

Painting/Politics/Photography:

Marlene Dumas, Mme Lumumba and the Image of the African Woman

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Black and white photographs provide the scaffolding of two quite distinctive paintings made more than twenty years apart (*plate 1* and *plate 2*). Marlene Dumas's *The Teacher (Sub A)* (1987) and *The Widow* (2013) are both executed in oil on canvas, and have manifestly magnified their image source, liquefied its surface patina, added colour to its monochromatic sobriety and transformed its signification and material resonance. In each instance the gestural marks of the painter overwrite the archival print, which is at once invoked and supplanted, whether drawn from the private family album or taken from the popular press. Notwithstanding the adaptations and alterations of the painter, it is the photographic substratum of modern visual consciousness that remains present in both of these pictures. This is painting that depends on, while departing from, its mechanical, material other.

In the case of *The Teacher (Sub A)*, the specific source of the image is so generic and ubiquitous as to be, in itself, almost redundant. Never mind that we can trace the specific class photograph on which the painting is based to the artist's own

cherished memento, or that she has identified herself in the image as the yellow-haired child standing behind the teacher: the reference here is to the typical and typological rather than to the unique or distinctive (*plate 3*). Those of us who, like Dumas, grew up under the yolk of a British or colonial education system can each reproduce a similar icon of our youth (*plate 4*). There we sit in our serried ranks, ankles carefully crossed, hands neatly clasped, ties obediently knotted, as we look awkwardly ahead at the camera. School photography favours the flat and the frontal, the formal and the forensic in its celebration and production of the group, the team, or the club. In such images sameness, rather than diversity, is the thing.¹ My own family album, like everyone else's, is furnished with just such a relic. Here we are, girls in the front, boys towards the back, blazers and badges intact in a choreographed display of uniformity that belies the adolescent brooding and bravado of those times. I, aged fifteen when my school photograph was taken, am placed fourth from the left in the second row. But there is little visible difference between my teenage comportment and dress and that of the children of Marlene Dumas's own Sub A class.² The group coheres as of one body, its identity marked by clothing, clasping, grinning and glaring, as the invisible photographer cajoles and controls from his spot, the very spot to which the organised ranks of school kids will remain orientated and fixated forever.

What unites both these photographs in our memories – for Dumas and I come from similar places, she from a rural Afrikaner childhood on the wine-lands outside Cape Town, I from closeted Jewish suburbia marooned on the edge of Table Mountain – is the unspoken glue of apparent ethnic homogeneity that framed the fact of our adherence to the set. To be part of such a classroom in South Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s was to be sucked into a segregated community in which a spurious sense of belonging was tied to language and custom and skin-colour. Uniforms provided the external carapace to our already over-determined sameness. Whiteness, above all, was what was registered in the performance and display of our identities. And black and white photography seemed to collude with the institutionalised naturalisation of separation as it bleached out our skins and smoothed over our blemishes all the better to inscribe each us as one of the set.³ The subtle but coercive effect of such images was to endorse and perpetuate the sense of belonging that the composition and costume enshrined.

Dumas's small act of retroactive painterly rebellion was to mimic the photograph's format, figuring the uniformity of furniture and repetitive pose, while refusing its bland, washed-out tonalities in favour of exuberant and fauve-derived hues. Puce and orange, green and turquoise sit alongside black and brown in Dumas's flamboyant reworking. The faces have

become punctuated masks, their peepholes black spots of indifference surmounting pinched and impenetrable mouths. Colour hovers expressively over limb and cheek, exceeding any naturalistic remit and refusing both humanist insight and ideological instrumentalization in the replaying of the photographic *mis-en-scène*. Applied in sweeping strokes and fluid, turps-laden gestures, the paint plays with shadow and shape in a haptic display of mark-making that rejects the smoothed-over surface of the image that gave it its form. At the same time the chromatic coherence of the painting reinforces the sense that the group breathes and lives together, symmetrically glued to seat and spot around the authoritative core of 'The Teacher'.

The generic nature of Dumas's source is instructive. For one, it allows us to delve into our own pictorial archives, substituting and supplementing personal images for the one that prompted her exuberant painting. At the same time, it alerts us to how photographic protocols inform ways of seeing and appearing irrespective of the individual instance portrayed. Dumas paints under the sign and the sway of the photographic that, overtly as well as subliminally, provides the language through which her pictures are framed. And yet it is a specific, time-bound technology, activity, and performance that *The Teacher (Sub A)* seems to encode, evoking as it does a childhood of the mid-twentieth century. Shown here are the

children of the analogue age used to turning our best faces to the camera and holding our frozen gazes for a while. Being photographed for us as school pupils was an elaborate, serious performance that took time and money and commitment. We were told to dress neatly, tie our hair in bunches, and be sure to polish our shoes for the one day of the year when the photographer came to school. He would not come again for another twelve months and the precious record of our belonging was neither cheap nor easy to replace. It was not a day to miss, it was not a time to misbehave.

It is the historical specificity of the visual culture of a colonial childhood that Dumas's incendiary chromatics point out. This is Sub A, the first class of primary school, through which six-year-old South African 'white' children entered into the segregated classrooms of Christian National Education,⁴ to be taught basic skills alongside conformity and knowing one's place. For this they would be rewarded, praised and prized. But as an adult and an artist, Dumas refuses to colour within the lines or neatly shade the figures with the designated 'flesh' tones of authority. Neatness and obedience are staged in the structure and repetitive poses of the underlying image, only to be troubled and challenged through gesture, palette and paint-work, so that the once-taken image and the once black-and-white childhood are remade and remodelled anew.

This essay looks at the politics of portrayal, photography and figuration in relation to the colonial/Apartheid archive, focussing on Dumas's reworking of a selection of images – both personal and public – in order to address contemporary painting's capacity to deal with history, and in particular its spectacular or photogenic trace. By using the painted reworking of both her old school photograph as well as an iconic depiction of Mme Pauline Lumumba, I ask what painting can do when it takes on the photographic past. At the same time, I explore the interpretive filters that have coalesced around the figure of the 'bare-breasted African widow'. My approach is very much a matter of voice and vocalization, one that is central to my personal stake in the overarching project that explores the lives of photographs in the aftermath of colonialism and Apartheid.

