

The politics of representation and the subversion of landscape in Ingrid Pollard's *Pastoral Interlude* (1987)

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Résumé

Le travail de la photographe britannique Ingrid Pollard tisse des fils entre l'histoire impériale, l'histoire personnelle, et les représentations visuelles et symboliques de l'identité anglaise. Utilisant le genre du paysage, Ingrid Pollard met en question l'investissement symbolique des espaces ruraux et maritimes par des valeurs de pureté et d'ordre, dans la production de discours et représentations identitaires. Dans la série « *Pastoral Interlude* » (1987), l'intrusion littérale de sujets noirs isolés dans les paysages du Lake District donne une réalité matérielle aux frontières historiquement et socialement produites qui continuent d'organiser l'exclusion des Noirs de ces espaces. Les images très construites de l'artiste mettent à l'épreuve les récits dominants de l'identité anglaise en convoquant des niveaux de lecture historique et subjective plus complexes. À la fin des années quatre-vingt, marquées par l'arrivée de photographes noirs sur la scène artistique, la recherche visuelle d'Ingrid Pollard prend sens dans un débat critique fondamental sur les identités multiculturelles d'une société anglaise post-coloniale.

Abstract

The work of British photographer Ingrid Pollard constantly weaves the threads of imperial history, personal history, and visual and symbolic representations of English identity. Using the genre of the landscape, Ingrid Pollard raises the issue of the symbolic investment of rural and seaside places with values of purity and order in the production of discourses and representations of national identity. In the series « *Pastoral Interlude* » (1987), the literal intrusion of lone Black figures in Lake District landscapes gives a material reality to the historically and socially produced boundaries which organise the exclusion of Black people from rural spaces. The artist's highly constructed images challenge mainstream narratives of English identity by bringing to the fore more complex layers of history and experience. At the end of the 1980s characterised by the rise of Black photographers, Ingrid Pollard's visual research engaged in a fundamental critical debate on multicultural identities in post-colonial England.

Mots-clés : Ingrid Pollard, photographie, paysage, représentation, identité nationale, Grande-Bretagne, anglicité, Black arts, post-colonialisme

Keywords : Ingrid Pollard, photography, landscape, representation, national identity, Great-Britain, Englishness, Black arts, post-colonialism

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Introduction

Ingrid Pollard is a British photographer whose work can be interpreted as an invitation to question the grand narratives of imperial history: her art is concerned with the need to challenge the predominance of Europe-centred historical accounts by playing them off against the subjective stories of immigrants from the former British colonies. Ingrid Pollard's work intervenes in the debates over the cultural, social and political evolutions which transformed Britain after the demise of its Empire from the 1950s onwards. The artist positions herself from the vantage point of Black Britons, thus changing perspectives on key questions such as the legacy of imperialism or the contours of national identity: her work seeks to give visibility to the Black experience in Britain and to allow counter-histories to emerge¹.

The concepts of participation and representation, in the fullness of their social, cultural and political meanings, spring to mind when studying Ingrid Pollard's artistic production. Participation, that is, the right to play an effective role in the common social sphere, the condition of being “[actively involved] in a matter or event, one in which the outcome directly affects those taking part” (OED), was a struggle for Black Britons who were denied access to the sphere of political power and for Black artists who faced the marginalisation of their work in the predominantly white system of cultural production. The conditions of political participation were not fulfilled for Black Britons in the 1980s, whose interests were not represented at a political level. Their experiences were more often than not experiences of exclusion and discrimination, experiences of “un-belonging”². At another level, the question of the visual representation of Black subjects in culture and the media came to a head in Britain from the late 1970s onwards as academics and activists began to confront “the problem of race” constructed by the media as a challenge to homogeneous concepts of national identity (Hall, [1981], 1995). Cultural and media theorists involved in the emerging field of Cultural Studies stressed the role of representation in the articulation and circulation of ideological meanings in the social fabric.

¹ The term *Black* is used in this text not as an essentialist category but rather because the term refers to a historically constructed political and social category. Black subjects share the experience of being “racialised”, i.e., of being considered and made to feel “other” with regards to an unquestioned white norm which oppresses and discriminates them. While we are aware that the term has an homogenizing effect over what is an extremely heterogeneous group, and can even include immigrants from the Indian sub-continent, we use it in reference to the common experience of immigrants from the former British colonies or British-born people of colour, who came to define their struggle in terms of a resistance to discriminations based on racial stereotypes.

² The neologism is Joan Riley's, author of a novel called *The Unbelonging*, which describes the experience of Black people in England in the 1980s.

