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Between an Empty Camera and Bare White Feet: Racial Complexity in the Photographic Archive of Ricardo Rangel

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ABSTRACT

Amplified by a feedback loop of nationalist memorialization and international reception, the dominant narrative on Ricardo Rangel's work reduces the anti-colonial purchase of his images to a simple disclosure of binarized injustice. By reading lesser-known images alongside his more canonical production, I argue that his wider archive in fact shows a graduated engagement with the racial complexities of late-colonial Mozambique and provides a key source of material for a post-colonial analysis of its capital, Lourenço Marques. To wit, Rangel's images permit both a nuanced reflection on his own intermedial status and a critique of colonialism that goes beyond the sheer fact of native exploitation and marginalization.

RESUMO

Amplificada por um circuito de retorno envolvendo a comemoração nacionalista e a receção internacional, a narrativa dominante sobre a obra de Ricardo Rangel tende a reduzir o anticolonialismo das suas imagens a uma simples revelação de injustiça binarizada. Ao abordar imagens menos conhecidas ao lado da sua produção mais canónica, defende-se aqui que o seu arquivo demonstra antes um engajamento matizado com a complexidade racial presente no Moçambique tardo-colonial e constitui uma fonte muito importante para uma análise pós-colonial da sua capital, Lourenço Marques. As imagens de Rangel permitem uma reflexão sutil sobre a situação intermediária do próprio fotógrafo e uma crítica ao colonialismo que vai além do simples facto da população local ter sido explorada e marginalizada.

KEYWORDS

Ricardo Rangel; Mozambican photography; late-colonial Lourenço Marques; postcolonialism; photography theory

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Ricardo Rangel; fotografia moçambicana; Lourenço Marques tardo-colonial; pós-colonialismo; teoria da fotografia

Shot, Negative, Print, Archive

“This was yet another photograph to denounce the social injustice here, that thing everyone knew about but which nobody mentioned, a thing that can only be described

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as COLONIALISM!” So thunders Ricardo Rangel in *Glowing Iron*, a documentary made shortly before the Mozambican photojournalist’s death in 2009. Rangel states the above on his return to the portside scene of an image, taken in 1968 and showing two dockers, that he would later name *Amarras* (translatable as *moorings* or *tethers*).¹ Sent to cover the goodwill visit of an American warship, Rangel instead produced the opposite of a stock propaganda shot, a blunt exposure that was no accident or outlier in his archive (a representativeness underlined by his adverbial phrase “yet another”). “Amarras,” as here by Rangel himself, is generally held to epitomize his oeuvre and overriding concerns, a status that explains its inclusion in the monographs that have made the lensman’s name abroad, such as *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique* (1994), which cemented his standing as the doyen of photography in this southeast African country, and *Ricardo Rangel: L’Anima del Mozambico* (2001), whose title bespeaks the importance of his work to postcolonial constructions of this nation’s memory and identity.²

Before imparting his interpretation of *Amarras* Rangel describes how, as the guest vessel put in at the Cais do Gorjão—the docks of Mozambique’s capital then known as Lourenço Marques, now called Maputo—he noticed two men waiting nearby. Turning away from the “news” he had been instructed to record, he opted in lieu to photograph this ostensibly unremarkable duo. The resulting full-shot arranges the men against the expanse of water, which separates the darker strips of wharf and far bank just as the figures themselves, though side-by-side, are equally polarized. One man is white, apparently in charge, his potbelly protruding from beneath a slouchy t-shirt as he cranes forward to track the ship. The other is black, scrawny-framed, and tatterdemalion, a shapeless hat pulled down so low its brim obscures his eyes, as if his own view of proceedings were unnecessary or irrelevant. His task, it seems, is simply to bear a heavy rope, which winds constrictively around him. The unencumbered boss, meanwhile, clutches a section of moorings as if holding a leash, needlessly from a practical point of view, as it has already been secured to the bollard, tethering his black skivvy in the process (and making him a literal version of the “negros tied to quaysides” in poet Noéma de Sousa’s roughly contemporaneous “Poema de João.”)³ To one figure, command; to the other, drudgery.

Through its juxtaposition of the two men and the dockside infrastructure, all visually linked by the hawser, Rangel’s image invites us to consider the black worker, both burdened and restrained, as closer in rank to implement than overseer, more facility than agent. He stands here as an example of Diana Fuss’s gloss of the Fanonian black subject under colonialism: excluded even from otherness, neither an “I” nor a “Not-I,” but simply reduced to “crushing objecthood.”⁴ While any subsequent image of the approaching American committee lies forgotten in the archives of the press, this photograph taken in the wings of a political set-piece circulates today as a metaphor for an entire historical experience: the inequity of colonial rule pictured as a split between

¹Ricardo Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique* (Paris: Findakly, 1994), 61.

²Ricardo Rangel: *L’Anima del Mozambico*, ed. by Sarenco (Milano: Prearo Editore, 2001).

³Rangel’s photographs dialogue intimately with the Mozambican poetry of his time, which share his social concerns, as my cross-references here will testify; Noémia de Sousa, “Poema de João,” in *Nunca Mais é Sábado: Antologia de Poesia Moçambicana*, ed. by Nelson Saúte (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2004), 176–89 (177; my translation).

⁴Diana Fuss, “Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification,” in *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 3, ed. by Diana Brydon (London: Routledge, 2000), 1104.

an adventitious class of usurpers and a subaltern echelon of exploited natives. Where a colonialist memoir could blandly pronounce the Cais do Gorjão the most important twentieth-century infrastructural development in Lourenço Marques,⁵ Rangel's image portrays it instead as an exemplary site of everyday divisions of race and class, the unjust reality of colonial "progress" expressed by the kinesic match yet power imbalance between two otherwise undistinguished *laurentinos* (as the inhabitants of Lourenço Marques were known).

While this image indeed typifies an important portion of Rangel's work, to ascribe the characteristics of *Amarras* to the entirety of his oeuvre pigeonholes his images as eristic anti-colonial interventions, simple visual brickbats giving scant heed to the subtler divisions of race and class that occupy current evaluations of Mozambique's past.⁶ This idea of Rangel's work as neatly split portraits of exploiter vs. exploited is an anamorphic vision strengthened by a feedback loop of nationalist memorialization, international receptivity and the limited selection of the photographer's images that circulates abroad and which, consequently, has received sustained commentary. An engagement with Rangel's own ambiguous position, downplayed in nationalist constructions, and his broader archive, much of which is inaccessible outside Mozambique, shows a much more complex picture, one that—as we see in the photographer's testimony in *Glowing Iron*—is not necessarily to be found in his best-known work and which he himself did not always make clear to an audience at home or abroad. Rangel's close friend and collaborator, the poet José Craveirinha describes Rangel's work as showing the "verso e inverso" of colonial Mozambique, riffing on the Portuguese terms for recto/verso, but using the word for "inverse," stressing oppositionality. Yet what Rangel's overall production displays is how, if there was a moral chiaroscuro to colonialism, the "broad class of those who always have less"⁷ actually presented a series of greyscale nuances that were far from insignificant. In a series of unfamiliar or unknown images that I will analyse here, we see Rangel go beyond the brute injustice of the colonial scene to a modulated and seemingly self-aware critique of inequality in its many guises.

At present Rangel's archive exists trichotomically, though the "same" image can be found on occasion in all three categories: halftone press photographs, fine-art prints (either in galleries or monographs), and digitalized negatives (which may or may not have once been printed). As Drew Thompson describes, the first group of photographs was subject to the vagaries of editorial line and demands for reportorial coherence, often being cropped and re-purposed, and always subject to the attentions of the Portuguese government censors.⁸ Any reading of maker intention into the selection of Rangel's work used in the press is complicated in his case by the limits placed by an authoritarian colonial regime upon him, his colleagues, and the organs for which they

⁵Alexandre Lobato, *Quatro estudos e uma evocação para a história de Lourenço Marques* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1961), 150.

⁶See for example Cláudia Castelo, Omar Ribeiro, Sebastião Nascimento, and Teresa da Cruz e Silva "Tardo-Colonialismo e Produção de Alteridades," in *Os outros da colonização: Ensaio sobre o colonialismo tardio em Moçambique*, ed. by Cláudia Castelo, Omar Ribeiro, Sebastião Nascimento, and Teresa da Cruz e Silva (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2012), 19–24.

⁷José Craveirinha, "Carta para o Ricardo sobre as suas fotografias," in *Ricardo Rangel: Homenagem de amigos*, ed. by Fernando Couto (Maputo: Ndijira, 2008), 21 (my translation).

⁸Drew Thompson, "A iconicidade de Ricardo Rangel e a escrita da história de Moçambique," in *Ricardo Rangel: Insubmisso e generoso*, ed. by Nelson Saúte (Maputo: Marimbique, 2014), 57.

worked. Our knowledge of what Rangel published and in which publications is limited and discontinuous. Given the fragile state of Mozambique's press archives, an inventory of Rangel's images in newspapers and magazines is a task requiring urgent attention.⁹ Nevertheless, to take Rangel's work for the *Tempo* newsmagazine as an indicative sample, images such as *O homem matrícula*¹⁰ [Licence-Plate Man], which is later described in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique* as showing a porter "with his 'identity card' on his back,"¹¹ and *LM-70*,¹² which juxtaposes thatched huts with the concrete skyline of Lourenço Marques, subtly but clearly show colonial antitheses, capturing aspects of the exploitation and exclusion of the black majority and so fit the established narrative for his work.

