

The photo is creased, as it remains it appears faded and printed a midst, or rather with a common 60's exposure. Kodachrome black printed as a red, burgundy, orange, cedar and maroon. As those creases present on the photographs surface tarnish, pigment is lost, leaving an orange haze as the pigment bleeds inward, dividing your body from their hands, from a likeness and difference simultaneously. A part of you away from you, away from them.

All hands are raised, holding onto Babycham glasses, perhaps it is champagne, perhaps prosecco, most likely a cheaper South African alternative, and perhaps I'm hoping it is bootlegged or stolen. It is in such menial attachments, perhaps we overlook the continuance and afterlives of economies that birthed you and I and the countries we inhabit(ed).

Everything but the lighting is serene, as a both a purple and green glare illuminate and shade the background.


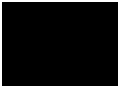
Their faces smile knowingly at the camera with both an unease and knowingness absent in your face, you look away. You don't smile, fully, whilst the edges of your mouth rises a little like that of a regency era China doll, whilst your eyelids slope downwards and a gaze away, a gaze glazed and fixed upon an elsewhere. You are uneasy and in love. The mise-en-scene is where others would situate you, and accord this as your environment where you perform best, you dance and sing a violently

electric spectacle. They fail to register, to remember to endow you with the same level of vulnerability. Those who look your way are both captured and enraptured by the chorus you sing. This is a night with girlfriends, black and brown sisters who with you, share so little and yet so much.

I read the notes, the citation if you will, this a portrait taken by a lover, of a partner and her friends; a portrait of a sister, a brother an auntie and elder.

Foregrounded amidst the foundation of brown skin, you appear anachronistic, with a blonde bouffant - it's coiffure placing it somewhere in a time beyond comprehension. There are two heads which look in the apertures direction, they are partially obscured and it would be most likely they are sounding their grievances in a manner just to be almost vaguely audible. Their disdain registers through decades, and I'm acutely aware of the sensation, I feel it in your presence - the uneasiness in what others will call your aloofness. I know it intimately. This, like other objects you so strongly persevered to keep documents a life preserved against their will, you later will recall this as a happy moment in time. A period that despite such commentary allude to antagonisms, testify to the hostile environment in which you resided, and later an entire community and borough de-invested and depopulated by industry and the state. Perhaps in these

interstices of intimacy, you narrate what has survived the slaughters, sweet seeds struggling to rise in precarity - repetitions, climbing and expanding, free.

There are two photos before me, of a babydoll. I watch a photo of   with a doll tellingly sharing your namesake. As objects at Christmas pile around her, her mother and father endowing upon her gross excesses; amongst a catalogue of gold and ornate papers, there is the babydoll, Kewpie. They live in a small 2 room flat as they work in a nearby tuberculosis sanatorium. Tuberculosis killed her uncle, and is thought to have killed her grandad. A disease that spread particularly like wildfire amidst and in the aftermath of famine. Between the two of you such records, allude to a fragility and resiliency that are as equally devastating when mentioned with what preceded both the migrations that made your bodies possible. Her brown skin deepens and folds upon the joints of her small body and frame, her skin smothers itself leaving the small white lines that seemed disconnected hidden from viewership. There are no presents from the people absent in this photo collection. I say this, to say in a polite manner - Which is to perhaps explain the over-abundance, and why it, seems to be incommensurate with narratives we tell or are told about ourselves - publicly. It is just three bodies warped into a static reticulation, where potentialities gather between creases, folds, cuts and tears in

surfaces. And all else anyone sees is a baby and doll.

I think of the Two of you, like a babydoll. reflections of my past and future.

I have felt so lonely, and felt so enamoured in your reluctant gazes, as our eyes hesitate to meet across one, two, three generations, two sheets of paper, coated, and printed. We will never meet, but I write this to tell you, that you have been both a sister, a father, a mother and a daughter, and beloved to me.

