

**FAKE PHOTOGRAPHS:
MAKING TRUTHS IN PHOTOGRAPHY**

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SUMMARY

During World War One a series of propaganda exhibitions were mounted in London by British, Canadian and Australian photographers. They featured large artificially-coloured composite photographs. After the war, in the 1920s, some British spirit photographers gained considerable notoriety because they seemed to be able to produce images of the dead on their photographic plates. These two moments in photography had a powerful effect on their contemporaneous audiences, but they have been subsequently neglected by photographic historians. I examine them, and their political, social and cultural context, in detail.

Out of this historical examination I produce a trope of the photographic 'fake', which I contrast to the snapshot. This is then used to recast some aspects of canonical photographic theory and current digital theory, discuss the relationship of contemporary Australian indigenous photographers to historical photographs of their past, and reflect on the increasing popularity of the photograph within current public rituals of memory and mourning.

In addition I visually identify examples of the iconography of the uncanny, such as the cloudblast and the spectre, and thread this iconography through various moments from the last hundred years when visual culture was convulsed by representational crises.

The work of the photographers Frank Hurley, Ivor Castle, and Mrs Ada Deane is discussed in detail, as is the role of Lord Beaverbrook in the development of visual propaganda in World War One, and the role of the photograph in the British and Australian Spiritualist movement of the interwar years.

Thirty photographs making up the exhibition *Faces of the Living Dead*, are presented as supporting material.

The thesis is made up of approximately 65,000 words of text and approximately 200 pictures.

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PREFACE

This thesis focuses on two moments in photography: the exhibition of a series of large, artificially coloured, composite photo murals which were produced as propaganda during World War One; and the revival of spirit photography immediately after World War One. If both these moments have previously received scant attention from photographic historians it is perhaps because the photographs themselves, despite having wide currency at the time, were also known at the time to be fake.

The composite murals which were exhibited during World War One traded on their photographic authenticity, their 'relentless verity'¹, for their propaganda power, but at the same time they were prepared to compromise this reality-effect by montaging together several different negatives to produce a more spectacular, more scenographically legible image. The spirit photographs, produced in a climate of post-war mass grief, were the products of fraudulent thaumaturges who delivered on their clients' thirst for an image of their departed loved ones by surreptitiously double exposing their photographic plates, thereby supposedly producing positive evidence, 'perfect proof'², that the dead lived.

Both these moments therefore transgress what has normally been taken to be photography's almost sacred mission: to remain optically true to its subject and to accurately transcribe reality without human interference. It is for this reason that moments such as the ones I will investigate have remained at best footnotes to standard photographic history: they are photography's quaint arcana, its slightly embarrassing rumour and disreputable apocrypha. They are what it has been necessary to exclude from

¹ 'During the summer of 1917, an exhibition of Canadian Military photographs was displayed in Ottawa. The *Ottawa Journal* commented, 'there is a relentless verity about them that eats up the miles between Canada and the firing line,...' The verity of the still photograph lies in its ability to freeze a moment of time for the benefit of future generations." Introduction to Robertson, *Relentless Verity: Canadian Military Photography from 1885*, Quebec, Laval University, 1973.

² Barlow, 'Psychic Photography. Perfect Proof', *Light*, London, 1921.

photography's standard history in order to define it as an integral medium with characteristics and qualities proper to it alone.

Yet these 'fake' photographs were very important to their audiences. They were produced in a time of extraordinary and unprecedented crisis and they had an emotional impact which connected their audience to people and experiences from which they felt estranged. In that sense they performed exactly the same function that 'straight', authentic photographs are meant to perform, while undercutting what is supposed to be the ontological basis of that affectivity. The emotional and psychological affect they produced in their audience did not flow from the unmediated connection with the real which the photograph grants, but from the special effects produced within the photograph, as extra to the photographer's normative function of snapping the picture.

This thesis uses the historical example of fake propaganda tableaux and fraudulent spirit photographs to develop a trope of the 'fake' with which to examine the wider issue of the relationship between photographic effects—supererogatory or superstructural additions and manipulations to the raw photographic image—and photographic affects—the self-consciously emotional, psychological or even spiritual states they induced in their audiences.

Whilst being built on the foundation of historical examples drawn from the early twentieth century, a period when the mass media and the normative function of the photograph as a 'snapshot' of a prior reality were still consolidating themselves, the thesis also considers the relationship between photographic effect and affect in the present day, when mass media forms of distribution and the photograph itself are undergoing transformation by digital technologies. To do this it reprises canonical photographic theory, discusses new media theory in relation to photographic realism, and then focuses on the role of the photograph in contemporary Australian visual culture. I look at the way Australian indigenous artists re-deploy the personal snapshot and the archival photograph in their historically and mnemonically charged works, and I reproduce two sets of images: the photographs that are frequently re-photographed in our media as they are held up as talismans by grieving relatives or wronged victims; and the photographs that are etched into granite, glass or steel on so many of our contemporary public memorials and monuments.

In contemporary Australian visual culture I find a continuation of some visual tropes that had their origin at the beginning of last century under the influence of the affective power of the fake photograph. I show that our present is still powerfully haunted by spectral, virtual images from the past, and that we still ritualistically use photographs as talismanic stand-ins for those who are absent from us.

Ultimately, although this thesis is putatively about the fake in photography, it returns to the issue of truth. The issue of truth in photography is much more than simply the historical consolidation of documentary realism as a genre, it is also the resilient manifestation of truth both in and by the photograph, not only in its ontological essence, but in the social and psychological process of its reception by an audience.

Also submitted as an appendix, and as supporting material, to the thesis is my exhibition of art works *Faces of the Living Dead*, 2001. Whilst writing this thesis I simultaneously created these works of art by cropping-out and enhancing details from one of the sets of photographs that are considered historically and theoretically in the thesis. The resultant exhibition of thirty works is therefore a response to the issues which are discussed in the thesis, but carried out on a purely visual plane by using intuition and my own affective reaction to the source images as my only guide.

The plan of the thesis

The thesis is divided into several autonomous parts, and each part is made up of a sequence of chapters. Most of these chapters are largely textual, with images used conventionally as illustrations of the points I am making. However some of the chapters are entirely visual, where I collate groups of images I have collected in order to make a point relevant to my larger argument on a purely visual basis.

Propaganda Effects and Affect deals with World War One composite propaganda tableaux in their historical and psychosocial context, as well as discussing their expunging from the documentary genre. This section also establishes the importance of uncanny visual figures such as the spectre and the cloudblast for mediating traumatic experience. *Spirit Photography* deals with the key role of the idea of photography within the practices and beliefs of post World War One Spiritualism. *The Fake Today* reconsiders traditional photographic theory in the light of the concept of the fake but affective photograph, and also considers the fate of 'fakeness' within our new digital visual regime. *The Photographic*

Truths Today brings these discussions to bear on specific examples from our contemporary historical and political moment. It discusses the role of photography within contemporary memory practices, and photography within Australian indigenous spirituality as it is deployed within current Australian race politics. This section also investigates the contemporary use of the photograph as a mnemonic tool—a chapter briefly discusses, but extensively documents, what I call ‘haptic’ and ‘monumental’ photographs. A conclusion returns to the issue of the fake and the true in the context of current photographic technology and theory.

1

PROPAGANDA EFFECT AND AFFECT

ONE

LONDON BATTLE SCENES

*Thrills as if one were on the battlefield itself—The Daily Mirror, 1917.*¹

During the last two years of the First World War a series of propaganda photography exhibitions were held in London. The centrepieces to these exhibitions were giant mural enlargements. Some of these spectacular battle scenes were artificially coloured, and some were composite, produced from several different negatives. The exhibitions were popular successes, and the mural images attracted favourable press attention. But they also produced a degree of controversy behind the scenes about their status as 'fakes'.

Pictorial War Propaganda in Britain

As the war had progressed propaganda had begun to be used more, and more strategically, by all belligerent nations. At the beginning of the war a War Propaganda Bureau was set up under the Foreign Office. The Bureau was initially secretive, circulating high-minded literary material abroad to influential people in allied and neutral countries. But by 1916 it had begun to appoint official photographers and had set up a pictorial department to attempt to distribute British photographs and films more widely. At this stage of the war the British were desperate for the still neutral United States to enter the war on their side, and propagandists became immensely frustrated when they saw, one day in November 1916 for instance, the *Chicago Tribune* running an extremely negative photograph of Britain at war, 'Regent Street in ruins after a Zeppelin raid', which it had received directly from a Berlin wireless dispatch, while at the same time official British photographs, with their positive spin, remained poorly distributed and expensive in the US.²

¹ 'WAR PICTURES WITHOUT EQUAL, CANADIAN BATTLE SNAPS, SHOTS THAT WILL THRILL', *The Daily Mirror*, 16 July 1917, London.

² 'File note relating to 'Regent Street in Ruins', *Chicago Tribune*, 8 November, 1916', War Propaganda Bureau Records, Imperial War Museum.

In February 1917, when the fighting had well and truly bogged down in the trenches and there was a real danger of domestic disaffection with the war, the Foreign Office Bureau was superseded by a Department of Information within the War Office, which had to become concerned as much with managing domestic public opinion and mood as overseas propaganda. A year later, when it had become apparent, "that almost for the first time in history success in war had become directly dependent on general public opinion"³, the Department was subsumed into a full Ministry of Information.

British pictorial propagandists quickly recognised the importance of the new media, such as the cinema or illustrated newspapers, to their task. In 1917 there were twenty million cinema attendances a week in Britain, and mass circulation illustrated newspapers were globally linked by cable and wireless and serviced by a network of news and picture agencies. In these tabloid picture papers and illustrated magazines the daily repetition of the unchanging iconography of trenches, enemy dead, allied wounded and bombardments, was contrasted by a proto-surreal fascination with the increasingly bizarre technologies of this war: gas masks, flame throwers, aeroplanes, mines, submarines, zeppelins, body armour, and camouflage, culminating with the invention and deployment of what was hoped to be the breakthrough technology, tanks, in 1917. As the war progressed these images became central to the public's understanding of the fighting, and photography and film supplanted the written word as the most powerful weapon in the propaganda war.

³ L. Beaverbrook, 'Memorandum for the Committee from the Minister of Information', 1918, House of Lords Records Office, BBK/E/3/4. p1.



'THAT ETERNAL MUD — FLANDERS ONE VAST QUAGMIRE', The *Daily Mirror*, 6 September, 1917. From J. Taylor, *War Photography*, 1991.

The driving force behind pictorial propaganda in Britain was Lord Beaverbrook, a Canadian financier who had come to Britain in 1910 as Max Aitkin and quickly rose in politics through his wealth, newspaper interests (he owned the *Daily Express*), personal friendships and high-level political allegiances. Aitkin persuaded the Canadian Prime Minister to make him 'Official Canadian Eyewitness' at the outbreak of the War. In January 1916 he was allowed to set up, and spend a lot of his own money running, the Canadian War Records Office. At the beginning of 1917 the new British Prime Minister Lloyd George granted him the peerage of Lord Beaverbrook as a reward for his support in the overthrow of the Asquith government.⁴ In early 1918 Lloyd George made Beaverbrook Britain's first Minister of Information, with a remit to form what had previously been piecemeal efforts into a single operation.