Despite the limitations of censorship, Rangel had already become a prominent local cultural figure by the end of colonial rule, participating in group exhibitions and enjoying his first major gallery retrospective in 1969.¹³ Yet it was really only after 1992—the end of civil war in post-colonial Mozambique—that his legend was truly worked up at home, in a process that Thompson describes as tantamount to establishing a Rangel "brand" to buttress nationalist narratives,¹⁴ in the process of which he became "a legend, almost a myth in the history of Mozambican photography."¹⁵ Concomitantly, following this milestone year select images began to circulate more widely, culminating in the mid-1990s and early 2000s—from the standpoint of the Western art market—with Rangel's being included in group exhibitions of African photography in major galleries in Europe and the USA.¹⁶ These images project a schematic idea of his themes, often "masking the range and complexity of Rangel's enormous oeuvre."¹⁷ The terms of this projection abroad generate a conflict between Rangel as wilful anti-Salazarist contrarian, an "eternal young rebel,"¹⁸ and his posthumously consolidated role as a "national treasure," or cultural icon for the independent nation. The photographer's work now appears in venues and publications far beyond the sphere of the ordinary Mozambicans he depicted, a situation that

⁹Thompson has made the greatest advance in this respect with his article "A iconicidade."

¹⁰Ricardo Rangel, "Homem-Matrícula," *Tempo*, February 23, 1971, 27.

¹¹Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 45 (my translation)

¹²Ricardo Rangel, "LM1970," *Tempo*, October 4, 1970, 58–59.

¹³See the documentary *Sem flash: Homenagem a Ricardo Rangel* (dir. Licínio de Azevedo, 2012) for detailed testimonies on Rangel's rise to national and international prominence.

¹⁴Thompson, "A iconicidade," 52.

¹⁵Raúl Calane da Silva, "Corpo e alma das pessoas: do teatro de sombras ao 'clíc' quase mágico: Ricardo Rangel conta a história do seu foto-jornalismo feito arte," in *Outras plasticidades: Reinata, Ricardo Rangel, Matias Ntundo, Valingue, Ídasse, Muando, Ndlozy*, ed. by Maria Armandina Maia (Lisbon: Instituto Camões, 1999), 71 (my translation).

¹⁶Two prominent examples are: *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994*, ed. by Okwui Enwezor (Munich: Prestel, 2001), which featured two pictures by Rangel, a portrait of the doorman at Beira's Moulin Rouge Cabaret dressed up as a renaissance nobleman (184) and a shot of a smartly dressed white setter disembarking in Mozambique in 1964 (187); Simon Njami, *A Useful Dream: African Photography 1960–2010* (Milan: Silvana, 2010), which featured images only from a colonial-era project on the Rua Araújo, Lourenço Marques's entertainment district, printed, signed and captioned like fine art prints, with Cartier-Bresson style black borders. It is elucidative to compare this reduced set (37–41) to Rangel's extended selection in *Pão nosso de cada noite* [Our Nightly Bread] (Maputo: Marimbiq, 2004). The full suite of images lays bare the racist, gendered logic of colonialism yet also shows a qualified celebration of the era and a certain fellow-feeling to some of the white subjects depicted, thus exemplifying the nuance I argue for here, perhaps in response to the simplifications involved in Rangel's reception abroad.

¹⁷Bronwyn Law-Viljoen, "Ricardo Rangel: Introduction," 2013, www.aperture.org (accessed December 1, 2018).

¹⁸Dália Cabrita Mateus and Álvaro Mateus, *Nacionalistas de Moçambique: Da luta armada à independência* (Alfragide: Texto, 2010), 53 (my translation).

restages the power relations obtaining between subject and object in Rangel's work and reflects his ambiguous positioning between participant and observer, issues I discuss below. In any case, the process of enshrining Rangel nationally and promoting him internationally belies the nuance found in Rangel's archive through its selectiveness and general ecnesia—the condition where older events are remembered while more recent developments are forgotten—which enshrine a relatively small repertoire of his colonial work as the epitome of his documentary concerns.¹⁹

The majority of Rangel's output can be found today in his digitalized archive, an engagement with which presents knotty hermeneutic problems for the aspiring scholar. Featuring more than 20,000 scanned images, this collection incompletely and unevenly encompasses production from across the photographer's career, which stretched from the late 1950s until the 2000s.²⁰ The diversity of images suggest Rangel was little constrained to shoot to order as an illustrator of others' news stories. While often no "authorized" print exists (whether enlarged by Rangel, completed under his supervision, or ordered to be made sight unseen during his lifetime), I argue that, given Rangel's "straight" photojournalistic aims and approach, the negative in his case is frequently a complete enough unit to read off aspects of situation, design, and intention. This is especially the case when, as here, we take the negatives as part of a wider, deeper corpus in which inclinations and tendencies play themselves out with greater freedom and clarity. In an influential argument, Roger Scruton argues that, absent control over detail in candid exposures, a photographer can only possess "the grossest features of style,"²¹ invalidating any idea of photography as representation, understood by the author as the conveyance of idiosyncratic, personalized thought regarding the object depicted. Photography, in this view, can only disclose a scene, not express an attitude towards it. An engagement with the archive of Rangel as a collective body (rather than the decontextualized, unitary "ideal photograph" generalized by Scruton to dismiss representational agency in photography) allows us to move away from this limiting concept and reflect on the ways in which Rangel, often in collaboration with other journalists, sought purposively to capture specific configurations of his profilmic reality and so "represent" his thoughts on it to potential beholders. To use Catherine Abell's terminology,²² the patterns in Rangel's archive allow us to gauge how far the depictive content of his negatives (i.e. what they allow us to see *in* them) accords with his maker content (i.e. the underlying and *ad hoc* aims present when making the exposures) and provides a compelling case study for a key question in the analysis of photography, regarding the relationship between depicta, operator intention, and meaning. The hypothesis here, *contra* Scruton, is that a photographer's back catalogue can testify to style (which I understand as a function of aims and approach, or what Diarmuid Costello calls "artistic character"²³ and so validate a plausible range of intended,

¹⁹And almost entirely side-lining his post-colonial output. Very few of the sizeable body of images that Rangel produced post-1975 feature in the monographs dedicated to or dominated by his work.

²⁰The various gaps in the negative collection, apparent when comparing it to the photographs that feature in the press, are not simply the result of Salazar-era cultural vandalism, but an upshot of lack of archival organization and management, especially as regards the period before Rangel achieved prominence.

²¹Roger Scruton, "Photography and Representation," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 3 (1981): 594.

²²Catherine Abell, "Pictorial Implicature," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no. 1 (2005): 55.

²³Diarmuid Costello, "The Question Concerning Photography," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70, no. 1 (2012): 111.

subjective meanings). The single image does not suffice to underwrite interpretation, as the significant decisions in making photographs come not only at the moment of exposure, but upstream and downstream of releasing the shutter.²⁴ The motives and conditions driving these options—and the extent to which these might be the result of negotiations—can only be discerned formally from long-term patterns, which apprise us of what Costello calls the “relevantly mind-dependent” status of individual photographs.²⁵ I interpret the latter’s position as relating to how photographs of scenes not entirely within a photographer’s control are nevertheless made selectively and probabilistically in accordance with intention and as such are “inherently expressive of an attitude to what is represented.”²⁶ “Attitude” here would be something like the overall historical view provided by Rangel’s images.

A fuller engagement with Rangel’s archive is therefore vital to understanding his practice (and, in so doing, the ideological affordances of both his published and unpublished work). While drawing mainly on photographs from Rangel’s digital store that have not been included in his monographs and consequently remain little known, I will move between these and more celebrated images to show how only a broader engagement with Rangel’s archive can nuance readings of individual shots and bring needed attention to “the longer-term modes of thoughtful effort that go into making photographs affect the imagination as they do.”²⁷ I argue that such patterns signal a throughgoing logic and the revelation of more than a Benjaminian “optical unconscious.”²⁸ It is possible that a version of these images might have illustrated newspaper reports, though given their contents this is rather unlikely, and I have been unable to locate any such usage in the archives of *Tempo* (though the collection in the Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique is incomplete). My analysis shall focus on two groups of Rangel’s images that engage with the subtleties of the late-colonial period and complement our existing knowledge of his work. The first consists of photographs that imply a reflection on Rangel’s own liminal position as photographic agent. The second comprises images of white poverty, arguably also a rebuke to Portuguese colonialism but one that is of little interest to dominant constructions of Rangel’s work today.

Between and Between

I begin with a selection of images from Rangel’s archive that can be read as coded reflections on his “intermediate position” in society,²⁹ a position that now helped, now hindered his photographic practice and certainly shaped his “ethnographic sensibilities.”³⁰ The preponderance of mixed-race artists in mid-century Mozambique’s

²⁴See Patrick Maynard, “Arts, Agents, Artefacts: Photography’s Automatism,” *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 4 (2012): 727–45.

²⁵Costello, “The Question,” 110.

²⁶Roger Seamon, “From the World Is Beautiful to the Family of Man: The Plight of Photography as a Modern Art,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 3 (1997): 247.

²⁷Joel Smith, “More Than One: Sources of Serialism,” *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 67 (2008): 8.

²⁸See Shawn Michelle Smith and Sharon Sliwinski, “Introduction,” in *Photography and the Optical Unconscious*, ed. by Shawn Michelle Smith and Sharon Sliwinski (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 1–31, for an extended discussion of this richly suggestive but problematic formulation.

