

A Reply to Moritz Neumüller's "A Stone Thrown At My Head".

London by Gian Butturini – A Reception History, 1969-2021'

by Dennis Low

A year on, and it seemed like a fresh sense of perspective was needed. Following a well-timed and, ultimately, decisive social media campaign against Gian Butturini's *London* (1969), the Italian art publisher, Damiani, had withdrawn their 2017 facsimile edition from sale; and the celebrated British photographer, Martin Parr, who'd written its new introduction, had issued a public apology and stepped down as director of the newly minted Bristol Photo Festival. It was, believed photography curator and writer, Moritz Neumüller, high time for an impartial and balanced reassessment of the events that had occurred. His editors at *PhotoResearcher* anticipated a 'profound analysis of the sources' (2021, p.5) while Neumüller would, he himself maintained, be '[a]s an author in the scientific context', promising 'a comprehensive analysis'; 'a full historic perspective'; and 'an academic discourse that will enable a critical breakdown of the facts' (2021, p.137)¹.

At its best, Neumüller's long article, "'A Stone Thrown at My Head". *London by Gian Butturini – A Reception History, 1969-2021'*, delivers on some of those promises. His section on the 'physis and access' of the book, that presents an inventory of the differences between the first edition and the facsimile, is, indeed, 'the driest and most technical description of the book' (2021, p.139). The original is 3cm taller and wider than the facsimile, and an extra 0.5cm thick on account of a differing paper weight. The facsimile loses a Robert Capa quotation from the endpaper; and a removable white or yellow bellyband. The overall impression, given here, is one of professional competence, and the article's extensive textual apparatus, which runs to 22 illustrations and 95 footnotes over just 31 pages, lends its exhaustive gravitas to a forensic veneer, one carefully designed to give the impression that this must be a study in which no stone has been left unturned.

And, yet, this apparatus soon begins to unravel. In the opening paragraph, Neumüller contends that Butturini took the photographs for *London* in June 1969 (2021, p.135) and, in doing so, contradicts Michele Smargiassi, an important secondary source whom he references on three occasions, who asserts the

¹ For ease of cross-referencing, references to Moritz Neumüller's article have been inserted in the body of the text. For the full text of Neumüller's article, see: M. Neumüller, "'A Stone Thrown at My Head". *London by Gian Butturini – A Reception History, 1969-2021'*. *PhotoResearcher* (vol. 35, 2021), pp.134-165. It is also available as a free download at:
<https://www.academia.edu/47744232/_A_Stone_Thrown_at_My_Head_London_by_Gian_Butturini_A_Reception_History_1969_2021?source=swp_share>.

photographs were made in 1968.² A footnote is vital, here, but there's no reference to document Neumüller's alternative date. At first glance, this seems a trivial, hair-splitting point of order, but whether the photographs were made before or after Enoch Powell's infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech in April 1968 surely makes all the difference in a case as sensitive as this. A few pages later, after quoting an interesting contemporaneous review that reads Butturini's gorilla as an anti-racist provocation, Neumüller argues that 'This does not mean, of course, that other readers and the author himself were not aware of the racist trope' (2021, p.141). This time, he adds a footnote for good measure, referencing Livingstone Smith and Panaitiu's 'Aping the human essence' (2016) essay. Not only is it never made clear why this essay is referenced, but Neumüller seems unaware that this essay – like the rest of the volume in which it is published – takes pains to note the geographical and historical specificity of racist tropes and carefully acknowledges, too, its own, specific 'emphasis on the North American context'³. On a third page, the footnote is plainly wrong: the ninety-third footnote misattributes a quotation to the American photography journalist, Andrew Molitor, that, more properly, belongs to British photography graduate and blogger, Mick Yates (2021, p.165n).

Exuding an exhaustive scholarliness and an air of academic authority, Neumüller's textual apparatus thus becomes unstable on close inspection, at its worst incomplete, misleading, and factually inaccurate. There is, however, a central and most inconvenient truth that lies at the very heart of last summer's Parr-Butturini scandal, and Neumüller's refusal to acknowledge that truth, or even entertain the possibility of its existence, cascades through his scholarship with devastating implications. And that truth is this: Parr and Butturini's social media detractors, very limited in number and audience, never put forward a case to support their claims that Butturini's *London* was a racist text. '[I]t's racist, right?' Benjamin Chesterton would tell *10 Frames Per Second*, half-wondering whether to discuss any alternative before deciding against it, 'because - like, let's not even to go there in trying to [unintelligible] with that discussion'⁴. On Twitter, Paul Halliday would assert that 'It

² M. Smargiassi. (2020). Butturini razzista? Pensieri su un'occasione perduta. [online] Fotocrazia. Available at: <https://smargiassi-michele.blogautore.repubblica.it/2020/09/30/gian-butturini-ondon-martin-parr-fotografia-razzismo-halliday/> [Accessed 30 Jun. 2021].

³ D. L. Smith and I. Panaitiu. (2015). Aping the Human Essence: Simianization as Dehumanization. In *Simianization, Apes, Gender, Class, and Race*. Eds. W. D. Hund, C. W. Mill and S. Sebasitani. Zurich: LIT. p.77.

⁴ 10fps.net. (2021). *No. 72 Benjamin Chesterton – 10 Frames Per Second*. [online] Available at: <http://10fps.net/no-72-benjamin-chesterton/> [Accessed 12 Jul. 2021].

was racist shit in 1969, and it was racist shit in 2017'⁵; and that his teenage daughter, Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, 'did her research'⁶. But this research, if it existed at all, never materialised, for scrutiny, consideration, discussion, or debate. This distinct absence of argumentation, compounded by the blunt refusal of Paul Halliday, Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, and Benjamin Chesterton, to participate in interviews, thoroughly derails Neumüller's overriding and stated ambition for a balanced, critical, even quasi-scientific appraisal of Butturini's *London* and the subsequent scandal. Bewilderingly, in the stark absence of an actual case to précis, Neumüller's only option is to manufacture that case himself.

Neumüller's interviewees and allies seem to quickly rally behind the ill-fated conceit of his scientific objectivity. Belgium-based artist, Jorge Luis Álvarez Pupo, whom Neumüller, as festival curator, included in *PhotoIreland* in 2012⁷, delivers a fake and baseless statistic: 'I would dare to say that 95 % of black or colored people would be shocked' (2021, p.150). Azu Nwagbogu, whom Neumüller had worked with on *PhotoIreland's New Irish Works* project in 2016⁸, offers similarly meaningless stats: 'Out of one hundred people who see this image on the internet, ninety-five will say that it is completely abysmal and wrong' (2021, p.163); 'Racism was rife with lots of overt racism and tensions in society. Butturini was 100 % aware of this and the danger of aping blackness and its dehumanising effect' (2021, p.162). By way of emotional leverage, Pupo includes an anecdote about being racially abused by his late girlfriend's toddler nephew, while Nwagbogu, more soberly, adds a thumbnail history of Britain's Windrush generation, asserting that 'The 1960s were probably the peak of the Windrush generation with a sudden influx of Afro-Caribbeans and others from Africa and the Commonwealth who came to work and earn a living in the United Kingdom' (2021, p.162). Nwagbogu is apparently unaware of the Commonwealth Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1968 which severely curtailed work-related immigration from the Commonwealth, and, additionally, set up a difficult work voucher application as a requirement in the process.

⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1202733658735566848> [Accessed 7 Jun. 2021].

⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1292747735624560645> [Accessed 7 Jun. 2021].

⁷ PhotoIreland. (2012). *PhotoIreland Festival 2012: Migrations 1-31 July*. [online]. Available at: http://2012.photoireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/PIF_2012_Catalogue.pdf. [Accessed 7 Jun 2021].

⁸ PhotoIreland. (2013). *About New Irish Works - New Irish Works*. [online] New Irish Works. Available at: <https://newirishworks.com/about/> [Accessed 7 Jun. 2021].

To this hodgepodge of invented, ‘scientific’ statistics, unrelated personal anecdote, and historical untruth that stands in for the absent argument of Butturini’s detractors, Neumüller adds his own, fanciful exaggerations. Needing to create, from scratch, an international stage for the debate, Neumüller disingenuously offers a rhetorical sleight of hand regarding the book’s distribution worldwide. ‘Today,’ he writes, ‘both versions of *London by Gian Butturini* are part of public library holdings, in the US, Italy, Germany, the UK, Sweden, and The Netherlands, but also as far away as Australia and Singapore’ (2021, p.140). *Worldcat*, the world’s largest and single most comprehensive library catalogue, lists only one copy in Australia (RMIT University, Melbourne) and one in Singapore (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore). Just two copies of the book, each costing around €40, would, in Neumüller’s homeopathic estimation, enlarge the global territory for Butturini’s book by approximately 7.7 million square kilometres. This wilful exaggeration is one that Neumüller knowingly executes, but he’s barely started. He knows that Damiani had been contracted to produce 2,000 copies of the book and had, as is common practice in the publishing industry, extended the actual print run to 2,200 copies (a final figure confirmed by their own documentation, held by the Butturini estate). He also knows that, upon publication, the Butturini estate had purchased 200 copies for their own use; and that, upon the book’s withdrawal from sale, 1,200 and 820 copies were returned to the Butturini estate from American and British warehouses respectively.⁹ Allowing for counting errors at every stage, the incontrovertible fact remains that the total number of copies sold, including the 40 library copies listed by *Worldcat*, was statistically insignificant. A quick calculation demonstrates that *London* was, for all the time it had been on the market, nothing short of an unmitigated commercial failure; and it’s perhaps for this reason that Damiani so readily acquiesced to the book’s withdrawal.¹⁰ These bottom-line ledger details, revealing as they are, go entirely ignored by Neumüller in favour of an undocumented, ‘*estimated* edition of [...] 3,000’ (2021, p.139, my emphasis). This significantly higher number conjures approximately 740 imaginary copies of the book into existence, 740 paper apparitions to go forth into the world – not a huge number, to be sure, but better than none at all. In any event and, by now, somewhat incoherently, even Neumüller has to concede

⁹ Personal email from Moritz Neumüller to Dennis Low, 9 January 2021.