From the start British propagandists distanced themselves from the sensational fabrications and gross jingoism of Boar War propaganda. (During that war, sometimes dubbed the 'first media war', commercial cinematographic companies such as Edison regularly staged spectacular battle scenes to supplement the official reportage.⁵) In the phrase of the first head of the Foreign Office's Bureau of Propaganda, Charles Masterman,

⁴ Henceforth I will refer to him as Beaverbrook.

propagandists in this war were to use: "the propaganda of facts".⁶ However, while acknowledging this central tenet, Beaverbrook demonstrated a more sophisticated understanding of media-based propaganda within the complex and fragmented social environment of early twentieth-century Britain. Writing as the Minister of Information in 1918 he summed up what his approach had been throughout the war:

The function of propaganda is the formation of public opinion. The method is to tell the truth but to present it in an acceptable form. It is useless to imagine that the mere existence of fact will penetrate everywhere by its own weight, or that facts themselves do not require treatment according to which audience they are to be presented. Public opinion is indeed so volatile a thing that nothing except a mixture of tact and persistence will induce it to accept and realise what to the preacher is self-evident.⁷

The tone of these ideas wasn't derived from any independent analysis of the needs of the Home Front as much as from the developing terminology of the then nascent public relations industry.⁸ The public's opinion must not be allowed to form itself, it must be unconsciously formed for it. In addition there was not one monolithic public, but an interrelated set of audiences, each of which must be strategically targeted, with specifically treated facts.

Earlier, as the new head of the Canadian War Records Office, he had realised that photography would be central to the documentation of this war because it was thoroughly in tune with the dual responsibility of a government records office to both disseminate information and collect documents. The photograph was able to naturally operate along both the axes of publicity and record keeping, propaganda and history. It took part in the

⁵ 'The Boer War: The First Media War', BBC TV Program.

⁶ J. Carmichael, *First World War Photographers*, London, Routledge, 1989, p16.

⁷ L. Beaverbrook, 'Memorandum for the Committee from the Minister of Information'. p1.

⁸ For instance in 1922 the sociologist Walter Lippman wrote a book *Public Opinion* in which he used terminology and ideas identical to Beaverbrook's: "Photographs have the kind of authority over imagination today, which the printed word had yesterday, and the spoken word before that. They seem utterly real. They come, we imagine, directly to us, without human meddling, and they are the most effortless food for the mind conceivable. ... The whole process of observing, describing, repeating and then imagining, has been accomplished for you." Quoted in: J. Taylor, *War Photography: Realism in the British Press*, London, Routledge, 1991. For more on the symbiotic relationship between the beginnings of the public relations industry and WW1 propagandists see: J. S. S. Rampton, *Toxic Sludge is Good For You: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry*, Monroe, Common Courage Press, 1995. And S. M. Cutlip, *The Unseen Power: Public Relations, a History*, Hillsdale, Erlbaum, 1994.

urgency of the moment, while simultaneously implying the importance of that moment for posterity.

[W]hat was once regarded as the most instantaneous of all arts which could photograph racehorses in position at the winning post ... has also proved to be one of the most permanent recorders. The events and men may pass, but the photographic plates remain for years as an indelible record. Many of these have not yet passed the censor, but five or ten or twenty-five years from now, they will be shown to us and our sons and will link the decades together in a way unimagined by our ancestors.⁹

Beaverbrook also had the most acute understanding of anyone in Britain of the importance of photography and film for the new psychological depth of the task which propaganda had to perform. He felt the visceral primacy of the image over the written word, and he understood the importance for war propaganda of the technical affinity which the most modern forms of communication had with the most modern forms of warfare.

Under modern conditions nations are fighting and are sacrificing bone and sinew to an extent never known before—and realisation alone can justify the sacrifice. We must see our men climbing out of the trenches before we can realise the patience, the exhaustion, and the courage which are the assets and trials of the modern fighting man.¹⁰

In addition, the photographic image had universal appeal, even to the lowest orders of society who, because continued recruitment was of utmost importance, were now being targeted as a newly crucial segment of the 'public'.

A direct picture of reality strikes the mind which is impervious to eloquence or the written word. The eye accepts it readily and it carries conviction.¹¹

As the war dragged on photography became even more important. The directness of the image was able to combat the fatigue the public was feeling with the war itself, and with

⁹ L. Beaverbrook, 'Report submitted by the Officer in charge', Canadian War Records Office, Imperial War Museum, Ministry of Information Records, London, January 11, 1917.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ L. Beaverbrook, 'Memorandum for the Committee from the Minister of Information'. p18.

the increasingly hollow-sounding rhetoric of the government. It was able to form a direct point of contact between the totally estranged experiences of those in Britain and those on the front.

The photograph has proved itself one of the most potent weapons of propaganda and therefore of war. It is hard enough for the civilian, on whose endurance to the end the issue of the world war depends so largely, to realise conditions at the front: without photography it would be practically impossible. But what the mind can't take in by the reading of descriptions, the eye can assimilate from the actual outline of the scene and the men depicted on the plate. Besides, the great bulk of mankind soon wearies of the word. At the bottom of his heart man feels of the war story that of the makers of such books there is no end, and that much study of them is weariness to the flesh. Photography has about it the convincing atmosphere of naked reality. He has only got to open his eyes to see it. So is modern science applied to the acts of war as well as of peace.¹²

Beaverbrook's other innovation as head of the Canadian War Records Office was to use the established film and photography trades for the production and dissemination of propaganda. The official British and Canadian photographers mostly came from London's populist tabloid picture paper the *Daily Mirror*. The *Daily Mirror* had been started in 1903 by Beaverbrook's fellow entrepreneurial press baron Lord Northcliffe, and was currently owned by his brother Lord Rothermere. A tabloid, it used new rotary press technology to print both photographic plates and letterpress on the same page at a speed of 20,000 copies an hour. It relied heavily on its photographs which became as up to the minute and 'newsy' as the written reports.¹³ Thanks to the press barons the London press scene was the most advanced of any in the world when it came to the instantaneous 'snapping' and quick distribution of press pictures. Writing after the war a London press photographer recalled:

[Slow, tripod-based photography] was still the state of affairs when Lord Northcliffe carried out his idea of making news pictures the chief feature of the *Daily Mirror*, which had proved a failure as a woman's paper. Success followed at once. The first thing he did was to send out men with hand cameras capable of taking

¹² L. Beaverbrook, 'Draft of the 'Ministry of Information, its Organisation and Work' for publication in the *Windsor* magazine, 18 June 1918, HLRO.

pictures of moving objects, instead of the heavy apparatus on legs, and, of course, speed became the chief consideration. The difficulty at the outset was to find men able to use these cameras, and as recently as twenty-five years ago there were but few who understood them or the work. Thanks to Lord Northcliffe's enterprise these men were almost all centred in London. Even New York and Paris lagged far behind, and in most of the great cities of the world there was no one able to take a 'live' picture.¹⁴

This was the context into which the Canadian official photographs were licensed for distribution through picture agencies on a commercial basis. Beaverbrook stated:

The policy of this office has always been based on the firm belief that no propaganda reaches the hearts and minds of the people unless it is so convincing and that the public is ready and anxious to pay a price to see or read it. What is given for nothing is, in the eyes of the recipient, worth nothing; what he is prepared to make a sacrifice for must in the nature of the case be worth something in his eyes.¹⁵

In the emerging mass media environment of the time there were many rivals for the public's attention, and tastes and appetites were easily jaded. In this context a fundamental principal of propaganda must be that, "obvious propaganda is not only of little value but may even do more harm than good."¹⁶ Beaverbrook realised that it was the public appetite for images with which to make sense of the war that should lead his propaganda. Although he wanted his images to carry the authoritative premium of the 'official' imprimatur, he also wanted them to find their way to their audience as a commercial product, so that they became an intimate part of the public's media consumption, a consumption driven by audience choice and desire. Moreover, because this public appetite was changing and continually seeking formal novelty, only trade cameramen trained under commercial imperatives, not bureaucrats, could provide effective propaganda.

¹³ P. Thwaites, 'Circles of Confusion and Sharp Vision: British News Photography 1919-39', *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, P. Catterall, London, Macmillan, 2000, p100.

¹⁴ B. Grant, *To the Four Corners: The memoirs of a news photographer*, London, Hutchinson & Co, 1937, p245.

¹⁵ L. Beaverbrook, 'Report submitted to the Officer in Charge', 13 March 1918, Imperial War Museum.

Official war photographs were disseminated into a very fluid, polyvalent media environment. In the picture papers and illustrated magazines of the time photographs weren't diegetically integrated into the news articles. They were generally given their own section in the paper—in the case of the *Daily Mirror*, as a front page, back page and centre double page spread—with supporting captions. The caption could denote either a non-specific 'scene at the front', or a specifically reported-on raid. Photographic realism had become the core model for all illustration, and the fresh, proximate, eyewitness report the core model for all text. But valencies of authenticity and scenographic legibility were still exchanged between different kinds of image and text across the page. For instance, illustrated magazines such as the *London Illustrated News*, which still largely relied on drawing and paintings to convey scenographic information, often had a rather uninformative photograph of a particular engagement, followed by a stirringly composed, narrativised drawing of the same engagement, with the caption 'drawn from eyewitness accounts'.¹⁷

However, although the photographer was often referred to in the caption, and the intrepid photographer became a pivotal figure in the newspaper and propaganda landscape, the idea of the 'photojournalist'—the autonomous photographer independently reporting on events as they unfolded—made no sense at the time. The official photographers, although usually recruited straight from newspaper press rooms, were given honorary ranks and saw themselves as propagandists, not reporters, their photographs were part of the war effort, not a comment on it.

Faking

In this context propagandists and photographers found themselves having to continually finesse and re-finesse the balance between the qualities of authenticity, actuality and immediacy in their images, and their legibility as historical scenes. This threw up conflict in all directions: between the photographers themselves; between the photographers on the ground in France and the desk-bound propagandists in London; and between the allied countries. These personal and bureaucratic conflicts highlight both the fluid ontology of the photographic image at the time, and its potency as an ideological weapon.

¹⁶ L. Beaverbrook, 'Memorandum for the Committee from the Minister of Information', 1918.

¹⁷ For more on the British press and propaganda during World War One see: J. Taylor, *War Photography: Realism in the British Press*, London, Routledge, 1991.

This was new iconographic terrain with everything at stake. The value of authenticity had never been more politically crucial, but at the same time the need to provide scenographic spectacle to feed the public's appetite for images, and the need to re-cohere fragmentary and disjointed images into assimilable legibility, created a huge temptation to fake. Given the conditions of the warfare, with many raids taking place in darkness, and shrapnel and snipers forcing photographers to constantly seek cover, and the state of the technology, with photographers using the standard kit of the pressman—relatively slow glass plates and wide angle lenses—the temptation to fake must have been enormous. As one war photographer, a veteran of the ranging warfare of the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 and the first fast-paced retreats of WW1, complained in 1917:

Of all the battles of which I have been a spectator, that of the Somme is the least productive from the point of view of the photographer. ... One might get some wonderful photographs if one had complete liberty of movement. But one would want a hundred charmed lives and indulgence from the enemy.¹⁸

What could be called faking took place in several forms. Photographs taken during training were passed off as real battle photographs; particular scenes and battles were deliberately staged for the camera; the photograph itself was embellished with montaged in bomb blasts or aeroplanes; or elaborate composites were constructed from several negatives. Virtually every photographer or filmmaker faked to some extent, and everybody involved behind the scenes seemed to know about it.¹⁹

Faking had been an issue bubbling away in press photography and film since the Boer War. It was an issue of some, but not urgent, concern. For instance in 1905 one reader of *Photographic News*, described as 'outrages', the use of faked photographs 'day after day' in the popular press. He complained of photographs of supposed Japanese troops supposedly returning from a far-off battle in battle trucks marked with the name of the British railway G. E. R., and described as an insult to Royalty the fake wedding pictures of two young people belonging evidently to the lower-middle class, who were dressed up as the Prince and Princess, and captioned as Royal newly weds.²⁰ But after 1916 the unprecedented psychological demands placed on the photograph by the war to both

¹⁸ I. Castle, 'With a camera on the Somme, by the Official Photographer with the Canadian Forces', *Canada in Khaki*, London, Canadian War Records Office, 1917, p68.

