of attempts at consolidating and defining these identities, "underscor[ing] which elements of difference were considered necessary to teach" to children to police the boundaries of imperial citizenship.³⁴ As Stoler writes, colonial policy makers became obsessed with analyzing how children learned the attributes that would give them access to being "European" rather than "native" and whether it might be possible for European-born children to "slip" into

³³ See Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Ann Laura Stoler, ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); and Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

³⁴ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 112.

another racial or class category if their education was neglected. For the officials who set colonial education policy, questions of “How do children learn which social categories are salient? How do they learn to attend to the politically relevant inclusions and exclusions that shape the imagined communities in which adults live?” were central to moulding future citizens.³⁵ Much like immigration policies throughout the empire, *which differences* were seen to matter in determining imperial citizenship constantly changed depending on the political exigencies of the moment. These changes were reflected in colonial education policies and in the visual aids used in schools. The transition from using maps to teach students about what defined imperial belonging, to employing photographs of human subjects signals a switch in emphasis, from the territorial borders of geographic space, to experiences of recognition and sympathetic identification between individual subjects.

The changeability of which differences were salient to determining imperial citizenship points to its flexibility as a category and undermines the assumption that colonial ideologies are all-encompassing or omnipotent forces of population control. As the learning outcomes of an education in imperial citizenship changed in governmental paperwork, they were also challenged, negotiated and refuted by students and parents. As Staeheli argues,

The school, thus, extends beyond the physical structure to encompass cultural and political practices by which citizens-in-the making are managed, disciplined, and enabled...It is therefore instructive to broaden the discussion to think about the ways in which power is used in a pedagogical sense in the formation of governable citizens, but also in the ways that citizens enact, co-construct and contest governing practices.³⁶

³⁵ Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, 137.

³⁶ Staeheli 395-96.

The COVIC photographs provide visual evidence of both of these forces in colonial education: attempts by the British government to shape future citizens through schooling, and the forms of resistance enacted by students.

Residential schools in Canada, Australia and New Zealand were the most obvious and most violent sites of citizen formation in the British Empire, places where students were literally separated from their indigenous cultures and communities and taught the characteristics salient to making them productive, English-speaking colonial citizens. In his reading of a photograph of a football team lined up outside a residential school in Saskatchewan in 1897, curator Gerald McMaster writes about the transformational function of these spaces, and about the possibilities for resistance within them. He writes, “These boys represented the colonial experiment, a type of colonial alchemy: transforming the savage into a civilized human being. Yet somehow their resistance remains visible.”³⁷ Though the COVIC lectures are inarguably about such sites of colonial alchemy in the empire, residential schools rarely appear as subjects of the photographs. Instead, traces of the residential school system seep into many of the photographs in the lectures, almost by accident, and I find myself reading the images for clues of this insidious form of citizenship training, as well as resistance to it. In one of the only photographs of an indigenous family that appears in the COVIC lectures on Canada (an obfuscation I discuss in more detail in chapter two), a woman is seen leading a child down a path, away from their home in the background and towards the camera (Fig. 4).

The photograph, titled *Shack or fishing hut on the White River. Near an Indian encampment. Squaw and small Indian boy. 744 miles from Montreal* (1908), is not staged

³⁷ Gerald McMaster, “Colonial Alchemy: Reading the Boarding School Experience,” in *Partial Recall*, Lucy Lippard, ed. (New York: The New Press, 1992): 76-87, 79.

as a typical school portrait, nor as a before-and-after demonstration of the benefits of colonial intervention into indigenous life. Instead, like many of the thousands of photographs produced for the COVIC project, this image of the woman and the boy—who seems to be her son—reads as an early form of street photography, framed to show the subjects in their everyday environment. Their home, centred in the background of the image, perched on a horizon line formed by the riverbank, is a rough-hewn log cabin. Though the caption describes it as a shack or fishing hut, a washing station and clean sheets hanging on a clothes line sit just to the right of the house, connoting a more permanent and domestic daily life. In the foreground, a woman wearing a long dark dress with a scarf pulled over her hair, leads the boy by the hand. Her face is turned away from the camera, her mouth open as though calling out to someone just outside of the frame. His face, however, meets the camera's gaze from under the brim of his cap. Unlike his mother's practical mode of dress, he wears a neat suit: a tie and suspenders worn over a bright white button up shirt, all tucked into a dark pair of trousers. He is outfitted as though going to school rather than to work at a local fishery or farm, and his position at a distance from the house, walking towards the camera, implies he is about to enter the public sphere of colonial education. If he is on his way to school, it seems as though it is not a residential one, but a day school that allows him to return to his home, and his mother, each night. But his mode of dress and his position in the landscape hint that he is in the midst of this alchemical process, enlisted in a process trying to transmogrify him from "savage," to a self-policing and self-reproducing imperial citizen.

This photographed event—a moment where the boy is on the border between his home and the outside world of colonial education—is in many ways a small, non-event in

the history of British colonialism. And yet it also seems a generative event for examining how citizenship was constituted in this historical moment between the Age of Empire and the beginning of a “post-colonial” commonwealth of nations. While Hannah Arendt posited that a new category of stateless Jewish citizens emerged after the Second World War—a category of subjecthood that continues to concern political and cultural theorists, and has very real consequences for residents of occupied territories, such as contemporary Palestine—in the pre-war British Empire, the kind of territorial dispossession experienced by the Jews was already part of the status quo.³⁸ For indigenous peoples in particular, who continued to reside in the nations and territories they had occupied for millennia but suddenly found themselves subject to a foreign sovereign and told they were no longer the owners of their land, the promise of protection by an independent nation state must have seemed an empty one from the outset. As feminist geographer Doreen Massey points out, while the British worried about the foreign invasion of their homeland in the build up to the First World War, “the security of the boundaries of the place one called home must have dissolved long ago, and the coherence of one’s local culture must long ago have been under threat” for the colonies.³⁹

This history of dispossession is one that is not just important in any study of the history of Canada, but that has been obscured in contemporary studies of citizenship in photography, with potentially disastrous implications. That citizenship laws emerge in the former British Empire as part of the process of decolonization means that contemporary notions of citizenship in the settler colonies carry with them the legacies of inequality wrought by colonialism. Rather than functioning as a declaration of autonomy and self-

³⁸ Hannah Arendt “We refugees (1943)” in Marc Robinson, ed. *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1994): 110-119.

³⁹ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 164.

sovereignty, as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in France (1789) and the Fourteenth Amendment to the American Constitution (1868) were seen to do, citizenship law in the former colonies is produced as part of a colonial hangover: a legal transition from colonial rule to a commonwealth state. In this “post-”colonial context, imperial inequalities silently but inherently shape our understanding of modern citizenship, troubling the assumption that sovereignty and equality guarantee one another in an independent nation state. In thinking about the effects of colonialism on the contemporary understanding of Canadian citizenship, Sunera Thobani has provocatively asked whether extending the rights of citizenship to minority populations—such as foreign domestic workers—in the settler colonies can ever work as a productive political gesture, especially when the very definition of citizenship in these former colonies is built upon the exploitation and eradication of the indigenous population. As she writes,

Can a citizenship based on the destruction of the sovereignty of Native peoples ever be expanded without deepening this colonial relation? Can those previously excluded from citizenship ever be included without being complicit to this Aboriginal dispossession? Can a citizenship conceived in, and maintained by, a genocidal violence leave untainted any group which comes to be included in its orbit, no matter how severe the forms of their own previous exclusions or how tenuous their subsequent inclusion?⁴⁰

Thobani’s questions raise serious implications for photography scholars who want to rehabilitate citizenship as a critical, politically generative mode of belonging in the twenty-first century. If we are to “rescue” citizenship as a model for a political community that is radically de-territorialized, virtual and photographic—as Ariella Azoulay has proposed—we need to also contend with the legacies of colonial violence

⁴⁰ Sunera Thobani, “Nationals, citizens and others,” *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2007): 64-104, 95.

that structured this model: to make sure that we “see” those subjects who in the past did not have the rights to have rights, alongside the citizens that photographs capture.

The civil uses of photography

The recent turn to thinking citizenship and photography together emerges, in part, out of a lineage of art historical work that has considered how photography was deployed as an instrumentalizing medium by institutions and states in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Largely Marxian in their approach, these earlier studies from the 1970s and 1980s were often interested in how photographs were used to shore up and maintain sovereign power in the emergence of the modern nation-state, and in thinking about how images were used to hide or displace those power relations. Authors like Allan Sekula, John Tagg, Roland Barthes, Martha Rosler and John Berger demonstrated that photography’s invention in 1839, at the same historical moment as the emergence of the nation-state and its attendant forms of governance, made it the ideal medium for state propaganda, surveillance and control.⁴¹ Taking state-sponsored and vernacular photography projects as their objects of study, these authors were concerned with how photography was used to control and manage potentially unruly human subjects, focusing on mug shots of criminals, state-sponsored portraits of poor rural farmers, social

⁴¹ See Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter 1986), 3-64; John Tagg, “The Currency of the Photograph,” *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1982), 110-141; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980); Barthes, “The Great Family of Man” (1957) in *Mythologies*, Annette Lavers, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972): 100-102; Martha Rosler, “In, around, and afterthoughts (on documentary photography),” *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 303-341 (first published by NSCAD and NYU Press in 1981); and John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1972).

documentary images of the homeless and war photography to make their arguments.⁴² Citizenship is largely absent from these texts, which focus instead on subjects: both the subjects of photographs, those actors who are subjected to state power and the subject matter that photographs constitute as knowledge.

While this earlier scholarship was vital in proving that photographs were not objective documents, nor “messages without a code,” but cultural texts that were invested with particular meanings by their producers and viewers, it tended to treat photographs as illustrations or symptoms of power relations, rather than as active producers of the very relations they are said to re-present.⁴³ In his landmark 1986 essay, “The Body and the Archive,” for instance, Sekula went so far as to argue that the camera was but one element integrated into a larger bureaucratic system of “intelligence” used to organize, surveill and manage criminals. “The central artifact of this system,” he argues, “is not the camera but the filing cabinet.”⁴⁴ For Sekula, it is photography’s mechanical functioning, not its ontology, that allows the medium to be so easily adopted by government archives. Archives, he writes, are both an “abstract paradigmatic entity and a concrete institution,” they work through substitution and abstraction, providing a relation of general equivalence between documents and images.⁴⁵ In his reading of Alphonse Bertillon’s anthropometric system of cataloguing criminals, Sekula argues that it is photography’s ability to function at both the specific and abstract levels of representation that makes it structurally similar to the archive. A photograph of a pickpocket is a portrait of that

⁴² Here, and throughout the dissertation, I use “vernacular” photographs to describe non-art photographs, images made to be circulated outside of museums, galleries and artists books as documentary images, photojournalism, official documents and as scientific evidence. “Instrumental photography” denotes photographs that were produced or circulated by public institutions—such as governments, hospitals, schools, and prisons—to support or illustrate their existing policies and ideologies.

⁴³ Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Stephen Heath, trans. (London: Fontana Press, 1977).

⁴⁴ Sekula, 16.

⁴⁵ Sekula 17.

particular pickpocket, registering that subject's specific facial features. But the multiplicity of photographic images, their ability to be reproduced, sorted and catalogued in relation to other images, also allows them to operate as types, examples of generalized abstractions. In Bertillon's system, the portrait of the specific pickpocket stands in for all other pickpockets who have committed similar crimes, and for all men who share the same set of physical characteristics, who might (according to the logic of Bertillon's biometrics) be future pickpockets, lying in wait. In many ways, Bertillon's system, like the COVIC lectures, sought to visualize an otherwise invisible social category: that of criminality. Like citizenship, criminality was hard to "see" until it was consolidated through photographic representation, conjuring an image of a community that was otherwise virtual and imagined.

One of Sekula's aims in thinking about the camera as an extension of the filing cabinet is to encourage photo historians to focus on the institutional contexts in which photographs circulate and the ideologies they are forced to represent through their relationship to other images. Though Sekula's point is an important one—that the organizational logic of the state archive needs to be analyzed alongside the content of the images it employs—his approach does not leave much room to consider where the archive is insufficient in containing meaning, or how viewers might use their encounter with the photographs to draw parallels between the ways that criminals and indigenous peoples (the other population most often subjected to anthropometric photography) were both made into non-citizens under modern colonial rule.

Like much of the work on instrumental photography that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, Sekula too readily assumed that the owner or producer of the photograph held

sovereign power over its meaning and uses, implicitly arguing that viewers were either too lazy or too gullible to refuse this dominant message. This assumption—characteristic of much of the scholarship from this period—arises, in part, from these authors’ reliance on ideology critique as a strategy for analyzing state-produced photographs. The foundation of much Marxian analysis, ideology critique assumes that, by carefully analyzing a cultural text, critics can reveal the ideological assumptions that underpin the social or political context in which that text was produced. Ideology is believed to obscure or distract from the “real” conditions of production and to go largely unnoticed by viewers and readers. Such an approach implicitly accepts that there are groups of viewers who are capable of properly understanding or unveiling the power relations revealed by the image and others who are incapable of such a reading.⁴⁶ It also assumes there is an “outside” to the relations that the photograph sets up that might provide a place of resistance or critique. This is quite different from the current scholarship on visual citizenship and photography, and Azoulay’s work in particular, which posits that there is something about the very nature of photography—something about its ontology—that allows it to disrupt existing power relations. Such an approach frames photography as an ongoing event, open to intervention by viewers and subjects who can use images to make civic claims (as we will see shortly).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For a thorough and convincing analysis of the problems with ideology critique and “political art,” see Jacques Rancière’s “The Misadventures of Critical Thought,” *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2009).

⁴⁷ Foucault’s turn away from the use of the term ideology, in favour of discourse (which emphasises the subject’s participation in modes of power even as she critiques it) was one attempt at circumventing some of the problems with earlier Marxist approaches to cultural critique. While discourse analysis offers an alternative method for understanding the ways that culture constructs and sustains power, it also presents difficult questions about how to occupy a position of critique that also acknowledges one’s complicity in these systems. Foucault’s work is undoubtedly an influence on Azoulay, who frequently invokes the term “the civil language of photography” to describe how subjects participate in and critique the distribution of sovereign power.

Another body of scholarship, coming in the wake of work by Sekula, Tagg and others, has illuminated how photographs are harnessed by subjects and viewers to picture imagined communities in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Art historian Louis Kaplan's work, in particular, has tried to show how the ontology of photography allows national communities to come into being. Examining vernacular American photographs taken in the early-twentieth century, and reading them through Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as an imagined community, Kaplan asserts that "photography exposes community to itself; it gives community the medium of its sharing and the incompleteness of its sharing."⁴⁸ Far from Steichen's idealized vision of a universal humanity that is captured by photography, Kaplan's project argues that every photographic community is an "inoperative one" (following the work of Jean-Luc Nancy): one that, despite its fantasies of inclusion and cohesion, will always be marked by otherness and incompleteness.⁴⁹ Kaplan's work is a helpful corrective to Marxist analyses of state photography projects because it underscores the profoundly relational nature of photographs, allowing subjects and viewers more agency in determining how images define and delimit communities: "Photography is understood as a way of relating to or being with others."⁵⁰ This effort to restore a level of agency to the viewer is a project Azoulay has more fully—though not unproblematically—realized: a theme I will return to shortly.

Other scholars have considered the community-generating dimensions of vernacular photography through the lens of post-colonial theory, looking for ways

⁴⁸ Louis Kaplan, *American Exposures: Photography and community in the twentieth century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xxii.

⁴⁹ Kaplan xxxvii.

⁵⁰ Kaplan xxiv.

marginalized and indigenous communities have used both state-sanctioned photographs and self-representations to make claims for political representation. Writing as a former curator of an anthropological museum, Elizabeth Edwards's book, *Raw Histories*, centres on emancipating photographic images from the often-overwrought context of the archive to see how viewers and subjects might use them to contest the conditions of colonial rule. Edwards wants to unsettle assumptions about the archive, typically described by scholars as passive and inactive, to argue for "a dense multidimensional fluidity of the discursive practices of photographs as linking objects between past and present, between visible and invisible and active in cross-cultural negotiation."⁵¹ By insisting on the multivalent meanings of photographs, Edwards hopes to create a space for alternate and critical readings of anthropological photography "in precisely those spaces to whose representational practices it has contributed so forcefully in the past."⁵² The case studies she uses therefore read an image of indigenous men posed for the camera on a ship deck for the disruptive potential of the subjects' gaze, for instance, or analyze the results of an anthropometric photography project by the Colonial Office to suggest the photographers' and colonial officers' resistance to and ambivalence about the imperial project. The curator and art historian Lucy Lippard follows a similar project in her edited volume, *Partial Recall*, inviting indigenous artists, historians and activists to re-read photographs of native subjects to see aporetic details and gazes that might tell an alternative story about these subjects' experiences.⁵³ For both Edwards and Lippard, there is the possibility for the contemporary viewer to find a pleasurable aesthetic engagement with

⁵¹ Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (New York: Berg, 2001) 4.

⁵² Edwards 4.

⁵³ *Partial Recall*, Lucy Lippard, ed. (New York: The New Press, 1992).

colonial photographs, over and against the dominant message imposed on the image by its creator, owner or exhibitor.

Christopher Pinney's career-long study of indigenous photography practices in India have likewise underscored the way that photographs can be used by subject to subvert and contest the logics of colonial rule.⁵⁴ In his astute readings of vernacular and commercial studio portrait photography in India, Pinney shows how Indian photographers, sitters, developers and viewers manipulated the conventions of this kind of image-making to undermine British assumptions about the legibility of the body and its representability through the camera. For Pinney, Indian uses of photography show a rejection of "somaticity": the belief that the external body was a fixed sign that revealed something about the interiority of the subject and his or her political affiliations.⁵⁵ Where other authors argue that photographic portraiture allows communities to be constituted and contested, Pinney argues that Indian photographic practices cast doubt on the camera's very ability to accurately capture subjects, and on the photograph's ability to communicate the collective will of a community. Pinney suggests it is not the politics of representation—how subjects are portrayed, for whom and where—that maintain colonial rule, but the politics that sustain the belief that photographic representations can "fix" identities, turning subjects into manageable colonial subjects. For Pinney, then, the focus of anti-colonial critique should not be in creating new or different images of colonial subjects, but in insisting on the contingency of photographic representation and the slipperiness of race as a marker of identity.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) and *The Coming of Photography in India* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁵⁵ Pinney, *Camera Indica* 196.

The work of Kaplan, Edwards, Lippard and Pinney is helpful in framing the COVIC project because it emphasizes the communal, relational aspects of looking at photographs. By focusing on how local and national communities come into being through photographs, it also resonates with the rhetoric of imperial citizenship, which relied on a prototype version of Anderson's notion of the virtual, imagined community of the empire to sustain its logic. But these authors also tend to assume that the viewer shares the same national citizenship status as those who are pictured in the photographs they analyze: even if this citizenship does not govern viewers and subjects equally. The context of the COVIC project, in the Edwardian empire, is a moment before the nation becomes the most pronounced organizing principle in social and political movements. It prompts questions about how citizenship was envisioned outside of the nation state, how it was pictured as a category of belonging that stretched across territorial boundaries, and how it was understood by other "citizen" viewers who were not a part of the same national or ethnic communities as the subjects they encountered in COVIC's images. This extra-national aspect of imperial citizenship reverberates in the contemporary moment, where ideas of the global or digital citizen are increasingly prominent, and where transnational and diasporic communities are constituted across and against nationalist distinctions.

It is in this transnational context that the most recent wave of writing about photography and citizenship emerges. No longer strictly concerned with state-sponsored photography projects, the work of Ariella Azoulay, Sharon Sliwinski and Thy Phu considers how photographs bring distant spectators into a relationship of political obligation and civic engagement with subjects. In many ways, these scholars seek to

recuperate photographs' potential to generate a virtual political community that operates outside of divisive state policies that separate citizens from their others: non-citizens, stateless subjects and refugees. In response to Sekula and Barthes's strident critiques of the humanist message of *The Family of Man*, this work asks whether viewers are more critical than these scholars assumed them to be; whether it is possible to see specific histories of inequality and difference within the homogeneous message of unity presented by Steichen, or whether new kinds of photographic communities can emerge out of these all-encompassing attempts to photographically capture the world. This recent work on photography, human rights and citizenship is less concerned with the work photographs *do* on viewers. Instead, it is interested in the work that viewers *do* with photographs. Photography theorist Shawn Michelle Smith has helpfully described this distinction as the difference between *photographic evidence* and *photographic meaning*. Elaborating on the work of Sekula, Smith suggests there is a rift between photographic evidence—what a photograph actually shows, what can be seen in the image—and photographic meaning—the interpretations and meanings that viewers make from this image.⁵⁶ For Smith, while photographic evidence is fixed and limited to what has been captured in an image, photographic meaning is contingent, malleable and notoriously unreliable: “Photographs as *evidence* are never enough, for photographic *meaning* is always shaped by context and circulation, and determined by viewers. Photographic meaning results from what we *do* with photographic evidence.”⁵⁷ For Smith, this explains why photographs of lynched African American bodies could be understood and circulated as trophies of white

⁵⁶ Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” in *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1982) 84-109.

⁵⁷ Shawn Michelle Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching,” *Lynching Photographs* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007): 10-41, 41.

supremacist violence by the Klu Klux Klan, and as evidence of an atrocity in need of political intervention by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the same historical moment. Or, why the commercial studio portraits of middle-class African American families taken in Georgia in the late-nineteenth century could be overlooked as banal forms of portraiture in their local community, but operated as a radical critique when presented in albums, organized by W.E.B. DuBois, at the American Negro Exhibit of the Paris Exposition in 1900.⁵⁸ Thinking about photographic meaning displaces the centrality of the producer of the photograph in determining its uses and meanings and gives agency over to the viewer, who works to understand an image in dialogue with others, often in opposition to the dominant message imposed by the state.

The viewer's role in creating photographic meaning is central in Azoulay's work, a body of research that has been especially generative in thinking about how viewers disobey the readings imposed on photographs by state governments, using photographic evidence to create alternate, politically resistant meanings of their own. Across her many essays, lectures and books, Azoulay argues that the ontology of photography is relational: a photograph emerges out of an encounter between the subject, the photographer and others on the scene (such as witnesses and bystanders) and is initiated by the presence of a camera. This encounter—which she calls “the event of photography”—does not need to result in a photograph, but takes place because the idea of, or the possibility for, a photograph exists. When a photograph does emerge from this encounter, it initiates another series of relational encounters between the viewer, the subject, and the photographer: this is what Azoulay terms “the photographed event.” The photographed

⁵⁸ Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

event may not replicate the event of photography that generated it, but it bears traces of this initial encounter. Most importantly for Azoulay, photography is an inherently political medium because the encounter initiated by the camera is one in which no actor has complete sovereignty: as she argues, “no-one is the sole signatory to the event of photography.”⁵⁹ In an understanding of the medium that directly opposes those put forth by Sekula, Tagg, Rosler and other Marxian scholars, Azoulay argues that photography can never be controlled by a single party, nor completely subsumed into existing ideologies or state apparatuses. As she explains,

Even when those traces [of the event of photography] express cultural and social hierarchies that organize the power relations between photographer, camera, and photographed person, they never simply echo such relations nor do they necessarily reflect the point of view of the most powerful figure present in the arena at the time the photograph was captured. This characteristic differentiates the photograph from all other forms of documentation that we know, and renders it a powerful and suggestive source for understanding the political existence of human beings, as well as for investigating their history.⁶⁰

If this is the case, then the civil spectator’s duty, in Azoulay’s formulation, is to read the photograph for traces of the relational encounter between subject and photographer, and to use these traces to generate a meaning that disrupts the current distribution of power and rights. This requires “watching” photographs rather than looking at them, imagining the encounters that took place before and after the moment the shutter was released. This is the exercise of what Azoulay describes as the “civil imagination,” the viewer’s ability to picture scenes that are not directly represented: the untaken photographs that come before and after the moment registered on film. “Viewing photography as a non-

⁵⁹ Azoulay, “Photography: the Ontological Question” 70.

⁶⁰ Azoulay, “Photography: the Ontological Question” 76.

deterministic encounter between human beings not circumscribed by the photograph allows us to reinstitute photography as an open encounter in which others may participate,” she writes.⁶¹

Azoulay offers a radical reformulation of how photography operates as medium, grounding it as a relational, incomplete utterance whose meaning must be determined by viewers. Her work not only changes the terms in which scholars analyze vernacular photographs as events, but it also insists on the centrality of citizenship in articulating the political potential of photographic representation. Taking photographs from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as her objects of study, Azoulay argues that when spectators watch photographs, they engage in a civil action that has important political ramifications. Issues of literal citizenship, such as who can carry a passport or rightly live on one side of a border or another, are obviously at stake in the disastrous conditions of the Middle East, but Azoulay is also interested in how the notion of citizenship might be more broadly defined and linked to issues of subjectification. For her, citizen status has less to do with national or political allegiances and more to do with how human bodies are separated into those subjects who belong to a distinct collective that is protected through state governance (citizens) and those non-subjects who do not belong to the collective, are perceived as a threat to the collective, and who are therefore left vulnerable through state governance (non-citizens or “the stateless”).⁶² The position of non-citizens is particularly volatile because they continue to be invisibly governed by the same policies, laws and institutions that govern citizens, but they do not receive the same protections. While Azoulay often explicitly speaks of the nation state as the sovereign power that divides

⁶¹ Azoulay, *Civil Imagination* 223.

⁶² Azoulay, *Civil Contract* 31-33.

citizens from non-citizens, the same operation occurs at local and global levels, from city bylaws, to the policies of transnational governing bodies such as the United Nations or the World Bank.

But beyond this binary of citizens and non-citizens, Azoulay also distinguishes those who experience forms of weak or impaired citizenship: subjects such as ethnic or racial minorities, people with disabilities, and women who, under everyday circumstances, are supposedly protected by the state but who are quickly made vulnerable once disaster strikes.⁶³ In *The Civil Contract of Photography* in particular, Azoulay uses photographs of disaster to show how moments of crisis throw the simultaneous but unequal governance of the citizen, the weak citizen, and the non-citizen into high relief, making the inequalities of citizenship appear. Disaster, torture, and atrocity, when depicted photographically, reveal the always already tenuous citizen status of photographers, subjects, and viewers. For Azoulay, the photographs that emerge from these disastrous conditions are loaded with political assignments, used by the state to separate citizens from their others. It is not the photographs themselves that do this work, but the captions and classifications that are added to the images by the state: “the photograph does not put abstract concepts such as ‘refugee,’ ‘stateless person,’ ‘citizen’ or ‘non-citizen’ on display. Rather, these are conceptualized within the parameters of particular political thought or through an act of rule that seeks to stabilize the legal and political status of the governed.”⁶⁴ In moments of crisis, the state mobilizes photographs to stabilize and solidify identifications, separating subjects along lines that are not immediately visible, but that viewers must be told to see and to recognize. It is at this

⁶³ Azoulay, *Civil Contract* 52-53.

⁶⁴ Azoulay, *Civil Imagination* 225.

moment—when the state seeks to secure the political status of human subjects through the circulation of photographs—that Azoulay urges the civil spectator to intervene by refusing to accept the stripping of political rights from one group and their transformation into stateless subjects. By attending to the “heterogeneity of information” in the photograph, Azoulay believes viewers can “disrupt the attribution of a stable political category to the photographed person.”⁶⁵ Such a disruption seeks to denaturalize the separation of citizens from non-citizens, insisting it is a motivated, state-sanctioned operation and reminding citizen viewers that they are complicit with the state when they accept these political distinctions.

Azoulay’s work on photography as a civil language has been widely taken up in the six years since it was first published, perhaps because it seems to free instrumental photography projects from the stranglehold of state ideology and to restore political agency to the viewer. Her work is also unabashedly optimistic about the capacity of the viewer. Far from thinking of looking as a passive act—as Burgin and Sontag contended—Azoulay insists that viewing can be an active, political gesture. My reading of the COVIC project repeatedly draws on Azoulay’s writing about the ontology of photography and the civil imagination of the spectator, because it makes possible a reading of the Colonial Office project that recognizes its intended role as a tool of colonial management while also accounting for the limits of the project in securing political identities through photographic representation. It also allows me to imagine the meanings that disobedient viewers could have generated from their encounters with the COVIC photographs, meanings that may have directly contradicted the message the committee hoped to convey.

⁶⁵ Azoulay, *Civil Imagination* 225.

But when I invoke Azoulay's work, I do so as a weak citizen: from a position that acknowledges that my rights, despite their guarantee through official paperwork, are precarious, contingent and secured through the exploitation of other weak and non-citizens. And I do so as a weak and occasionally weary viewer, one who recognizes that I may not be able—or, worse, willing—to see those others, and to fulfill my duties in the civil contract of photography, even after a sustained study of an image.⁶⁶ To Azoulay, the viewer has indefatigable capacities for looking, for acknowledging her complicity in the uneven distribution of rights, and for instigating political action to transform that distribution. The community generated by photographs is democratic, de-territorialized, virtual and productive for Azoulay: it is a "citizenry of photography" open even to those whom Arendt described as having "lost the right to have rights."⁶⁷ She optimistically hopes that this photographic citizenship will be used for positive social change: that the spectator will use her encounter with a photograph of weak or non-citizens to make claims on their behalf, to recognize her complicity in state systems that divide citizens from non-citizens and to insist that these systems change. But there is also the possibility that the spectator can and will use the uneven application of citizen rights to make claims

⁶⁶ Here I want to suggest that it is not just a question of political will that may prevent a viewer from participating in the civil contract of photography, but also a psychoanalytic question about processes occurring at the level of the unconscious that may prevent her from recognizing an other that would threaten her own sense of self. As pedagogical theorist Mario Di Paolantonio argues, there are important psychic limits that often prevent these moments of recognition from being realized. As he writes of national reconciliation projects, to fully recognize that the "we" of the nation has done a violence to another group in the course of the nation's coming together as a community requires that the "we" confront its own lack and question its very identity. For Di Paolantonio, this means that true "national reconciliation" is unattainable since to ethically achieve it would require an intolerable dismantling of the ego: "The reassertion of the abject, of what was rejected in the name of an imaginary unity (identity), reveals an unmendable tear in the group's narrative of itself: an exposure of the vulnerable seam of self-constitution." See Mario Di Paolantonio, "Loss in Present Terms: Reading the Limits of Post-Dictatorship Argentina's National Conciliation," *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, eds. Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg and Claudia Eppert (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000) 153-185, 159.

⁶⁷ Azoulay, *Civil Contract* 85.

that benefit herself at the expense of other non- or weak citizens: a possibility that the history of the circulation of the COVIC lectures confirms, as I chart in chapter three. So while I want to believe that viewers *can* use their encounter with photographs to contest the division of citizens from non-citizens, I am not convinced that they always will. My reading of the COVIC project therefore tries to draw out the partialities and contingencies of photographic citizenship, asking how viewers learn to see citizens where they are told to see only subjects, and questioning what we look *away from* when we look for citizens in photographs.

Two recent studies of the transnational communities that come into being around photographs have tempered some of the optimism of Azoulay's writing, demonstrating the ways in which the universal promises of human rights and liberal citizenship are extended to and withdrawn from certain populations based on the exigencies of colonialism and nationalism. Sharon Sliwinski's *Human Rights in Camera* (2011), for instance, argues that the notion of universal human rights emerged through the circulation of photographic images, which allowed a virtual community of humanity to come into being across national borders. By charting the world spectator's reaction to representations of human suffering—from the 1755 Lisbon earthquake through to photographs of the Rwandan Genocide in the early 1990s—Sliwinski argues that human rights violations are judged as such only through the viewer's aesthetic and affective engagement with the depiction of others. Like Azoulay, she argues that looking is not passive, but a politically generative act that allows the spectator to imaginatively come to terms with the suffering of distant others, to judge this suffering as unfair and in need of intervention, and to make claims on behalf of these subjects. In her case study of the

Congo Reform Association (CRA)’s lanternslide presentations on the atrocities being committed by the Belgian government in the Congo in 1904 (a project circulating at the same historical moment as the COVIC lectures), Sliwinski argues that photographs taken for one purpose—to promote British missionary work in the Congo—were simultaneously used for a form of anti-colonial critique, adopted to illustrate one of the world’s first secular human rights campaigns. The CRA used photographic evidence of the Belgian government’s acts of torture and mutilation to generate a new photographic meaning from these images, one that called into being a new category of a “crime against humanity.” For Sliwinski, the CRA’s campaign moved the discourse of rights outside the bounds of the nation and even the empire, “bring[ing] into focus a notion of an international political community that operates independently of sovereign law.”⁶⁸ These early human rights campaigns therefore addressed an as-yet-unrealized community of viewers who came into being through their encounter with photographs, at the moment they judged these events as human rights violations.

Unlike Azoulay, however, Sliwinski’s claims about the political work that viewers do with photographs are grounded in contingency and doubt. By charting when and how spectators have used their encounter with photographs to make claims on behalf of others, she demonstrates that “showing the world” that atrocities are being committed is insufficient in preventing future atrocities from occurring, and that—far from being universally guaranteed—human rights are extended to particular populations, at certain historical moments and through particular representational strategies. As she argues, “spectators’ engagements with... pictures affected how human dignity came to be

⁶⁸ Sliwinski 69.

imaginatively extended to (*and withdrawn from*) distant others.”⁶⁹ (It is no small irony, for instance, that the British-based CRA were circulating photographs of the Belgian colonial government’s atrocities in the Congo at the same moment that the British government carried out policies of resource extraction and indentured labour across more than a quarter of the globe: practices that were arguably as exploitative of indigenous peoples as those used in the Congo, if somewhat subtler in their use of coercive violence.) Following Arendt’s differentiation between the human subject and the citizen—where the citizen has a legal personality but the human is guaranteed only a mere existence—Sliwinski’s study is a cautionary tale, one that warns that “[o]ur membership within the political community we call humanity is granted by others. One must be judged human—and thus be endowed with a ‘legal personality’—in order to enjoy the benefits of the title”⁷⁰ This puts us, as both spectators and subjects, in a position of vulnerability, where we must rely on (distant) others to be recognized as human, with a right to a literal and political existence. The spectator’s encounter with the representation of distant suffering is therefore an experience plagued with doubt: “doubt about what there is to know, about what the good of such knowledge might be, and whether knowing will have any effect on the other.”⁷¹

Thy Phu similarly foregrounds the vicissitudes of national and transnational belonging in her study of how Asian American subjects strategically performed as citizens through the production and circulation of photographic portraiture. By putting the emphasis on civility as a performative comportment, rather than on citizenship as a fixed identity or status, Phu argues that gestures of decorum and self-regulation were integral

⁶⁹ Sliwinski 5, emphasis added.

⁷⁰ Sliwinski 46.

⁷¹ Sliwinski 47.

prerequisites for accessing citizenship in early–twentieth century American culture.⁷²

Much like the COVIC project, early twentieth century attempts to picture citizenship in the United States did not try to build a visual taxonomy of the citizen, but emphasized the importance of performing the role of the model citizen. To be a citizen required being recognized as such by others, through the enactment of a set of established codes of affect and comportment. For Phu, this means that non-white subjects could adopt the codes and conventions of civility strategically, in order to access power and, occasionally, contest the uneven application of economic and social rights justified by the rhetoric of democratic liberalism. As Phu helpfully suggests, the emphasis on civility in American citizenship had its roots in the colonial context, a result of “the contradictions of the ideal of civil society under colonial rule, in which civil conduct masks and defuses the violence that is the ideal’s disavowed origin.”⁷³

Phu’s work is also helpful in the way it historicizes Azoulay’s concept of the civil contract of photography, reading it against contemporary postcolonial theories of diaspora and cultural mimicry. As Phu notes, Azoulay’s work aims to rescue citizenship from the ideology of the nation-state, which, in the course of producing modern day citizenship, also produced a residue of its others—noncitizens—in its wake.⁷⁴ While Azoulay would argue that citizenship can be rehabilitated from the rhetoric of the nation-state if spectators refuse to dispossess certain populations of their citizen status, Phu worries that this rehabilitation comes at the cost of obscuring the unseemly history of how citizenship and photography emerged as concomitant technologies of governmentality. As she warns, “Azoulay’s task of preserving the ideal of ‘becoming

⁷² Phu 10.

⁷³ Phu 11.

⁷⁴ Phu 19.

citizen' through the 'civil contract of photography' as an alternative civic space depends... on eliding the traps associated with nation-state sovereignty."⁷⁵ Phu is not so sure that these traps can—or should—be so easily avoided, especially given the “resilience of the nation-state, whose stubborn influence is manifest in diverse fields and is specifically durable within the visual field, where instrumental photography...remains a privileged site for the constitution—and contest—of sovereign power.”⁷⁶ If citizenship is to be rehabilitated, Phu suggests, historians need to contend with the problematic role the nation-state played in bringing photography and citizenship together in the first place. Only then can we consider how, or if, these discourses can be disentangled from the exercise of sovereign power. This dissertation takes up Phu's challenge by attempting to further historicize the emergence of photography and citizenship as mutually constitutive discourses. Placed at the juncture between the end of the Age of Empire and the beginning of twentieth-century, “post-”colonial nationalism, the COVIC project suggests that it is not just the spectre of the nation-state that haunts photographic citizenship, but the ghosts of colonialism as well.

This growing body of scholarship on photography, human rights and citizenship informs my analysis of the COVIC lectures, allowing me to foreground the relational encounter between the spectator, subject and photographer that the camera initiates. It also helps to expand the analysis of photography and citizenship beyond the scope of the nation state to think about how they operate in colonial and global contexts, linking viewers and subjects transnationally. But, like many studies that have sought to understand the affective reactions that photographs stir in viewers, this work has also

⁷⁵ Phu 19.

⁷⁶ Phu 19.

focused on the “limit case” images of social trauma and political violence. Sliwinski’s analysis of how human rights are constructed and recognized (as universal) through moments of injustice represented by photographs and circulated to distant spectators, and Azoulay’s thinking about how images of deportation and dispossession initiate a civil contract, help us think through photography’s role in creating relationships of recognition and obligation between spectator and subject in moments of crisis; but it is harder to see how these relations are forged and negotiated outside of these moments of trauma. By foregrounding the banal, the COVIC photographs show how the structures of imperial belonging (and exclusion) also permeate states of non-exception, organizing the everyday environment of British colonialism. I contend that these ordinary moments are important places where citizenship was (and continues to be) negotiated. They need to be analyzed, with an attention to the places where weak citizens are hidden in plain sight, if we are to historicize and complicate the current narratives about photography and citizenship.

Seeing imperial citizens

The rest of this dissertation charts the appearance and disappearance of the imperial citizen as a photographable subject through a sustained investigation of the production, circulation and reception of the COVIC lanternslide lectures. Though the COVIC scheme, and some of its images, has occasionally appeared in histories of British colonialism, geography instruction and geopolitics, these accounts have offered only partial views of the project, focusing on the history of its production and rarely attending to the images themselves. Historian John M. MacKenzie, for instance, has considered the COVIC project within the wider project of imperial propaganda in the early–twentieth

century, linking its aims to those of the concurrent Victoria League and League of Empire.⁷⁷ And, more recently, two historians—Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Gerry Kearns—have included the COVIC project in their critical appraisals of the work of geographer and politician Halford J. Mackinder, one of the founding members of the Visual Instruction Committee and author of many of its textbooks (one of the foci of chapter one).⁷⁸ For all three of these authors, the COVIC project is merely a set of texts—from government memoranda and meeting minutes, to textbooks and captions—that demonstrate how geography and education were integrated into the imperial project. The 3,000 photographs that circulated with these lecture texts are either ignored, or are brought in strategically as one-dimensional illustrations of the author’s arguments.

Geographer James R. Ryan has provided the most sustained investigation of the COVIC lectures so far, using them to explore the confluence of the invention of photography (1839) with a period marked by “the extraordinary expansion of Britain’s overseas Empire”; an historical connection that places photography as *the* representational mode for imperial expansion and consolidation.⁷⁹ Rather than thinking of photographs as constitutive of imperial rule, Ryan is concerned with the ways that landscape, ethnographic and educational forms of photography mirrored and sustained the ideologies of British imperialism.⁸⁰ His analysis is convincing, weaving together popular culture examples with vernacular and fine art photography, but too often in his work, photographs are assumed to “speak for themselves,” or to operate as denotative

⁷⁷ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*.

⁷⁸ See Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Putting Mackinder in his place: Material transformations and myth,” *Political Geography*, 11.1 (January 1992); and Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷⁹ Ryan, *Picturing Empire* 11.

⁸⁰ Ryan, *Picturing Empire* 13.

illustrations for broader, extra-textual arguments. Though he provides extensive socio-historical context about how the COVIC photographs were commissioned and written about in order to problematize the evidentiary role that the images were assumed to play, this analysis occurs *around* the images and is rarely applied to the formal composition, framing choices or viewing experience of the photographs themselves.⁸¹ This dissertation therefore marks the first effort to think through the entirety of the COVIC project, analyzing all seven lectures that circulated as part of the scheme, and considering the more than 7,600 images produced for the project. Part of its work is in generating a COVIC archive from several disparate collections of material: a project that is motivated—admittedly—by fantasies of being able to reconstruct the original lecture presentations from the archival material that remains. While this is an impossible project, as I explain in chapter two, the dissertation makes this material available to other scholars and researchers by aggregating the various incarnations of the project and tracing how it circulated through the empire.

The COVIC lectures are a strange, anachronistic colonial project, at once coming too late and too soon for the historical audience they hoped to address. Too late in that the committee hoped they would keep the empire together just as it was (literally) falling apart, and because they employed lanternslides at the moment of their technological obsolescence, just as cinema emerged as *the* tool of the national imaginary (as evidenced by John Grierson's work with the National Film Board, another nationalist visual culture project haunted by colonialism). But the message of the COVIC photographs was also

⁸¹ Throughout the book, Ryan astutely draws connections between the work of photographers such as John Thomson, Samuel Bourne and COVIC photographer Alfred Hugh Fisher and the rhetoric of manly imperial adventure that framed these images, but he does not attend to the images themselves in any detail, or provide an analysis of how they may have been understood by contemporary viewers.

anticipatory, foreshadowing a category of belonging that would not be legally guaranteed in the empire for another 50 years: a category we are still trying to define, and to photograph, as Jeff Wall's image makes clear. To make sense of the COVIC project therefore requires a careful consideration of how the lectures interacted with other visual and textual projects of the period, borrowing from and sometimes competing with contemporary representations of the British Empire. As method, I begin my analysis *from* the COVIC photographs, reading them formally and in relation to the texts that hoped to contain their meanings. From these closer readings, I then consider what is outside of the frame of these images, telescoping out to think about how viewers made meanings from the COVIC photographs, given the other signs that circulated in the empire at this time. Such an approach relies upon my familiarity with the logic of the COVIC archive—the kinds of images that were permitted to circulate publicly, and those that remained in the darkroom of the colonial archive.

Chapter one, "Projecting imperial citizens," traces the historical context for the production of the COVIC lectures, beginning in 1902, and considers the conditions that made it possible for colonial bureaucrats to think of imperial citizenship as both a teachable and photographable subject. By situating the lectures in relation to concurrent state and imperial photographic projects, I consider how the COVIC series drew on or diverged from dominant modes of representing colonial subjects, particularly in the images of England and India (the first two lectures published in the series). Much like contemporary notions of citizenship, imperial citizenship proved a difficult subject to define and photograph. The lectures on India, in particular, point to the speculative nature of the COVIC project, which sought to predict which populations might pose a threat to

the empire and how they might be safely managed and contained through colonial education.

The second chapter, “Looking at photographs ‘along the archival grain,’” turns to the function of the archive in the COVIC project, arguing against (now clichéd) assumptions that the archive is the place where knowledge is organized and concretized, and pointing instead to the archive’s potential for the disruption and subversion of COVIC’s intended goals. The photographic albums where the COVIC images are stored directly contradict the seemingly methodical narrative of the empire documented in official government records, while the journals of Alfred Hugh Fisher, COVIC’s photographer, reveal information about imperial citizens that the final, published lectures worked to obscure. Taking as its focus Fisher’s photographs and journals about Canada, the second chapter attends to historical moments where colonial officials’ expectations, idealizations or anxieties about imperial management were refuted through the photographic encounter. Following Ann Laura Stoler’s advice to read “along the archival grain,” I argue anxieties about belonging and citizenship structure every aspect of the COVIC project, not just what is omitted from the final lectures, but the very “grain” of the archive itself.

“Developing historical negatives,” the third chapter, turns to the role of the indentured labourer in the COVIC lectures: a figure whose complicated relationship to the imperial economy would seem to disqualify her from membership in imperial citizenry, but who nevertheless appears throughout the majority of the COVIC lectures. In my reading of this recurring figure, usually represented as a female labourer, I question how agency was managed within the rubric of imperial citizenship. Looking at the

COVIC lectures on India, Africa, the West Indies and Australia, in particular, demonstrates that the indentured labourer was not “outside” imperial citizenship, but an integral part of how it came to be defined and valorized. At the same time, anti-colonial activists used the figure of the transnational, indentured labourer to make claims for political sovereignty and equality. The recurring presence of this figure in the COVIC lectures and archives therefore suggests these images could have been re-instrumentalized by viewers to critique the same systems the COVIC project was meant to celebrate. But, as Sukanya Banerjee’s work on imperial citizenship as a strategy of colonial critique makes clear, imperial citizens were also often complicit in the uneven promise of universal rights in order to make strategic political claims—even at the expense of other (non-)citizens’ claims to these same rights. By treating the COVIC photographs and archives psychoanalytically, this chapter aims to “develop” the critical and political potential of the indentured labourer as the “negative,” repressed, ideal to the “positive” image of the imperial citizen.