¹⁰ For a while, a brief notice on the Damiani website read: ‘In line with its ideals of tolerance, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, Damiani has decided to suspend sales of Gian Butturini’s book “London” in order not to fuel controversy and manipulation with regard to the unfounded accusations of racism brought against Gian Butturini and Martin Parr.’ See: Damiani. (2020). *London by Gian Butturini: suspended sales*. [online] Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20210116075117/https://www.damianieditore.com/en-US/blog/london_by_gian_butturini_suspended_sales [Accessed 30 Jun. 2021].

that, 'Despite Martin Parr's engagement, the new edition of *London by Gian Butturini* received only a modest amount of attention outside of Italy' (2021, p.152).

For all of Neumüller's profuse appeals to impartiality and critical objectivity, the very notion that Butturini's book had not only offended, but offended widely – globally – remains an untested one, founded not upon documentary evidence, but on faith, or magical thinking, alone. 'I genuinely *believe*', he writes, 'that the juxtaposition "horrified", "appalled", "disgusted" and "outraged" many, in a debate involving the photographic community in the UK, the US, and other Western countries, and to a lesser extent, in India, China, Russia and Latin America' (2021, p.153, my emphasis). Conversely, if Butturini's detractors had to, somehow, be augmented, contorted, and marshalled into the semblance of a coherent argument, that could, subsequently, be used in some kind of ideological balloon debate, Butturini's supporters, consisting of international academics, gallerists, and respected journalists from national newspapers across Europe, not to mention the Butturini estate itself, had to be curtailed or declawed.

Neumüller's principal strategy when it comes to this is heavily reliant on careful elisions of his article's subtitle, 'A Reception History, 1969-2021'. Far from delivering the 'full historic perspective' that, promised early on, encompasses 'the reception and discussion of the book, between late 1969 and early 2021, in an academic discourse' (2021, p.137), Neumüller erases key parts of that chronology. In fact, his first erasure constitutes almost the entire chronology, from circa 1970, when *London* won the Premio EPOCA Diaframma 22 prize (2021, p.140), to circa 2014 and the publication of Parr and Badger's *The Photobook: A History, Volume III*, in which it is featured (2021, p.140). Neumüller asserts that, soon after its publication in 1969, Butturini's *London* 'became a cult book, recognized for its rough and provocative style, and its highly political content' (2021, p.135). A few pages on, however, he suggests that, shortly after publication, '*London by Gian Butturini* soon became a rarity and was little known internationally, until it entered volume III of Parr/Badger's photobook anthology' (2021, p.141). If most of its history is as a 'cult book', Neumüller's readers are never privy to that history: he never describes who the book's collectors are; what his sources are for their recognizing its 'provocative style' and 'political content'; and what sustains their interest, for almost four decades, until Parr and Badger bring it wider attention by including it in *The Photobook*. Neumüller's second erasure is a contemporary one. In contrast to his delicate picking over of individual tweets from the "Less Than Human" / @LTHDebate account on Twitter, Neumüller frankly seems uninterested in *London's* reception in Italy from 2020 onwards. He mentions 'several discussions'; 'an exhibition called *Save the Book*'; and how this

exhibition, on its own, resulted in ‘around 70 news items, both in digital and traditional media’, including ‘larger newspapers such as *La Repubblica*, and the *Corriere della Sera*’ (2021, p.157). All of this is hurriedly dispatched, in barely half a paragraph, unceremoniously handicapped to make for a fairer fight when pitted against the non-existent argument of Butturini’s tiny mob.

Neumüller’s dogged determination to achieve a seemingly balanced article doesn’t stop here, and his interventions soon become ever more brazen. On no less than three occasions, for example, does Neumüller raise the question of whether Butturini’s contemporary audiences would have understood his book as racist. It’s a useful question: racial slurs, like any aspect of culture and language, are geographically, historically, and culturally specific. Twice, Neumüller cuts the difference: ‘[...] to contemporary Italian viewers, the simianisation trope might not have been instantly recognizable or a binding interpretation for this spread in the *London* book’, he writes, ‘This does not mean, of course, that other readers and the author himself were not aware of the racist trope’ (2021, p.141). Later, reading Burgin on Winogrand, he again asks: ‘Do we have to find binding proof that the Italian (and British) public of the late 1960s would not have understood the aping trope?’ (2021, p.161) Neumüller’s is, at this point, a topsy-turvy and wilful logic, one that demands conclusive but impossible proof of something not existing, rather than leveraging reasonable and documented proof to the contrary. If such proof existed, it would be a simple enough matter for Neumüller to find contemporaneous uses of the ‘racist shit’ Butturini was accused of channelling in his photography, whether that be in the form of newspapers, satirical cartoons, joke books, police reports, academic studies or reports on racism – European, late-1960s equivalents of the North American material so carefully and importantly archived in Michigan’s Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia.

And, yet, unable, or unwilling, to even begin to show that simianisation tropes directed at black people were circulated and commonly understood in Italy and/or Britain circa 1969, Neumüller reaches an impasse that can only be overcome by misdirection. In order to maintain the possibility that Butturini knew the trope that *London* allegedly replicates, Neumüller outsources research on the subject to an expert, before, in an apparently inexplicable move, relegating that same expert to his thirty-second footnote:

According to Stefania Ragusa, a specialist in African Culture from the University of Parma, discrimination in these years was mainly aimed at Roma, Sinti and Caminanti, as well as Jews, and the inhabitants of the southern part of Italy. She notes that “many Africans who came to Italy in the 70s /

80s of the last century, often for study reasons, say they felt then the object of curiosity rather than racism. Things began to change in the late 1980s, when migration to Italy intensified". (2021, p.148n)

Stefania Ragusa's comments certainly begin to offer a counterpoint to Nwagbogu's unfounded assertion that 'Butturini was 100 % aware of this and the danger of aping blackness' (2021, p.162). But, shoehorned into a small-print footnote, rather than highlighted on a separate and differently coloured page and given pride of place in the way that Nwagbogu's interview is, Ragusa's comments – and, by extension, her critical position and scholarly authority – are necessarily diminished for the illusion of critical balance. Neumüller's strategic but somewhat passive-aggressive decision to do this is made all the more evident when the source for Ragusa's comments is fully considered. Neumüller references the above as coming from a 'personal email exchange, on 19 January 2021' (2021, p.148n). From the selected quotation, it presents as a general overview of post-war race relations in Italy. In actuality, however, Ragusa's email responds, directly, to Neumüller's repeated quandary regarding 'proof that the Italian (and British) public of the late 1960s would not have understood the aping trope' (2021, p.161). Ragusa's original email begins:

Hello everybody.

Here is my answer. I can't know what references Gian Butturini had in his mind when he made his book or if he was familiar with the American debate on racism. I'm sure however that in Italy, in 1969, there was no specific discussion about the use of the word "black" or the racist and discriminatory power of certain images.¹¹

In addition to burying her within his vast and unwieldy textual apparatus, Neumüller is also compelled to severely redact Ragusa's comments, all the while giving absolutely no indication that he is doing so. As I have argued, the absence of argument from Butturini's detractors necessitates this. But, as we will see, there was still more for Neumüller to do. Not only did he need to create an argument for Butturini's detractors to make his article present as balanced and critical, not only did he have to hamstring a respected academic and

¹¹ Personal email from Stefania Ragusa to Moritz Neumüller and Dennis Low, 19 January 2021.

journalist writing in support of Butturini by covertly redacting their opinions, but he also had to go so far as to help the detractors conceal their true motivations and identities.

In their editorial, the editors of *PhotoResearcher* give a flavour of what is to come in Neumüller's article. 'In late May 2019,' they write, 'the renowned British photographer and photobook collector suddenly saw himself confronted with an accusation of perpetuating racist tropes when the black student Mercedes Baptiste Halliday posted a tweet drawing attention to a combination of motifs on a double-page spread in the book that she felt were offensive and hurtful' (2021, p.4). Neumüller picks up and sustains the same narrative, introducing the student as 'Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, a young woman from Clapham, [who] called on her followers "to confront such vile #racism within #BritishPhotography"' (2021, p.135); and 'Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, who started the social media campaign' (2021, p.157). Pupo, his interviewee, also picks up the same thread: 'I also understand that Mercedes (Baptiste Halliday), when she received the book, was upset. I would dare to say that 95 % of black or colored people would be shocked', he writes, '[...] I understand that Mercedes felt offended by the image' (2021, p.150). Of course, it is not without reason that the editors of *PhotoResearcher*, Pupo, and Neumüller himself pursue this Mercedes-focussed narrative. It was, after all, the very story that was reported in the press, both in the UK and abroad. In Neumüller's article, there is a tacitly held assumption that the press is professional, unbiased and balanced, in the same way that he himself purports to be. In making that assumption, however, Neumüller overlooks – or must wilfully ignore – that not all journalists are created equal in this respect.