²⁹Simon Njami, “Saudade,” in *Iluminando Vidas: Ricardo Rangel and the Mozambican Photography*, ed. by Bruno Z’Graggen and Grant Lee Neuenburg (Basel: Christophe Merian, 2002), 20.

³⁰Pamila Gupta, *Portuguese Decolonization in the Indian Ocean World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 15.

cultural development is an idiosyncrasy of that country, complicating a comparison to other spaces in mainland Africa.³¹ If, as Edward Said has argued, “all nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement,”³² in the Mozambican case it was the alienation of such *mestiço* figures from colonial society that largely inaugurated this process in the fields of literature and photography. Attention to the cultural production of these medial figures shows both a refutation of colonial discourses of inclusivity and the peculiar racial configurations found in Portuguese colonial spaces. It is no surprise, therefore, that the themes tackled by Rangel recall those of mixed-race peers José Craveirinha and Noémia de Sousa, yet it is also noteworthy that *mestiço* subjects rarely appear in his work,³³ except—as I shall argue here—in the way the photographer himself is implied in his subject selection and approach. Luís Bernardo Honwana writes that Rangel’s career coincided with a “historical period in which his skin colour earned him only suspicion and disfavour.”³⁴ But this assertion—or rather the limiting adverb it employs—is not entirely accurate and points to a tension in the memorialization of Rangel between his status in binary constructions of late-colonial society as Mozambique’s first “non-white” photographer and his individual location as a *mestiço* in a more finely-graded conception of the past. Thinking through this tension has a wider relevance for understanding the emergence of the present-day nation from circumstances where the brunt of exploitation and suffering fell upon non-assimilated black Africans even as other non-white groups derived a *relative* advantage from colonialism.

The latter can be seen in the way Rangel benefitted from the evolvment of colonial attitudes and policy, which allowed him to transcend the informal colour bar that “froze Africans in the lowest-paying jobs while reserving the most desirable employment for white immigrants.”³⁵ To recognize this is in no way to diminish his work or impugn the credentials of a figure connected to underground anti-colonial activity since the 1940s,³⁶ but merely a step towards understanding how Rangel occupied an ambiguous middle ground between discrimination and privilege. His photojournalistic career coincided with a need to vindicate the rhetoric of Lusotropicalism—the exceptionalist discourse of Portuguese racial inclusiveness across not an empire but a pluricontinental yet unified nation—with actual examples of non-white social mobility. Alexandre Pomar comments that, in the opportunities that came Rangel’s way, “we can certainly recognize the tactical flexibility of colonial power towards the oppositional mixed-race (Greek and Chinese) photojournalist, with a view to creating intermediate actors between the daydreams of white extremists and the ambitions of black nationalists, to

³¹See Albert Gérard “Identité nationale et image littéraire en Afrique lusophone,” in *Les Littératures africaines de Langue Portugaise*, ed. by Benjamin Abdala Junior (Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1985), 488; Patricia Hayes, “Pão nosso de cada noite: As mulheres e a cidade nas fotografias de Ricardo Rangel de Lourenço Marques, Moçambique (1950–60),” in *Ricardo Rangel: Insubmisso e generoso*, ed. by Nelson Saúte (Maputo: Marimbique, 2014), 67.

³²Edward Said, “Reflections on Exile,” in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Russel Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Cornel West, and Felix Gonzales-Torres (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 359.

³³With the exception of some personal photographs of Craveirinha and Sousa. A curiosity of Rangel’s negative archive at the CDDF is how personal exposures are mixed in with professional work, a token of how image-making was a practice running through all parts of Rangel’s life.

³⁴Luís Bernardo Honwana, “Introdução,” in *Ricardo Rangel: Insubmisso e generoso*, ed. by Saúte, 16 (my translation).

³⁵Allan Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900–1982* (Aldershot: Gower, 1983), 74.

³⁶Mateus and Mateus, “Nacionalistas,” 45.

divide and rule and back a number of horses.”³⁷ Without this need to substantiate a supposed Portuguese colour blindness, Rangel might not have joined the press, gained access to technology and status, and made images whose official accommodation reached a peak with an acclaimed retrospective of his work. Thompson reproduces a newspaper image of Rangel, taken at his 1969 show,³⁸ in which the photographer is pictured explaining to colonial bigwigs his images of the institutional neglect and material poverty for which they can be held ultimately responsible. It is an eloquent testimony to both the excellence of his work and the ambiguity of his position and suggests the complex circumstances in which Rangel’s production was by turns policed and repressed yet also encouraged and recognized, a situation that is now usually read as speaking truth to power and subversion from within,³⁹ but which also shows how Rangel was subject to strategies of co-option and containment.

In effect, Rangel’s qualified privilege showed him both how much he was denied and how much more disenfranchised than he the bulk of the population found itself. And his work itself was also interstitial: his photographs depicted black life for a white public in the first instance, positioning the photographer between the structural comfort of a minority and the daily suffering of the masses. Two photographs, one relatively little known and one quite canonical, reflect this dual intermediacy, showing poor black disadvantage at two stages of life and encoding a divide between the photographer as subject and the impromptu model who could never aspire to the same agential practice. The first is from Rangel’s archive of scanned negatives (archive reference RR01_08_D_02). Although it featured in *One Story, A Thousand Stories: Ricardo Rangel and Children*, a posthumous exhibition held in Maputo in 2011, under the title *Menino com máquina* [Boy With Camera], it has not been included in any of the internationally circulating monographs featuring Rangel’s images and has received no attention in the emergent scholarship on his life and work (Figure 1).

As the title of the 2011 exhibition indicates, children and childhood are a major theme for Rangel; he seems to have been particularly drawn to *molwenes*, the street urchins with threadbare clothes, begrimed skin and callused feet who also take centre stage in Isaac Zita’s eponymous short-story collection, published in 1988 but set during the colonial period.⁴⁰ Such figures have recurred symbolically throughout Mozambican cultural production since independence, perhaps under the influence of some of Rangel’s most famous images. This proclivity on Rangel’s part—and *mutatis mutandis* in the culture more generally—has two likely explanations common to the wider movement of post-war humanist photography. The obvious practical reason is the photogenic spontaneity or pliability of children, their openness to being photographed candidly in societies largely free from moral panic over stranger danger—their almost condition-free “accessibility,” to extend Lisa Henderson’s term.⁴¹ The second reason is

³⁷Alexandre Pomar, *Quatro Fotógrafos de Moçambique: Moira Forjaz, José Cabral, Luís Basto, Filipe Branquinho* (Sines: Câmara Municipal de Sines/Centro de Arte de Sines and Centro de Arte Emmerico Nunes, 2016), 24 (my translation).

³⁸Thompson, “A iconicidade,” 59.

³⁹Craveirinha, “Carta,” 22.

⁴⁰Isaac Zita, *Os molwenes* (Maputo: AEMO, 1988).

⁴¹Lisa Henderson, “Access and Consent in Public Photography,” in *Image Ethics: The Moral Rights of Subjects in Photographs, Film and Television*, ed. by Larry P. Gross, John Stewart Katz, and Jay Ruby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 91–107.

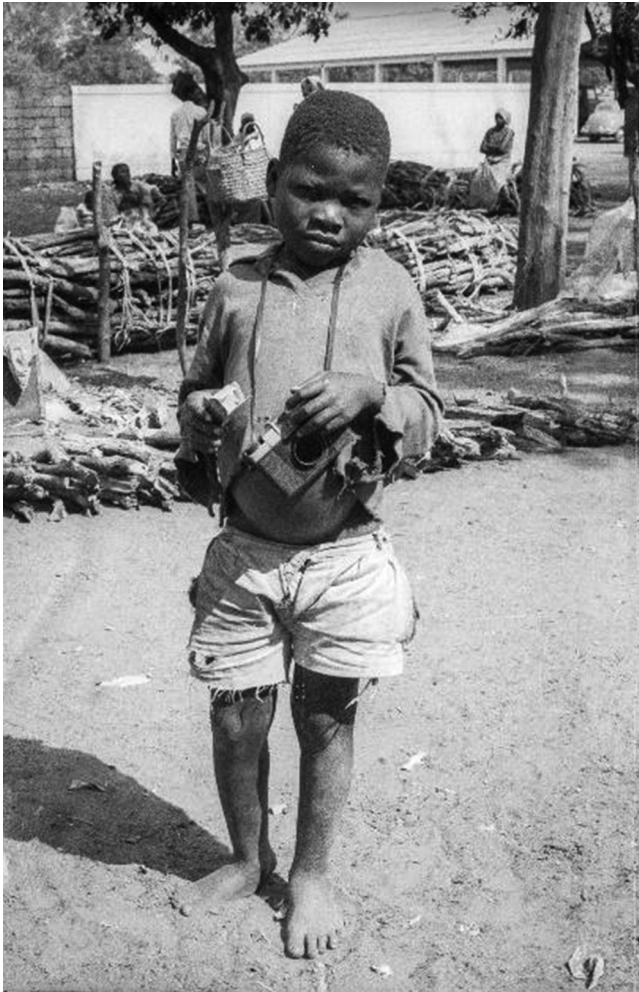


Figure 1. Ricardo Rangel. *Boy With Camera*. Lourenço Marques. Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo. RR01_08_D_02.

the obviously powerful symbolic charge of such figures, exemplified by Zita's tales, as the actually existing inverse of a decolonized future in which, as a line by the poet Sousa goes, "a new childhood will dawn for everyone," and is best understood with closer reference to Rangel's image itself.⁴²

In *Menino* the subject is captured full shot; total photographic centrality given to utter actual marginalization. The boy stares directly at the lens, unsmiling, wary, an address and attitude in Rangel's young subjects that Ascêncio de Freitas regards as his "trademark."⁴³ This observation alerts us to the difference between *Menino* and *Xipamanine Blues*, perhaps Rangel's most widely printed image, which shows an equally

⁴²Noémia de Sousa, "Poema da infância distante," in *Nunca mais é sábado: Antologia de poesia Moçambicana*, ed. by Nelson Saúte (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 2004), 160 (my translation).