Our contention is that Ingrid Pollard's work is deeply anchored in this political context. She was part of a generation of Black and Asian British artists who vindicated the right to play a role as cultural producers and challenge the terms around which arts and politics revolved. In the struggle to transform representations, the strategy Ingrid Pollard chose was to unsettle centuries of artistic and cultural constructions of Britain as the “Island nation”, white, insular and homogeneous, and to boldly expose the fallacy and ideological underpinnings of such essentialist discourses.

We propose to explore how her involvement in the political struggles of Black artists in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s was central in formulating the politics of representation foregrounded in her series *Pastoral Interlude* (1987)³. The extremely codified tradition of landscape representations becomes in Ingrid Pollard's work the locus of a political critique.

1. “Photographic practice as political craft”: Black cultural politics in the 1970s and 1980s

Ingrid Pollard was born in 1953 in Georgetown (British Guyana) and her family moved to the United Kingdom to join her father three years later. Photographic images were part of the family environment, used as a source of narratives about family history:

I do not remember the first time I took a photograph, but I did grow up in a house of family photo-albums and the stories that went with them. My father took lots of pictures for our albums and later I used some of these images in my own work (Pollard, 2004, 7).

Photography took a more political dimension in the early 1970s for Ingrid Pollard. Her own position, as a Black homosexual woman, led her to pursue work and personal affiliations in women's and Black organisations which came off the ground at that time to protest against the oppression of a predominantly white and patriarchal society (Pollard *et al.*, 1984):

The political liberation movements of the late 1970s and early 1980s were a central part of living in London. There were definite political agendas about gender, sexuality and race in the groups I was part of. (2004, 8)

Alternative cultural spaces flourished in the 1970s under the umbrella name of “community arts” (Kelly). The movement was embodied in the development of “community workshops”, self-organised collectives observing egalitarian principles, which embraced the issue of access to the cultural means of expression as central in the struggle to challenge cultural hegemony. Ingrid Pollard was involved in such ventures:

I worked at the Lenthall Road Workshop, a community based screen-printing and photographic collective. We saw ourselves as workers whose activities would enable and empower the groups who used the workshop through skill sharing and by direct action. [...] It felt like we were all part of a wider movement. At Lenthall we were working out new ways of working with groups so that they could use the media tools of newsprint, screen-printing and photography to express their life and concerns—the same media tools, which had traditionally been used to stereotype and control the representation of marginal communities. For me this work was photographic practice as political craft. (Pollard, 8)

³ *Pastoral Interlude* now resides at the Victoria & Albert Museum. The full series may be found on Pollard's website at <<http://www.ingridpollard.com/pastoral-interlude.html>>. Last accessed on August 26th, 2014.

As curator Eddie Chambers suggests, “the late 1970s and early 1980s was quite possibly the most politically, culturally and racially charged period of Black British history (Chambers, 2003, 22). New analytical, radically political perspectives emerged in the late 1970s, nurtured by the combined insights of Black feminism, Black arts and Cultural Studies:

This analytical perspective played an important role in challenging exclusionary definitions of citizenship popularised by politicians such as Margaret Thatcher, suggesting that national identity had to be redefined in terms of cultural difference rather than insular stability (Dawson, 96).

Black feminism broke out in the mid 1970s, confronting the shortcomings of a predominantly white feminism on the specific struggles of Black and Asian women: “Many black women have been alienated by the non-recognition of their lives, experiences and *herstories* in the women's liberation movement”, Helen B. Carby warned. “Feminism has to be transformed if it is to address us.” (Carby, 63, 84) Ingrid Pollard was present when the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) held its first conference in 1978, photographing the event⁴. As for Black arts, they emerged as a highly politicised practice, led by practitioners in diverse media who sought to occupy a central space in the British cultural and artistic arena in order to challenge its terms and values. To Stuart Hall, the period was the formative moment for “a cultural politics designed to challenge, resist, and where possible, transform the dominant regimes of representation” (Hall, [1989] 1996, 442).

In this context, *Autograph*, the Association of Black Photographers, was formed in early 1986. Ingrid Pollard was one of its twenty founding members. It was designed as a support structure for Black and Asian photographers, meant to challenge the “euro-centric definition [of art, which], combined with the exclusion of Blacks from all areas related to the study, art and commerce of photography, has denied Black photographers both access/support and an audience/market for their work” (Autograph). Ingrid Pollard was thus actively involved in the development of a politically radical artistic scene in Britain in the 1970s.