Andy Day, senior writer at the photography interest site, *Fstoppers*, was one of the first journalists to break the news about the allegation of racism levied at Butturini's *London*, and Parr's subsequent resignation from the Bristol Photo Festival. Day reports, simply, that 'Complaints were first raised in May 2019 by Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, a student who received Butturini's book as a gift'¹². The campaign's spin-doctoring begins here, given that even Paul Halliday's own tweets confirm the he would 'never forget the look on my partner's and daughter's faces when I showed them #MartinParr's layout'¹³ and 'bought her another book'¹⁴. It

¹² A. Day. (2020). Magnum Photographer Martin Parr Steps Down from Festival Following Outcry Over "Racist" Photobook. [online] *Fstoppers*. Available at: <https://fstoppers.com/documentary/magnum-photographer-martin-parr-removed-festival-following-outcry-over-racist-501809> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021].

¹³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/113331377877505792> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

¹⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/113331377877505792> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

was a point of fact that did not go by unnoticed. Manick Govinda noted that '[Mercedes Baptiste] Halliday was *reportedly* given the book by her father on her 18th birthday' (my emphasis)¹⁵, something that was soon followed up (without reply) on social media. 'Can I ask Paul was @manick62 right in his article that you gave the book in question to your daughter?' asked Rupert Rivett (@rupephoto), 'And if you did what was the reasoning for you to do that?'¹⁶

Additionally, what the statement from Day also belies is that Day had been wanting to run the story for more than a year. As the "Less than Human Debate" account (@LTHDebate) debuted on Twitter, he wrote, in reply to their pinned 'horrified' and 'appalled' tweet, quoted by Neumüller (2021, p.153): 'Has there been any response from the photographer, the publisher, or Parr? @duckrabbitblog @PaulTHalliday Putting together a short news article for Fstoppers'¹⁷. It's interesting, seeing so many of Butturini's detractors assembled, so early, in the one tweet – Benjamin Chesterton (@duckrabbitblog); Mercedes' father, Paul Halliday (@paulthalliday), a photography lecturer at Goldsmiths University; the @LTHDebate account; and Andy Day (@kiell). But, even more interesting is tracing their relationships elsewhere on Twitter. 'Cobbling an initial [sic] draft of an article for Fstoppers' writes Day to Halliday in August 2019, 'Might send it over to you for some thoughts'¹⁸. The informal mentorship this tweet hints at is readily unpacked by other exchanges. On one occasion, Halliday tweets: 'I remember when @kiell was doing his MA Photography & Urban Cultures at @SociologyGold, thinking: "today is Andy day, and I wonder what incredible monuments and buildings he's going to show us?"'¹⁹; to which Day replies, 'Ha! Those were some good times'²⁰. In another, Halliday writes, 'Yes, it's true Andy - what with your highfalutin ideas around #photoethics and hands-on image-making - what

¹⁵ M. Govinda. (2020). The cancellation of Martin Parr. [online] Spiked-online.com. Available at: <https://www.spiked-online.com/2020/07/27/the-cancellation-of-martin-parr/> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

¹⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/rupephoto/status/1288254002048581632> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

¹⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/kiell/status/1133301162801881088> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021].

¹⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/kiell/status/1160891086920921088> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021].

¹⁹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1271510908133609472> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021].

²⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/kiell/status/1271542628270649344> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021].

gives you the right to have views on #photography?’²¹; to which Day replies, ‘I guess I need to send back my degree certificate. Let me know your address’²².

What is also absent, from Day’s piece on Butturini for *FStoppers*, is any indication, professional disclosure, or otherwise, of Day’s intimate and evidenced relationship with Halliday – his former lecturer and Mercedes’s father – with whom he feels very comfortable sending *FStopper* article drafts. Day’s silence with regards to this prior relationship proved crucial in the early formulation of the Butturini scandal, because it gave Halliday the opportunity to distance himself from his own campaign, allowing it to run as if it had been the brainchild of a quickly anonymised daughter, who not only played better with the media at the height of *Black Lives Matter* protests in mid-2020, but was never called upon to present any argument regarding Butturini’s alleged racism. ‘It was a young Black student from London who stood up and challenged this abuse’²³ tweeted Halliday; ‘the Black student who first challenged the gorilla racist trope not only ‘did her research’, but is currently studying anthropology and archaeology in the top rated department in the world’²⁴; ‘Seen some reactionary bigots upset that #MartinParr was challenged by a young Black woman’.²⁵ Roxanne Baptiste – Mercedes’ mother, Halliday’s partner, and lecturer in media production and Westminster Kingsway College – also chimed in to similar effect, distancing herself from her own, photo-documented involvement as she did so.²⁶ ‘Young people are out demonstrating on the streets against structural racism’, tweeted Baptiste, ‘Surely the @guardian can at least make an attempt to interview the campaigners @LTHdebate they did the work. Don’t take their voice!’²⁷

If the campaign could be handed over, so, too, could the machinery of that campaign. In 2019, Halliday was an active participant in the small protest outside London’s National Portrait Gallery, briefly

²¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1227860975505768448> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021].

²² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/kiell/status/1227864836006129664> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2021].

²³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1198532479495352320> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

²⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1292747735624560645> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

²⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1285930414360715264> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

²⁶ T. Seymour. (2020). Martin Parr steps down as artistic director of Bristol Photo Festival after student’s anti-racism campaign. [online] *Theartnewspaper.com*. Available at: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/martin-parr-stood-down-from-bristol-photo-festival-after-student-anti-racism-campaign> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

²⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/baproxanne/status/1278789712635977731> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

referred to by Neumüller (2021, p.153). ‘The people we spoke to outside the @NPGLondon were appalled’²⁸, wrote Halliday, whom Michiel Kruijt has also revealed as the fimographer for an accompanying video.²⁹ Only later, would Halliday recast himself, from a member of a family outing with his daughter and partner, into a third-party witness: ‘I saw the protest outside the #NationalGallery led by young #BlackWomen’³⁰; ‘I saw how @LTHdebate was ignored, then belittled for challenging what she and her friends knew to be wrong’³¹. As we begin to see here, already, in these quotations, the “Less Than Human Debate” (@LTHDebate) account on Twitter would also undergo a metaphorical transfer of ownership. Having begun life as a collective ‘we’, Twitter’s @LTHDebate account soon became interchangeable with Mercedes herself, right up until the present: ‘When people talk about “photographic history”, this will be there’, wrote Halliday, ‘Write your account Ben[jamin Chesterton]. I’m writing mine. @LTHdebate will write hers’³²; and, more recently, ‘I’ve been approached by Moritz [Neumüller] for an interview along with @LTHdebate’³³.

Interestingly, both users on Twitter and the press at large seemed at least partially aware that everything was not what it seemed regarding the Mercedes narrative. American photography journalist, Andrew Molitor, called out @LTHDebate as a ‘sock puppet account’³⁴ on no less than two occasions, only to receive, from Halliday and @LTHDebate, clumsily worded responses. ‘So,’ writes Halliday, ‘the @LTHdebate that you describe as a “sock-puppet account” was set up by a young #Black woman’³⁵. Similar wording, and a tell-tale first-person singular seem to betray the true identity of @LTHDebate: ‘As I previously said, this

²⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1133135558098788352> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

²⁹ M. Kruijt. (2020). Martin Parr, Icon of British Photography, in Disgrace After Being Accused of Racism. [online] de Volkskrant. Available at: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/martin-parr-icon-of-british-photography-in-disgrace-after-being-accused-of-racism~ba5a826c/> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

³⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1282704019341955078> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

³¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1288039287359971329> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

³² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1288849077585797123> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

³³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1343976635842879496> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

³⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/amolitor99/status/1134171620061302784> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/amolitor99/status/1141471572789567488> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

³⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: https://twitter.com/amolitor99/status/1134171620061302784/retweets/with_comments [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

account isn't run by Paul [Halliday], he is just supporting it, as a number of other people are. This account was set up by a young black woman'³⁶.

Some journalists took up the Mercedes narrative unknowingly and in good faith. Writing for *The Art Newspaper*, Tom Seymour reported: 'Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, from London, who is currently a student at University College London, drove an 18-month protest against the book and Parr's involvement, which led to the prominent photographer stepping down from the Bristol Photo Festival this week'³⁷; 'Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, from Clapham, London, who is currently studying anthropology at University College London, has driven an 18-month protest against a photography book credited as being by Parr and which he promoted for a sustained length of time'³⁸. On Twitter, too, Seymour would lend his support to the Mercedes narrative, tweeting, 'I told her personally and will say publicly that Mercedes should be proud of herself for raising these concerns'³⁹. By September, Seymour was turning to Mercedes' father for an expert opinion on his own campaign:

"Pandora's box has been opened," says Paul Halliday, a photography lecturer at Goldsmiths University of London. "It's a moment of crisis for photography's status quo [...] A lot of lecturers have been very upset by recent events and are increasingly uncomfortable with how these so-called masters have been traditionally taught," Halliday says [...]"⁴⁰

Day and Seymour were important components in initiating and sustaining the Mercedes narrative. But while they were wittingly or unwittingly disseminating it, other parts of the press seemed wary. Referring to the protest at the National Portrait Gallery, Lanre Bakare, writing for the *Guardian*, chose not to mention any of

³⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/LTHdebate/status/1141842389406867456> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

³⁷ T. Seymour. (2020). Martin Parr's resignation from photo festival sparks "cancel culture" debate. [online] *Theartnewspaper.com*. Available at: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/martin-parr-s-festival-abdication-sparks-cancel-culture-debate> [Accessed 12 Jun. 2021].