⁴³Ascêncio de Freitas, "A arte de Ricardo Rangel," in *Ricardo Rangel: Homenagem de Amigos*, ed. by Couto, 41 (my translation).

ragged boy standing by the jamb of a gate.⁴⁴ The gate holds a shut padlock, a connotation of the trapped, locked-out condition common to all Rangel's images of black street children. But where the scruffy tot in *Xipamanine Blues* looks past the lens with startled eyes, the older boy—well within what Max Kozloff terms “the zone of hypothetical conversation”⁴⁵—assesses the adult behind the camera frontally, with self-aware distrust. It is a disquieting rather than sentimental image, which perhaps goes towards explaining its low profile. André Rouillé's typology of bodies before the camera distinguishes between the subject body (as in the bourgeois portrait), the object body (of those who appear powerless before camera), and the element body.⁴⁶ Here, as elsewhere in Rangel's depiction of subaltern subjects, the portrait blurs the first two categories, registering without reinforcing disadvantage by an act of visual “reported speech.”⁴⁷ Dressed in ripped top and fraying shorts, the child subject wears a broken camera on a strap around his neck and holds a small cardboard box with a strong resemblance to those in which individual canisters of 35 mm film are packaged. It is hard to tell whether his camera is merely a toy or the discarded shell of a ruined device. What is clear is that any lens is missing and the film box empty: in real and symbolic terms the boy has no means to see photographically or record the perceptions of his solemn eyes. He thus fulfils the symbolic role his fellows play elsewhere in Rangel's archive and humanist photography more generally, of inchoate potential cut short by an unjust adult world.

Yet, despite its denunciatory forthrightness, a complexity remains. John Berger, attempting to put clear water between snapshot banality and “memorable photographs,” argues that the latter differ in the extent to which they use “the given event to explain its recording. Photography [here] is the process of rendering observation self-conscious.”⁴⁸ The “memorability” of this half-forgotten portrait lies in its pointedly qualified *mise-en-abyme*, a mismatched correspondence symbolizing the chasm between professional *mestiço* photographer and poor black depictum. Under colonialism, this little boy might play the newshound but can never actually tread in the footsteps of Rangel, the adult with the real camera. Elsewhere I have contrasted the limitations operating on Rangel with the footloose privilege of Henri Cartier-Bresson, the exemplum of photojournalist-turned-fine artist.⁴⁹ Here an opposite comparison is necessary and can be broached via one of Rangel's most widely circulated images.⁵⁰ Entitled “Estúdio no Boulevard”

⁴⁴It is reproduced in both Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 31, and *Ricardo Rangel: L'Anima del Mozambico*, ed. by Sarenco, 41. It features in *Iluminando vidas*, ed. by Z'Graggen and Neuenburg, 39, a multi-artist compendium that frames Rangel as the fountainhead of Mozambican photography and is also included in the commemorative volume of essays *Ricardo Rangel: Insubmisso e generoso*, ed. by Saúte, 47.

⁴⁵Max Kozloff, *Lone Visions, Crowded Frames* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 23.

⁴⁶André Rouillé, *Le corps et son image: Photographies du dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: Contrejour, 1986).

⁴⁷See Steve Edwards, “The Machine's Dialogue,” *Oxford Art Journal* 13, no. 1 (1990): 63–76 for an extended application of Bakhtin's heteroglossia to photographic practice.

⁴⁸Berger, *Understanding*, 18–19.

⁴⁹Paul Melo e Castro, “Expressive Perspectives on the Printed Page: The Photography of Ricardo Rangel,” in *Projectos editoriais: Imagens e contra-imagens no estado novo*, ed. by Filomena Serra, Paula André, and Susana Martins (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2020), 275–302.

⁵⁰Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 65; *Ricardo Rangel: L'Anima del Mozambico*, ed. by Sarenco, 77; *Iluminando vidas*, ed. by Z'Graggen and Neuenburg 41; *Ricardo Rangel: Insubmisso e generoso*, ed. by Saúte, 42. With its overview of the nation's photographic history as it intersected with social division, Álvaro Simões's book *Moçambique, A terra e os homens* (Maputo: Associação Moçambicana de Fotografia, 1984) notably featured this image on its cover.

[Studio on the Boulevard], it shows a street photographer in the traditional sense of a peripatetic outdoor portrait artist (for all that such figures were considered *infra dignitatem* by the world of high art, they were often models of practical photographic skill).⁵¹ The man is bent double with his face lifted to regard the lens, caught in the act of rinsing a print in a bucket. It is a pose that suggests being caught unprepared, as opposed to any deliberate self-presentation to Rangel's lens. His legs and downstretched arm form a visual rhyme with the tripod of his antiquated view camera, a virtual two shot aligning the tatty focusing cloth atop the wood-frame apparatus with the salt-and-pepper hair and moustache of its aging operator. The shabby aspect of the camera intimates the limitations on such a jobbing lensman's work, restricted to the repetitious, banal and commercial, and forced to tout for business,⁵² a world away from the career of Rangel (the original article of 1961 alongside which this image appeared describes street photographer's amazement at Rangel's modern gear).⁵³ In the history of photography, portraying such figures has often been a way to reflect on the meaning, limits, and context of photographic practice. Here, to use Barthes's terminology,⁵⁴ as the street photographer is reduced from operator (photographer) to spectrum (object photographed), the limits on his practice are symbolized for us as spectators by the distance between the subject positions involved in the image's production.

This gulf reflects the general difference between Rangel and coeval black photographic agents. Sebastião Langa is often namechecked alongside Rangel as the second of Mozambique's first two non-white photographers.⁵⁵ Yet, as the division between *mestiço* subject and black object in "Estúdio" indicates, non-white was far from a uniform category in the late-colonial period. Rangel first met Langa in the 1940s when both held menial positions in white-owned photographic studios and their careers were at the outset essentially parallel, only afterwards evolving in radically different ways that "represent the deep racial divisions in colonial society."⁵⁶ Whereas Rangel was able to find a position in the press,⁵⁷ gain official esteem and access technology, Langa qua photographer remained low-profile, his personal practice strictly circumscribed—like most pre-independence black photographers across Africa⁵⁸—to small-time portrait work within his own community.⁵⁹ As Geoff Dyer points out, candidly photographing strangers is the almost exclusive preserve of the handheld camera;⁶⁰ large format

⁵¹Geoffrey Batchen, "Seeing and Saying: A Response to 'Incongruous Images,'" *History and Theory* 48, no. 4 (2009), 26–33.

⁵²Batchen, "Seeing," 30.

⁵³Thompson, "A iconicidade," 55.

⁵⁴Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), 9.

⁵⁵See António Sopa, "Flashes sobre a actividade dos estúdios fotográficos em Lourenço Marques," in *Sebastião Langa: Retratos de uma vida*, ed. by Maria das Neves and Maria Deolinda Chamango (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 2001), 8; António Sopa, "Fotojornalismo em Moçambique," in *Iluminando vidas*: ed. by Z'Graggen and Neuenburg, 24, and Nelson Saúte, "Ricardo Rangel: Nome tutelar e inspirador do fotojornalismo em Moçambique," in *Ricardo Rangel: Insubmisso e generoso*, ed. by Saúte, 44.

⁵⁶Sopa, "Flashes," 8.

⁵⁷Rangel's trajectory is elucidative here. Despite a passion for photography, he began his working life as a car mechanic since, in the 1940s, "not being white, during that period in Lourenço Marques, I couldn't even have been a taxi driver or customs officer, let alone a photographer" (Rangel, quoted in Calane da Silva, "Corpo e alma," 71 and 72; my translation). It was only through his boss at the repair shop "pulling strings" (Calane da Silva, "Corpo e alma," 72; my translation) that Rangel first attained the lowest rung of colonial photography.

⁵⁸See Marc Vausort, "Photographie en Afrique: Quelques jalons autour d'une collection," in *Afriques*, ed. by Christelle Rousseau (Charleroi: Musée de la photographie à Charleroi, 1999), 19.

⁵⁹Sopa, "Flashes," 8–9.

⁶⁰Geoff Dyer, *The Ongoing Moment* (London: Abacus, 2007), 98.

cameras generally imply solicitation and permission. The chasm in *Estúdio* between the relatively lightweight 35 mm device used by Rangel to snap this image and the unwieldy outmoded relic of the street photographer (whose surname also happened to be Langa)⁶¹ therefore betokens a vast difference in their abilities to photograph colonial Mozambique. If, as Susan Sontag maintains, the photograph is “experience captured,”⁶² here this experience is relational, not simply observed. The exclusion of the subaltern from historiography—here framed by Rangel in photographic terms—mirrors his economic and political subjugation.