However her work from the late 1980s onwards illustrates the shift which Mark Sealy and Stuart Hall notice in the production of Black photographers in that period. They suggest that the dominant documentary photography of the 1970s, which did play a crucial role in making Black communities visible, was replaced by more conceptual visualisations of Black British experiences.

The strategy of “positive imagery” now seemed inadequate; and that in turn precipitated a critique of documentary realism and a decisive move towards the “constructed image”— in effect, a new kind of cultural politics of representation (Hall and Sealy, 15).

The question of the politics of representation is at the core of Ingrid Pollard's work, as she moved away from reportage to constructed and staged photographs as part of a struggle to contest dominant images. The strategy was to intervene and subvert, to make the construction visible as opposed to naturalising representation.

⁴ Very active in its short life (1978-85) OWAAD was one of the first foyers in which the need to combine the two perspectives of gender and race discriminations was first debated in Britain (Yuval-Davis). These insights are important in terms of a new thinking about identity, which Pollard absorbed.

2. De-familiarising the landscape: *Pastoral Interlude* and the subversion of the genre

An unsettling intervention

Produced in 1987, *Pastoral Interlude* was first exhibited at the Watershed Gallery in Bristol (Pollard, 1987). The series marks the beginning of Ingrid Pollard's ongoing interest in the genre of the landscape. It consists of 5 hand-tinted silver prints [20"x24"], whose colours are a direct evocation of the old postcards which celebrate the countryside through peaceful depictions of domesticated nature. The images are unmistakable references to the canons of the genre, and represent in themselves actualised landscape images in the late 20th century. The photographer consciously places herself in this long tradition of representation, summoning all the codes and imagery of the genre, the better to question them. Ingrid Pollard chooses to subvert such codes through a symbolic, unsettling intervention: she invites in her photographs the sign of the repressed in England's history of colonisation, by placing Black figures in a quintessentially white countryside.

It could be argued that landscape painting is a typically English genre. The aesthetic tradition flourished from the eighteenth century onwards as an influential discourse celebrating the English nation and the time-honoured value of the land which nurtured it. Yet the specificity of the genre lies in its capacity to conceal the fact that it is an artefact: as W.J.T Mitchell suggests, "landscape effaces its own readability and naturalises itself." (Mitchell, 2) It conceals the ideological meanings which support it under the veil of a realistic, "truth-to-nature" representation:

Landscape as a cultural medium thus has a double role with respect to something like ideology: it naturalises a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable, and it also makes that representation operational by interpellating its beholder in some more or less determinate relation to its givenness as sight and site. (Mitchell, 1-2)

Ingrid Pollard's point is to challenge the accepted given-ness of landscape representations. She knows that landscapes are both objects and views, that just as the depiction of a scene is invested by a gaze which organises it, so picturesque sceneries have themselves been arranged. Nature has been managed, ordered, and turned into a view to be enjoyed, masking its dimension as a space determined by social, economic and political relations. She never tries to conceal the process of construction of her images. On the contrary, the posed attitudes, the tone of the hand-tinted photographs, or the addition of texts which are part of the image, are elements which contradict the contrived naturalness of landscape painting. The constructed character of her images echoes the similar construction of stereotypes: the one wants the construction to appear, the other naturalises it. "Nothing about the scene is really 'natural'. It's as manufactured and deliberate as the assumptions and stereotypes about Black people." (Pollard, 2004, 18)

The title of the series is in itself open to ironic interpretations. An *interlude* is a detour, a "humorous or lighter interval", "a minor performance compared to a play". (OED) Whose interlude is referred to here? Is it the Black rambler's, usually associated with urban environments, in what is the epitome of the English land? Is Ingrid Pollard's work a minor production compared to the more established pieces in the legitimate canon? As for the term *pastoral*, it refers to "the portraying of rural life or characters, in an idealized or romantic

manner”, characterised by “a simplicity or natural charm associated with pastureland”. (OED) Precisely, Ingrid Pollard's aim is to demystify the apparent simplicity of the landscape, and to question the process which aestheticizes land into landscape, what Alain Roger calls the “artialisation” of the land (Roger).

In an English landscape normalised as a place of harmony far from urban hustle and bustle (to which Blacks are associated in mainstream representations in the media), the intrusion of an unfamiliar figure, here a Black person, creates a disturbance. It becomes a sign which disrupts and troubles the flowing and unproblematic narrative of homogeneous and ordered rural Englishness. This *unexpected* presence reveals the mechanisms of exclusion that act at a symbolic and literal level in the images. Therefore, on the one hand, the images of *Pastoral Interlude* expose the fallacy of the landscape as a value-free mode of representation and therefore indict an entire tradition, and on the other, they deliberately convey a political message which questions the naturalised exclusion of Black subjects from the countryside.