³⁸ T. Seymour. (2020). Martin Parr steps down as artistic director of Bristol Photo Festival after student's anti-racism campaign. [online] *Theartnewspaper.com*. Available at: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/martin-parr-stood-down-from-bristol-photo-festival-after-student-anti-racism-campaign> [Accessed 12 Jun. 2021].

³⁹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/TomSeymour/status/1285637076298485764> [Accessed 12 Jun. 2021].

⁴⁰ T. Seymour. (2020). Photo finish? Dubious practices in the firing line. *The Art Newspaper*, September 2020 [print edition].

the protestors by name.⁴¹ Halliday was incensed: 'This makes disturbing reading. The @guardian article erases the activism of young #BlackWomen who campaign against racism in #BritishPhotography'⁴². So, too, was his partner, Roxanne Baptiste, ('Surely the @guardian can at least make an attempt to interview the campaigners @LTHdebate they did the work. Don't take their voice!'), and the @LTHDebate account: '@LTHdebate was set up by young black women fed up with the presentation of racial stereotypes within British Photography. @Lanre_Bakare @Guardian this was a wasted opportunity to talk to young black people about why #BlackLivesMatter'⁴³. Conversely, any journalist who attempted to highlight Halliday's paternal relationship to Mercedes quickly drew ire: 'Even those who criticise this trend are mobbed', wrote Manick Govinda for *Spiked*, 'Paul Halliday – the father of principal protester Mercedes, and an MA course leader at Goldsmiths – accused me on Twitter of being a 'brown racist enabler'. He has denounced others for their associations with Parr.'⁴⁴

Michiel Kruijt's long article for the Dutch newspaper, *de Volkskrant*, is a masterly piece of detective work when it comes to recuperating Halliday's carefully hidden involvement in the matter, but it only served to confirm what academics, industry insiders, and other interested parties closer to the ground seemed to already know.⁴⁵ The beginning of the new university year in September 2020 saw a litany of high-profile public complaints levied, not at the undergraduate student, Mercedes Baptiste Halliday, but at her father, Paul Halliday, lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. At the time of writing, the ensuing investigation by Goldsmiths' senior management is in its tenth month. If there is any residual doubt as to whom the campaign against Butturini belonged, it is put to rest by Halliday's more recent tweets: 'I, along with 3 other people [...] challenged a book juxtaposing a Black woman with a gorilla'⁴⁶ he writes; 'Yes, I was 'Spiked' when I challenged a publication that juxtaposed an elderly Black woman with a gorilla'⁴⁷. Neumüller was aware of most, if not all,

⁴¹ L. Bakare. (2020). UK photography body removes image "playing to racist stereotypes." [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/jul/02/uk-photography-body-removes-image-playing-to-racist-stereotypes> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

⁴² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1278765518854504454> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

⁴³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/LTHdebate/status/1278760828469235713> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

⁴⁴ M. Govinda. (2020). The cancellation of Martin Parr. [online] *Spiked-online.com*. Available at: <https://www.spiked-online.com/2020/07/27/the-cancellation-of-martin-parr/> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

⁴⁵ M. Kruijt. (2020). Martin Parr, Icon of British Photography, in Disgrace After Being Accused of Racism. [online] *de Volkskrant*. Available at: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/martin-parr-icon-of-british-photography-in-disgrace-after-being-accused-of-racism~ba5a826c/> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

⁴⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1326330205514960896> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

⁴⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1378425346048024578> [Accessed 12 Jun. 2021].

of the political machinations and backstage personal politics that I've described here, but they are, for the most part, actively suppressed in his account. Early on in his article he writes, 'To my regret, Dennis Low did not release his interview for publication' (p.138). An important passage, relating to the public complaints made against Halliday, had been carefully redacted from the transcript of my interview and this, as I explained to the editors of *PhotoResearcher*, was the reason I had been unable to release it for publication.

In minimising Halliday's involvement in the campaign against Butturini, Neumüller is able to re-authorise the very same Mercedes narrative that even social media and the press had begun to question and shy away from. Even if Butturini's detractors lacked an argument to support their allegations, at least, in Mercedes, they had the shape of something: an emotive, against-the-odds story that was easy to get behind; a 'young, black woman' protagonist who, coming of age on her eighteenth birthday, might, conceivably, have just a pinch of Jen Reid's zeitgeist heroism.⁴⁸ The Mercedes narrative legitimised Butturini's detractors, and kept them respectable. On paper, it superficially resembled a clear, ideological position, fuelled by a defiance of racial injustice. In actuality, it was a subterfuge, a mere foil – albeit one cut from noble principles – to hide the pettiest and basest of motives: the green-eyed monster of professional jealousy.

Paul Halliday, by any measure, cuts a strange figure. His career seemed to begin promisingly enough. By his own account, he had, by the age of 17, become 'the youngest tutor in ILEA (Inner London Education Authority)⁴⁹'. He was commissioned by Channel 4 for *Steven Lawrence: Living with the Bunker* (1994), a documentary that was warmly received.⁵⁰ He taught at Croydon College; was 'invited to become a visiting Fellow in the Centre for Urban and Community Research'⁵¹ at Goldsmiths; and would take up a position, at Goldsmiths, as programme convenor for the MA Photography and Urban Cultures degree. In 2007, he became a director of Photofusion, then one of the UK's most prestigious photography charities, which enjoyed long-

⁴⁸ A. Bland. (2020). Edward Colston statue replaced by sculpture of Black Lives Matter protester Jen Reid. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/15/edward-colston-statue-replaced-by-sculpture-of-black-lives-matter-protester> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

⁴⁹ Archive.org. (2016). Critique of Street Photography – Interview with Paul Halliday. [online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180830210013/http://critiqueofstreetphotography.org/interview.html> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

⁵⁰ E. Gibb. (1994). The List: 4 Nov 1994 (Issue 240). [online] Available at: <https://archive.list.co.uk/the-list/1994-11-04/85/>. [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁵¹ Archive.org. (2016). Critique of Street Photography – Interview with Paul Halliday. [online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190209215528/http://www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org/interview.html> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

standing National Portfolio of Arts Organisations (NPO) status at Arts Council England. Up until that point, it was a career of which any mid-career academic/photographer would have been justifiably proud.

It is difficult to pinpoint precisely what faltered for Halliday. Perhaps it was the decline of Photofusion. Halliday's directorship oversaw the collapse of that charity's revenue, which fell from approximately £600k in 2007 to £100k in 2015. In 2014, Arts Council England announced there would be no more funding for Photofusion, which had received funds, annually, for 30 years. Halliday stepped down from his directorship in 2015, just weeks after that funding formally came to an end. (With Photofusion no longer the portfolio concern it once was, British photography would, it seemed, need to lean on a new charity, the Martin Parr Foundation, founded in 2014.)

Yet, for all the institutional troubles at Photofusion, a booming interest in street photography, which had quietly gathered momentum since Nick Turpin's founding of the in-Public collective in 2000, seemed to offer new opportunities for Halliday. 2011 saw in the launch of the inaugural and highly successful London Street Photography Festival (LSPF) which, in addition to representing many members of the in-Public collective, also invited Martin Parr to participate. Parr not only contributed to the festival but went on to select images from that festival to show at the prestigious Les Rencontres d'Arles photo festival the following year and, in doing so, helped revitalise interest in contemporary street photography. Either the LSPF festival or the Arles show might have been high-profile exhibition opportunities for Halliday except, however, he was not part of LSPF and, therefore, not available for Parr's selection for Arles. On the opening night of the LSPF festival, marked by the opening of an exciting exhibition of women street photographers at Photofusion, Halliday staged his own, non-festival event at Whitechapel Gallery, in which he discussed his own street photography of London, an extended project which he called *Urban Detours*.⁵²

Urban Detours was, even by 2011, already old work. Describing it for *London Independent Photography* magazine in 2006, Halliday wrote: 'This summer will see the completion of a twenty-year photography project focusing on London's streets and public places. I decided to initiate the project whilst completing the London College of Printing (now the London College of Communication) diploma in photojournalism in 1986'⁵³. Its exact dates frantically oscillate thereafter, perhaps in an attempt to appear

⁵² Flickr. (2020). Flickr, Paul Halliday and Photographing Society. *Flickr*, 3 Oct. 2020. [online] Available at: www.flickr.com/groups/instruction36/discuss/72157626775888175/. [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

⁵³ P. Halliday, P. Kilsby, B. Keane, B. and J, Rhodes, (2006). [online] *London Independent Photography*. Available at: https://www.londonphotography.org.uk/magazine/pdf/2006_Summer.pdf. [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

current and, therefore, relevant. Helen Thomas and Jamilah Ahmed's *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory* (2008) noted that Halliday was 'currently completing a 12-year photographic and film project focusing on street cultures in London'⁵⁴. Five years later, in 2013, when Halliday's partner, Roxanne Baptiste, interviewed him for his own <www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org> website, the project had elongated back to 20 years, encompassing 'images of places in London that were also shown in the Channel 4 documentary 'Living With The Bunker' which you directed in 1994'⁵⁵. In an interview for <PersonalWork.Online> in 2020, confusingly titled 'Paul Halliday, Course Leader Goldsmiths MA Photography & Urban Cultures, on why he's spending 20 years photographing London', the project snaps back to a twenty-year one with the original dates, 'launched at a Tate Modern conference in 2006'⁵⁶. Without doubt, *Urban Detours* was, and continues to be, Halliday's magnum opus. It was the sole content of <www.paulhalliday.org> which ran from circa 2007 to 2018, and the principal focus, too, of the recently defunct <www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org>. Tragically, for Halliday, no-one has ever seemed much interested. Recently, the newest iteration of Halliday's twenty-year project has been an extended YouTube presentation which, at the time of writing, had received 182 hits, 2 likes, and 4 dislikes.⁵⁷

Critical indifference to his *Urban Detours* project seems to have spurred Halliday into action. In 2012 he founded his own Urban Photo Fest⁵⁸ and an academically minded International Association of Visual Urbanists⁵⁹, clearly in competition to the London Street Photography Festival and the in-Public collective from which he'd been excluded the previous year. But still the critical indifference and exclusion rankled. In late 2011, the Museum of London – a stakeholder in LSPF – published *London Street Photography, 1860-2010*, edited by their Senior Curator of Photographs, Mike Seaborne. in-Public's founder, Nick Turpin, and Parr were both invited to contribute but Halliday was not. His response was the aforementioned

⁵⁴ H. Thomas and J. Ahmed, eds. (2008). *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, p.ix.