¹⁹ J. Carmichael, 1989, p52.

²⁰ P. Thwaites, 2000. p105-6.

supply coherent information and transmit an authentic experience elevated the issue of faking to one of acute importance.

Not only did the accusation of fake directly undermine the propaganda value of the photograph or film, it could upset the delicate internal politics of the army and undermine the photographer's honorary position within its structure. Fakes could bring photographers and cinematographers into disrepute with soldiers at the front. For instance a set up shot with a dog supposedly minding its master's kit and rifle in the snow was returned to the official photographers from the chief censor with the terse note: "I am instructing the photograph censors not to pass this type of photo in the future. To every soldier serving with a combatant unit, this must be patently and obviously a 'fake'".²¹

On the other hand the need to perpetually ramp up the spectacular effect of press images, and the need to both create and satisfy a public's insatiable appetite for photographs of the fighting, led to the propagandist being forced to entertain 'faking' despite its new dangers in war-time.

Nonetheless the instances of faking remained relatively rare and isolated, and were usually officially disavowed and surreptitious. Beaverbrook unceremoniously sacked one Canadian cinematographer Lieutenant Bovill, whose obvious and wholesale faking made his footage useless, at the same time as continuing to sponsor the successful British film cameraman Lieutenant Malins and the Canadian photographer Ivor Castle, who were also widely suspected to have faked from time to time.

Propaganda exhibitions

The war's most explicit, though still tacit, 'fakes' were the central set pieces to a series of massive photographic exhibitions that Beaverbrook auspiced. He organised two exhibitions of *Canadian Official War Photographs* at the Grafton Galleries near New Bond Street in London in 1916 and 1917. The success of these exhibitions led him to auspice an *Imperial War Exhibition*, containing British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand photographs at the Royal Academy in January 1918, and *British Official War Photographs in Colour* at the Grafton Galleries in March 1918. When the new Australian War Records Section was established in mid 1917 they also began to plan an exhibition of *Australian*

²¹ M. N. Lytton, 'Note from Photography Section, GHQ, to Ministry of Information', 8/1/18, 1918, Imperial War Museum, Ministry of Information files.

Official War Pictures at the Grafton galleries in May 1918. The sequence of propaganda exhibitions was concluded with two large Naval and Air Force exhibitions in 1919.

The first Canadian exhibitions not only went on to tour—provincially, then to Paris, and then to North America—but they were also the locus for considerable press attention, visits by royalty, and huge attendances. As media events they were partnered by the reproduction of images from them in newspapers and magazines and the production of postcard series. They were also points from which images were sold in a variety of formats and prices, from nine pence to several hundred pounds.

These exhibitions were organised by Ivor Castle, an experienced English press and war photographer who Beaverbrook, drawing on his connections to the British newspaper trade, had recruited to the Canadian War Records Office from the *Daily Mirror's* photography department in mid 1916.²² Castle photographed Canada's role in the disastrous Somme offensive of late 1916, and then returned to London to mount the first exhibition of over 200 Canadian Official War Photographs at the Grafton Galleries in December 1916. The photographic printing company Raines & Co of Ealing enlarged the negatives to dimensions that ranged from one metre square to two by three metres, and mounted them in heavy oak frames. The proceeds from the picture sales went to the Canadian War Memorials Fund, to pay painters to paint grand battle-pictures for a post war memorial.

Captions to photographs in this exhibition emphasised both the technical sophistication of the photographs and the bravery of the photographer.

Heavy Barrage Fire

This is the only panoramic photograph of a shell barrage in the world ... It is obvious from the picture the risk which the photographer ran in taking it.

The Shelling of Courcellette

The photographer approached as near to the scene as he could without being killed, and declares it to be a veritable 'hell on earth'.²³

²² P. Robertson, 'Canadian Photojournalism during the First World War', *History of Photography*, Vol 2, No 1, January 1978. p42.

²³ *Catalogue of the Canadian Official War Photographs Exhibition*, London, 1916

However in this exhibition staged photographs were also shown without compunction. The central sequence of photographs to the exhibition supposedly showed lines of troops going 'over the top'. (Going 'over the top' was already the action that had become lodged in the public's imagination as the central heroic image of trench warfare, one that still retained iconographic links to earlier, more familiar, forms of battle, and earlier, more familiar, forms of war representation such as history painting and the nineteenth century craze for the staging of battle re-enactments in theatres.²⁴) In fact this sequence of images which supposedly showed Canadian soldiers heroically clambering over the sides of a trench into an onslaught of enemy machine gun fire was taken by Ivor Castle behind the lines at a training school. The canvas breech covers on the training rifles held by the soldiers had been cropped out, and shell bursts from the nearby St Pol trench-mortar school had been montaged into the image.²⁵

But the sequence had already been enthusiastically received by the press. Shortly after they were staged the *Illustrated London News* had published them as up to the minute news photographs with the caption "'Over the Top': The meaning of a phrase now familiar."²⁶ They were also splashed on the front page of the *Daily Mirror*.²⁷

²⁴ For more on the theatrical staging of war spectacle see J. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984.

²⁵ P. Robertson. p43

²⁶ "'Over the Top', the meaning of a phrase now familiar. The Canadians making one of their brilliant attacks. Men leaving their trenches.', *Illustrated London News*, 21 October 1916, London.

²⁷ 'GOING OVER THE TOP: A CHARGE BY THE CANADIAN TROOPS ON THE SOMME FRONT', The *Daily Mirror*, 16 October 1916, London.



Ivor Castle, 'GOING OVER THE TOP: A CHARGE BY THE CANADIAN TROOPS ON THE SOMME FRONT, These Striking Photographs Show In Vivid Fashion an Attack by the Canadian Troops.' *The Daily Mirror*, 16 October 1916, page 1. British Library.

The *Daily Mirror* published them again a month later, along with a dashing portrait of Ivor Castle posing in a trench.



'CANADIAN OFFICIAL WAR POSTCARDS. A remarkable snapshot. Two gas shells exploding. Lieutenant Ivor Castle. Shrapnel bursting over a reserve trench in the Canadian lines.' "The Daily Mirror has undertaken, at the request of the Canadian authorities, the publication of a series of picture postcards reproducing the wonderful Official Canadian War photographs. These photographs were taken during the Battle of the Somme by Lieutenant Ivor Castle who was formerly manager at the Daily Mirror Photographic Department. The net profits to the Daily Mirror from the sales will go to the Canadian War Memorials Fund." The *Daily Mirror*, 6 November 1916. British Library.

When the enlargements were exhibited at the Grafton Galleries two months later they relied on a fabricated catalogue text to verify them:

The Last Over The Top

Here is to be seen a remarkable picture of a German shrapnel shell bursting over a Canadian trench just as the Canadians are going over the parapet. A fragment from this shell killed the man whose body is seen sprawled across the parapet.²⁸

This incident of staging remained officially unacknowledged. And Castle, who coming from a commercial background had a flare for publicity, went on to exaggerate his personal derring-do in the magazine *Canada in Khaki*.

My first welcome among the Canadians was not too encouraging: but I have to blame the enemy for that. For more than two miles I had to go through shell-fire,

and the ground seemed as though it had been visited by an earthquake. The taking of photographs under such circumstances is a disagreeable business, and you miss many opportunities when the shells are round. You think you are going to secure a very great picture, but the German shrapnel comes along and you seek safety very quickly in the nearest trench. Taking photographs of the men going over the parapet is quite exciting. Nothing, of course, can be arranged. You sit or crouch in the first-line trench while the enemy do a little strafing, and if you are lucky you get your pictures. But when you read in official communiqués that an 'attack was launched at daybreak,' you can imagine that photography is impossible.²⁹

This kind of studied insouciance gave Castle's colleague on the *Daily Mirror*, William Rider-Rider, who was the second Official Canadian Photographer recruited to the Canadian War Records Office in June 1917, a lot to live down when he visited some units where, he later recounted, he was met by remarks such as: "Want to take us going over the top? Another faker?"³⁰

As the exhibition toured to Canada and the United States over the next two years, the 'over the top' pictures continued to be met with press acclaim for their realism, vividness and sense of immediacy. In all of the press accounts the image of the intrepid photographer, who like the soldiers themselves risked death to capture his shots, figured strongly.

Cinema Propaganda

Castle staged his 'over the top' pictures at about the same time as the seminal propaganda film *Battle of the Somme* was breaking all box office records in Britain. The centrepiece to the film was a similarly stirring 'over the top' sequence which had been filmed a month or so before. The first two shots in the sequence were staged, probably at the same training school behind the lines, by the British War Office's Official cinematographer Lieutenant Geoffrey Malins.³¹ Like Castle, Malins was a trade cameraman with many commercial connections (he had previously worked for Gaumont). Like Castle, he also talked up his own role as the intrepid hero risking all to get the

²⁸ *Catalogue of the Canadian Official War Photographs Exhibition.*

²⁹ I. Castle, 'With a camera on the Somme, by the Official Photographer with the Canadian Forces', *Canada in Khaki*, London, Canadian War Records Office, 1917, p68.

³⁰ P. Robertson, 1978. p43.

picture.³² For instance Malins' supposed insouciance filming tanks under enemy fire was described in dramatic, but mostly fabricated, detail in a *Daily Sketch* article:

TANKS IN ACTION, Wonderful Pictures secured by Thrilling Exploits, HERO WITH A CAMERA, Great Deeds Filmed Under Hail of Shot and Shell"³³

The article caused GHQ to complain directly to Beaverbrook, who by then had also made himself chair of the War Office Cinematographic Committee:

The interview is so full of lies that it has caused great ill-feeling here among the Armies. The only result will be that if and when Malins comes out here again, he himself will have a very warm reception from the men. I think also that other cinema operators will have their difficulties increased.³⁴

A month later, Malins even attempted to publish a book *The Adventures of a War Film Artist*, which was vetoed because of its numerous objectionable misstatements and exaggerations, and wasn't published until 1920.

But Malins himself, despite his willingness to bend the truth for his own self-aggrandisement, was also careful to safeguard the inherent value authenticity gave to films shot in France. In February 1917, at the same time as he was trying to get his book published, he heard that a small film company from Clapham had obtained the cooperation of the Aldershot Command to film mimic battles and mine explosions, in order to make a film to be marketed by Pathe Freres. He wrote to the distributor of the Official British War Films.

I am of the same opinion as others, that for a small firm to exploit the British army in this country in producing fake War Films will create a rather bad impression with the British public with regard to the official ones taken in France.³⁵

Lord Beaverbrook quickly wrote to the War Office asking them to rescind Aldershot's cooperation and to requisition and suppress the footage already shot.

³¹N. Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda During the First World War*, London, Croom Helm, 1986.

³² N. Reeves, 1986. p96.

³³ 'TANKS IN ACTION, Wonderful Pictures secured by Thrilling Exploits, HERO WITH A CAMERA, Great Deeds Filmed Under Hail of Shot and Shell', *The Daily Sketch*, 16 January 1917, London.

³⁴B. G. Charteris, 'Letter to Sir Max Aitkin', 18 January 1917, HLRO.