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For Dumas, painting offers a space for the disruption of norms that are photographically emplotted and endorsed.⁵ Like many of the painters from her generation, the world is approached tangentially via the media-saturated image bank that surrounds Dumas. For her, there is no such thing as an unmediated experience or authentic encounter with a lived or code-free corporeality. Post-conceptual painting takes its knowing place in the wake of the ubiquity of the photographic image, not through recourse to a pre-industrial celebration of the eye, or a faith in the proximity or tangibility of bodies, but by confronting the

mechanics of the photographic as the ground of both painting's criticality and its contemporaneity. Zooming in and zooming out of a scenario, closing in on a detail, enlarging and fragmenting at will, the language of photography permeates Dumas's compositional strategies, providing a vocabulary for framing or plotting a scene.⁶ At the same time, the attitude to a source photograph is, as we have seen, far from deferential or reverent. If anything, the 'original' is accosted and challenged, cropped and cut by a gestural and painterly dynamic that over-writes or defaces its history-laden form with a defiance that comes from the hand.

And yet photographs, collected, scavenged, reproduced and rescaled form the basis of Dumas's access to the 'real', whether sourced from her own family album or from the image banks that circulate in the world. Reproducing and adapting them is at once a political act and an aesthetic gesture: in fact, they are inseparable as such. *The Widow*, like *The Teacher* (*Sub A*), is a reworked photograph. But where the class portrait deals with the clichéd and the banal, the formulaic and the conventional, *The Widow* invokes an enigmatic, unique pictorial precedent that is more difficult and complex to trace. Cut off at the edges, capturing a crowd that is as much suggested as seen, *The Widow* speaks to the technologies of modern history as it is captured and conveyed in the newsworthy snapshot or print. The source photograph reads less as the product of ritualised display

than as casual reportage, relaying its assortment of ill-defined figures for a future that has not yet been imagined or prepared. Its iconic power is retrospective rather than prefigured or planned.

At face value, *The Widow* portrays a scene in which a bare-breasted African woman is escorted in a vaguely-glimpsed crowd by a pair of her bleached-out compatriots, dressed in casual, open-necked shirts, cotton shorts and socks or solemn, ink-black slacks. The antinomies of clothing and nakedness, European costume and African flesh, masculinity and femininity, are encapsulated in this unlikely threesome and the painting seems to zoom in on the central group, cutting off their shoes and feet, as well as the blurred, surrounding figures alongside them, as if extracting a still from a movie strip or an expanded contextualizing drama. This is not a generic or typical scene. It is clearly based on an actual event, and the almost-life size figures come towards us as if emerging or advancing from history.

In fact, the context for the triumvirate is more fully filled out in a later companion painting, paradoxically significantly smaller in scale than *The Widow* (it measures only 60 x 80 cm as opposed to the 150 x 140 cm of the close-up), but including much more of the scene (*plate 5*). Here the same central group is seen, this time *in situ*, flanked on the left by a couple of pale skinned male figures, dressed alternately in army uniform and

lounge suit, while the motley crowd behind them and to the right is sketched in to amplify the larger context from which they appear to proceed. The effect in the smaller painting is of an extended or expanded vista rather than that of a concentrated and enlarged threesome at its core.

From the paintings alone, it is clear that the image derives from a reproduced source depicting a specific public procession, played out in an urban environment, in which a lone woman, dressed differently from everyone who surrounds her, is both cradled and surveyed by the crowd. The photographic origin of the works is apparent, not only by the cut-off composition and frontal orientation of the scene in which the figures seem to walk towards us as if into the lens of a camera, but by the essentially tonal arrangement of shapes – from the saturated blackness of trousers and legs to the highlights on flesh and face – that are massed out as if seen in black and white, despite the occasional linear incursions of blue and red, or the washed-in greens and golds that seem to endorse rather than undermine the essential tonal chromatics of the whole. The focus is on the figures in the front that are staged against the anonymity of the crowd. The paintings have all the hallmarks of an old newspaper photograph, now repurposed and enlarged on canvas, so that our attention is directed to the dramatic anomaly played out at its heart.

In fact, the paintings' link to a specific photographic source is affirmed by Dumas's earlier iteration of its use (*plate 6*). In a gigantic collage, entitled *Drie Vroue en ek/Three Women and I* (1982) and shown together with *The Widow* for the first time in her 2015 retrospective at the Beyerle Collection, Basel, a close-up and severely cropped rendition of the central group of figures is mounted on card between two other blown-up drawings based on images of solitary or widowed women: Malcolm X's grieving wife Betty Shabaz is shown at the bottom of the triptych, while Winnie Mandela, wife of Nelson who was then incarcerated and on trial for treason, appears at the top.⁷ All of the drawings reproduce details of iconic historical photographs. The image of Winnie Mandela even includes a bit of the caption that originally accompanied its publication in the press. Extracted from the news and reworked in multiple media, the images are here enlarged and framed on a cardboard strip so as both to point to and exceed their historical roles as documents, while enshrining their principle protagonists as heroines. The purloined images may go beyond the cardboard frame, but the focus is undoubtedly on the figures. It is to the central drawing that Dumas returned after thirty-one years in *The Widow* paintings.⁸ It reproduces part of the now famous shot of the flanked Pauline Opango Lumumba, widow of the assassinated Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who was brutally murdered in

mysterious circumstances in 1961. Bare-breasted and bare-footed, she leads the funerary procession through the streets of Léopoldville (later Kinshasa). What unites the three women in Dumas's vertical strip is their shared relationship to famous black revolutionaries, and the spousal solitariness that their husband's positions produced.

Beneath the triumvirate of actual or grass widows that she drew, Dumas placed herself as a simplified, cartoon-like mask mounted on a wooden block as if occupying the space of the viewer, or even the witness or *bricoleur*, who pulls the evidentiary materials of the past into what appears as a giant, fantastical filmstrip, or a series seen through a massive viewfinder so as to create continuity and contiguity of experience. *Three Women and I*, as Dumas calls it, implicates herself in the scenarios that her crayon revisits, her self-employment (both in the title and the totem) literalizing her attachment to her female protagonists as icons (or heroines) through which to think her own relation to history and the images via which it is learned. The pictorial past is veiled here in blues and purples: it is scratched and hatched, shaded and hacked, stretched and magnified; but the underlying press photographs from which the enlarged portraits are made remain assertively, undeniably present. In each, the public display of a particular woman's grief or sorrow is made known through an image that once had currency and marketability in the media.⁹

But it was not in the press that Dumas had first seen the photograph of Pauline Opango Lumumba. In fact, she had come across it reproduced (and cropped) in Sandy Lesberg's volume, *Assassination in Our Time* (1976), which she had found when browsing in an Amsterdam bookshop soon after arriving in the city from South Africa in 1977 (*plate 7*).¹⁰ The book is a compendium of images and texts chronicling twenty assassinations of famous men from the twentieth century.¹¹ Amongst these are images of the wives that they left behind. When Dumas encountered the small photograph of the Congolese widow for the first time, it appeared anomalous and out-of-synch with the rest. She was struck, she has said, by what she saw as the spectacle of the bare-breasted woman, flanked by her fully-dressed male companions, and visibly 'in mourning for her husband'. In using these words, Dumas repeated the standard filter through which the image (and Mme Lumumba's comportment) have routinely and repeatedly been read.