David A. Bailey and Stuart Hall argue that “if you don’t have the means of representation at your disposal then you do not have access to the places where photographic work can be exhibited, discussed and criticized. You are not even in the game, and you are not part of photographic discourse.”⁶³ Such was Sebastião Langa’s fate under colonialism while Rangel was making a name for himself in the colonial press and beginning to exhibit his own work. Recognition of Langa’s production and place in Mozambique’s photographic history would only come long after 1975, by way of *Retratos de uma vida* [A Life in Portraits] a revisionary exhibition of 2001 in which Rangel, always committed to using his stature to promote others, was significantly involved. Indeed, after independence, Rangel dedicated much of his career to pedagogy, extending photographic opportunities to those who could never have aspired to becoming anything approaching full photographic agents under Portuguese rule.⁶⁴ It is worth noting that a poster-sized enlargement of *Estúdio* hangs in the lobby of the CDDF, which was founded by Rangel precisely to create the sort of opportunities for photographic training and development that were inexistent under colonialism for such as the “boulevardier” (let alone the *menino*).

This attention to Rangel’s position as a *mestiço* photographer allows us to re-assess one of his best-known images and augment what we might call, using John Berger’s term, its perceived historical “length.” Berger argued that the photographic instant can have greater or lesser significance accordingly as it implies events, connections and cross-references outside itself.⁶⁵ Here we see how Berger’s notion of photography as a quotation of experience might be squared with the photographic staging of subjective meaning, insofar as all quotations repurpose their contents to some extent. Yet at the same time, as with my position regarding Scruton, I want to resist a simply mechanistic understanding of photography (which Berger underwrites elsewhere in his writing on the subject).⁶⁶ Arguing against such naturalist accounts of the link between picture and reality, Joel Snyder points out that photographs might show us *what* we would have seen (had we been present at the moment of exposure), but not *how* we would have seen it.⁶⁷ No photographic object, after all, has a single image. To put it another way, there is a difference between what Abell calls visual content (what we see) and depictive

⁶¹See Thompson, “Iconicidade,” 54.

⁶²Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1990), 3.

⁶³David A. Bailey and Stuart Hall, “The Vertigo of Displacement,” in *The Photography Reader*, ed. by Liz Wells (London: Routledge, 2004), 386.

⁶⁴See *Sem Flash: Homenagem a Ricardo Rangel (1924–2009)*, dir. by Bruno Z’Graggen and Angelo Sansone (Sansofilm, 2012) [on DVD].

⁶⁵John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, ed. by Geoff Dyer (London: Penguin, 2013), 89–90.

⁶⁶See Berger, *Understanding*, 82.

⁶⁷Joel Snyder, “Picturing Vision,” *Critical Inquiry* 6, no. 3 (1980): 507.

content (what we see *in*).⁶⁸ Photography, in short, is an art of manipulating the relationship between the two. Powerful in its simplicity, Rangel's well-known *Sanitários* [Lavatories] demonstrates the photograph's ability to perform an "instruction of attention"⁶⁹ by showing the top half of two doors. The sign to the first reads "Homens" [Men] and the sign to the second reads "Serventes" [literally Servants, but here indicating a menial position in an institution]. Though visually unambiguous, the meaning of this image is anchored in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique* by the legend "where the Negro could only be a servant and only the White was a man."⁷⁰ The staging here resides in the sleight of composition excluding a presumable third door labelled "Senhoras" [Ladies] and forces the reading of "Servants" as disbarred from the category of "Men," framed now as a synonym for Humankind. These two unremarkable entranceways are thus lifted from the dull rumble of the everyday to indict a racist society that barred non-white menials from full citizenship.⁷¹

So far, the image stands as a blunt version of *Amarras* stripped down to verbal signifiers, a fragment of the city reframed as what Jonathan Raban calls a "moral synecdoche."⁷² Yet there remains a third category between implicitly white "men" and black "servants" which must be accounted for. Between the two doors, aligning with the apex of the cone of vision, and thus implying the standpoint of the viewing subject, is a thin strip of wall separating the two doors. In the context of my overall reading, I take this composition as adverting to the *mestiço* photographer's interstitial position, which allowed Rangel access enough to make the image but also dynamized sufficient fellow feeling for him to read "Serventes" otherwise than as an unexceptionable category of employment inscribed upon the fittings of the workplace. *Amarras* too must now be read as a formal expression of the self-same perspective.

A series of unknown images from Rangel's digital archive can also be read in similar fashion. RR01_17_B_01 (Figure 2) is a stark, simple image. It shows a man standing at the edge of a body of water. Stripped to the waist, his head and neck are covered in what are presumably soap suds. He casts a shadow of roughly his own stature to the right, while a similarly sized shadow falls from someone unpictured to his left. The man's black skin, which has registered as the same tone as his trousers, contrasts with the brilliant white substance coating his head and neck. Rangel's archive contains at least five attempts at this rather static image, indicating its interest to the photographer and his anxiety to catch a certain aspect of the scene. In simple terms it is a picture of poverty, of a man forced to perform his ablutions in public. In the context of Rangel's work and the history of late-colonial Mozambique, the image symbolizes both the real gap between black and white Mozambicans and the bad faith of colonial discourses of assimilation and integration.

Close scrutiny of the negative shows that the highlights in this otherwise dark image have been clipped, meaning that some of the white is actually total overexposure. While surely accidental, even unavoidable, this erasure of detail is nevertheless suggestive;

⁶⁸Abell, "Pictorial Implicature," 55.

⁶⁹Snyder, "Picturing Vision," 510.

⁷⁰Rangel, *Richard Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 40 (my translation).

⁷¹Calane da Silva, transforming Rangel's words into reported speech, gives the photographer's aim as "report[ing] on the world of Men, their daily life of sweat and passion, struggles and misery" ("Corpo e alma," 72). The use of the word "Men" is a thought-provoking echo of the signage in *Sanitários*.

⁷²Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London: Picador, 2017), 32.



Figure 2. *Man with Soap Suds.* Lourenço Marques. Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo. RR01_17_B_01.

Whiteness is off the spectrum for this subject. Another question to ponder is whether the photograph puts forward a local image for Fanon’s “white mask,” the unreachable counterfoil to the “epidermization of inferiority,”⁷³ moreover one which, in a Portuguese situation of supposed racial miscibility, expresses the evanescence and superficial nature of any inter-ethnic equiparation.⁷⁴ Underneath any whiteness possible for the subaltern Mozambican lies a black detriment which could never be washed away under the divisive rule of colonialism. Moreover, in line with my readings so far, this image contains a reflection on Rangel’s own position. Triangulating the black skin and white lather is the mixed-race viewpoint, also originating in a racially-othered body, but one able to access more than a fleeting simulacrum of whiteness. Where the depictum is turned from the lens, symbolically objectified, the photographic agent is able at least to exercise the subjectivity of picture-making. Perhaps we can say that Rangel is represented by the second shadow, which symbolizes how Rangel’s position is recorded without the photographer himself being seen, a causal absence in this writing with light.

Petty Whiteness

If, as we have seen, various of Rangel’s images allow for reflection on the complexity of race in colonial society—of which his life and career are an expression—others permit a

⁷³Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, 4th edition (Paris: La Découverte, 1996), 8; my translation.

⁷⁴Cláudia Castelo, *O modo português de estar no mundo: O luso-tropicalismo e a ideologia colonial portuguesa (1933–1961)* (Oporto: Edições Afrontamento, 1998), 99.

more searching critique of colonialism than the nationalist narratives identified by Thompson might allow. Rangel's most widely reproduced images include various shots of well-heeled Europeans in Lourenço Marques ignoring the entreaties of black beggars (or, with hardly a look, thoughtlessly proffering whatever loose change they had to hand). These include in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique, Cena da Cidade V*,⁷⁵ which shows a clump of suited businessmen casually snubbing the beggar beside them. *Cena da Cidade IV*, in the same book shows a pair of black boys with younger siblings in papooses.⁷⁶ They appeal in vain to two young white men, who stride past, focussed on their own affairs. These men, little older than the alms-seekers, symbolize a future that was closed off to their destitute counterparts. Other similar examples in Rangel's archive, which likely went unpublished, testify to his ongoing interest in this trope for white minority privilege and indifference to social injustice. RR01_06A_02 appears to show an elegant white woman, pencil-skirted with a neat bob and high heels, swish past a black child beggar, extending a handout behind her without so much as a glance.⁷⁷ According to Jonathan Friday, in virtue of the optics involved, viewing photography involves a far stronger impression of seeing another's vision than manugraphic picture forms.⁷⁸ If white comfort needs must be blind to the suffering of the black majority, in these images Rangel from his intermedial position imparts an acute, situated view of both the suffering *and* the blindness involved.

Yet other images, however, provide more complex takes on such situations, and go beyond exposing how settler ease rested on callous disregard for native hardship. Numerous shots, which could not have been published in colonial-era publications and that lie forgotten today, reveal the elements of white poverty existing in Mozambique at that time. Duncan Money and Danielle Van Zyl-Hermann comment that race and class are often considered synonymous in accounts of Southern African history.⁷⁹ Whiteness, however, while a condition for privilege, was not privilege itself. "Power, status and hegemony," Money and Van-Zyl Hermann comment, "were not necessarily fixed, secure or self-evident for all those raced as white."⁸⁰ The existence of poor whites, even a white underclass, challenged the colonialist self-image across the region. In his *Keywords*, Raymond Williams describes the image as not merely a likeness but—especially in advertising and politics—as perceived reputation.⁸¹ In portrait work, it is stance and poise that largely enable such perception. In the candid exposures I turn to now Rangel gainsays any reputed Eurocentric supremacy by picturing embodied actions, states, and exchanges disclosing an obscured side to colonial reality, the fact that whites were not exclusively "lords and masters" (Figure 3).⁸²

⁷⁵Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 4.