Quite apart from the fact that in expert opinion this film will prove a keen competitor to the Official War Films, we are greatly concerned at the grave consequences which are likely to follow the exhibition of 'faked' films. The greatest damage has already been done by the statement systematically circulated with intent to do damage, that portions of the last Official Film are of a faked description. Such must do incalculable harm, and we are of the opinion that every effort should be made to protect Official Films of any suggestion of this kind, and to permit a 'faked' film to be taken in the Aldershot Command can only aggravate a position which is already serious. In particular, we feel it is laying the Official Films of the War Office open to attacks on the part of German Propagandists in the USA, which will be very difficult to meet.³⁶

Despite always moving quickly to safeguard the assumed authenticity of his propaganda films, Beaverbrook was also always aware of changes in audience response to official film and photography. Later on in the war, after the success of major feature length films such as *The Battle of the Somme* had dissipated, he wrote to GHQ:

The public is jaded and we have to tickle its palate with something a little more dramatic in the future if we are to maintain our sales. From this point of view one is compelled to look at the matter from an entirely commercial point of view.³⁷

He immediately initiated a bi-weekly eight minute newsreel, but also began to consider producing what he hoped would be a potent film propaganda product by hybridising the 'story' film and the 'record' film to make films which, whilst "having a basis of fact, are dressed in the garb of fiction".³⁸

In mid 1917 Beaverbrook, and the Department of Information, entered into discussions with the most famous American Producer of the time, D. W. Griffith, who had already produced the epic blockbusters *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*. The initial verbal agreement he made with Griffith was extraordinary: the British War Office Cinematographic Committee would supply Griffith with official war films from the Front for him to intercut with his own footage. In addition the War Office was to assist Griffith in

³⁵ G. H. Malins, 'Letter to W. F. Jury', 14 February 1917, HLRO.

³⁶ L. Beaverbrook, 'Letter to the Secretary, The British War Office', 16 February 1917, HLRO.

³⁷ L. Beaverbrook, 'Letter from Canadian War Record Office to GHQ, 8 May 1917, HLRO.

shooting his own footage by supplying up to 40,000 troops, 3,500 French and German uniforms, half a dozen or more aeroplanes, and fifty carts loaded with personal effects, for a period of thirty days, plus the necessary artillery, horses, trench tools, barbed wire, shovels, munitions and other paraphernalia for them to stage mock battles. In return they were to receive 60% of the British and Colonial receipts, although they were not to be allowed to release an Official War Film for thirty days before, or sixty days after the release of Griffith's film.³⁹ Although this enormous commitment to Griffith's project was considerably wound back after this initial agreement, Griffith did go on to make the film *Hearts of the World*, shooting in England and France with Beaverbrook's and official Canadian assistance, and using £3094 worth of explosives. It turned in a lacklustre performance at the box office in 1918, but as Britain's first Minister of Information, Beaverbrook was happy to claim it as a successful propaganda innovation of his new Ministry.⁴⁰ In October 1918, just before the end of the war, Beaverbrook began negotiations for the Ministry of Information to purchase a London film studio to produce more 'story' propaganda films, and he was also negotiating with the London film producer Herbert Brenon and the writer Hall Caine over the production of a story film with the working title 'The National Film'.

The second Canadian exhibition

Following the success of his first Canadian exhibition Castle remained in London until April 1917, when he went to France and photographed the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge. These photographs formed the basis of the second exhibition sponsored by the Canadian War Records Office, which opened in July 1917 at the Grafton Galleries. Like its predecessor this exhibition featured 188 oak-framed enlargements, some of which were further enhanced by artificial colouring. The pictures were reported as depicting the Canadian operations with a "terrible realism" and supplying a "most intimate insight" into the difficulties of the Front.⁴¹

³⁸ L. Beaverbrook, 'Memorandum for the Committee from the Minister of Information', 1918, HLRO.

³⁹ D. W. Griffith, 'Letter to Lord Beaverbrook', 30 May 1917, HLRO.

⁴⁰ L. Beaverbrook, 'Draft of the 'Ministry of Information, its Organisation and Work' for publication in the *Windsor* magazine, 18 June 1918, HLRO. p20.

⁴¹ 'News and Notes: Canadian War Photographs', *The British Journal of Photography*, 20 July, 1918.



'THE STRETCHER-BEARERS. One of the Splendid Pictures from the Great Exhibition of Canadian battle Photographs'. *Canada In Khaki: A Tribute to the Officers and Men now serving in the Canadian Expeditionary Force*, 1917. (Artificially-coloured photograph)



'ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE EXHIBITIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHS EVER. The imagination of small boys is thrilled as they watch the photographs being carried into the galleries. Canadian soldiers helping to hang the photographs. The 'tanks' are there as large as life.' The *Daily Mirror*, 4 December, 1916. British Library.

As in the first exhibition, the intrepidity of the Official photographer was highlighted in the catalogue.

Barbed Wire and the Shells

The Canadian Official photographer was out along the front line when the Germans suddenly began a bombardment. The photographer had to take cover for three hours, but he emerged periodically to take pictures of the German's morning 'hate'.

The Death Cloud

It is one of the hardest things in the world to get a really good 'snap' of bursting shrapnel. Pretty as this little cloud of smoke looks, it is very deadly, and the man who handles the camera at such a moment does so at the risk of his life. ⁴²

Many of the pictures were giant enlargements. The catalogue drew the visitor's particular attention to picture number 158,

which is the largest photograph in the world. taken on 'no man's land' by the Canadian Official Photographer as the Canadians went over to the attack on Thelus Village.

⁴² *Catalogue of the Canadian Official War Photographs Second Exhibition, 1917.*



Ivor Castle and Raines & Co., *Battle of Vimy Ridge*, 1917. Composite gelatine silver photograph. Public Archives of Canada. PA 001093.

In fact the picture would have been hard to miss since it occupied an entire wall of the central gallery and measured six by three metres. It had been printed by Raines & Co in five separate panels, and was a composite of at least three separate negatives, one supplying foreground incident in the form of fallen soldiers, and probably several others for the background bomb blasts.



Ivor Castle, 'Untitled', Component photograph to *Battle of Vimy Ridge*, 1917. Gelatine silver photograph. Public Archives of Canada. PA 004875.

The catalogue description carefully took the visitor, almost step by step, through the correct way to experience this picture:

The Taking of Vimy Ridge

No individual soldier taking part in a modern battle can have the faintest idea of the scope of the battle, or the conditions of that battle. Distance and perspective are necessary to secure the correct impression of the actual facts. For this reason it is idle to stand close to this picture. It must be looked at and studied from a sufficient distance to enable one to understand the immensity and importance of the scene before one. It is true that the Canadian Official photographer, who took this picture, was in the midst of the men who were advancing to the attack, but knowledge of his craft alone enabled him to take a picture, the real wonder and sense of which can only be studied with quiet reflection and at a distance. Nonetheless the terrible nearness of things in which the photographer stood, which enables one to, as it were, 'watch the battle from the neighbouring hill', at the same time sweeps one into the conflict. One becomes absorbed into the picture. It is as though one were on the battlefield itself. The picture of the battle is taken in profile. It is taken from the flank looking along the line of attack. To the left

of the picture, beyond the frame, one must imagine the smoke of our guiding and sheltering barrage fire. Guiding, yes, but sheltering only to a degree. Through that barrage the German shells are hurtling. The white smoke in the distance, which lies along the ground like a dewy mist above meadows at dawn, is smoke from the counter barrage of the German's piercing our own. Every fleck of smoke, indeed, in the grim sky is smoke from bursting enemy shells. The great splodges of black smoke show where German shrapnel is showering thickly. Far along the ridge, in the middle distance, through the lane of men, may be seen the tanks heavily engaged. In the immediate foreground lie those who have already made the supreme sacrifice. Between, strolling to their 'rendezvous with death', are the men who made Vimy deathless. At the moment they are on what had been 'no man's land' but a short time before; there still protrude from the broken ground the supports which held the German wire entanglements swept away from our guns. It is an awful pageant of war as it is waged today. It is an impression, nay, indeed a reality, of the splendid horror snatched by the photographer, in the fraction of a second, from the clutchings of death.⁴³

This extended description not only navigates the audience through the abstracted, fragmented and disorienting experience of modern warfare, but also instructs us how to experience the picture in the gallery space. It implicitly links the two, new, modern experiences—warfare and exhibitions of giant photographs—through the mechanisms of nationalist sympathy and photographic technology.

Like the first exhibition, this one was a spectacular success. At one point people queued for nearly two hundred metres to get in, and the exhibition raised £1100 for the Canadian War Memorials Fund. It was also the occasion for much associated press coverage. The *Daily Mirror* (the photography department of which Castle had formerly headed, and to which he would return after the War) was enthusiastic:

WAR PICTURES WITHOUT EQUAL, CANADIAN BATTLE SNAPS, SHOTS THAT
WILL THRILL

To gaze, for instance at the huge picture showing the Canadians going to the attack at Vimy Ridge is to be carried away in imagination to the grim realities of war. To obtain a full impression of the splendid awesomeness of this amazing

⁴³ Ibid. p21

masterpiece of photographic art the visitor should stand some distance away. The result will be thrills as if one were on the battlefield itself.⁴⁴

After its London run the exhibition toured Britain, and a copy toured to Paris and Canada. But the success of the Canadian War Records Office did not go unnoticed. In August 1917 John Buchan, head of Britain's Department of Information, wrote to Sir Reginald Brade of the British War Office. He wanted to revamp and increase the support and supervision afforded to the British photographers because:

The position at present is that so many good [Canadian] photographs are taken, and of so good a quality, that their circulation lends colour to the criticism which you will find to some extent in the British, and very largely in the American press, that Canada is running the war. This makes it very necessary to improve the quality of the British official photographs.⁴⁵

Buchan was opposed, however, to emulating Beaverbrook by putting British propaganda photography on an entirely commercial footing. He didn't want to tie his distribution to the monopoly of one agency, and he didn't want to potentially restrict attendance at propaganda exhibitions by charging admission.

Our aim is to improve the quality of our photographs and to use them as widely as possible for propaganda purposes. Sometimes the latter aim is best realised by working on a commercial basis, but generally it is not.⁴⁶

Castle's use of composites had the full support of Beaverbrook. But his biggest composite was in fact produced not for the Canadians, but on behalf of the British, for the *Exhibition of British Official War Photographs in Colour* in March 1918. Beaverbrook now led Britain's Ministry of Information, and the composite was impresarioed by Ivor Castle, although he was still nominally attached to the Canadian War Records Office. At Raines & Co the

⁴⁴ 'WAR PICTURES WITHOUT EQUAL, CANADIAN BATTLE SNAPS, SHOTS THAT WILL THRILL', *The Daily Mirror*, 16 July 1917, London.

⁴⁵ J. Buchan, 'Letter to Sir Reginald Brade, War Office', 14 August 1917, HLRO. During this period of the war there was a general shift to emphasising English successes because, according to *The Times* of 7 October: "The enemy have for some time been engaged in spreading the ridiculous fiction that the English have left the Scots and the Irish and the rest of the Empire to do the fighting.", J. F. Williams, 'The gilding of battlefield lilies', *The Quarantined Culture: Australian Reactions to Modernism 1013-1939*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p100.

⁴⁶ J. Buchan, 1917.

photographs in the exhibition were broadly hand coloured with spray guns before being coloured in detail by hand with oil stick. They were mistakenly assumed by some daily newspapers to be colour photographs.⁴⁷ Mounted prints measuring over a metre by a metre were on sale for £150, with an additional 50% for hand colouring. In the words of its catalogue the exhibition was a:

Great Record of the War

No photographic exhibition has ever been attempted on such a scale before. It comprises many thousands of square feet of photographs, coloured under the supervision of experts, with the most particular care to detail. Truth to colour has never been sacrificed for the sake of creating an impression, but none the less the impression which this amazing collection conveys will be ineffaceable. If all the Master Artists of the world had laboured for a year they could not have produced a record of War so humanly vivid, arresting and complete. One walks thorough the doors of the Grafton Galleries on to the grey flats of Flanders, and on to the golden but burning sands of the deserts of the east. It is as though one was transported on a magic carpet into the battle zone half the world over. This wonderful collection is the apotheosis of the camera. The unflinching eye of the lens has looked on the War in all its aspects, and has recorded more faithfully even than any historian could do, the greatest and the smallest things in the greatest and most wonderful war in history.