The organisation of exclusion

Can heritage embodied in the English countryside ever be shared in the same way by the white and non-white English? Can any form of even symbolic space appropriation fundamental to fostering a sense of belonging ever happen? These are the central questions that the artist keeps raising in the series.

The landscape images Pollard creates are not light in tone but indeed much darker, as they point to the exclusiveness of the English countryside. They invite the weight of a colonial history kept at bay in traditional depictions of the landscape as pure, white, and harmonious. A feeling of antagonism permeates the first image, showing a woman (Pollard herself) looking warily to her side as she reloads her camera while sitting on a rock wall reinforced by wire mesh. The caption confirms the notion of threat, of being out of place:

“... it's as if the Black experience is only lived within an urban environment. I thought I liked the Lake District where I wandered lonely as a Black face in a sea of white. A visit to the countryside is always accompanied by a feeling of unease, dread... (Pollard, 1987)”

The reverie, joyfulness and harmony with nature which Wordsworth's lyrical lines from “The Daffodils” suggested, “I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o'er vales and hills”, have been replaced by a sense of menace. (Wordsworth, [1802] 1985, 35) The domestic homeliness of the countryside has given way to an experience of alienation.

The sights offered by the Lake District, in which Ingrid Pollard sets her images, have already been visualised, painted, designed, managed, the places have already been named, the paths traced and the spaces enclosed. Therefore the experience of the English landscape by the Black rambler or sightseer is framed by centuries of the *making English* of the landscape. Cultural identification is made more difficult for those kept “beyond the pale”, who are literally prevented from developing any easy connection with the countryside. Pollard's text hints at the notion that Black people are excluded from the tradition of landscape painting, therefore barred from sharing or participating in a common English culture which gives them no visibility; and they are made to feel like strangers when they come to the countryside⁵. The

⁵ A parallel may be made with Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights* (2011). The film is the first screen adaptation in which the character of Heathcliff is interpreted by Black actors James Howson (old Heathcliff) and Solomon

unfamiliarity is twofold: they are an unfamiliar sight in the countryside, and they are unfamiliar with the leisurely experience of rambling. Black people are “naturalised out” of the countryside and as a result their presence provokes awkwardness, “unease, dread”. Ingrid Pollard takes on the task of challenging this normalised exclusion of Black people from both the countryside and landscape representation. Her pictures disrupt any easy, simple reading, while the added texts invite much more troubling narratives into the image.

Pollard explains that early on photography may certainly have been an instrument facilitating her appropriation of an environment, a means of finding her own place, of experiencing a sense of belonging:

I took my camera with me everywhere, going to Hereford on a canoeing and walking holiday with the Black Lesbian Group for instance. [...] I was documenting the community I was part of, although at the time I would never have put it that way. Taking pictures was a seamless part of belonging—part of finding a home and being at home (Pollard, 2004, 8).

In *Pastoral Interlude*, the focus is precisely on the impossibility for Black Britons to belong in rural spaces which have always been regarded as the epitome of an unalloyed white Englishness. Ingrid Pollard had to find ways of expressing the feeling of alienation and adversity through visual means. Loneliness is one means.

Pastoral Interlude began as holiday snaps. There was an unconscious selection of the lone figure within the landscape. It became a way of working. The stylised posed figures, the use of historical details about a particular place. It started off unconscious, but then after a while it became quite deliberate (Pollard, *Id*, 18).

Elements in the environment seem to encircle and restrain the figures. The land in Ingrid Pollard's images is an enclosed space: fences, stone walls, barbed wire, railings, brooks, bramble, hedges all signify a “geography of exclusion” and a world of borders not to be crossed. These borders protect as much as they exclude. As geographer David Sibley suggests, “there's a continuing need for ritual practices to maintain the sanctity of space in secular society. These rituals are an expression of power relations: they are concerned with domination” (Sibley). Pollard's pictures are not the picturesque vistas of Romantic paintings: they depict a land of frontiers, physical as much as symbolic, in which movement is constrained for those who try to penetrate it. The second image in the series presents the figure of a woman seen speeding away in a cemetery, threading her way on top of a high wall with railings barring one side, and heading towards a dense row of bushy trees. The gothic motifs create a feeling of unease, which is compounded by the fact that the woman turns her back to the viewer and by the caption: “...feeling I don't belong, walks through leafy glades with a baseball bat by my side...” (Pollard, 1987). The clear innuendos of threat create a growing tension.