⁵⁵ Archive.org. (2016). Critique of Street Photography – Interview with Paul Halliday. [online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190209215528/http://www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org/interview.html> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

⁵⁶ Personal Work. (2020). Paul Halliday, Course Leader Goldsmiths MA Photography & Urban Cultures, on why he's spending 20 years photographing London. - Personal Work. [online] Available at: <https://personalwork.online/paul-halliday-course-leader-goldsmiths-ma-photogrpahy-urban-cultures-on-why-hes-spending-20-years-photographing-london/>[Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

⁵⁷ Chitr Sanstha (2020). Dekho Paul T Halliday Full talk presented by Chitr Sanstha. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAQtN63vwj4> [Accessed 20 Jun. 2021].

⁵⁸ Archive.org. (2011). [online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121203055940/http://urbanphotofest.org/home/> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁵⁹ International Association of Visual Urbanists. (2017). [online] Available at: <https://iavu.org/index.html> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

<www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org>, a personal website for which his partner, Roxanne Baptiste, interviewed him. The interview, approximately 7,000 words in length, is vitriolic, resentful, and uneasily grandiose in its claims. Unchecked, Halliday convolutedly asserts that his Stephen Lawrence documentary 'made history as the first Channel 4 film about a London street photographer to reach a mass audience'. And, of Seaborne's book, he says:

[A]ny publication that purports to give a history of street photography in London, by definition would have needed to make reference to the work of Marketa Luskacova, Rut [Blees Luxemburg], Mark [Power] and myself. I don't say that as an egotistical thing; rather, I say it as a statement of fact.⁶⁰

Luskačová and Luxemburg would be quickly mobilised, too, to take a pot shot at Sophie Howarth and Stephen McLaren's highly successful *Street Photography Now* (2010) book, which had also featured Parr and Turpin but not Halliday. For Halliday, their exclusion – which, as we have seen, was also a proxy for his own exclusion – quickly became a smoking gun for the publication's 'mate-ology' [...] in the section labouring under the title 'Reclaiming the Streets', Halliday told his partner, 'a disproportionate number of those were from In-Public'⁶¹.

If 2011 had been a year of disappointment for Halliday, with his exclusion from LSPF, Arles, and the 150-year history of London street photography, there was more to follow. Under the auspices of Martin Parr, that same history of London street photography would soon explode in a profusion of hitherto unknown names, diluting whatever residual value *Urban Detours* had, as a geographically-bound, photographic archive, ever further. Parr showcased his collection of London-based photobooks at the Barbican with an exhibition called *Strange and Familiar: Britain as Revealed by International Photographers*. In its vitrines lay Gian Butturini's *London* which, interestingly, was shown again in *Photobook Phenomenon*, curated by Neumüller (2021, p.140n). Predictably, Neumüller takes care to elide over his own, far from insignificant role in Butturini's contemporary exhibition history, presenting *London*, as he did, at two separate venues in Barcelona in 2017,

⁶⁰ Archive.org. (2016). Critique of Street Photography – Interview with Paul Halliday. [online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190209215528/http://www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org/interview.html> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

⁶¹ Archive.org. (2016). Critique of Street Photography – Interview with Paul Halliday. [online] Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190209215528/http://www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org/interview.html> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2021].

before restaging it at Museo San Telmo in San Sebastián the following year (2021, p.140n).⁶² If Parr ‘should have picked up on the spread’ (quoted in Neumüller, 2021, p.136) – and Neumüller seems in full agreement that he should have – Neumüller himself should, too, have done the same.

Halliday attended the *Strange and Familiar* exhibition, and, by his own account, clocked Butturini’s *London*.⁶³ His decline into photographic obscurity was, I would suggest, effectively finalised by that show; and, nor, by this time, did university’s academe provide any sort of consolatory solace. By one account, at least, Halliday cut an acerbic and detestable figure on the academic stage: ‘You are fucking bullying Paul’, tweeted Jenny Thatcher (@JennyAThatcher) in 2019, ‘You trolled the event bullying several women. I’ve never met you, never spoken to you, never worked at Goldsmiths. We all put complaints in about you & your behaviour towards women’⁶⁴. The comment comes after ‘Paul who I’ve never met decided to screen shot my chest to make a point [about] racism’⁶⁵.



<https://twitter.com/JennyAThatcher/status/1142053670131048453>

⁶² See: [online] Butturini estate. (2020). [online] Available at: https://m.facebook.com/gianbutturini/posts/1834342203481956/?locale=zh_CN [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁶³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1280632885171585025> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2021].

⁶⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/JennyAThatcher/status/1142054117361311745> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁶⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/JennyAThatcher/status/1142053670131048453> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2021].

Halliday's response was to call the police: 'I contacted the police and it's now been investigated as a crime'⁶⁶; 'That "complaint" was investigated by the Met Police and now has a crime number'⁶⁷. By July 2021, the police seem to have decided not to pursue any investigation, much to Halliday's chagrin: 'Well there are parallel institutional track-lines here', he complained to Twitter at large, 'The Met Police failed to investigate that racist attack and #LeedsUniversity where the sociologist is based, also failed to investigate a complaint around the #sociologist's racist abuse'.⁶⁸ Halliday switched targets and trained his sights onto the Metropolitan Police themselves, demanding to know why they'd ignored him when he sustained an injury to the throat, following the Euro 96 England vs Germany football match, twenty-five years earlier: 'I nearly died that night, and the @metpoliceuk did nothing to assist me, took no statement, failed to investigate'⁶⁹. Reminiscent of the grandiose posturing found in the earlier <www.critiqueofstreetphotography.org> interview, a totalising self-mythology, with a baffling logic of its own, soon materialised to bind the two events together: 'I've had PTSD counselling in relation to this and also the utter clusterf*ck that is systemic racism in #UKHigherEducation' Halliday told Twitter, 'Sometimes, I'm not sure which is actually worse'⁷⁰. And, true to form, this irrepressible self-mythologising would soon be pressed into service for the work; the Metropolitan Police's inaction would itself become a delicious opportunity for self-promotion. 'My response to what the @metpoliceuk did that day, was to survive and make a massive body of work about London's streets', tweeted Halliday, 'And anyone that has an issue with the idea of a personal urban 'project', can go get a frigging life'⁷¹. All this, however, was two years on and yet to come.

Whatever the precise circumstances of the original altercation, it remains apparent that, by mid-2019, a malcontent Halliday was gunning for a fight. Half-heartedly, he tweeted a petulant quip about the cost of

⁶⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1177320664384049157> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2021].

⁶⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1177329481192747008> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2021].

⁶⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1410973229515218945> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁶⁹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1410952157067624450> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁷⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1410966018348945408> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁷¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1411385318410948609> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

tickets and snacks at Parr's exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery.⁷² Acquiring a copy of Butturini's re-released *London*, however, he found himself an opportunity with a bit more bite.

Masterminded from the start by Halliday, the Parr-Butturini scandal can be usefully read as one individual photographer's attempt to vent his frustration at his life's work being overlooked; to cut the competition down to size; to finally draw a line in the sand and say, "This far, and no further". In September 2020, to little fanfare, Halliday presented *Urban Detours* on YouTube in an online interview with Chitr Sanstha. As he did so, he quietly seized the book-title of the now-disgraced Butturini for himself, renaming his own project 'London'. No-one in the world, except the American journalist, Andrew Molitor, stopped to notice:

It must have been crushing for Paul to see Butturini's book. The latter is focused, intense. It has a powerful sense of time and place. The framing is consistently good. The edit is tight. The time it was shot was visually interesting. I don't think Butturini's "London" is really all that, it's not my favorite book, but it is astronomically better than Paul's efforts, and this damned Italian knocked it out in a summer. Paul's 120,000 negative archive might as well go in the bin now, and he probably shouldn't have started.⁷³

Neumüller's active suppression, in his article, of the public complaints levied at Halliday reinforces the Mercedes narrative and, in doing so, obscures the fact that a deep-seated and long-standing professional jealousy, and a concomitant battle over the psycho-geography of London, lay at the heart of Halliday's entire campaign against Butturini. Neumüller would, however, reserve his most elaborate rhetorical illusion for long-time Photolreland colleague, Jennie Ricketts.

Neumüller and Ricketts crossed paths no later than 2015 when Neumüller was curatorial advisor and chair of board of directors, and Ricketts – former picture editor of the *Observer* – took up a role on the advisory board to Photolreland. They would go on to reprise the same roles annually, right up until the present day.⁷⁴ It's a working relationship that crossed over onto social media, too, with Ricketts regularly reposting call-

⁷² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1105883313913413633> [Accessed 1 Jul. 2021].