In the concluding chapter, “Residues of non-citizens in the COVIC project,” I focus on the continued problems of recognizing citizen rights through photography from the First World War through to the present. Reading the so-called “Komagata Maru Incident,” the arrival of more than 300 would-be immigrants to Canada in 1914, and the scandal that erupted when they were refused entry, as a litmus test for the limits of imperial citizenship, I consider how these world events put increasing pressures on the COVIC lectures’ promises of imperial citizenship. Photographic representations of “undesirable” immigrants, such as those aboard the SS Komagata Maru, who used the language of imperial citizenship to make claims to their rights, employed many of the

same visual strategies used in the COVIC images and texts, drawing the lectures into increasingly public debates about the double standards of imperial mobility at the start of the twentieth century. Like the COVIC lectures, critics of empire also appealed to viewers' sympathies, invoking a relationship of recognition and civic obligation between the spectator and subject. More recently, the London-based non-profit organization Autograph APB has attempted to construct a post-colonial catalogue of imperial citizenship, building a photographic archive that tells the story of black immigration into the UK. Combining official state photographs with vernacular and snapshot photographs collected from the public, Autograph is re-circulating these images in British classrooms, using them to generate a counterarchive of British citizens of colour. Like the COVIC lectures, the Autograph project politicizes the banal, insisting on the importance of representing the everyday experiences of black British citizens, and the need for these experiences to be witnessed and recognized by (children) world spectators. The Autograph archive hopes to function as a critical response to projects like COVIC, using the same educational structure to animate "dormant" histories of transnational communities within photographic archives like COVIC. It combines these "official" archives with the stories told by vernacular photography (especially family photo albums) and suggests the importance of these vernacular spaces in constructing alternate histories of (post-)colonial belonging in the British Empire. By analyzing the first stage of this research and educational project, the conclusion considers how the Autograph project might be haunted by the aims of the COVIC lectures, and questions the critical and reparative work that can be done with colonial photographs in the contemporary conditions of global capitalism.

Whether circulated as a tool of imperial management, or rearticulated as a modern project of identity politics, photographs of citizenship offer a powerful aesthetic and pedagogical encounter. The COVIC lectures, in particular, elicit affect in response to very banal images, but their focus on everyday experiences mean they do not ask the viewer to immediately move from this feeling of identification to action or intervention. This is both the promise and failure of visual citizenship. There is a danger in thinking that recognizing citizens in photographs will—in and of itself—help to guarantee the sovereign rights of those citizens. As the American Civil Rights movement, Israel-Palestine, Abu Ghraib, and many other photographic events have shown, this recognition is not enough. And, perhaps more insidiously, this recognition often comes at the expense of other citizens who we refuse to see: those who become unintelligible so that another collective of subjects can enter into subjectivity and rights.

Though I want to recognize citizens in the COVIC lectures—to refuse to continue to add to the “residue of noncitizens” created by colonialism—the history of the project demonstrates that there is no such thing as a photograph of citizenship: only photographs that spectators use to claim the position of the citizen. This is not to say that photographic evidence is irrelevant, or that photographs are incapable of operating as tools of critique and political intervention, but that the particularities of each image have to be negotiated in relation to the universal promises of seeing, of learning and of belonging.

Chapter One: Projecting imperial citizens: photography, pedagogy and colonial consolidation

On a warm afternoon in May of 1907 in a village near Hong Kong, a primary school teacher gathers together his students for a geography lesson on the British Empire. Reading from a small textbook, the instructor announces to his audience that, “we are going to make a visit to the British Isles, the land in all the world which, after our own land...should be of the greatest interest to us, for it is the centre of the Empire to which we owe so much.”⁸² As he reads, he loads glass slides into a magic lantern, projecting a series of photographs onto the wall that depict a journey at sea. Before departing on this virtual voyage, the teacher asks his students to imagine “cabl[ing] to our friends in London, telling them to expect us.”⁸³ Images of the deck of a steamer ship, crowded with the bodies of white, middle-class families, give way to views of the cities and towns that dot the “sea road” towards the West, then to depictions of the Suez Canal and finally to the landscapes of Dover and London (Fig. 5).

Describing the steamer ship as a “great moving hotel, which goes from port to port with wonderful punctuality,” the texts and photographs depict a breezy, fair weather voyage, but conditions in the classroom are not so pleasant.⁸⁴ The temperature in the room has risen to more than 90 degrees, the windows and doors closed against the afternoon sun so it is dark enough for the images to be clearly projected. Closely packed students, many of whom have already spent the morning at work in their parents’ fields, begin to giggle uncontrollably, likely because the air is filling with the acetylene gas

⁸² Halford J. Mackinder, *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom: Seven Lectures on the United Kingdom for use in India (Reissued for use in the United Kingdom)*, (London: Visual Instruction Committee of the Colonial Office/Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1909) 6.

⁸³ Mackinder, *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom* 8.

⁸⁴ Mackinder, *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom* 6.

produced by the chemicals used to illuminate the lantern. Eventually, one of the younger female students loses consciousness, and the lesson is ended prematurely, with more than 300 slides left unviewed.⁸⁵

Though this sounds like a satire of colonial-era education practices, it is in fact compiled from first-hand accounts of one of the earliest presentations of a set of geography lectures prepared, published and circulated by the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee (COVIC). Founded in 1902, COVIC was a committee of volunteers that met under the auspices of the British government to develop and administer a program of colonial education that combined visual technologies with geographical instruction. Described as a series of geography lessons illustrated with lanternslides, the COVIC lectures were an exercise in colonial consolidation that used more than 3,000 photographs to teach the empire's schoolchildren what it meant to look and to feel like an imperial citizen at the beginning of the twentieth century. Structured as travelogues, each of the COVIC lectures opened with images of a steam ship departing from the viewers' home country and then journeyed through one of the Empire's major colonial holdings, in England, India, Canada, Australia, Africa, the West Indies and "the Sea Road to the East" (Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong).⁸⁶ Images of transportation, especially the modern steam ship and railway train, were therefore common in the COVIC lectures, while the sequence of images and a narrative

⁸⁵ High Commissioner of Hong Kong to the Earl of Elgin, "Report on use of lectures," 10 July 1907. Miscellaneous Correspondence (4 April 1905 to 16 November 1907) relating to Visual Instruction, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

⁸⁶ COVIC's records show that the slides were often exhibited to parents as well as schoolchildren, and that several sets were purchased by the Department of the Interior in Canada and Australia, expanding the project's audience beyond the classroom. Copies of individual photographs were also printed and mailed to Fisher's subjects by the COVIC secretary whenever they were requested. See Miscellaneous Correspondence (4 April 1905 to 16 November 1907) relating to Visual Instruction, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

read aloud to students suggested a continuous journey. Given the increasing prominence of film and the growing number of cinema houses in England in the Edwardian period, it is perhaps unsurprising that COVIC attempted to replicate a sense of filmic movement in the organization of the lantern slide lectures. But, unlike watching a film, which has a distinct beginning, middle and end and presents a continuously flow of moving imagery, the lantern slides in the COVIC project had to be loaded into the lantern one at a time, creating a viewing experience that was open to the editorial choices of the teacher and the interaction, or interruption, of the audience. No two presentations of the COVIC lectures were quite the same, and the constructed nature of the travelogue narrative must have been obvious as the teacher or lecturer removed each still image, only to replace it with another.

The COVIC project was the British government's only peacetime exercise in official imperial propaganda, and, as the scene in the classroom in Hong Kong indicates, the lectures were an unusual and in many ways impractical use of modern education initiatives to respond to transformations in the economic and social conditions of the empire.⁸⁷ For the committee, the most pressing concerns were the growing internationalization of human affairs, the relative decline of Britain's finances in the world economy, and the increasingly vocal demands for political recognition by overseas colonial subjects and, closer to home, by women and the working class.⁸⁸ As a response to these crises, the COVIC lectures sought to bring the community of the empire back to its "natural" state of equilibrium by constructing a catalogue of imperial citizenship. It

⁸⁷ John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) 165.

⁸⁸ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "Putting Mackinder in his place: Material transformations and myth," *Political Geography*, 11.1 (January 1992): 100-118.

was an ambitious project that attempted to visually consolidate the largest empire the world had yet seen, which at the time encompassed twelve million square miles of land and one quarter of the world's population.⁸⁹ As the preface to each textbook asserted, "The component parts of the British Empire are so remote and so different from one another, that it is evident the Empire can only be held together by sympathy and understanding... imparted to the coming generation...[and] taught in the Schools of the Empire."⁹⁰

To encourage these feelings of sympathy and unity in viewers, the COVIC lectures borrowed from the language of imperial citizenship that circulated in literature and in political pamphlets during the late Victorian and early Edwardian period. Although the category of citizen was not formally codified in British law until late in the twentieth century, Sukanya Banerjee has shown that "the idea of a common but equal status across the empire gained... currency toward the end of the nineteenth century" as a rhetorical compromise: a way for Britain to appease the settler colonies' demands for autonomy without losing authority over the dominions.⁹¹ While the law continued to govern British "subjects," the "imperial citizen" emerged in literary and visual culture to explain how individuals could maintain their religious, national and ethnic affiliations but still belong to the community of the empire. The vague and non-legal definition of imperial citizenship meant that it guaranteed few tangible rights for British subjects, or that it offered protection to some sections of the imperial population while neglecting or exploiting others. But, as Banerjee has shown, its circulation in public discourse

⁸⁹ Ó Tuathail 104.

⁹⁰ "The Visual Instruction Committee of the Colonial Office" in H.J. Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India* (London: Visual Instruction Committee/Waterlow & Sons, 1910) v.

⁹¹ Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) 23.

paradoxically allowed colonial subjects to make demands for sovereignty on the basis of this formal, if purely rhetorical, promise of equality (a point I return to in chapter three).

In the COVIC lectures, imperial citizenship is most often depicted as a collective effort to defend the empire, resulting in recurring group portraits of figures such as shipbuilders (Fig. 6), military regiments (Fig. 7) and “native policemen” (Fig. 8) who were seen to be constructing and serving within the defenses of the empire. Images of “native” army and police forces are a leitmotif woven throughout the COVIC project, appearing in almost every lecture, with the exception of England and those on the white, “settler colonies” of Canada and Australia. And, much like the photograph of the deck of the steam ship that begins the COVIC lectures, these groups are captured at a distance from the viewer, often with their backs turned towards the camera. This formal choice turns them into a group of nameless and undifferentiated subjects rather than individuals. There is a sense in many of the COVIC photographs that human subjects are interchangeable rather than unique: that their designation as imperial citizens is measured by the physical and affective labour they offer in the defense of the empire, and that this labour takes on added value if it seems to run counter to the subject’s “natural” affiliations based on race, religion or class. As representations of local populations that had not just been successfully “civilized,” but were now willingly participating in the reproduction of colonial rule, these groups attested to the successes of British imperialism in “(re)produc[ing] citizens who are capable of governing themselves, of acting in their own interests and in solidarity with others.”⁹² As Barbara Cruikshank has provocatively argued, by emphasizing the importance of agency and self-governance in defining

⁹² Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3.

citizenship, projects like the COVIC lectures demonstrate that “Citizens are not born; they are made.”⁹³

This focus on making imperial citizens explains the COVIC lectures’ curious status as a set of geography lessons that contain almost no maps. From the beginning, it was photography, not cartography, that the committee proposed would achieve COVIC’s pedagogical goals, by organizing the empire under a unifying imperial gaze. Michael E. Sadler, a civil servant who first suggested the scheme to the Board of Education in 1902, stressed the importance of sight in encouraging feelings of imperial sympathy and pride in students: “The object in view is to give every citizen of the Empire an opportunity of *seeing* what the different parts of the Empire are like... and of learning what duties its possession entails,” he wrote in his seven-page memorandum. “Much can be learnt by the eye as well as through the ear.”⁹⁴ From 1905 until its official dissolution in 1924, the COVIC committee worked to meet Sadler’s goals, producing seven sets of lectures (each focused on a different British colony or holding) illustrated with photographs. Sold to government houses and boards of education around the world, the COVIC lectures came in sets that included the slides (numbering between 350-400 images), 25 textbooks and one magic lantern. COVIC intended for colonial schoolchildren to receive sets of slides about the “Mother Country,” while English schoolchildren would see slides about the colonies.⁹⁵ This method of organization established a double audience, each with their own set of expectations and experiences of the empire.⁹⁶

⁹³ Cruikshank 3.

⁹⁴ Michael E. Sadler, “Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902,” CO 885/8/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London, emphasis added.

⁹⁵ Here and throughout the dissertation, I follow the literature of the Edwardian period in using “British” to refer to all imperial subjects, in the dominions and colonies as well as in England, “colonial” to designate those subjects living away from the metropolitan centre, and “English” to designate those located in what is

This chapter argues that the invention and organization of the COVIC scheme was deeply symptomatic of the anxieties about national efficiency, colonial consolidation and capitalist modernity that characterized imperial management in the Edwardian period. It charts the invention of the COVIC project, from the earliest proposals that circulated within the Colonial Office and imagined the political work that the lectures could do, through to the narratives of imperial belonging that were communicated to students in the first two sets of lectures—on England and India—and tested so disastrously in classrooms in Hong Kong in 1907. The committee’s plans for the project, as well as the design, production and implementation of the first lectures, can easily be analyzed as forms of overcompensation for these Edwardian anxieties, but they also reveal much more. In their use of photographs, emphasis on everyday life in the empire, and insistence on the affective dimensions of spectatorship, the COVIC lectures initiated a new way of “seeing” imperial citizenship. Well before the introduction of the individual passport photograph in the United Kingdom in 1916,⁹⁷ COVIC attempted to create a photographic catalogue of citizenship, one that relied upon group portraits and street scenes alongside the seriality of a lecture series to build up this category of belonging.

As a non-legal, rhetorical category of belonging, imperial citizenship had until now been invisible: promised through birth certificates, colonial proclamations, political petitions and government policies, but rarely visualized. By insisting that imperial

now the United Kingdom, even though I am wary of the hegemonic way the term “English” attempts to erase difference within the stratified and diverse population in England.

⁹⁶ See “Colonial Office, Miscellaneous no. 174, Syllabus of a Course of Seven Lectures, illustrated by lantern slides, on a Journey to England from the Eastern Colonies (in continuation of Miscellaneous no. 152),” April 1905, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

⁹⁷ The British Passport Office made photographs a standard requirement for British passports as of 1916. See Mark B. Salter, *Rights of Passage: The Passport in International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003) and Lily Cho, “Citizenship, Diaspora and the Bonds of Affect: The Passport Photograph,” *Photography & Culture* 2.3 (Nov 2009): 275-288.

citizenship needed to be learned in the schools of the empire, and using photographs to do this teaching, COVIC made imperial citizenship visible. This visualization was inconsistent, however, flickering in and out of focus among the familiar and highly visual categories of difference—racial, class, ethnic and gendered—that had long sustained representations of the empire. In the COVIC lectures, the problems government officials and colonial critics had both encountered in defining imperial citizenship became problems of the limits of visual representation. When photographic evidence fails in the COVIC lectures, it is supplemented with textual and verbal appeals to the imaginary, with demands for forms of projection and identification on the part of the spectator. Photographs of “native” military forces in India, such as those in Tanjore (Fig. 8), for instance, required the careful supplementation of the lecture texts if they were to be understood as representations of imperial citizenship.⁹⁸ As I show in this chapter, although the COVIC lectures on India were published more than fifty years after the so-called Indian Mutiny of 1857, the lanternslide images and texts were haunted by representations of the local population’s insurrection, especially as these representations continued to circulate in contemporaneous newspaper accounts and government documents: texts that worried about the possibility of a “Second Mutiny” in British India at the beginning of the twentieth century. Central to these fears was the suspicion that the Indian population might be plotting another rebellion through a series of visual codes, communicating in public but in a way that the British could not “see” or understand. To ensure the COVIC images of groups of Indian officers were interpreted as representations of willing imperial citizens, readily defending the empire, rather than potentially

⁹⁸ Tanjore, located in the Princely State of Mysore, was not under direct British control in the Edwardian era, leading to a local police force, rather than one imported from the imperial centre.

mutinous subjects preparing for another massacre of the British, the lecture texts went to great lengths to assure viewers that these were just “drills” or “practices” by subjects who “remained loyal during the Mutiny.”⁹⁹

Anxieties about not being able to discern the loyalty of certain populations based on their race were also a way of justifying continued colonial rule. As Homi Bhabha points out, colonization occurs through the logic of transforming the other into the colonizer’s image, but it can never be entirely successful, or else it will negate the logic of the colonizer’s right to rule.¹⁰⁰ For Bhabha, this feature of colonial rule appears as mimicry: the colonial subject’s attempt at enacting the ideal subjecthood must always produce a difference. As he writes,

colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.¹⁰¹

In this way, mimicry “problematizes the signs of racial and cultural priority, so that the ‘national’ is no longer naturalizable.”¹⁰² it complicates what it takes to be counted as “English” by distilling the characteristics of nationality down to a set of repeatable gestures and behaviours, yet even following this script to the letter does not guarantee the colonized subject entrance into the imagined community of the nation. The colonial subject will always remain different, “*Almost the same but not white*,” as Bhabha puts

⁹⁹ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India*, 119.

¹⁰⁰ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 125-133, 126.

¹⁰¹ Bhabha 126.

¹⁰² Bhabha 128.

it.¹⁰³ While Bhabha sees this mimicry as a function of colonialism everywhere, for post-colonial scholars Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, British imperialism was particularly predicated on this promise of achieving equality by enacting an ideal subjecthood: “The colonialist system permitted a notional idea of improvement for the colonized, via such metaphors as parent/child, tree/branch, etc., which in theory allowed that at some future time the inferior colonials might be raised to the status of the colonizer. But in practice this future was always endlessly deferred.”¹⁰⁴ By compelling colonial subjects to enact an idealized, but impossible (and in this case, invisible) subjecthood in the form of imperial citizenship, modern British colonialism guaranteed its legitimacy and its continuation. The confusion of race, ethnicity and loyalty in the COVIC lectures was perhaps another way to assert the necessity of ongoing colonial rule at the end of the Age of Empire, and the importance of governmental tools such as schools, military training and labour in ensuring the continued mimicry of the ideal imperial citizen.

It was here that the distancing strategies of the photographs created potential misinterpretations of what constituted imperial citizenship and its relationship to representations of race. To see a group of non-white subjects, marching in uniform rows and brandishing rifles, and to read these not as a threat to, but reassurance of, imperial unity, required a leap of interpretive faith on the part of the viewer. The COVIC lectures’ treatment of images of “native” military in India therefore demonstrate the distinction Shawn Michelle Smith makes between photographic evidence—what can be seen in the image—and photographic meaning—the interpretation that viewers make from this

¹⁰³ Bhabha 130.

¹⁰⁴ *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed., Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 42-43.

image. For Smith, photographic meaning is contingent, malleable and notoriously unreliable: “Photographs as *evidence* are never enough, for photographic *meaning* is always shaped by context and circulation, and determined by viewers. Photographic meaning results from what we *do* with photographic evidence.”¹⁰⁵ In the COVIC lectures, photography was insufficient in securing evidence of imperial citizenship and had to be supplemented through texts that instructed viewers on how to access this meaning through their practices of looking. These moments of confusion about how to represent imperial citizenship also cast doubt onto whether the existing, supposedly stable categories of difference that structured colonial power—especially race—are ever about vision or visibility at all (a question that I return to in my discussion of the lectures’ representation of indentured labourers in chapter three).

While other scholars have read the COVIC lecture texts’ rhetoric of imperial unity against the photographs’ disparate representations, and looked for visual mistakes or insufficiencies in the project’s dominant narrative, I am interested in paying attention to the ways the COVIC project acknowledged, rather than obscured, these discrepancies.¹⁰⁶ For Sadler and the committee, this tension between seeing racial difference but recognizing imperial citizenship was inherent to the model of belonging espoused by the project. The premise of the COVIC project was that students could be taught to feel through these contradictions using photography’s pedagogical potential. The committee’s plans for the lectures demonstrate that the relationship between citizenship and visuality

¹⁰⁵ Shawn Michelle Smith, “The Evidence of Lynching,” *Lynching Photographs* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007): 10-41, 41.

¹⁰⁶ See, for instance, John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

is not a necessary or inevitable one: it required careful planning and construction, both through the production of the photographic archive, and through the creation and implementation of didactic textbooks. Examining the plans for the COVIC project alerts us to the fact that the link between photography and citizenship is an historically constructed one. Students of the COVIC lectures had to be taught to “see” and to recognize imperial citizenship where there had previously been only the visual differences of race, ethnicity, class and gender. While recent photography scholarship, including work by Ariella Azoulay, Tina M. Campt, Thy Phu and Sharon Sliwinski, has examined the various things that spectators *do* with photographs to make claims for the citizens they represent, less work has been done on how spectators learn how to identify photographs of citizenship in the first place: how they move from seeing an image, to recognizing its subjects as fellow, if distant, citizens.¹⁰⁷ The COVIC project suggests that spectators must be taught—quite literally in this case, through textbooks, lectures and school assignments—to see, and to feel, this connection to photographs of other citizens. While pedagogical theory offers one way of unpacking this relationship between affect, teaching and (dis)identification (Deborah Britzman, James Donald and Roger I. Simon are all particularly useful in this regard), often missing from these accounts is the role that aesthetics play in initiating pedagogical processes of identification.¹⁰⁸ How does a spectator learn to identify with distant citizens through the aesthetic encounter offered by

¹⁰⁷ See Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2008) and *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2012); Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Thy Phu, *Picturing Model Citizens: Civility in Asian American Visual Culture* (2012); and Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011).

¹⁰⁸ See, for instance, Deborah Britzman, *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects: Toward a Psychoanalytic Inquiry of Learning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); James Donald, *Sentimental Education: Schooling, Popular Culture and the Regulation of Liberty* (New York, Verso, 1992); and Roger I. Simon, Sharon Rosenberg, Claudia Eppert, eds. *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

photographs? And what happens when this imaginary identification with an image rubs up against the viewer's lived experiences of belonging or unbelonging in the empire?

Moreover, because it foregrounds photographs of everyday life in the empire, rather than moments of wartime, protest or revolution, the COVIC photographs demonstrate how the structures of imperial belonging (and exclusion) permeated the everyday environment of British colonialism. Though representations of social trauma and atrocity have figured prominently in the recent scholarship on photography and citizenship, as a way for authors to analyze how subjects make claims for rights when they are violated or withheld, the COVIC lectures show that citizenship is tenuous, uneven and partial, even in times of relative non-violence.¹⁰⁹ The ordinary moments that the COVIC photographs depict are important places where citizenship is learned and negotiated: to analyze them is to historicize and complicate contemporary narratives about the relationship between photography and citizenship. The COVIC lectures show that the project of visualizing citizenship, through photography, was a both a colonial and pedagogical endeavour. Rather than the guarantors of freedom and self-determination they are thought to be in the discourse of modern liberalism, here education and citizenship—much like state photography projects and other forms of visual surveillance—are shown to be interwoven technologies of colonial government.¹¹⁰

These technologies are imperfect, however, prone to failure, disruption and intervention by the very populations they are designed to manage, as the scene in the classroom in Hong Kong demonstrates. My wager is that the committee's fantasies about being able to visually represent imperial citizenship, before it was concretized through

¹⁰⁹ One could argue that the colonial context is one of perpetual, everyday violence, a view that is supported by some of the COVIC images I discuss in chapter three.

¹¹⁰ Donald 47.

law, were not just methods of consolidating colonial control. The COVIC lectures also articulated a desire for imperial citizenship to be seen and recognized by distant spectators. Because imperial citizenship was guaranteed through the subject's relationship to the empire, and to her fellow citizens, the COVIC lectures encouraged in spectators a worldview of the empire as an interconnected and virtual community. Despite the ways the COVIC project tried to use this vision of imperial belonging to stabilize colonial rule, this dream of a worldwide community would continue to animate the ways that anti-colonial resistance was imagined and articulated in the British Empire throughout the first half of the twentieth century, allowing the project's viewers to reinstrumentalize the same images and demand the promises of imperial citizenship be fulfilled.

Far-seeing plans

There is a pressing need for the diffusion, in an accurate and vivid form, of knowledge of the conditions of life in different parts of the Empire among the masses of the people in this country. For great multitudes the Empire exists in little more than name. They do not realize the economic opportunities which it affords them. They do not comprehend its geography, and they have little idea of the dangers to which it is exposed. Is it not advisable that they should be led to think of these subjects, in order that they may be more willing to give sustained support to far-seeing plans for Imperial consolidation and development?

-- Michael E. Sadler, "Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902"¹¹¹

From its inception, the COVIC lectures were proposed as a solution to a set of problems that did not yet exist: a kind of forecast for the political demands of twentieth-century nationalism that the First World War would bring to violent realization. This premonitory

¹¹¹ Michael E. Sadler "Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902," CO 885/8/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

function of the lectures is clear in the language used by the director of the department of Special Inquiries and Reports of the Board of Education in his proposal for the COVIC scheme: a seven-page text that starts out in the measured, impersonal tones of colonial bureaucracy but that, by its end, takes on a note of urgency. From his unique position in the Board of Education, a role designed to produce research to inform and influence educational policy in Britain and its colonies, Sadler felt there was a “pressing need” for educational tools that would help prime the British population for the measures of “imperial consolidation and development” that were imagined to be needed in the future. The direness of Sadler’s address at first seems out of place in Edwardian era politics (1901-10), a period of British rule characterized by its relative political calm, extravagant royal pageants and opulent visual and material culture in England.¹¹² But the proliferation of world expositions and imperial pageants in Edwardian England also belied growing national concerns about the sustainability of the colonial project. No longer interested in imperial expansion, the Colonial Office’s main goals in this period were colonial consolidation and imperial unity: to convince the general population that the empire was still a worthwhile project despite increasingly vocal demands from the dominions and colonies for political self-determination.¹¹³ As Annie E. Coombes notes, the perceived failures of the British to protect their colonial holdings in the Boer War (1880-81 and 1899-1902) saw both Tory and Liberal administrations try to link ideas of national strength and efficiency to the colonial process: “For Edwardian England, social decline

¹¹² See, for instance, Deborah Sugg Ryan’s discussion of the outbreak of “pageantitis” in 1908 English culture in *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design, and Performance in Britain, 1901-1910*, Morna O’Neill and Michael Hatt, eds. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010): 43-72; and Angus Trumble’s edited volume *Edwardian Opulence: British Art at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

¹¹³ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Putting Mackinder in his place: Material transformations and myth,” *Political Geography*, 11.1 (January 1992): 100-118.

and the industrial economy at home were inextricably linked to the concerns of Empire.”¹¹⁴ In this context, improving the moral and physical fitness of the national population was seen to have a direct influence on the health and strength of the wider empire, which depended on the metropolitan centre for its administration and governance. This led to a host of bodily metaphors, in both colonial paperwork and public discourse, that positioned England as the heart and brain of the empire and measured the “health” of the body politic of the empire through figures of circulation.¹¹⁵

At the same time that it recognized the need for projects that would increase a sense of imperial unity and strength, however, the British government also wanted to distance itself from official policies of colonial expansion. Unlike the French or American administrations of the period, the British government upheld a tacit policy of refusing to directly finance world exhibitions, pageants or other forms of imperial propaganda. This meant that British colonial projects had to be funded by private business or volunteer fundraising committees in the first decade of the twentieth century, leading to the creation of a number of groups—including the Victoria League, the Royal Colonial Institute and the Daughters of Empire—that mixed public policy with private interests.¹¹⁶ COVIC was one such hybrid group: a committee of volunteers (only the secretary was on the payroll of the Colonial Office) whose constituency and aims blended the concerns of human geography, the fine arts, state education and colonial management.

¹¹⁴ Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 189.

¹¹⁵ Benerjee 45.

¹¹⁶ Coombes 187.

What set COVIC apart from these other groups was its focus on the classroom as a key site where the empire's health could be measured and a feeling of imperial unity strengthened. Sadler's position at the Board of Education was undoubtedly a major influence over COVIC's goals. Over his ten-year tenure (1895-1905), he urged several changes in educational policy that, among other things, extended the school-leaving age from twelve to fourteen years, keeping children in schools longer, instituted geography as a mandatory subject in British elementary schools, and moved the design and control of public education away from local county councils and into the purview of the national government.¹¹⁷ These policy changes were in step with broader transformations in public education in the late Victorian period, as James Donald has shown in his study of how sentiment was manipulated through public education and popular culture as part of the project of modern liberalism in England. While the aim throughout eighteenth- and nineteenth-century educational policy was to moralize and manage the working class, in the early twentieth century, "such interventions, initially religious or philanthropic, came more and more to be seen as the responsibility of the state."¹¹⁸ As Donald shows, paradoxically, while the administration of public education became increasingly standardized in Britain, its implementation in the classroom became more inventive, imaginative and affective, leading to a "sentimental education" over standardized testing. Inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas about the importance of childhood development to the construction of the social contract, the modern British approach to education built on earlier attempts by abolitionists to convince children of a humanist

¹¹⁷ Michael E. Sadler and J.W. Edwards, "Public Elementary Education in England and Wales, 1870-1895," *Special Reports on Educational Subjects, 1896-7, vol. 1* (London: Education Department Library, 1897) 6.

¹¹⁸ Donald 29.

universalism, where all human subjects were essentially the same at heart.¹¹⁹ In England, this sentimental education was inflected with nationalist interests, however; the failures of the Boer War in particular led to public recognition that the “stupefying routines of [rote] schooling” were inadequate in meeting “the aspiration to breed—and educate—an ‘imperial race’.” The goal of developing these characteristics in students resulted in a push for a broader curriculum that taught nationalist subjects like history and geography but also provided training in imperial citizenship, both in schools and in volunteer organizations like the League of Empire and the Boy Scouts.¹²⁰ The language of development united the discourses on childhood education, imperial management and colonial photography in England at the beginning of the twentieth century. While education policy advocated that schools provide an environment for the development of children into imperial citizens, colonial bureaucrats worried about the unevenness of colonial development, all while photographers—literally and figuratively—developed images of the empire.

The COVIC project was envisioned as part of these intersecting processes of development, as is clear from Sadler’s memorandum in 1902: its first sentences propose a series of lantern slide lectures “as an educational means of strengthening the *feeling* of Imperial unity and citizenship,” rather than aiming to deepen the student’s knowledge of British history or politics.¹²¹ Inspired by the extensive use of lanternslide lectures in classrooms in New York—supplied to teachers through a lending library of more than 140,000 images produced by the American Natural History Museum (ANHM) between

¹¹⁹ Donald 7.

¹²⁰ Donald 27.

¹²¹ Sadler, “Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902.”

1888 and 1903, and subsidized by the American government¹²²—Sadler envisioned a global project that would “give every citizen of the Empire an opportunity of seeing what the different parts of the Empire are like...and of learning what duties its possession entails.”¹²³ Though the focus of the ANHM collection was on botany, the natural sciences and geography, Sadler saw the program’s potential as a tool of imperial and national propaganda, one that was firmly rooted in a depiction of the present conditions of the empire, with a view to shaping the minds and sympathies of a future generation of imperial citizens. (A sense of imperial competition and impending cultural inferiority may have also informed Sadler’s “admiration” for the ANHM program, and the tone of panic in his descriptions of it. As he notes towards the end of his memo, the ANHM program was so successful that “the system has now spread into Canada, and the New York slides were shown last year in centres in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba.”¹²⁴ Fears like this—about the “spread” of the United States’ influence over Canada—would continue to animate the COVIC committee’s discussions throughout the project’s lifetime, as I demonstrate in chapter two).

When Secretary of State to the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, created the Visual Instruction Committee in April of 1905, placing it under the supervision of the Colonial Office, he took Sadler’s proposals seriously, appointing a geographer and politician, Halford J. Mackinder, as chair of the committee.¹²⁵ A former director of the London School of Economics and friend of Sadler’s, Mackinder was already a well-known

¹²² Kelli Anderson, Barbara Mathé, Eric Muzzy and Stacy Schiff, “Picturing the Museum: Education and Exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History,” *Digitization in the Real World: Lessons Learned from Small and Medium-Sized Digitization Projects*, Kwong Bor Ng & Jason Kucsma, eds. (New York: Metropolitan New York Library Council, 2010): 242-258.

¹²³ Sadler, “Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902.”

¹²⁴ Sadler, “Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902.”

¹²⁵ Sadler resigned from the Board of Education in 1905, but continued to serve as a COVIC committee member until 1909.

proponent of geographical instruction as a mode of imperial thinking. His widely publicized views on the importance of geography as “a special form of visualisation” solidified the COVIC project’s reliance on sight as *the sense* through which the empire should be understood.¹²⁶ As historian Gerry Kearns has argued in his account of Mackinder’s influence on twentieth-century geopolitics, “Mackinder spoke of Geography not only as a science (ordering knowledge), and philosophy (synthesizing knowledge), but also as an art because it relied upon evoking pictures, vistas and panoramas”¹²⁷ Like Sadler, Mackinder believed education was most effective when it was imaginative and could be applied in students’ everyday lives. In his descriptions of the work the committee might achieve, Mackinder wrote that he hoped the COVIC lectures would transform colonial schoolchildren into his concept of a “real geographer:” the type of man (“the geographer” is notably a gendered subject throughout Mackinder’s writing) who “sees the world-drama as he reads his morning paper.”¹²⁸ In a period when newspapers were still largely illustrated with engravings and hand-drawn illustrations rather than photographs, Mackinder positioned geographical seeing as a kind of proto-photojournalism: a way for the reader to imaginatively illustrate distant world events. From the outset, then, the goals of the committee were not just to encourage a particular mode of viewing while in the classroom: the COVIC lectures sought to teach the spectator a way of seeing the empire, and its citizens, in her everyday life as well. By

¹²⁶ H.J. Mackinder, “The teaching of geography from an imperial point of view, and the use which could and should be made of visual instruction,” *The Geographical Teacher*, 6.2 (Summer 1911): 79-86, 80.

¹²⁷ That Mackinder would go on to write one of the foundational texts about geopolitical strategy of the twentieth century, a theory used by the United States government to justify their policies in the Cold War, is perhaps unsurprising. For Mackinder, the study of geography, and how it was pictured both in images and in the minds of viewers, had real political effects. See Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 165.

¹²⁸ Halford J. Mackinder in James R. Ryan, “Visualizing Imperial Geography: Halford Mackinder and the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee, 1902-11,” *Ecumene*, 1.2 (1994): 157-176, 169.

choosing to illustrate the COVIC lectures with photographs, rather than maps or drawings, the committee planned to engender a type of photographic seeing in students. Importantly, this was not a kind of seeing that offered piecemeal views of the empire, but one that sought to form a cohesive worldview. In many ways, the COVIC project's premises—of cataloguing one quarter of the world's population through photographs, and of reassuring distant viewers of their interconnectedness and shared citizen status—foreshadow those of Edward Steichen's "Family of Man" exhibition, which opened in 1955 at the Museum of Modern Art and traveled to hundreds of international venues over the following eight years. Like Steichen's Cold War-era project, the COVIC photographs were created as a form of soft propaganda, meant to head off anticipated political conflicts by winning over the hearts and minds of future imperial citizens.

Nowhere is the implied photographic vision of the COVIC project clearer than in the committee's plans for the production of images for the lectures. Unlike many of its contemporary colonial photography projects, the COVIC slide sets were not assembled from existing collections of images, but were produced specifically for the project by a single photographer. It was Sadler who first recommended the committee hire someone to document the whole of the empire, following the commissioning system used by the ANHM and putting the focus of the COVIC lectures on the present state of the empire rather than on its history (this also helped to give the impression that the empire had "naturally grown" into its current state, rather than being the result of a series of planned, violent incursions on indigenous populations, a point I will return to shortly).¹²⁹ Though Sadler had envisioned sending out a team of a photographer and "an artist in colour" who could make sketches on the spot, over the course of the committee's quarterly meetings,

¹²⁹ Sadler, "Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902."

these two positions were collapsed into one and in July of 1907, a subcommittee interviewed candidates for the job of project photographer.¹³⁰ Mackinder, along with COVIC members H. F. Heath of the Board of Education, R.D. Roberts of the Gilchrist Educational Trust, and Sir Charles Lucas of the Colonial Office—as well as National Gallery director Sir Charles Holroyd—met with ten artists who were asked to bring in samples of their work: all were male and none had any experience in photography. By the end of the interviews, the subcommittee unanimously recommended Alfred Hugh Fisher of Hammersmith for the job.¹³¹ A newspaper illustrator and fine art engraver who had studied art at the City of London School and University College and in Paris, Fisher’s artistic work largely focused on architectural studies, such as his 1898 book on the Hereford church and cathedral (Fig. 9), or on picturesque views of rural life and professions (Fig. 10).

That these were the kinds of images that attested to Fisher’s potential skills as a documentary photographer seems strange to the contemporary viewer. The staid architectural studies offer little visual interest while the views of daily life seem like a derivative, off-brand form of Pictorialism. But they reinforce the committee’s desire to provide students with “views” of the empire that were artistic, suggestive and true: terms that reappear throughout the meeting minutes. While it is tempting to think the decision to hire Fisher reveals the COVIC administrators’ bad aesthetic tastes, or their lack of originality, it is more likely that Fisher’s straightforward, slightly sentimentalized style seemed ideal for the project. The distanced objectivity that would become the ideal for

¹³⁰ “Misc. no. 158: Minutes of meeting of Sub-committee of July 29th, 1907, for the purposes of selecting a photographer.” CO 885/17/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

¹³¹ After the selection process, Holroyd was offered, and accepted, permanent membership in the Visual Instruction Committee.

documentary image-making would not emerge in England until two decades later, when John Grierson pioneered documentary cinema as a medium in another colonial government project, this time for the Empire Marketing Board in 1926.¹³² Indeed, there is nothing to suggest that the COVIC committee, and Fisher himself, did not see the production of the lantern slide photographs as a fine art endeavour. From holding the interviews with candidates in the National Gallery, to insisting that the photographer also provide sketches of the landscape with notes about correct colouring, to offering Fisher the opportunity to exhibit his work upon his return to London, the COVIC project approached photography as one tool among many in traditional artistic practice: a skill that could be learned by anyone with the proper artistic temperament. Like many photographic projects of the early twentieth century, the objectivity of the photograph was not a guarantee for the COVIC committee: it was a form of representation that, like any other, required the supplementation of texts and a trained eye to be fully understood.

The committee offered Fisher a three-year contract that included an annual salary of £300, a fund of £1,500 for travel expenses and subsistence, and a six-week “crash course” in photography with Emery Walker of Sussex House. But the agreement also stipulated that the committee would retain complete creative control over the project, setting Fisher’s travel itinerary through the empire and holding copyright for all work completed during his engagement with the project.¹³³ That same week, the committee hired Mackinder as author of the series textbooks and tasked him with supervising Fisher’s work, asking him to provide the photographer with a list of the types of views he

¹³² James Chapman and Nicholas John Cull, *Projecting Empire: Imperialism and Popular Cinema* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009) 6.

¹³³ “Misc. no. 160: Minutes of the meeting of the Visual Instruction Committee,” 31 July 1907. CO 885/17/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

would need for the lectures.¹³⁴ This step in the production of the lectures is another feature that makes COVIC unusual among concurrent colonial photography projects. From the beginning, Mackinder insisted that, for the lectures to be effective, the texts should be written *to* the images that would be shown to students. Fisher's photographs would not simply function as illustrations to existing lessons on the geography of the empire: they would literally structure the content of the lectures, serving as important visual lessons of their own.

Mackinder's plans for Fisher's travel reveal his faith in the organization and interconnectedness of the empire, not just as a form of rhetoric but as a practical reality. The unity of the empire, figured through the biological discourse of the organism, was a key feature in Mackinder's writing about geopolitics, as historian Gearóid Ó Tuathail has observed. Drawing on Romantic conceptions of the empire as a living entity that had "grown" naturally, Mackinder argued that the empire was "a community of natural social hierarchies...bound together by a shared set of mutual obligations and beliefs."¹³⁵ In the model of empire espoused by Mackinder, modernization, rapid industrialization and unfettered transnational capitalism had damaged the body of the imperial community, disconnecting its social life from its economic life.¹³⁶ The COVIC project was an attempt to suture these disconnections, to restore unity to an organism that, in ideal circumstances, was a self-sufficient, autonomous entity. This was not just political posturing for Mackinder; in the plans he made for Fisher's three-year voyage around the world, he relied upon the empire's existing infrastructures of circulation, arranging for

¹³⁴ A post he accepted, though he would only write the first two sets of lectures on England and India, being relieved of his duties as author in 1910 so he could devote more time to his political career.

¹³⁵ Ó Tuathail 109.

¹³⁶ Ó Tuathail 112.

the photographer to travel free of charge aboard the ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and on the trains of several national railway corporations.¹³⁷ These plans were made despite the fact that they guaranteed that Fisher would never see Africa or the West Indies, areas he was asked to document by collecting what he thought to be representative views of those colonies from commercial photographers during his travels.¹³⁸ Mackinder was in many ways COVIC's own best audience. He believed in a fantasy of imperial unity that his own work proved impossible: even with three years and the resources of the Colonial Office at his disposal, Mackinder could not get one man to every holding of the British Empire. The implications of this failure for the project's fantasies of imperial unity—failures the archive of COVIC photographs bears out—is the subject of the following chapter.

The assumptions underpinning the planning of the COVIC project—that public education could be used to control a potentially unruly global citizenry; that photography could create a cohesive worldview of a patchwork empire; that the empire was physically, as well as figuratively, interconnected—believe an unease about the future of the British Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. The rest of this chapter traces moments when this unease seeps into the lectures on England and India, the first two series to be published in the COVIC project, and looks for moments that reveal the limits of photographic evidence in securing colonial ideologies. My aim in charting these moments where photographing imperial citizenship proved difficult, if not impossible, is not to perform a critique of COVIC as an apparatus of colonial rule. My hope instead is

¹³⁷ "Misc. no. 160: Minutes of the meeting of the Visual Instruction Committee," 31 July 1907.

¹³⁸ The restrictions of the mail routes meant that Fisher could not access British South Africa or the West Indies on his voyages: an irony, given the project's plan to distribute the lanternslides and textbooks to these same areas, presumably using the same methods of transportation.

to open up moments when viewers might have brought resistant readings to the images to make claims for the rights promised by imperial citizenship. If, as Smith has argued, the viewer produces photographic meaning, the COVIC project's contradictions and limitations "suggest that the viewer can also be directed to look and see differently," reinstrumentalizing images for political purposes that directly contradict the intended message of the COVIC project.¹³⁹

Teaching photography in a geography classroom

The publication of the first set of COVIC lectures is a testament to Christopher Pinney's assertion that the colonies were often the "testing grounds for new techniques of visual control."¹⁴⁰ Published for the first time in 1905 as *Seven Lectures on the United Kingdom*, they took England as their subject matter, but were directed at colonial audiences. This address was not only a practical one, but an ideologically invested one. As part of their fundraising efforts, the committee had arranged for the government houses of the Eastern Colonies—Ceylon, Hong Kong and the Straits Settlements—to pay for the production of the first set of lectures on England.¹⁴¹ In exchange for investing money into the production of these first lectures, the Eastern Colonies would receive the first "draft" sets of lectures and slides on England, as well as copyright and royalty fees for the final published version that would circulate around the empire. While the first editions of the lectures circulated privately, sent by mail to the government houses in the Eastern

¹³⁹ Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) 11.

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 17.

¹⁴¹ "Miscellaneous no. 174, Syllabus of a Course of Seven Lectures, illustrated by lantern slides, on a Journey to England from the Eastern Colonies (in continuation of Miscellaneous No. 152), April 1905" CO 885/9/8, , Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

Colonies, the first publically available set of lectures on England were directed towards Indian students and published by Waterlow & Sons printing house in 1907. That the first public manifestation of the COVIC project takes India as its intended audience reflects the committee's repeatedly expressed need for Indian children to see images of the Mother Country.

Still considered the "jewel in the crown of the British Empire" in this period, it is perhaps unsurprising that India figured as the ideal audience for the COVIC lectures. What is unusual is the committee's decision to adapt these lectures for use in British classrooms in 1909, a choice that raises interesting questions in thinking about the relationship between photography, citizenship and spectatorship. Rather than adapting the language or imagery from the scripts meant for Indian students, Mackinder left the texts on England relatively unchanged, adding a preface to teachers at the beginning of each textbook explaining, "The effort on the part of English children to imagine themselves in the position of Indian children should tend to arouse and impress a valuable feeling of political sympathy."¹⁴² This adaptation of lectures addressed to Indian students for English schoolchildren demonstrates the importance of spectatorship for the COVIC project. Projection happened in several directions in the COVIC lectures: photographs of distant imperial citizens were projected onto the walls and screens of the classroom, bringing the empire's far-flung corners into a virtual proximity with one another, while viewers were also asked to imaginatively project themselves into the spaces depicted by the images *and* into the position of other spectators of the lectures who might be located halfway around the world. The publication of a set of eight lectures on India, meant to be

¹⁴² H.J. Mackinder, *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom: Seven Lectures on the United Kingdom for use in India (Reissued for use in the United Kingdom)* (London: Visual Instruction Committee of the Colonial Office/Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1909) vi.

seen by English schoolchildren, the following year, underscores this reciprocal spectatorship. The COVIC project did not just want English schoolchildren to see images of Indian schoolchildren, and vice versa: they aimed to have these students imagine what it was like to see themselves from the perspective of the other.