The centrepiece to the exhibition was the new “largest photograph in the world”, a hand-coloured composite called *Dreadnoughts of the Battlefield*, which, despite General Staff's request, was not identified as a composite.

⁴⁷ 'News and Notes: Canadian War Photographs' and 'Imperial War Photographs in Colour', *The British Journal of Photography*, 20 July, 1918, p117, and 15 March, 1918, p130.



Raines & Co, Unidentified man retouching *Dreadnoughts of the Battlefield* with an oil stick, 1918, Imperial War Museum. Q28,580

Dreadnoughts of the Battlefield

This, the largest photograph in the world, was taken during a recent advance on the Western Front. The tanks, those giant landships which indomitably plough the oceans of mud in France and Flanders, are moving forward to attack. In the photograph heavy shells may be seen bursting thickly in the line of their path, but no barrage daunts them. The picture is so vivid that it brings the realisation of modern battle into the heart of London. The best way to appreciate its wonders is to stand away from it as far as possible, when every detail will stand out in stereoscopic relief. The picture actually measures 23ft 6in by 17ft, without the frame, and it was necessary to make it in two sections, as the builders of the Galleries never anticipated a 'canvas' on such a scale. Neither doors nor windows could accommodate a picture of such gigantic dimensions.⁴⁸

So, this picture subsumes into itself all previous and rival technologies: the humanity of the history painting, the magic carpet ride of cinema, and the corporeally based illusionism of the stereoscope. The magnitude of this *Gesamtkunstwerk* can only be achieved through

composite montage, but this montage has to be disavowed in order to preserve the integrity of photographic verisimilitude while inscribing it into a new regime of modernist spectacle. As a Ministry of Information press article commented:

It is a far cry from the old garish family group pasted in the album of Victorian days to the great picture twenty four feet by seventeen feet showing the first tanks in action.⁴⁹

When the King and Queen visited the exhibition to view "the soul of the War laid bare in pictures" they remained for a long time in front of this picture. The King remarked that the photographs were the finest he had seen.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Catalogue of the exhibition of the Exhibition of British Official War Photographs in Colour*, 1918

⁴⁹ L. Beaverbrook, 'Draft of the 'Ministry of Information, its Organisation and Work' for publication in the *Windsor* magazine', 18 June 1918, HLRO.

⁵⁰ 'SOUL OF THE WAR, The King's tribute to Realism in Pictures, VISIT TO EXHIBITION', The *Daily Mirror Sunday Pictorial*, , 24 February 1918.

SUNDAY PICTORIAL, February 24, 1918.
OUR GREAT £50,000 FREE AIR RAID INSURANCE—SEE PAGE 2

HARRY AND CHARLIE.—While at Los Angeles Harry Lauder looked in on Charlie Chaplin and the two were photographed together. An exchange of hats was decided upon, with the incongruous effect seen above.

SUNDAY PICTORIAL
 THE GREAT SUNDAY PICTURE NEWSPAPER.

BRISK BUSINESS, BUT WITHOUT ANY QUEUES

Doing business at Lady Pease's market stall, which she has opened at Chislehurst for the purpose of increasing the supplies of fresh produce.

A LUSITANIA WIDOW.—Mrs. Alfred G. Vanderbilt, who is wintering at Palm Beach with her two young sons, Alfred and George. Her husband, it will be remembered, was drowned in the Lusitania disaster.

SAMMIES ACCOMPANIED BY ADMIRING CROWD IN PARIS.

The appearance of American troops marching through the streets of Paris created the greatest excitement, and the "Sammies" soon found themselves accompanied by an admiring throng. On arriving at the railway station they were kindly cheered.

WORLD'S LARGEST PHOTOGRAPH FOR WAR EXHIBITION.

The most wonderful exhibition of coloured photography ever seen has been organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and will be opened on March 4 at the London Galleries. The soldiers are seen carrying in one of the gigantic canvases.

TWO INTERESTING MILITARY WEDDINGS IN LONDON YESTERDAY.

Colonel Francis Wilson (Canadian Force) and Miss Marjorie Bridges, daughter of the late Admiral Bridges, were married at the Chapel Royal, Surrey.

Major A. G. Barnard, R.F.A., and Miss Winifred Cowan, younger daughter of the late N. B. Cowan, M.A., LL.D., were married at St. Peter's, Eaton-square.

ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD AGAIN.

Major V. J. Woodward, the amateur international forward (in dark jersey), played for Chelsea yesterday in their match against Tottenham Hotspur.

Printed and Published by SUNDAY PICTORIAL NEWSPAPERS, Ltd., 20, Bouverie Street, London, E.C. 4.—Sunday, February 24, 1918.

"The most wonderful exhibition of coloured photography ever seen has been organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Information and will be opened on March 4. The soldiers are seen carrying in one of the gigantic canvases." *Sunday Pictorial*, 24 February 1918. British Library.



'THE WORLD'S LARGEST PHOTOGRAPH. A Portion of the largest photograph in the world being moved into the Grafton Galleries'. The *Daily Mirror*, 1 March 1918.

After two months at the Grafton Galleries the exhibition had been seen by a quarter of a million people, and had raised £7000 for charity. The exhibition was then moved into the East End, to the People's Palace in Mile End Road, presumably to address itself more directly to London's working classes, before moving north to Manchester and other large provincial centres. A smaller version of the exhibition simultaneously toured smaller towns, and a set of battle photographs was prepared for dispatch to the United States.



'Opening of the Exhibition of British War Photographs in Colour by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal at the People's Palace Mile End Road.' 1918. Imperial War Museum. Q30650.



'Exhibition of War Photographs in Colour, City Art Gallery, Leeds. Some of the 500 school children invited to the exhibition', 1918. Imperial War Museum. Q28577

Two

AUSTRALIAN PROPAGANDA

*Canada has made a great advertisement of their pictures, and I must beat them. –
Frank Hurley, 1917.¹*

C. E. W. Bean

The establishment of a Canadian War Records Office in January 1916 was a model and a goad for Australia's War Recorder C. E. W. Bean to agitate for the establishment of an Australian War Records section. Bean himself was an amateur photographer. As a journalist before the war he had taken his own photographs as aide-mémoires and illustrations for his works of descriptive writing. His descriptive prose, of which he wrote voluminous and continuous quantities from childhood, had a photographic quality. It was praised for its "clearness of description" and "directness and a pictorial clarity".² Appointed to be official Australian 'eyewitness' to the war in 1915, Bean naturally had taken his camera (along with his typewriter, telescope, sketchbook, notebook and diary) with him to the Gallipoli landing and used it freely.³

As the importance of his future role as official war historian grew in his mind during the months he spent dug in on the Gallipoli Peninsula he began to personally valorise and professionally emphasise the qualities of passive, objective recording in his work. His method consisted of writing his immediate impressions, conducting interviews, taking photographs, making sketches, drawing maps and taking measurements, all of which were spatially and temporally linked back to his ongoing diary. He referred to himself in

¹ F. Hurley, 'My Diary, Official War Photographer, Commonwealth Military Forces, from 21 August 1917 to 31 August 1918', National Library of Australia.

² D. McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: the Story of C. E. W. Bean*, Sydney, John Ferguson, 1983, p62, p67.

³ The British Army's ban on independent photography was not enforced on Gallipoli, or in the Middle East.

his diary as an 'Australian recorder' and was angered when newspapers preferred to publish the more lurid and fanciful accounts of the Reuters pool reporters over his own official despatches, which ended up being described as "colourless" by the Bulletin.⁴ To Bean, however, "the private interests of papers are something which cut right across the interests of the country – scoops, competition, magnification and exaggeration are out of all harmony with what is best for country."⁵

Although there was an official British photographer at Gallipoli—an ex *Daily Graphic* photographer Ernest Brooks—who Bean could use from time to time, and many soldiers had cameras, Bean gradually came to realise the value of having professional photographers, particularly Australians, to help him with his work. For instance once, whilst watching troops move into line to repel a Turkish attack, Bean reached for his camera only to discover that he had brought along the case without checking that the actual camera was inside. "And so I missed the finest war photographs that have never been taken", he wrote.⁶

Following the withdrawal from Gallipoli Bean made his way to France where the British War Office attempted to make him turn over to them his Gallipoli photographs, which he resisted; and prohibited him from taking any further photographs himself, which he occasionally surreptitiously ignored⁷.

The Australian War Records Section was finally established in June 1917, nearly eighteen months after the Canadian War Records Office. There was rivalry, but also mutual support, between the two organisations. As they were setting up their office the Australians were assisted by Canadian advice drawn from their longer experience. But Lord Beaverbrook kept an eye on the Australian section and was quick to ensure that his office lost no ground to Australia. As head of the Canadian War Records Office, chair of

⁴ D. McCarthy, 1983 p233, 270.

⁵ C. E. W. Bean, 'C. E. W. Bean Diary', 1917, Australian War Memorial. 19 September 1917. However the interests of 'country' sometimes led Bean to withhold or manipulate facts in his despatches, see J. F. Williams, 'The gilding of battlefield lilies', *The Quarantined Culture: Australian Reactions to Modernism 1013-1939*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁶ D. McCarthy, 1983, p140.

⁷ 'C. E. W. Bean Diary', June 12, 1917

the War Office Cinematographic Committee, and eventually as Minister of Information, he continually used his considerable influence in an attempt to bring as much pictorial propaganda, be it British or Australian, under his control.⁸

The Canadian office was always much more generously resourced, commercially aggressive and, because of the peculiar status of Lord Beaverbrook as simultaneously chief pictorial propagandist, peer, newspaper proprietor, and Whitehall power broker, had much more weight in London. But the two organisations also took radically different approaches to their work. Although Bean would readily modify his War Correspondent dispatches for immediate propaganda purposes⁹, he was at heart an historian, committed above all else to making a long term record of the war which he saw in nation-building terms. Beaverbrook was a politician and newspaperman, committed to propaganda and publicity and, above all, the management of public opinion.

Like Beaverbrook, however, Bean was also convinced of the visceral role photography must play in war records, but not because of its propaganda charge, but because of its status as an inviolable historical artefact. Bean had been angered on Gallipoli when he realised that Brooks was staging scenes for the camera—arranging incidents and formations on sheltered spots away from the fighting. When later, in France, Bean pointed out to him the threat his staged photographs posed to the historical record he simply replied "[but] that's what the public wants".¹⁰ Beaverbrook used experienced English press photographers as Canadian Official Photographers because they knew the contemporary media landscape best. But although initially the Australian War Records Section was able to use the English press photographer H. F. Baldwin to take Australian record photographs, Bean desperately wanted to use Australian photographers to record Australian soldiers, because they would be contributing to the foundation of an Australian heritage.

⁸ H. C. Smart, 'Australian High Commission note to Beaverbrook', 20 July, 1917, HLRO. L. Beaverbrook, 'Letter to the Acting High Commissioner for Canada, Sir George H. Perley', 1917, Ministry of Information files, Imperial War Museum.

⁹ J. F. Williams, 1995.

¹⁰ M. McKernan, *Here is Their Spirit*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1991, p53.

Frank Hurley

In August 1917 the two Australian photographers Bean had requested – Hubert Wilkins and Frank Hurley – were appointed directly to the AIF. Wilkins had been a polar explorer, reporter for the *Daily Chronicle*, and cinematographer for the Gaumont Company. Hurley was an independent showman, adventurer, photographer and cinematographer. Hurley received the honorary rank of Captain and established with Bean a clear separation of duties between himself and Hubert Wilkins, who was given the rank of Lieutenant: “Wilkins will attend to the records, and I myself to the publicity pictures and aesthetic results.”¹¹ Bean saw the division of labour between the two photographers in similar terms, but placed quite different weightings on their relative importance.