⁷³ A. Molitor. (2021). Crit: "London" by Paul Halliday. [online] Available at: <http://photothunk.blogspot.com/2020/09/crit-london-by-paul-halliday.html> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁷⁴ See: Angel (2014). Photolreland Festival 2015 Team + Thanks - Photolreland Festival 2015. [online] Photoireland.org. Available at: <http://2015.photoireland.org/festival/pif15/> [Accessed 22 Jun. 2021];

outs and news from Neumüller's @TheCuratorship account on both Twitter and Instagram, from 2017 until the start of 2021, when Neumüller closed his account, ahead of his article's publication.⁷⁵ Curiously, while Neumüller leveraged PhotoIreland artists Pupo and Nwagbogu for substantial contributions to his article – interviews reproduced in full – Ricketts barely features. She's mentioned in passing, and on just a couple of occasions. Early on, in Neumüller's article, we learn that 'In an apology tweeted six months after the beginning of the protest, and in reaction to a critical post by Jennie Ricketts, Martin Parr clarified that he had merely supplied an introduction to a facsimile edition' (2021, p.136). Twenty pages on, in the footnotes, the circumstances of that apology are recapitulated in only a little more detail: the apology was, explains Neumüller, 'a direct reply to a tweet from Jennie Ricketts, of 17 November 2019, and hidden from the general timeline of his studio's account' (2021, p.156n). Ricketts gets one more mention from Neumüller and, for reasons that will soon become apparent, it's worth quoting in full:

One of the first reactions to the image was Jennie Ricketts' one-word post on 28 May 2019: "Speechless!" However, after seeing the double page in the context of the book, her perception changed: "My initial reaction to the juxtaposition of a black woman and a gorilla was an emotional response based entirely on the optic presented via social media. Having had time to properly review the context of the imagery and text from the book, I realise it was the wrong conclusion." At this point, blogger Ben Chesterton (@duckrabbitblog) still stated that he "would want to see the original before coming to any conclusions" and "decided not to share" the image, a cautious posture that he would soon give up [...] (2021, p.153)

This seemingly unremarkable passage achieves three important aims. Firstly, it conceals any pre-existing relationship between Ricketts and Benjamin Chesterton; secondly, it reduces Ricketts' significant contribution to the Parr-Butturini scandal to a one-word 'Speechless!' tweet; and, thirdly, Ricketts' apparently

PhotoIreland. (2016). Catalogue. [online] Available at: http://2016.photoireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/PIF16_Catalogue_s.pdf [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021]; PhotoIreland. (2018). Catalogue. [online] Available at: http://2018.photoireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PIF18_Catalogue.pdf [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021]; PhotoIreland. (2019). Spreads. [online] Available at: http://2019.photoireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/PhotoIreland_Festival_2019_spreads.pdf [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021].

⁷⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/916314049696161794> [Accessed 22 Jun. 2021]; Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1354504210247778305> [Accessed 22 Jun. 2021].

instantaneous change of heart concertinas the timeline, effectively obliterating the events that took place between her ‘Speechless’ tweet of 27 May 2019 (which Neumüller misattributes, in his text, as 28 May; and, in his footnotes, as ‘published 2 December 2020’ (2021, p.153n)) and her *volte-face*, delivered in a personal email to Neumüller, on 3 December 2020 (2021, p.153n). Just as he has to obscure the relationship between Day and Halliday, that had proved so crucial in gaining media traction for the Mercedes narrative, Neumüller has to elide the close relationship that Ricketts and Chesterton enjoyed, in order to conceal her role as Butturini’s most vociferous and influential detractor.

Ricketts’ close relationship with Chesterton dates as far back as 2011, brought together by a mutual interest in the representation of marginalised social groups in photography.⁷⁶



<https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/133912527548583936>

Over the following decade, Ricketts and Chesterton would regularly exchange tweets. In 2012, when Chesterton’s film company, Duckrabbit, was hiring a documentary producer, Ricketts pushed the job to her followers, tweeting ‘Great job opportunity’⁷⁷. She’d promote his company blog posts too. When Chesterton was outraged by the death of a Libyan driver, working for *New York Times* journalists, Ricketts promoted his post, adding vehemently, ‘It seems humanism bows to capitalism when mammon is God’⁷⁸. Other times, as when Chesterton blogged about a film concerning children working on a rubbish tip, the conversation became extended, earnest, and existential: ‘There is nothing ‘Romantic’ in working on a rubbish dump’ wrote Ricketts,

⁷⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/133912527548583936> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁷⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/277350818196365312> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁷⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/449553087867682816> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

‘This film is heart-rending’⁷⁹; ‘Voice over aesthetic triumphs’⁸⁰, Chesterton would reply; ‘Agree there too’, Ricketts would write back, ‘But the aesthetic voice of the photographer is more often louder than that of the subject in the frame’⁸¹. There’d be more familiar interactions too: a friendly natter about Nina Simone⁸², an ebullient ‘Happy Birthday!’ message when, in December 2018, Duckrabbit turned ten⁸³. And nor were these regular, transactional strokes ever solely one-way. When Ricketts, in August 2019, stood for election at the Royal Photographic Society (RPS), Chesterton quote-tweeted her, adding: ‘Members. You know what to do’⁸⁴. And, the following month, when Ricketts announced her sudden resignation from the RPS, writing: ‘With regret, I have resigned as an @The_RPS Trustee due to personal reasons. Thanks and apologies to all those who supported me’⁸⁵, Chesterton would offer his condolences. ‘Damn. Best to you Jennie’⁸⁶. Although this relationship is entirely suppressed in Neumüller’s article, the cosy rapport that Ricketts and Chesterton evidently enjoyed would form the backdrop against which Ricketts was first introduced to Butturini, Halliday, and the @LTHDebate account:

⁷⁹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/450597112611622913> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/450597326042976257> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/450598789842083840> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/993952831907524609> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1068833207955701761> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1158421176009601024> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1174260741282680835> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1174286531533639680> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

← Tweet



Paul Halliday @PaulTHalliday · 27 May 2019

It's beyond comprehension that someone would think it's a good idea to juxtapose an image of an elderly Black woman with a caged gorilla. What the hell is wrong with #BritishPhotography and the institutions that support such practices? #photojournalism #photography #photoethics

Less Than Human Debate @LTHdebate · 27 May 2019

Utterly horrified and appalled to see this double page layout in a book about London, edited by #MartinParr. It's time to confront such vile #racism within #BritishPhotography. Get involved with the #LessThanHumanDebate. #photography #photojournalism #photoethics



8 30 50



duck @duckrabbitblog · 27 May 2019

Jesus Christ. I decided not to share. Shaking my head.

2 1 4



Vanessa Peterson @vanessaptrsn · 27 May 2019

this came up on my feed just now and it made me so sad i'm going to have to log off for the night. no more.

1 1 1



Jennie Ricketts
@jennieric

Replying to @vanessaptrsn @duckrabbitblog and 2 others

Speechless!

11:44 pm · 27 May 2019 · Twitter for Android

1 Retweet 2 Likes

8 30 50

<https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1133142014143471616>

‘It’s beyond comprehension that someone would think it’s a good idea to juxtapose an image of an elderly Black woman with a caged gorilla’, wrote Halliday, retweeting @LTHDebate, ‘What the hell is wrong with #BritishPhotography and the institutions that support such practices?’⁸⁷; ‘Jesus Christ’, replies Chesterton, ‘I decided not to share. Shaking my head’⁸⁸; ‘Speechless!’⁸⁹ replies Ricketts.

If Ricketts was ever speechless, she did not remain so for long, and soon chimed in on iterations of the same thread. ‘You want to give people the benefit of the doubt,’ tweeted the American historian, John Edwin Mason, ‘but can anyone, who’s in a position to be asked to photo edit a book, actually be that clueless?’⁹⁰ ‘Believe me’, replied Ricketts, ‘ppl are absolutely that clueless! The phrase "lack of empathy" springs to mind.’⁹¹ ‘I can imagine the hurt this has caused. No parent wants to inadvertently [sic] expose their child to harm’, she tweeted, empathising with Halliday’s role as father in the Mercedes narrative, ‘[...] The problem is the perpetrator’s not yours’⁹². After a flurry of activity, Ricketts fell silent on the subject, as she concentrated her social media efforts on raising the profile of the RPS’s *Hundred Heroines: Women in Photography* project that she had been heavily involved in.⁹³ She was, it seems, happy enough to retweet details of the RPS’s *Decisive Moment* exhibition that featured Parr⁹⁴; and Markéta Luskačová’s exhibition at the Martin Parr Foundation in August⁹⁵, as well as notices from the Martin Parr Foundation regarding Bristol’s new Books on Photography Festival, in July⁹⁶ and September⁹⁷. By November, however, Ricketts’ tone altered radically:

⁸⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1133094767900995584> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1133131280911085570> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁸⁹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1133142014143471616> [Accessed 24 Jun. 2021].