This spectatorial projection was encouraged by the projection of photographs through the magic lantern, which transformed still photographs into life-sized images that were animated by the teacher's recitation of the lecture texts. As geography historian James R. Ryan notes, the committee's decision to use lantern slides—3 ¼" square glass slides—as the means of visual representation in the COVIC lectures was designed to enliven the study of geography, drawing on the technology's reputation as a "form of indoor, imaginative fieldwork, often emulating manly imperial adventure."¹⁴³ Ryan's description of lantern lectures, as imaginative, as fieldwork, and as manly, is telling, conveying the varied uses to which the magic lantern was put in the Edwardian period. Though their popularity as middle-class entertainment peaked in the middle of the nineteenth century, lanternslide presentations continued to be used in classrooms, churches and village halls well into the twentieth century to show everything from morality plays and sermons, to anthropological field studies and amateur travelogues. Some historians, including Ryan, have argued that COVIC's decision to use a magic lantern is evidence of the project's nostalgic, anachronistic tone, especially given that the genesis of the COVIC lectures directly coincides with the development of cinema in Europe between 1895 and 1906. There is no sense of incongruity in using a magic lantern rather than a film projector in the meeting minutes or in the reports from teachers and headmasters, however, and Sadler's expectation that "good lanterns would be available

¹⁴³ Ryan, "Visualizing Imperial Geography," 169.

nearly everywhere” seems to have been a realistic one.¹⁴⁴ Much as it is common to find outmoded technologies like overhead and slide projectors in public classrooms today, as the outgoing visual technology of the time, slide lanterns were ubiquitous in colonial classrooms.

But my wager is that the committee’s decision to use the lanternslide format was not just practical: it also borrowed lessons about racial inferiority and imperial improvement from these concurrent religious, anthropological and propagandistic presentations, relying on the visual databank they would have constructed in the minds of viewers. Missionary lantern slides lectures, which relied upon “before and after” photographic portraits of colonial subjects to demonstrate the “benefits” of religious and imperial intervention in indigenous life, ethnographic and anthropometric photographs used to teach anthropology to professionals and students in English universities, and heroic accounts of the bravery of male explorers sent out on government-sponsored expeditions to the only uncharted spaces left on the Edwardian globe (such as Robert Peary’s trip to the North Pole in 1909, or Captain Robert Falcon Scott’s fatal expedition to the Antarctic in 1910) all employed photographs to convey narratives of colonial progress.¹⁴⁵ While the subjects of these lectures are wide-ranging, sometimes contradicting one another’s messages about the empire, what unifies Edwardian lanternslide lectures is their didacticism. The magic lantern lectures of the first decade of the twentieth century were meant to performatively convey information to a collective

¹⁴⁴ Sadler, “Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902.”

¹⁴⁵ For a nuanced account of the construction of whiteness in filmic and photographic representations of Peary and Scott’s expeditions, see Kirsty Dootson’s “Antarctic Empire: Herbert Ponting’s Footage of the British Antarctic Expedition (1910 – 1912),” a paper presented at the “Art, Anxiety, Protest in the Edwardian Era” conference at Yale University, March 2013.

audience. As Elizabeth Edwards suggests, lanternslide presentations from this period “shifted anthropological images, whatever their origin, into a performative space.”¹⁴⁶ By narrating and re-narrating the meaning of photographs of colonial subjects, lantern lectures made photographs into performative teaching tools meant to solidify a visual index of racial difference.

As the first attempt at constructing a photographic catalogue of imperial citizenship, COVIC’s lectures on England echoed but also diverged from these narratives about racial difference. Mackinder’s vision of imperial citizenship was not a “colourblind” or post-racial one that denied the existence of race, but one that recognized several intersecting categories of belonging for colonial subjects. Foreshadowing Benedict Anderson’s framing of the nation as an “imagined political community” in which members will never know or meet all of their fellow-members and which, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail, ...is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship,” Mackinder’s writing described an imperial race which encompassed both English and colonial children.¹⁴⁷ For Mackinder, allegiance to the sovereign trumped all the “natural” affiliations based in class, religion and ethnicity (gender did not even figure into his discussions of imperial citizenship, except perhaps through its absence; his description of the citizen is implicitly male).

Though this model of imperial citizenship appears throughout Mackinder’s writing on geographical instruction, a body of work that dates back to the late 1890s, the COVIC project was the first time it was visualized, ushering in the powers of

¹⁴⁶ Elizabeth Edwards *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (New York: Berg, 2001) 46.

¹⁴⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1991) 6-7.

photography to represent this structure of imperial belonging. In a series of letters and memoranda, Mackinder gave Fisher detailed instructions on the type of views to create for the lectures, beginning with images of England, which he would create as part of his six weeks of photographic training, and on his stopovers in England between his three voyages around the empire. Having borrowed photographs from existing state collections (such as those assembled by government departments and the national railways) and commercial slide companies to create the draft version of the lectures on England in 1905, and finding these “wholly inadequate” for his educational purposes, Mackinder encouraged Fisher to include “as much suggestion of movement as possible” in his photographs through depictions of “groups actively employed in some characteristic way.”¹⁴⁸ This meant that, in the place of studio portraiture or anthropological photography, the COVIC lectures prioritized group portraits and street scenes, often echoing the work of John Thomson, who served as Fisher’s instructor in photography at Sussex House.¹⁴⁹ Thomson was a fitting mentor for Fisher: his work had documented the empire both abroad, in his survey photographs of China (Fig. 11), and at home, in his socially concerned images of London’s poor (Fig. 12), linking the concerns of the colonial periphery with that of the metropolitan centre. Fisher’s photographs of England, like Thomson’s, prioritized everyday life over momentous events, documenting scenes as banal as the entrance to a train station (Fig. 13) or a view of a white, middle-class family crossing the street on their way to church (Fig. 14).

¹⁴⁸ See Halford J. Mackinder to the Visual Instruction Committee, “Memo for the Consideration of the Colonial Office Committee on Visual Instruction,” 28 Nov 1906 and Mackinder to Fisher, “Instructions to Photographer-Artist,” 21 October 1907. CO 885/17/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

¹⁴⁹ James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 190.

To narrate Fisher's photographs, Mackinder adopted the popular form of the travelogue, a format common to many magic lantern presentations in this period. Each set of COVIC lectures was structured as a journey that began aboard a steam ship departing from the viewers' "home country." Upon arriving at the colony or country under study, the photographs and texts explored the capital city and then continued by train or foot through its rural areas and small towns, describing in detail its natural resources and major exports. Throughout the lectures he authored, Mackinder addressed his school-aged audience as "we," asking viewers to imaginatively place themselves in the spaces of the photographs and insisting that, as imperial citizens, they would be welcome in any part of the empire. Early on in the lectures on England that were presented to students in India, for instance, he provides the addresses of the Northbrook Society and the National Indian Association, who he says will welcome and introduce "Indian students and others who happen to have no friends in London."¹⁵⁰ As the lectures continue on to photographs of the country's great universities, Mackinder establishes class distinctions between the city and country, describing the students of Eton and Oxford, pictured at play on soccer pitches, as "the men whom we know here in India as officers of the Army and of the Navy, as Civil Servants, and as merchants," whereas England's small towns and countryside are said to be "the early surroundings of those whom we know chiefly as the rank and file of the Army and as the sailors of the Navy" (Fig. 15).¹⁵¹ Here, schooling is seen as an access point to international mobility, where English students secure their ability to travel to the colonies through their education as colonial bureaucrats at universities for the middle-class, or through their training in the navy and army for the

¹⁵⁰ Mackinder, *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom* 8.

¹⁵¹ Mackinder *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom* 59.

lower and working classes. In a small farming village in northern England, for instance, Mackinder describes three slides of an Old Man Digging, an Old Shepherd and an Old Woman in terms that suggest the older generation's ignorance and lack of mobility compared to that of the current generation of students. The older villager "probably did not learn to write because in their childhood children from country villages were not obliged to go to school," and, while the father of the family has probably never been to London, "quite likely he often has letters from a son who is a sailor in the Fleet in the China Seas, from another son who is a soldier in India, and from a daughter who is married to a farmer in Australia."¹⁵² Here, the class distinctions and familial ties of birth are seen to have a stronger hold on the older generation of English subjects, while their children—as model imperial citizens—have left the "Mother Country" to join the wider community of the empire.

Fisher's photographs present a group of sailors, on board the King Edward, one of the largest warships ever built in the United Kingdom, meant to stand in for the varied nameless sailors in Mackinder's texts. Unlike his scene of the English family on their way to church, seen at a distance with their backs to the camera, closing the viewer out of their nuclear unit, Fisher's photograph of sailors collecting their pay presents his human subjects face-on. The image is structured by the "rank and file" that the lectures describe, with row upon row of stern-faced young men in uniform stretching back into the horizon line of the image. None of the men return the gaze of the camera, looking instead to the figures at the right and left of the frame that hand out their pay as they exit the ship. The militaristic tone of these photographs is obvious, shoring up the texts' patriotic assurances that the empire is held together by the cooperation of its citizens, working

¹⁵² Mackinder, *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom* 65.

together to defend its borders. But if it is also meant to tell us something about what it means to feel like an imperial citizen, it is perhaps that a kind of emotional restraint is what is expected from the modern colonial citizen that wishes to travel within the empire, as Lily Cho has suggested.¹⁵³ In Britain, this emotional restraint took on nationalistic overtones in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, evoked by the increasingly popular idiom “to keep a stiff upper lip.” Epitomized in the poetry of Rudyard Kipling and Lawrence Oates’s famous final words as he exited the tent of Captain Scott’s Antarctic expedition (1910-12), convinced his frostbite was slowing the team’s progress to the South Pole—“I am just going outside and may be some time”¹⁵⁴—the British stiff upper lip was the affective expression of colonial common sense: an assertion of English reason and cool-headedness in the face of indigenous irrationality and intemperate weather. These are photographs that fall into a category that Tina Campt describes as “images of institutional membership whose consumption was intended to construct an affiliative relation between the viewer and the viewed... They are structured by a documentary impulse, yet it is an impulse premised on a relation of affiliation, connection, and affirmation.”¹⁵⁵ The model of affiliation and connection that COVIC offers is not the warm and fuzzy kind promised by “The Family of Man” exhibition and located in the domestic space of the home, however; instead it is a calm, detached and public form of belonging guaranteed through institutional membership. To join this community of imperial citizens and to access the

¹⁵³ Lily Cho, “Intimacy Among Strangers: Anticipating Citizenship in Chinese Head Tax Photographs,” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 15.1 (March 2013), pp. 10-23.

¹⁵⁴ See, for instance, Kipling’s poem, “If—,” (1895). Oates’s supposed final words are recorded in Herbert Ponting’s memoir, *Great White South: being an account of experiences with Captain Scott’s South Pole expedition and of the nature life of the Antarctic*, (London: Duckworth, 1921) 288.

¹⁵⁵ Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 58.

mobility it offers is, the photograph suggests, to identify with the professional comportment of this group of serious men over the structures of the family unit.

Mackinder's appeal to the Indian viewer to conflate these images of nameless, unindividuated white men with the real-life representatives of empire that she would encounter outside of the classroom also underscores the performative function that Fisher's photographs were meant to play in the classroom. To interpret these subjects as imperial citizens means to recognize them, through their rank and class positions, as already-familiar and unthreatening contributors to the empire's organic community: to sympathize with them, not as strangers, but as future acquaintances who will inevitably cross the viewer's path through the circulatory systems of the "living entity" of the empire.

This emphasis on circulation helps to explain why the COVIC project used photographs, rather than traditional maps, to illustrate a series of geography lectures. Here, photography is employed as another form of colonial transportation. Bringing people and objects from faraway lands into close proximity with the viewer, the COVIC lectures ask that its audience not only interpret Fisher's photographs as illustrations of the workings of the imperial circulatory system, but that they also affectively identify with the subjects and social relations that the slides bring to life. In this way, the COVIC project invests photography with the ability to create proxies for colonial subjects, visually corollaries which the viewer is meant to engage with on an affective level as practice for the real-life encounters she will negotiate outside of the classroom. Accompanied by Mackinder's use of biological vocabulary, describing England as "the heart and the brain of the Empire" which must be nourished by the colonies, this appeal

to the viewer's sympathies serves to naturalize the power relations at play in the imperial context.¹⁵⁶

Rather than assuming that these rhetorical strategies in the textbooks worked to smooth over the contradictions that appear in Fisher's photographs, I want to suggest that the constant performance and re-performance of imperial citizenship in the COVIC lectures point to the instability of photographic meaning in the modern colonial context. Just as Herbert Ponting, the official photographer for Captain Scott's failed expedition to the Antarctic, had to physically accompany his lanternslide presentations to students to make their narrative of imperial masculinity legible in the face of the failures his images depicted, the COVIC lectures used textbooks as instruction manuals on how to understand Fisher's photographs as signs of imperial citizenship.¹⁵⁷ The photographs, in other words, were contingent on texts for their ideological message. This dependence on their activation as pedagogical tools in the classroom means that every time the COVIC lectures were presented, there were opportunities for students and spectators to intervene in the meanings that were made from the photographs, and to point out the internal contradictions about imperial belonging that structured the project. Though there are few accounts from students and teachers about how they used and understood the COVIC photographs, there is evidence that viewers were aware of the contradictions of imperial citizenship even from the earliest presentations of the lectures. While Mackinder's texts promised students that they could travel anywhere in the empire and find themselves at home, under the same flag and king and among fellow citizens, reports from the teachers who presented the "test" lectures on England point out that, for the majority of the

¹⁵⁶ Mackinder, *Lantern Lectures on the United Kingdom* 31.

¹⁵⁷ Dootson.

empire's citizens, travel itself was impossible. One headmaster in the Gold Coast noted that the lectures were well-received, but that the texts had to be significantly adapted in some cases to be able to explain to students who lived inland how sea travel and transportation worked, since they had never seen the ocean before. Another teacher at a girls' school in Hong Kong had "nothing but praise" for the lectures' effectiveness, especially for her female students who, she noted, "have few, if any, facilities for [physically] traveling" through the empire.¹⁵⁸ By reminding the committee that the material conditions of colonial life made the international travel depicted by the COVIC lectures into a photographic fantasy, these reports convey an implicit awareness that many of the rights guaranteed by imperial citizenship were empty promises. In the next set of lectures on India, presented to British students in 1910, the unevenness with which the rights of citizenship were applied across the empire becomes even more apparent: an inconsistency that would take on a new political urgency in the face of Indian demands for independence and sovereignty as the lectures continued to circulate in classrooms until 1945.

Projecting imperial citizenship

The COVIC lectures on India were, along with those on England, the most popular in the series, circulating to thousands of schools around the empire. They are also the texts and images that have received the most attention from scholars, figuring prominently in the only two sustained accounts of the COVIC project, by geographer James R. Ryan and

¹⁵⁸ Government House of the Gold Coast to the Colonial Office, "Report on the success of lectures," 13 August 1907 and High Commissioner of Hong Kong to the Earl of Elgin, "Report on use of lectures," 10 July 1907. CO 885/17/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

historian John M. MacKenzie.¹⁵⁹ The lectures on India present a greater diversity of subject matter than those on England and see Fisher experiment with a wider array of formal choices in his photographs. Gone are the stiff views of well-formed groups, such as the sailors aboard the King Edward warship, and the distanced perspectives of middle-class families that typified the photographs of England; in their place, the India lectures offer the viewer a close encounter with the subjects of Fisher's photographs in frontal scenes that place the camera in the middle of events with a kind of immediacy that borders on reportage. In a series of photographs of a fair in Rosa, for instance (Fig. 16), Fisher positions the camera as another spectator of the leisure activities already taking place, with one figure in the foreground—a small boy on the left-hand side, with some kind of package or fabric tucked under one arm—so close to the camera that he is out of focus. Though most of the subjects return our gaze, including the passengers on the Ferris wheel who turn around to look at the camera, they do not look posed so much as briefly paused in the middle of their activities to acknowledge the camera's presence. Unlike the tours of the shipyards and factories in England, which seemed designed to be seen by Fisher's camera, the photographs of India mimic the snapshot aesthetic of vernacular photography: they seem to capture everyday life as it unfolds rather than constructing a scene for the camera.

Not only are Fisher's photographs of India more visually interesting, but Mackinder's texts also take on a more evocative tone in the Indian lectures, perhaps because he was drawing on his interpretations of Fisher's photographs, and his imagination, as much as he was geographical knowledge. As one of his biographers

¹⁵⁹ The lectures on England and India are the only images to receive attention in both scholars' work, including Ryan's "Visualizing Imperial Geography," *Picturing Empire* and in MacKenzie's *Propaganda and Empire*.

points out, Mackinder was fascinated with India in part because he had never traveled there;¹⁶⁰ when he lists the “common sights” or “typical scenes” in India, he is imagining them through Fisher’s photographs, just as his children viewers were asked to. After a cursory read, the COVIC lectures also seem to traffic in the familiar racial categories established by colonial travel writing of the period and by contemporaneous photographic projects such as the best-selling multivolume publication, *The People of India* (1868–1875, reprinted 1908).

All these factors make the India lectures a seductive target for critical analysis, which perhaps explains their prominence in accounts of the COVIC project so far. But missing from these accounts is a critical attention to the anomalies within the project’s narrative that suggest a more complicated account of how COVIC’s audience was taught to recognize imperial citizenship in relation to the visualization of race. While the second and third chapters suggest that there are fruitful, contradictory meanings available to the present viewer of the COVIC archive who can let her eye wander, reading the images out of order and seeing which photographs were excluded from the final presentations, here I want to keep my eyes firmly trained on how COVIC would have liked its viewers to read the slides, dwelling on the inconsistencies of imperial citizenship that appear even within the lectures’ intended, official message. This is not to suggest that it is possible to create a whole or hermeneutic reading of the COVIC lectures, or to retrieve what it may have been like to be one of the “original” viewers of the lectures. Such a project is not only a romantic and nostalgic one that would try to create origin stories where there are none, but the structure of the COVIC project means that a holistic or consistent view of the

¹⁶⁰ Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 177.

lectures is an historical impossibility. The slides, which had to be loaded into the lantern individually, were difficult to store in the “correct” order laid out in the textbooks and, because of their fragility, the glass slides would often break while being transported between schools, resulting in missing images each time the lectures were presented. Mackinder’s preface to the textbooks also encouraged teachers to ad lib, inserting local knowledge into their presentations and stopping the lectures to create assignments for their pupils (such as “writing a letter home, telling your family what you have seen on your trip,” as one teacher reports doing). The layout of the textbooks contributed another, often contradictory, level of narration by including reproductions of some of the slides, printed in pairs placed sporadically throughout the books. These pairings seem to have been chosen by the book publisher for their visual interest and formal connections rather than their original order in the lectures, often creating compare-and-contrast relationships between images that are not reflected in the lecture texts (Fig. 17). Sales records indicate it is also highly unlikely that any one group of viewers saw more than one set of the lectures (i.e., on both England and India), meaning that the imaginative, spectatorial exchange between children viewers that the COVIC project envisioned was more a proposition than a reality.

These practical considerations are important, especially in considering how the obstacles to implementing the lecture program refuted the committee’s fantasies about the cohesiveness of the empire (a tension I explore further in my consideration of the Canada lectures in chapter two). But for the moment I want to suspend this disbelief about the ways the lectures were presented to students and to take Mackinder’s texts at their word, imagining the ideal reception and audience that the committee must have

imagined for the project. Performing a “loyal” reading of the India lectures is not to refuse to see the inconsistencies of imperial citizenship as it is articulated by COVIC, but to recognize how these inconsistencies were woven into the project’s narrative: to trace how flexible the definition of imperial citizenship had to be in order to be convincing. Here, I am interested in how the COVIC photographs conversed with concurrent visual representations of imperial subjects, which sometimes provided ballast for the lectures’ rhetoric, and at other times contradicted it. These inconsistencies signal that it was the ability to view images of other subjects and to recognize them as citizens that made one an imperial citizen in the COVIC project. By drawing out this emphasis on spectating as the constitutive practice of citizenship, I hope to show that the COVIC project also inadvertently opened up the possibility for viewers to “see” narratives of belonging in places where it was not explicitly represented, to put photographs of colonial subjects to use in ways that their producers could not anticipate or control.

Though the COVIC lectures were advertised as lessons in geography, it is human figures that appear most often in the lectures, underscoring the project’s function as a catalogue of imperial subjectivity as much as it was an inventory of colonial holdings. In contradistinction to the images produced by national railway companies and immigration departments around the empire in the same period, which used views of empty landscapes to encourage colonial settlement and obfuscate indigenous ownership and use of the land, unoccupied landscapes are rare in the COVIC photographs.¹⁶¹ The vast

¹⁶¹ The scholarship on the ideological function of the unoccupied landscape in colonial photography is rich and varied. For case studies relevant to the period in which the COVIC photographs were produced, see Jeremy Foster, “Capturing and Losing the ‘Lie of the Land’: Railway Photography and Colonial Nationalism in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa” in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003/2009): 141-161; and Marcia Crosby, “Construction of the Imaginary Indian” in *The Vancouver Anthology: the Institutional Politics of Art*, Stan Douglas, ed. (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991): 267-294.

majority of the 7,600 images Fisher produced for the project between 1907 and 1910 are populated, depicting the British Empire as a series of territorial holdings constantly being worked and improved by colonial subjects. Mackinder's vision was just as important as Fisher's in determining the kinds of subjects represented in the COVIC photographs: not just because he served as the editor of the project, choosing which of Fisher's images to make into lantern slides, but because he also operated much as a film director would today, directing the camera's attention to particular scenes as the photographs for the project were produced. In a lengthy letter to Fisher before he left on his journey, Mackinder gave the photographer explicit instructions about the type of "views" to create, including a slide list that imagined the kinds of subjects he would need. The goal of the imagery, as Mackinder explained, was to give students an impression of each colony or dominion as "might be obtained by an intelligent traveller who was favoured with the guidance of the authorities on the spot." Fisher should not, therefore, spend time documenting buildings which are only of archaeological interest, nor on natural objects with scientific interest, but photographing subjects "essential to a broad and vivid impression of the country."¹⁶² Equipped with a 1907 model Sanger-Shepherd camera (a relatively new colour photography process that used a series of prisms and filters to produce three negatives on one plate of film with every exposure), Fisher followed Mackinder's directions faithfully.¹⁶³ He then mailed batches of his negatives and prints,

¹⁶² H.J. Mackinder to A. Hugh Fisher, "Instructions to Photographer-Artist," 21 October 1907. Miscellaneous Correspondence (4 April 1905 to 16 November 1907) relating to Visual Instruction, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

¹⁶³ The preface to the second edition of the lectures on India note that "some of the lantern slides are photographs in black and white, some are photographs coloured by hand from Mr. Fisher's paintings, and some are colour photographs from the Sanger Shepherd process directly reproducing Mr. Fisher's work" (H. J. Mackinder, *India: Eight Lectures*, London: Visual Instruction Committee and George Philip and Son, 1910, iv). For more detailed information about the operation of the Sanger-Shepherd method of colour photography and printing see Brian Coe, *Colour Photography: The first hundred years, 1840-1940*

often developed in the bathroom sinks of his hotel rooms, as well as his journal notes, back to England each month, where Mackinder selected the images to be used in the lectures and wrote the texts to accompany them.¹⁶⁴

Like the other lectures in the series, the images that Mackinder selected for the India slides prioritize group portraits and street scenes over photographs of individuals. This emphasis on the collective over the individual portrait was emblematic of a turn in the broader visual culture of the period, as Pinney has suggested. Pinney argues that colonial photography projects in India shifted away from anthropometric photography—which used the features of a single subject to try to build taxonomies of racial or ethnic characteristics—and towards group portraiture as a kind of aesthetic hangover after the Indian Rebellion, or so-called Indian Mutiny, of 1857. A sense of having failed to predict or prevent the Mutiny, of not having “seen it coming,” pervaded public discourse in the years after the conflict and cast doubt on the legibility of the human body captured by photographs. Individual portraits may have told anthropologists something about what each “race” looked like, but it did nothing to predict the political allegiances of each religious and caste group in the lead-up to the Mutiny. Since photographs of individual bodies were insufficient in representing generalized social identities, post-Mutiny photography projects focused instead on the “external traces of a collectivity.”¹⁶⁵ This explains the success of projects like *The People of India* (Fig. 18), an antecedent to the COVIC project that attempted to build a catalogue of ethnic and caste groups. Bringing

(London: Ash & Grant Ltd, 1978) and Sylvie Pénichon, *Twentieth Century Color Photographs: Identification and Care* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2013). I am grateful to Arpad Kovacs for directing me to this research into this little-known process.

¹⁶⁴ A.H. Fisher letters, 2 November 1907, RCMS 10, Royal Commonwealth Society, University of Cambridge.

¹⁶⁵ Pinney, *Camera Indica* 70.

together existing photographs from various private and public collections into a multivolume publication for mass consumption, *The People of India* was, like COVIC, organized by members of the British government as an effort to photographically catalogue the Indian population through 468 annotated images. In *The People of India*, the collectives that made up Indian society were not only classified by their racial origins, but also by their castes, tribal affiliations and professions. The Mutiny forced colonial photography projects like COVIC to overthrow the “typical” formal conventions of anthropological photography for the exigencies of the political moment: as Pinney describes it, a “preoccupation with origins, purity and the prospect of decay which informed so many earlier and later works were swept away by a concern with political loyalty (or its lack) [in the post-Mutiny era] and an ongoing desire to provide practical clues to the identification of groups which had so recently had the opportunity to demonstrate either their fierce hatred of British rule, or their acquiescence.”¹⁶⁶

Pinney’s analysis of the effects of the Mutiny on photographs of Indian subjects helpfully explains the apparent paradox that visual representations of India became less, rather than more, insistent on the legibility of bodies after the catastrophic moment of insurrection. As historian Kim A. Wagner suggests, this skepticism about visual legibility was part of a wider “enduring legacy of fear” that animated much colonial discourse and policy in India after 1857, leading to a series of non-events that Wagner describes as “colonial information panics.”¹⁶⁷ Wagner traces several moments in post-1857 British

¹⁶⁶ Pinney, *Camera Indica*, 34.

¹⁶⁷ Kim A. Wagner, “‘Treading Upon Fires’: The ‘Mutiny’-Motif and Colonial Anxieties in British India,” *Past & Present*, 218.1 (February 2013), 159-197, 160. Here, Wagner draws on Ann Laura Stoler’s concept of the “non-event” in colonial archives: times when colonial bureaucrats planned for a crisis that might not ever come to pass (*Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009)).

India where newspapers and colonial paperwork struggled to make sense of trends or changes in the local population, always with the fear that seemingly everyday practices—such as the exchange of chapattis or the daubing of mud onto trees—might portend a “Second Mutiny” against imperial rule. In these expressions of anxiety about what these visual signs *might* mean, “The colonial culture of fear found its expression at the convergence of the colonial imagination and colonial information, effectively blurring the lines between public opinion and government policy.”¹⁶⁸ Fisher’s photographs can be interpreted as another source of this unsettled information: visual clues about Indian subjects whose meanings were difficult to pin down. Perhaps this explains one of Mackinder’s most insistent but opaque requests for the COVIC photographs: that, wherever possible, Fisher “divide... subjects into two categories, the first being the *native characteristics* of the country and its people, and the second the *super-added characteristics due to British rule*.”¹⁶⁹ Mackinder may have imagined that these before-and-after distinctions would be easy to visualize, demonstrating the ways that colonial rule had benefited the colonies by eliminating slavery, providing health care and education or improving infrastructure. The lectures’ rhetorical power depended on the viewer’s ability to recognize these contrasts through the depictions of indigenous practices taking place in front of Western-inspired architecture, or the evidence of non-white bodies adopting British modes of (re)production, from factory labour to forms of military training and education. But, as becomes clear as we follow Mackinder’s imaginary route through India, it is often difficult to discern which of Fisher’s photographs are meant to show us dutiful imperial citizens and which suggest potential

¹⁶⁸ Wagner 162.

¹⁶⁹ Mackinder to Fisher, “Instructions to Photographer-Artist,” 21 October 1907. Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London, emphasis added.

rebels, preparing for their next insurgency through the benefits provided by colonial education and military training. Throughout the COVIC lectures on India, group identities are never settled or unitary. Instead, difference is intersectional, with groups nested within one another: Brahmins and untouchables, bureaucrats and lowly foot soldiers, loyal subjects and nationalist mutineers all brush up against one another in the catalogue of imperial citizenship.

Much like the lectures on England, COVIC's India lectures ask their (implicitly white, English) audience to imagine traveling to India by ship, underscoring how the invention of steam-powered transportation has transformed the speed with which goods and people travel through the empire. As Mackinder notes on the second page of the textbook on India, "Today the British official and soldier and merchant go from London to Bombay, and the Indian student comes from Bombay to London, in a fortnight."¹⁷⁰ This description of the circulation of colonial bodies—a recurring feature of the lecture texts—is, importantly, unidirectional and paternalistic: established British professionals travel out to the colonies to deliver their wares and services, while the Indian student comes to London to learn the ways of the imperial centre. Fisher's photographs underwrite these power dynamics between English and colonial subjects. In contrast to the lectures on England, which insisted on the familiarity of white English subjects as the mobile and friendly administrators of empire, figures in the India lectures are often rankless and classless, described as exotic scenery rather than active subjects. In the sixth image of the lectures on India (the first image of human figures in this set), Fisher's photograph depicts the viewer's imagined ship arriving at the docks of Tuticorin (now

¹⁷⁰ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India*, 2.

Thoothukudi) (Fig. 19). Mackinder's text adopts the familiar tone of colonial travel writing to describe the scene:

We land. *Dark* gesticulating figures surround us, scantily clad in white cotton. The morning sun casts long shadows, but there is a throng of people, for the work of India is done in the cool of the morning. The express train to Madras is waiting, but we have a short time for that first stroll, which leaves so deep an impression on the traveller setting foot in a new land.¹⁷¹

Where the lectures on England underscored the familiarity of the photographed subjects, the Indian lectures present theirs as foreign and exotic; a distancing strategy that is echoed in Fisher's compositional choices, which capture the figures at a remove from the viewer, their backs turned to the camera. Here, the interplay between the lecture texts and the photographs is particularly important in marking Indian subjects as racially different from British viewers. The text draws our attention to the figures' darker skin tones by juxtaposing it with their white cotton robes: a contrast in light and dark forms that is repeated in the photograph's opposition between the bright morning sunlight, which nearly eradicates any detail in the background of the photograph, and the "long shadows" cast by the figures in the foreground. For those viewers who had seen the lectures on England, published the previous year, the photograph of the landing at Tuticorin must have functioned as the inverted version of the image of the English sailors receiving their pay on the deck of the King Edward warship (Fig. 15). In the place of ordered rows of naval crew members, their white faces and caps facing the viewer and standing out against their dark, identical uniforms, in Tuticorin we are offered a haphazard cluster of people in bright white shirts and saris, all of whom seem to be waiting for something and

¹⁷¹ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India* 5, emphasis added.

ignore the presence of the camera, gazing outside the frame of the image, towards the arriving ships or at one another. Fisher's elevated perspective of the sailors on the King Edward produces a long line of men that recedes into vanishing point high at the top of the image, suggesting a nearly endless supply of defenders of empire. In Tuticorin, we are presented with an extreme, shortened frontality and a low perspective that seems to look up at the figures on the dock. The background, which takes up two thirds of the composition, is blown out by the bright lighting conditions, appearing almost blank except for the few ship masts that have registered on the film. While the naval officers in England are on their way off of the ship, mobile and determined, the Indian subjects in Tuticorin are caught in a moment of inactivity, not really going anywhere or doing anything. From the beginning of the COVIC lectures on India, Indian subjects are consigned to an "imaginary waiting room of history," as Dipesh Chakrabarty has described it, not yet ready for global mobility, nor, as we shall see, for self-government.¹⁷²

As the tour through India's major cities continues, the COVIC lectures continue to emphasize the exotic and the "characteristic" in Indian culture, a Darwinian notion that Mackinder favoured throughout the lectures on the non-European colonies that described the "innate" qualities of a race or culture. In the section about Benares (now Varanasi), one of India's oldest cities and a centre of spiritual education, a range of "typical scenes" is presented to the viewer, including snake-handlers, bazaars and carnivals (Figs. 20 and 21). I want to dwell on two of these images, of a "fakir" lying on a bed of nails, and of two snake charmers, which appear one after the other in the slide list for the India

¹⁷² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000) 7.

lectures and side-by-side in the illustrations included in the textbooks given to students (Fig. 17). They are familiar stereotypes in the era's visual culture representing India, so familiar that Mackinder seems to have felt it unnecessary to describe the figures at any length. The COVIC textbooks describes them in five economical sentences that are worth reproducing in full:

In the narrow deep-shaded streets, and the sordid and tawdry purlieus of the temples may be seen many a typical scene of Eastern life. Here, for instance, close to Aurangzeb's Mosque, is a Fakir or religious enthusiast, to whom the alms or the faithful are due. He rests on this bed of spikes day and night. Such Fakirs get much alms, which they are supposed by the envious to bury underground. We have another characteristic scene here, two snake charmers on one of the ghats, with a fine assortment of reptiles—cobra, python, and other snakes, as well as scorpions. There is always a ready crowd for them, as for jugglers of curious skill.¹⁷³

Fisher's two images are straightforward in their depiction of these two scenes: they position the camera on the same level as the fakir and snake charmers, giving the viewer close access to these scenes in a more casual manner than the depictions of the same figures in *The People of India*. Returning the gaze of the camera, Fisher's subjects seem at ease with his presence, welcoming the viewer as the spectator of these scenes. But it quickly becomes clear that, as viewers, we are alone in this spectatorial position. If there is a "ready crowd" for these performances, as Mackinder's text suggests, then we must be them: there are no other figures looking on, no groups of spectators the camera has to compete with to bring us this view. There are other people in these photographs, though, people who are not the fakir or snake charmers meant to be the main subjects, and it is to

¹⁷³ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India* 57.

them that I find myself looking to confirm the text's assertion that these are typical and characteristic scenes.

At first, the figures in the backgrounds of both images seem to support what the lecture texts tell viewers to see. The expressions of the men behind the fakir (Fig. 20) in particular convey an emotional neutrality and casualness that suggests the banality of the fakir's performance. Standing in an open doorway, they gaze towards us rather than at the fakir, squinting into the bright sun overhead. Neither smiling in response to the camera—which at this historical moment was not yet a conventional response to photography—nor exhibiting overt aggression, they almost glare in Fisher's direction. If their expression is somewhat neutral, the fakir himself is downright blasé, his face turned towards the camera in an expression of disinterest, his arms resting nonchalantly in his lap. Depicting the “native” population's suspicious or fearful reactions to the camera and the request—or injunction—to have their photograph taken had become a trope in many colonial photography projects in the late nineteenth century, one that James Ryan argues was a way to discount as irrational the indigenous population's legitimate resistance to colonial violence, and for European communities to work through their own fetishistic relationship to photography by displacing it onto a racialized other.¹⁷⁴ Neither Fisher's photograph nor Mackinder's text traffics in this trope, but these figures are once again left idling within the empire's circulatory system, waiting for something to happen. Their inactivity, as well as the ambivalent annoyance with the camera's presence that registers on their faces, complicates COVIC's narrative of imperial citizenship, however; the audience of the COVIC lectures might hear that they are welcome travelers in any part of

¹⁷⁴ James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 143.

the empire, but they can see there is no guarantee they will be greeted warmly upon arrival. Much like Fisher's photograph of the sailors in England, neutrality and, in this case, indifference are the emotional tenors of imperial citizenship.

The photograph that follows this one (Fig. 21), of two snake handlers by the river in Benares, presents even more onlookers, but they are once again behind the main subjects of the image, with many of them turned away from the "main event" the photograph supposedly depicts. Two men squat in the foreground, handling several different breeds of snake and presenting them to the camera, but the image has been carefully framed to also include examples of the "native" architecture and several other human subjects, many carrying baskets and parcels, as they recede into the background, up the steps toward a line of trees. Two men stand on the steps just above the snake-handlers, one, in a sweater emblazoned with the acronym BRP, glances at the ground as though distracted by something just outside the frame, while the other, a cloth held to his nose and mouth, seems to be the only person in the image who looks to the snake handlers at all, his gaze directed towards them while his feet seem to pivot away, as though he is about to turn and walk up the steps behind him.¹⁷⁵ Between these two standing male figures, a younger woman, dressed in a sari, wearing bangles and carrying a small bag in one hand, turns mid-stride to look back at the camera. The woman is striking, not just because she is the exception as the only non-male figure in the image, but because she seems to have been captured so candidly, as though she was going about her normal routine when Fisher, or someone else in the scene, hailed her, prompting her to turn back and look at the camera. Even more than her pose, it is her expression of

¹⁷⁵ I have searched in vain for what BRP stands for, but cannot find any record of a colonial-era organization that used this acronym.

bemusement that makes her exceptional: unlike the fakir in the preceding image, or the men in front of her, she exhibits a clear emotional response to the appearance of Fisher and the camera in the landscape. Not one of surprise, but of casual and amused recognition.

I have taken liberties in reading the responses of the onlookers in these two images (we will never know how these people really felt, or even what they were looking at, in this encounter with Fisher) not because I hope to somehow rescue the emotional lives and biographies of these unknown colonial subjects, but in the hopes of demonstrating one possible reading available to COVIC's schoolchildren viewers based on the visual information offered to them through these photographs. With so little firm contextual information offered by the lecture texts about where we are and whom we are looking at, the COVIC viewer is invited to speculate and project narratives of their own onto these images. The network of gazes in these images is particularly important given the project's pedagogical goals: if the COVIC lectures were based on the assumption that children could be taught to "see" imperial citizenship, then depictions of colonial subjects looking, at one another, and back at the viewer, would offer lessons of their own. Lessons about how one should "look" in the sense of appearance—the kinds of emotionality that can be appropriately expressed by a citizen of empire—and lessons about how one returns the look of another imperial citizen. Paying attention to these optical exchanges between subject, photographer and viewer also draws out the event of photography in the COVIC archive over the photographed events that the lecture texts tell us we are seeing.¹⁷⁶ Though Fisher may have positioned his camera in a particular spot, carefully framing the view to include some subjects and exclude others, photography is an

¹⁷⁶ Ariella Azoulay, "Photography: the Ontological Question," *Maqte'akh* 2 (2011), 65-80.

unwieldy medium. It captures both what its operator hopes it will see, but also much more. Following Ariella Azoulay's theorization of the photograph as a medium that initiates relationships between agents that its owner(s) cannot control, this reading of the India lectures argues that an external critique of the biases of the rhetoric of imperial citizenship in the COVIC lectures is unnecessary: the contradictions and instabilities of imperial citizenship are already present in the photographs, available to the attentive viewer and student.

The lack of descriptive attention that Mackinder pays to these two photographs is at odds with their visual prominence in the COVIC textbooks on India.¹⁷⁷ While he goes on at length about other, much more boring, images of factories and waterways, he passes over these two group portraits in Benares quite quickly. Perhaps it was because the meaning of these charged figures was so obvious—a part of the colonial common sense about India—that it did not need to be explicitly articulated in the COVIC lecture texts: the significance of the figure of the fakir and the snake charmer went without saying because it was something “everybody already knew.”¹⁷⁸ As Wagner notes in his study of the colonial information panics that circulated in the wake of the Indian Mutiny, one of the “lessons” the British took from the rebellion was that the colonial authorities could not be seen to be interfering in local religious practices and beliefs, leading to an official policy of non-interference after 1857. Representations of religious leaders, and of fakirs, yogis and snake-charmers in particular, were charged with insurgent connotations in the

¹⁷⁷ It is possible that George Philip & Son, the commercial publishers who printed and distributed the COVIC textbooks, made the decisions about which of Fisher's photographs to reproduce in the books. On average, a dozen images appear in the printed textbooks, out of 300-400 lantern slides for each set of lectures.

¹⁷⁸ I owe my thinking here to Ann Laura Stoler's suggestion that important information often went unwritten in colonial archives because it was considered a part of the state's “common sense” narrative of the empire. To say it explicitly would have been redundant and unnecessary. See *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009) 3.

Edwardian period as figures suspected of “spread[ing] sedition under the guise of devout asceticism.”¹⁷⁹ An image of a fakir leading a “Second Mutiny,” a popular anxiety for colonial officials in this period, even appears in a Nov. 28, 1908 edition of London’s weekly *Penny Illustrated Paper* (Fig. 22). Published the same year Fisher was traveling through India, making these portraits of the fakir and snake-charmers in Benares, the newspaper depicts a messianic figure of the revolution, sweeping a burning torch with one hand to magically create the word “Mutiny” out of its smoke, while the other holds a coiled snake. Below him, a group of marching male students seemingly awaits his instructions, while on the right, eerily echoing Fisher’s compositional choices, several Indian women descend a staircase towards a river. By condensing these signs—the fakir, the snake-charmer and the Indian insurgent—into one figure, the drawing in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* demonstrates the currency of these representations in British public discourse in this period, the ways that these quasi-religious figures could operate as shorthand for both a reminder of past colonial insurgencies and a portent of those yet to come.¹⁸⁰

Though the fakir and the snake charmer are loaded types in the visual culture of post-Mutiny India, abstracted representations of the idea of insurgency rather than particular individuals, the fact that the COVIC lectures represent these two figures in the

¹⁷⁹ Wagner 187.

¹⁸⁰ The particular news item that the *Penny Illustrated Paper* caricature was meant to dramatize was the hanging of Satyendra Nath Bose, convicted of murdering an Indian insurgent-turned-British informer, Narendro Nath Gossain, while both in the Calcutta jail hospital. Gossain had been part of a plan to bomb key sites of colonial governance in Bengal, orchestrated by a former Indian civil servant—educated in England—who had turned against the colonial government. Bose was taken up as a martyr for the Indian nationalist movement after his death, with reports of hundreds of Calcutta residents burning effigies of his body in his honour after his execution, students marching in his memory, and British authorities refusing to release his ashes to the public out of fears of inciting violence. In its explosive bringing together of colonial education, civil service and Indian sedition, the Gossain case is the COVIC project’s inverse: a nightmare demonstration of the limits of managing colonial subjects. See “Unrest in India,” *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 14 September 1908, 5.

section on Benares is significant for the specific local meanings of that site for British colonialists. While Lucknow is usually referenced as the main site of British deaths in the Mutiny, Benares was also an important location of British-Indian violence because it hosted one of the country's largest mints: a place targeted by the rebellion as a symbol of colonial rule, and also sought as a refuge by the British civilians living there. Accounts of the Mutiny in Benares make much of the fighting that took place at the mint, on the steps of the river, and of the subsequent public hangings of rebels carried out by British troops and the burning of their bodies along the banks as a deterrent to any further rebellious acts.¹⁸¹ The lecture texts do not mark the significance of Benares in the Mutiny, except tacitly. In the India lectures, the images of the fakir and snake charmers are preceded by a lengthy discussion of Hindu burial practices, which the texts tell us involve burning the body of the deceased on pyres by the riverbank, along the ghats of the Ganges. For those students who were "seeing the world-drama as they read their morning paper," as Mackinder hoped the lectures would help them do, contemporary newspaper speculations about the potential for a "Second Mutiny," and reminders of the burning of insurgent bodies on ghats in Benares, may have come to mind as they viewed Fisher's photographs.

If this connection is implicit in the COVIC lectures, the textbooks make it explicit. Printed on the verso of the side-by-side reproductions of the fakir and the snake charmers in Benares is another suggestive pairing: an image of a woman's body burning on a pyre at a ghat in Benares and a photograph of a "Mutiny veteran" standing in front of the Baillie Gate in Lucknow, a site that had become a public monument to the British killed in the fighting of 1857 (Fig. 23). As Mackinder writes in the lecture texts about this

¹⁸¹ See, for instance, George Dodd, *The history of the Indian revolt and of the expeditions to Persia, China, and Japan, 1856-7-8: with maps, plans, and wood engravings* (India: W. and R. Chambers, 1859) and W. Thomas, *Narrative of the Indian mutinies of 1857* (Madras: The Asylum Press, 1858).

image, “Here is the Baillie Gate itself, the scene of the most furious attacks on the British position. The old man whom we note with his hat off and a medal on his breast is the guardian of the place, a veteran of the Mutiny, who as a boy took part in the defence of Lucknow.”¹⁸² This pairing of the burning body on the ghat and the loyal veteran standing guard at the gate, as well as its placement on the flip side of the portraits of the fakir and the snake charmers, suggests a cause-and-effect relationship between these photographs: a study of the differences between what mutinous and loyal subjects look like, and a reminder of the life-and-death repercussions of these imperial allegiances.