Both were utterly daring fellows, but in other respects they were almost opposite. Hurley, a rare mixture of the genuine, highly sensitive artist and keen commercial man, became responsible rather for the publicity side, to which he was devoted; while Wilkins sought to provide our future historians with a record of places and events so accurate that they could be, and often were, relied on as historical evidence.¹²

Bean saw the Australian record photographer as closely akin to the Anzac soldier, whereas the publicity photographer was necessarily excluded from the urgent historical imperatives of military, and therefore national destiny – although they might still make useful record photographs incidentally.

Experience [has] taught that the obtaining of photographs for historical record, and the taking of them for propaganda or for the press, were to some extent conflicting activities ... Wherever it was possible, particulars as to place, time, and nearest troops were noted when the photograph was taken. ... The Australian official photographers, inasmuch as they maintained such accuracy as the ideal of their service to their country, played their part as Australian soldiers.¹³

¹¹ F. Hurley, ‘My Diary’, 5 September, 1917.

¹² C. E. W. Bean, *Gallipoli Mission*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1948, p20.

¹³ C. E. W. Bean and H. S. Gullett, *Photographic Record of the War: Reproductions of Pictures taken by the Australian Official Photographers*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1923, pvii & pviii.

Although Hurley himself certainly saw his principal role in the war as a propagandist, he at least professed a commitment to historical recording. Reflecting on his work after the war he wrote:

[F]or me, visions of new fields opened for the camera, and of making pictures that would last, for here was an opportunity for turning all my experience to public advantage in recording the doings of our fellow countrymen on the field of battle—pictures that future generations might proudly look upon—imperishable records of history.¹⁴

However this familiar rhetoric owes more to Hurley's skills of showmanship than to his own belief in posterity. In fact it was precisely the issue of the ontological status of these imperishable records of history that was to become a sharp point of conflict between the two men.

By the time of his arrival in Flanders, Hurley was already a famous photographer and polar explorer. And he already had extensive experience with the production of popular attractions, all of which used the latest film and photographic technology, and all of which featured himself as showman. As a Sydney postcard photographer in the 1900s he had specialised in pushing the technological envelope of new photographic materials such as faster, panchromatic film; bromide papers; and chemical intensifiers, reducers, and toners. He produced postcards taken at night, using flash light or extended exposures; postcards which dangerously froze high speed trains or crashing waves; or postcards which used multiple exposure to create special effects. The appeal of these images to their buyers was as much in their status as new technological artefacts of an extended urban visibility, as in their pictorial aesthetics.¹⁵

Hurley was a local hero of the camera club movement—a collection of enthusiasts and fanatics who were as besotted by the technical procedures of the medium as by its

¹⁴ C. F. Hurley, 'War Photography', *The Australasian Photo-Review*, 15 February, 1919, p164.

¹⁵ For more on the interrelationships between early amateur photography, technology, cinema and instantaneity see: T Gunning, 'New Thresholds of Vision: Instantaneous Photography and the Early Cinema of Lumiere', *Impossible Presence: Surface and Screen in the Photogenic Era*, T. Smith, Sydney, Power Publications, 2001.

aesthetic, personal or social uses (perhaps a contemporary equivalent is the world of the computer nerd). The two major Australian photographic magazines of the day, which were published by two rival photographic manufacturers and retailers, were filled with articles on x-ray photography, ultra-violet photography, composite printing, enlarging, toning, telephoto lenses, high speed photography and so on. In this technophilic discourse 'pictorial' or 'impressionistic' photography was defined as a technical category as much as an aesthetic one—albeit with higher cultural cachet. Certain favourite subjects, such as evening shots, shots taken into light, or shots of crashing waves, presented to both 'impressionistic' photographers and 'pure' photographers the same technical challenge of controlling the tonal range and minimising the effects of halation—by either hand applied retouching to the negative in the case of 'impressionistic' photographers, or by chemical treatment in the case of 'pure' photographers. The camera club ethos emphasised the virtuosity of the photographer in making malleable the rigid constraints of the medium. Another common way of making the photographic medium malleable for camera club enthusiasts was the composite print. In 1906 one of Hurley's early mentors, Norman Deck, published an article on combining landscape and sky negatives, and in 1919 another enthusiastic amateur wrote an article on composite printing called 'The Gentle Art of Faking'.¹⁶ Before the war Hurley himself read a paper on the subject to the Photographic Society of NSW, and demonstrated his skill by showing a print which combined several different negatives taken of different animals at the zoo into a single scene, complete with clouds¹⁷.

Hurley cultivated a lifelong professional relationship with Kodak, and contributed several extensive and detailed 'how to' articles to its magazine. *Practical Bromide Manipulation* displayed his chemical virtuosity.¹⁸ In *Night Photography* his understanding of exposure was displayed, and the extent to which he was prepared to go to get a suitably spectacular shot was included with suitable showman-like flair. For instance to produce *Macquarie Light House, South Head, Sydney* he had to stand in the drizzle for four and a half hours,

¹⁶ N. Deck, 'Combining Landscape and Sky in Contact Printing and Enlarging by Artificial Light', *The Australian Photographic Journal*, 20 September, 1906. H. M. Cockshott, 'The Gentle Art of Faking', *The Australasian Photo-Review*, 15 March, 1919.

¹⁷ F. Legg, *Once More On My Adventure*, Sydney, Ure Smith, 1966, p20.

¹⁸ J. F. Hurley, 'Practical Bromide Manipulation: Exposure, Development, Toning, and Formulae', *The Australasian Photo-Review*, 22 February, 1911, p79-86.

covering and uncovering the lens with his hat when the beam struck particular angles. He proudly noted that his night photograph of *The Old Railway Station, Sydney* had sold 20,000 copies as a post card.¹⁹

Despite the camera clubs' emphasis on the optical, chemical and physical malleability of the photograph, this artisanal proficiency was all subsumed under what had quickly become the reigning technical and perceptual paradigm of the photograph—the snapshot. A Hurley 'how to' article of 1911, *Photographing Locomotives*, reveals Hurley's early natural understanding of self-publicity as well as his understanding of the innate interest of the snapshot. He instructed his readers to put a stone on the rails, place themselves between the rails with their feet firmly planted "in the best position for jumping", focus on the stone, wait till a train approached, watch the stone until—

the wheels of the engine grind over it. Then 'shoot the shutter' and spring for your life. The engine will be less than the length of a rail from you by this time, and no hesitation must be made. Above all, remember I have advised you to watch the stone. DO NOT WATCH THE ENGINE. If you do, you will find it impossible to correctly judge distance, and the papers will probably record another obituary notice.²⁰

This youthful apprenticeship prepared him for the spectacular and truly heroic work he produced on the Mawson Antarctic expedition of 1911-13 and the Shackleton Antarctic Expedition of 1914-16. He produced composite prints from the material shot on both expeditions.²¹

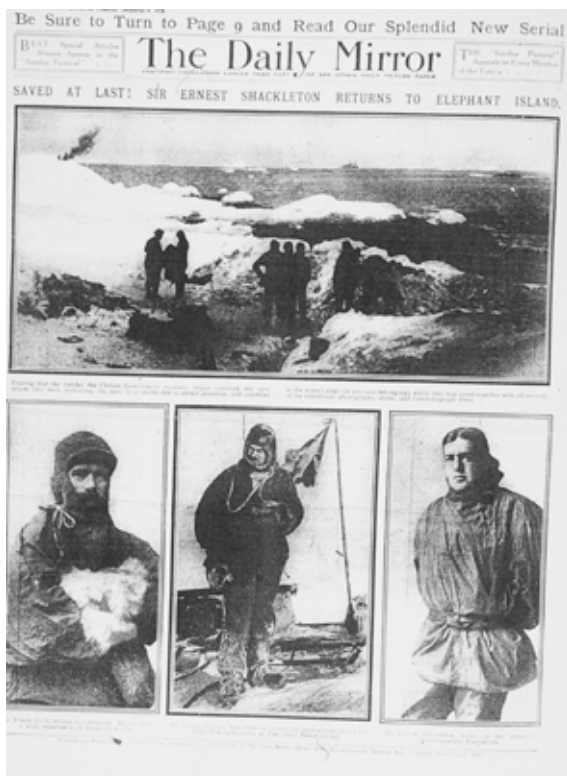
Hurley had arrived in London with a splash in November 1916 as the photographer and cinematographer of the Shackleton Antarctic expedition, which had just returned to London after a sensational rescue from Antarctica. On 5 December 1916 Hurley's

¹⁹ J. F. Hurley, 'Night Photography', *The Australasian Photo-Review*, 22 March, 22 April, 22 May, 1909, pp131-132, 185-187, 238-239.

²⁰ J. F. Hurley, 'Photographing Locomotives', *The Australasian Photo-Review*, 23 January, 1911, p10-13.

²¹ For an example of a composite photograph from the earlier, Mawson, expedition, see the two versions of *Aurora off the Great Ice Barrier*, in Helen Ennis, *Man with a Camera*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 2002.

photographs were published exclusively across all of the photography sections of the *Daily Mirror*, and featured in two editions of the top selling illustrated magazine the *Sphere*. Hurley was aware of the competitive image marketplace, and just who he was competing against when he commented in his diary: "It is a fine tribute and exceptional advertisement for the Expedition to be given such attention with practically unlimited space in the leading press, when its pages could be outcrowded with war and Ministerial photographs."²²



Manipulated photograph: "Fearing that the *Yelcho*, the Chilean Government steamer, might overlook the spot where they were sheltering, the men lit a smoke fire to attract attention, and conveyed to the water's edge the personal belongings, which they had saved together with all records of the expedition, photographic plates, and cinematographic films." Self-portrait of Hurley centre bottom. The *Daily Mirror*, 5 December 1916

The Shackleton expedition had been financed against expected future earnings from the sale of the film and photograph rights. But much material had been lost in the crushing of the *Endurance*, or left smashed on the ice in order to lighten the load of the survivors as they escaped. Immediately on arriving in London Hurley delivered his remaining material to the man who was the main investor in the exhibition's film and photography rights, Mr Perris. Within a few days they had decided that Hurley should return to South Georgia to

²² F. Hurley, 'My Diary, Shackleton Antarctic Expedition', National Library of Australia, 1917, 15 December 1916.

shoot more wildlife scenes to supplement the Antarctic material, because it might increase its exhibition value 'ten fold'.²³ Before leaving for South Georgia in February 1917, however, Hurley worked on his remaining material in the darkrooms of the *Daily Chronicle*, which was owned by Perris, where he made some composite prints. Most famously he embellished an image of the crew farewelling Shackleton from Elephant Island on his heroic voyage to South Georgia, to turn it into an image of the crew signalling Shackleton in his rescue boat. (The image, now representing the rescue, was reproduced in the *Daily Mirror* on 5 December.)



Manipulated photograph: "The scene on Elephant Island when, on August 30, 1916, Sir Ernest Shackleton at the fourth attempt, succeeded in reaching Elephant Island and getting off the twenty-two men he had left there when he set out on his wonderful voyage." The *Daily Mirror*, 5 December 1916. British Library.