It was the caption that accompanied the reproduced photograph which first directed Dumas to read the picture in this way. 'Mrs Lumumba is bare-breasted as a sign of mourning' reads the text, her identity as a grieving African woman given as an explanation for the sartorial statement that she so blatantly makes. The effect of this textual mediation is to de-politicise Pauline Opango's pointed gesture (she stands out in the crowd) and to naturalize her figure in relation to the iconic image of

African femininity still operative in ethnographic and racialized discourses of the time. The photographic depiction of a semi-naked African woman, however solitary or incongruous or vulnerably exposed, was neither anomalous nor unexpected at the time. In fact, such a figural mode was both expected and explained through recourse to 'traditional' mores and morals as well as habits of representation and depiction. For Dumas, the photograph's anomalous appearance in a book devoted to male politicians and their murders (as well as their surviving veiled widows) made the incongruity and vulnerability of this scantily-clad female figure stand out. She represented not only an African widow embedded in customary practices of mourning but a particular woman whose public performance of grief marked her as different and exposed in the crowd.¹²

Interestingly, though, this contextualized portrayal of the bereaved Mme Lumumba did not signal the first time that the photograph had entered into the artist's consciousness. In fact, Dumas had come upon a mention of it in the third volume of Simone de Beauvoir's 1965 autobiography *Force of Circumstance* while still an art student at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in Cape Town in the 1970s, but it took until she was working on the 2013 paintings for the memory of the textual reference to resurface.¹³ When turning through the pages of her old dog-eared edition of de Beauvoir's memoir, Dumas discovered, to her surprise, that she had years before not only

read about the image of Mme Lumumba but had underlined the few sentences in the book that dealt with it.¹⁴ At that point, the words alone had made an impression. So much so that she had marked the page in black ink (*plate 8*). ‘NB’ she had scrawled in the margin while her broken line traced a hesitant path beneath the poignant and prescient lines: ‘The assassination of Lumumba, [...] the photographs of his wife leading his mourners, head shaved, breast bared – what novel could compete with that?’ There is no mistaking the impact that these words made on their impressionable reader. She emphasized them on the page with her pen, dwelling word for word on the details as well as the conundrums and challenges that they invoked. For de Beauvoir’s rhetorical question (pitting photography against the novel) responds to a declaration that she quotes a few lines earlier from her friend, the working class, feminist writer Christiane Rochefort, who, she reports, had stopped writing fiction for a while: ‘I can’t get interested in my piddling little stories, not at the moment!’ Rochefort had declaimed.¹⁵

There was much in these lines to intrigue Dumas, the curious art student. At the level of the pictorial, the evocation of the bare-breasted, cropped-haired, African widow leading a procession of mourners must have set off a visual trigger or conjured an intriguing image of a forbidden yet fascinating world. For one thing, Africa as a continent was a physical no-go

zone for most South Africans during the Apartheid era.¹⁶

Instead, it served as an imaginary, ill-defined dark mass in the censored and circumscribed lives that we led. Lumumba's assassination, which de Beauvoir – following the Soviet line – describes further down the page as 'a stain on the good name not only of Kasavubu and Tshombe' (his alleged murderers at the time), 'but of America, the U.N., Belgium, the entire Western world and Lumumba's immediate circle of followers', was little reported or discussed in the environment we inhabited down South. Africa's history crept surreptitiously into our consciousness, when it entered at all, often filtered tangentially, inadvertently or by stealth. Something, though, must have struck the young Dumas in the few sentences that she picked out from the page, and they would still reverberate decades later in her work. But just as significant in the underlined passage as the visualisation of an isolated, semi-naked African femininity was the burning question of the opposing claims of literature and photography in the recounting of, and accounting for, history. 'What novel could compete with that?' asked de Beauvoir rhetorically of the photograph that had created the stir. Could literature ever encapsulate the drama and spectacular impact of photography? And where, Dumas might have added, would painting lie between the narrative propulsion of fiction and the documentary directive and immediacy of the news-worthy snapshot or image? Could painting ever be adequate to the

dramatic impact and archival import of the photograph with its proximity to history, its quotidian density and apparent veridical truth?¹⁷

For a politically aware South African at the time that Dumas was reading her de Beauvoir, documentary photography was unassailable as the conduit of a conscience-driven practice. Painting (especially modernist painting) was much harder to defend or define. Projects like David Goldblatt's *On the Mines*, published in 1973, a copy of which Dumas owned at the time, set the gold standard for a form of evidentiary social realism that stood for a revolutionary aesthetics tied to the verifiable events of the day.¹⁸ Subject to censorship and often taken at great risk, the black and white documentary photograph came to represent a hard-won record of an increasingly dangerous 'real'.¹⁹

Regularly forming the basis of painting, photographic records from Sam Nzima's iconic image of Hector Peterson's body, carried Pièta-like across the streets of Soweto after his murder by the South African Defence Force during the 1976 school protests, to reworked images of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko's funeral after his murder while in Detention, the apartheid-era archive of photographs provided a stark and startling image bank from which to work.²⁰

But what could the language of painting have to say to the affairs and affects of the world? How could it avoid the vulgar literary or merely descriptive and still remain both relevant and

rooted in the present? For Dumas, it is in the ambivalent and complex relationship to the photographic that this is played out and repeatedly explored. If de Beauvoir suggested that photography trumped the novel in its capacity to transcend ‘piddling stories’, then for Dumas, like many painters of her generation, it remains *the* technology that still has to be both addressed and overcome. Placed between the competing spectres of narrative overkill and literal verisimilitude, painting is required to assert its own relatively autonomous voice. This was arguably already the case for Edouard Manet, whose multiple versions of *The Execution of Maximilian* (1867) were amongst the earliest oil paintings to be conceived via newspaper reportage and an awareness of circulating photographs.²¹ Alongside Manet’s well-known sources, such as Goya and Velazquez and Courbet, therefore, stood the modest (often manipulated) *cartes de visite* or albumin prints that provided new visual models for contemporary noteworthy events. Modernist painting – from Manet to Dumas – remains critically engaged, therefore, with the force of photography’s veridical hold, at the same time as it troubles and unsettles its putative claims on the truth.