This is, admittedly, a rather nuanced connection to make between Fisher’s photographs, one that relies on the framings imposed by the lecture texts read out loud to students and by their reproduction in the textbooks, as well as their relationship to concurrent representations of the Mutiny in wider visual culture. For any of the student viewers of the COVIC lectures on India to make these interpretive leaps would require imaginative readings of these images and a careful attention to how the different photographs were meant to speak to one another across the lectures and in dialogue with current events. If the COVIC lectures were intended as a form of imperial propaganda, in this case they are certainly subtle in their message. But the strategy of implying meanings through comparisons, of leaving the significance of a depicted space unsaid, was common in the Edwardian era as a solution to the unrepresentability of the Mutiny itself, as Zahid Chaudhary suggests in his study of post-Mutiny photographs in India. Since

¹⁸² Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India* 64. Fisher’s notes in the COVIC archive tell us this is not entirely accurate: the man, William Ireland, was a veteran of the Mutiny, but a Scottish surgeon posted to the East India Company who had tended to the wounded in the Siege of Delhi, not a guard who had actively defended the Lucknow Residency. Ireland returned to the United Kingdom in 1869, where he became a specialist in “imbecility and idiocy” in children, and was likely just visiting India in this period. This is not the only time the lecture texts take interpretive and narrative liberties that are contradicted by Fisher’s travel journals, as I explore in chapter two.

cameras were not present at the major events of the rebellion, most depictions of the Mutiny were made retrospectively, either through drawings by witnesses, or by photographers who sought to recreate scenes from oral accounts. These images fulfilled a memorial as well as documentary function. Chaudhary notes that British photographers who represented the events of the Mutiny felt the need to go back to the literal space of death to record the scene, “yet what they record is blankness, the void, or emptiness. In these photographs the object of the frame is absence itself, and so the images strive toward allegory in their depiction of loss”¹⁸³ This tension between what could, or in many cases, could *not* be seen in photographs “of” the Mutiny and the complicated narratives invested in them by texts suggests for Chaudhary that colonial photography always engages in a play of surface revelation and concealment: “What interests me is this apophatic impulse at the heart of colonial photography that precisely cannot be explained away. Such a play of exposure and concealment, naming and unsaying, may well lie at the heart of all photography,” he writes.¹⁸⁴

When photographers chose to depict the blank spaces left behind after the “atrocities” committed by insurgent Indian subjects against their benign British rulers, it was the bodies of dead British colonists that went concealed and unrepresented, conjured in the minds of viewers rather than explicitly pictured. For others, such as Fisher, representations of post-Mutiny India were designed to document everyday life in the colony; both to demonstrate that the status quo of colonial rule had been re-established following the rebellion and, as both Pinney and Wagner suggest, to build a catalogue of collective allegiances that might foretell future insurrections. In these images, it is loss

¹⁸³ Zahid R. Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) 40.

¹⁸⁴ Chaudhary 69.

itself that goes unrepresented, covered over by images of effective colonial management and modern imperial production.

As the students' imaginary journey through India continues to Cawnpore, the COVIC lectures return to its message of imperial citizenship, drawing attention to the ways that Indian subjects contribute their labour to the strength of the empire. In a rhetorical move that recurs throughout the lectures on India, the textbooks make an analogy between the colonial periphery and the metropolitan centre, describing Cawnpore as "the Manchester of India... [where] Western capital, Western ideas, and Western organisation are at work on a large scale."¹⁸⁵ In a series of views of an army factory, for instance, cloth-cutters are seen crouched over an enormous expanse of khaki, working to cut patterns for uniforms that the lectures tell us are part of an order for thirty-three thousand coats for the police in Hyderabad (Fig. 24). "Both the spinning of the yarn and the weaving of khaki cloth," Mackinder's text tells the audience, "have been accomplished by native labour and British machinery at Cawnpore."¹⁸⁶ A few images later, in a tour of the boot shop of a "leather factory for making Government boots and army equipment," the lecture texts ask the viewer to note that the boots are being sewn by hand. Here, Fisher's depiction of workers squatting along the floor, making everything by hand, shows the "native characteristics" that Mackinder sought to depict in the lectures, contrasting it with the modern British forms of production that have been adopted in the "Motherland." Like so many early twentieth century narratives about the benefits of colonial rule for the native population, the COVIC lectures employ an evolutionary narrative to explain the differences between Indian and British modes of production.

¹⁸⁵ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India*, 58.

¹⁸⁶ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India*, 58.

Describing India as lagging behind modern industrial progress, Mackinder's text argues that industrialization is one of the "super-added characteristics" that British rule brings to India, improving not just the economic but also the social life of Indians; of most Indians, that is. As he concludes the section on Cawnpore, he implores his audience to

Consider the revolution in all the social life of India, which is involved in the steady displacement of these village-made wares by the cheaper machine-made products of Cawnpore and other factory centres. There is a change beginning throughout the length and breadth of this vast land, not wholly unlike that which took place in Britain under the name of the Industrial Revolution a century and a half ago. As higher and more skilled industries are introduced, it seems likely ultimately to result in a migration of workers from the villages to the cities, in the growth of the size of the cities, and in the greater monotony of life in the rustic villages. No doubt there will be some inevitable suffering, especially on the part of those workers who cannot adapt themselves to the new conditions.¹⁸⁷

In this short passage, the emotional neutrality of imperial citizenship is cast aside by Mackinder's references to the "inevitable suffering" of colonial subjects (though the blame for this future suffering is, of course, squarely placed on the subjects themselves and their unwillingness to "adapt to new conditions"). It is one of the few times the COVIC lectures acknowledge that there may be obstacles to imperial unity, and that these challenges might be the result of the will and agency of individual colonial subjects. For a brief moment, the threat to imperial citizenship does not come from the external forces of other nations or the changing world economy, but from the citizens themselves.

Read alongside Mackinder's text, Fisher's photographs of figures kneeling on the factory floor suddenly imply another kind of adaptation, this time to a position of subjugation to British rule. The textbook's reference to the destination of these goods—to

¹⁸⁷ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India*, 59.

be used by the police in Hyderabad and by the government army—reinforces such a reading: it builds on Mackinder’s favourite metaphor of the empire as a massive, cooperating circulatory system, while also reminding viewers of the daily consequences of imperial insurgency. In Cawnpore, the site of one of the bloodiest confrontations between Sepoy and British forces, the local population is seen to be quietly paying for their disloyalty 50 years later, represented here through their work to literally outfit the forces they once opposed. Images of the Mutiny and its aftermath therefore constitute the shadow archive to the COVIC photographs of India, one that haunts the geography lessons with another set of lessons about loyalty, disobedience and retribution. Though photographs of the Mutiny itself did not exist, these “unshowable” images of Indian insurrection remained a potent force in the British colonial imaginary at the start of the twentieth century, raising questions about the limits of seeing imperial loyalties.

The India lectures’ representation of these figures as currently docile but potentially problematic, as ghosts of the colonial past and specters of a post-colonial future, is the first in what will become a trope in the COVIC lectures: a concern with containing the latent political force of subjects by shaping them into productive and pliable citizens of the future. Just as schools were imagined to be key sites for creating imperial citizens in the planning of the COVIC project, education is also posited as the solution to preventing future colonial insurgency in the lectures. Towards the end of the lectures on India, as the imagined journey moves westward into what is now Pakistan, two photographs of students in a Government High School in Peshawar are used to demonstrate the ways that schooling and the defense of the empire are intertwined. In the first, a long row of young men, most wearing turbans, stand in front of a low, one-storey

building (Fig. 18). Carefully lined up shoulder-to-shoulder, they face the camera and, with outstretched arms, point the viewer's gaze to what she is meant to be paying attention to: another male student who is performing a handstand on two balance bars in the foreground. While, in another context, this demonstration of physical strength and fitness might have been interpreted as a potential threat to colonial rule (one imagines a depiction of a snake charmer performing a similar gesture would have easily been read as a call to arms for a Second Mutiny), in the space of a school it is framed as a testament to the successes of British education on the colonial periphery. As Mackinder's lecture texts explain, "Here in Peshawar, on the very border of British rule, it is interesting to see the progress of western education. This is the Government High School. A class is in the playground under gymnastic instruction. The boys are mostly Musulmans, though a few Hindus may be distinguished by their caps in the place of turbans."¹⁸⁸ Here, on the border of then-India (now Pakistan) and Afghanistan, religious differences are noted (but are so unstable that they require a mode of dress to distinguish between the two groups), and then smoothed over by the processes of colonial education, which transform the subjects' violent and mutinous potential (suggested a few pages beforehand by the snake charmer in Benares) into imperial loyalty.

The India lectures show that the ultimate destination for these newly trained imperial citizens is not far away. These students are implicitly destined for the Khyber Pass, a key military site depicted in the next seven photographs of the lecture. Here, the Kyhber Rifles, a company of colonial serviceman, defend India's borders alongside the "wild" and "war-loving" native tribesmen that have been enlisted into the British Army to "keep them out of mischief, and also to assist in repelling raids by their fellow-

¹⁸⁸ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India*, 123.

tribesmen.”¹⁸⁹ Like contemporaneous lanternslide lectures presented by missionaries to support their evangelical work in London and the colonies, the COVIC lectures here take on a proto-cinematic quality, using still images to suggest the movement of bodies and the transformation of subjectivities. Students of the COVIC lectures are meant to read Fisher’s photographs of these Indian subjects as before and after depictions, to “see” a change in their political affiliations that is not visually explicit. Since these political allegiances were not immediately evident in Fisher’s photographs, the COVIC lectures relied on Mackinder’s texts to make students imagine them instead. It was not just the evidentiary function of photography that the committee relied on in their depictions of the colonies as active contributors to the strength of the empire: photography’s affective potential—the meanings that a collective of viewers could generate from their identifications with these images—was just as important as what it showed.

Fisher’s photograph of the gym class in Peshawar weaves the various narrative threads of the COVIC project together into one image: the role of state education in producing citizens, anxieties about national efficiency brushing up against fears of a potentially insurgent indigenous population, and the importance of training the spectator to recognize this as a scene of imperial citizenship. In contrast to Thy Phu’s study of how civility—performances of restraint and dignity—constituted model citizenship for Asian minorities in the United States in the twentieth century, in the COVIC lectures expressions of emotional extremes—such as aggression, resolve, and a fierce loyalty to the sovereign—did not necessarily disqualify one from imperial citizenship.¹⁹⁰ On the contrary, amid the national panics about efficiency, imperial loyalty and the strength of

¹⁸⁹ Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India*, 124.

¹⁹⁰ Phu 4.

the empire, these were often seen as coveted qualities that the colonial subject might teach the English student. But distinguishing where physical strength was an asset to the empire, rather than a threat to it, also required rhetorical gymnastics on the part of the COVIC lectures. Fisher's photographs could construct a catalogue of colonial subjects, but to understand these figures as imperial citizens required the supplementation of Mackinder's texts, and the affective work of the viewer, who imagined herself as similar to the people being projected on the screen despite all of the differences—in class, gender, religion and especially race—that she was also asked to see.

Flexible Citizenship¹⁹¹

How then were students supposed to understand the diverse subjects of the India lectures as figures of imperial citizenship? Are they rebellious insurgents now safely contained as citizens? Or do they constitute potential threats to imperial unity, lying in wait for the right moment for nationalist insurrection, which even education is not guaranteed to correct? I want to suggest that Mackinder, and the wider COVIC committee, did not have clear answers to these questions: that these uncertainties about what it meant to look and to feel like an imperial citizen are what defined it as a category of belonging in the first place. Like contemporary notions of universal human rights, imperial citizenship was imagined in the abstract. When it had to be realized, concretized and represented in specific places and times, it was inevitably marked by contingency and contradiction. As

¹⁹¹ Though Aihwa Ong has used the term “flexible citizenship” to describe the ways that modern citizens use the discrepancies of international citizenship laws to their advantage, often working in one country while owning property and locating their family in another, I am interested in a different conception of flexible citizenship, one in which the very parameters of what determine citizen status seem to stretch and morph. See Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

Banerjee argues, despite its premise in a universal and formal equality, “the effects of citizenship [are] always double and partial.”¹⁹²

This interplay between each subject’s intersectional differences and their place within the wider imagined community of the empire is what makes the COVIC project so fascinating. Rather than homogenizing differences between subjects, as we might expect hegemonic power structures to do, the COVIC project highlighted them, showing the capaciousness of imperial citizenship in accommodating (certain kinds of) agency. The flexible framework that could safely contain these differences was a worldview of the empire as densely interconnected, an imagined global community with a rightful place for each subject. In some ways, the COVIC project’s depiction of the empire foreshadows early–twenty-first century discourses of the global digital citizen, a notion that also relies on photographs to shore up an otherwise invisible category of belonging. But where the global citizen is created in the supposedly immaterial spaces of digital image-making and streaming video, COVIC’s imperial citizen is shaped through the viewing practices she is taught in the space of the classroom. Perhaps most importantly, the colonial subjects pictured in the COVIC lectures had to be seen to be participating in this education in imperial citizenship of their own accord: they had to be willing citizens, not coerced subjects. The inverse of the imperial citizen was the colonial slave labourer, a figure who reappears throughout Fisher’s photographs, haunting the notion of the sovereign imperial citizen, as we will see in chapter three.

The moments of contradiction in the narrative of imperial citizenship that I have charted in the lectures on India are not failures in the project’s ability to persuade its viewers, but constitutive of the kinds of knowledge it tried to produce. Photographic

¹⁹² Banerjee 11.

archives such as COVIC were produced in an effort to make epistemic distinctions, to “see” racial and imperial categories that did not yet exist. But this knowledge, as the lecture images and texts show, was—much like imperial citizenship itself—tentative and precarious.¹⁹³ The archive where the COVIC photographs are stored, the subject of the next chapter, records these uncertainties in detail, revealing where the committee’s “knowledge” about the empire was refuted and revised as Fisher traveled around the world for three years. The images he produced for the project that were omitted from the final lectures, as well as the journal notes he kept, test the promises of imperial citizenship and the limits of photographic representation in picturing it. The COVIC project’s acknowledgment of the contingencies of photographic meaning, and the flexibility of a term like imperial citizenship—a category that accommodates snake charmers alongside students, fakirs as well as uniform-makers—also made it a tool of anti-colonial resistance as the lectures continued to circulate in classrooms as late as 1945. As a researcher in the archive, my interest is in developing the critical possibilities of these photographs further, of imagining how spectators may have re-instrumentalized them to demand the promises of imperial citizenship be realized.

¹⁹³ Stoler 4.

Chapter Two: Looking at photographs “along the archival grain”

In a large, leather-bound album of photographs of Canada made by Alfred Hugh Fisher in the summer of 1908, a series of thirteen images taken from the deck of a steamboat depicts a journey up the Ottawa River, on its way to Montreal (Fig. 26). Mounted four to a page and captioned with short, hand-written phrases describing sights along the route, the sepia-toned images offer the viewer of the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee (COVIC) archive a now-familiar perspective. As he had in hundreds of images of ships that appear in the eight albums that precede this one, Fisher has positioned his camera on the steamboat’s lower deck, pointing his lens away from the bow and towards the ship’s passengers (Fig. 27). The curved lines made by the boat’s railings frame the photographs, which are punctuated by the rectangular forms of windows on the lower deck and the octagonal enclosure that holds the ship’s wheel and helmsman. Fisher’s subjects—the ship’s passengers—occupy the middle ground of the photograph, seated on simple wooden chairs and shaded from the summer sun. One woman peruses a newspaper, while another to her left hunches over her knitting. On the right-hand side of the image, a man’s legs appear, cut off from view from the rest of his body and propped up on a chair. Engaged in their own activities and positioned far from the lens, the passengers blend together in a crowd of summer vacationers, dressed alike in dark suits, lace-trimmed dresses and straw hats. The view Fisher offers is not of the river’s passing scenery, as one might expect from the photographic travelogues on which the COVIC lectures were based, but rather a photographic *mise-en-scène*, establishing the point of view from which the journey will be captured and depicting the other spectators who share this perspective. Turning the pages of the album, its hinges loose from decades

of browsing by visitors to the University of Cambridge library, Fisher's photographs of the Ottawa River at first seem typical of the aesthetic he employed throughout the 7,600 images he produced for the COVIC project.¹⁹⁴

The archive where the COVIC photographs are stored is a strangely personal one, especially in contrast to the officious tone and bureaucratic structure of the committee's meeting minutes held by the National Archives. At the Cambridge University library, where Fisher's 28 albums of photographs now reside, the archival researcher is offered an alternative account of how the COVIC project constructed imperial citizenship. Told in the first person, through Fisher's travel diaries, the story offered by the photographic archive is rich with anecdotes about moments when the abstract and universal promise of imperial citizenship faltered when it had to be realized and pictured in the specific contexts of the colonies and dominions. Though they offer first-hand accounts of his journey around the empire, Fisher's travel diaries were never intended to be private: the photographer took these notes as the basis for the captions for the images, and mailed them back to Halford Mackinder (then-chair of the COVIC committee) in regular batches, hoping they might be useful to Mackinder as he authored the first lectures on England and India. And, much like the lecture texts that were read aloud to students, Fisher's journals try to both contain and elaborate on the meanings that viewers can construct from his images, sometimes directing the viewer to see particular things in his photographs and at other times displacing or distracting us from what the images show.

¹⁹⁴ While there are 7,600 images in the Fisher archive at the University of Cambridge library, only 4,195 of these are photographs taken by Fisher while the rest comprise photographs he collected from existing collections, his journal notes and sketches, oil paintings, and water colour studies made by the artist during his travels. See "Library Notes – The Royal Commonwealth Society, Northumberland Ave, London, New Series No. 166, Nov/Dec 1970," RCMS 10, Royal Commonwealth Society, Cambridge University library.

In his diaries that accompany the albums on Canada, for instance, Fisher singles out one of the otherwise banal images of the steamer: a photograph of the passengers that at first seems like all the others, bearing the nondescript caption *On an Ottawa River steamer* (1908, Fig. 27). In it, a small girl, probably seven or eight years old, stands apart from the crowd in the foreground of the scene and looks sternly in the direction of the camera. Her diminutive stature, the oversized bows in her hair, and the teddy bear she clutches—a sign of the latest fad in children’s toys, popularized just two years earlier through its association with American president Theodore Roosevelt—would, if seen in a studio portrait, offer an idyllic and fairly conventional depiction of childhood in early-twentieth century North America. But Fisher’s photograph, and the sprawling handwriting that accompanies it, offers a different picture of Canadian childhood. On loose-leaf sheets of paper, Fisher’s letters describe his encounter with the young girl, who, after noticing his camera, approached him and offered him some sweets and biscuits. To Fisher, the girl’s attention was evidence she had no peers to play with: “A child without a small plush bear would it appears be lonesome in Canada,” he writes.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, in the photograph several other children appear among the crowd, but at a distance from the girl with the bear; three of them—an older boy and two younger girls, their blonde hair in long braids that swing down their back—run diagonally through the frame, taking no notice of the photographer’s young friend.

Direct, personal interactions between Fisher and children are rare in the COVIC photographic archive, especially outside of venues such as classrooms or colleges: an irony given the lectures’ focus on showing schoolchildren photographs of their imperial

¹⁹⁵ Fisher to Mackinder, *Fisher letters, 1907–08* (Fisher Collection, Royal Commonwealth Society, Cambridge University library) RCMS 10, 24 October 1908.

peers. At first, it was the scarcity of portraits of individual children that made me pay attention to the image of the young girl on the Ottawa River steamer, but Fisher's account of his exchange with her—one that is atypically long within his journals—further underscored the image's unique place within the COVIC archive. As Fisher writes,

There was a little French Canadian girl with her hair in two plaits and the huge ribbon bow at each side of the back of her head just now in fashion. "Will you have one of these," offering me cake and biscuits. I took a small one, whereupon the child picked out one she thought extra good and said, "please have this one, too." I did not want more so we talked about her 'Teddy Bear'—a child without a small plush bear would it appears be lonesome in Canada—I asked whether this particular Teddy Bear was French or English. "English," said the little maid, "'cos he is brown."

"What colour would he be if he was French?" I asked. "White," she said. I asked if he was a good bear and she said, "Yes, good, just same as you." Then she kissed and hugged the toy (a bear is hardly a toy any more than a doll, is it?) and pressed her cheek into its soft brown side and added, looking at me from the corners of her eyes, "and now are you going to take my portrait?"

(Not long after this I caught sight of Teddy Bear being severely punished).¹⁹⁶

Though Fisher's journals describe his encounter with the young girl as the subject of the Ottawa River photographs, the exchanges he describes must have taken place just before the photograph was taken. The final image captures only a trace of his interaction with the girl, who stands, still holding her stuffed bear, at a remove from the rest of the passengers. As Fisher's diaries make clear, the photograph that emerged from his encounter with the child is "merely one possible outcome among others of the event of

¹⁹⁶ Fisher to Mackinder, *Fisher letters, 1907-08* (Fisher Collection, Royal Commonwealth Society, Cambridge University library) RCMS 10, 24 October 1908.

photography.”¹⁹⁷ The camera’s presence is essential to this exchange, however, as it is the agent that initiates, mediates and captures Fisher’s encounter with the girl.

In all of the paperwork about the lectures and in Fisher’s travel journals, this is the only time that a subject in the COVIC archive is seen to commission her own portrait (even if the little girl’s form of payment was only a biscuit). This information, on its own, makes the *On an Ottawa River steamer* photograph worthy of closer study because of the way it unsettles the assumed power dynamics of the COVIC project, which sent a single male, English photographer around the world for three years, tasked with capturing the empire’s citizens on film, with or without their consent. But Fisher’s conversation with the French Canadian girl is also significant for the way it engages the multiple, overlapping modes of identification that underpin the COVIC project. By gesturing towards race, language and nationality (the girl’s brown bear is English while a French one would be white), imperial belonging (the description of the girl as lonesome in her Canadian environment except for the company of her bear), and “good” and “bad” kinds of subjects (the bear deserves love because it is “good” like Fisher, but later is seen to be needing punishment for some unknown infraction), Fisher’s anecdote helps to ground the COVIC lectures’ rhetoric in the everyday environment of the early twentieth century British Empire. Clearly, these issues of belonging were not just on the minds of the committee’s volunteers and Colonial Office bureaucrats, but also preoccupied the empire’s subjects, even in their most banal conversations.

I dwell on this image and the interaction that lead up to it, as told through Fisher’s journals, not because I hope to unearth the “real” conditions that lead to the production of the photographs in the COVIC project, but because I want to think about how the

¹⁹⁷ Ariella Azoulay, “Photography: the Ontological Question,” *Mafte ’akh* 2 (2011): 65-80, 76.

intertextuality of the photographic archive allows it to operate as another place where the event of photography unfolds, suggesting new readings of historical images. The meaning of Fisher's photograph of the girl on the steamer does not end at the moment that he produced the photograph, nor even at the moment in which the image was selected to be included in the final lantern slide lectures on Canada and shown to schoolchildren around the empire. Its meaning continues to unfold in the space of the archive, where the contemporary archival researcher can activate the political potential of the relations that the photograph was produced by and the relations it continues to produce in the present. The archive of Fisher's photo albums and letters not only points to the disjuncture between the event of photography—the moment of negotiation between the photographer and subject—and the photographed event—the moment captured by the photograph—it also offers a counternarrative to the story of imperial belonging that is constructed by the official COVIC lectures. Where the COVIC textbooks reassured schoolchildren viewers that, as imperial citizens, they would find a community of belonging anywhere they traveled in the empire, Fisher's description of the girl on the Ottawa River steamboat tests the limits of the promise of imperial citizenship. Through an interaction initiated by the camera's presence, but not captured by it, the archive presents a picture of imperial belonging that is lonely, seemingly disconnected from the global community of colonial children that the COVIC lectures sought to construct through its lanternslides and textbooks.

While the preceding chapter outlines the aims of the COVIC project and questions what the first lectures on England and India tell us about the limits of cataloguing imperial citizenship through photographs, this chapter takes as its focus the space of the

COVIC archive: a collection of photo albums, travel journals and government memoranda that document the production of the lectures, but also hint at its reception by subjects and viewers. If the COVIC lectures offered a viewing space that performatively combined oral texts with life-sized images and emphasized the importance of identification between viewer and subject, the COVIC archive provides a different kind of encounter with photographs. In the archive, where we can read Fisher's 29 photo albums, their captions, and his letters about his photographic work against one another, the COVIC photographs become records of moments of cultural negotiation and disidentification that the official lectures try to obscure. Rather than treating the COVIC archive as supplementary to the final, published lectures, I read it as an alternative account of imperial belonging at the beginning of the twentieth century, one that reveals the places where the universal promise of imperial citizenship was tested, refuted or revised through Fisher's exchanges with his subjects. Following Shawn Michelle Smith's study of the photo albums of African American sitters compiled by W. E. B. Du Bois for the 1900 Paris Exhibition, this chapter looks at the COVIC project as the end result of a "contest of cultural meaning produced between and across archives."¹⁹⁸

While other studies of COVIC by cultural geographer James R. Ryan and by historian John M. MacKenzie have focused on the moment of the lectures' production, concentrating on the texts' intended meaning, I want to use an analysis of the COVIC archive's competing visual narratives to think about moments of reception, moments when the subject and viewer's encounter with these photographs may have complicated or disrupted the project's assumed power relations. These are moments Ariella Azoulay

¹⁹⁸ Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W. E. B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) 23.

describes as “the event of photography,” a network of relations between subjects (including the photographer, subject and spectator) that the camera initiates but which do not necessarily replicate the dominant power relations of the owner or producer of the photograph.¹⁹⁹ In other words, inserting a camera into an exchange between subjects changes the very nature of that exchange, opening up the space for new power dynamics to emerge and new rights to be claimed. In Azoulay’s formulation, both the subject and the spectator have the agency to make political demands through their encounter with the photograph, in ways that the producer of the image cannot anticipate or control. I want to suggest that the contest of cultural meaning that happens between and across photographic archives is another kind of event of photography: just as the photographic apparatus records more than the photographer intended, the resulting archive of images always exceeds the interpretive parameters imposed upon it by captions and texts. As Azoulay explains, the camera “transforms the encounter that comes into being around it, through it and by means of its mediation, into a special form of encounter between participants where none of them possesses a sovereign status.”²⁰⁰ This chapter extends the relational encounter that is initiated by the camera to include the photographic archive, treating Fisher’s photo albums as another, protracted photographic event where photographer, subject and viewer negotiate their relationship and their civic responsibilities to one another. Following Azoulay, this chapter argues that the COVIC photographic archive underscores the relational nature of the event of photography, allowing us to speculate about how the project’s subjects and viewers may have used

¹⁹⁹ Azoulay, “Photography: the Ontological Question.”

²⁰⁰ Azoulay, “Photography: the Ontological Question” 70.

their encounter with photographs to challenge its imperialist rhetoric and to make claims for sovereignty.

To do this, the chapter is organized into two parts that reads Azoulay's work against two different bodies of scholarship about state photographic archives. The first considers the editing and selection process that determined which of Fisher's photographs would be included in the final lectures shown to schoolchildren, paying attention to the kinds of subjects that could not be accommodated or contained by COVIC's catalogue of imperial citizenship. As I demonstrate in the first chapter, the meeting minutes and plans from the Colonial Office show that the COVIC lanternslide lectures were not an attempt to visually illustrate an existing and settled imperial ideology; instead, they are the outcome of a series of (sometimes failed) attempts to consolidate imperial citizenship by trying "to regulate the semantic traffic in photographs."²⁰¹ One of the sites where this semantic regulation took place was through the selection and omission of images from the published lectures. While Fisher created more than 4,300 photographs for the lectures, Mackinder chose only two-thirds of these—approximately 2,900—to reproduce as slides in the final sets of lectures that circulated in schools. Following the methodological approaches to photographic archives put forth by Marxian scholars such as Allan Sekula and John Tagg, the first section of the chapter investigates the images that were omitted from the final lectures in an effort to sketch out the ideological investments that determined these erasures. Uniting Sekula and Tagg's work is a belief that photographic archives do not represent a pre-existing reality, but rather that they are put to work by state apparatuses to constitute a discourse of realism for particular viewers

²⁰¹ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986) 3-64, 55.

in particular historical moments.²⁰² My analysis focuses on the archive of images of Canada that were produced for the lectures between 1908 and 1909, and published as lantern slides in 1913, because of the prominent place Canada was given as both a subject and audience of the COVIC lectures. As one of the more “developed” settler colonies represented in the project—one that was implicitly whiter than imperial holdings in India, Africa and the Caribbean—the committee hoped the lectures on Canada would serve as the model imperial community: one that was visually and culturally similar to the “Motherland” and that could be mimicked by the other colonies. Unlike the lectures on India, which worried about containing potentially insurgent colonial subjects as imperial citizens, the Canadian lectures tried to construct the ideal articulation of imperial citizenship: Canada is the imagined result of the improvements wrought by imperial intervention, the “after” to India’s “before” in the narrative of colonial development. The criteria for what kinds of subjects had to be excluded from the final Canadian lectures are therefore subtler than they were in the other lectures. The unedited photographic archive reveals subjects captured by Fisher’s camera who seemed “out of place” in the imperial community, putting stress on the lecture’s rhetoric of global circulation and civic belonging.²⁰³

The second part of the chapter turns to the archival methodologies proposed by anthropologist and historian Ann Laura Stoler to investigate what these figures might have to tell the archival researcher about how imperial citizenship was negotiated by COVIC’s subjects and viewers. While reading the COVIC photographs “against the

²⁰² John Tagg, “The Currency of the Photograph” in *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1982): 110-141.

²⁰³ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009) 2.

archival grain,” as Sekula and Tagg advocate, puts the focus on what is absented and repressed from the state’s master narrative, Stoler’s advice to read “along the archival grain” encourages scholars to pay attention to the contradictions already present within the project’s archive.²⁰⁴ As Stoler argues, the colonial state’s epistemic practices of securing the qualities of different social groups (by race, class or ethnicity) were developed through the documents created by civil servants like Mackinder and Fisher. Colonial photographic archives therefore operate as sites where epistemic distinctions were made, and as records of the uncertainties that inspired the need for these distinctions.²⁰⁵ Rather than trying to identify holes, biases and blind spots in the colonial archive, Stoler draws attention to the instabilities already present in the archive’s organizational logic.²⁰⁶ Following Stoler, the second section of this chapter proposes a re-reading of the images of Canada “along the archival grain,” attending to the shifting dynamics between photographer, subject and viewer that the event of photography initiates and which the COVIC photo albums continue in the present moment. This reading of the Canadian images foregrounds the difficulties that Fisher encountered in defining and representing imperial citizenship—articulated through the encounters captured in his photographs, captions and travel journals—and speculates that these difficulties did not go unnoticed by COVIC viewers. The photographic archive demonstrates that the distinctions between imperial subjects that COVIC tried to establish through the lectures were, from the beginning, tenuous and unstable. Viewers’ encounters with the COVIC photographs would have only exacerbated these instabilities, forcing the distinctions between imperial citizens to break down as the images circulated in

²⁰⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*.

²⁰⁵ Stoler 4.

²⁰⁶ Stoler 8.

classrooms (and beyond) as late as 1945. My focus here is on outlining how the colonial photographic archive, as anthropologist and photography historian Elizabeth Edwards argues, “is not only a place of disciplinary regulation and enclosure...[but] also a place of potential, open to new historical frames of reference where photographs can interrupt dominant narratives.”²⁰⁷ By insisting that the colonial photographic archive is another location where the event of photography takes place, I imagine how the other participants in the event—in particular, its subjects and spectators—might have harnessed the vicissitudes of photographic meaning to contest their status under modern imperial rule.

As this chapter tries to show, the disjuncture between the narrative of imperial unity that the final lectures meant to convey and the multiple meanings that the photographs offer to the spectator underscores the relationality of the photographic encounter. If the COVIC lectures tried to interpellate a particular kind of imperial citizen through their management of photographic meaning, the presence in the archive of subjects that were too ambiguous for the project’s master narrative suggest that photographs are sites of potential and latent meaning that can be activated by spectators in ways their creators cannot control. As Azoulay asserts, this potentiality of photographic meaning is its political strength, allowing the spectator to “disrupt the [state’s] attribution of a stable political category to the photographed person” and re-instrumentalize these images for their own social and political aims.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (New York: Berg, 2001) 4.

²⁰⁸ Ariella Azoulay, “Civil Uses of Photography,” *Civil Imagination: Political Ontology of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2012): 219-242, 225-226.

Framing imperial belonging in COVIC's lectures on Canada

Before investigating the interpretive possibilities that the COVIC archive presents to the contemporary viewer and researcher, I want to briefly return to how the lectures used photographs to construct and address a particular kind of imperial viewer at the beginning of the twentieth century. As the preceding chapter makes clear, the lectures' intended narrative of imperial belonging, and the social conditions that gave rise to this narrative, place COVIC within a history of attempts by the modern state to control the meaning of bodies through the production of photographs: representations that were made intelligible through the rationality and ordering of the state archive. As Sekula asserted in "The Body and the Archive," late-nineteenth century state apparatuses responded to the semantic instabilities of photography—described at the time as a "harbinger of modernity"—by creating archives that would inventory the social body, define normalcy and patrol the boundaries of citizenship.²⁰⁹ Focusing on two photographic archives of criminality in England and France in the 1860s, Sekula argued that one of the key ways that the state attempts to contain photographic meaning is through the archive, which integrates the camera into a larger bureaucratic system of "intelligence," using substitution and abstraction to establish a relation of general equivalence between images.²¹⁰

The COVIC lectures share with Sekula's criminal archives a reliance on the seriality of the photographic archive to create a visual index of the imperial citizen during a time of social instability. But the project also differs from Sekula's state archives in the way that it understood the relationship between photographs and their viewers. Rather

²⁰⁹ Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 4.

²¹⁰ Sekula, "The Body and The Archive" 16-17.

than approaching them as indexical records of ownership or as a visual corollary for the bureaucratic systems of intelligence already in place to manage the empire, the COVIC project treated photographs as powerful affective objects that could bind viewers and subjects together. In this way, the COVIC lectures not only attempted to depict an ideal imperial citizen-subject through their photographic representations, but also tried to constitute an ideal citizen-viewer, one who would learn the correct way to identify with and respond to other imperial citizens through their encounter with photographs.

To supply students with stirring representations of the empire's citizens, COVIC undertook a program of frantically producing photographs. Between 1907 and 1910, Fisher, an artist who had been trained as an engraver and had worked as a London newspaper illustrator, created and collected more than 7,600 images to be used in the lectures. After receiving photographic training from Messrs Newton & Co., a commercial lanternslide firm,²¹¹ Fisher visited most of Britain's strategic or wealthy colonies on three separate voyages aboard the ships of the Royal Mail Lines: transportation arranged by COVIC at no cost to the project.²¹² The photographer mailed his negatives and prints, often developed in batches in the bathroom sinks of his hotel rooms, and his journal notes back to England each month, where Mackinder selected the images to be used in the lectures and wrote the texts to accompany them, marshalling the photographs' multiple meanings to construct a narrative about the unified, organic community of the British Empire.²¹³

²¹¹ Ryan, *Picturing Empire* 190.

²¹² MacKenzie 164.

²¹³ A.H. Fisher letters, 2 November 1907, RCMS 10, Royal Commonwealth Society, University of Cambridge.

Representing the movement of goods and people via the transportation networks of the British Empire, through its trains and steam ships in particular, was one of the ways that COVIC hoped to establish a sense of connection between viewers and subjects. The lecture texts about Canada, shown to British students, often note that the goods and foods that viewers see being produced in Fisher's photographs will one day be imported to England for their consumption, while immigration to the dominion is alluded to whenever steam ships or trains are pictured. In the Canadian lectures, the movement of people into and within the Dominion is the organizing theme in directing viewers' interpretations of Fisher's photographs. Following the conventions of the previous textbooks, the Canadian lectures are organized as a travelogue which begins on a steamship travelling along the St. Lawrence River, then goes east by train to Newfoundland and Labrador, back to the Maritimes, before heading west through Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies and ending in British Columbia. Throughout these photographic travels, the textbooks repeatedly ask the viewer to imagine how the subjects they are seeing are connected to England, the empire's hub. Fisher's photograph of one of the steamships travelling along the St. Lawrence River, *Emigrants on the Empress of Britain* (1908, Fig. 5), for instance, is described as carrying

a large number of emigrants from over-crowded Europe, who are going through this gateway to the empty spaces and freer but hard-working life of the Far West. A ceaseless stream of these pours in year after year; they are the people of many tongues and races, but all destined to be absorbed into one united nation.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ A. J. Sargent, *Canada and Newfoundland: Seven Lectures* (London: George Philip & Son, 1913) 49.

Though the text promises these would-be Canadians membership in the imperial community, in reality, Canadian immigration law limited the admission of non-white and non-European subjects into the dominion (a contradiction I explore in more detail in my discussion of the photo albums from Montreal). Internal immigration policies also dictated that new Canadians be settled in the western provinces wherever possible, under the assumption that these areas were under-populated and in need of agricultural development.²¹⁵ The COVIC lectures on Canada hint at the unevenness of this development, working to place certain sections of the country at a temporal distance from contemporary British viewers, designating some regions (such as Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia) as more developed and therefore closer to British society, and others (such as the Maritimes and Quebec) as underdeveloped and in need of improvement through an influx of imperial immigrants. The Canadian lectures, like the lectures on India that came before them, make repeated promises to the viewer that they will be protected with equal rights as imperial citizens, while still acknowledging and reinforcing the colonial power dynamics created by the supposedly “natural” hierarchies of race, class and gender: hierarchies that would continue to influence how subjects experienced forms of (un)belonging throughout the empire at the beginning of the twentieth century.

But while the lecture texts work to erect and police these hierarchies among imperial citizens, Fisher’s photographs do something else. As several photography scholars have noted, the meanings that photographs offer to viewers are ambiguous,

²¹⁵ See Brian S. Osborne, “Constructing the State, Managing the Corporation, Transforming the Individual: Photography, Immigration and the Canadian National Railways, 1925-30,” in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003/2009): 162-191.

multivalent and open-ended; they cannot be pinned down through textual descriptions or archival classification systems.²¹⁶ Photographic archives are therefore complicated sites where visual meaning is contested through and against textual description. Despite the archive's reputation as a static system of organization, Edwards argues that, in fact, "within the archive and the museum there is a dense multidimensional fluidity of the discursive practices of photographs as linking objects between past and present, between visible and invisible."²¹⁷ Rather than seeing the archive as a place where the intended message of colonial photography projects settles and solidifies, Edwards suggests the archive might be a space of fluidity, exchange and revision. This is especially true of projects like COVIC, which relied on the interplay of textbooks with photographs to create meaning for the viewer. In the libraries and archives where the COVIC materials are now stored—the British Library and National Archives in London and the University of Cambridge library—these materials have been split up, reorganized and stored in autonomous collections. In an ironic turn of archival logic, the organizational strategies used by these libraries to subsume images into their institutional, bibliographic model (such as separating texts from photographs, or presenting images according to a logic that does not line up with the Colonial Office's intended message) allow new meanings to emerge from these unconventional connections between images. Encountering these photographs separately from their textual frameworks allows me, as the researcher/viewer, to temporarily forget the dominant message that the COVIC lectures intended to convey. The distance provided by the structure of the contemporary archive

²¹⁶ For an overview of how theorists have addressed the complicated interplay between photographic and linguistic meaning, see Roland Barthes' *Image-Music-Text*, Stephen Heath, trans. (London: Fontana Press, 1977) and Victor Burgin's landmark edited volume, *Thinking Photography* (London: MacMillan, 1982).

²¹⁷ Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (New York: Berg, 2001) 4.

encourages me to speculate about the negotiated or dissenting readings that viewers may have brought to the COVIC images as they circulated throughout the empire. As the viewing context offered by the archive of COVIC photographs makes clear, Fisher's images demonstrate the partial and uneven nature of imperial citizenship, suggesting unexpected relationships between subjects and unsettling the power dynamics that Mackinder's texts worked to so carefully construct.

Reading against the archival grain: inconsistencies in imperial belonging

As the previous chapter suggests, the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee's plans for the lectures were based on two paradoxical assumptions about photography: first, that it was possible to photograph the whole of the British Empire—which in this period encompassed twelve million square miles of land and one quarter of globe's population—despite the logistical problems the committee encountered in coordinating the project; and, second, that a photographic archive could depict something that was, for all intents and purposes, unphotographable. Namely, the until-then invisible notion of imperial citizenship, which was constructed as a relational, affective encounter between subjects, rather than as a firm set of visual characteristics. While it might be possible to infer these assumptions about photography and the empire from the final, published lectures, the COVIC archive makes these aims explicit. Organized into two collections of material—the photographs created and collected by Fisher, as well as his travel journals, held in the Royal Commonwealth Society collections at the University of Cambridge library; and the official meeting minutes, memoranda and correspondence of the committee, archived with the rest of the Colonial Office's paperwork at the National

Archives in London—the COVIC archive charts moments when the committee's attempts at harnessing the ambiguities of photographic representation fail, exposing epistemic uncertainties about how to define and picture imperial citizenship.

In sharp contrast to the neatly organized sets of lecture textbooks published by COVIC, each devoted to a distinct and separate colonial holding, Fisher's photographs and travel journals depict a disconnected and ungainly empire that was difficult to navigate and nearly impossible to comprehensively photograph. Stored in 29 albums at the University of Cambridge's library, Fisher's photographs are organized chronologically, by exposure number—that is, the first photograph in the albums is the first exposure Fisher made in England before he left on his expedition in 1907, continuing this way until his last exposure in Australia in 1910 as photograph number 7634.²¹⁸ Each image is then captioned not with the title that appeared in the final, published lectures, but with short, hand-written sentences taken from Fisher's letters to Mackinder while travelling: work that was completed by COVIC's secretary as the photographs arrived in England. The photographic archive's chronological structure provides a play-by-play account of Fisher's journey through the empire, a circuitous route planned by Mackinder in accordance with his own publishing schedule, which projected the completion of lectures on India and Canada late in 1908, with texts on Australia, Africa and the West Indies in the following years. Mackinder's anticipated schedule for publication had little bearing on geographical proximity, and seems instead to be influenced by his, and the committee's, priorities about which colonies would most

²¹⁸ Though Fisher only produced around 4,000 photographs for the COVIC project, the University of Cambridge library also includes the sketches, watercolour paintings and journal notes among the item numbers in the RCS Fisher collection, as well as several photo albums that have been damaged or gone missing before the collection was donated.

benefit from seeing the lectures first: a list that repeatedly placed the more “advanced” colonies of India and Canada at the top of the list, and the less developed (and significantly less white) at the bottom, with South and West Africa and the West Indies consistently coming last.²¹⁹

But other, non-logistical factors also determined Fisher’s travels, such as Mackinder’s concern to avoid “mingl[ing] the incompatible artistic atmospheres of India and Canada” by visiting both colonies on the same trip.²²⁰ Obstacles, including Mackinder’s poor health, which delayed his writing of the lectures and his correspondence with Fisher, the committee’s dwindling budget and the restrictions imposed by existing steam ship and railway routes, disrupted this already convoluted itinerary, forcing the artist to double back to capture views of some colonies in all four seasons and eventually cutting his journey short.²²¹ The number of photographs that Fisher produced in each colonial holding reflects the committee’s priorities: India, the “Crown Jewel” of the empire, has more than 11 albums dedicated to it, while the other colonial darlings, Canada and Australia, are represented across another 12 albums. In contrast, the territories around the Red Sea, in Fiji and in the South Pacific get only one album of photographs each, while Palestine, South Africa and the West Indies are not

²¹⁹ See, for instance, Miscellaneous No. 158: Minutes of meeting by Sub-committee at Colonial Office, 29 July 1907, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

²²⁰ Halford J. Mackinder to Sir Richard Lucas, 30 September 1907, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

²²¹ In 1909, after projecting a deficit of £360 in their annual budget for the coming year, the committee sent a telegram to Fisher, alerting him that the project had run out of money and advising him to cut the last leg of his trip short, skipping his visit to Papua New Guinea, postponing his trip to Australia (but purchasing photographs of the colony if he could) and concentrating the remainder of his time on capturing Fiji and New Zealand (Minutes from meeting on 3 Dec 1909, CO 885/19/8, Miscellaneous 218: Further Correspondence related to Visual Instruction [1908-1909], Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London). Fisher’s final route saw him visit Ceylon, India, Burma, Aden, Somaliland, and Cyprus between October 1907 and June 1908; Canada’s east coast, Newfoundland, Weihaiwei, Hong Kong, Borneo and Singapore with return trip through Canada to photograph winter scenes between July 1908 and May 1909; and Gibraltar, Malta, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji between October 1909 and August 1910.

pictured at all. Fisher was instructed to collect images of the places he could not visit in person from local photography studios or stereograph companies, while the committee solicited images, and the permission to reproduce them, from those colonies' government houses by mail. These supplementary images, several of which are included in the final, published lectures, are stored separately from the photographs made by Fisher, organized into separate albums and folios according to their creator. The images collected by the committee, some of which were made as early as 1880, exhibit a remarkable diversity of subjects and photographic perspectives, encompassing botanical studies of indigenous plants in India, government-ordered group portraits of school children in Australia (Fig. 28) and sweeping landscape vistas off the coast of South Africa (Fig. 29). After Mackinder's repeated insistence in committee meetings that the COVIC project needed images made by the same "expert and artistic photographer," this last-minute cobbling together of photographs—originally intended for widely disparate audiences and contexts—demonstrates how suddenly the committee was confronted by the limits of imperial unity.²²² While Mackinder confidently asserted in his public lectures that, "the British Empire is... threaded through the other powers as the weft through the woof of a cloth," the photographic and textual records of Fisher's journey reveal the snags and flaws in imperial organization.²²³

The organization of Fisher's photographs portrays a route that contradicts the lectures' claim that it would be possible for viewers to conduct a direct journey from their home countries to the colonies under study, and suggests the fractured and disorganized state of imperial communication in this period. But the albums also create unexpected

²²² Mackinder, No. 114: Memo for the Consideration of the Colonial Office Committee on Visual Instruction, 28 November 1906, Colonial Office Archives, National Archives, London.