⁷⁶Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 5.

⁷⁷This image was obviously taken quickly and at a certain distance (perhaps from the interior of a café). It is possible the woman has bought something from the boy or else is simply flapping him away. In any case, the interpersonal dynamic remains the same.

⁷⁸Jonathan Friday, "Photography and the Representation of Vision," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 4 (2001), 56.

⁷⁹Duncan Money and Danielle Van Zyl-Hermann, "Rethinking White Societies in Southern Africa, 1930–1990s," in *Rethinking White Societies in Southern Africa 1930s–1990s*, ed. by Duncan Money and Danielle Van Zyl-Hermann (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 2.

⁸⁰Money and Van Zyl-Hermann, "Rethinking," 3.

⁸¹Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Flamingo, 1985), 158.

⁸²Calane da Silva, "Corpo e alma," 73 (my translation).

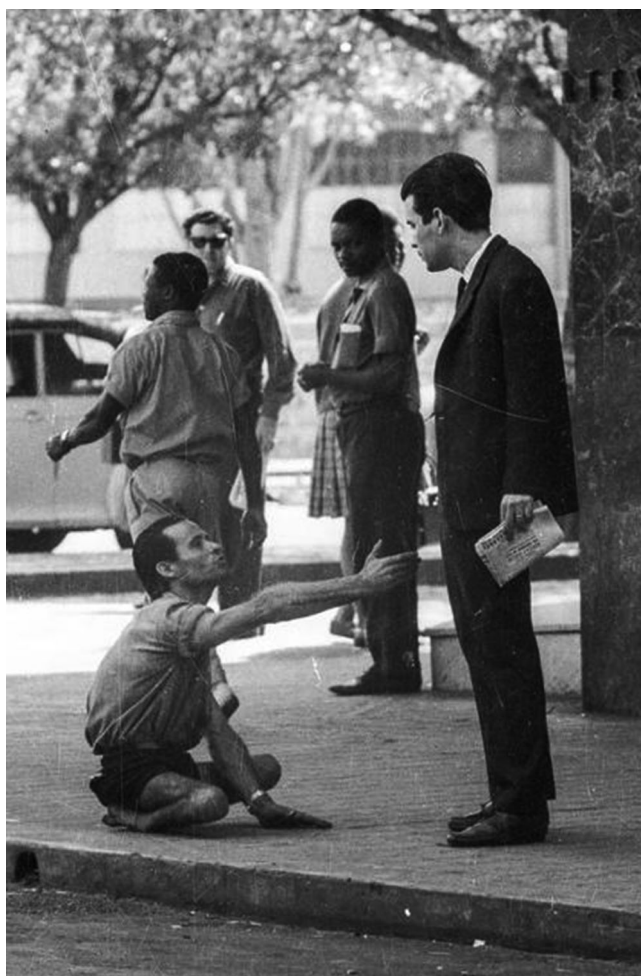


Figure 3. Ricardo Rangel. *Disabled White Beggar*. Lourenço Marques. Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo. RR01_24_F_03.

One series shows not a black but a white beggar in central Lourenço Marques, evidently a polio sufferer to judge from his wasted, incapacitated legs. Taken from a distance, with a long-focus lens, the series shows a number of white passers-by moving past the disabled man. The most resonant version, RR01_24_F_03, shows him with his hand outstretched to a white peer of similar age and with equally slicked-back hair. These two parallels serve to accentuate the two subjects' physical difference, establishing a mismatched *mise-en-abyme* comparable to that of *Menino*, only this time within the image. The man standing looks prosperous and healthy in a well-cut suit and polished shoes, with a casually folded newspaper clasped in one hand. His afflicted counterpart wears an old khaki shirt and shorts rolled up to reveal as much of his matchstick-thin lower limbs as possible. The seated figure's arm appears imploringly outreached, but the addressee's posture is of refusal, aloofness and even animosity. If Rangel's pictures of black beggars invariably feature white indifference, that attitude is here visited on a European, a supplementary indictment of a dictatorship-era society whose cruelty and neglect were not simply racially defined. The series has a clear critical purchase on

colonialism and the socio-economic structure from which it emerged, just not in exact consonance with the prevailing narratives on Rangel's work.

These images were, in essence, exposés with no possible contemporary outlet—such scenes would never have passed the censors' scrutiny—and currently stand as dead letters to the future. Cláudia Castelo writes that behaviors or situations “that might lower the settler in the eyes of the native,” such as public indigence or begging, were particularly feared by the authorities, “as here, the threat to the prestige and unity of the white community came from the inside”⁸³ and describes attempts to conceal “embarrassing” white migrants who might signal a failure of Portuguese colonialism in comparison with the more economically advanced settler societies of South Africa and Rhodesia. If the Portuguese feared the “white” gaze of their Anglophone neighbors, “even further beyond the pale was it that natives or even assimilated Africans realize that there were whites living in misery. Ultimately, the settler community tried to protect itself against potential threats to its social prestige and economic position,” which were intrinsically linked to the sacrosanct ‘superiority of its civilization’.”⁸⁴ This image is noteworthy for featuring precisely such an aware black subject.

Although in the background, the black figure pictured is evidently not simply “at the service of the white man” (as Vausort describes the typical native subject in colonial-era photographic images).⁸⁵ Dressed smartly, if more informally, in slacks and a short-sleeve shirt that suggest relative prosperity and even a casual motive for his presence in the *Baixa*, he looks on with an ambiguous frown. Is this a reaction to the plight of the disabled beggar, consternation at the attitude of the suited man, or merely a similar displeasure to the latter's regarding the importuning of strangers? In any case, if the European settler in Mozambique was “on permanent display to the natives,” as António Metello wrote in 1945,⁸⁶ here the black subject observes the white European poverty the colonial authorities tried so strenuously to disavow. Echoing Rangel's own position, he stands as a non-European witness to a moment undermining European imperial self-performance, one attesting to the fact that such misery did indeed exist, though it was not at all the norm, and was always apparent to certain non-white Mozambicans.

What this man sees, and what we see him seeing, is another way in which the concrete downtown of Lourenço Marques “was far more complex than postcards of the famed City of Acacias showed.”⁸⁷ Certainly, the presence of this man—and other similarly attired young black subjects that crop up throughout Rangel's images⁸⁸—nuances the idea that the black inhabitants of Lourenço Marques in the 1960s “feared and rarely visited the *cidade*,” “the beautiful and very clean *cidade* from which they were excluded.”⁸⁹ Evidently not all black subjects experienced Lourenço Marques in precisely the same way. A certain suburban experience in the centre is not absolutely

⁸³Cláudia Castelo, *Passagens para África: O povoamento de Angola e Moçambique com naturais da metrópole (1920–1974)* (Oporto: Afrontamento, 2007), 251; my translation.

⁸⁴Castelo, *Passagens*, 288; my translation.

⁸⁵Vausort, “Photographie,” 15; my translation.

⁸⁶Quoted in Castelo, *Passagens*, 269; my translation.

⁸⁷Luis Bernardo Honwana, *A velha casa de madeira e zinco* (Maputo: Alcance, 2017), 24; my translation.

⁸⁸Here we might also put forward the Garry Winogrand-style image of two young black women in the *baixa*, fashionably attired and walking with their heads held high (RR01_09_B_04).

⁸⁹Bjørn Enge Bertelsen, Inge Tvedten and Sandra Roque. 2014. “Engaging, Transcending and Subverting Dichotomies: Discursive Dynamics of Maputo's Urban Space,” *Urban Studies* 51, no. 13 (2014): 2746.



Figure 4. *Shoeless Woman*. Lourenço Marques. Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo. RR01_20_D_05.

generalizable. John Berger argues that “every photograph is in fact a means of testing, confirming and constructing a total view of reality. Hence the crucial role of photography in ideological struggle.”⁹⁰ Any piecemeal consideration of Rangel’s work that does not take cognizance of his overall production, therefore, risks traducing the “total view” of colonial reality it composites. The intricate anti-colonial import of this particular composition, showing as it does a face of Lourenço Marques and its “urban cruelties”⁹¹ that frustrates simple binaries, perhaps explains the oblivion to which it has been consigned (Figure 4).

The mixed implications of white poverty transpire in another disregarded image. RR01_20_D_05 shows an elderly and evidently impoverished white woman. Taken as she shuffled past unawares, the shot catches her head bowed and dressed in an

⁹⁰Berger, *Understanding*, 21.