The gaze itself is made complex in the series. The feeling of estrangement is conveyed not only through the isolation of the Black subject but also through the *mise en abîme* of the gaze: in the pictures showing Pollard herself, she stands as an onlooker on a panorama which doesn't seem to respond to her presence, forbidding any sense of a harmonious communion. On the contrary, the lines dividing her position from the rest of the land before her prevent her from entering it. Unlike landscape paintings, *Pastoral Interlude* does not provide views which

Glave (young Heathcliff), a choice which takes the indication of Heathcliff's “darkness” literally and may be closer to Emily Brontë's text. Arnold's Heathcliff appears doubly alien, because of his class and race.

would place the spectator in the position of a confident landowner dominating a scenery for instance: instead the images problematize the gaze, situating it in a racialised position, making it indirect and refracted, hesitant. The viewer is looking at the Black figure in the landscape, and is made to reflect on the reasons why such a presence may appear extra-ordinary. The politics of exclusion built in traditional representations is made all the more blatant.

Pollard's landscapes are political as she invites in her pictures the social and economic history of imperialism. This larger historical view gives way to another narrative: one of exploitation, slavery and death. If Black people are absent from iconic representations of the English landscape, it is because at the very moment when the landscape tradition was flourishing Black slaves were being shipped to the colonies and exploited there. The text underlines this very clearly:

“... a lot of what MADE ENGLAND GREAT is founded on the blood of slavery, the sweat of working people.. an industrial REVOLUTION without the Atlantic triangle.”

“... searching for sea shells; waves lap my wellington boots, carrying lost souls of brothers and sisters released over the ship side...”

“... death is the bottom line. The owners of these fields, these trees and sheep, want me off their GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND. No Trespass, they want me DEAD. A slow death through eyes that slide away from me...”

Such an insistence on death and violence jars with the stillness of the rural scenes depicted in *Pastoral Interlude* and with the peacefulness of common representations of rural England. A melancholy and accusing tone springs from the knowledge of the deaths and disasters caused by the colonial exploitation of the British West Indies. The landscapes of the Lake District appear as the opposite of other invisible, far-away places in the colonies whose exploitation made it possible for England to prosper. Colonisation was the condition for the beauty of the English countryside. A much less positive vision of imperialism is thus thrust upon the viewer. They are reminded that the counterpoint of the “prettiness” of the postcard-like pictures, of the softness of the colours and the faded light is a very violent history which affected non-English populations in distant lands.

Yet the violence is still there, reflected in the racist tensions which the presence of a Black person in the countryside arouses: “they want me off their green and pleasant land. [...] They want me dead”. The hostile reaction echoes directly the xenophobic slogans addressed to the immigrant population at large. The countryside, the symbolical heart of the nation, appears a microcosm which magnifies the persistent racism present in representations and discourses at the level of the whole country.

Pastoral Interlude is the chronicle of a reversed process of colonisation: from the colonial gaze of the imperialist project in landscape painting or in travel photography to the de-centred gaze of the colonised subject. Pollard's circulation in the countryside is a reversed pilgrimage to the historical source of oppression. The descendant of the colonised subject has come to visit the sites and country houses whose wealth was built on colonising ventures.

3. Whose heritage?

Pollard's *Pastoral Interlude* was one of the first visual pieces of work to articulate the issue of the exclusion of coloured minorities from rural England at a time when multiculturalism was being redefined by the New Right and restrictive choices in terms of immigration policy were being taken ten years after Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had claimed that she understood the concerns of people feeling they were “rather swamped by people of a different culture” (Thatcher).

Pastoral Interlude generated a lot of attention when it came out. It met the concerns of intellectuals and activists who raised awareness about a form of “eco-racism”, that is, a racism which led to the exclusion of minority communities from environmental issues and made invisible the specific discrimination of these populations in rural areas. The concept struck roots in Britain with the creation of the Black Environment Network (BEN), led by Prof. Julian Agyeman in the late 1980s. Pollard was approached and became active in the organisation, sitting on its steering committee and communicating around the issue. BEN aimed at “[challenging] the normative whiteness of the countryside and the urban association of Black and minority communities” (Neal and Agyeman, 111).