²²³ Mackinder, "The teaching of geography from an imperial point of view" 83.

juxtapositions that further complicate the lectures' intended narrative. The photographic archive's chronological order means that images that should not be neighbours according to the logic of the COVIC project (such as two images taken in completely different countries) bump up against one another for the archival researcher, sometimes "mingling the incompatible artistic atmospheres" of two different colonies on the same album page, but more often attesting to the uneven development of industrialization, urbanization and colonial governance across the empire. Because the photographs are stored in a completely different institution and city than the texts that were originally read aloud to students (the first edition of the textbooks are stored in the British Library in London), it is impossible to have Mackinder's published texts and Fisher's images physically alongside one another. The visual juxtapositions created by the photo albums therefore offer the archival researcher an alternative account of these images that is at odds with the tidy narrative of imperial belonging manufactured by Mackinder's (absent) texts. As Ryan explains in his chapter on the COVIC images, "many of the photographs made by Fisher...simply contained too much information to be successfully contained by the frame the COVIC lectures intended for them."²²⁴ While this possibility likely troubled Mackinder and the COVIC members, it presents opportunities for resistant and radical readings for contemporary scholars and viewers. As Edwards has argued of her experience working as a curator of photographs in an ethnographic museum, "photography has the potential for critique in precisely those spaces to whose representational practices it has contributed so forcefully in the past."²²⁵

²²⁴ Ryan, *Picturing Empire* 220.

²²⁵ Edwards, *Raw histories*, 4.

The juxtapositions, as well as the absences, in Fisher's albums reveal the kinds of subjects that Mackinder and the committee deemed inappropriate for the final lectures.²²⁶ The images that were excluded from the final lectures, but which appear in Fisher's unedited albums, underscore the difficulties the committee encountered in establishing a clear set of visual codes for representing imperial citizenship. While the logic of some of these exclusions seems obvious (such as the obfuscation of indigenous peoples in colonies like Canada to encourage a reading of the country as "more developed"), in other cases the reasoning behind these absences is difficult to puzzle out. Following John Tagg's notion of photographic "currency," which analyzes the contingent and dynamic way photographs "changed hands, found a use, a meaning and a value, in certain social rituals," I argue that the exclusion of certain images from the published COVIC lectures is symptomatic of the anxieties that inspired the creation and circulation of the lectures in the first place.²²⁷ As I note in chapter one, as British imperial ideology shifted from a discourse of expansion to one of consolidation, from explicit domination to more nuanced ideals of cooperation, the representational tropes employed in colonial photography projects were also forced to change. Fisher's production of thousands of photographs laid the groundwork for COVIC to create a new photographic language for modern imperial belonging. But the process of selecting which photographs could be shown to viewers and still maintain the readings, or currency, that the committee hoped to invest in them was an experimental one, requiring speculation about the viewer's

²²⁶ Mackinder helped to establish the visual language of the COVIC lectures by selecting the images to be reproduced in the lectures on England, India and Canada, but he was not the only one in the committee who selected which of Fisher's images to reproduce as lanternslides: the last sets of lectures on Australia, South Africa and the West Indies were authored by A. J. Sargent and Algernon E. Aspinall, who each made suggestions about which of Fisher's photographs should be made into lantern slides. These images are the subject of chapter three.

²²⁷ John Tagg, "The Currency of the Photograph," 121.

interpretive abilities and about how the photographs would be understood as they circulated in other places and times. As Tagg argues about the U.S. government's use of photographs in the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the coherence of the ideological "truths" produced by state-circulated photographs are actually constructed through and in spite of the contradictions that ideology attempts to conceal.²²⁸ These contradictions cannot be obscured within the photographs used by state apparatuses, according Tagg, but emerge instead as contrasts that lend ideological "truths" their appearance of realism. Viewed in this light, the inconsistencies that mark COVIC's picturing of imperial citizenship emerge not as errors in the project's dominant narrative, but as contradictions inherent to the committee's attempts at managing visual representations of social, political and economic transformation in the modern British Empire.²²⁹

Nowhere are the contradictions richer or more nuanced than through a comparison of the official lectures on Canada, published by COVIC in 1913, with the photographic archive and travel memoirs Fisher made in the dominion between 1908 and 1909. As the paperwork related to the organization of the COVIC project makes clear, Mackinder and the committee felt there was an urgent need to represent England to Canada, and Canada to the rest of the empire, in this period: a need that was undergirded by its reputation as one of the more developed colonies and its proximity to the United

²²⁸ Tagg 118.

²²⁹ The contradictions—between belonging and exclusion, equality and exploitation, the public and domestic spheres of power, racial purity and ethnic fetishization, to name just a few—that structured colonial discourse in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were manifold, as many critics and postcolonial scholars have gone on to show. While I focus on only a few of them in my study, COVIC is undoubtedly a part of this discourse which sought to solidify and fix identities through a variety of visual and material cultural practices. For a more wide-reaching survey of how colonial discourse shaped visual representations in this period, see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001).

States, one of Britain's fiercest economic competitors at the time. In fact, as Fisher prepared to embark on a six-week journey through England to create images of the "Mother Country" that would be shown in Canada, Mackinder wrote to him that, "It is most necessary that the Canadian of the Far West should be made to appreciate the magnitude of equipment in the Old Country, and should not think that we have been completely outdistanced by his neighbour, the United States."²³⁰ While Mackinder here worries about the United States outpacing England's industrial and agricultural capabilities, the committee's meeting minutes also express concern about the influence of American cultural production on the Canadian population, fretting about American films and other lanternslide lectures "spreading" into the dominion and encouraging a sense of American patriotism—rather than British imperialism—in viewers.²³¹ Canada was therefore imagined not only as a key subject in the COVIC lectures, but also as one of its most important audiences. This is perhaps because viewers, both in Canada and abroad, were already primed to interpret photographs of Canada as visual lessons in national belonging by the time the COVIC lectures began circulating. Canada's Department of Agriculture and Department of the Interior had used magic lantern presentations since the 1890s to promote the export of Canadian produce and to encourage immigration, both to and within Canada,²³² while the Canadian High Commission reported to COVIC in 1902 that it had organized its own series of promotional magic lantern lectures in England, with up to 40 sets of lantern-slides in circulation throughout British town halls and

²³⁰ Mackinder to Fisher, 24 July 1909, CO 885/19/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

²³¹ See Michael E. Sadler, "Misc. No. 150: Lantern Lectures on the British Empire, December 1902," CO 885/8/8, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

²³² Osborne 164-65.

churches every year.²³³ This legacy of circulating photographs of Canada under the banner of nationalism may explain why COVIC's Canadian lectures were not only some of the most commercially successful in the program—at one time, there were more than 1,000 sets of the textbooks on Canada circulating through the empire—but that they could also draw on a remarkable diversity of tropes to carefully negotiate imperial citizenship through the signs of nationality, language and gender.²³⁴ For these reasons, the Canada lectures provide a potent case study for thinking about the contradictions that structured COVIC's visualization of imperial citizenship.

While the lectures on India followed the conventions of colonial travel writing and underscored the subjects' potential for insurrection without the education and training provided by imperial rule (as I show in chapter one), in the lectures on Canada, the "native characteristics" of the dominion were inscribed on specific regions that had not yet fully benefitted from the "super-added characteristics due to British rule." The temporality of imperial citizenship therefore works differently in the lectures on Canada: while Indian subjects had unexpectedly rebelled in the past, and are suspected of continuing to pose a threat in the future if they are not transformed into imperial citizens, there was an assumption that Canadians were always already on their way to becoming imperial citizens from the beginning. The purpose of British education, military service and governmental cooperation was not to transform Canadian subjects, then, but to solidify their allegiance and indebtedness to the empire. To borrow Barbara Cruikshank's theorization of citizenship as a technology of government, COVIC's emphasis on imperial citizenship in the Canadian context "is a manner of governing that relies not on

²³³ Ryan, "Visualizing Imperial Geography" 160.

²³⁴ See Charles Lucas, "Visual Instruction Committee 6th annual report," 28 Sept 1925, CO 323/943/10, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

institutions, organized violence or state power but on securing the voluntary compliance of citizens.”²³⁵ While the COVIC lectures on India reminded viewers—in subtle and not-so-subtle ways—of the retribution that would be meted out on those subjects who dared to rebel, the Canadian lectures implied that membership in the empire was most highly valued when it was voluntary: when subjects in the self-governing dominions had the choice to leave the empire, or to establish themselves as a separate nation, they enacted their agency by deciding to stay, recognizing the benefits offered to imperial citizens.

Following the conventions of the previous textbooks, the Canadian lectures are organized as a travelogue which begins on a steamship travelling along the St. Lawrence river, then heads east by train to Newfoundland and Labrador, back to the Maritimes, before heading west through Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies and ending in British Columbia.²³⁶ Unlike Mackinder’s lectures on England and India, however, which were focused on the present day, the Canadian lectures, authored by a lecturer from the London School of Economics named A. J. Sargent, began with a narrative of discovery and mapping by the British in the sixteenth century.²³⁷ From the outset, distinctions are drawn between French- and English-speaking Canada, with Sargent’s text laying claim to Canada as a British dominion by describing its failed colonization by the French (who he says could not endure the cold winters and did not realize fertile land lay beyond the rugged coasts of Newfoundland).²³⁸ Photographs of Newfoundland and Labrador, collected by Fisher during his travels, are used to illustrate this historical narrative.

²³⁵ Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999) 4.

²³⁶ A. J. Sargent, *Canada and Newfoundland: Seven Lectures* (London: George Philip & Son, 1913).

²³⁷ By 1910, Mackinder’s ill health and burgeoning political aspirations forced him to step down from the committee. In his place, he recommended that his fellow lecturer at the London School of Economics, A.J. Sargent, complete the next two lectures on Canada and South Africa. See Mackinder to Charles Lucas, 24 October 1910, CO 885/21/7, Misc. 249, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

²³⁸ Sargent 1.

Though these photographs are contemporaneous with the COVIC lectures, Sargent uses them to construct a vision of eastern Canada as an older, almost pre-modern state that is described in similar terms as those used to characterize African colonies in the rest of the COVIC series. In a view of a fisherman's shack, for instance (Fig. 30), four men are seen sitting and squatting around a rustic log shed, their home placed at the centre of a small clearing between several tall coniferous trees. Though the shack is supposedly the subject of the image, the landscape around it dominates the image, nearly obscuring the figure on the far left-hand side, whose bent arm—his elbow resting on a nearby stump—just barely distinguishes him from the surrounding plant life. If the lectures on India were characterized by tensions between dark-skinned bodies and bright white sunlight and clothing, in the Canadian lectures, figures are often in the shadows—sometimes quite literally—of their natural environment. This darkness was not just alluded to in the lantern slide images, but also suggested by the lecture texts, which compare the remoteness of the Canadian landscape to that of Africa: “The interior [of Newfoundland],” Sargent writes, “is perhaps less familiar to travellers than some of the remoter regions of Africa.”²³⁹ In a strange transposition of temporalities, present-day images of Newfoundland and Labrador (which, at the time of publication, were still not officially part of Canada) are then used to represent a narrative about the role of the Hudson's Bay Company in establishing the fur trade in the 1600s and aiding in the expansion of the railway system in the nineteenth century.

Sargent's texts, which work to place certain sections of Canada at a temporal distance from contemporary British and colonial viewers, also work against the photographs' depictions to place the country's inhabitants at a physical remove from

²³⁹ Sargent 17.

viewers. Absent from the Canadian textbooks is the direct address which Mackinder was so fond of employing, the “you”s and “we”s that established a community of imperial citizens meant to identify with one another through the encounter that photography provides. In its stead, Sargent uses a dryer, third person narrative that places Canadian subjects at a remove from the British viewer. It is here that the contradictions between what Sargent’s lectures describes in text and what Fisher’s photographs actually depict become apparent, both for the viewer of the original lectures and for the researcher working in the photographic archive. Despite Sargent’s attempts to mark the east coast of Canada, and its inhabitants, as other from the viewer, Fisher’s photographs of the region consistently picture human figures that look quite similar to the intended audience of the COVIC lectures. In Newfoundland, in particular, Fisher’s photographs of the fishing industry do not picture the ships and equipment used to process cod, but instead focus on the people that use them. In one particularly striking image, *Fresh Newfoundland Cod, Petty Harbour* (1908), Fisher offers a portrait of a young boy awkwardly posing for the camera with a large fish, held by the gills, in each of his hands (Fig. 31). The boy’s half smile and casual stance lend the image a snapshot quality, while the empty wooden dock that he is standing on place him at a remove from the fishing industry that Sargent’s text describes (two blurry female forms are the only other human figures in the frame, standing on a dock in the background). Only his squinting look towards the camera, as well as his uniform of overalls and oversized leather boots, suggest that he has in fact been interrupted from his work, asked by Fisher to pose in the sunlight for the camera. Far from the pre-modern and foreign people that Sargent describes, the portrait of this young Newfoundlander must have seemed a familiar figure for the lectures’ school-aged

audience in Britain, many of whom would have had older siblings that also went to work in the local mines, wharfs and fields as early as age twelve, when it was no longer mandatory for them to attend school.²⁴⁰ Here, COVIC's reliance on photography's affective relationships between viewers and subjects seems to backfire. Though the texts try to make a case for the improvements that could be made through imperial interventions on the "backward" and remote eastern provinces, the photographs picture contemporary subjects whose daily activities appear to keep pace with those in the centre of the empire.

In the COVIC photo albums, the lecture texts' assertions are also refuted by Fisher's captions, which include detailed information about the time and place each photograph was taken, and sometimes offer historical or biographical information about his sitters. A photograph of several men, eating at a low table, their hats and coats hanging on pegs against the plain wooden walls behind them and piled on the floor in one corner of the room (Fig. 32), appears in the published version of the Canadian lectures, in a section on Prince Edward Island. In the textbooks, the image is simply titled "Lobstermen at Breakfast" and is used by Sargent to describe the fishing industry in the region. With jugs, plates, teacups and saucers on the table and most of the men ignoring the camera's presence to focus on their meal, Fisher's image seems to show us just that, locating the men as labourers from a working-class background who are seen to contribute to the success of the imperial economy. But Fisher's caption for the image, transcribed below the photograph and taken from his travel journals, offers a different, much more detailed account of the scene: "The Lobster men's dinner, Tignish Run,

²⁴⁰ See Steve Humphries, Joanna Mack and Robert Perks, *A Century of Childhood* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1988) 27.

P.E.I.—nearly all French. At time of expulsion from the Maritime Provinces twelve families came to Tignish.”²⁴¹ Calling up the history of the British colonialists’ violent expulsion of French-speaking Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755, Fisher’s caption places these figures within a specific language and cultural community that has been directly impacted by British colonial expansion. Where Sargent’s lecture texts would have these men stand in for all “lobstermen” across the eastern coast, Fisher’s photograph, and its interplay with the textual caption he provides, anchors them in a specific time and place that marks the dislocations enforced by global imperialism. In the Canadian lectures, language differences (between French and English) subtend the promise of imperial citizenship. But because it is impossible to immediately “see” the language a subject speaks through their photograph, the COVIC texts work to make this difference appear and disappear from the frame.

While Sargent’s lectures about the Maritime provinces continue in this vein, focusing on present-day agricultural production and the movement of agricultural products like apples from Canada to England, the texts about Quebec again imagine the inhabitants as existing at a past point in the evolutionary narrative about imperial progress. Speaking about a street view in Quebec City, for instance, Sargent describes its narrow streets and crumbling stone walls as exemplary of one of the only medieval cities in the whole of North America, while on a tour of everyday scenes in Joliette, including Fisher’s photograph of *Maple sugaring in the woods near Joliette: close of winter* (1909, Fig. 33), he remarks that these people are “certainly not English, and [they] hardly strike us perhaps as modern French in appearance; but we may find [their] type to-day in the

²⁴¹ Janus: Fisher photograph collection, Cambridge University Library, <http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0115%2FFisher%2014>, accessed April 23, 2012.

country districts of France.’’²⁴² Fisher’s image of the maple sugarers in Joliette reads as comical in contrast to the serious portrait of priests rehearsing a church service that come before it in the lectures. Showing a line of women (and one man) who sit and stand on the snow, Fisher’s photograph shows figures pouring melted syrup from their metal pots onto the icy ground while others scrape it off with metal sticks. Depicting the creation of a typical Canadian luxury, the image was likely meant to connote domesticity (the preparation and serving of food), civil company (the figures enjoy a nearly exclusively female environment) and a colonial sense of calm and control over the harsh Canadian landscape.

While most of the women wear the long skirts, shawls and ribboned hats typical of late Victorian fashion, the older woman in the foreground, who seems to be leading the group’s activities, wears a men’s bowler hat, while another woman, three figures behind her, inelegantly clamps a cigarette between her teeth. The gestures and garb of these two women, which perform a kind of drag by appropriating the clothing and habits associated with middle-class British men, seem to have posed an interpretive problem for the committee, necessitating Sargent’s description of the figures as un-English, un-cosmopolitan and un-modern. Given the rising popularity of the suffragette movement in Britain in this period, and the increasingly aggressive activities of its more militant strand, the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU), which in 1908 advocated for the destruction of private property, classical artworks and arson as means of political agitation, the COVIC members may have realized viewers could read these performances of masculinity as strategies of resistance and political sovereignty. As literary theorist Sara Mills asserts in her study of travel writing by English women in the late Victorian

²⁴² Sargent 54.

period, the colonial context offered an unusual space where the legitimated subject positions of British society could be exaggerated, negotiated and sometimes rejected through the codes of dress and language.²⁴³ Mills shows that the public perception of colonies such as Canada as rough backwoods that were inappropriate for well-raised British ladies allowed many women to assume gender and class roles that would have been impossible to perform in English society. By locating the Quebecois women of Fisher's photograph within the imperial community, but suggesting that they have not yet benefitted from the civilising effects of modern, English imperial culture, Sargent's text attempts to contain and neutralize the radical potential of their self-presentation.

While Sargent relied on his texts to manage the ambiguities of Fisher's photographs, the albums in the archive at the University of Cambridge reveal there were dozens of images made in Quebec and Montreal that were purposefully excluded from the final lectures. Some, such as a view of a streetcar driving through the supposedly medieval streets of Quebec City, were omitted for obvious reasons, because they directly contradicted the textbook's construction of the city as backward (Fig. 34). But others seem to not only support Sargent's claims about Montreal as a modern, education-focused metropolis, but to also illustrate COVIC's larger goals to portray the empire as a cooperative endeavour that brings together diverse people under the banner of the imperial training and education. This is particularly true of a series of photographs taken at MacDonald College, an English-speaking school of agricultural and household sciences that opened as a branch of McGill University in 1907 (Fig. 35-36). Fisher's well-composed view of women students lined up in rows on balance beams, participating in gymnastic exercises, seems a particularly persuasive visual argument for the benefits

²⁴³ Sara Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester University Press, 2005) 44-46.

of imperialism. Although the caption makes clear that the school is in Quebec, it also notes these are not Francophone women, participating in an indigenous form of folk dancing, but instead Anglophone women, participating in strengthening, but not strenuous, exercises. A basketball hoop, a sport invented in Canada, hangs behind them, stationary and unused. All of these signifiers tell us that these are, for all intents and purposes, proper British women; they are in a school environment, in uniform, participating in a ladylike activity, which will help to make them into productive, English-speaking members of a self-governing British dominion. In subsequent images of female students in dressmaking and cookery classes, Fisher presents us with stereotypical views of women learning and practicing domestic tasks that will make them better wives and mothers in imperial families. Though they are in the semi-public setting of a school, their activities remind the viewer that this is training ultimately destined for the private space of the home. It is one of only a handful of times that motherhood is represented or even alluded to in the COVIC archive (a scarcity I explore further in chapter three), and it is perhaps because of the difficulty COVIC had in managing depictions of mothers that the Macdonald College images are not included in the final lectures on Canada.

Sargent's motivations for excluding the Macdonald College images from the final lectures on Canada are unclear, particularly when so many photographs of classrooms and training colleges appear in the lectures on England, India and the Eastern Colonies: images Mackinder had hoped would evoke a sympathetic response in his school-aged audience by showing other colonial figures in the same kinds of spaces in which they were viewing the COVIC slides. Perhaps the representation of adult women in these kinds of environments, learning household sciences together, was too commonplace to

warrant inclusion in the final lectures, constituting a common sense construction of colonial women that did not require photographic reiteration. Or, given the difficulties the committee encountered in creating a visual lexicon for the notion of imperial citizenship, perhaps the Macdonald College images were excluded in favour of depicting Quebecois figures as a foil for the more conventional depictions of white, English-speaking colonial subjects that populate the sections on Ontario and the Western provinces (though these sections are not without their own contradictions, as we will see shortly).

Fisher's photographic albums reveal other exclusions from the final lectures that, at first, seem counterintuitive to the project's rhetoric of a cohesive empire structured by the natural hierarchies of race, class and gender. The scarcity of photographs of indigenous peoples in the Canadian lectures seems unusual, for instance, given the prevalence of representations of aboriginal peoples in the lectures on Australia and South Africa. In the other lectures in the COVIC series, indigenous figures appear frequently, either performing a local custom or ritual (to depict conventions before imperial intervention), or participating in the empire's practices of governance, protection and trade as willing, transformed members of the imperial community. In the published version of the lectures on Canada, however, only a handful of photographs of indigenous people are included, each of them drawn from images collected by Fisher or submitted by the Canadian government. Typical of these photographs is an image of a group of Inuit fisherman on the deck of a ship in Labrador that was not taken by Fisher, but by Robert E. Holloway, a schoolteacher and amateur photographer who lived in St. John's (Fig.

37).²⁴⁴ In his study of the COVIC project, Ryan argues that the scant photographic representation of indigenous peoples in the lectures was designed to circumscribe these colonial subjects in contained areas, such as reservations, away from the broader British-descended population, and supported Sargent's claim that, "depleted and outnumbered, the indigenous inhabitants were seen to pose no threat to the prosperity of the 'colonies of white settlement.'"²⁴⁵ But the photographic albums also suggest that Fisher had little interest in, or limited access to, indigenous subjects during his time in Canada. In the albums produced by Fisher, a blurry, distant view of a group of families, standing in front of their tents in a field in Manitoba, is one of only two times he represents Canada's indigenous peoples, sandwiched between landscape views of wheat fields and a detailed tour of a local grain mill, which seem to have captured the bulk of the photographer's interest and time (Fig. 38). Neither idealized as converted and reformed colonial citizens, nor demonized as racialized threats to the order and management of the empire, Fisher's imaging of indigenous subjects is simply deemed insufficient to be represented to COVIC's intended audience.

These absences and contradictions in the photographic narrative created by Fisher's albums point to a gap between the committee members' expectations of how the empire would appear to the camera, and the contingencies and contradictions that accompany any attempt to photographically capture interactions between colonial subjects. As Sekula explains, the message that the photograph carries is always an "'incomplete' utterance, a message that depends on some external matrix of conditions

²⁴⁴ Janus: Fisher photograph collection, Cambridge University Library, <http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0115%2FFisher%2FY3061B>, accessed April 23, 2012.

²⁴⁵ Ryan, *Picturing Empire* 204.

and presuppositions for its readability.”²⁴⁶ Photographs are intertextual signs, highly dependent on the context in which they appear to the viewer for their meaning. What Fisher’s albums and journals demonstrate, when read against the grain of the dominant narrative that the COVIC lectures attempted to impose on them, is just how volatile photographic meaning can be, exposing the limits of textual description in determining the lessons a viewer takes from her encounter with images.

Photographic encounters “along the archival grain”

While the first part of this chapter followed Tagg and Sekula’s methods of searching “against the grain” of the colonial photographic archive to analyze the way that COVIC used Fisher’s photographs to maintain class, gender and language hierarchies in the modern British Empire, I now want to turn to historian Ann Laura Stoler’s advice to read “along the archival grain,” paying attention to the contradictions and irrationalities that are already present within the COVIC’s depiction of Canada. For Stoler, the contradictions of the colonial archive are best revealed by treating its materials—the texts, photographs, journals and official memos that document the construction of a colonial common sense—as traces of the processes through which knowledge and sentiments are sorted, edited and rewritten.²⁴⁷ To approach the archive as a process, rather than a concretized series of objects, is to treat archival documents as “active, generative substances with histories, as documents with itineraries of their own.”²⁴⁸ Stoler’s methodology encourages a reading of COVIC’s published lectures not as a totalizing

²⁴⁶ Allan Sekula, “On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,” in *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1982): 84-109, 85.

²⁴⁷ Stoler 20.

²⁴⁸ Stoler 1.

narrative imposed upon the photographs, but as one moment when the meaning of Fisher's images was forced to temporarily settle through the order and textual framework imposed by the textbooks. As the examples from the Canadian lectures that I have outlined so far might indicate, the COVIC archive already contains evidence of the anxieties that underpinned the project and demonstrates how photography was employed to try and assuage these uncertainties. The second half of this chapter therefore follows Stoler's advice to read along the logic of the COVIC photographic albums and Fisher's travel journals with an attention to its internal discrepancies and instabilities, foregrounding what Stoler describes as "non-events": the conditional, projected and pre-figured encounters or crises that the archive tries to anticipate and manage, often without success.²⁴⁹ To read along the grain of the COVIC archive requires some imaginative freedom on the part of the archival researcher, who is allowed to wander back and forth through the albums' chronology, flipping between different cities and locations and paying attention to recurring themes and accidental connections between and across images.

Interestingly, Stoler employs a photographic metaphor to describe the archival researcher's work in uncovering of these prefigured, planned-for, but never realized events, describing them as a strategy of "developing historical negatives."²⁵⁰ The parallel between the organizing logic of the colonial archive and the ontology of photography is an important one; it is a connection that Sekula has tried to make by comparing the archive's reliance on indexicality and abstraction with photography's function as both a specific index of its subject (a portrait is of a specific person, at a particular place and

²⁴⁹ Stoler 21.

²⁵⁰ Stoler 22.

time) and a generalized abstraction of all subjects (the formal qualities of that portrait remind the viewer of all the other photographic portraits she has encountered in the past). But here I want to draw a connection between the archive and the photograph that is based on the relational encounters that these two objects initiate between viewers, photographers and subjects. It is here that Azoulay's concept of photography as a social encounter, a notion she describes as "the event of photography," is useful in opening up the political possibilities of the COVIC images. As Azoulay asserts, to study the event of photography is to analyze not only the moment of the photograph's production (the conditions in which the photograph was taken) and circulation (the framing devices used to present the image to a public), but to take seriously "how the act of viewing a photograph prolongs the event of photography and enables renewed discussion of that which might be figured in the frame—so that something buried in the photograph or by means of the photograph might emerge."²⁵¹ For Azoulay, the colonial state's attempts to circumscribe the meaning of a photograph will never be successful because of the dynamic social relations that the camera initiates: it is "impossible to wholly erase the traces which the interaction between the partners in the act of photography leave in the photographed frame," even if COVIC's lecture texts encourage viewers to ignore the event of photography in their interpretation of Fisher's images.²⁵² In a strategy similar to Stoler's, Azoulay asks that photography scholars avoid the deterministic meanings ascribed to photographs through their official rhetorical framing (through captions or other textual descriptions) and pay attention instead to what appears within and beyond the photograph's frame, imagining how the viewer might have used (and might continue

²⁵¹ Azoulay, "Civil Uses of Photography" 219.

²⁵² Azoulay, "Civil Uses of Photography" 227.

to use) the potential of the photographic encounter to make political claims that run counter to the state's official narrative about the image.

To sketch out these moments of potential contestation by the COVIC spectator, which are rarely recorded in the project's official documents,²⁵³ I draw heavily on my experiences as a researcher in the COVIC archives: a space that offers a disjointed viewing experience that might mimic the haphazard presentation of the images in the colonial classroom. It is important to remember, for instance, that no captions appeared on the screen when the COVIC images were presented to students and that, unlike modern slide projectors, the slide lantern did not include a carousel, meaning the order of the images could change at the teacher's discretion. Although the lectures were carefully organized, teachers were also encouraged to "ad lib" during their lectures by referring to local knowledge or by creating their own assignments.²⁵⁴ As the textbooks and slides continued to circulate in classrooms until as late as 1945, using the same photographs that Fisher made between 1907 and 1910, the way that audiences would have understood these images as representations of imperial citizenship must have shifted, especially as some imagined catastrophes—such as Canada's takeover by the United States—did not come to pass, while others—India's independence as a nation—did. There is also evidence within Fisher's albums that copies of individual photographs were often requested by his sitters and hosts: requests that the committee was happy to fulfil, noting in several places that prints had been sent to government officials or headmasters, as was

²⁵³ There are only a handful of official reports about the implementation of the lectures in the classroom, mostly solicited from teachers and headmasters in the Eastern Colonies, where the first lectures were implemented in 1907. See Chapter One.

²⁵⁴ "Preface to the new series of Visual Instruction Committee Handbooks", *Visual Instruction Committee Handbooks* 1-9, Visual Instruction Committee of the Royal Colonial Institute, no date, bound 1933, 3.

the case with the series of images of Montreal's Macdonald College.²⁵⁵ So although it is unlikely that any of the early-twentieth century viewers of the COVIC series encountered Fisher's images in the same context in which I first saw them, in the chronological order of the albums in the University of Cambridge library, it is also problematic to assume that the organizing logic of the COVIC archive obscures the "real" way in which viewers first saw these images. My aim in following Stoler and Azoulay's thinking is not to use the evidence provided by the COVIC archive as a way to get closer to the true or authentic experience of Fisher as a photographer or the subjects that (sometimes reluctantly) posed for his camera. My interest instead is in thinking of the archive as another space where photographic meaning is continuously negotiated, where competing narratives of imperial citizenship—its promises and its uneven application in the colonial sphere—can be discerned by an attentive but disobedient viewer.

To return to Fisher's albums with the event of photography in mind is to look at these photographs differently, attuned to the often-unsettled social dynamics the images betray. In the archive of images from Canada, the incoherence of imperial citizenship manifests itself through the difficulties the photographer encountered in creating images that met Mackinder's definition of the proper imperial citizen. In Montreal, in particular, the encounters with French-speaking Canadians that were initiated by Fisher's camera unsettled the lecture texts' imposition of a social hierarchy along the lines of language. Fisher, for instance, greatly admired Montreal for its cosmopolitanism, describing it in his journals as "the real capital city of Canada" in an unfavourable comparison with Ottawa and Toronto.²⁵⁶ But this admiration for the city seemed to stem not from

²⁵⁵ See Fisher photographs, RCS, Album XIII, no. 2777-2792.

²⁵⁶ Fisher to Mackinder, *Fisher letters*, 24 October 1908.

Montreal's resemblance to English culture, but from the ways that it exceeded Fisher's expectations of Canadian society. In one particularly striking instance, the photographer was shocked to meet a black man who owned a downtown café, and expressed his incredulity at the man's position by placing scare quotes around the word "boss" in his caption for the image (Fig. 39). Posed halfway up a ladder on the sidewalk, wearing a wide straw hat, an apron tied over his crisp white shirt and black trousers, the man is seen washing the windows on the exterior of the café. Like much early modern street photography, Fisher's image captures a barrage of signage: the word CAFÉ, studded with lights, appears above the window, while the man's hand is partially obscured by an advertisement for the Bell Telephone Company. Below the window, painted script promises a "Dining Room" that is "Open All Night," while a chalkboard menu is leaned up against the wall on the sidewalk. Next to the café, just down the street, a barber's pole and a sign for cigars indicate that this is a busy commercial district, full of shops. Perhaps most importantly, these signs are all written in English, addressing an Anglophone or at the very least bilingual audience rather than a Francophone community. A clock hanging from a neighbouring business tells us it is just past eight o'clock in the morning, lending the scene a sense of preparation and anticipation: a moment of calm, set aside for cleaning, before the lunch hour rush.

This figure of the economically sovereign, yet non-white, imperial citizen presented an anomaly in the lectures' rhetoric of the organically structured community and, unsurprisingly, does not appear in the final version of the lectures presented to students. But the existence of the portrait of the shop owner, which shows him in an active pose, implicitly aware of the camera's presence, raises questions for the archival

researcher. What were the power relations at play between this man and Fisher, a figure who would have been perceived as a foreigner in Montreal? How do the formal choices of the image, which avoid the aesthetics of anthropological photography and more closely resemble the work of Eugène Atget or Alfred Stieglitz, complicate established historical narratives of imperial belonging? And how might this image be seen as a precursor to representations of multiculturalism and national belonging that replaced the notion of the imperial citizen in twentieth-century Canada?

Reading the portrait of the unnamed shop owner becomes even more complicated when it is put in conversation with the other photographs of black Canadian subjects that circulated in this period. Though Fisher was likely unaware of the political climate in Canada at the time, the period of his visit there, between 1907 and 1910, marked one of the most tense and vocal debates about black immigration into the country in the pre-war period.²⁵⁷ The Canadian immigration department had issued confidential memos to their agents as early as 1899 that deemed black immigrants “undesirable” as future Canadian citizens, but by 1910, the popular press was reporting a widespread anxiety about “a mass northward migration of Negroes out of Oklahoma and a resulting backlash among whites in the Canadian west.”²⁵⁸ The influx of black immigrants to Canada was partly due to changes in the legal status of black Oklahoma residents, a group of almost 7,000 former slaves and indigenous people who, since the Civil War, had benefitted from land ownership and voting rights.²⁵⁹ But in 1910, as white American settlers moved into the Oklahoma territory following the government’s promise of affordable, workable land,

²⁵⁷ Harold Martin Troper, “The Creek-Negroes of Oklahoma and Canadian Immigration, 1909-11,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 53.3 (September 1972): 272-88.

²⁵⁸ Troper 274.

²⁵⁹ Troper 275.

new laws were introduced that used literacy tests and a grandfather clause to deny black citizens the right to vote.²⁶⁰ In Oklahoma, as in much of the British Empire, the promise of universal equality through the abstract concept of citizenship was denied to black citizens through discriminatory laws and official policymaking. In response to this change in their legal status, many black landowners in Oklahoma took advantage of white interest in their land, selling their properties at a high profit by capitalizing on recent oil discoveries in the region. Some of these newly solvent black citizens looked to move north to Canada, where they were promised equal citizen status, free education and large parcels of farmland (promises that had ironically been made by the Canadian Department of the Interior, which had used “magic lantern” shows in the United States in the 1890s to attract potential immigrants).²⁶¹

But the public perception of black immigrants had changed in Canada since the 1890s, with conservative minister of parliament Frank Oliver taking over immigration policy in 1906 and deeming some new citizens more desirable than others. Government photography projects from this period helped shore up these distinctions between citizens. Official photography projects commissioned by the Department of the Interior in 1909, for instance, circulated portraits of white, European families to try and reassure potential white immigrants from the United States and England that, in Canada, they would find communities of people “similar to themselves” (Figs. 40-41). And, in a strange turn of events that saw the Canadian government hand over the administration of immigration into the Western provinces to the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1910, the

²⁶⁰ Troper 276.

²⁶¹ Brian S. Osborne, “Constructing the State, Managing the Corporation, Transforming the Individual: Photography, Immigration and the Canadian National Railways, 1925-30” in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan, eds. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003/2009): 162-191, 164-65.

railway corporations began using photographic “dossiers” to document, classify and monitor new Canadian citizens (Fig. 42).²⁶² Though black immigration to Canada climbed from 98 to 1,524 people in the period between 1901 and 1911, the official photographic archives render these black bodies invisible, generating an index of immigrant whiteness in its place.²⁶³

While the photographic reports about immigration to Canada carefully avoided the representation of black bodies in the landscape, textual reports in national newspapers positioned these subjects as an active threat to dominant white culture. In 1911, for example, several stories were accompanied by sensationalist headlines, including an article in the *Ottawa Free Press* warning, “Negro Settlers Troop into West, Edmonton White People Complain to Minister of Interior of the Influx,” and a dispatch in the *Montreal Herald* under the title, “Negroes Ousting Whites in Alberta.”²⁶⁴ Though these reports positioned the threat of black immigration as unique to Western Canada, the policies that were put in place to limit and discourage the immigration of non-white Americans to Canada were enforced across the country, leading to public expressions of outrage by prominent African American figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois, who wrote to the Canadian Immigration Branch in 1911 demanding clarification as to how recent changes to immigration regulations affected blacks. His letter, and the opaque response it elicited from Canadian officials, was published in the March issue of *Crisis*, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which Du Bois edited.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Osborne 166.

²⁶³ Troper 282.

²⁶⁴ Troper 280.

²⁶⁵ Troper 286.

To look again at Fisher's portrait of the Montreal café owner with this context in mind is to see the portrait as one outcome of these various struggles for sovereignty and recognition by black Canadian subjects that took place through their encounters with the camera. It is perhaps because of this political context that Fisher's photograph is not included in the final COVIC lectures, which were published in 1913 while Canada's discriminatory immigration policies continued to be enforced. Though it is unlikely that the café owner realized it in the moment the photograph was taken, his presence in the Canadian landscape, and the seeming nonchalance with which he poses in front of his business for Fisher, offered a challenge to the dominant discourses that COVIC, and the Canadian popular presses, attempted to impose on these kinds of photographic encounters. His presence in the photographic archive, as one of many imperial citizens in Fisher's catalogue, "invites the spectator to undermine the self-evident status of the act of dispossession" of political sovereignty that the COVIC lectures try to enact on certain kinds of colonial subjects by erasing them from the official lecture texts and images.²⁶⁶

As this example makes clear, the photographs that Fisher produced for the COVIC project are not the limit case events that are so often the focus of analyses of photography and the ethics of spectatorship. The COVIC photographs do not represent moments of social trauma or disaster, but instead attempt to catalogue the environment of everyday life in the empire. But it is the textures of these everyday encounters, captured by the camera, that often register the complex social dynamics created by British colonialism. It is for this reason that I am interested in considering the COVIC photo albums as a series of photographic encounters, rather than discrete events or situations. An encounter connotes the context in which a viewer sees and engages with an image,

²⁶⁶ Azoulay, "Civil Uses of Photography" 226.

lending the event of photography a spatial dimension that takes into account the specific context in which a photograph circulates, and the texts that compete to try to secure its meanings. But it also takes into account the ongoing, unfolding temporality of a spectator's engagement with a photograph and the ways that our understanding of an image can change over time. Though the COVIC project's engineers had hoped that the lectures would continue to circulate long into the twentieth century (and in many places they did, as late as the Second World War), they could not have anticipated the ongoing life of Fisher's photo albums, which allow contemporary viewers to negotiate the status of the subjects of the images and make different claims about their sovereignty and citizenship. As Edwards argues, the colonial photographic archive "is not only a place of disciplinary regulation and enclosure...[but] also a place of potential, open to new historical frames of reference where photographs can interrupt dominant narratives."²⁶⁷

To position the COVIC photo albums as a series of encounters is to also allow the different tempos of the photographic situation to come into view, including the slow, ordinary time of the everyday that is structured by the camera's presence. This slow time of the everyday is how Lauren Berlant describes "the environment" as a sphere of analysis:

an environment is made via spatial practices and can absorb how time ordinarily passes, how forgettable most events are, and, overall, how people's ordinary perseverations fluctuate in patterns of undramatic attachment and identification. In an ordinary environment, most of what we call events are not of the scale of memorable impact but rather are episodes, that is, occasions that make experiences while not changing much of anything.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Edwards, *Raw Histories* 4.

²⁶⁸ Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)", *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 33, Number 4, (Summer 2007): 754-781, 759.

For Berlant, while the environment seems unremarkable, even forgettable, it provides a rich ground for critical analysis. In the COVIC project, the environment encompasses the set of unmarked conditions that separate subjects from non-subjects, citizens from non-citizens, that Azoulay says become starker in moments of social disaster. So while it is unlikely the Montreal café owner's interaction with Fisher registered as anything other than part of his daily environment, or that the circulation of the photographed event—the portrait that Fisher created—in the COVIC photo albums made any immediate, tangible changes to his subject position in early modern Canada, the viewer's encounter with it in the archive demonstrates that the image still carries political force. The everyday becomes an important site where citizenship is negotiated, often through subtle forms of photographic self-representation.

The critical potential of the portrait of the café owner continues to be felt when the archival researcher turns to Fisher's representations of residents in Ottawa and Toronto. Like much of the central and western parts of Canada, Ontario residents are presented as ideal imperial citizens in the textbooks, but in Fisher's photographs they often appear to be suffering from the uneven nature of modernization and development that characterized modern British imperialism. In the streets of Ottawa, for instance, Fisher photographed a group of young children, dressed in their Sunday best and standing on a wooden sidewalk (Fig. 43). As Fisher notes in his caption, these children are from the poorer and working-class families in the region, and his photograph places them at a distance from the viewer, making them appear even more diminutive in relation to the tall and rough wooden buildings that fill the background of the image. The formal choices of the image recall another British photography project that sought to stir the sympathies of

imperial viewers, John Thomson's book project, *Street Life in London* (1878), created in collaboration with the journalist Adolphe Smith (Fig. 12). Meant to depict London as a distinct world, comprised of many races, that required the same kind of benevolent, Christian social intervention that was deemed necessary in faraway African colonies, *Street Life in London* linked the rhetorics of imperialism with that of urban social work.²⁶⁹

Many British viewers of the COVIC photograph must have noticed the formal resemblance of Fisher's image of the children in Ottawa to Thomson's depiction of children living on the streets of London, while others may have even recognized the setting of Fisher's photograph. In 1900, much of Ottawa had been destroyed by what became known as the Great Hull-Ottawa Fire, a blaze that began on the Hull side of the river and quickly spread throughout the city, killing seven and leaving more than 15,000 people homeless.²⁷⁰ Captured in photographs taken from the roof of a building on the Ottawa side of the river, the fire became an international event, circulating as a photographic postcard and represented in pamphlets that solicited donations from the rest of the empire to assist the city in rebuilding after the blaze. In the *Report of the Ottawa and Hull Relief Fund, 1900*, for instance, maps, alongside photographs of the wreckage, charted the destruction, showing how Hull—built entirely from wood at the time—was “wiped out” while a large section of Ottawa “was made a desert waste” (Fig. 44).²⁷¹ The pamphlet uses the now-familiar hyperbolic language of disaster relief campaigns, emphasizing the destruction and suffering wrought on Ottawa's residents, but it also

²⁶⁹ Ryan, *Picturing Empire* 177.

²⁷⁰ *Report of the Ottawa and Hull Relief Fund, 1900* (Ottawa: the Rolla L. Crain Company Ltd Printers, 1900).

²⁷¹ *Report of the Ottawa and Hull Relief Fund, 1900* 3.

celebrates the success of the international campaign, listing the donations that poured in from fellow Canadians (\$500,781), Great Britain (\$363,248), the British colonies (\$53,605) and the United States (\$33,505).²⁷² This list of contributors, which prioritizes colonial and British donations, is used to demonstrate “a spirit of generosity that completely obliterated national barriers, and gave the most gratifying demonstration of the common ties which bind mankind into one great brotherhood” in the pamphlet: a sense of international communality that echoes Mackinder’s concept of imperial citizenship.²⁷³ Yet, the attentive viewer cannot help but notice that, in the place of the stone wreckage depicted in the pamphlet on the Great Fire, Fisher’s photograph of the children in Hull shows a newly built town that is, again, constructed from wood, perched atop an unpaved road. Rather than assuring viewers that Ottawa is now safe from future calamities like the Great Fire, the COVIC photograph seems to suggest that these children live in a state of ongoing precarity: a mode of just getting by on the colonial periphery where natural disasters and the harsh Canadian landscape will continue to pose a threat to their prosperity and safety.

The Canadian landscape continues to pose a threat to imperial civilization in Fisher’s images of Western Canada, though it is in a much subtler form. In his photographs of Victoria, British Columbia, for instance, the affluence of the city and its success as a colonial outpost is marked through images of the stately homes found there, which borrow their features from English architecture (Fig. 45). But Fisher’s other images of B.C. society work to undermine the notion of the province as a copy of upper-class British society, particularly through his (perhaps unintentional) confluence of a

²⁷² *Report of the Ottawa and Hull Relief Fund, 1900*, 26.

²⁷³ *Report of the Ottawa and Hull Relief Fund, 1900*, 3.