⁹⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1133142014143471616> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

⁹¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1133641110725779456> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

See also: Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1133642415787712512> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

⁹² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1133645232015335424> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021]

⁹³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1165251905792221184> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

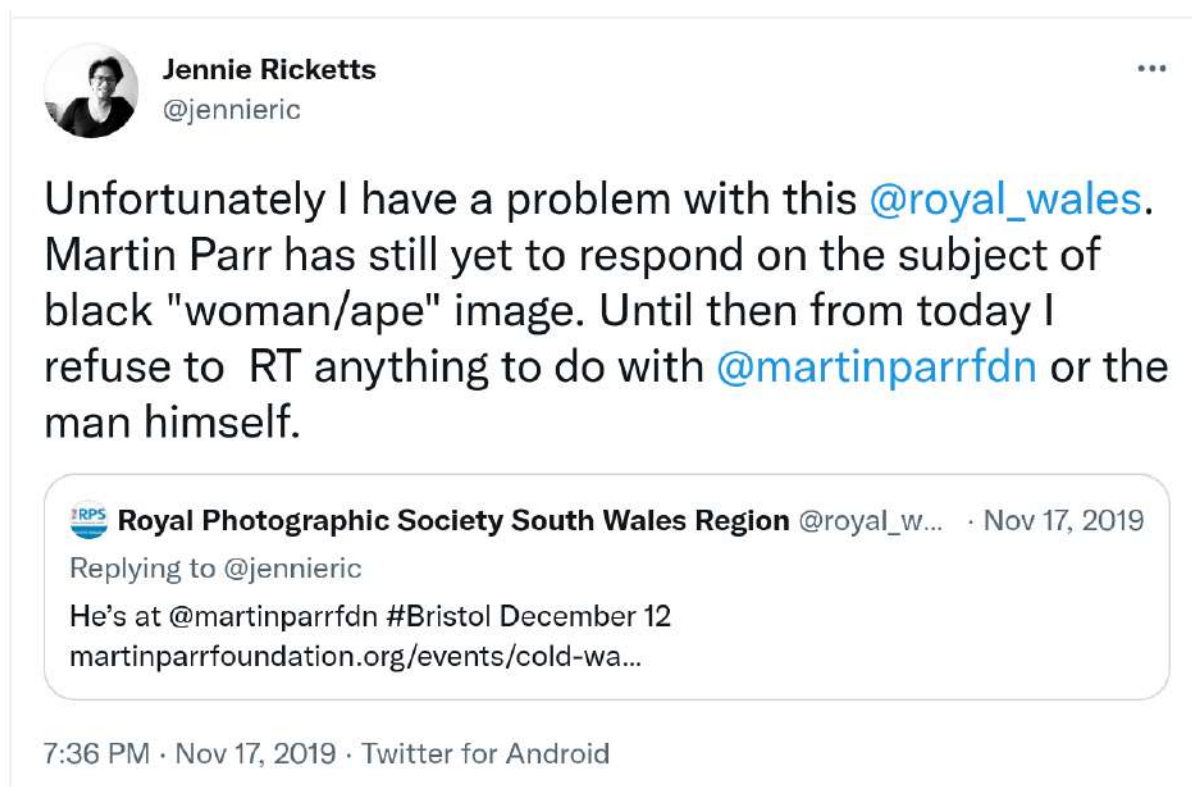
⁹⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1162812629255147522> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

⁹⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1165251905792221184> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

⁹⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1151115033633533952> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

⁹⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1169628576947331072> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

having been told that Cold War Steve (a photographer whom she had described as 'Brilliant'⁹⁸) had an event at the Martin Parr Foundation, Ricketts, suddenly became curt and defiant: 'Unfortunately I have a problem with this @royal_wales. Martin Parr has still yet to respond on the subject of black "woman/ape" image. Until then from today I refuse to RT anything to do with @martinparrfdn or the man himself.'⁹⁹



<https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1196150076755849216>

It is, of course, in response to this tweet that Parr wrote an apology (Neumüller, 2021, p.136), except neither Ricketts nor Chesterton were aware of its existence until February 2020. 'What bullshit'¹⁰⁰, tweeted Chesterton, 'Over 6 months after the issue was raised'¹⁰¹. 'Likewise, I've not seen an apology', tweeted

⁹⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1196144972648656896> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

⁹⁹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1196150076755849216> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1228026544100122628> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1228028859473420288> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

Ricketts, ‘Where can we find it please?’¹⁰² Seven weeks later, Ricketts became a trustee of Autograph, a high-profile, London-based charity, headed by Mark Sealy, that champions ‘photography that explores issues of race, identity, representation, human rights and social justice’^{103 104}. By July 2020, when the Parr-Butturini scandal broke, Ricketts tweeted as if Parr’s apology had never been written: ‘Fair play to Martin Parr for standing down as artistic director of the new Bristol Photo Festival’, she wrote, ‘Perhaps he will now lead the debate as reparation, instead of dismissing the concerns. The photo industry has an opportunity here to pave the way for #Equality and #Diversity.’¹⁰⁵ It was a sentiment closely echoed by Chesterton, who told Seymour at *The Art Newspaper* that ‘It was inevitable that Bristol would not tolerate an artistic director who by his own account is visually illiterate when it comes to racism’¹⁰⁶. Not to be outdone, Ricketts’ imperiousness moved to the same magazine: ‘Martin Parr’s apology comes at a significant moment for the photography establishment’, she told Seymour,

A coded language has carried ingrained bias towards black people for far too long. Black people now need to be seen and acknowledged when issues of racism are raised, as [Mercedes] Baptiste Halliday did. There then needs to be accountability and reparations made. Anything less simply perpetuates this insensitivity towards black people.¹⁰⁷

As a vociferous campaigner, as a respected industry professional, and as an expert opinion for the press, Ricketts was absolutely pivotal in how the Parr-Butturini scandal unfolded. ‘[Jennie Ricketts] @jennieric stood up to Martin Parr’, explains Chesterton, ‘More than anyone working in the industry she kept the challenge

¹⁰² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1228030897049481216> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰³ Autograph (2021). Autograph | Mission. [online] Autograph.org.uk. Available at: <https://autograph.org.uk/about-us/mission> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1246116522726166529> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1286255072532410370> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰⁶ T. Seymour. (2020). Martin Parr steps down as artistic director of Bristol Photo Festival after student’s anti-racism campaign. [online] Theartnewspaper.com. Available at: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/martin-parr-stood-down-from-bristol-photo-festival-after-student-anti-racism-campaign> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰⁷ T. Seymour. (2020). Martin Parr’s resignation from photo festival sparks “cancel culture” debate. [online] Theartnewspaper.com. Available at: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/martin-parr-s-festival-abdication-sparks-cancel-culture-debate> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

going. This needs to be acknowledged'.¹⁰⁸ This being the case, why, then, does Ricketts play such a minor and forgettable role in Neumüller's account? And, equally importantly, what does Neumüller conceal from view when he manufactures an account that can concertina the chronology of events in this way?

The beginning of an answer to these questions lies in plain view in Ricketts' tweet from November 2019, in which she refused to retweet anything from '@martinparrfdn or the man himself', and the subsequent thread in which Parr apologised. Reading the apology in February, Chesterton elaborated on the significance of that tweet and its mechanics: 'Fair play to you Jennie. Achieving what no-one else has ever'¹⁰⁹; '15 days after your tweet. Six months after the issue was first raised. I suspect it was because of the orgs [organisations] you included'¹¹⁰. Ricketts' refusal to retweet Parr was squarely aimed at a Twitter account called @royal_wales. It belongs to the Royal Photographic Society – South Wales Region. Liable to flit this way and that, as we have seen, Ricketts' public position on whether or not Butturini was racist had nothing to do with the work itself. Rather, it had everything to do with Ricketts' own scandalous election campaign, which, in 2019, shook the Royal Photographic Society, 'one of the oldest, well respected, global #Photo organisations'¹¹¹, to the core. News of the Royal Photographic Society's 2019 elections was not circulated in the press. Following legal advice, however, an independent inquiry was commissioned.¹¹² The results of that three-month inquiry, in a document entitled *REPORT OF THE INQUIRY INTO THE 2019 ELECTION* by Michael King, Queen Square Advisory Limited, published on 13 January 2020, continues to be available from the RPS website. Although the inquiry was independent, it necessarily remains partisan as Ricketts, who is mentioned by name no less than 48 times over 28-pages, resigned from her position as trustee and declined to cooperate with the inquiry.¹¹³

For an outsider, the report is a heady labyrinth of arcane constitutional rules, meaningless names and unfamiliar job titles, but the myriad of complaints levied at Ricketts are shocking nonetheless. Members

¹⁰⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1285688006138048512> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹⁰⁹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1228032215776419840> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹¹⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1228031219981484032> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹¹¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1133369170387767297> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹¹² Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. (2019). Trustees' Annual Report and Consolidated Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019. [online] Available at: <https://rps.org/media/rs0ns13d/2019-annual-report-and-accounts.pdf> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2021], p.6.

¹¹³ M. King. (2020). ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN CC Registration No 1107831 REPORT OF THE INQUIRY INTO THE 2019 ELECTION. [online]. Available at: <https://rps.org/media/nbebf5vy/rps-inquiry-report-13-1-20.pdf> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

expressed concern that Ricketts seemed to be exploiting a constitutional loophole whereby ‘a co-opted Council member, with no history of involvement in the RPS could end up being President in such a short period of time’ (King, 2020, p.12). The current president of the RPS, meanwhile, expressed even more serious concerns about ‘A succession of tweets by Jennie Ricketts. Through the election period’, Dr Alan Hodgson explains, ‘these contained information confidential to Council, incorrect facts and comments that could adversely affect our relationship with Kensington Palace’. Hodgson worried, too, about ‘the breaking of confidentiality of Council candidates in the May Council meeting’, and provided the investigator with documentation to evidence these concerns (King, 2020, p.12).