The memorable photograph that underpins the paintings of *The Widow* has itself a riveting story to tell. First seen, captioned and cropped at bottom and sides, by Dumas, in *Assassination in Our Time*, it takes its place in a section on the murdered

Lumumba alongside copiously illustrated essays on the lives and deaths of famous men, from the Kennedys to Mahatma Ghandi, Hendrik Verwoerd and Che Guevara (amongst others). But, as we have also seen, the picture invokes a sub-genre of widow portraits, ranging from a veiled Jacqueline Kennedy to a head-scarved Betty Shabaz and a weeping Pamela Mboya, all representing the public display of grieving wives, the feminine counterparts to the heroic men who remain the principle subjects of both history and publishing. In relation to these, the image of Mme Lumumba stands out. For while similarly flanked and framed by public figures or family members who apparently share her grief, Mme Lumumba's performance of self seems to separate her from her surrounding supporters. Rather than veiled or covered or crying, as the iconic role of the grieving Western widow demands, Mme Lumumba appears to bare her body boldly, expose her flesh and produce a corporeal gesture that deliberately confounds expectation and flouts European rules of dress and decorum. She grieves in her way, the picture tells us, irrespective of the spectacle that her body presents.²² For Dumas, concerned as she has always been with icons of the feminine, Opango Lumumba became the embodiment of the 'African widow', a counterpoint to the much reproduced figure of Jaqueline Kennedy who came to serve as the quintessential American widow, immortalised via canonical photographs and their reworking through the filter of Andy Warhol's prints. For

Dumas, the figuration of African femininity in this way provides a counterpoint to the homogeneity and hegemony of Western pictorial prototypes.²³

In *Assassination in Our Time*, the slightly cropped and concentrated photograph did not appear unmediated or alone. In fact, it was reproduced on a double-page spread alongside images of Lumumba's son 'playing with a toy pistol the day before he learned of his father's death', and a photograph, shot six months after the assassination, of Lumumba's successors, at the time widely thought to be responsible for his death.²⁴ The overarching context of the double-page spread is masculine and military, exacerbating the anomalous appearance of the small unclad woman on the right. The photograph itself was accompanied by a lengthy caption: 'Pauline Lumumba, widow of the slain premier, leads a group of mourners through the streets of Léopoldville. Mrs. Lumumba is bare-breasted as a sign of mourning. She sought, to no avail, to persuade the UN to have her husband's body returned and given a Christian burial.'²⁵ The implications of the placement of the photograph and the caption are clear: the African widow reverts to the local custom of bearing her breasts to express her sorrow in a man's and militarized world. The photograph appears to isolate and underline Mme Lumumba's gesture, but the caption also reassures that it does not undermine the Christianity and faith of a believer whose tragedy is magnified by the fact that she is

unable to bury her husband's remains. This powerful image of a mourning, bereft figure, vulnerable and exposed in public, has served to define and delimit Pauline Lumumba's gesture both in her time and beyond.

For Dumas in 1982, its significance and resonance would be framed in the early collage by different models of African feminine fortitude that she would magnify and mount like a vertical triptych in front of which she intimated her supplicating self (see *plate 6*). But Dumas would confront the image-source formally again in 2013, when an invitation to show alongside the Belgian artist Luc Tuymans prompted her to recall and re-visit this image and her earlier intimations of its ultimate significance. Dumas has often been compared to Tuymans and her work has been shown alongside his since the early 1990s, especially because they both work from recycled photographs, in particular ones drawn from the press. Both are inveterate collectors and croppers of images; Tuymans proceeds systematically, grouping related paintings in carefully contrived series and pairs, and exploring the blandness, even banality of an enervated or over-exposed image culture whose violence is often veiled or latent. But Dumas draws out the expressive potential of each of her sources, heightening and intensifying its mode of address while retaining its reproducible underpinnings and confronting the aggression of both the world and representation head-on.

For the joint exhibition *TWICE* in 2013, both artists were invited to deal with Belgium's colonial history, but Dumas noticed that in an earlier handling of the theme for the Venice Biennale of 2001 Tuymans had entirely omitted women from his painterly panoply, concentrating instead on the figures of the imperious Belgian King Badouin in *Mwana Kitoko* (2000), the iconic, spectacled mugshot of Patrice Lumumba in *Lumumba* (2000), and the now disgraced Moïse Tshombe (one of Lumumba's executioners) (*plate 9*). This was a version of history, drawn from the press, in which women were entirely invisible and with which Dumas could neither identify nor empathise.²⁶

To counter this male narrative and iconography, she returned to her earlier image of Pauline Opango Lumumba, and the *Assassination* book from which it was drawn, and produced the first of her two paintings foregrounding the figure of 'The Widow' (see *plate 2*). In fact, the concentrated intensity of the painting, closing in on its three principle characters who are shown with cropped feet and pushed up to the front of the picture, comes directly from this 1970s mediation of the photograph. In the process of reworking it for the Belgian show, Dumas's curiosity about the image was stimulated, and with the help of her daughter she was able (via Google) to trace its earlier iteration in an expanded print that had appeared in *Time Magazine* barely a month after Lumumba was killed (*plate*

10).²⁷ It was only after she had seen the *Time* version that Dumas executed her second painting of the subject (see *plate 5*). Smaller in scale but expanded in view, it is as if Dumas's delight in the discovery of the contemporary document led her to reproduce the picture intact at the same time as she more closely approximated its modest scale, shrinking from the zoomed in enlargement of the close-up to create a more faithful reproduction of an actual photograph than she habitually allows herself to make.²⁸ Now the wider atmospheric context is sketched in so that the presence of the original document is even more powerful and evident than before.

The initial photograph, it turned out, had been taken by a Dutch photojournalist, Ed van Kan, who had sold it in 1961 to United Press International.²⁹ It appeared in *Time* in the context of an article on the American response to the news of Lumumba's death and the Cold War fallout around it. The Cover of *Time* for February 1961 showed the Soviet delegate Valerian Zorin addressing the United Nations in the aftermath of Lumumba's assassination, an event that had precipitated protests across the world (*plate 11*). The Soviets, claimed *Time*, had jumped on the anti-colonial bandwagon to accuse the US of supporting the Belgians, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammerskjold, of being no more than an 'imperialist lackey' and 'accomplice and organizer of murder'. The picture on the cover showed Zorin laying out the Soviets'

demands for retribution against the perpetrators of the murder and the withdrawal of Belgian and UN troops from the Congo. The article chronicles the competing claims for Lumumba's succession, and the miserable scramble for power that ensued. But amongst the political analysis and the pictures of rioters and picketers from Cairo to Paris and Brussels, appeared the now famous photograph of Mme Lumumba, surrounded by small print and accompanied with the provocative caption:

Lumumba's Mourning Widow in Léopoldville

Gone were the Paris frocks.