Hurley also worked closely with the Paget Company, where his colour plates were developed, and at Raines & Co of Ealing, where his negatives were made into lantern slides, albums (one for presentation to the King), and sets of carbon prints. During this period Hurley made the most of the material which he had managed to bring back from Antarctica by producing composite prints. He also made personal contact with a wide range of cutting-edge visual technology companies in Britain, where through a

²³ 15 November 1916.

combination of spending Perris's money, and garnering informal sponsorship deals, he assembled an impressive array of technologies to exploit the expedition images to the full. The Jap Motor Works made him a cinema camera for South Georgia; Taylor, Taylor & Hobson presented him with high quality lenses; Barker Studio used their new automatic light grading equipment to print his existing footage; and Newtons made for him a lantern which could project both colour and black and white slides. Tests he and Perris conducted with the lantern proved that even with a 60 amp current throwing the colour image over 24 metres, and up to a size of almost 5 metres square, the plates still did not overheat.

Hurley was in London working with the Shackleton material and making composite prints during the period of both of the Canadian exhibitions. He was having his material printed at Raines & Co at the same time as the enlargements for the first exhibition of Official Canadian War Photographs were also being printed there. He probably would have recognised the printed-in clouds in the Canadian exhibitions, however he does not record visiting either exhibition.

Hurley and Bean argue

Almost immediately after setting up the Australian War Records Section's photographic unit's darkroom behind the front line and beginning work in early September 1917 Hurley began to rankle under the impositions of military bureaucracy. He was impatient with the slowness of military organisation. He thought that the need for his precious negatives to pass through the brusque hands of a military censor was "seemingly in most cases a most absurd proceeding as the enemy is already aware of most if not all the negatives held up."²⁴

Attempting to photograph in Flanders in September 1917 Hurley became, like Castle had before him, frustrated with the difficulties of producing convincing battle scenes without getting killed. During the Battle of Polygon Wood the speed and intensity of battle were his biggest problems. Hurley shared with the Canadian photographers, and with the public, a fascination with the uncanny looking shapes of the shell bursts which combined the thrill of instantaneity with the fascination of amorphous ambiguity. But they were the

²⁴ F. Hurley, 'My Diary', 10 September 1917.

hardest to take. "In spite of heavy shelling by the Boche, we made an endeavour to secure a number of shell burst pictures. ... I took two pictures by hiding in a dugout and then rushing out and snapping."²⁵ He became convinced that the only solution was to make composite pictures, but soon encountered fierce resistance from Bean. Hurley reported to his diary:

Had a great argument with Bean about combination pictures. Am thoroughly convinced that it is impossible to secure effects, without resorting to combination pictures.²⁶

Bean also sought to get a perspective on the dispute by retreating to his diary. The example of the Canadian exhibitions had obviously been raised during the argument:

...had a long argument with Hurley who wants to be allowed to make 'composite' pictures for his exhibition – ie to put in a shell burst made by trench mortars at St Pol. I can see his point, he has been nearly killed a dozen times and has failed to get the pictures he wants – but we will not have it at any price. The Canadians to some extent print their battle pictures with shell bursts from other photos – but we don't want to rival them in this.²⁷

The issue was an important one for both men because the Australian War Records Section and the Australian High Commission were planning their own exhibition of Australian war pictures at the Grafton Galleries in London for May 1918. Bean got Australian GHQ to prohibit Hurley from making composites.

Bean did not know it at the time, but Beaverbrook had approached Hurley and tried to poach him for the Canadian War Record Office.²⁸ Although Hurley never told Bean this (he eventually heard it from a third party) this high-level approach, combined with his prestige as a famous polar explorer, may have emboldened Hurley to tactically respond by upping the ante.

²⁵ 26 September 1917.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ 'C. E. W. Bean Diary', pp71-72.

²⁸ pp20-27.

Had a lengthy discussion with Bean re pictures for exhibition and publicity purposes. Our authorities here will not permit me to pose any pictures or indulge in any original means to secure them. They will not allow composite printing of any description, even though such be accurately titled, nor will they permit clouds to be inserted in a picture. As this absolutely takes all possibilities of producing pictures from me, I have decided to tender my resignation at once. I conscientiously consider it but right to illustrate to the public the things our fellows do and how the war is conducted. They can only be got by printing a result from a number of negatives or re-enactment. This is out of reason and they prefer to let all these interesting episodes pass. This is unfair to our boys and I conscientiously could not undertake to continue to work.²⁹

Hurley also used the rivalry with the Canadians as extra leverage.

I sent in my resignation this morning and await result of igniting the fuse. It is disheartening after striving to secure the impossible and running all hazards to meet with little encouragement. I am unwilling and will not make a display of war pictures unless the Military people see their way clear to give me a free hand. Canada has made a great advertisement out of their pictures, and I must beat them.³⁰

However Hurley continued to photograph and film. Called to headquarters to photograph the 1st Anzac staff, he spoke to General Birdwood who promised to 'fix matters up'.³¹ A few days later Hurley was able to report in his diary:

Headquarters have given me permission to make six combination enlargements in the exhibition so I withdrew my resignation. They must at least appreciate my efforts as they were dead against this being done. However it will be no delusion

²⁹ F. Hurley, 'My Diary', 1 October 1917.

³⁰ 2 October 1917.

³¹ 3 October 1917.

to the public as they will be distinctly titled, setting forth the number of negatives used, etc. All of the elements will be taken in action.³²

In early November 1917 Hurley was sent to Palestine to cover the Australian Light Horse for the upcoming exhibition.

That month, with Hurley in Palestine, Bean paid a visit to Beaverbrook. Beaverbrook suddenly announced to Bean that he had been planning the *Imperial War Exhibition* for the Royal Academy for January 1918, and that he wanted to set up a parallel committee to the War Office Cinematographic Committee, a War Office Photographic Committee, which he would also chair, which would control all photographers, British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealander at the front. Bean was taken aback.

I told him that he clearly had us in his hand as far as the [Imperial War] exhibition went—their exhibition killed ours. The Canadians had had their [two exhibitions]—now they wanted to scoop in ours.

But Bean really had no choice. He told Beaverbrook that:

We had no objection provided they gave us unlimited scope. ... But one thing we would not agree to was that they should control our photographers—we have our own policy, records and no faked pictures except such as are clearly stated in their title to be faked.

For his part Beaverbrook said that he was determined that the Canadians should retain their right to compose pictures—"fake them that's what you could call it". He was simply going to ignore general staff on the matter. Bean informed him that General Birdwood, also, had ignored General Staff and given Hurley permission to make six composites, and that he had the backbone to stand up to them.³³

³² 6 October 1917.

³³ 'C. E. W. Bean Diary', item 94, 21-7.

A month or so later Beaverbrook brazened General Staff down on the issue of faking by directly requesting a ruling from the Chief Censor as to how the planned Canadian composites should be treated. He received the purse-lipped reply:

All photographs whether 'composite' or single exhibited as representing an actual scene on the Western front should be censored. If the Canadian Photographic section care to exhibit 'composite' photos clearly marked as such, then it will suffice if each separate photo has been censored.³⁴

Wilkins chose the Australian photographs for the *Imperial War Exhibition*. Each country had its own gallery, although the Canadian gallery was twice the size of the Australian gallery, and each gallery was dominated by a giant enlargement. The Australian mural enlargement was not of a battle scene, but a brass band marching through the square of the ruined French town of Bapaume while the town was still burning. Some of the Canadian photographs displayed were composites and after visiting the exhibition Bean commented, "ours were simply and strictly true...I would rather have them a thousand times."³⁵ Wilkins had, in fact, made a very good selection, with many both picturesque and emotionally moving shots featured in the Australian room.



Australian Room at Imperial War Exhibition, Royal Academy, London, 1918. Imperial War Museum. Q30499

³⁴ B.-G. J. Charteris, 'Note to Major Neville Lytton', 6 January, 1918, Imperial War Museum, Ministry of Information files.

³⁵ D. McCarthy, 1983, p314.



'297. The German Withdrawal, 1917 — An Australian Band in Baupaume. The band of the 5th Brigade playing in the Place Faidherbe on March 19th, while the town was still burning', Bean and Gullett, 'Photographic Record of the War: Reproductions of Pictures taken by the Australian Official Photographers', *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, 1923.

Hurley returned to London in early May 1918 to prepare for the *Exhibition of Official Australian War Photographs*. Once more he became frustrated at the pace of Military assistance coming from the Australian High Commission at Australia House. Although they had given him an office in the building before he left for Palestine, they had done virtually no preparatory work in the meantime. In less than three weeks Hurley arranged to have about 100 negatives enlarged to mural size, and the images further worked up by hand in sepia at Raines & Co, as well as colour lantern slides made from the Paget colour plates. He also constructed four composites, which were also printed at Raines & Co. The exhibition opened on May 24. Admission was one shilling three pence. Prints were on sale at prices that ranged from three shillings six pence for an eight by six-inch print, to 150 shillings for a sixty by forty-inch print. The exhibition wasn't completed to his satisfaction in time, so he refused to attend the opening, but several days later all of his composites were installed, and the lantern slide projection room was operational.

The exhibition was well patronised today. The colour lantern is working excellently. The colour slides depict scenes on the Western Front, Flanders and also Palestine. They are gems and elicit applause at every showing. A military band plays throughout the day. ... Our largest picture 'THE RAID' depicting an episode at the Battle of Zonnebeke [is a combination of twelve negatives] and measures over 20ft x 15'6" high. Two waves of infantry are leaving the trenches in

the thick of a Boche Barrage of shells and shrapnel. A flight of bombing aeroplanes accompanies them. An enemy plane is burning in the foreground. The whole picture is realistic of battle, the atmospheric effects of battle smoke are particularly fine. Another sensational picture is 'DEATH THE REAPER'. This remarkable effect is made up of two negatives. One, the foreground, shows the mud splashed corpse of a boche floating in a shell crater. The second is an extraordinary shell burst: the form of which resembles death. The Palestine series are magnificent. Collectively it is a rare exhibition, and from the point of view of art, and from the criticism I have heard, is ahead of anything which has been shown in this country. It is some recompense to see one's work shown to the masses and to receive favourable criticism after the risks and hardships I have taken and endured to secure the negatives.³⁶



Frank Hurley, *The Raid*, 1918, composite gelatine silver photograph (photographed against a wall in London). Australian War Memorial. P1438/01

³⁶ F. Hurley, 'My Diary', 26, 27, 28 May 1918.

The composite Hurley referred to as 'The Raid' was subsequently variously known as *An episode after the Battle at Zonnebeke*³⁷, or sometimes *Over the Top*.³⁸ It surpassed Castle's composites in intricacy, but wasn't artificially coloured, nor was it 'the largest photograph in the world' (missing out by only a few centimetres). The foreground was constructed from the final two images of a rapid sequence of three photographs he shot of the one trench during a re-enactment.³⁹ Sequential images of the same soldiers thus become spatialised as two lines of advancing troops. Planes, shrapnel and smoke, most probably taken in Palestine, have been added in. Although the actual battle was fought in rain and in a quagmire of mud, in the re-enactment the ground is dry.

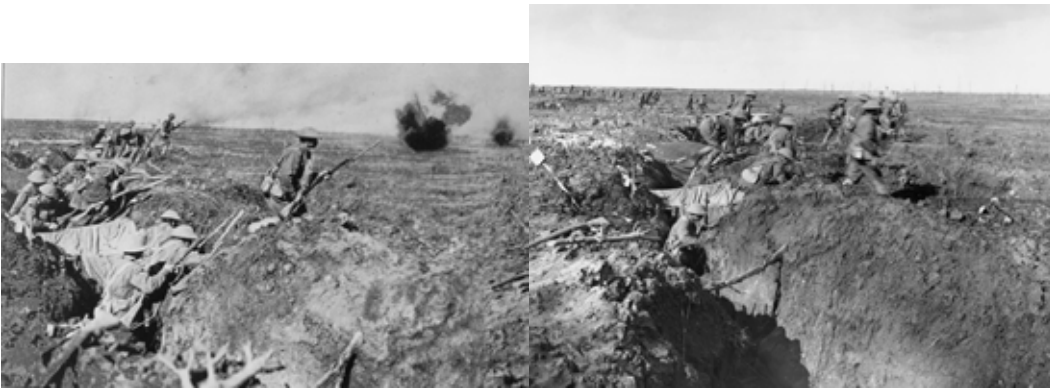


Frank Hurley, 'Fix Bayonets' Australian Infantry preparing to resist a counter attack at Zonnebeke', 1917.