The attention that Pollard's work attracted from openly political groups such as BEN testifies to the political power of images that challenge dominant representations and invite themselves in political debates. This piece of work is an intervention, through artistic means, on a very pressing political issue: that of the possibility, for members of ethnic minorities, of belonging to and fully sharing in a common, yet not linear nor homogeneous national heritage.

In her following series Pollard kept coming back to the question of the involvement of Black Britons in popular historical accounts which form the bedrock of an accepted common British culture. *Seaside Series* and *Wordsworth Heritage* developed further the problem of identification Black Britons face when they visit or try to relate to highly symbolical places such as Hastings or “Wordsworth country” in the Lake District (Pollard, 1989, 1992). These names evoke very definite meanings and are part of a shared knowledge and history. But Pollard underlines the fact that they bear ideological representations: fears of a perceived invasion, celebration of resistance, pride in an unchanging environment. Pollard questions the commodification of these places which continue to exclude immigrants and perpetuate a discourse valuing permanence and immutability. These series are a critical examination of the notion of heritage and of the place non-white newcomers can find in it. The notion of a “national heritage” gained strength from the early 1980s when two National Heritage Acts were signed (1980, 1983). But the very notion holds problematic ideas. The promotion of the concept is closely associated with a Conservative agenda (later embraced by New Labour) seeking to promote an authorised and consensual version of national history through forms of commodification in the tourism industry. Heritage sustains a conception of history consumed in parks and monuments, devoid of the dimension of political conflict (Hewison, 1987, Smith, 2007). It is a depoliticised and stereotyped form of history which naturalises a traditional order:

Heritage [is] market-led history: never mind the substance of the product, but only whether the market would bear it. [...] Heritage, wherever it is indulged, promotes an essentially pastoral sensibility. [...] Heritage presumes the country, not the city; cottage-industry, not heavy industry; leisure, not work (Coster, 1990, unpaginated).

Concerned by the implications of such an ideological use of history, Pollard convincingly demonstrates that the concept of heritage, which masks and depoliticises historical truths, also nurtures a homogeneously white representation of the past. The valorisation of the bland and commodified conception of history which heritage promotes prevents any probing into the uncomfortable truths on which the narrative of the nation rests. Pollard's work suggests that the symbolic appropriation by Black subjects of hallowed national places such as the countryside or the southern coastlines will remain problematic, as long as the historical realities of exploitation, class struggle and racism fail to be addressed and acknowledged.

These are the issues that Pollard keeps exploring through her artistic work in her attempts to reshape a broader, more inclusive sense of place. The concept of *heritage* seems much too bland and mystified to take up contested issues such as the legacy of colonialism. Stuart Hall offers a much more capacious and politically conscious conception of history, warning that Britain needs to come to terms with the troubled periods of its past and the challenges of today:

Slavery, colonisation and colonialism locked us all—them (you) and us (them)—into a common, unequal, uneven history. Afro-Caribbean culture and history *is* precisely the result of the ways these histories were locked irrevocably together.

Conclusion

Pollard's work, from *Pastoral Interlude* to *Seaside Series* and *Wordsworth Heritage*, attempts to articulate the complex nexus of race, gender and place in an approach which emphasises the negotiated, shifting, historicised nature of the relations between these categories. Using the genre of the landscape is an extremely effective way of raising these questions. The landscape of quintessential England is given a post-colonial twist. The choice is a daring one, for Pollard consciously challenges one of the pillars of the English artistic tradition, and symbolically punctures the canvas by summoning into the image the historical realities of human and economic exploitation on which the British Empire thrived. The Black people present in her images refuse to be foils in a history which has subjugated their ancestors, but on the contrary claim their full participation in a country which was also made with them. *Pastoral Interlude* is a deceptive name: it is not a “humorous or lighter interval”, but a central, crucial challenge to contemporary definitions of what Britishness stood for in the late twentieth century.

Subverting the homogeneous narrative of traditional landscapes, Pollard's postcolonial landscapes interpellate the spectator and lay the ground for the necessary redefinition of a dis-essentialised and much more heterogeneous notion of Britishness that does not shy away from questioning its own past and reconsidering the terms of its inclusiveness. Pollard's work participates in the search for the construction of alternative, active visualizations of the situations and experiences of Black people in Britain in the 1980s.

Its relevance is also to the artistic world in general, demonstrating the continuing power of images to provoke, politicise and transform representations. Black British artists of Pollard's generation raised necessary political questions and managed to redefine the terms of their participation in the British cultural and artistic production. These challenges paved the way for an ambitious generation of Black British artists who took centre stage in the 1990s, rivalling the Young British Artists in popularity (Chambers, 2012).

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