The caption contains a stark juxtaposition between the 'mourning widow' in the Congo and the *Parisienne* attired accordingly. In the pages of *Time* Mme Lumumba's 'difference' appears encoded in black and white, not only through the technologies of print, but in the dramatic juxtaposition of her dark naked flesh against the crisp white clothing of her Congolese, male companions. The image isolates the widow, establishing a solitary and isolated position for her gesture, while the caption underlines its volitional character by invoking the image of her more habitual attire: the 'Paris frocks' by which she was more usually known in Europe.³⁰ Nakedness here is construed as a renunciation of the costume of French femininity.

Mourning is produced as an eschewal, a stripping away of the trappings of 'civilization' and metropolitan chic.

The accompanying article goes further in this direction than the caption: 'At the height of her husband's power, 28-year-old Pauline Lumumba wore diamonds and high heels and Paris frocks. Last week she bared her breasts in the Congo's traditional sign of mourning, and led a wailing procession of other bare-breasted women through the streets of Léopoldville', it records. For this commentator, the baring of breasts and eschewal of frocks, the collective wailing and processing in public, represents a deviation from the customary comportment of the figure. It is worthy of note. It must be explained and excused. But above all it is a manifestation of a culturally-specific and African expression of grief, explained here for the benefit of *Time's* international Anglophone readership.

A family portrait of the Lumumbas with their children, taken shortly before Patrice's death, provides an interesting contrast with the famous image of the bare-breasted widow (*plate 12*). Mme Lumumba is here shown as the epitome of the westernised wife surrounded by her neatly dressed offspring. Lumumba himself is characteristically dapper in well-cut suit and spectacles while the children seem to wear their Sunday best with utmost aplomb and ease. Typical of many family photographs from the 1950s, the group is carefully posed, their feet making a smooth diagonal across the well-clipped lawn.

Mme Lumumba takes up her demure position like a suburban matriarch, her sandaled feet, smoothed hair and feathered hat looking the picture of fifties respectability. The perfect wife, the fecund mother, the docile partner: this is what the picture gives off.

Why then did Mme Lumumba choose to appear publically in the manner of the *Time* photograph? The repeated assertion of her grief and the rituals of African modes of mourning may be one thing, providing a suitably comforting explanatory filter for the readers and perusers of *Time*. Recourse to indigenous ritual and a reversion to a 'native' authenticity is not in itself a controversial or challenging stance. In fact, the sight of Mme Lumumba in sarong and little else might have comforted some Western observers for whom the Paris frocks would have represented a thin and unconvincing veneer. For them, Mme Lumumba could be seen to have reverted to type. Beneath the dresses and pearls, it was felt, lurked a primitive and atavistic sexuality that was only temporarily and unconvincingly obscured.

The image of bare-breasted brown women *chez eux* was, in any case, still par for the course in the European imaging of Africa. What jarred in this photograph was not primarily the spectacle of Pauline's flesh, but its positioning alongside the crisp white safari suit and open necked shirt of her minders so that the trio appears anomalous and odd. Discordant too with a

primitive or pastoral disrobing are the nearby guns and suits of the European attendants and guards and the heated crowd of followers looking on from nearby. There is danger and tension in the scene. In this context the diminutive Mme Lumumba's nakedness has power. It undercuts the fragile consensus that surrounds her. It is spectacularly, even explosively, Other.

Dumas's insistent return to this distillation or figuration of difference gives us pause. Extracted from the context of magazine or book, enlarged and adapted in crayon or paint, Mme Lumumba's startling sartorial statement seems provocative and glaringly brave. It is tempting to subsume her pictorial mode of address into a history of Western painting in which the allegorical figuration of femininity is repeatedly and unflinchingly invoked through the abstraction and display of flesh.³¹ Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* is only the most obvious, immediate reference presaging 'The Widow' with a bare-breasted female figuration of rebellious and revolutionary vigour alongside armed men and unpredictable crowds. But bare breasts in this context are not particularly noteworthy; in fact, they constitute a standard European artistic signifier of a robust classical tradition underpinning even the proletarian fervour of this strapping and striding wench. Marie Benoist's earlier appropriation of a traditional pose for the portrayal of her so-called 'negresse' provides an example of the way that the framing of breasts in crisp classical drapes and cloth creates a

palliative framework in which even the dark skin tones of the sitter's body seem tamed and restrained by convention (*plate 13*).

Dumas's works are anything but; perhaps this is because already embedded in the source photograph is a tension and disturbing unease that is not easily abstracted or rendered either emblematic or allegorical (see *plate 10*). For one thing the aesthetic of the press photo – grainy, miniscule, carelessly composed and close up – denudes the figures of lofty or literary significance. Here, we are invited to view the picture of an actual, news-worthy event photographed in a recognizable place. It is the spectacle of the moment, not the underlying narrative or moralizing lesson, that confronts us. The nakedness of the principle protagonist feels real and provocative rather than didactic, distant or symbolic. There is something brutal and visceral being enacted here. The bare feet on the pavement seem to announce this. As does the casual presence of soldiers and guns, not to mention the uniforms and masculine parade that surrounds the small, grieving figure of the widow. Her downward glance, defensive placement of the arm across the midriff, and purposeful step appear self-contained and isolated, as if undertaken alone with volition and will. In the context of the street and the crowd, the bared chest and feet suggest an insubordinate act in which grief is overlaid with defiance and mourning comes laced with anger. Alone in her African attire

the widow seems to stride through the city, solitary but assured in her action, aware of the scandal that her appearance provokes. All eyes are upon her: heads turn, bodies veer towards her, our attention, like theirs, is fixed.