⁹¹Mia Couto, “Os deuses espreitam pelos seus olhos,” in *Ricardo Rangel: Homenagem de amigos*, ed. by Couto, 18 (my translation).

ill-fitting, dirty-looking smock. A plastic bag dangles from her hand, filled perhaps with bread rolls. It might be early morning, judging by the light. Below uncomfortably swollen ankles, her feet are conspicuously bare. This image is a useful reckoner to gauge how far two canonical anti-colonial descriptions of the settler and his city apply to Rangel's context. Unlike Fanon's abstract colonial urban space, limned in *Les Damnés de la terre*, wherein references to Portuguese Africa simply echo his Algerian experience,⁹² this is manifestly not always a place where "the settler's feet are never seen."⁹³ The subject does not have "feet protected by solid shoes," even if the streets are indeed "clean, smooth and unpotholed."⁹⁴ Instead, this figure's unshod state indexes disadvantage and counterpoints Rangel's better known *Prioridade de Passagem* [Right of Way],⁹⁵ which shows a portly white gentleman sauntering across the road as though he owned the entire city. While the woman is obviously far from typical, her condition evidences a fact of colonialism normally airbrushed out. Yet it also shows that however far she might have fallen, an element of privilege remains. Extrapolating from his birthplace, Tunis, Albert Memmi writes that "even the poorest colonizer thought himself to be—and actually was—superior to the colonized. This too was part of colonial privilege."⁹⁶ Rangel's shot bears out this ultimate differentiation in a specific Portuguese colonial context. Its distinctive view of the OCE building in the rear locates the scene to a corner of the Praça seven de Março, one of the main squares in Lourenço Marques, so named to commemorate its elevation to city status.⁹⁷ David Morton writes that black women at this time were disbarred from urbanized downtown spaces if they were not using footwear.⁹⁸ This woman's decision to dispense with shoes, this capacity to liberate herself from the surrounding social world, thus indicates a freedom in the city of which black subjects were almost entirely deprived at that time. If in late-colonial-era photography, "Lourenço Marques was portrayed as a white *man's* town. Photographs emphasized the built environment in masculinist imagery, straight, solid, big,"⁹⁹ here Rangel relativizes such architectural gestures so as to undermine any gendered triumphalism, in a sidelong glance at a frail, apparently needy yet also unmolested passer-by, framed as a symbol of a double-edged injustice.

Both in Lourenço Marques and across the colony, a key marker of the divisions extant under colonialism was water. In a territory with a long, straggling coastline, its land crisscrossed by rivers and prone to cyclic flooding and drought, easy access to sweet and seawater or the alternating want of and subjection to the most basic stuff of common human life marked Mozambican reality (and still does today). One series of images in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique* is grouped together under the

⁹²Fanon, *Les Damnés*, 72.

⁹³Fanon, *Les Damnés*, 42 (my translation).

⁹⁴Fanon, *Les Damnés*, 42 (my translation).

⁹⁵Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 42.

⁹⁶Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. by Howard Greenfeld (London: Profile Books, 2021), 8.

⁹⁷Today this square has been re-baptized Praça 25 de Junho, in honour of the date of Mozambique's independence. The building is now used by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

⁹⁸David Morton, "From Racial Discrimination to Class Segregation in Postcolonial Mozambique," in *Geographies of Privilege*, ed. by France Winddance Twine and Bradley Gardener (London: Routledge, 2013), 246.

⁹⁹Jeanne Penvenne, "Fotografando Lourenço Marques: A cidade e os seus habitantes de 1960 a 1975," in *Os outros da colonização: Ensaio sobre o colonialismo tardio em Moçambique*, ed. by Cláudia Castelo, Omar Ribeiro, Sebastião Nascimento and Teresa da Cruz e Silva (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2012), 177 (my translation, italics mine).

title “Water Drama.” The first picture¹⁰⁰ shows a huddle of black subjects with buckets and canisters, evidently awaiting rations of drinking water. Their static, listless attitudes suggest their wait has been long. In the foreground a girl languishes by a wooden cask. Such barrels—used originally to transport wine, one of Portugal’s main exports to its colonies and a symbol for the damaging exchanges between metropole and empire¹⁰¹—found a second life storing water at times of drought and so bear a secondary connotation here, that of officialdom’s lackadaisical response to a situation of general emergency. The body language of the child conveys resigned extenuation. Head sagging, arms resting anaemically on the chime, the figure appears to seek refuge from the sun, the remorseless cause of her desiccation and thirst, as indifferent as the authorities. The second image shows a line of such barrels, with a clutch of water-seekers mewed up in the background.¹⁰² The third image shows a woman pulling a barrel down an untarmacked road, which looks dusty and hot.¹⁰³ She is caught in the middle distance, a widescreen composition that reprises the classic “visual rhetorical premise” of loneliness.¹⁰⁴ On one hip she carries a child and with one hand she hauls the water: her action and situation create a composite image of steadfast parenthood in adverse circumstances. Is she being used to symbolize the fortitude to win out over both climate and the forces of neglect? In any case, the anti-colonial feeling behind the image seems clear, as it must have done when apparently included in Rangel’s first 1969 exhibition (Figure 5).¹⁰⁵

An unknown image extends and complicates the “Water Drama” series through mismatched parallels in viewpoint and composition. If postcolonial envisioning attempts to revise nativist pedagogies that essentialize colonizer and colonized by forcing a recognition “of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often-opposed political spheres,”¹⁰⁶ RR02_11_A_01 exemplifies such a problematic of opposition and overlap. It echoes the third shot of the “Water Drama” series by showing another mother carrying an infant and dragging a barrel; it differs in that the subjects pictured here are European. Where the image in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique* is a long shot, this one has been taken from closer up, apparently in passing from a rear windscreen. Notably barefoot, also walking along a dirt track, the white subject gazes back at the camera without apparent awkwardness. Here we see that at the bottom of settler society ready access to such a basic as drinking water was not a given. It is a vision of European poverty¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 32.

¹⁰¹See Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire: 1825–1975: A Study in Economic Imperialism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 201.

¹⁰²Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 33.

¹⁰³Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 34.

¹⁰⁴Umberto Eco, “Critique of the Image,” in *Thinking Photography*, ed. by Victor Burgin (London: Macmillan, 1982), 37.

¹⁰⁵See Ricardo Saavedra, “Meditação sobre 36 Fotografias de Ricardo Rangel,” in *Ricardo Rangel: Homenagem de amigos*, ed. by Couto, 14.

¹⁰⁶Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxford: Routledge, 1994), 173.

¹⁰⁷On this note, it is useful to compare these images of impoverished white *laurentinos* discussed here with the report carried in *Tempo* on December 26, 1971 entitled “Lisboa na Objetiva de Ricardo Rangel: *Photographe du Mozambique*” (25–36). Here Rangel captures many images of European whites in a similar predicament to blacks in Mozambique: elderly women carrying loads on their heads, impoverished street vendors, a woman leading a donkey down a modern street in Estoril. Together with a report co-authored with the Portuguese writer Urbano Tavares Rodrigues, entitled “Africanos em Lisboa,” *Tempo*, April 2, 1972, 26–32, it shows Rangel’s interest in deconstructing colonial discourse of separation, superiority and uplift while never eschewing a visual tone of empathy and humanism.



Figure 5. *White Woman with Water Barrel.* Lourenço Marques. Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo. RR02_11_A_01.

that finds echoes in recent fiction on colonial Mozambique, such as *The Murmuring Coast*, in which the protagonist Evita is shown poor white families on the urban edge by the *mestiço* journalist Álvaro Sabino (culminating in the revelation of Sabino's own white prostitute lover and illegitimate children),¹⁰⁸ and where it has the function of showing the fragile position of women within a system that not only depended on racial exploitation but was also characterized by sexist structures. Rather than the proleptic viewpoint of the image in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, which shows the woman walking away into the symbolic future, this image looks backwards at the sort of figure that, until recently, was largely consigned to oblivion.

John Berger argues that photography, at heart, is a play with time rather than form, and that the decisive choice involved is not so much between “photographing X and Y; but between photographing at X moment and Y moment,”¹⁰⁹ the timing of composition on this view acting as a form of characterization. Here Rangel's choice of figure is amplified and complicated by his selection of compositional opportunity, given that the relative arrangement of the images featuring the white and the black mother could conceivably have been inverted. In Rangel's exposure of the white woman's poverty and fortitude, as his car speeds past she is left behind on the margins, as if foreshadowing

¹⁰⁸This is more explicit in Margarida Cardoso's film adaptation than in Lúcia Jorge's original novel, due to the racial disambiguation of the journalist figure in the former. In the novel, nevertheless, the protagonist views both the woman and her children as white and the tumbledown house in which the white mother of Sabino's children lives contrasts—ambiguously, it is true—with the half-finished new-build flat where the black mother of another set of his children is residing.

¹⁰⁹Berger, *Understanding*, 19.

the eventual fate of the woman's image and the account history would retain of such figures. In any case, this unknown image is ample testament to the heterogeneity of the white population, forgotten in what Castelo et al. call the "comfortable opposition" that essentializes colonizer and colonized.¹¹⁰ While colonial Mozambique was undeniably a "world cut in two" (as Fanon describes the colonial city),¹¹¹ this divide, as seen in these photos by Rangel, could be quite ragged. Fanon's emotive chiasmus in *Les Damnés de la terre* of "rich because white; white because rich"¹¹² might have been a vital strategic remark at the high noon of colonial rule but proves unhelpful today for parsing the complex social landscape of a city such as Lourenço Marques. As Anne McClintock argues, such synopses—exemplified also by nationalist constructions of Rangel's work—"run the risk of telescoping crucial geo-political distinctions into invisibility."¹¹³ Indeed, the existence of the sort of white poverty Rangel captures—a likely upshot of the influx of poor white metropolitans—might go some way to explaining the sectional polarization which in fact characterized late-colonial Mozambique and led to a state of informal apartheid.¹¹⁴ If photographs are indexical, and so comparable to the footprint, variously thought of as the mark of the person, the foot or the event of stepping,¹¹⁵ then this image can be thought of as the "depictive trace"¹¹⁶ of this barefoot woman on the shifting historical ground of Mozambique.