The sheer speed at which Ricketts progressed through the RPS hierarchy was extraordinary. Having apparently been co-opted by the Council in January 2019, officially becoming a trustee in July (owing to the lack of a required RPS membership), with a nomination as President Elect by July, she could have conceivably become President of the RPS by November 2021, or significantly earlier if the President, Del Barrett, chose to retire early. That scheme, however, soon unravelled and, by the summer, before the nominations process drew to a close, some of the membership were proposing a change to the RPS constitution designed to bar Ricketts’ nomination as President Elect (King, 2020, p.13). With her back to the wall, what Ricketts needed was a win. And she found that win in Butturini. ‘Speechless!’ she tweeted. Ricketts resigned from the board in September, not due to ‘personal reasons’ as her aforementioned tweet from that time suggested, but for very political reasons. ‘I would like to make a formal complaint about the recent election process on the grounds that the procedure has been conducted with bias and double standards,’ she wrote to RPS Chief Operating Officer, Mike Taylor, ‘forcing me to withdraw my candidacy and resign as an RPS Trustee’ (King, 2020, p.3).

By the time Ricketts tweeted about Butturini again, on 17 November, when she refused to retweet anything to do with Parr or the Martin Parr Foundation, she was no longer a trustee of the RPS, no longer even a member. Her friend and ally, Del Barratt, the President who had co-opted her to the board in the first instance and with whom she’d worked closely on the *Hundred Heroines* project, had, less than a fortnight earlier, on 5 November, resigned suddenly. The tweet, screenshot above, reaches out to the RPS (South Wales Region) account. It constitutes a sneer, a disgraced Ricketts taking the high ground, defiantly assuming the role of moral arbiter, in the face of the election scandal that had just transpired and decimated the board. RPS

(South Wales Region) did not 'like' it; did not retweet it; did not reply. (And Ricketts' own celebration as one of the RPS's 'Hundred Heroines' herself would, eventually, be quietly removed.¹¹⁴)

Fortunately for Ricketts, however, somebody was reading. Within hours of her tweet, Halliday had replied, ready and raring to go with the main tenets of the Mercedes narrative, appropriating her stunned silence from six months past: 'I bought the #photography book edited by #MartinParr as a birthday present for my daughter, who is Black', he tweeted, 'Later, when I opened the book at home and saw a double page layout of an elderly Black woman juxtaposed with a caged gorilla, I was left utterly speechless.'¹¹⁵ There and then, Parr-Butturini became the new campaign in Ricketts' will to power.

On 21 July 2020, Tom Seymour's article for *The Art Newspaper* broke the news of Parr's stepping down from the Bristol Photo Festival. That evening, in the semi-anonymous, semi-private world of Twitter, Butturini's detractors would bask in their triumph. '[Jennie Ricketts] @jennieric stood up to Martin Parr', said Chesterton, 'More than anyone working in the industry she kept the challenge going. This needs to be acknowledged.'¹¹⁶ 'Yes', breathed Halliday, 'that's right'.¹¹⁷ 'The credit is yours Ben', replied Ricketts, 'Thank you for your support. The world would be a different place if there were more people like yourself out there.'¹¹⁸ But Ricketts couldn't publicly front the campaign – the RPS election scandal never reached the news but its existence was a liability nonetheless; and nor could Halliday, whose appearance at this time might have aroused suspicion. So, earlier that day, it had been left to Chesterton to lay down the official narrative, one that recruited Ricketts as an expert opinion, and hid Halliday from view entirely. 'No one in power wanted to hold Martin Parr accountable for promoting a racist book', Chesterton told a credulous Seymour, 'except Mercedes Baptiste Halliday and a couple of her friends. When she did protest, she was almost universally ignored.'¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Hundred Heroines. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://hundredheroines.org/heroine/jennie-ricketts/> [Accessed 7 July 2021].

¹¹⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1196213945591369728> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹¹⁶ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1285688006138048512> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹¹⁷ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1285692687790804994> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹¹⁸ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1285689647138562048> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹¹⁹ T. Seymour. (2020). Martin Parr steps down as artistic director of Bristol Photo Festival after student's anti-racism campaign. [online] *Theartnewspaper.com*. Available at: <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/martin-parr-stood-down-from-bristol-photo-festival-after-student-anti-racism-campaign> [Accessed 11 Jun. 2021].

The following month, the Martin Parr Foundation announced a call-out for new trustees; and, by early November, Ricketts would, in a twist of fate, be added to the Martin Parr Foundation board. Before that could take place, old allegiances had to be cast aside. A discreet change in opinion was enough to shake off Halliday:

The book wasn't racist, a spread within it was, and a cautionary tale perhaps. We will have to agree to disagree @PaulTHalliday. The industry needs to be targeted, not one flawed individual. Repeating past mistakes helps no one. Reformation doesn't have to mean annihilation.¹²⁰

The betrayed Halliday was incensed. He pounced on the Photography Ethics Centre, where Ricketts had recently spoken, because they'd 'liked a tweet claiming #MartinParr's book "wasn't racist"¹²¹; attacked Ricketts again as she became appointed to the board, 'Didn't @jennieric conclude that the 'racist' book Martin Parr edited wasn't racist?'¹²² Chesterton tried to be diplomatic: 'I sincerely appreciate that Jennie called @parrstudio out on twitter on a number of occasions.'¹²³ And so it went on, into the new year: 'That is precisely the 'logic' that informed the defence recently made excusing the publication of a racist book, on the basis that the pairing of a gorilla with a Black woman was 'racist', but the book itself 'wasn't racist'¹²⁴ wrote Halliday; 'Cognitive dissonance'¹²⁵, chorused Chesterton. Little did either of them know, then, that, over the Christmas period, Ricketts – having been burned by the RPS but now safely ensconced on the boards of both Autograph and Martin Parr Foundation – had changed her opinion once more. In a short statement given to Neumüller, she explained:

My initial reaction to the juxtaposition of a black woman and a gorilla was an emotional response based entirely on the optic presented via social media. Having had time to properly review the

¹²⁰ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/jennieric/status/1286310360170012673> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹²¹ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1286562559164919808> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹²² Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1327289095845015555> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹²³ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1327311114850471936> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹²⁴ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/PaulTHalliday/status/1345759112353689600> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

¹²⁵ Twitter. (2021). [online] Available at: <https://twitter.com/duckrabbitblog/status/1345873977227571202> [Accessed 25 Jun. 2021].

context of the imagery and text from the book, I realise it was the wrong conclusion. (Neumüller, 2021, p.153)

And yet, even this short, written statement is itself the result of a cautious but amicable negotiation. 'I am also a Trustee for Autograph ABP', wrote Ricketts in a personal email to Neumüller, 'and I feel any further involvement on my part will hamper future work with both them and the MPF'. The email goes on to provide an astonishing explanation for Ricketts' reticence:

Paul Halliday has a history of animosity with both these organisations and has already attempted to paint me in unfavourable light. Which suggests this is an excuse for another agenda as you have rightly guessed. A statement of my position as you have suggested in your Option B will have to serve as the extent of involvement at this stage.¹²⁶

'Dear Jennie', Neumüller replied at once, 'Thank you for your explanations and for allowing me to use the quote. I will try not to involve you any more than necessary, for sure'¹²⁷.

Neumüller's article falls way short of the 'profound analysis' (2021, p.5) proffered by his editors, or the 'comprehensive analysis' (2021, p.137), or 'scientific context' (2021, pp.137-8) he himself reaches for. In many respects, Neumüller's failure to deliver a coherent, documented, detailed, and, above all, believable narrative was inevitable from the start. He comes to the task with the wrong skill set. Intent on brokering a virtual peace accord between two warring factions, on penning an 'Addendum' (2021, p.165) like some kind of treaty, he brings a cataloguer's eye that can see the granular detail but can't hope to evaluate it. He tries to be an archivist when he ought, more properly, to be a biographer. He desperately looks for stable, ideological contestations and intellectual abstractions that might, somehow, be brought into equilibrium with 'an academic discourse' (2021, p.137), when, all along, he should be looking for deeply flawed personalities; inconsistent egos; and ambitious players ready to react, feint, and attack, according to unpredictable and rapidly changing circumstances, even as they unfold. Neumüller's becomes an abject failure that is,

¹²⁶ Personal email from Jennie Ricketts to Moritz Neumüller, 3 December 2020.

¹²⁷ Personal email from Moritz Neumüller to Jennie Ricketts, 3 December 2020.

necessarily, paralysed by disingenuousness: dodgy referencing, trumped-up experts, and pretend statistics; made-up histories and historical anachronism; the suppression of valuable sources; a too-tight tethering to already-contested narratives; and, finally, an honouring of unspoken allegiances to a long-time colleague that over-simplifies, sanitises and, in the final analysis, brutally whitewashes contemporary events. And this same, present-day history that Neumüller tries so carefully to simultaneously marshal, resolve, and conceal is not without real-world consequence, not without its casualties. Gian Butturini's children have, for a year, worked tirelessly to salvage their late father's legacy; at the time of writing, Martin Parr, whose life and work was upended by this unprovoked and protracted attack, lies in Bristol Royal Infirmary, severely ill, a bone marrow cancer, from which there is little to no hope of full recovery.

No-one would dispute Neumüller's concluding assertion that 'important structural changes in the photographic community and open discussions around the photographic medium' (2021, p.165) need to happen. But Butturini's *London*, introduced by Parr, was never the vehicle with which to make those changes, or initiate those discussions. The pain – the trauma – that has been caused by that book's unscrupulous and, ultimately, self-seeking detractors has been wholly unjust and far, far too great. In this particular instance, the end does not – can never – justify the means.

*Dr Dennis Low
July 2021, London.*

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