From its first appearance in *Time*, the notion of ‘mourning’ has mediated the image that Mme Lumumba presents. As we have seen, Dumas herself interpreted the figure’s form in this way. But the use of bare-breasted display (while perhaps indicating ritual grieving or pain) is regularly associated with expressions of anger or acts of female protest that go back a long way in African culture and still remains widespread across the continent.³² African women have frequently and famously demonstrated their rage by confronting their enemies stripped bare.³³ Strategic stripping was a particularly powerful tool in the context of anti-colonial struggle, and in 1929 women in Eastern Nigeria, for example, marched *en masse* against colonial authority and racialized Western notions of the female body.³⁴ In 1960, the year before Lumumba’s assassination, Julia Chikamoneka, the Zambian activist and liberation leader used the visit of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Ian McLeod, to Southern Rhodesia as an occasion to march naked alongside other women in protest against colonial rule and to call for immediate independence. In the view of Chikamoneka and her fellow strippers, to show nakedness was the highest form of anger and the only weapon

they had with which to highlight the suffering of their people. In the Congo, naked female protest has been widely used and understood, whether for political or personal reasons. In her memoir Andréa Blouin, the feminist and activist who served briefly in Lumumba's cabinet recounts the story of her mother's expression of rage at the nuns who abused her as a child. Confronting one of these creatures, Blouin's mother, she recounts, stripped off her camisole and physically attacked the nun to the startled amusement and awe of her daughter.³⁵

There is no doubt therefore that Pauline Lumumba understood the impact and potential effects of her action. She lived in a world in which varying costumes could be adopted and removed, strategically deployed and denounced, and she herself had views on the matter. It is thus safe to assume that she was neither simply reverting naively to 'authentic' attire in the company of her traditional sisters, nor merely expressing her private sorrow when she took, bare breasted, to the streets of Léopoldville in January 1961. That she would be photographed and recorded as such was beyond her control or concern.

The whole issue of dress for African women in Mme Lumumba's position was in any case fraught and contested. Though she came from a small village and was raised in a traditional home, her daily dress as Lumumba's wife was, as we have seen, conspicuously and fashionably European, in keeping with the *évoluée* context in which Lumumba wished herself to

be seen. The ruling male elites in the newly liberated Congo were fluent in French language and fashion and saw themselves as participants in a cosmopolitan cultural milieu that was not incompatible with their anti-colonial politics. Lumumba himself identified as an *evolué*, the word used at the time to designate an educated, African man who had taken on the language, clothing and manners of the colonizers.³⁶ Lumumba advocated, therefore, for girls' education and criticised arranged marriages, the custom of bride wealth and what he saw as outdated and obsolete traditional practices, instead enshrining the husband as the benevolent patriarchal centre of an enlightened nuclear family with an obedient but respected and well-schooled wife at its heart. He was a fierce critic of the ignorance in which Colonial schooling had kept women, and of the concomitant cultural separation of husbands and wives.³⁷ To be awarded the status of *evolué*, the aspirant had to be examined in his home by the authorities in order to prove that he was 'civilized' and worthy of the title. In this context his wife's behaviour reflected on him and needed to be carefully modelled and controlled. Pauline's relationship to this tyrannical regime was complicated and not without conflict. Her appearance was in particular the subject of marital tension and she recorded how Lumumba insisted that she hid herself in the bedroom until he had inspected her attire to ensure that she was suitably dressed to receive his friends.³⁸ Her inability to speak French was an

embarrassment to her husband and she rarely accompanied him on official functions or platforms. On the occasion of his inauguration and the delivery of his legendary speech in which he refused to accept the role of Léopold's lackey, she was absent, apparently, legend has it, 'because her hair was a mess'.³⁹

But Pauline Opanga Lumumba did not inhabit her required role without dissent. Shortly before Independence on 30 June 1960, Opango and some other wives of *evolué* men organised a protest against their husbands.⁴⁰ The women were concerned that the men would be tempted to marry better educated, more Europeanised women, able to take part in diplomatic events. Thus, they would be divorced or repudiated, as polygamy had been rejected in their circles. The wives argued that women who had fought for independence should be elevated and honoured irrespective of how they were regarded by European hierarchies and values. Pauline's relationship to Belgian customs and costume was, therefore, at best ambivalent, at worst hostile. She knew very well how to wear her 'Paris frocks' and high heels but she also chose when and why to remove them.

Mme Lumumba's self-performance in the funeral procession is thus overdetermined and complex to read. That she knew what it was to mobilise traditional somatic and sartorial signifiers in order to make a statement is undeniable, even if she was unable to read or write in French. Interpreting her act

respectfully as a gesture of mourning or patronizingly as an abdication of a civilized veneer provides only a limited view. Another possibility is that Mme Lumumba may have been staging her own (and her fellow countrywomen's) protest both at the Belgian occupiers and at the predicament in which their husbands' had placed them. Not only had they been rendered inferior by the Colonial establishment, but their very own compatriots had found them wanting in 'civilization' and culture. Now that Lumumba was no longer there to inspect her costume, look over her hair-style and sanction her imported appearance, Pauline Opanga was free to undertake the role of the grieving African widow bare foot, bare headed and bare breasted. It is questionable whether her husband would have approved. For her gesture potentially reads as an act of protest, not only against her husband's assassins and their many high placed international accomplices, but against the invidious position in which she, as African wife, had been placed.

When Christine Rochefort and Simone de Beauvoir discussed this extraordinary photograph at the time of its first publication, they ascribed it with a power that they feared the novel could never attain. Distilled in the juxtaposition of the semi-naked widow and her minders, amongst the soldiers and spectators turned towards them, was a powerful iconic message that they felt words were inadequate to describe. Dumas's response to the photograph has been to rework it three times,

alternately zooming in on the widow and her minders and spreading out to accommodate the crowd. In the earliest iteration, it was the stoicism and fortitude of individual black women that the work seemed to declare and proclaim (see *plate 6*). In the last it was the wider context of setting and crowd that was sketched in like an impressionist cityscape in which the main trio is seen, as if a matter of fact, to process and proceed (see *plate 5*). There is neither the squashed-in concentration nor atmospheric expansiveness in the second (see *plate 2*). Instead, an intense drama seems to be played out amongst the threesome against a sketchy and indeterminate crowd. We can barely identify the liquified white man who flanks our three figures on the left. Alongside him a man's face has become a watery mask. The spectacled chap behind Mme Lumumba appears as little but a hazy blur. And the faceless figure on the right is a smudge and an accent in paint rather than an individual who draws us away. All attention is focussed on the central threesome in whose touching bodies and compact presence a tension and anxiety unfolds.

Much of this is to do with a staging of race and gender – a split that is posited at the heart of this painting in the way that the colour-coated homogeneity of *The Teacher (Sub A)* just could not and would not allow. Let us look at the issue of complexion. Where intensified chromatics in *The Teacher (Sub A)* made a mockery of the shared attribute of 'whiteness',

opening up the component pigments of flesh-tones to reveal the colours that go into the designated category 'white', the depleted palette and contrasting tonality of *The Widow* places difference at the heart of the image (see *plate 2*). It reads as an exercise in successive shades of blackness and whiteness despite the odd bits of colour washed in.