“freak” maple tree and the “freak” Vancouver-born children posed in front of it (Fig. 46). In another rare image of motherhood, Fisher has a stern woman pose in front of a gnarled, four-trunked tree in the woods, one hand on the pram holding her youngest child and the other holding the hand of her eldest, a wooden house visible in the background between the tree’s unusual twisted form. Much like the photographs of the Newfoundland trouters that precede it, here the colonial family unit is dwarfed by the Canadian environment, appearing in its shadows rather than in a position of dominance or mastery over it. Appearing at the end of Fisher’s travels through the dominion, and at the end of the lectures about Canada, the Victoria family is positioned as the literal descendents of the imperial project, bringing the legacy of the fur trade, the domestic training offered at schools like Macdonald College, and the spirit of international economic cooperation exemplified by the Hull-Ottawa Fire Relief Fund to the colony’s furthest outposts. In Fisher’s photo albums of Canada, loneliness and isolation are the typical affective states for the imperial citizen. Rather than being used to contain and transform the rebellious potential of groups of subjects, as it was in India, training in imperial citizenship appears in Canada as a mode of securing the continued compliance and cooperation of the population, even in the face of inhospitable environmental conditions.

To examine the relationality of the photographic encounter, as Azoulay advocates, in these images of Canada is to frame Fisher’s photographs as traces of the shifting social dynamics that marked the spaces of empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Azoulay puts it,

Even when those traces express cultural and social hierarchies that organize the power relations between photographer, camera, and photographed person, they

never simply echo such relations nor do they necessarily reflect the point of view of the most powerful figure present in the arena at the time the photograph was captured. This characteristic differentiates the photograph from all other forms of documentation that we know, and renders it a powerful and suggestive source for understanding the political existence of human beings, as well as for investigating their history.²⁷⁴

Though I can only raise some of these political potentials of the COVIC photographs here, the next chapter focuses on the ways in which the COVIC images evoked and participated in ongoing debates about equality and exploitation in the empire. Focusing on images of indentured labour and the ways they conjured past visions of slavery, I speculate on the ways viewers may have enacted a form of disobedient spectatorship that was at odds with the didactic function the committee hoped the lectures would fulfill. By speculating on how the images of the other colonies—including Australia, South Africa and the West Indies—might have been reinterpreted and reinstrumentalized as the photographs continued to circulate into the mid-twentieth century, I hope to open up a space for resistant readings to emerge out of the multiple events of colonial photography.

²⁷⁴ Azoulay, “Photography: the Ontological Question” 76.

Chapter Three: Developing historical negatives: indentured labour and the latent force of the colonial photographic archive

The woman standing on the left-hand side of the photograph is the only human figure in the frame, yet she is not the subject of the image (1908, Fig. 47). At least, not according to the photographer's title, scrawled on the album page above it: a simple, declarative sentence that describes its focus to be the "Entrance to a village on the Rungeet River, in Sikkim—in front coolie woman carrying camera." Appended with a dash, the archival caption locates the woman as an afterthought in this scene. Its main subjects, it tells us, are several huts, elevated on stilts, at the edge of a river in the Himalayas. Yet, everything about the photograph's composition directs our gaze towards the woman: the curved path that leads to her firmly planted feet and the sloping contours of the mountains in the background that conclude at the top of her head; the line of three tall, spindly trees that mimic her upright stance, casting long shadows across the foreground of the image. Her face is obscured by dark shadows, grainy and out of focus, but if you look closely, it is possible to make out the gesture of her hands as she adjusts the load on her back, and the layers of plain dark clothing that she wears against the late afternoon sun (Fig. 48). She looks toward the viewer, stopped and posed for the camera rather than caught mid-stride on her way down the road.

In many ways, this photograph is a non-event within the larger archive to which it belongs: the collection of more than 7,600 images that Fisher made for the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee between 1907 and 1910. As we have already seen, rather than capturing major world events, the focus of the COVIC photographs is on everyday life in the empire, drawing viewers' attention to the interconnectedness of economic, trade and military systems between the colonial periphery and the imperial

centre. Images of individual subjects in the midst of their daily work and routines are therefore common in the COVIC lectures, designed to show the differences and similarities between imperial citizens around the world. And, despite the evocative language employed by Halford Mackinder—the chair of the Visual Instruction Committee and author of many of its textbooks—to describe the aims of the COVIC project, the images Fisher produced for the slide lectures are, for the most part, quite banal. If, as historian John McKenzie has suggested, the COVIC slide lectures were a form of imperial propaganda, they were surely some of the most understated forms of government messaging the twentieth century has seen, relying on the viewer's affective projections onto the image—rather than an agitating aesthetic—for their ideological force.²⁷⁵

As the first chapter suggests, in its effort to provide a photographic catalogue of the whole community of the empire, the COVIC scheme foreshadowed the aims of Edward Steichen's 1955 exhibition, "The Family of Man," which sought "to show the universality of human actions in the daily life of all the countries of the world."²⁷⁶ As Roland Barthes described it, this universality was represented through a series of common and essential experiences: "birth, death, work, knowledge, play [were seen to] always impose the same types of behaviour" on human subjects.²⁷⁷ Like "The Family of Man," the COVIC project also focused on these common life events, repeatedly picturing schools, military training, leisure and work as the activities that bound the imperial community together across great geographical distances. COVIC and "The Family of

²⁷⁵ John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) 165.

²⁷⁶ Roland Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," (1957) in *Mythologies*, Annette Lavers, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972): 100-102, 100.

²⁷⁷ Barthes, "The Great Family of Man" 100.

Man” also share origin stories as products of a cultural trauma: attempts at reassuring world viewers of a commonality at a moment when political events (the Cold War in the case of Steichen’s exhibition, and decline of the British Empire and rise of nationalism for COVIC) were increasingly fractious. But while “The Family of Man” relied on images of mothers—as caregivers and homemakers—to encourage feelings of affiliation, the COVIC lectures made motherhood, and its affective labour, nearly invisible. Instead, women are seen to provide their labour in other places, often in ways that (somewhat paradoxically) reveal the uneven conditions of work across the empire. Ironically, by picturing women as workers rather than as mothers, the COVIC lectures offered an almost-Marxian overview of the labour conditions of the empire, seeming to answer Barthes’s strident critique of the representation of work in “The Family of Man”:

And what can be said about work, which the Exhibition places among great universal facts, putting it on the same plane as birth and death, as if it was quite evident that it belongs to the same order of fate? That work is an age-old fact does not in the least prevent it from remaining a perfectly historical fact. Firstly, and evidently, because of its modes, its motivations, its ends and its benefits, which matter to such an extent that it will never be fair to confuse in a purely gestural identity the colonial and the Western worker (let us also ask the North African workers of the Goutte d’Or district in Paris what they think of *The Great Family of Man*). Secondly, because of the very differences in its inevitability: we know very well that work is ‘natural’ just as long as it is ‘profitable,’ and that in modifying the inevitability of the profit, we shall perhaps one day modify the inevitability of labour. It is this entirely historified work which we should be told about, instead of an eternal aesthetics of laborious gestures.²⁷⁸

In their repeated assertions about how the British government had transformed work in the empire—making it more efficient, more cooperative and supposedly more humane—the COVIC lectures historicized, rather than universalized, labour, making it clear that work was an effect of colonial policy rather than a natural state. The COVIC lectures also consistently racialized labour, asserting that certain kinds of difficult manual labour were

²⁷⁸ Barthes, “The Great Family of Man” 102.

more suitable for specific ethnic populations, who had the will and desire to perform these tasks for the benefit of the empire.

This chapter takes as its focus the role of indentured labour in the COVIC lectures and the ways that its photographic representation was included—rather than excluded—in the logic of imperial citizenship. Framing indentured labour as a trans-national phenomenon that, like imperial citizenship, forged connections across the colonies, my reading of the COVIC photographs stresses the ways these working conditions responded to the abolition of slavery and how this history was both repressed from, and returned to, the lectures’ account of work in the empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the lectures appear to be able to accommodate indentured labour within the catalogue of imperial citizenship, a closer inspection of the COVIC photographs of women indentured labourers reveal slippages between what the images show and what the texts assert. These accidents and omissions signal that photographing indentured labour, and women labourers in particular, risked exposing the double standards of imperial citizenship and troubled the ideals of agency, civility and presentability that were so vital in constituting that form of belonging. As I go on to show, the indentured labourer was a “shadow” figure to the ideal imperial citizen: a subject so fraught that even anti-colonial critics were often unable to “see” her in their claims for equal rights across the empire.

She was also a figure whose political significance was marked by latency. The indentured labourer, much like the snake charmer in India or the prospective black immigrant to Canada, posed a potential, belated problem for the unity of the empire, one that had to be developed by colonial officials, COVIC viewers and contemporary archival researchers to be fully reckoned with. My interest in this chapter is therefore in

considering latency, as a quality that characterizes the photographic process, the dismantling of slavery in the British Empire, and the claims made by imperial citizens through their encounters with photographs. The contradictions of imperial citizenship are hidden in plain sight in the COVIC lectures, available to be seen, but often underdeveloped by the lecture texts. Latency offers a way to think about the political work that is done by these photographs of indentured labour that are looked at but whose photographic evidence is not immediately *seen*.

Indentured labour was one of the “super-added characteristics due to British rule” that the COVIC lectures sought to depict in their representations of the empire. Both a literal and rhetorical solution to the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, indentured labour was officially introduced in 1833 as a way for colonial officials to continue to provide cheap labour and meet international demands for resource extraction. But the idea of creating a system of indentured Chinese labour in the British Empire emerged even earlier than abolition laws, dating back to a “secret memorandum” sent from the Colonial Office to the East India Office in 1803: a date that importantly also marks the Haitian revolution, an unprecedented historical moment in which the local population—the product of the transatlantic slave trade—overthrew the French colonial government.²⁷⁹ The British system of indentured labour was therefore a practical solution to the end of a highly profitable form of work, and a blueprint for preventing a revolution like the one that had occurred in Haiti. As Sukanya Banerjee argues, indentureship’s

²⁷⁹ Lisa Lowe, “The Intimacy of Four Continents,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Ann Laura Stoler, ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006): 191-212, 193. Susan Buck-Morss has also carefully illuminated the historical conjunction of post-Enlightenment liberal discourses of freedom and autonomy and the height of the slave trade in the Caribbean, arguing that Hegel’s essay on the master-slave dialectic emerges as a direct response to the Haitian revolution of 1803. See “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry*, 26.4 (Summer, 2000): 821-865.

historical genesis means that representations of indentured labour were always charged with the spectre of slavery, necessitating extensive paperwork to distinguish it from the system it supposedly replaced: “The compulsive nature of this documentation, a compulsiveness evident in the sheer voluminousness of the archive on indentured labour, may have been occasioned by the fact that the system of indentured labour was often not very different from the one it was designed to supersede, both in its recruitment and treatment of the workers.”²⁸⁰ At the centre of the indentured labour system was the legal contract between the worker and the imperial government, which

legitimated itself on the premise that [labourers] were rights-bearing subjects... that ‘they too were citizens of empire.’... In what seems a strange paradox, then, the discourses of imperial citizenship and indentured labour became mutually constitutive, with the result that the relation between labour and citizenship took on an added edge in imperial debates.²⁸¹

Indentured labour was a pan-imperial project that, like imperial citizenship, brought together the far-reaching corners of the empire. As Lisa Lowe argues, indentured labour generated a “global intimacy” across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. This intimacy—both physical, through the movement of bodies, as well as cultural—gave rise to two conflicting, but foundational, constructs of modern liberal capitalism: modern humanism *and* a modern racialized division of labour.²⁸²

Photographs of indentured labourers, like the woman outside the village in Sikkim, were common in the COVIC project, serving as signs of the empire’s economic

²⁸⁰ Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) 77.

²⁸¹ Banerjee 77. Though I do not have the time or space to address it here, the function of the contract in indentured labour raises provocative questions about how Ariella Azoulay’s conception of “the civil contract of photography” operates in the context of British imperialism: a system that employed the same two central concepts—citizenship and the contract—to justify colonial consolidation.

²⁸² Lowe 192.

interdependence in five of the series' seven textbooks. In the lectures on India, South Africa, "the Sea Road to the East," Australia and the West Indies, these imported labourers appear as rickshaw drivers (Fig. 49), as work-for-hire in local markets (Fig. 50), as rubber tappers (Figs. 51 and 52), and as porters (Fig. 53), as well as manual labourers who break stones, construct roads and perform other physically taxing work in the service of building and maintaining the empire. The frequency with which the figure of the indentured labourer appears in the COVIC photographs perhaps signals the "everdayness" of this form of transnational labour in the British Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. Referred to as "coolies," a term originally used to describe (East) Indian labourers brought to other dominions and colonies to work, the COVIC lectures survey some of the 2.5 million emigrant workers—from places across the Asian continent—who were working around the empire by the early 1900s.²⁸³ As a recurring motif, the "coolie" reads as a type within imperial citizenship, one that can reliably be found in any corner of the empire alongside her counterparts, the naval officer and the colonial bureaucrat.

But the lectures' textual descriptions of these figures undermine their seemingly status quo nature as part of the empire's everyday functioning. The COVIC textbooks obsess over how to categorize these imperial subjects that do not neatly conform to existing race and class categories, and worry about how this ambiguous status might cause problems for the functioning of the empire. These anxieties about how the indentured labourer's ambiguous racial status might undermine notions of imperial belonging were exacerbated when the subjects that Fisher photographed crossed multiple

²⁸³ K.O. Laurence, *A Question of Labour: Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

categories of difference. Women indentured labourers—who were not native to the country in which they worked, but also not British; who were neither working-class, nor part of the middle-class colonial bureaucracy; who provided not just physical, but also reproductive and affective labour as mothers of and caregivers to the children of the empire—put particular stress on COVIC’s catalogue of imperial citizenship. The woman “coolie” reappears throughout the COVIC archive as a figure that is not immediately threatening, but that *might one day*, through her ability to literally and figuratively create colonial subjects, disrupt the spirit of cooperation espoused by the project.

This chapter looks at the indentured labourer as a sign of the latent violence—both physical and psychic—that structured imperial citizenship after the abolition of slavery. Unlike the preceding chapters, which search for figures and feelings in the photographs that the lectures try to obscure, the focus of this chapter is on a subject that is so common throughout the COVIC project that she constitutes a type within imperial citizenship. By looking for representations of the indentured labourer across the COVIC lectures, and particularly in those on India, South Africa and the West Indies, I stress the archive’s role as a negative of empire: the possibility that the very images used to constitute imperial citizenship might also register a latent critique of that form of belonging. The figure of the indentured labourer—whose living and working conditions often resembled those of slavery—should pose a problem for the promises of equality offered by imperial citizenship, but she does not. And yet, unlike the fakir in India, or the Quebecois women in Canada, the indentured labourer does not appear as a difficult “other” that needs to be managed or transformed by imperial rule. She is instead a liminal figure. Her presence in the imperial community can be acknowledged, but her position is

never fixed. She is a sign that continuously circulates, and it is this mobility that makes her both profitable to, and a problem for, the empire. Her ability to travel throughout the empire is framed as one of the advantages that would compel her to agree to the terms of her work, but her slippery racial identity also risks confusing imperial power structures; of allowing lowly workers to “pass” as middle-class colonial civil servants; or, even worse, of middle-class imperial citizens being mistaken for forced labourers (a key concern for members of the India Office, which I will return to).

Fisher’s image of the indentured female labourer in front of the village in Sikkim is not excluded from the published COVIC lectures, as other problematic colonial subjects were. But the textual treatment of her image belies the representation problems she posed for picturing imperial citizenship. Her photograph appears in the lectures on India, for instance, but under the simple title “Village in Sikkim: a woman carrying baggage.” Any reference to the presence of camera equipment has been removed, perhaps because it too obviously called attention to the means of the lectures’ production and the role of the photographer as author: cues that might impair the viewer’s ability to imaginatively project themselves into the photograph and draw their attention to the constructed view of the empire that COVIC provided.²⁸⁴ Instead, the lecture texts, authored by Mackinder, attempt to describe and fix the woman’s racial makeup, through a series of cross-colonial comparisons that blend visual descriptions of skin colour with affective descriptions of temperament:

²⁸⁴ Indeed, it is one of the only times the photographic archive represents Fisher’s role as author: the other appears in two self-portraits, taken in Canada while the artist was—rather heroically, the images imply—scaling a glacier to get a better perspective on a scene. See Fisher photographs, RCS Album X, nos. 2212–2213: Photographer unknown, *A.H.F. on the Illecilliwait [i.e. Illecillewaet] Glacier. Standing on side of a crevasse: view looking up towards the Serac on the top*, Alberta, 1908, quarter plates.

The people of Sikkim in the hills beyond Darjeeling are Highlanders of Mongolian stock and not Indian. They are of Buddhist religion like the Burmans, and not Hindu or Musulman like the inhabitants of India. They are small, sturdy folk, with oblique cut eyes, and a Chinese expression, and they have the easy-going humorous character of the Burmans, though not the delicacy and civilization of those inhabitants of the sunny lowland. They and the kindred and neighbour Tibetans rarely wash, and the women anoint their faces with a mixture of pigs' blood, which gives them a dark and mottled appearance.²⁸⁵

Fisher's photograph of the woman makes her face literally dark, difficult to read for these supposedly obvious, racially defined characteristics.

Fisher's original caption for the image—"Entrance to a village on the Rungeet River, in Sikkim—in front coolie woman carrying camera"—also obscures what it is we are seeing. It does not just displace the woman as the main subject of the photograph; it also functions to obscure the work she is performing. The photographer's caption describes the contents of the load on the woman's back as a camera, when Fisher's only camera is, of course, not in the bag, but in his hands, being used to take this photograph. What the "coolie woman" carries instead is the supporting apparatus for the camera—the tripod sticking out at an awkward angle behind her head—as well as the portable darkroom and developing agents that the photographer hauled around the world with him to create his negatives.²⁸⁶ This double slip between what the photograph shows and what the caption tries to pin down as its subject suggests a kind of optical repression on Fisher's part: a refusal to acknowledge the signs of the means of production (the

²⁸⁵ H.J. Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India* (London: Visual Instruction Committee/Waterlow & Sons, 1910) 45.

²⁸⁶ Fisher was supplied with one camera by the Colonial Office and provided with a budget of £100 to purchase "film, plates, printing papers and chemicals" to take with him on his journey, while Mackinder requested that customs agents around the empire allow him to enter without inspecting his camera equipment. See Halford Mackinder to Sir Charles Lucas, 6 Sept 1907 (CO 885/17/8), Miscellaneous Correspondence relating to Visual Instruction, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

woman's labour) and reproduction (the photographic developing equipment) that sustained the British Empire.

These repressed subjects—the woman, the darkroom equipment and the figure of the indentured labourer—are not hidden by the final COVIC lectures, but their presence, and its import for the message of imperial citizenship, does not immediately register on the first viewing of the photograph. It is only through careful, repeated looking—a kind of looking that disobeys the direct, pedagogical message communicated by COVIC, and that imagines other meanings—that inconsistencies between the image's photographic evidence and the meaning inscribed upon it by its captions begin to emerge. To adopt this kind of looking in the archive is to imagine the spectators of the COVIC lectures, past and present, as critical and imaginative viewers, savvy enough to see past the committee's directives, and capable of developing oppositional meanings from the COVIC photographs. It is a strategy that departs from Stoler's advice to read "along the archival grain," foregrounding the epistemic uncertainties that structure the archive's organizational logic.²⁸⁷ For Stoler, it is not enough to look for what is absented from the archive's official narrative, but necessary to look for "non-events" contained within the archive's materials: the conditional, projected and pre-figured encounters that the archive tries to anticipate and manage, often without success.²⁸⁸ Such non-events might include memoranda about an imagined and impending political crisis (such as a "Second Mutiny" in India), educational policies for managing a yet-to-be-constituted population (such as mixed race children), or exhaustive re-workings of immigration laws (usually in response to catastrophes in neighbouring countries) to pre-empt a "foreign flood" of immigrants

²⁸⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 21.

²⁸⁸ Stoler 21.

into the empire. In Stoler's estimation, the fact that these events do not come to pass does not detract from their significance. Their affective textures—the panics they signal, the uncertainties of colonial knowledge production that they reveal—are not anomalies in the archive, but constitute its logic. As I have noted, Stoler employs a photographic metaphor to describe the archival researcher's work in uncovering these prefigured, planned-for, but never realized events, describing it as a strategy of “developing historical negatives.”²⁸⁹ For Stoler, the archive's negatives are expressed in the “subjunctive mood of official imaginings,” in the concrete responses that colonial officials planned for crises that might not ever materialize.²⁹⁰

While for Stoler the photographic process is a metaphor for how the archive anticipates events before they happen—with the double meaning of the word “negative” also connoting the “worst-case scenario” thinking that characterizes colonial bureaucratic rhetoric—I want to take the analogy seriously, exploring the critical and psychoanalytic implications of using the developing process as a metaphor for working in the colonial photographic archive. The working conditions of the indentured labourer were not a secret, but openly acknowledged as part of the “colonial common sense” of the British Empire.²⁹¹ But seen within the catalogue of imperial citizenship constructed by COVIC, photographs of indentured labourer are symptomatic of the inequalities embedded in imperial citizenship, offering visual evidence of the hypocrisies of colonial rule, “that only some [subjects] had rights, that rights and race were not always aligned, and that awareness of those inconsistencies were evident to, and expressed among, empire's

²⁸⁹ Stoler 22.

²⁹⁰ Stoler 106.

²⁹¹ Stoler 6.

practitioners themselves.”²⁹² To dwell on representations of the indentured labourer in the COVIC lectures is to develop the hypocrisies of imperial citizenship they represent, to imagine how they might offer a critique of colonial rule, and to insist on seeing how they continue to structure contemporary visions of photographic citizenship.

To focus on the indentured labourer, and her latent critique of imperial citizenship, also means contending with the limits of agency: the agency of the labourer, the agency of the photograph to record accidental details, and the agency of the archival researcher in activating the intersecting narratives of empire, photography and citizenship. In each of these cases, the critical force of the labourer, the photograph and the archive arrives “too late” to be immediately useful. Indentured labourers pose a problem for agency within imperial citizenship: they have supposedly agreed to the conditions of their work, but those conditions are tantamount to slave labour. They have “willingly” relocated to another part of the empire, but in so doing have relinquished their rights to own property, to vote and often found it impossible to return to their home country at the end of their indenture. Their appearance across the empire also confuses the boundaries between subjecthood and commodity. Like the fruit and sugar picked in the colonies and sold in London’s markets, the indentured labourer is a resource, extracted from one colony to be capitalized on in another.

The critique of imperial citizenship suggested by the category of the indentured labourer has to be developed by critical viewers of the COVIC project. This process demonstrates the ways that photographic claims to citizenship are necessarily deferred claims: they must come after the event of photography, once the image has been developed, both literally and metaphorically. But, as I go on to show, there are also

²⁹² Stoler 6.

obstacles to allowing the latent critical force of the image of the indentured labourer to enter into the public discourse of imperial citizenship. While some of these obstacles are practical ones—such as the censoring of certain images by the Colonial Office committee—others are political. The representation of the indentured labourer in texts and images concurrent with the COVIC lectures show that would-be imperial citizens often refused to “see” indentured labourers in their home colony when they were inconvenient for the group’s self-presentation as model citizens. At other times, the indentured labourer became an overly visualized shadow figure: the “bad object” of imperial citizenship, used to demonstrate another group’s readiness for inclusion in the imperial community. These examples, which I go on to chart in detail, not only raise questions about the agency of the indentured labourer, but about the limited agency of the viewer. They caution that the civil contract of photography—like imperial citizenship—is authored on uneven terms: that there are no guarantees that every viewer will be willing to see the ways that exploitation structures and continues to underwrite citizenship in the (former) British Empire.

Developing agents

Much like Fisher’s refusal to acknowledge the presence of the developing equipment in his photograph of the woman indentured labourer in Sikkim, processes of photographic development have often been repressed in contemporary theories of photography. Before turning to a close analysis of the images of indentured labour that appear in the COVIC archive, I want to take a short theoretical diversion to chart the ways that photographic development appears and disappears in scholars’ accounts of the medium. Though these

theories are often expressed in abstract terms that may not seem immediately relevant to the COVIC project, my claim is that the developing process might be a useful metaphor for understanding the critical work that scholars can do in the colonial photographic archive. By drawing out references to development in writing by Walter Benjamin, Ann Laura Stoler, psychoanalytic theorist Sarah Kofman and photographer Jeff Wall, my hope is to think about the latency of the colonial photographic archive as one of its critical strengths, allowing a critique of imperial citizenship to emerge from the residues of the COVIC project.

It seems strange that so little focus has been put on the function of development in our theories of photography; especially since the invention of the medium is marked not by the creation of the first camera (which came in the Renaissance), but by the invention of the first successful development process to fix the impressions made by the camera obscura. Photography's "inventors," Henry Fox Talbot and Louis Daguerre, were in many ways developers just as much as they were photographers. This oversight in the critical discourse may have its own psychoanalytic causes, as Jeff Wall has suggested in his essay on photography's "liquid intelligence."²⁹³ Writing in 1989, at an historical moment that saw artists increasingly turning to digital photography, Wall speculated that the developing bath had been suppressed in most theories of photography because its reliance on liquids undermined our fantasies about the medium as dry, optical and rational. For Wall, the liquidity of photography had been excised from photography theory because it represents that which is excessive, alchemical and primal about the medium: liquid seeps into places it should not be, often changing their very structure. But

²⁹³ Jeff Wall, "Photography and Liquid Intelligence (1989)," *Jeff Wall: The Complete Edition*, Thierry de Duve et al., eds. (New York: Phaidon, 2010) 209-210.

the liquid intelligence of photography is also one of the medium's assets. In Wall's estimation, photography is self-reflexive because, while the "dry intelligence" of optics and camera mechanics capture an image, it is the "liquid intelligence" of the developing process that "achieves a historical self-reflection, a memory of the path it has traversed."²⁹⁴

In the context of the COVIC lectures, the developing process was literally a moment of self-reflection for Fisher, who would often convert his hotel bathrooms into darkrooms to process and print his images at the end of each day of shooting. These evenings were also spent writing captions for the images, designing diagrams and instructions about the colouring of each scene for the lanternslide company, and writing in his journals about what he had seen during his travels. To encounter the remnants of this process more than 100 years after the production of the COVIC images presents another opportunity for reflection, one where another narrative about citizenship and labour can be developed. Instead of examining the official narratives told by the COVIC textbooks, Stoler's approach of developing the archive's historical negatives looks for the "pliable coordinates of what constituted colonial common sense," paying attention to how knowledge was written and rewritten as the committee's fantasies about imperial unity were refuted and the British government's preparations for future calamities went unrealized.²⁹⁵

While for Stoler photographic negatives are convenient, and not always consistent, metaphors for the anxieties that structure the colonial project, Kofman made

²⁹⁴ Wall 209.

²⁹⁵ Stoler 3.

the psychoanalytic implications of photographic negatives explicit.²⁹⁶ Elucidating Sigmund Freud's use of the photographic apparatus in his writing on the unconscious, Kofman argued that it was actually the movement from the negative impressions registered on film to the positive photographic print that interested the psychoanalyst: "Freud's use of the model of the photographic apparatus is intended to show that all psychic phenomena necessarily pass first through an unconscious phase, through darkness and the negative, before acceding to consciousness, before developing within the clarity of the positive."²⁹⁷ But, as Kofman is careful to point out, this development from the unconscious to consciousness is neither natural nor inevitable. Freud "adds other metaphors, making it clearly understood that, between the negative and positive phases, there intervene forces which enact a selection from among the negatives. The metaphor here is that of the watchman, the censor, present at the entrance to the dark antechamber, forbidding certain drives from entering into the clear room of consciousness."²⁹⁸ In Freud's model of the unconscious as a photographic developing process, these censoring forces can prevent the negative from ever developing through to the level of consciousness. The passage to light, when it happens, does not take place through a theoretical procedure, but a practical one: through the analytic "talking cure."

If we try to adapt Kofman (and Freud)'s thinking to the context of British colonialism, seeing the patient not as a single human subject, but as colonial common sense itself, then the undeveloped negatives become a repository of the unrepresentable

²⁹⁶ Stoler often mixes her photographic metaphors, conflating the decisions made in the taking of photographs (such as adjusting the aperture, framing or shutter speed) with steps in development and printing (cropping, enlarging, distortion).

²⁹⁷ Sarah Kofman, *Camera Obscura of Ideology*, Will Straw, trans. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) 22.

²⁹⁸ Kofman 22.

anxieties that structured imperial rule. Our work then, as researchers in the colonial photographic archive, is not to imagine that we can find missing pieces of the archive that would undo the ideological work it performs. Rather, as in dream analysis, the work lies in narrativizing the slips and accidents already present in the archive. Our role as researchers in the photographic archive to act as developing agents, working to make these latent images visible. To look at the archive in this way is to allow our gaze to wander, to focus on details that the captions tell us are unimportant, and to pay attention to how clearly certain figures register, while others remain grainy and out-of-focus.

In the colonial context, paying attention to the figures that do not register on film also draws attention to photography's troubled and ongoing relationship to race. Much like the developing bath, photographic emulsions—the light sensitive materials applied to photographic plates or embedded in celluloid film—have also tended to fall out of theories of photography. Yet, as a number of scholars and artists have demonstrated, the supposedly neutral ways that film stock, and especially colour film stock, has been calibrated and tested to register human skin tones has consistently used white, European bodies as its standard, rendering coloured bodies darkened or even invisible in twentieth-century photographs.²⁹⁹ Kodak's insistent use of white female models for their “normal” test images was so pervasive that, in 1977, it led the French film director Jean-Luc Godard to publicly announce he would not be using their stock while on assignment in Mozambique because it was “inherently racist.”³⁰⁰ While the COVIC photographs used

²⁹⁹ See, for instance, David Smith, “‘Racism’ of early colour photography explored in art exhibition,” *The Guardian*, 25 January 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/25/racism-colour-photography-exhibition>, accessed June 16, 2014; Sean O'Toole, “Yes, but (Some Thoughts on Broomberg and Chanarin's New Work),” Gallery TPW R&D, April 2013, <http://gallerytpw.ca/rd/yes-but/>, accessed June 16, 2014.

³⁰⁰ Smith, accessed June 16, 2014.

black and white film stock rather than the (literally) colour blind film Godard rejected, it is nonetheless helpful to think about the limits of photography's capacity to register particular human bodies based on the colour of their skin. Looking through the archive of images produced for the COVIC project, and searching for those subjects who failed to register on Fisher's film, these technical limits serve as an analogy for the spectator's psychic and optical limits in "seeing" citizens who are visibly different from us.

This approach to the archive, which is attuned to the undeveloped and repressed figures in the COVIC project, also draws from Benjamin's writing on the optical unconscious. Like many photo historians, Benjamin's notion of the optical unconscious emphasizes the moment that a photograph is produced, relying on the camera's ability to capture fleeting or microscopic events. In his earliest essay on the idea, 1931's "A Little History of Photography," he underscores the importance of the camera's mechanical operations, using the snapshot, slow motion film and the microscopic photograph to argue for the medium's ability to reveal occurrences that would ordinarily pass unnoticed by the human eye. This does not mean that photography allows human perception to gain mastery over the visible world, however; instead, Benjamin argues for the radical unruliness of the event of photography. Despite our efforts to control what it captures, photography does not conform to the will of the subject nor operator, containing within it that "tiny spark of contingency" which draws us to its images.³⁰¹ For Benjamin, there is something beyond the physical, visible world that presents itself to the camera—sometimes accidentally—in these moments of encounter between subject and operator that can only be seen latently, once the photograph is developed and printed.

³⁰¹ Walter Benjamin, "A Little History of Photography," *One Way Street and Other Writings*, Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, trans. (London: New Left Books, 1979) 240-257, 243.

Processes of development and printing are central in Benjamin's conception of the optical unconscious, yet they have not received the same amount of analytic attention as the moment in which the shutter is released. References to enlargement, in particular, appear throughout Benjamin's writing, serving to reveal the physiognomy of the visual world and to blur the line between technology and magic.³⁰² In his 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," he even goes so far as to argue that the practice of photographic enlargement is akin to the psychic processes of subject formation: "The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject."³⁰³ For Benjamin, it is not just the moment of production, but the subsequent moments of developing and looking at photographs, that reveal these new structural formations.

Though the kinds of enlargement that Benjamin discusses were not yet technically possible in the period in which the COVIC photographs were produced, I want to think about these strategies of cropping and enlarging metaphorically, to describe the kinds of looking that are possible in the space of the archive. To fixate on the figure of the indentured labourer in the COVIC photographs is to enlarge her psychic presence within the narrative of imperial citizenship. To make her the focus of my gaze—rather than the subjects that the captions describe—is a political gesture, motivated by a desire to see her as an active, agentic citizen; to acknowledge her specific position in the empire rather than relegating her to a "type"; and to take seriously the trouble she caused for colonial bureaucrats.

³⁰² Benjamin, "A Little History," 243-244.

³⁰³ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969) 217-251, 236.

While the school-aged viewers of the COVIC lectures had a limited view of the project, one directed by the textbooks' and their teachers' pedagogical methods, I can look through the COVIC archive at a different tempo, one that allows me to watch the subjects of the photographs as they move through, across and between photographic frames, and to return to figures who reappear throughout the albums, haunting the COVIC project. It is in this slowed-down space of looking that the affective textures of the COVIC photographs can be felt: literally touched through the glossy surfaces displayed in the albums in the University of Cambridge library, but also through a more ephemeral kind of contact between the viewer and the archive.³⁰⁴ Much as a film negative must make physical contact with the photographic paper to produce a positive print, the colonial photographic archive is a site of physical and psychic transference, where the potential affective meanings of an image can be imprinted upon and relayed by the researcher. This space of touching feeling, as queer theorist Eve Sedgwick has put it, collapses the distinctions between reading and seeing, tactility and affect.³⁰⁵ It allows the unsaid, implicit meanings of the photographs to emerge, both those that hit the viewer immediately, and those that only register latently, after repeated viewings, prolonged contact and extensive looking.

Things not photographed: "seeing" photographs of slavery in the British Empire

³⁰⁴ For a nuanced discussion of how the glossy or shiny surface of the photograph both elicits contact from the viewer and insists on the limits of the surface or "skin" of the image, see Elizabeth Abel, "Skin, Flesh, and the Affective Wrinkles of Civil Rights Photography," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, 20.2 (Spring/Summer 2012): 35-69.

³⁰⁵ Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

Representations of contact, and its prohibition, were central to COVIC's attempt to separate representations of indentured labour from the spectre of slavery: a task that was made difficult by the ongoing ways that signs and symbols of plantation slavery continued to brush up against the photographs of indentured labour in the British isles. As many historians have noted, the invention of photography in 1838 coincided with the abolition of slavery in the British Empire: an historical development that was, of course, accidental, but which has important resonances for how we picture the conditions of slavery in the United Kingdom. While there is a rich body of hand-drawn illustrations and etchings that depict slavery in the British Empire—visual material that was vital to abolitionist campaigns in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—there are few, if any, photographs. As Krista Thompson shows in her study of the historiography of slavery in the British Caribbean, the lack of photographs that directly picture slavery has not stopped historians from using photographs produced in the late 1800s and early 1900s as illustrations of the conditions on plantations in the West Indies.³⁰⁶ Thompson focuses in particular on several photographs that appear on the cover of a popular historical textbook about slavery in the British Caribbean, including *Cutting Sugar Cane*, a photograph of a sugar cane plantation produced by Adolphe Duperly and Sons in 1904 (Fig. 54).³⁰⁷ A commercial photography studio established by the senior Duperly in Kingston, Jamaica in 1840, Duperly and Sons specialized in picturesque landscape views of the region. The image of fourteen Jamaican workers, and their European employer, is a strange one, showing the labourers at rest in the sugar cane fields. Some lean on their

³⁰⁶ Krista Thompson, "The Evidence of Things Not Photographed: Slavery and Historical Memory in the British West Indies," *Representations*, 113:1 (Winter 2011): 39-71.

³⁰⁷ Thompson's main focus is on how the photograph is used, in cropped forms, in Michael Craton, James Walvin, and David Wright's *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Black Slaves and the British Empire* (London, 1976).

inactive machetes, while others kneel or even lounge on the ground. As Thompson notes, the workers in the front row are also ostentatiously demonstrating the edibility of the crop they are harvesting, awkwardly holding pieces of cane to their lips in a series of unnatural and seemingly staged positions.³⁰⁸

Reproduced as a postcard, the photograph of cutting cane sugar was designed as a tourist memento: a depiction of the British Caribbean as a verdant tropical landscape, rich in exotic vegetation that could feed the local population, and as a place of safety and relaxation for English tourists. The opening decade of the twentieth century marked a turning point in the ways the Caribbean was visualized and marketed to the British public, as hoteliers razed the landscape, building resorts and planting non-indigenous flowers and trees to make the surroundings seem more typically “tropical.”³⁰⁹ After the collapse of the sugar industry in the West Indies in the 1860s, the British government was also turning its focus away from sugar cane, emphasizing instead the region’s “exotic” fruits and vegetables and trying to shed its associations with the plantation slavery system that was in place before 1833. In Thompson’s masterful reading of the image, the images produced by Duperly and Sons signal all of these shifts, while also communicating a contradictory message about labour in British Jamaica: “Many images simultaneously conveyed tropical languor and colonial discipline, portraying the island’s inhabitants as ardent workers in a landscape that did not need labor.”³¹⁰ With its connotations of luxury, tourism and inaction, it seems strange that historians would employ this image as an illustration of the conditions of slavery in the British Empire. But Thompson suggests

³⁰⁸ Thompson, “The Evidence of Things Not Photographed” 54.

³⁰⁹ Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and the Framing of the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

³¹⁰ Thompson, “The Evidence of Things Not Photographed” 48.

that this atemporal use of the image signals an unspoken assumption on the part of historians that slavery was not yet “over” in the British Empire. Instead of seeing it as a mistake, she suggests that “[t]he presentation of late nineteenth-century photographs as the pictorial face of slavery might precisely visualize the continuities between the period of slavery and post-emancipation, the ghostly and all too real reappearance of forms of unfreedom past.”³¹¹

The COVIC lectures on the West Indies, circulating at the same time as the Duperly and Sons postcard, also struggle with how to picture slavery and its ghostly traces, starting with the very cover of the textbook. The front of the COVIC textbook on the West Indies, authored by Algernon E. Aspinall, a specialist in tropical agriculture, and published in 1914, hints at the importance of sugar and rum (a resource made from the overabundance of sugar in the Caribbean) to the local economy, even if the photographs inside refuse to directly picture them (Fig. 55). Printed on a coffee-coloured cloth, the illustrations in the upper register of the cover centre on a huge sailing ship in a circular frame, flanked by two tall palm trees and two large oars. To the left of the ship are two “native” figures, dressed in stereotypical headdresses, loincloths and palm fronds. One standing figure, carrying a spear, approaches another, who seems to be bundling something into packages, implicitly headed for the ship and ultimately the rest of the empire. To the right of the ship, a dark figure—his skin filled with densely packed lines to indicate his racial status—stands hammering a barrel, while the bow of a small boat appears on the shore in front of him. In contrast to the “native” figures on the left, this lone figure is noticeably naked. He reads immediately as a slave, sealing a barrel of rum on the shore so it can also make its way to the ship in the centre of the cover.

³¹¹ Thompson, “The Evidence of Things Not Photographed” 40.

Of all of the textbooks in the COVIC series, the one on the West Indies is the most overt in its acknowledgment of slavery, and in its description of its successor, the system of indentured labour. In the opening pages of the lectures, Aspinall describes the slave trade set up by the British between western Africa and the West Indies. While he admits that the middle passage was “unspeakable,” he quickly goes on to reassure his childhood readers that, once the slaves arrived and if they had good masters, they “were probably more contented than they could ever have been in their home in Africa. Many old prints show that the slaves were, on occasion, extremely happy.”³¹² Hand-drawn images, rather than photographs, are marshalled in to illustrate Emancipation Day in the British West Indies in 1838, showing engravings of scenes of celebration on the islands. This brief account of the “happy” end to slavery is quickly ended, however, with a section that details the ways emancipation negatively impacted sugar production and the economy of empire, when the freed slaves of the West Indies “declined to work.”³¹³ As Aspinall notes, the British government initially attempted to solve this problem by importing labour from Calcutta in 1837, but this was outlawed by the Indian government (after reports of the heinous living and working conditions the imported labourers faced there—a detail the lectures fail to note) in 1838. This restriction was lifted again in 1844 and “since that year East Indian immigration into certain of the West Indian islands, under a system of indenture, has been successfully conducted,” Aspinall tells his readers.³¹⁴ This opening section ends with a description of the composition of the population of the West Indies, which is implicitly an outcome of these various forms of

³¹² Algernon E. Aspinall, *West Indies and Guiana: Six Lectures* (London: George Philip & Son Ltd., 1914) 8.

³¹³ Aspinall 9.

³¹⁴ Aspinall 10.

forced, imported labour. The lectures note that the British West Indies are now comprised of people of East Indian descent, East Indian immigrants, Chinese subjects who were introduced to the islands between 1853 and 1866 (whose descendents “form respectable and law-abiding members of the community”) and a “white population who are the descendants of old planters and Royalists; political prisoners sent to the islands by Cromwell; and loyalists who emigrated after the American revolution.”³¹⁵ The lectures describe the West Indies as a kind of hodgepodge of imperial citizens, from a variety of national and ethnic backgrounds, who now find themselves living side by side because of the practicalities of imperial labour. Notably absent from this description of the current population are the territory’s indigenous peoples, and the African slaves, the two imperial subjects who appear so clearly on the cover of the COVIC textbooks.

Another strange representational slip occurs in the photographs included in the West Indies lectures. Whereas the drawings on the front cover of the book show male labourers in the British Caribbean, the lanternslides depict only women workers. In this section, in particular, images of “market women” appear as illustrations of local workers, including one produced in Jamaica by A. Duperly and Sons (Fig. 56). Showing a line of African-Jamaican women standing in the foreground of a dirt road cut through the forest, and not the East Indian population that the texts mention, the image shows the women on their way back from the market, with yams, bananas, cloth sacks and metal pitchers of water piled in baskets perched on top of their heads. Though they are barefoot, their long dresses, clean aprons and the occasional necklace suggest we are not seeing forced labourers at a plantation, but rather willing workers of the post-emancipation period: a time frame that seems doubly assured by the appearance of modern telephone poles and

³¹⁵ Aspinall 10.

electrical lines along the sides of the road in the background. Here, the COVIC lectures (perhaps accidentally) make a direct displacement, showing an image of Jamaican subjects who are undoubtedly a product of the transatlantic slave trade, but describing its successful removal and replacement with East Indian indentured labour.

The laborious conditions of the women's work are also obscured by the texts, which wax eloquently about the gracefulness of these figures' movements. In the section about Barbados, for instance, an image that is remarkably similar to the Duperly and Sons photograph shows another woman worker: this time a yam-seller (Fig. 57). Aspinall's text uses the photograph to point out the way the women in this region carry baskets of all kinds of material on their heads, "as West Indians do with everything...from a banana to a packing case, and it is to this that the splendid bearing and carriage of the black women is commonly attributed."³¹⁶ Here, the women's bodies and comportment are literally transformed by the physical work that they do. Not through backbreaking, forced labour on sugar cane plantations, but through the action of walking and hauling the commodities of the empire. The insistence on the women's "splendid bearing and carriage" is undoubtedly meant as a contrast to the hand-drawn images of naked black figures, shackled and whipped, that were so potent in the abolitionist movement in the British Empire. But these images also suggest the figures' stoic willingness to work, at odds with the texts' descriptions of the freed slaves' decision to "decline to work" after emancipation.

One other visual sleight of hand takes place in the COVIC lanternslides of the Caribbean, seemingly in an effort to suppress visions of slavery from viewers' minds. Though sugar cane and rum are both suggested by the illustrations on the front of the

³¹⁶ Aspinall 80.

textbook, they are rarely pictured in the photographs. When sugar does appear, it does so either as an unpeopled landscape of planted cane, or as a raw commodity being processed in a factory. In both cases, sugar is carefully separated from human figures and their labour. Instead, the COVIC photographs picture fruit, yams and even coal, the new luxury commodities of the West Indies at the dawn of the twentieth century, carefully balanced in the baskets on the women's heads. In the Duperly and Sons image, in particular, the only figure allowed contact with sugar is a donkey who, standing in the centre of the image, is loaded down with long sections of cane. This disappearance of human subjects from sugar production—the resource that was one of the foundations of the British Empire's economic prosperity in the 1800s—suggests a repression of any visual residues of plantation slavery: a desire on the part of the committee to prevent representations of slavery from “touching” the depictions of imperial labour. Though the COVIC images are not photographs “of” slavery, they are photographs that nonetheless conjure the negative impressions of slavery: the “unspeakable” system that indentured labour supposedly replaced. The function of the woman labourer in this new system was a complicated one, however, because of the ways her affective and reproductive labour could literally shape the hearts and minds of the empire's younger citizens.