The World's Fattest Man

The final image to be discussed brings together colonial exploitation *and* the ambiguities of racial intermediacy. I examine it here in conclusion as it revisits a figure from a simple, well-known photograph by Rangel and thus creates an opportunity both to extend our knowledge of his oeuvre and to think further about the complexities of colonial society and the photographer's position within it. RR01_13_B_04 is part of a series of images documenting a fairground worker. The set contains the equivalent of an establishing shot (showing a carnival tent emblazoned with the boast "The World's Fattest Man"), expository images of the man in question and his family (one shot and group portraits) and concludes with various images showing him at work, a narrative drive that suggests the exposures were ingredients for a photo story (unpublished perhaps or even lost, as I have been unable to track it down). The odd subject matter aside, it was the familiarity of the main figure that first drew my attention, as he also features in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*. In this noted image, taken in Marracuene in 1973,¹¹⁷ we see a morbidly obese man seated on a stool outside his thatched hut, flanked by two small children who provide visual scale for his own vast

¹¹⁰Cláudia Castelo et al, "Tardo-Colonialismo," 19 (my translation).

¹¹¹Fanon, *Les Damnés*, 43 (my translation).

¹¹²Fanon, *Les Damnés*, 43 (my translation).

¹¹³Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'," *Social Text* 31–32 (1992): 87.

¹¹⁴See Francisco Bethencourt, "Introduction," in: *Racism and Ethnic Relations in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, ed. by Francisco Bethencourt and Adrian J. Pearce (Oxford: Oxford University Press/British Academy), 1–16.

¹¹⁵Mikael Petterson, "Depictive Traces: On the Phenomenology of Photography," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69, no. 2 (2011): 189.

¹¹⁶Petterson, "Depictive," 191.

¹¹⁷Rangel, *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique*, 73.

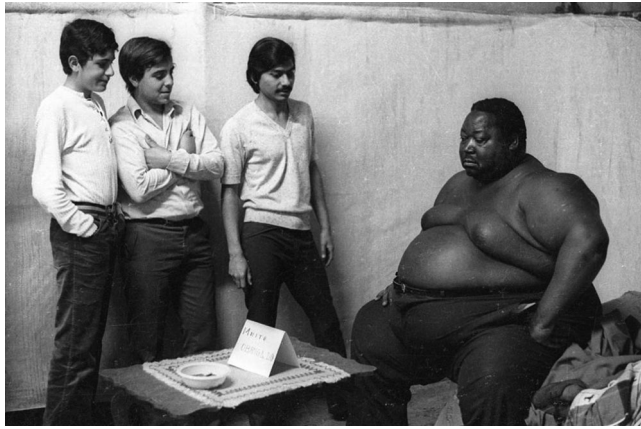


Figure 6. *The World's Fattest Man.* Lourenço Marques. Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica, Maputo. RR01_13_B_04.

bulk. The legend tells us that the man's name is Cumbe, he weighs 250kg, and works as a fisherman.¹¹⁸ RR01_13_B_04 shows Cumbe again, but in ostensibly different circumstances. Rather than his children, we see him with three young fairground visitors who have seemingly paid to goggle at his corpulence. Two of the onlookers are white. Leaning into one another they appear to share a common amusement. The third is South Asian and stands between Cumbe on the right and his fellows on the left.¹¹⁹ His mirth appears somewhat attenuated, as if he were a little unsure of his position, uncomfortable at finding entertainment in this spectacle, or uneasy before Rangel's camera. His downcast eyes echo those of Cumbe. A flimsy card, propped up on the table, reads "muito obrigado" [thank you very much], somewhat plaintively given the donations bowl placed before it is almost empty. It is a scene of hierarchy and humiliation, somewhat as if key members of the multi-racial gang of boys in Luís Bernardo Honwana's classic story "We Killed Mangy-Dog" of 1964 had been revisited in early manhood. "This" we could say, echoing Rangel in *Glowing Iron*, "is also a scene that can only be described as colonialism" (Figure 6).

Yet the image also presents a gradated picture of colonial structures, even if its fundamental injustice is of a piece with that dividing *Amarras*. John Berger argues that what is at stake in photography is the way in which it "can and cannot give meaning to facts."¹²⁰ Lesser-known images such as the "World's Fattest Man" series, and the others I have discussed here, contribute to the destabilization of any simple narrative of Rangel's life and work and of the unary meaning given to the factual content of his images, such as those contained in *Ricardo Rangel: Photographe du Mozambique* and

¹¹⁸This image originates in a photo story published in *Tempo* (no. 71, January 23, 1972, 15–21), where it accompanies a text written by Guilherme da Silva Pereira entitled "Alberto Cumba: 250 quilos de gente." While there is a certain sympathy for the man in Pereira's text, he is treated essentially as a visual sideshow attraction, a foreshadowing of his appearance in this seemingly later series.

¹¹⁹I use the term "South Asian" as Mozambique had—and has—communities from what were both Portuguese and British India. After Partition in 1947, and particularly after the annexation of Goa in 1961, Muslim Asians identified strongly as Pakistani. In the absence of any indication of whether the subject here is "Goan" Catholic, "Indian" Hindu, or "Pakistani" Muslim, I have preferred to describe him as "South Asian."

¹²⁰Berger, *Understanding*, 71.

echoed in nationalist accounts of Rangel as non-white cultural icon representing chiefly colonial privilege and the exploitation of his native countrymen. While some of Rangel's images, own statements, and top-billed summations of his work suggest an overriding depiction of Fanon's "Manichean world," the oeuvre does not bear this out.¹²¹ Rather it provides compelling images with which to reflect on Vale de Almeida's two-point injunction for postcolonial studies never to forget the inequality of power relations in the Portuguese empire but also not to simplistically dichotomize them.¹²² In their stark inequity and multihued social relations, the varied parts of Rangel's oeuvre allow us to see colonialism as a system generating injustice in myriad ways and not merely as a *simple* opposition of haves and have-nots. Rangel provides, in short, a visual way to approach Ashis Nandy's maxim that a true postcolonialism should champion the inclusive whole over the exclusive part.¹²³

The enabling complexity of *World's Fattest Man*, and the other images discussed here, including *Amarras*, results from the ambiguous and liminal position occupied by the photographing subject, which reflects a *mestiço* position, not *the* *mestiço* position, just as the shirted black onlooker in the *Baixa* and the *moluenes*, and the suited executives and poor white women, occupied differing racialized stations. Within colonialism's general logic of hierarchy and discrimination, there was a continuum of subject positions for whites, blacks and others; such racial identities should not be essentialized or considered ahistorically. Kendall Walton argues that the particular realism of the photograph comes from its unique ability to put the viewer in perceptual contact with the reality shown.¹²⁴ Whether we subscribe to the ontology put forward by Walton or not, it remains true that photographs often kindle an impression of visual interloping; Rangel's image of Cumbe at work induces this feeling in me at least. After all, are we not in a similar position to the punters snapped, and the picturing photographer, regarding Cumbe from a standpoint of separation and privilege, whether easy in our laughter or uncomfortable like the South-Asian subject or even Rangel himself? Here, as in so many of his images that do not circulate widely, Rangel's photographs go beyond John Szarkowski's classic division of photography into windows and mirrors¹²⁵—or outer exploration versus dramatized self-representations. They are instead subtly critical reflections both on the social environment and the position of the photographic agent within the same, located at the apex of a cone of vision whose scope embraces both an empty camera and bare white feet, the exclusion of the subaltern from colonial representation and the outer limits of the white community (which, rhetorically undermining group ideology, surely stiffened its collective drive to hold its position). As critical reflections these photographs thus constitute "a practical knowledge, an inscription of, and intervention in, a socially divided world"¹²⁶ and

¹²¹Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 2001), 255.

¹²²Miguel Vale de Almeida, "Not Quite White: Portuguese People in the Margins of Lusotropicalism, the Luso-Afro-Brazilian Space, and Lusophony," unpublished paper presented at "Antônio Vieira and the Futures of Luso-Afro-Brazilian Studies," Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, May 2, 2008.

¹²³Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 99.

¹²⁴Kendall Walton, "Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism," *Critical Inquiry* 11, no. 2 (1984): 267.

¹²⁵John Szarkowski, *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960s* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978).

¹²⁶John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography and the Everyday* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 4.

contribute to our understanding both of colonialism and the blind spots of anti-colonialism even as they compel us to assess how subject positions shape any act of analysis. Through all the photographs discussed here runs an element that begins with *Amarras*—the photographic object’s seeming or partial unsightedness contrasting with the photographer’s constitutive, and constative, act of seeing. By contrast with Cumbe’s downcast eyes, the Menino’s useless camera, the old woman’s apparent interiority, the impuissant return gazes of the girl, the woman and the street photographer, Rangel’s lens is attentive, unflinching. Rangel does not just see others, he sees *for* others, an act of applied privilege, not self-less, true, and not unproblematic, but still altruistic. What emerge here are Rangel’s key themes of vision and visibility to which he recurred throughout his life as a photographer, and which always had the effect of creating a multiplex critique of the world that colonialism helped make, revealing what was supposed to be hidden, witnessing in ways that short-circuited, within the frame of a negative at least, the colonial ideology that then dominated Mozambique.

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