Pauline's head and neck are placed in dark and deliberate shadow and her arms and upper body are drawn in a heavy black series of strokes so that her 'blackness' is literalized and appears fixed definitively and firmly on her body. In contrast, her accompanying minders in their Western attire, seem pale and light-skinned in comparison, at least as far as heads and upper limbs are concerned. Even the bare legs of the man on the left seem to echo the black silhouette of his companion's trousers rather than register the patina or texture of skin. Flanking the figure of the dark-skinned Widow, therefore, are a pair of whitened men with Congolese features, whose costume and complexion seem to separate them from her provocative mode of address. The effect of the painting, whether intentional or not, is to point to a gendered split that is played out at the level of race. Perhaps this serves inadvertently to highlight the disjunction between the way that many men and women lived out the process and effects of anti- and decolonization. For while the *evolué* elites negotiated their politics of liberation in French and in open necked shirts and lounge suits, many of their wives

struck an uneasy balance between aspirant European identification and an attachment to local customs and rituals. By homing in on the group and taking liberties with the facts of the photograph, Dumas unearths a latent meaning that it both registers but does not declare. Of course, the complex dynamic of men and women, clothes and flesh, dark and light, was already encapsulated in the newspaper image but in the process of transcription and repetition Dumas heightens and enhances a difference that she discerns to be embedded at its core. In this context, the actual pale figures of Colonial officials and soldiers are irrelevant, reduced to a liquefied caricature on the left or excluded and excised from the scene. Instead it is an internal drama that the performance of the wWidow plays out.

Faced with an actual photograph, one as loaded and powerful as our source image, what is left for the painter to do? It is not as if she is retelling her own story through the guise of the African woman. When faced with the photo of her own girlhood she troubled the chromatics of race through unfixing the generic and stilted uniformity of the classroom. But when encountering a powerful document of history, not once or twice but three times, she could neither reproduce it unscathed nor fail to trouble its habitual underpinnings. It is true that the photograph of Pauline Lumumba, unlike that of the generic school class, is overwhelmingly powerful and poignant. So riveting was it to its earliest viewers that it momentarily silenced

the writer Christine Rochefort and made her doubt the effectiveness of fiction. This may be true at times for the painter too who must find her way amongst the plethora of imagery that surrounds us in order to question what it is that paint does. At the least, it seizes and sifts from the maelstrom, rendering visible what was latent from view and re-forming the known and the felt through estranging and re-making the found.

Notes

This essay was originally conceived as part of the series ‘Selves and Strangers: Photographic/Filmic Encounters in, of and from Southern Africa’ that I delivered as the Slade Lectures at the University of Oxford in 2014. It was only completed afterwards and has had a life as an independent lecture delivered in various locations around the world, from London to Sydney to Philadelphia. The discussions it engendered have been formative and I am grateful to all my interlocutors for their insights and critiques but most especially to Gabriella Nugent who helped me with research assistance during its gestation. Marlene Dumas has been extraordinarily generous with her time and attention to the many questions I posed in the process of writing this article. Thanks too to the Leverhulme Foundation whose generous support enabled me to spend time thinking and writing the Slade Lectures as well as related publications.

¹ Alternatively, the British artist Steve McQueen’s project of documenting the children in Year 3 across London, 2019, takes on the uniformity of the format of school photography in order to demonstrate the diversity of its sitters/citizens. Here the very formality, framing and conventionality of the genre, subsumes the kids into a shared identity (they are all Londoners,

children and full of the expectations of youth) despite their different appearances and apparently diverse cultural origins. I was struck by this contrast to the South African Apartheid-era group portraits (with their homogeneity and racialized uniformity) as they had just appeared all over London, from Tate Britain to billboards on the Underground, during the time that I was revising this article for publication. See

<https://www.artangel.org.uk/year-3-project/>, accessed 29 November 2019.

² Sub A was the first year of primary school in the South African system. Children started school in the year that they turned six. For Dumas this was in August 1959, for me in January 1962.

³ For a discussion of race and black and white photography, see Richard Dyer, *White*, London and New York, 1997, 82-144.

⁴ Christian National Education was the official policy of the Nationalist Party that came to power in South Africa in 1948. It marshalled Calvinist theology to the political ideology of white suprematism, endorsed by law and custom in Apartheid South Africa, and was reflected in the differentiated compulsory school curriculum that sought to naturalise and reproduce racialized hierarchies and difference. Initially meant to bolster the status of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and national language, and the Dutch Reformed Church as the official religious institution of the nation, it spread to most state supported ‘white’ schools despite robust criticism from Anglophone pedagogues and politicians. Private schools were exempt, including Jewish day schools, but the overarching segregationist and racialized hierarchies prevailed. For a collection of related documents and debates, see <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/christian-national-education>, accessed 29 April 2019.

⁵ Dumas herself talks of the difference between ‘taking’ a photograph and ‘making’ a painting. ‘You can’t TAKE a painting – you MAKE a painting’, she declares; see Marlene Dumas, ‘The Private Versus the Public’, in *Marlene Dumas: Miss Interpreted*, Eindhoven, 1992, 43. Richard Shiff plays

with these oppositional practices in his essay 'Less Dead', in Cornelia Butler, *Marlene Dumas: Measuring Your Own Grave*, Los Angeles, 2008, 144-153.

⁶ Dumas uses the vocabulary of photography to talk of her compositional strategies, in particular in relation to 'zooming in' and zooming' out; see 'A Conversation Between Marlene Dumas and Theodora Vischer', in *Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden*, London, 2014, 170.

⁷ See *Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden*, 165-169.

⁸ Dumas explains the sequence of events in *Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden*, 169.

⁹ *Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden*, 169.

¹⁰ Email from artist to author, 24 August 2015. The genesis of the painting was also the subject of a long unpublished interview with Dumas conducted by the author in London in May 2015.

¹¹ Sandy Lesberg, *Assassination in Our Time*, London, 1976, 106-121. The image of Pauline Lumumba appears on page 121.

¹² Dumas discusses it in these terms in *Marlene Dumas: The Image as Burden*, 169.

¹³ Dumas talks of her early incursions into European literature when she arrived at art school in Cape Town and was exposed, for the first time, to a culture beyond that of her Afrikaner upbringing; interview with author, London, May 2015.

¹⁴ As Dumas recounted to the author: '[...] I would go back to South Africa, and I would go through my books and then I found this book of Simone de Beauvoir from my art school days, and there I see I had underlined where Simone de Beauvoir talks about that picture – and she says how can one novel compete with a picture like that'; interview with author, London, May 2015.

¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, London, 1968, 596.

¹⁶ For the effect of the prohibition of 'Africa' on the South African artist's imagination during the Apartheid years, see William Kentridge, 'Painting

Maps', in Tamar Garb, ed., *Vivienne Koorland: Reisemalheurs (Travel Woes)*, London, 2007, 23-28.

¹⁷ Dumas continues to speculate on the relationship between painting and photography. Eschewing the direct copy or transcription, she nevertheless understands that all visual imagination in our time is underpinned by photographic awareness. Whether an actual source for a painting can be traced to an individual image or not, it remains informed by the protocols of posing and positioning that the frontal orientation of the photograph has produced. But painting needs to transform and rework the image source, not by obeying its conventions but by subjecting them to the rules of modern painting – its flatness, its gestural plenitude, its animated surface and its chromatic freedoms. Gleaned in interview with the artist, London, May 2015.

¹⁸ Dumas described how documentary photography and Goldblatt in particular stood for her as the ultimate socially-engaged practice at the time; interview with author, London, May 2015. See also David Goldblatt and Nadine Gordimer, *On the Mines*, Cape Town, 1973.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of the role of documentary photography in the depiction of daily life and the struggle against Apartheid, see Okwui Enwezor and Rory Bester, *Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life*, Munich, 2013. See also: Darren Newbury, *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa*, Pretoria, 2009; and Patricia Hayes 'Power, Secrecy, Proximity: Visual Emergency. Fusion and Fragmentation in South African Photography of the 1980s', *Camera Austria*, 100, 2007, 18-22.

²⁰ For a vivid discussion of the context of 1970s art school culture in Cape Town and the use of photographs in conceptually-driven painting practices, see Hayden Proud, 'Experiments Under Constraint: "Random Collisions of Energy" in South African Art of the 1970s and 1980s', in Mario Pissarra, ed., *Visual Century: South African Art in Context*, vol. 3, Johannesburg, 1973-1992, 128-155.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of the visual culture that surrounded the event, see John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian*, New York, 2007, 88. See also Juliet Wilson-Bareau, *Manet: The Execution of Maximilian*, London, 1992, 35-68.

²² For a reading of the work in relation to allegories of femininity in Western painting, in particular Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), see Leora Maltz-Leca, 'Spectres of the Original and the Liberties of Repetition', *African Arts*, 46: 4, Winter 2013, 32-45.

²³ See 'The Making of Marlene Dumas's "The Widow"', *New York Times Style Magazine*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/20/t-magazine/the-making-of-marlene-dumas-the-widow.html>, accessed 22 April 2019.

²⁴ See *Assassination in Our Time*, 120-121.

²⁵ For a lengthy contemporary description of Mme Lumumba's attempts to have her husband's body returned, see 'Mourning March for Congo Ex-Premier', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 February 1961; Reprinted in *Marlene Dumas: Image as Burden*, 165.

²⁶ See Philippe Piroette, *Mwana Kitoko (Beautiful White Man)*, 2001, reprinted in Peter Ruyffelaere, ed., *On&By Luc Tuymans*, London, 2013, 199-214. For the joint exhibition, see *Marlene Dumas - Luc Tuymans, TWICE*, Antwerp, 2013.

²⁷ Lumumba is thought to have died on 17 January 1961. See 'Foreign News', *Time*, 24 February 1961, 18-22. The cover of this issue showed an image of the United Nations with 'Soviet Delegate Valerian Zorin' pictured and the banner 'The Russian Offensive against the U.N. & U.S.', indicating where the Russians were apportioning blame. This is explained on page 18 of the article. The photograph of Mme Lumumba 'in mourning' appears on page 24.

²⁸ For the sequence of events in the discovery of the *Time* image, I am grateful to an email from Dumas, 24 August 2015.

²⁹ See Marlene Dumas, Andrea Büttner and Jennifer Higgie, 'To Show or Not to Show', *Tate Etc.*, Spring 2015, 60.

³⁰ 'The Congo – Death of Lumumba and After', *Time*, 24 February 1961, 21.

³¹ For a fascinating reading of *Three Women and I* in this vein, see Maltz-Leca, 'Spectres of the Original and the Liberties of Repetition'.

³² For a discussion of the feminist context of the practice, see Maryam Kazeem, *Bodies That Matter: The African History of Naked Protest, FEMEN Aside*, <http://www.okayafrika.com/news/naked-protest-bodies-that-matter-femen-african-history/>, accessed 23 August 2015. I am grateful to Immy Mali for sharing with me anecdotes about her aunt's use of 'stripping' as an expression of anger, for example with a co-wife. Among the Ateso of Eastern Uganda, according to Mali, older women routinely use undressing to express offence; email to the author, 13 August 2015. For an example of Soroti women protesting through stripping against the appropriation of land, see <https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/soroti-women-undress-over-university-land-dispute-1>, accessed 22 April 2019. This form of protest has been recently rekindled in both South Africa and the US where successive groups of black women have rebelled against failures in service delivery or against the random killing of young black women by stripping off their clothing in public; see Maltz-Leca, 'Spectres of the Original and the Liberties of Repetition', 32. See also Annie Coombes, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, London and Durham, 2003, 245.

³³ The influential Congolese activist who served in Lumumba's government, Andrée Blouin describes an incident from her childhood in which her outraged mother, from whom she had been taken at the age of three and placed in an orphanage for mixed race girls, confronts one of the nuns who had abused and neglected her daughter by stripping off her camisole and, bare-chested, physically attacking and beating the woman. See Andrée

Blouin, *My Country Africa, Autobiography of the Black Passionara*, Westport, 1983, 38.

³⁴ See Kathleen M. Fallon and Julie Moreau, 'Revisiting Repertoire Transition: Women's Nakedness as Potent Protests in Nigeria and Kenya', *Mobilization*, 21: 3, Spring 2016, 323-340.

³⁵ See Blouin, *My Country Africa*, 38.

³⁶ The Belgians in the Congo in the 1950s strictly controlled and monitored the award of this title, and offered an examination called the 'Immatriculation' which aspiring *evoluées* had to pass; see Karen Bouwer, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo: The Legacy of Patrice Lumumba*, New York, 2019, 14-15.

³⁷ Bouwer, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo*, 21.

³⁸ As discussed by Jean Omasombo and Benoît Verhaegen, quoted in Bouwer, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo*, 59.

³⁹ Bouwer, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo*, 60.

⁴⁰ Bouwer, *Gender and Decolonization in the Congo*, 68.