Good and bad objects of imperial labour

As we have seen, photographs of factories, farms and markets dominate the COVIC lectures. Representing work as a common, pan-imperial activity was also an important way to assert one of COVIC's most forceful fantasies about the empire, a delusion about it as an organized, cooperative system where each citizen's work contributed to the well-being of the greater imagined community. Imperial citizenship, as

I have shown, was difficult for the COVIC project to visualize because it relied on performative cues, such as dress, comportment and the expression of emotions, as criteria for membership. Service, duty and industriousness—qualities associated with work—were also integral in shaping representations of the ideal imperial citizen who, alongside the colonial bureaucrat and the military serviceman, directed their behaviour towards the maintenance of the empire.³¹⁷ The COVIC lectures on India, in particular, employed labour as a unifying activity, using photographs of Indian men making khaki uniforms and army boots for the British military as examples of the interconnectedness of empire and as a not-so-subtle reminder of the outcome of the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Other, more nuanced depictions of idealized imperial labour appear in the other COVIC lectures, in ways that demonstrate how the idea of imperial citizenship both troubled and reinforced racial distinctions.

In the COVIC lectures on South Africa, authored by economist Arthur John Sargent and published in 1914, imperial labour is centred on the production of food: “exotic” fruit and vegetables which will circulate back to England, literally feeding the imperial centre. Describing a tour of a fruit farm just outside of Capetown, Sargent’s lecture text notes the “native workers who are a very necessary element in the agricultural population of South Africa.”³¹⁸ In the photograph that accompanies his description, titled “Native Workers on a Farm,” eleven workers, both men and women, are seen standing over several wooden crates of peaches (Fig. 58). The work that is being shown on the farm is not that of planting or harvesting, but rather the sorting of fruit into containers.

³¹⁷ Sukanya Banerjee notes that service and duty increasingly became the ethos of imperial citizenship as part of a growing civic sensibility in England and abroad. *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 118.

³¹⁸ A. J. Sargent, *South Africa: Seven Lectures* (London: George Philip & Son Ltd, 1914) 11.

Though it is not an assembly line that is pictured, the workers' position in rows on each side of the crates denotes a systematic method of labour, while the way the materials are laid out on the table—a tall stack of crates in the background, two boxes piled high with peaches at the far end, a container of packing straw in the centre and a beautifully organized crate of perfectly lined-up fruit at the end of the table—illustrate a controlled process of inventory management.

What is not immediately clear in the lectures, or photographs, is that this is not just any rural farm, but a site of social and agricultural experimentation that typified British colonialism in South Africa. Commissioned by the Cape Government Railways and lent to COVIC for reproduction in the lectures, the photograph was taken at one of the Rhodes Fruit Farms, a series of more than 20 “model” farms throughout South Africa that were established by Cecil John Rhodes in the early 1900s. A politician, mining magnate (Rhodes was one owner of the De Beers diamond company), railway developer and proponent of British colonial policy, Rhodes's farm project aimed to rehabilitate farming in the region by transforming old wine vineyards (which had been afflicted by an insect epidemic in the 1880s and 90s) into fruit farms. Between 1897 and 1902, more than 200,000 pears, apricot, plum and peach trees were planted across Rhodes's properties and the farms became the largest source of employment in the region.³¹⁹ The success of the farms was meant, in part, to form a pedagogical model, demonstrating how British colonialism could benefit, and benefit from, intervention in South Africa. Though Rhodes died in 1902, the farms continued to operate until 1969.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Chris Aucamp, “Rhodes fruit farms: a small beginning in the Paarl Valley 1897-1910,” *Contree* 31 (1992): 11-16.

³²⁰ Robert Young points out that Rhodes started the Rhodes scholarship program as another explicitly pedagogical strategy to try to bring Americans back into the British fold: “It was for this reason that

The photograph of the workers at the fruit farm therefore draws together the key activities that constituted British colonialism in South Africa: resource extraction, railways, and the harvesting of luxury foods for European consumption. The COVIC textbook does not explicitly note Rhodes's involvement in the farm, but the lectures do make a typical connection between the colonies as networked sites of production and England as a centralized hub of consumption. As Sargent notes, "From this district hundreds of thousands of boxes of fresh fruit are shipped annually to England and sold at Covent Garden."³²¹ The photograph underscores this network of trade, literally spelling out the fruit's destination in the text printed on the side of the crate in the foreground of the image: "R.I.F. London."

Curiously, though Sargent describes this as a photograph of "native" labour, two of the boys in the image are clearly of European descent, while the other nine workers appear to be native South Africans. This blurring of who constitutes the "native" population of South Africa—the settler colonialists, or the dominion's indigenous peoples—seems intentional in this instance, designed to prove that cooperation across the "imperial races" was not only possible, but necessary to a successful colonial enterprise. In the photograph of the Rhodes fruit farm, this cooperation takes on a haptic dimension, with the workers standing so closely to one another that their shoulders nearly touch. And, though the workers are supposedly in the midst of organizing the peaches into containers, their hands are noticeably inactive, removed from the fruit and placed at the

Rhodes specified in his will that the United States should receive more Rhodes scholarships than any country in the British Empire, the idea being that if the US elite came to study at Oxford they would recognize the profound ties that bound them to the larger framework of Anglo-Saxon civilization." See Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001/2009) 38. Rhodes's work was therefore an explicitly pedagogical and nationalist project that can be seen as a parallel to the COVIC aims.

³²¹ Sargent, *South Africa* 11.

edge of the worktable. These gestures of un-touching may be the result of directions from the photographer in an effort to reduce blur in the final image, but they also suggest a tension. If the peaches are too fragile to be sorted by machinery and must be carefully placed into crates, nested in straw for protection, then surely human hands are vital in preparing them for shipment. This visual repression of the act of touching seems forced, as though the owner or producer of the image hoped to obscure the fruit's function as an object of transference, where traces of the hands of the "native" workers will eventually make contact with the hands of British consumers. But such a repression also invites a desire for contact on the part of the viewer: an impulse to reach out and touch the fruit that has been so elegantly displayed. It is in moments like this—where the photographs both depict and elicit contact between imperial subjects—that the fixity of race seems to slip in the COVIC lectures, loosened by the images' appeal to the viewer, and by the constantly shifting definitions of imperial citizenship.

Maintaining racial distinctions became more complicated, and more dire, in representations of indentured labour, where it was not the native population that was seen to be cooperating in the success of the empire's economy, but a foreign, displaced group whose working conditions rarely resembled the modern efficiency of the khaki factories in Cawnpore or the sociable atmosphere of the Rhodes Fruit Farms. Picturing indentured labour required a great deal of textual explication, forcing the COVIC lectures to make tentative, textual distinctions between subjects in the photographs that were not always visually evident. In the section on Singapore included in the lectures on the *Sea Road to the East*, for instance, viewers are introduced to photographs of labourers on a rubber plantation (Figs. 51 and 52) where, "if we pay the planter a visit we see coolies tapping

the trees by slicing the bark—the planter is English, perhaps from Ceylon, while the coolies are Tamils from India since the Malay are not interested in the steady work of cultivation.”³²² Distinguishing between the ongoing and logical form of labour being organized by the English plantation owner and the seasonal (and implicitly irregular) work practiced by the indigenous population, the lectures suggest that the “artificial cultivation of rubber” is one of the benefits of British imperialism that the COVIC project hoped to picture for its viewers. But while the lecture texts make it sound as though these ethnic and racial distinctions that separate the planter/owner from his workers (and both of these groups from the native population) would be obvious to the casual viewer, in Fisher’s photographs these categories are less clear. Three figures, all in sarongs, tap rubber from an orderly line of trees while a fourth, wearing a boater hat, stands a short distance away, watching them work. Their stances and clothing demarcate their roles within the plantation, but it is unclear if the man in the boater hat is the English planter the caption refers to, or another Tamil labourer acting as a supervisor. His white hat and shoes form a striking tonal contrast to his skin that make it impossible to read him as a white European, and yet the lecture texts give the viewer few other categorical options with which to understand him.

Like the photograph of the fruit farm workers in South Africa, this depiction of the “cooperative” project of resource extraction insists on a form of photographic identification between colonizing and colonized workers, and between viewers and subjects: forms of affective identification that confuse the taxonomies of race established by anthropological photographs from the same era. Photography historian Tina Campt

³²² A. J. Sargent, *The Sea Road to the East: Gibraltar to Wei-hai-wei* (London: George Philip & Son Ltd, 1912) 85-86.

has argued that institutionally produced group portraits like these, which stress affiliation while still acknowledging differences of race, class and ethnicity, “challenge our ability to pinpoint exactly how and where we ‘see race,’ and whether that perception is ever... solely or primarily about vision or visibility at all.”³²³ In the COVIC photographs of indentured labourers, race becomes a sign that is as difficult to recognize and to guarantee as that of imperial citizenship. But, unlike the image of the Rhodes Fruit Farm, which attested (however indirectly) to the ways the farm benefitted the local population by providing employment, in Singapore, the empire’s intervention into the local economy is wholesale, replacing the local workforce with imported and indentured labour. Here, it is more difficult to see how Singaporean subjects qualify as imperial citizens, since they are “uninterested” in participating in the kinds of organized, orderly work that will contribute to the sustenance of empire. The lectures’ presentation of Fisher’s image seems to suggest that imperial citizenship is a category that subjects can enter into—by agreeing to participate in necessary forms of indentured labour—and fall out of—by remaining “uninterested” in it.

That COVIC’s representation of indentured labour in Singapore focuses on rubber extraction is also significant for the ways in which it echoes contemporary discourses about labour and violence in the colonies. Fisher’s images of latex cultivation performed by indentured labourers in the British Empire operate psychoanalytically as the “good object” of colonial labour to the “bad object” of photographs of rubber extraction in the Belgian Congo. For many British viewers, Fisher’s photographs of rubber tapping in Singapore must have brought to mind the Congo Reform Association (CRA)’s use of

³²³ Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 59.

photographs to denounce the atrocities committed by King Leopold and the Belgian government as part of the rubber industry in the Congo Free State. Presented in government reports and published in newspapers between 1904 and 1913—the same period in which the COVIC lectures were published—the CRA used photographs of amputated Congolese workers, sometimes picturing severed hands and body parts, to try to incite the British public to intervene in the atrocities taking place there.³²⁴ In much the same way that COVIC tried to visualize and constitute a virtual community of imperial citizens in their lectures, the CRA appealed to a yet-to-be-formed community of humanity. As visual theorist Sharon Sliwinski has shown, the CRA’s use of the term “crimes against humanity” to critique Leopold “call[ed] into being a form of political community that exceeds the typical boundaries of nation and citizenship. Indeed these crimes presuppose a human subject who belongs to a citizenry of humanity.”³²⁵

The CRA’s work was significant as one of “the earliest critics of empire and advocates of a secular human rights ideology,” so much so that its depictions of forced colonial labour cast a dark shadow over projects like COVIC.³²⁶ In the public discourse about the Congo, the pre-modern forms of “native” slavery that colonial expansion was meant to correct through its civilizing mission had gone horribly awry, replaced with a twentieth-century version that was so appalling it required further intervention. Implicit in these critiques was the notion that the Belgian version of colonial intervention in Africa was the “negative” kind of colonialism, one that needed correcting through the

³²⁴ Sharon Sliwinski, “The Kodak on the Congo,” *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 57-81.

³²⁵ Sliwinski 69.

³²⁶ Sliwinski 58.

“positive” system being practiced in the British Empire. Indentured labour was central to this positive form of colonialism.

COVIC’s obsession with managing representations of indentured labour in the empire—by securing the indentured labourer’s non-English racial identity while also assuring the viewer of their political autonomy—can be seen as a form of overcompensation for these anxieties about indentured labour appearing as an extension of slavery: a way of planning for a critique of colonial labour practices, or a demand for equal treatment by labourers, that might one day materialize.

“Framed with an eye to coolies”: developing COVIC’s historical negatives

I want to return now to the figure of the indentured female labourer, who appears and disappears from the lectures, haunting the COVIC archive as a negative image of the imperial citizen. Female indentured labourers further complicate the already compromised status of the “coolie” as a citizen. As mothers and caregivers, their affective labour is literally contributing to the reproduction and maintenance of the empire. Yet the fate of their children, raised in an adopted land that may not ever recognize them as full citizens, remains unclear. Are they imperial citizens in the making, who can be transformed into willing and productive members of the imperial community through education and state training? Or has their fate as the next generation of indentured labourers been predetermined, relegating them to the limbo status of the “coolie”?

If imperial citizenship is a category that is difficult to define and picture, the fate of female indentured labourers—and their children—suggests that its shifting parameters

mean that subjects can fall out of its proffers of equality just as often as they use them to enter the community it creates. This threat of “falling out” of the catalogue of imperial citizenship is, much like fears about the potential for a “Second Mutiny” in India, a latent one. Indentured labour is depicted in the COVIC series as a solution to an unequal distribution of “willing” workers across the empire, and one that is currently well managed by the empire. But by relying on agency to distinguish it from slavery, indentured labour also implies that there are other choices available. What might happen if the indentured labourer refused the terms of her employment, or refused to play by the rules once her contract ended? What if she, like the freed slaves in the West Indies, “declined to work”?³²⁷

Women, in general, appear infrequently in the COVIC lectures, perhaps because the settings that Fisher was encouraged to tour—factories, naval yards and schools—were spaces dominated by men. The relative absence of women might also be the result of Fisher’s shyness around female subjects: when images of women do appear in the archive, they are often taken covertly, showing the backs of figures as they recede into the horizon (Fig. 59), or at such great distances that it is almost impossible to make out the subject of the image. What is even more surprising is the way that motherhood is obscured in the COVIC lectures. Despite the project’s stated aim of stirring the sympathies and sentiments of its children viewers, references to love and family are rare. When family units are depicted, they are firmly located in the white settler colonies of Canada and Australia, under the direction of a paternal figurehead.

Representations of motherhood are always charged, but in the COVIC project they took on added significance. Educational projects such as COVIC were attempts at

³²⁷ Aspinall 9.

managing the sentiments of students and future citizens, lessons motivated by fantastical fears on the part of colonial officials that children of mixed parentage, or those who were raised by native caregivers, would always remain “natives in disguise, fictive Europeans... affectively bound to the sentiments and cultural affiliations of their native mothers”³²⁸ Sympathies and attachments, when encouraged in the children who viewed the COVIC lecture, were directed towards one’s fellow citizens, rather than towards the intimate space of the family. While colonial laws and policies in this period obsessed over practices of cleanliness, child rearing, and marriage—activities centred in the private home—COVIC ignored the entirety of the domestic sphere, constructing imperial citizenship as a highly public performance.³²⁹ To represent mothers, biological or surrogate, in the lectures was to risk confusing the intended object of these identifications, and the location of their enactment.

Images of motherhood seep into the final COVIC lectures nonetheless. In Fisher’s photograph of “Tibetan women doing coolie work” in a Darjeeling market (Fig. 50), for instance, a group of adult women carrying baskets on their backs is meant to draw our gaze as the main subject of the image. But the COVIC lectures’ school-aged audience must have surely also noticed the group of children, clustered together at the left edge of the frame, who look back towards the women, and the scene at the centre of the image: a young girl, carrying a basket like the coolie women, who reaches out to take a hand offered by an older woman, moving away from her peers and towards the group of labourers in the market. Though it is impossible to know if it is in fact her mother whom

³²⁸ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 114.

³²⁹ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

reaches for her hand, the photograph's staging and composition read as an allegory of the journey from childhood to the adulthood of indentured labour, one that is shepherded by a maternal figure. Unlike the British viewers of the COVIC lectures, who in this period were legislated to stay in school until the age of twelve, these Tibetan children are receiving a different kind of sentimental education, one about the limits of the rights promised by imperial citizenship.

As the COVIC lectures continued to circulate in classrooms, and beyond, as late as 1945, the photographic meaning that viewers constructed from these images shifted, taking on greater political urgency in light of the colonies' demands for sovereignty. And, just as the COVIC lectures tried to manage representations of the female indentured labourer, colonial critics were also confronted with the unrepresentability of this figure in their campaigns for equal rights as imperial citizens. As Banerjee has demonstrated, the vague and flexible definition of imperial citizenship meant that it guaranteed few tangible rights for the British subjects, but its circulation in public discourse paradoxically allowed colonial subjects to make demands for sovereignty on the basis of this formal, if purely rhetorical, promise of equality. In India, in particular, these claims often drew on the psychic investments tied up in the figure of the "coolie," using him either as victim of the uneven application of the law across the empire's dominions and colonies, or as limit case for those colonial subjects who were not yet "ready" for self-determination. In a series of memoranda addressed to the Imperial Conference of 1911, held just one year after COVIC published its first sets of lectures on England and India, the contradictory roles the indentured labourer was forced to play are obvious as groups from across the empire employ the rhetoric of imperial citizenship to point to the ways in which colonial

policy was inconsistent with itself, and to make demands that the promises of imperial citizenship be upheld. In one, written by representatives of the India Office and addressed to the Colonial Office, the “coolie” appears as a sign of insubordination and ungratefulness; a figure who must be contained by imperial regulations but whose inferior moral character should not reflect poorly on India’s model imperial citizens. Appealing to the Colonial Office to change immigration laws that prevented the movement of Indian subjects through and across the empire, the letter is hyperbolic in its comparison of the indentured labourer with other, more loyal imperial citizens: “If the question were not so grave, it would be seen to be ludicrous that regulations framed with an eye to coolies should affect ruling princes who are in subordinate alliance with His Majesty..., members of the Privy Council of the Empire, or gentlemen who have the honour to be His Majesty's own Aides-de-Camp.”³³⁰

By contrast, a letter from the Hindu Friend Society of Victoria, British Columbia, employs the coolie as its central protagonist. Using the transnational logic of imperial citizenship against itself, the letter petitions the Colonial Office to ensure that the families of indentured labourers who have decided to settle in Canada at the end of their contract are “allowed to enter this country on the same terms as the Japanese, Chinese, or even Negroes.”³³¹ The memo closes with a demand that the equality of the indentured labourer be recognized not just through written policies, but that it also be *seen* by distant imperial spectators.³³²

³³⁰ “Memorandum by the India Office, to the Colonial Office: Position of British Indians in the Dominions, No. 1, June 1911” *Papers submitted before the Imperial Conference of 1911*, 272-279, 277.

³³¹ “Memorandum from Hindu Friend Society of Victoria, British Columbia, to Colonial Office, April 28, 1911,” *Papers submitted before the Imperial Conference of 1911*, 279-281, 279.

³³² Here I borrow from Sharon Sliwinski’s argument that human rights claims are constructed through photography, as a series of injustices that need to be *seen* and judged by distant spectators (*Human Rights in Camera*, University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Does imperialism mean Canada for the Empire, Australia for the Empire, India for the Empire, or can there be two definitions for subjects of one and the same Empire? If there is but one recognized definition under the flag over which the sun is supposed to never set, then it is for us to see that *no injustice shall minimise the rights or privileges of that citizenship, whether that holder is black or white*³³³

This emphasis on the visual dimension of imperial citizenship, either through the regulations invented “with an eye to coolies,” or in the demand for rights to not just be legally encoded but also seen, underscores the political potential of photographic representations, both developed and undeveloped, in the colonial context.³³⁴

Whether the “coolie” was invoked as the victim of the imperial system, or its scapegoat, it was the qualities of masculinity, efficiency and rationality that were employed as the currency for these claims, inevitably rendering the female indentured labourer invisible. As Banerjee notes, “Indian claims of citizenship [in the colonies] were modeled on particular idioms of character, credit, and cleanliness in ways that rendered indentured labourers both indispensable to—and unrepresentable within—the rhetoric of imperial citizenship.”³³⁵ As I explore in the concluding chapter, these debates about who could rightfully claim the status of the imperial citizen, and which subjects had to remain invisible non-citizens, only intensified in 1914, when the arrival—and refusal—of the Komagata Maru, carrying 376 Indian immigrants to Canada, sparked international debate about the limits of imperial citizenship. Photographs, circulated in imperial newspapers, would play a vital role in how the Komagata Maru incident was understood and

³³³ “Memorandum from Hindu Friend Society of Victoria,” 281, original emphasis.

³³⁴ Ariella Azoulay, “Photography: the Ontological Question,” *Mafte'akh* 2 (2011), 65-80.

³³⁵ Banerjee 76.

contested, creating a dialogue with the COVIC lanternslide lectures and spotlighting the kinds of subjects who consistently “fell out” of the catalogue of imperial citizenship.

Coda: an unworlding inquiry into photographic citizenship

Even in anti-colonial critiques, the negative of the woman indentured labourer that lies dormant in the COVIC archive has yet to be fully developed. Here, too, she is repressed into the optical unconscious of the campaign for citizen rights. Though her absent presence suggests imperial citizens were sometimes—perhaps unconsciously—complicit in the uneven distribution of the promise of rights if it allowed them to make strategic political claims, the latent force of her image also suggests the colonial archive’s representation of imperial citizenship is not yet finished, open to edits, enlargements and re-croppings by the very subjects it was designed to control.

The optical unconscious, much like the psychic unconscious, can never be fully “developed,” however. It will always remain outside of representation and conscious capture, registering instead through what Sigmund Freud described as symptoms: slips of the tongue, mistaken memories, repetitive gestures and dreams, which at first seem random or accidental but which, when put through analysis, are spurred on by psychic processes occurring at the level of the unconscious. While these symptoms can be analyzed, allowing us to consider some of their possible meanings, we can never have complete access to the unconscious itself. The force of repressed thoughts and experiences mean they are not just unspeakable, but also consciously unthinkable. So while I want to suggest the possibility that I, and others, can work as agents to “develop” the critique latent in the colonial photographic archive, I want to do so cautiously. There

are undoubtedly limits—both practical and theoretical, both conscious and unconscious—to how far I can develop the shadow figures of the imperial citizen. There are surely some figures of un-belonging in the COVIC archive that cannot be fully seen (yet), or who might pose too great a threat to my sense of self as a viewer to be consciously acknowledged. To keep these limitations in mind, to conjure what might be unrepresentable in the archive, is to insist on the ongoing potency of this photographic archive: its use to future viewers who might be able to more fully develop its critical potential. It is also to refuse an imperializing gaze that assumes the world and all its inhabitants can be visually captured and contained, to adopt, as art historian Louis Kaplan has suggested, a mode of “unworldly thinking and unworlding inquiry [that] would expose photography and community to a reading that dares to lose track of the shape of the world.”³³⁶ To let the world of the COVIC photographs lose its coherent shape, to immerse oneself in its fluid meanings, its contradictory affects and its glossy surfaces is a frightening prospect, in part because it threatens to unsettle the already shaky terrain of defining and picturing citizenship. For, despite its problematic origins in the colonial context and the residue of non-citizens it produces in its wake, citizenship continues to be a powerful and effective model for understanding our relationship to one another, as spectators and subjects who often see one another photographically, across great physical distances. But it is only by courting this incoherence, by allowing our gaze to wander, that we can begin to grapple with both the promises and failures of photographic citizenship.

³³⁶ Louis Kaplan, *American Exposures: Photography and community in the twentieth century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) 79.

Conclusion: Residues of non-citizens in the COVIC project

In 1914, while the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee was scrambling to publish its final two lectures on the West Indies and Australasia, a group of 376 imperial citizens from India was putting the promises of imperial citizenship to a highly public, and highly visualized, test. On May 23 of that year, the SS Komagata Maru, a Japanese steamship, arrived in the Vancouver Harbour, its passengers—almost entirely men, many of whom were Sikh veterans of the British Army—intending to immigrate to Canada.³³⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the ship's Punjabi passengers were not greeted with the warm welcome that had been promised by the colonial government's rhetoric of imperial citizenship. Instead, they were denied entry, based on the policies laid out in the 1910 Canadian Immigration Act, which stipulated that immigrants had to arrive in the dominion by "continuous journey." Because the ship traveled from Hong Kong to Shanghai, then from Moji to Yokohama, and across the Pacific Ocean, immigration officials declared it did not meet their criteria.³³⁸ The ship's arrival on the west coast of Canada became an international "incident," appearing in newspaper reports around the empire, and sparked a two-month legal battle between a Vancouver lawyer representing the ship's passengers and the Canadian government, which tested the legality of the dominion's racially motivated immigration policies: the same policies that had spurred the African American civil rights activist, W.E.B. Du Bois, to write a letter of inquiry to the Canadian Immigration Branch in 1911, demanding they explicitly state which kinds of racially coded citizens would be found "undesirable" when they attempted to cross the

³³⁷ Michael Bird, "Behind the Komagata Maru's fight to open Canada's border," *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday 24 May, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/komagata-maru-100-years-later/article18830049/>, accessed May 26, 2014; Renisa Mawani, "Specters of Indigeneity in British-Indian Migration, 1914," *Law & Society Review*, 46:2 (2012): 369-403.

³³⁸ Mawani 370.

Canadian border.³³⁹ Over the course of those two months, the Komagata Maru remained anchored in the Vancouver Harbour. Denied permission to take more provisions aboard, the living conditions on the ship rapidly deteriorated and tensions between passengers—many of whom claimed to have been misled about how long the journey from Hong Kong to Canada would be and were now trapped for a further 60 days—and government officials escalated (news reports claim some passengers hurled hunks of coal at the Canadian immigration officers when they attempted to board the ship for inspections).³⁴⁰ Finally, in July, the ship was forcibly escorted out of the harbour by Canada's only West Coast warship, but the controversy was far from over. When the Komagata Maru landed in Calcutta on September 27, it was met by British colonial authorities and Bengal police who, nervous about the passengers' revolutionary intentions, initiated a violent confrontation—now known as the Budge Budge Massacre—that left at least 26 people dead and many more injured.³⁴¹

As an object, the Komagata Maru steamer had a long history as a tool that linked the various outposts of the British Empire: built in Glasgow in 1880, it had spent its life hauling coal to and from Japan until it was chartered, in early 1914, by Gurit Singh, a Hong Kong-based Sikh businessman.³⁴² The Canadian government's response to the ship's arrival in Vancouver, and the public debate that emerged in its wake, illuminated these cross-imperial connections. As legal scholar Renisa Mawani writes, "The Komagata Maru's journey was a formative moment in British colonial history in that it connected Britain, India, Hong Kong, and Canada within a circuitous, albeit uneven,

³³⁹ See Harold Martin Troper, "The Creek-Negroes of Oklahoma and Canadian Immigration, 1909-11," *The Canadian Historical Review* 53.3 (September 1972): 272-88, and issues of *Crisis* from April to June, 1911.

³⁴⁰ Bird, accessed May 26, 2014. Also see my discussion of Canadian immigration policies in chapter two.

³⁴¹ Mawani, 370.

³⁴² Bird, accessed May 26, 2014.

movement of peoples, and within a global regime of law, legality, and violence.”³⁴³

While the Komagata Maru’s arrival in Canada was designed to prove the “double standard of mobility” that had been created by conflicting immigration laws in the dominions and colonies, it was also a battle over the extra-legal dimensions of imperial citizenship: an attempt at putting into action the rhetorical and visual promises made by Colonial Office projects, such as the COVIC lectures, in the hopes that these abstract claims to belonging might overturn the laws of racial exclusion that were shaping the colonial community.³⁴⁴ Singh was explicit that this was his goal in chartering the ship and in planning its route:

“We are British citizens and we consider we have a right to visit any part of the Empire,” Singh declared to the superintendent of immigration upon arrival in Canadian waters. “We are determined to make this a test case and if we are refused entrance into your country, the matter will not end here. . . . What is done with this shipload of my people will determine whether we shall have peace in all parts of the Empire.”³⁴⁵

Singh’s lawyer, J. Edward Bird, likewise drew on the promises of imperial citizenship in his repeated appeals of the Canadian Immigration Branch’s decision, claiming that the Komagata Maru’s passengers “identified not as residents of India but as *Imperial citizens*. They did not differentiate between colonial geographies and thus imagined themselves as belonging to the wider Imperial polity with the capacity to move freely within and across it.”³⁴⁶ Using this logic, Bird tried to prove that the passengers had made a continuous journey, stopping only in locations where they were citizens: “As ‘a citizen of the Empire

³⁴³ Mawani 370.

³⁴⁴ Mawani 376.

³⁴⁵ Singh in Mawani 383.

³⁴⁶ Mawani 385, original emphasis.

and therefore a native of the whole of it, [he] is [also] a native of Hong Kong,' which is a part of the British Empire, the[y] claimed."³⁴⁷

It is difficult to imagine a more perfect demonstration of the ways in which the promises of imperial citizenship, especially as they were pictured in the COVIC lectures, were empty ones. In both the photographs that accompanied reports of the ship's fate, and in the legal documents and public statements made by Singh and Bird, the visual codes of presentability—of civility, cleanliness, duty to empire, and emotional neutrality—that the COVIC lectures relied upon to build a catalogue of ideal imperial citizens were mobilized in the passengers' claims to citizenship in Canada. As Sukanya Banerjee suggests, because imperial citizenship was not clearly legible through the (racialized) body, and relied instead on the viewer's ability to recognize others' performances as fellow imperial citizens, the question of dress and self-presentation became vital as an instrument for assuming and claiming the rights of citizenship.³⁴⁸ The passengers aboard the *Komagata Maru*, for instance, were scrupulous in presenting themselves as proper, middle-class subjects, to both immigration officials and to the national and imperial media. In the photograph that most often accompanied news reports of the ship's arrival in Canada, dozens of men, and one small boy, dressed in three piece suits and ties and each wearing a turban, stand in rows along the ship's deck, facing the camera, their hands placed resolutely by their sides (Fig. 60). Taken the day the ship arrived in the harbour, the image shows the men as they prepared to go ashore to the Canadian immigration office, a destination they would never reach. Their stern expressions reveal nothing about their experiences aboard the ship over the previous six weeks: in conditions that were

³⁴⁷ Mawani 385.

³⁴⁸ Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) 97.

reportedly cramped, unsanitary and occasionally violent. And, in stark contrast to the other image that documented their arrival in Vancouver—a wide shot of many of the men standing at the ship’s railings, many with their hands raised in joyous celebration (Fig. 61)—here the emotional tenor of the subjects is tempered. Here, the passengers present themselves to the camera, offering themselves as serious, civil and implicitly middle-class citizens of the empire.

Though it is a very different view of the steamship’s passengers than the ones offered by Alfred Hugh Fisher’s photographs of (white) immigrants aboard the *Empress of Britain* that appeared in the COVIC lectures on the United Kingdom (Fig. 5), the photograph of the Komagata Maru’s would-be citizens demonstrates the continued currency of these visual codes of model imperial citizenship. (Though it may strike us as a particularly Edwardian mode of self-presentation today, it nonetheless continues to serve as the main illustration of the event in Canada, where a Vancouver memorial featuring a mural-size version of the photograph was erected in 2012, at the same time that a national apology was offered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. See Fig. 62). That the performance of these codes of dress, comportment and civility, as well as the language of imperial citizenship—near perfect replicas of the ideal citizenship performed by the white subjects in the COVIC lectures—failed to secure the passengers’ access to Canada reinforces Homi Bhabha’s assertion that colonial mimicry is always marked by failure. No matter how dutifully she mimics the model imperial citizen, the colonial subject will always be deemed insufficient, a “weak citizen,” in Ariella Azoulay’s language, because she is “*almost the same but not white*.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 125-133, 130.

The Komagata Maru marks an important moment in the discourse around imperial citizenship when colonial subjects began to not just use the language of imperial belonging to make claims for inclusion, but started to actively demonstrate and protest their exclusion from the community of empire. In the lead up to the First World War, as claims for national independence by colonies and dominions (most notably India and Canada) reached a crescendo, imperial citizenship “was punctuated, more than before, by the racial and ethnic tensions generated by intra-colonial nationalisms.”³⁵⁰ In response, the British government increasingly envisioned imperial education as a tool of war propaganda and a strategy for defusing nationalist tensions—rather than a message of warm and harmonious colonial consolidation—in the decades after 1914. 1914 also signaled a turning point for COVIC, which, after publishing the last two lectures in the series, went into a state of “suspended animation” while the Colonial Office’s efforts were redirected towards the war.³⁵¹ This suspended state was meant to be temporary, but it in fact marked the end of COVIC’s first and most active period. Though the committee would continue to meet until 1925—albeit in very different forms than it had taken up until this point, moving under the auspices of the non-governmental Royal Colonial Institute (RCI) in 1919—, after the First World War its activities were reoriented, away from the production of new lanternslide lectures (a planned lecture on Tropical Africa was never realized, for instance) and towards the maintenance, circulation and occasional revision of the existing textbooks.³⁵² This means, somewhat unbelievably, that the photographs that Fisher produced for the COVIC lectures as early as 1907 were still

³⁵⁰ Banerjee 117.

³⁵¹ “Report on present position of the Visual Instruction Committee, August 1916,” Miscellaneous No 265 related to the Visual Instruction Committee, National Archives, London, CO 323/730/35.

³⁵² “Visual Instruction Committee Sixth Annual Report,” 28 September 1925, Visual Instruction Committee, the Royal Colonial Institute, National Archives, London, CO 323/730/35.

circulating, serving as illustrations of the British Empire, as late as 1945, with only minimal changes to the textual descriptions that tried to manage their meanings.

By way of a conclusion, I want to consider how this historical moment—which saw the decline of projects like COVIC and the rise of more overt gestures of resistance by colonial subjects, such as the Komagata Maru “incident”—illuminated “the residue of non-citizens” produced by imperial citizenship:³⁵³ the figures that consistently fell out of COVIC’s catalogue of imperial citizenship, such as child labourers, orphans and “undesirable” immigrants.³⁵⁴ Like the indentured labourer, these subjects are types: not specific to a particular geographical location, but whole categories of subjecthood that could not be accommodated by COVIC’s model of imperial citizenship. While the preceding chapters have looked at each of the lectures as discrete texts, charting the inclusion, management and textual obfuscation of particular populations in each colony and dominion, here I want to take a more global view of the lectures. This is not to impose the same kind of colonizing worldview that the committee used in their fantasies of imperial unity, but to think about the transnational effects of colonialism on the population at the beginning of the twentieth century. Such a view allows me to see those subjects made unintelligible within COVIC’s model of imperial citizenship: non- and weak citizens who could not be visually or textually represented in the lectures because of the incoherence they posed to the imperial community. Traces of these figures nonetheless appear in the archive of Fisher’s photographs, often omitted from the final lectures, and in the RCI’s revisions of the textbooks after the First World War—changes

³⁵³ Ariella Azoulay *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2008) and *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2012).

³⁵⁴ As I note in the preceding chapters, other figures, such as mothers and indigenous peoples, are also notably absent from the COVIC lectures. More work remains to be done on how colonialism, as a paternalistic system, necessitated the erasure of motherhood from the COVIC photographs.

that were instigated as a form of damage control in response to perceived nationalist threats. The recurring self-presentation of weak and non-citizens in the public sphere after 1914 demonstrated the failures of imperial citizenship, but also demanded recognition from their fellow citizens, insisting that distant spectators acknowledge their active exclusion from the imperial community.

Unsurprisingly, these claims for recognition were most often made through photographs, drawing them into conversation with the COVIC images, which continued to circulate in schools around the empire (in England, the Victoria League kept a “depot” of a complete set of the lectures and slides, available to be loaned out by schools and imperial organizations around the country. In 1922, these sets were still being loaned out 75 times a year).³⁵⁵ In the socially engaged documentary photographs produced by figures such as John Thomson and Lewis Hine (contemporaries of Fisher), and in the images that circulated in newspapers, pamphlets and lantern slide presentations as part of the growing anti-colonial movement, subjects presented themselves to the camera, hoping to demonstrate their impaired civic status to distant spectators. That these claims for rights were not always immediately recognized, that they were often unsuccessful in provoking changes to colonial law, or in altering these subjects’ ability to move through the empire, has much to tell us about how we understand the relationship between sovereignty, photography and citizenship. While spectators have had great expectations about the political work that photographs can do in the twentieth, and now twenty-first, century, these expectations have often assumed that spectators will immediately and innately know “what to do” with their encounters with images of others. The COVIC

³⁵⁵ “Third Annual Report of the Visual Instruction Committee,” 28 July 1922, Visual Instruction Committee, the Royal Colonial Institute, National Archives, London, CO 323/899/47.

project, and its aftermath, suggest that spectators must in fact learn “what to do” with the photographs of citizens and non-citizens they see. And even then, there is no guarantee that this knowledge will translate into direct or successful political action.

The citizen-spectator’s failure to insist the imperial community make good on its promises of equality also has a generative, political potential. It forces us, as contemporary spectators, to address these un-kept promises as a current, ongoing problem: to integrate failure into our understandings of photographic citizenship. Writing about the possibilities that might be opened up by the failures of imperial citizenship, Banerjee argues that,

If colonial subjects repeatedly articulated their positions as citizens in ways that were marked by failure in the expansive context of empire, then not only does the nation emerge in the face of this failure, but, importantly, it defines it as such... [T]o excavate this failure—indeed, to read and write failure into citizenship in general—is not necessarily a redundant exercise: it reconfigures citizenship as process, something that the triumphalism of nationalist discourse often obscures.³⁵⁶

If defining, representing and articulating citizenship is a process, prone to failure, then it is perhaps freed from functioning only as a tool of governmentality. Its failures, when they register as spectacular events like the Komagata Maru, demonstrate it is a category of belonging open to the intervention of others. Most importantly, perhaps, the photographic encounters that weak and non-citizens generate offer contemporary spectators the opportunity to think differently about what we want from photographs, and what they demand from us in return.

³⁵⁶ Banerjee 193-94.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the ways in which the COVIC lectures tried to mute the political potential of images of weak or non-citizens was in the series' treatment of child labour. In the same moment that Hine was photographing the working conditions for children in factories and mines in the United States in an effort to pass the first laws against child labour, Fisher's photographs of the colonies also captured examples of children at work, from the young boy working at the cod fishery in Newfoundland, Canada (Fig. 31), to children hammering out decorative metalwork in Lahore (Fig. 63). Though British children were now legally mandated to stay in school until age 12, this was not the case for their colonial peers. In fact, reports from colonial headmasters and schoolteachers, sent to COVIC after the first year the lectures were in circulation, regularly note the difficulties instructors had in presenting the lectures to children who had already spent the first half of their day working in their parents' fields and factories. In the darkened, stuffy rooms where the lectures were presented, they often fell asleep as soon as the teacher began speaking.³⁵⁷ Unlike Hine's work, which had an explicitly social, expository function and therefore used visual strategies such as bright flashes, closely cropped framing and a low viewpoint to emphasize the starkness of his subjects' working conditions and the impact it had on both their bodies and inner character, Fisher's photographs had no such transformative political agenda. The banality of his images has the effect of rendering representations of children at work part of the status quo of the colonial economy. Not a deplorable side effect of over-industrialization, as Hines's images seemed to suggest, but a practicality within the everyday functioning of the empire. For viewers familiar with education laws around the empire, Fisher's

³⁵⁷ High Commissioner of Hong Kong to the Earl of Elgin, "Report on use of lectures," 10 July 1907. Miscellaneous Correspondence (4 April 1905 to 16 November 1907) relating to Visual Instruction, Colonial Office archives, National Archives, London.

photographs may have attested to what they already knew: that despite imperial citizenship's offers of equality, double standards were everywhere; that only some childhoods were worth protecting; that only some kinds of young bodies counted as innocent.

Depictions of orphans seemed to cause greater consternation for the Visual Instruction committee than those of child labour. In the Fisher archive, there are at least two instances where the photographer comes face-to-face with orphaned children: once, early in his visit to India, when he observes a train full of children from the Lawrence Asylum in Ootacamund, headed for their Christmas vacation (Fig. 64); and again, in India, when he tours the Victoria Memorial Orphanage in Aurungabad (now Hyderabad) (Fig. 65). Formally, the images these encounters produced could not be more different. The first shows a blurry image of several young boys, each wearing bright white caps, leaning out the windows of a train car, their faces indistinguishable from one another. The second is a crisp, clear portrait of a single male figure, smiling broadly under the leaves of a large mango tree. Barefooted, he gazes just outside of the frame of the photograph, with one hand placed casually at his side while the other reaches out to hold and display a piece of fruit dangling from the branches. What the images share is a common type of subject—they are both portraits of colonial orphans—and a common cause for these children's parentless state. The Lawrence Asylums were a series of orphanages and schools established in India and Pakistan to care for the children of British Army who had been killed in combat. Founded by Sir Henry Montgomery Lawrence, who was killed "defending" Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the Ootacamund asylum was established in 1858 and, along with the other schools, carried

the motto “Never Give In,” reportedly the last orders given by Lawrence before his death.³⁵⁸ Similarly, the Victoria Memorial Orphanage in Hyderabad was housed in the nizam’s former palace, donated to the Indian colonial government, and named after Queen Victoria, in 1903 to house children whose parents had died in the service of the empire. Though these children are clearly too young to have been directly orphaned by the violence of the Mutiny, these two institutions’ ties to the British military, and by proxy, to the ongoing armed conflict between the colonial government and the local population, meant Fisher’s photographs carried a traumatic and potentially disruptive charge. They also spoke, quite directly, to childhood experiences of loneliness, isolation and un-belonging in the empire. Tellingly, neither of them appears in the final COVIC lectures on India.

As a propaganda project that relied heavily on metaphors and images of circulation for its message of imperial unity, it was images of unsanctioned or undesirable immigration that constituted the unshowable in the COVIC lectures. When immigration did appear in Fisher’s photographs, it was always as a legal and government-sanctioned activity: white, European families coming to settle Western Canada; ships full of Indian indentured labourers making their way to the Caribbean (Fig. 66); or naval officers sailing off to defend the faraway borders of the empire in Australia and New Zealand. Self-organized forms of migration and immigration, of the kind exemplified by the Komagata Maru, were absent from both the texts and photographs. Unlike the spectres of slavery, or of the Indian Mutiny, that appeared in the COVIC photographs as lessons about the long term effects of disobeying colonial rule, undesirable immigration failed to

³⁵⁸ “The Lawrence School Lovedale – Our History,” *The Lawrence School*, <http://www.thelawrenceschool.org/#!history/clrxd>, accessed June 3, 2014.

appear even as the “bad object” of imperial mobility. It could not be contained within the logic of imperial citizenship, even as a point of disidentification. Within the COVIC lectures, the movement of colonial bodies, much like the movement of commodities, was central to the functioning of the empire, but could only accommodate limited forms of individual agency. British subjects could choose to travel to another part of the empire in the logic of the COVIC lectures, but their options were limited by the government-approved channels of immigration, indentured labour and military service.

In this context, the arrival of the Komagata Maru in Canada, and its photographic representation around the empire, constituted a representational breach in idealized understandings of imperial mobility and citizenship. The public reaction to the passengers’ arrival and attempted immigration was immediate and anxious, as the special issue devoted to the “incident” in the *Hindustanee*, the official publication of the United India League, in June 1914 makes clear (Fig. 60), but it reached an outright panic after Britain entered the First World War in August of that year. While the ship was still making its way back to Calcutta, public anxieties about the meaning of the Komagata Maru’s voyage intensified, leading to a series of paranoid news reports about the passenger’s seditious intentions, and the creation of an official committee whose purpose was to investigate the circumstances surrounding the ship’s departure. Their findings, much speculated about in colonial newspapers, attempted to link the Komagata Maru’s movements with the international conflicts of the war. In an article titled “Komagata Maru Incident: Suspicious Circumstances,” the Central News agency went so far as to suggest that the ship had been under “German influence”: a claim that the investigation pursued but could not prove, despite the “suspicious” but unnamed circumstances

surrounding the ship's voyage.³⁵⁹ This conflation of a disastrous moment in British immigration with the exceptional, wartime threat posed by an external aggressor indicates the acute anxieties that continued to animate public discussions about British immigration well into the twentieth century.

In other, more tempered reports of the committee's findings, a lack of education was posited as one of the precipitating causes of the incident. A Reuter's report from Delhi in 1916, for instance, accused the "leaders of the expedition" of misleading the "more ignorant passengers," who were in "a dangerous frame of mind when they left Vancouver" and were further incited to violence by "revolutionary organisations outside India."³⁶⁰ The riot that occurred when the ship arrived back in Calcutta was blamed on a lack of education on the part of the passengers, whose ignorance allowed them to be "disaffected" with the imperial government to the point of outright mutiny. Here, it is not the physical experience of being detained, forcibly confined to a ship for weeks on end that is seen to be the cause of the colonial other's frustration and violence, but their limited psychological and intellectual capacities. By bringing together anxieties about colonial immigration, the rhetoric of imperial citizenship and the transformative (or in this case, mutinous) potential of education in shaping the minds and temperaments of British subjects, the Komagata Maru incident illustrated both the need for, and the failures of, the COVIC lectures in managing the colonial population.

It was with events like the Komagata Maru, and the First World War's overt demonstrations of nationalism, in mind that the RCI initiated their revisions of the

³⁵⁹ "Komagata Maru Incident: Suspicious Circumstances," *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, Monday 18 January 1915, 6.

³⁶⁰ "Komagata Maru: A Report of an Inquiry into the Voyage," *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, Saturday 16 January 1915, 6.