I remember what [REDACTED] relates in a sleepless night as he relays a terror, in that he is recaptured by a narrative where his mother traces the direct lineage of his conception and subsequent sexual interest in brown men to a brown babydoll given to her by Irish missionaries as they softly implicate young girls into the net of empire's expansion. He relates the tension between them, and her penchant and emotional disregard towards brown men, a disregard towards his father - him . It's a story familiar, nameless that folds out again waves, I wonder how long one can hold such pain, dreaming of how to cradle a brother long succumbed to eternal sleep, and then again terror jolts me, that such a warp is happening as we speak. Perhaps, I wonder at what point such intimacies dissipate from the footprints we trace, knowing that such narratives collapse our steps together, they shadow material realities of our lives, somewhere sticky like quicksand or mud, braiding us intimately inwards towards imperialism

 despite our attempts towards flight.

I look again in your direction, The wall perhaps is damp, what should be white is obscured by a curtain, it is in reality more like a periwinkle blue, and spattered with a brown and black speckling; like an egg with freckles. The brocade suggests it was produced by Laura Ashley in the 80's, but this and the 60's, and thus this paper was produced and printed in the 40's. It is a time for celebration and you barely register in the margins.

It reminds me of a dress worn by my mother in the 1980's, and I think critically of what is overlooked in these moments, who or what is seen, there is an electric sheen of what appears like a brick over a hand. A reflection of cheap nickel watch or bracelet. Yet, I know that between these photos Lancashire, India and South Africa are all intricately linked - in ways unspoken.

I think you are sat on his knee, and you are looking away. You cut hair, and as I contemplate how to shift in modalities of gendered labour, racialised labour, I think of the cuts and the trepidation of not being welcomed, again.

I want to say you lead a way, but I'm forced to remember you were a almost forgotten community elder.

In moments more serene, You are with a friend, in nature, against a pastoral backdrop of pine and blue terpenoid greens and all I can focus

upon are the faint repeats of roses. They pleat an otherwise stark background to an under recognised beauty - an unrecognised beauty, I think of how the light plays upon the two of you, you pose like the Indic dancing girl; a residual knowledge which resides in the body - or - otherwise found in the ground. How is it that an object of bronze continues to reflect time, after time.

I think of you, I think of the bronze statuette and the last gift my grandad bought me. For my fifth birthday what he presented was a dark-skinned and haired barbie , she possessed velcro hair; I think of how such a gift dances in my memory. you could sever her hair, by her roots, and under pressure the two severed parts would re-attach, it seldom worked, but in theory she would return to her previous state. I cannot escape the thought you and this dancing memory present to me, i think of these memories of distant cousins and aunties - they shimmer like mirages until they cede into histories, and vanish between a visual noise of black and blue into a dust of nothing. I remember these small moments of sadness to try and think of their joy, or their anger, and disturbance. I wonder what you would make of my musings of you, as a statuette, a doll, a friend, or a reflection of self and how would you usher me in regards to these feelings I can't escape? By what whisper or whim, would you imply, for me to fold into myself, to fall into another's arms, or simply to collapse. Would you

furtively remind me to take flight and depart? or to stay, to follow your waves?

Perhaps it is here, in the creases of that faded Kodachrome black - that we surpass some uncertain demise and find futures within such ruptures, the tender tendrils of sweet peas, where my fingers and your eyes meet, where my vision blurs and there - a line that connects us, an origin, a continent, a labour forgotten, a flitting hand and jutting wrist, flowers glistening, kissed, unknowingly pollinating anew; we are together and alone in a synchronicity where we fall into each other like dandelions, weeds, a singular unit, floating freely. I say this all to acknowledge, that the certainty I crave, and the security I long for are unaccomplished until particular economies end. Somewhere, there are continuous projects that our lives, documented or otherwise will testify to that what is unfathomable. Like that which archives imagine, with a terror and sexual excess - perhaps what you may present is a veil that may both shimmer and obscure like wild grasses in the wind. Yielding that which is necessary, for survival, for that time, and I remember. We are one, despite time, crystalline and bliss-like, as bodies or earth; we appear as an eco-system together as a maroon mass.