COVIC lectures in 1921. Making the decision to offer a condensed version of each of the lectures, with a reduced number of images and greatly shortened lecture texts—described as “notes” that encouraged teachers to improvise rather than reading verbatim from the page—the RCI hoped to reinvigorate interest in imperial education around the empire.³⁶¹ While these abridged versions drew on the original lectures authored by Halford J. Mackinder, A. J. Sargent and the other authors involved in COVIC, their truncated form eliminated much of the affective language and direct address that made the earlier lectures such fascinating pedagogical documents. Rather than asking students to imaginatively project themselves into the spaces and subjects of Fisher’s photographs, the RCI’s revised lectures offered point-form “facts” about the colonies and dominions that leave little room for the imaginative capacities of the spectator. “Both the hot weather and the wet weather are very trying for Europeans,” the revised India lectures intone. “Religion is the great dividing line between the peoples.”³⁶² When these “updated” versions of the texts do stray into the affective register, it is to offer simplistic observations about loyalty, obedience and the management of nationalist desires. Where Mackinder’s 1910 lectures on India ended with a rousing speech about the connection between British subjects as “fellow human beings” and the great need for sympathy and education among imperial citizens—

The responsibility for India is, indeed, a great one. It is idle to ask whether our forefathers should have assumed it. We could not withdraw now without throwing India into disorder, and causing untold suffering among three hundred million of our fellow human beings. Yet the

³⁶¹ “Second annual report on the Visual Instruction Committee of the Royal Colonial Institute,” July 1921, Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, Empire Marketing Board, and related bodies, CO 323/880/38, National Archives, London.

³⁶² C.H.K Marten, “Hints for Lectures on India”, no. 1, *Visual Instruction Committee Handbooks*, (London: Visual Instruction Committee of the Royal Colonial Institute, 1933) 9-10.

administration of such an Empire calls for virtues in our race certainly not less than those needed for our own self-government. Above all, we require knowledge of India, and sympathy with the points of view begotten of oriental history.³⁶³

—in the revised RCI version, published in 1921 and again in 1933, the textbooks conclude with an image of a “young English Indian Civil Servant official” who represents the many peoples of India who “now desire to have a greater share in the government of their country.”³⁶⁴ “This is as it should be,” the notes reassure listeners, “and is in accordance with our own British traditions; but how it can best be done, and through what stages, is one of the greatest problems before Great Britain at the present day.”³⁶⁵ In the RCI’s revisions, the future of India is no longer the concern and responsibility of the imperial community, but a “problem” for Great Britain to deal with alone. As the nationalist demands of the colonies, and the British government’s repression of them, intensified in the later decades of the early-twentieth century, imperial education projects increasingly spoke of division and separation.

Whatever the problems, omissions, slips and outright lies of the original COVIC lectures—and there were many, as this dissertation has demonstrated—their appeal to a community of spectators to sympathize with one another as imperial citizens at least offered a visual and rhetorical language with which colonial subjects could make claims to one another, across great physical distances. They offered a way to imagine one’s place in the imperial world that was “with others,” even when physically isolated. By providing a thinking room, rather than a waiting room, of history for colonial subjects,

³⁶³ H. J. Mackinder, *Eight Lectures on India* (London: Visual Instruction Committee/Waterlow & Sons, 1910) 129-130.

³⁶⁴ Marten 36.

³⁶⁵ Marten 36.

the COVIC lectures briefly made possible the kinds of cross-colonial allegiances that colonial laws actively tried to prevent. This is perhaps something akin to Azoulay's notion of the civil imagination: the ability to use our encounter with photographs to think our way out of the seemingly closed system of state violence these images depict, and to imagine other ways of recognizing and living with one another in the world.

For Azoulay, practicing this civil imagination in our encounters with photographs is an urgent political act: one that should be exercised each time we enter an archive, see an exhibition, or open a newspaper. In the colonial photographic archive, where the critical potential of so many images remains undeveloped, practicing our imaginative faculties as viewers seems particularly important, especially as new conceptions of global and flexible citizenship echo the logic and language of projects like COVIC. Several recent projects by non-profit organizations and artist-run centres are also turning to the colonial photographic archive in an effort to develop its historical negatives, looking for the subjects and citizens that may have been unseeable in our first encounter with these images. In London, for instance, Autograph ABP, a charity that advocates for the inclusion of historically marginalised photographic practices through exhibitions, publications and education projects, has initiated a critical pedagogical project of their own, reframing the images produced by bodies such as COVIC to focus on narratives of "black presences" in the (former) British Empire. Drawing on their archive of post-1945 documentary and artistic photographs of and by black photographers, Autograph currently offers an "Archive Learning Resource" designed to be used in public schools across England.³⁶⁶ Reproduced on A4-sized paper, the photographs in the kit address the

³⁶⁶ "Learning | Autograph ABP: Archive Learning Resource," *Autograph ABP*, <http://autograph-abp.co.uk/learning>, accessed June 4, 2014.

“politics of identity, belonging, culture, migration, race and representation” and offer “contextual information” and “suggested questions” for teachers on the verso of each image.³⁶⁷ The earliest image in the series, taken in 1948, documents the arrival of the SS *Empire Windrush*, a troopship that brought 482 Jamaican immigrants—many of them former servicemen who had served in the British armed forces in the Second World War—to Britain (Fig. 67). In an eerie echo of the images of the *Komagata Maru* arriving in the Vancouver Harbour, the photograph shows a range of smiling faces leaning over the railings of the ship, with several passengers on the upper deck climbing some of the rigging, their arms outstretched, to get a better view of their new home.

Unlike the *Komagata Maru*, the *Windrush* successfully landed in Britain, marking the first of what would become a huge post-war influx of coloured immigration into the imperial “motherland.” While the Archive Learning Resource suggests some rather modest discussion questions for teachers to broach with their students—“How and why do you think this image has come to represent a key moment in Britain’s migration story? How did the arrival of the people on the *SS Empire Windrush* initially change British society?”³⁶⁸—an imaginative and critical viewer is tempted to see the photograph as the final fulfillment of the abstract promises of imperial citizenship: a moment when the colonial photographic subject finally, and forcefully, exited the waiting room of history. As Stuart Hall once brilliantly, and a bit gleefully, wrote, moments like the arrival of the *Komagata Maru* in Canada, or of the *Windrush* in England, were the literal return of the repressed colonial figure:

³⁶⁷ *Archive Learning Resource* (London: Autograph ABP, no date), n.p.

³⁶⁸ *Archive Learning Resource* (London: Autograph ABP, no date), n.p.

There is a tremendous paradox here which I cannot help relishing myself: that in the very moment when finally Britain convinced itself it had to decolonize, it had to get rid of them, we all came back home. As they hauled down the flag, we got on the banana boat and sailed right into London. That is a terrible paradox because they had ruled the world for three hundred years and, at least, when they had made up their minds to climb out of that role, at least the others ought to have stayed out there in the rim, behaved themselves, gone somewhere else, or found some other client state. No, they had always said that this was really home, the streets were paved with gold and, bloody hell, we just came to check out whether that was so or not.³⁶⁹

While Hall was interested in the political and psychoanalytic events surrounding the moment of de-colonization, similar moments of return and confrontation also emerge, perhaps more subtly, in the colonial photographic archive. In 2013, Autograph embarked on a three-year research project to expand the Archive Learning Resource to include photographs made before 1945, for a project called “The Missing Chapter.”³⁷⁰ Looking beyond their own collection, to the archives of groups like the Colonial Office, “The Missing Chapter” project focuses on black immigration to England and will result in further learning kits for schools, new acquisitions of vernacular photographs to Autograph’s archive and in public art installations by contemporary artists. It is tempting to imagine some of COVIC’s images entering into this new, critical space of public pedagogy.

These contemporary uses of colonial photographs like the one Autograph is pursuing attempt to read “along the archival grain” for the imperial citizens we overlooked in our first glances. My encounters with the COVIC archive, and the records

³⁶⁹ Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, Anthony D. King, ed. (London: MacMillan): 19-40, 24.

³⁷⁰ “The Missing Chapter | Autograph ABP: Archive Learning Resource,” *Autograph ABP*, Learning | Autograph ABP: Archive Learning Resource,” *Autograph ABP*, <http://autograph-abp.co.uk/learning>, accessed June 4, 2014.

of its lecture scheme, have demonstrated that, as photography scholars, we are only beginning to understand how photography and citizenship inform one another, and to just start to reckon with the failures of both practices in securing the rights of others. Though I have tried to imagine some of the possible meanings the COVIC photographs may have generated as they circulated around the world over the 40 years of the project's lifetime, there are still many unresolved questions that the photographic representation of imperial citizenship raises. The problematic status of the contract as a binding document that unites photography, labour and citizenship; the ways indigenous sovereignty, if taken seriously, calls into question the very premise of citizenship as a performance of agency and collectivity; the limits of visual pedagogy in telling narratives of civic belonging; the connections between imperial citizenship and the now-current discourses of global citizenship; and photography's ability to guarantee the rights of the subjects it pictures are all pressing issues that can and should be addressed in future scholarship.

Human rights discourse, which has increasingly been linked to photography in visual culture scholarship over the past decade, also needs to be thought alongside our historical and contemporary understandings of citizenship. Citizenship, like human rights, is only "seeable" in photographs when it is shown to have been disregarded, denied or transgressed. As Azoulay argues of the civil contract of photography, images of social trauma reveal the subjects whose citizenship is always already precarious, always about to be revoked as soon as disaster strikes. But the COVIC project offers a chance to think about how—or if—citizenship registers photographically outside the moments of catastrophe and social trauma. Citizenship is also constructed and negotiated in the spaces of the everyday: through immigration policies, banal documentary photographs

and education initiatives. How does citizenship appear, to witnesses and spectators, in the space of the everyday? Can we develop models for seeing it and analyzing it through our encounters with more “everyday” photographs?

To do so might require an attention to not just the subtler strategies of photographic representation, but to the subtler affects and emotions they prompt in us as viewers. The COVIC lectures do not traffic in the exultant, warm humanism of Edward Steichen’s “The Family of Man” exhibition, nor in the shock and outrage of Alice Seeley Harris’s photographs of atrocities in the Belgian Congo. They elicit, instead, those in-between feelings, of recognition, mild sympathy and perhaps, more uncomfortably, complicity in the everyday traumas that structure the colonial and post-colonial environment. Our failure, as spectators, to recognize weak and non-citizens through photographs is often a failure in acknowledging the ways we might benefit from the same systems that put them in a state of constant precarity. As Azoulay cautions, this is the greatest challenge in looking at photographs with a civil imaginary:

Breaking out of this circular relationship [where victims are always the ones pictured as victims and must demand rights in the face of their violation, and where perpetrators and the laws responsible for these violations are never directly pictured] requires that we treat photographs... as the basis for reconstructing the photographic situation, whose boundaries never correspond to the frame of the photograph. Using photographs differently allows us to imagine a *new*—or renewed—human rights discourse, which besides the traditional assistance to a population designation as violated, stands also to benefit the citizens ruled alongside the violated population. This new form of intervention would help the privileged citizens to identify and acknowledge the inherent flaw in their citizenship, a flaw that makes them accomplices to the crimes of a regime that does everything in its power to keep from appearing to be criminal.³⁷¹

³⁷¹ Azoulay, *Civil Imagination* 245.

While Azoulay most often frames the spectator's ethical duty as the need to "refuse to be a perpetrator" by refusing to accept the stripping of citizen rights from the subjects in the photograph's frame, in the former British Empire, it is more difficult to pinpoint exactly when these subjects were made into non-citizens. The process of divesting them of their rights was a long, subtle one that often worked outside of the law. Writing from my position in Canada, a (post-)colonial settler country that has defined itself through myths of its acceptance of immigrants and its multiculturalism—a self-fashioning that seems to actively repress a national history of racist immigration policies and the ongoing disavowal and destruction of indigenous peoples—the task of refusing to be a perpetrator is a difficult but urgent one. It requires a confrontation with the limits and fractures of the self, both at the level of the individual and the nation. It asks for an engagement with difficult, messy feelings that are hard to mobilize and often uncomfortable to sit with. But it can also, as the COVIC lectures show, be a deeply pleasurable experience that allows us to envision our relationship to distant others whom we may never meet.

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Appendix



Figure 1: Jeff Wall, *Citizen*, 1996, silver gelatin print, 181.2 x 234.0 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 2: Unknown photographer, *Pupils at drill*, Lovedale Missionary Institution, ca. 1900-1910. From Fisher photographs, Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) photography collection, University of Cambridge library, RCS Fisher Album Y305J no. 73.



Figure 3: Alfred Hugh Fisher, *Men leaving Portsmouth Dockyard for Saturday half-holiday*, 1909, England, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XXI, no. 5043.



Figure 4: A. Hugh Fisher, *Shack or fishing hut on the White River. Near an Indian encampment. Squaw and small Indian boy*. 744 miles from Montreal, Canada, 1908, quarter plate. From RCS photography collection, University of Cambridge library, RCS Fisher Album IX, no. 2093.



Figure 5: A. Hugh Fisher, *Emigrants on Empress of Britain: In the St. Lawrence, arriving at Rimouski, Canada, 1908*, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IX, no. 2001F.



Figure 6: A. Hugh Fisher, *Men leaving Portsmouth Dockyard for Saturday half-holiday, England, 1909*, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XXI, no. 5042.



Figure 7: A. Hugh Fisher, *The 18th Prince of Wales's Tiwana Horse Lancers*, Delhi, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album V, no. 727.



Figure 8: A. Hugh Fisher, *Tanjore - ordinary Native policemen being drilled on the Maidan*, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album II, no. 231.

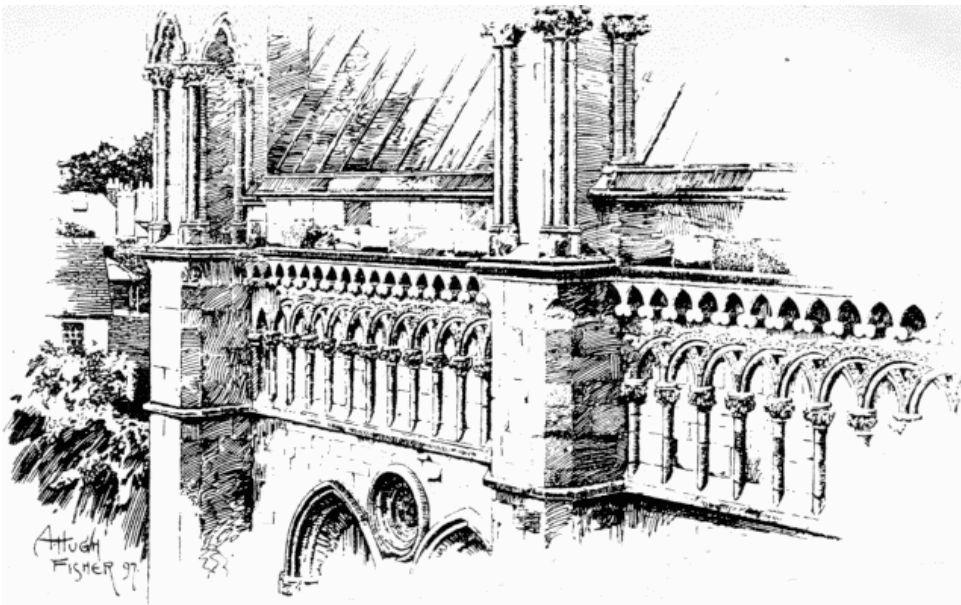


Figure 9: A. Hugh Fisher, *Exterior of the Lady Chapel*, engraved illustration from *The Cathedral Church Of Hereford: A Description Of Its Fabric And A Brief History Of The Episcopal See* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898).

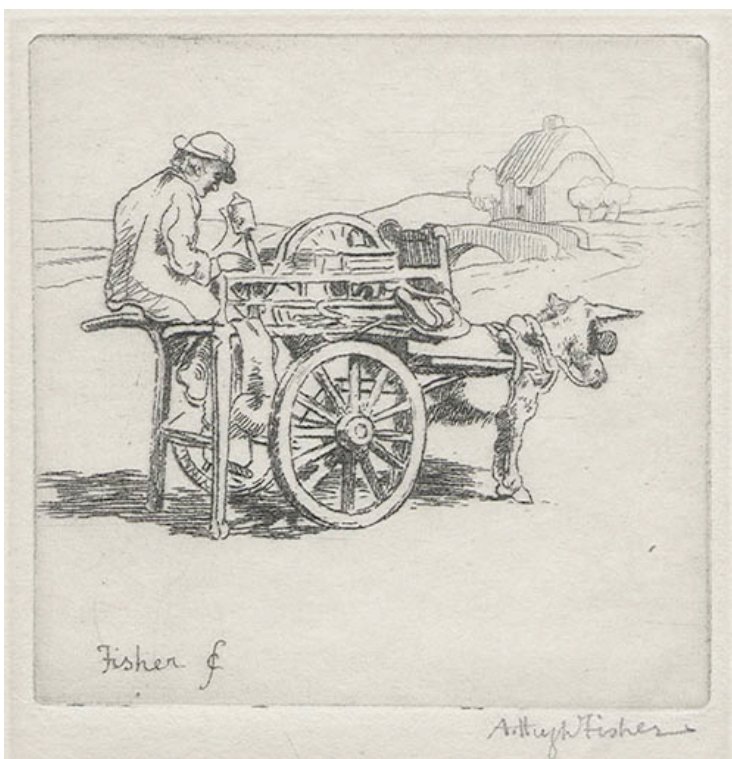


Figure 10: A. Hugh Fisher, *Knife Grinder*, ca. 1925-30, etching.



Figure 11: John Thomson, *Clock Tower, Hong Kong*, ca. 1870-72, albumen print.



Figure 12: John Thomson, "Hookey Alf," of *Whitechapel*, 1876-77, Woodburytype, from Adolphe Smith's *Street Life in London* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1878).



Figure 13: A. Hugh Fisher, *Great Northern and Great Central: Manchester, England*, 1909, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XVI, no. 5305.



Figure 14: A. Hugh Fisher, *The outside pulpit: Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone, England*, 1909, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XXI, no. 5003.



Figure 15: A. Hugh Fisher, *Paying the men in the Battery: King Edward VII*, Portsmouth, England, 1909, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XXI, no. 2014.



Figure 16: A. Hugh Fisher, *Rosa. Fair of the Saint*, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album VII, no. 1004.

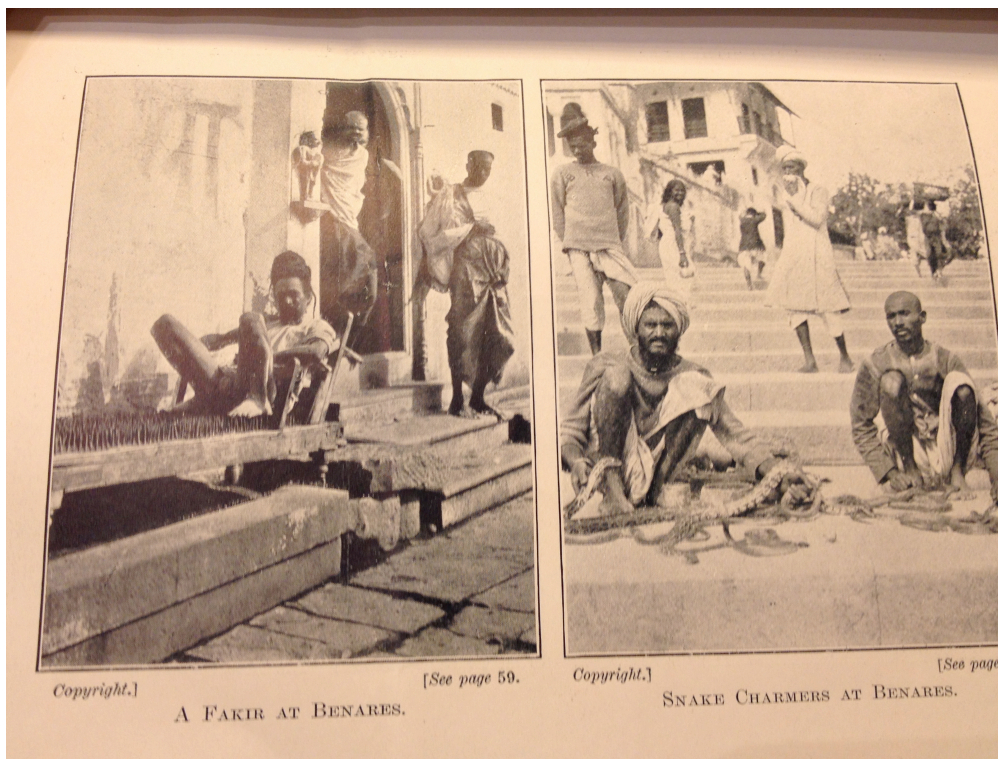


Figure 17: Illustrations from *Eight Lectures on India*, 2nd edition (London: Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee and George Philip and Son, 1910).

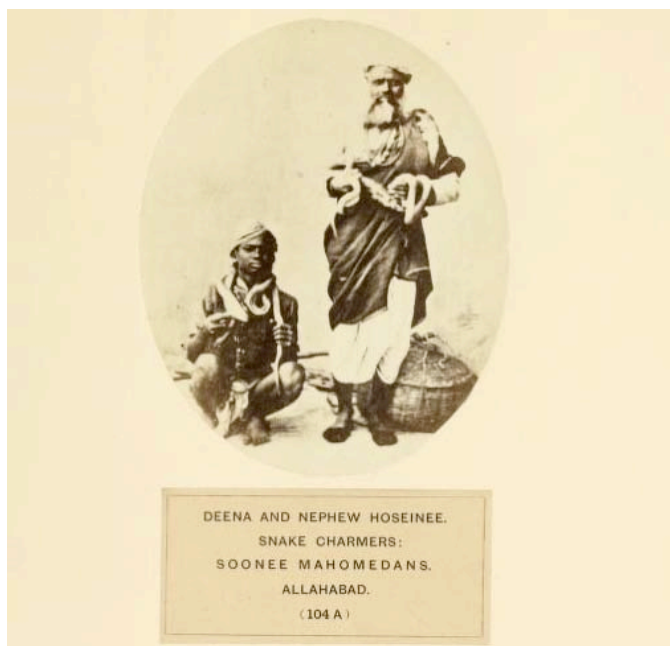


Figure 18: Unknown photographer, "Snake Charmers" from *The People of India* (1868-75).



Figure 19: A. Hugh Fisher, *Tuticorin: Landing on the jetty from the launch*, India, 1907, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS, Album II, no. 191.



Fig. 15: A. Hugh Fisher, *Paying the men in the Battery: King Edward VII*, Portsmouth, England, 1909, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XXI, no. 2014.

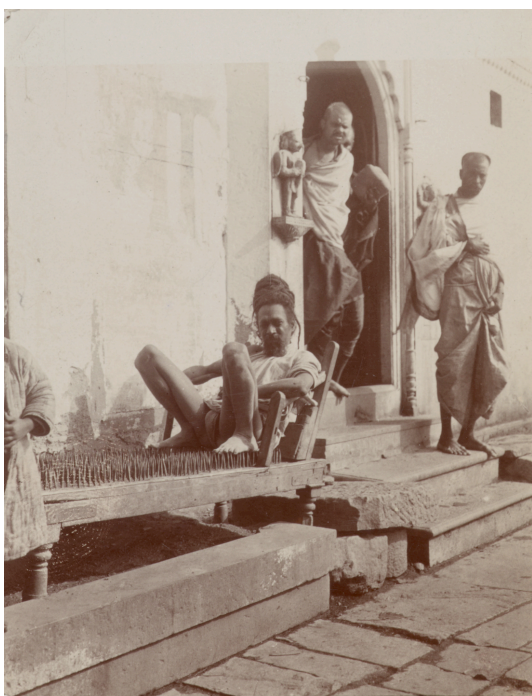
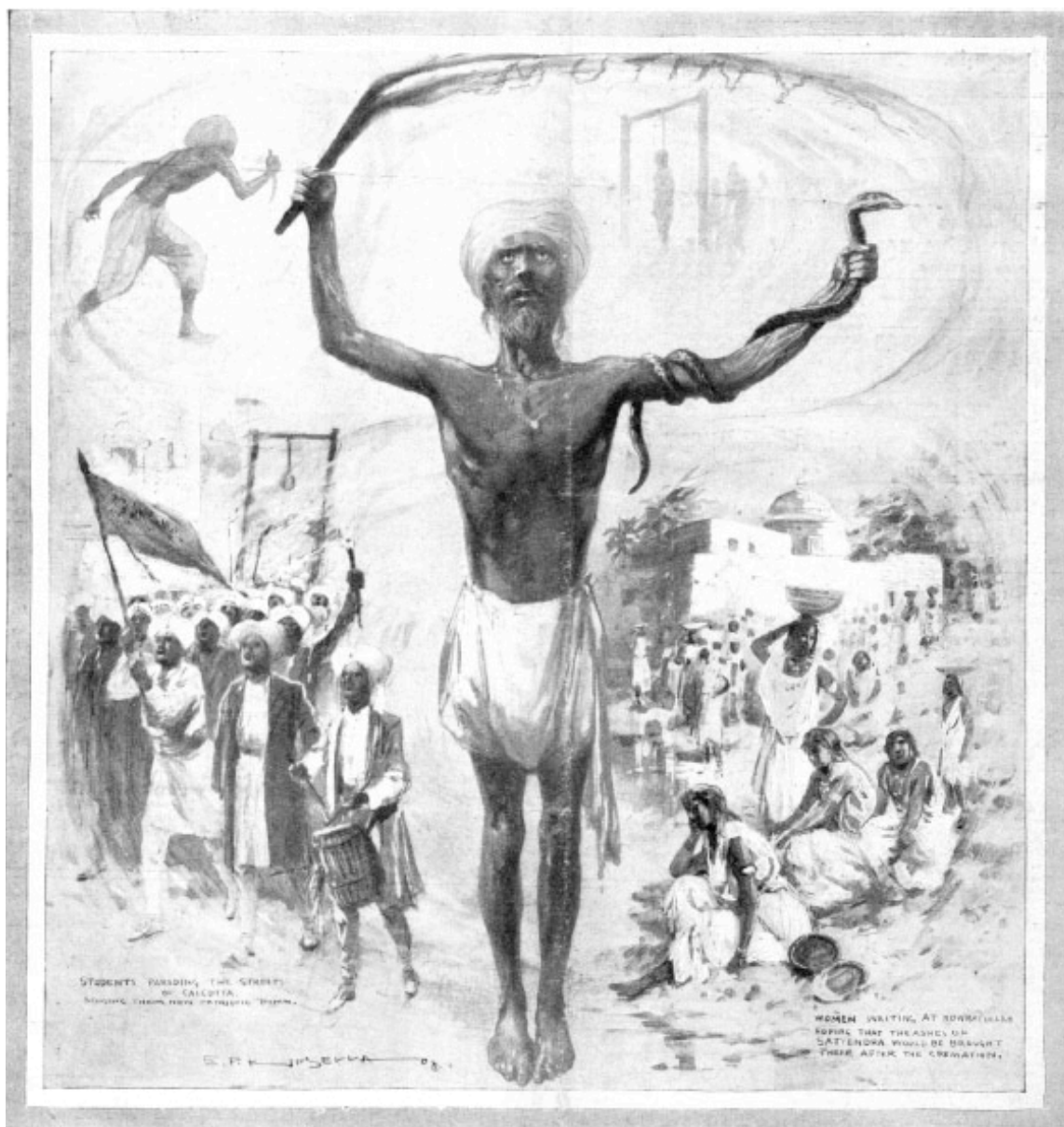


Figure 20: A. Hugh Fisher, *A Fakir, Benares*, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IV, no. 597.



Figure 21: A. Hugh Fisher, *Snake charmers on the Desasumay Ghat at Benares—a cobra, python, and other snakes*, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IV, no. 585.



THE SHADOW OF A MUTINY: UNREST IN INDIA.

Once again our great possession in the Far East, the Indian Empire, is overshadowed by the threatening clouds of mutiny. At the execution of Satyendra Nath Rose, the murderer, a large crowd, composed mostly of women, spent the day at Kowratullah, on the riverside, hoping that his ashes would be brought there by the current after the cremation. The gaol authorities, however, refused to allow the ashes to be taken away. The whole country seems to be seething with sedition, and there is no knowing to what length it will go unless prompt measures are taken, and the danger nipped in the bud.

Figure 22: "The Shadow of a Mutiny: Unrest in India," illustrated by E.P. Kinsella, *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 28 Nov. 1908. Captions in the image note, "Students parading the streets of Calcutta, singing their new patriotic hymn. Women waiting at Kowratullah, hoping that the ashes of Satyendra would be brought there after the cremation." Courtesy of the British Library's Newspaper Collection, © The British Library Board, General Reference Collection 1908-1909 Jan. 1908 - June 1909 Microform. MFM.M40517 [1908-1909].

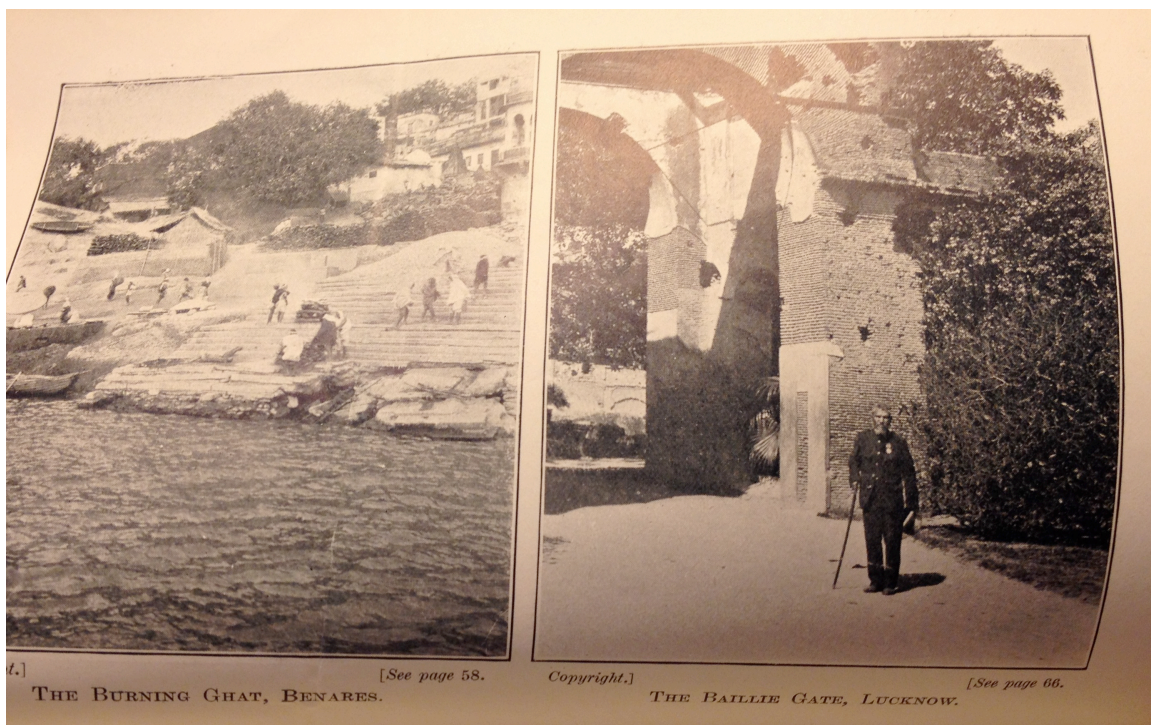


Figure 23: Illustrations from *Eight Lectures on India*, 2nd edition (London: Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee and George Philip and Son, 1910).



Figure 24: A. Hugh Fisher, *Native cutters making clothes for British Troops*, Cawnpore, India, 1908, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IV, no. 630.



Figure 25: A. Hugh Fisher, *Government High School, Peshawar: Gymnastic class in playground - this is the highest Form - Mohammedans except four Hindoos (wearing caps)*, India, 1908, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album VI, no. 819.



Figure 26: RCS Fisher album in the University of Cambridge library, January 2013. Author's photograph.



Figure 27: A. Hugh Fisher, *On an Ottawa River steamer*, Canada, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IX, no. 2039.



Figure 28: Unknown photographer, *Bush school, Petrie's Creek, north coastline*, ca. 1910, sent by the Brisbane Department of Agriculture and Stock, which notes there is a Union Jack flag flying in the yard. From Fisher photograph collection, RCS Fisher Album Y30850, no. 8.



Figure 29: John R. Cleland, *Table Bay and the Devil's Peak from the top of Table Mountain*, ca. 1900–10. From Fisher photograph collection, RCS Fisher Album Y305J, no. 101.



Figure 30: Robert E. Holloway, *A trout's shack*, Newfoundland, ca. 1880-1904, medium unknown. From Fisher photograph collection, RCS Fisher Album Y3061B, no. 4.



Figure 31: A. Hugh Fisher, *Fresh Newfoundland Cod, Petty Harbour, Canada, 1908*, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XI, no. 2463.



Figure 32: A. Hugh Fisher, *Tignish Run, P.E.I. The lobster men's dinner—nearly all French. At time of expulsion from the Maritime Provinces twelve families came to Tignish, Canada, 1909*, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XIV, no. 2924.



Figure 33: A. High Fisher, *Maple sugaring in the woods near Joliette: close of winter. Pouring the boiled syrup on to the clean snow, ready for eating*, Quebec, Canada, 1909, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XIV, no. 2843.



Figure 34: A. Hugh Fisher, *Quebec: a streetcar*, Canada, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IX, no. 2014F.



Figure 35: A. Hugh Fisher, *Macdonald College: St. Anne de Bellevue: Quebec Province: Gymnasium class for women students: half of these in picture are Canadian born: balancing exercises*, Canada, 1909, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XIII, no. 2777.



Figure 36: A. Hugh Fisher, *Macdonald College—Dressmaking class*, Canada, 1909, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XIII, no. 2788.



Figure 37: Robert E. Holloway, *A group of Esquimaux [i.e. Inuits], Labrador, Canada*, ca. 1880-1904. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album Y3061B, no. 2.



Figure 38: A. Hugh Fisher, *Camp of Indian Harvesters on a farm in Manitoba*, Canada, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS, Album X, no. 2323.



Figure 39: A. Hugh Fisher, *Montreal: a cheap café—negro “boss” of the café on a ladder*, Canada, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IX, no. 2070.



Figure 40: William James Topley, *Slavic immigrants, Yanaluk family*, 1911, photograph from glass plate negative 2406 in album 38 Canada – Department of Mines Collection. Courtesy Library and Archives Canada/Topley Studio fonds/PA-010254.



Fig. 41: "Some Types of the New-Comers. Snapshot Poses of the Polyglot Peoples who are helping to make a New Nation. From Photographs Taken at Quebec and Halifax." Courtesy Library and Archives Canada/*Canadian Courier*, VII, 20 (30 April 1910)/AMICUS 132774/nlc011092.



Figure 42: Unknown photographer, page from Canada National Railways photograph-dossier *Family of Michal Zatyczko on homestead*, ca. 1927-1930. Courtesy Library and Archives Canada/Canadian National Railway Company fonds/e000009433.



Figure 43: A. Hugh Fisher, *Ottawa: Alma Street. L'Eglise Notre Dame on the Hull Side. A typical street of wooden houses on Sunday afternoon - showing class of house for work people and poorer class generally*, Canada, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IX, no. 2021.



THE WEST END OF OTTAWA AFTER THE FIRE.

Figure 44: Photographer unknown, *The West End of Ottawa After the Fire*, 1900, from *Report of the Ottawa and Hull Fire Relief Fund*, 1900.



Figure 45: A. Hugh Fisher, *Residences in Victoria*, Canada, 1909, quarter plates. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XIII, no. 2677-2682.



Figure 46: A. Hugh Fisher, *Freak maple: and children born in Vancouver*, Canada, 1909, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XII, no. 2639.



Figure 47: A. Hugh Fisher, *Entrance to a village on the Rungeet River, in Sikkim – in front coolie woman carrying camera*, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IV, no. 541.



Figure 48: Detail of Alfred Hugh Fisher, *Entrance to a village on the Rungeet River, in Sikkim – in front coolie woman carrying camera*, India, 1908, quarter plate.



Figure 49: A. Hugh Fisher, *Colombo. My first servant, John, a Madrassee Tamil in rickshaw*, Ceylon, 1907, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album I, no. 31.



Figure 50: A. Hugh Fisher, *Darjeeling, in the Bazaar. Tibetan women doing Coolie work*, India, 1908, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album IV, no. 516.



Figure 51: A. Hugh Fisher, *Collecting latex*, Singapore, 1908, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XVIII, no. 4209.



Figure 52: A. Hugh Fisher, *Tapping rubber: Chain-Gamma system invented by Mr C. Bolden Kloss, and considered to get best flow of latex*, Singapore, 1908, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album XVIII, no. 4210.



Figure 53: A. Hugh Fisher, *The road down from Mussoorie, coolies carrying my baggage*, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album V, no. 788.



Figure 54: A. Duperly and Sons, *Cutting Sugar Cane*, postmarked 1904. Postcard.



Figure 55: Cover of the textbook (detail) for *West Indies and Guiana: Six Lectures* by Algernon E. Aspinall (London: George Philip & Son Ltd., 1914).



Figure 56: A. Duperly and Sons, *Market Women*, Jamaica, ca. 1900-1910, medium unknown. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album Y3073B no. 28.



Figure 57: Photographer unknown, *Native street hawker (yams)*, Barbados, ca. 1910, medium unknown. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album Y3072A, no. 10.



Figure 58: Photographer unknown, *Groot Drakenstein, packing fruit for export (London and Continental Markets)*, South Africa, ca. 1900-10, medium unknown, Courtesy the Cape Government Railways. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album Y305J, no. 9.



Figure 59: A. Hugh Fisher, *Brahmin women close to the top of the Rock, Trichinopoly, looking northwards towards Surangam. Womens dress red and saffron*, India, 1907, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album II, no. 218.

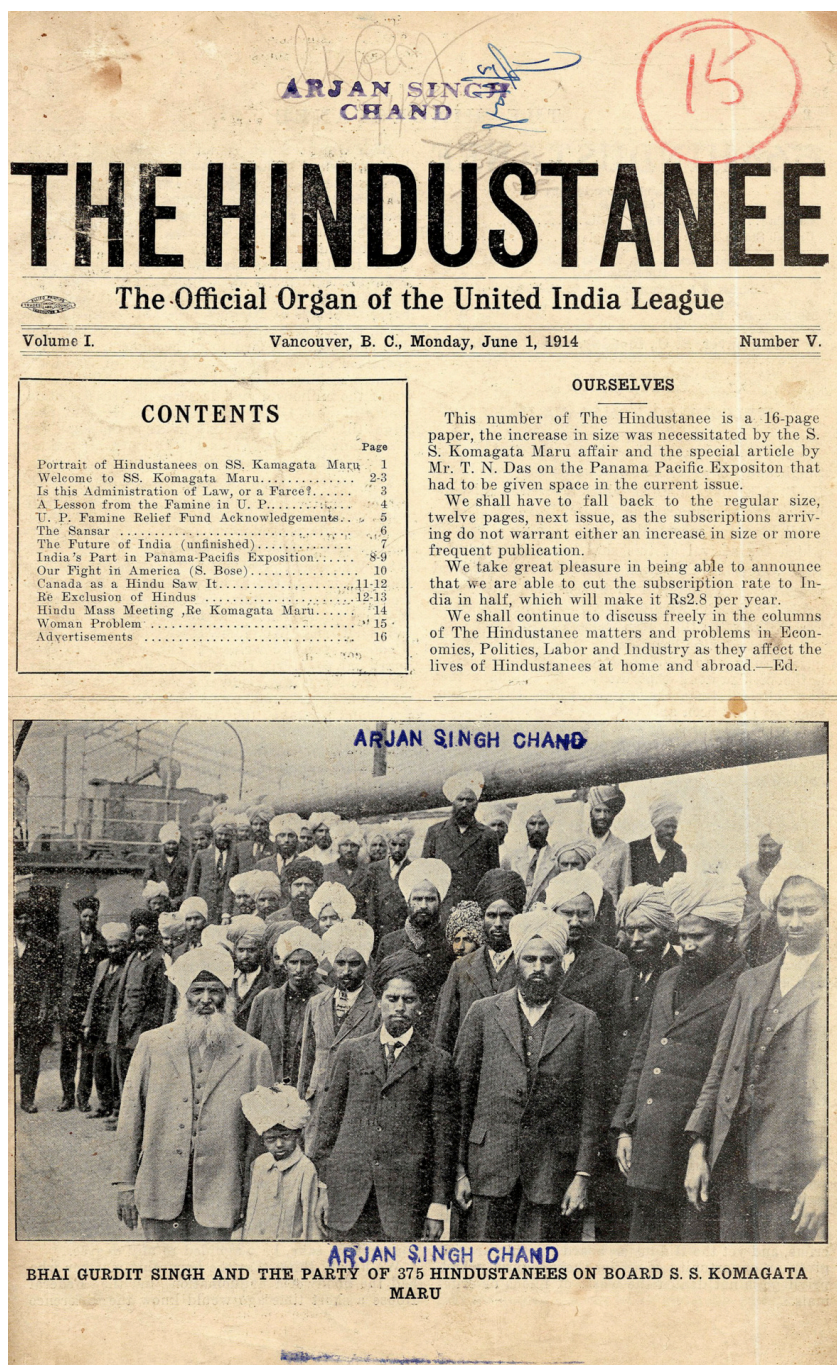


Figure 60: Cover of the *Hindustanee* newspaper, 1 June 1914. Image courtesy of Simon Fraser University Library Special Collections and Rare Books, Arjan Singh Brar Collection.



Figure 61: "Indian immigrants on board the Komagata Maru in English Bay, Vancouver," British Columbia, 1914. Courtesy Library and Archives Canada/Natural Resources Canada fonds/PA-034015.

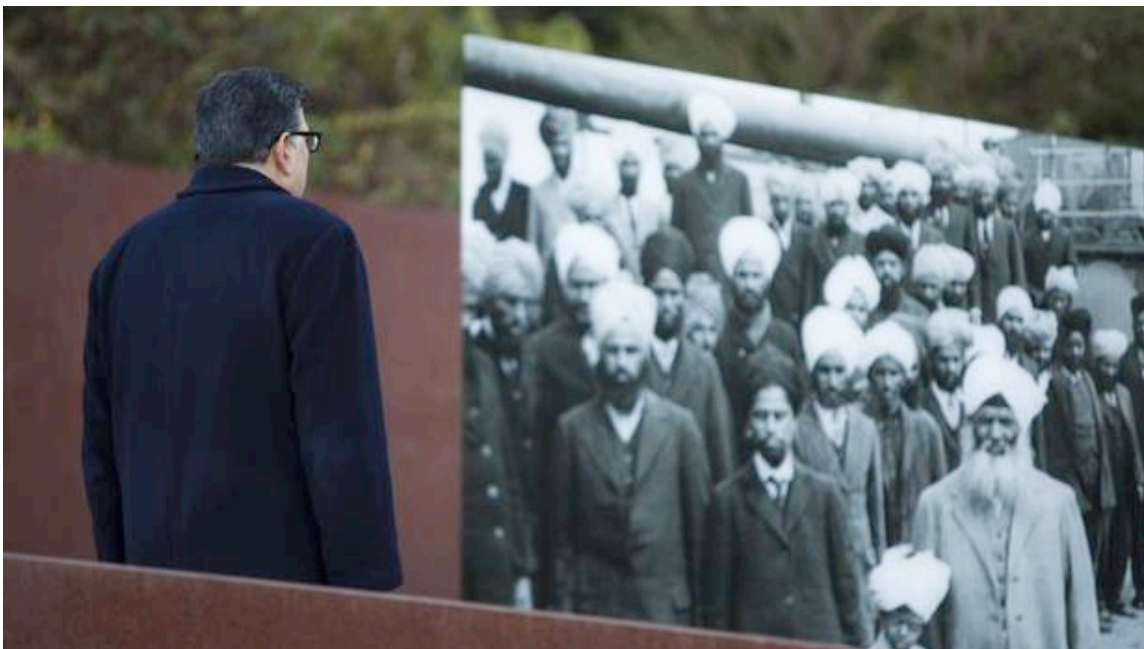


Figure 62: "A man visits Coal Harbour's Komagata Maru monument in Vancouver, Thursday, January 16, 2014." Photo: Rafal Gerszak for the *Globe and Mail*, courtesy Rafal Gerszak.



Figure 63: A. Hugh Fisher, *The Mayo School of Art Lahore. Metal Working Department*, India, 1908, half plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album VI, no. 846.



Figure 64: A. Hugh Fisher, *4,500 feet high at Runnymede Station. A train full of children coming away for Xmas [i.e. Christmas] from the Lawrence Asylum Schools, Ootacamund, India*, 1907, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album II, no. 261.



Figure 65: A. Hugh Fisher, *The Queen's Boy, Victoria Memorial Orphanage*. Here all receive training of their own religion, there being no sectarian bias. This boy is now in the Agricultural school, and will probably settle down in a years time, very likely marrying one of the Queens girls, and with a portion of his scholarship saved up for him will purchase bullocks, plough, etc., Aurungabad, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album VII, no. 988.



Figure 66: A. Hugh Fisher, *Calcutta. Coolies. Boarding the Bengala*, India, 1908, quarter plate. From Fisher photographs, RCS Fisher Album III, no. 454.



Figure 67: *SS Empire Windrush*, 1948. Courtesy Getty Images.