³⁷ C. F. Hurley, 'Catalogue of an Exhibition of War Photographs', Sydney, 1919, cat. no. 77.

³⁸ F. Hurley, 'Press cuttings', National Library of Australia, *Newsy Notes*, August 1919.

³⁹ The first shot from the sequence was exhibited as 'Fix Bayonets' Australian Infantry preparing to resist a counter attack at Zonnebeke in C. F. Hurley, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of War Photographs*, Sydney, 1919, cat. no. 36, and D. O'Keefe, *Hurley at War*, Sydney, The Fairfax Library, 1986, p53. The second shot from the sequence was exhibited, as a detail from the larger composite, as *A wave of infantry going over the top to resist a counter attack, Zonnebeke*, in C. F. Hurley, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of War Photographs*, Sydney, 1919, cat. no. 41, and D. O'Keefe, *Hurley at War*, Sydney, The Fairfax Library, 1986, p51. Collection SLNSW, PXD19-PXD31. The third shot from the sequence is in the Australian War Memorial at E5429 as 'A photograph taken in France in June 1919 [incorrect date] illustrating the commencement of an attack'. The aircraft montage was also exhibited separately as *Shrapnel bursting amongst reconnoitring planes. Picture taken over the tail of a leading machine* C. F. Hurley, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of War Photographs*, Sydney, 1919 Collection SLNSW, PXD19-PXD31.



Left hand image: Frank Hurley, 'A wave of infantry going over the top to resist a counter attack, Zonnebeke', 1917

Right hand image: Frank Hurley, no title, 1917 (Captioned: 'A photograph taken in France in June 1919 (sic) illustrating the commencement of an attack'). Australian War Memorial. E 5429.

However this picture is an atypical Hurley composite. Hurley usually embellished scenes with atmospheric affects or bomb blasts, spotted out unwanted details, and masked in foreground objects or events to add a sense of dramatic perspectival space. But he never constructed a complete scenario as convincingly as this. The raid looks closer in style to other Raines & Co composites, such as *Dreadnoughts of the Battlefield*. It remains a matter of speculation as to what the division of labour was between Hurley, Raines & Co, and even Castle.

Other composites in the exhibition are more typical. *Morning After the Battle of Passchendaele* montaged a spectacular cloud and sunlight negative onto an image which had previously been selected by Wilkins, and exhibited at the Royal Academy in an unsacralised state, in the *Imperial War Exhibition*.



Frank Hurley, 'The First Battle of Passchendaele, Australian Infantrymen, wounded, round a blockhouse, near the site of Zonnebeke railway station, October 12, 1917'. Gelatine silver photograph. Australian War Memorial. E01202



Frank Hurley, no title, 1917 (Negative used in the composite *Morning after the Battle of Passchendaele*). Australian War Memorial. E5430



Frank Hurley, *Morning after the Battle of Passchendaele*, 1918. Composite gelatine silver photograph. National Library of Australia 52192.

Although oil and watercolour sketches were exhibited in a separate room, the photographs received most press attention. The catalogue took pains to point out that in the Paget lantern slides,

Colours are reproduced with perfect accuracy; every tint, shade and gradation is rendered photographically without resorting to hand tinting or applied colouring in any form.⁴⁰

The slides received notices that confirm Hurley's enthusiastic diary entries.

Those who go to admire the Australian war photographs at the Grafton Gallery – and to see them is to admire – now find an additional attraction in an exhibition of natural colour photography. This, like the main show, is the result of Captain F. Hurley's zeal in the pursuit both of subjects and of the best methods of treating them. ... A cluster of soldiers' graves, described as "one of Australia's most sacred spots", is covered with flowers which have sprung from the shell scarred earth. It might seem that nothing could grow in such soil, and the ordinary photograph would have to be very good indeed to persuade to the contrary. But the coloured photograph is complete proof. These pictures should not be missed by any who would learn what photography can accomplish.⁴¹

The *British Journal of Photography* reported that these half-hourly displays of half-plate Paget plates projected onto a full-size lantern screen were in fact the first real colour photographs to be exhibited of scenes and incidents of the War. Hurley's status as an explorer photographer was also recognised, as well as his highly developed sense of the picturesque which, for the *Journal*, was as important as the intrinsic interest of the subject. For instance the *Journal* noted how he exploited the emotional potential of colour by contrasting the "wealth of flower and foliage in France" to the "ruin wrought by warfare close at hand".⁴²

⁴⁰ *Catalogue of Australian Official War Pictures and Photographs: Pictures of Gallipoli, the Western Front, and Palestine*, 1918.

⁴¹ 'Colour Photographs. Capt. Hurley's Work in Palestine', *The Times*, June 6, 1918, London.

⁴² 'Colour Photography of the Battlefield', *The British Journal of Photography*, 7 June, 1918.



Frank Hurley, 'THE RUINS OF AN OLD CHURCH AT VOORMEZELLE', reproduced from a direct Color Transparency', *Supplement to the Australasian Photo-Review*, 15 February 1919.

The catalogue, in keeping with Birdwood's proviso, carefully identified Hurley's composites. But, as in the composite description in the previous Canadian and British propaganda exhibition catalogues, the Australian descriptions were a kind of cinematographic editing together of incidents, providing a textual alibi for the photographic composites.

A Hit on the Road

This picture is a combination of two photographs, each taken on the Ypres battlefield, and is constructed to show an incident common in the experience of those who know the place.

A Raid

A large composition picture. Australian troops are seen advancing to the attack prior to the Battle of Broodseinde. A heavy enemy barrage is seen falling on the distant ridge. Aeroplanes are shown flying low for the purpose of machine gunning the enemy trenches. At the extreme right of the picture is an aeroplane in

flames. This picture shows the thick smoke and haze which are characteristic of the battlefield in this sector.



Frank Hurley, *A hit on the road* (also titled *Death's Highway*), 1918, composite photograph. From Capt. F. Hurley, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of war Photographs*, 1919.

However there were other fakes in the exhibition that weren't immediately identified. Captain Treloar, Bean's confidant, and Head of the Australian War Records Section, had already told the Australian High Commission to change the titles on the pictures which Ernest Brooks was known to have faked at Gallipoli. One purporting to depict Australians charging Turkish trenches was re-titled in the catalogue 'Illustrating how the Australians charged the Turkish trenches at Gallipoli'. Another, purporting to be of a Turkish sniper, was re-titled, 'How a Turkish sniper conceals himself'. But the day after the opening Treloar wrote to the H. C. Smart, the publicity officer at the High Commission to pedantically complain:

There is an additional picture which I did not see, but which I have heard commented upon, and that is one of the Australians bathing at Anzac. An officer who was at Gallipoli for practically the whole time says he cannot place the location of the scene and suggests it may have been taken at one of the neighbouring islands where Australian troops enjoyed some short rests. I have

today heard a great deal of adverse comments upon the pictures. It comes from those who were at Gallipoli, and know the pictures cannot possibly be true, and those who have spoken to me about it say the obvious inaccuracy of the titling of these pictures made them doubt all the others, and in their opinion quite spoilt the whole show. Personally I am inclined to agree with them.⁴³

The hapless Smart replied that he would change the labels and the catalogue, and since the exhibition had only been open one day, he did not think that too much damage had been done.

In early June Bean came to London and visited the exhibition. He had already discovered that Hurley had attempted to smuggle some colour plates out of France for the exhibition, without going through the censor—he was angry, but not surprised, at Hurley's unscrupulousness.⁴⁴ He was further angered when he realised that Hurley now intended to abandon the task of photographing the continuing trials of the Anzacs in France in order to return to Australia with his new wife (whom he had met on the return trip from Palestine) to continue his career as a showman. And he didn't like what he saw when he visited the exhibition, either.

Our exhibition is easily the best I have seen, although there is too much Hurley in it—his name is on every picture with few exceptions—including some that Wilkins took; and what should be a fine monument to the sacrifice of Australians in France is rather an advertisement for Hurley. ... Hurley was married in Egypt and is determined to go back to Australia straight. I shall see that he does not have management of this exhibition there.⁴⁵

As the exhibition continued to attract larger and larger numbers of visitors to the Grafton Galleries (on one Sunday 1000 people saw it in three hours) its future descended into chaos. Hurley recorded his point of view in his diary.

⁴³ Letter from Captain Treloar to H. C. Smart, 'Re: Exhibition in the Grafton Galleries', 25 May 1918, Australian War Memorial.

⁴⁴ D. McCarthy, 1983, p333.

⁴⁵ 'C. E. W. Bean Diary', 5, 6, 7, June.

I am urging that the present set of enlargements be sent to Australia for propaganda. No better medium could we possibly have. The exhibition has been pronounced by experts to be the best since the beginning of the war.⁴⁶

I am having a great fight to secure the pictures for Australia. It makes me lose patience when I see all my efforts over which I spent all my time and risked my life thrown to the winds.⁴⁷

I have omitted a week from my diary, having been so disgusted with the treatment I have received from the High Commissioner's office and the A.I.F. It has worried me considerably. A deadlock has been arrived at which excludes me from taking the Exhibition of my own pictures to Australia. ... The only reason Australia House ascribe to their attitude is because I am soliciting publicity. They accuse me of making a Hurley show of the exhibition, which is an infernal lie. ... It seems beyond conception that government officials can assume such an attitude which is nothing but the outcome of personal jealousy. ... I do not intend to let the matter drop here, but will have it taken up further by the Australian press.⁴⁸

The Australian High Commission also wanted to send the exhibition to Australia to aid in recruitment. Smart had become extremely frustrated with the handling of the official images in Australia. When they sent them directly to the illustrated press they were well published, but after the Prime Minister's office requested that they be sent directly to them in Melbourne, they ceased to be distributed on to the press. For nine months very few were published in Australia.

Bean had always expected that two sets of the pictures would be made, one for a provincial tour of the UK, and one for Australia. However Smart had only ordered one set. The Prime Minister's Office wouldn't pay the £600 needed for making a second set. And, in any case, when Smart came to enquire about ordering a second set from Raines & Co he found that they had now been entirely sub-contracted to Beaverbrook's Ministry of

⁴⁶ F. Hurley, 'My Diary', 4 June 1918.

⁴⁷ 6-8 June 1918.

⁴⁸ 14-21 June 1918.

Information, and the Ministry of Information wouldn't let them print the Australian order because, "they have several sets of pictures [already] in hand, and unless they get a move on I am afraid we shall be badly let down."⁴⁹

Nonetheless Bean still wanted the exhibition to go to Australia. He just didn't want Hurley to have anything to do with it, or Hurley's name to be featured in it. Even though the Prime Minister's Office in Melbourne remained unresponsive to cables about the exhibition Smart managed to find a cabinet-maker to varnish the pictures to protect the hand-applied sepia, and crate them for dispatch to Australia. Significantly, about twenty pictures, including all of Hurley's composites and the other fakes in the exhibition, were not included in the crates to be sent to Australia. At the end of September, six weeks before the Armistice, the exhibition was finally put on a ship for Melbourne. Some of the remaining giant prints were installed in the Exhibition Hall of Australia House in the Strand.

Hurley knew none of this; he had washed his hands of the High Commission in disgust in June. He resigned on 11 July and received permission to make smaller versions of the AIF photographs, including the composites, for his private use—paying for the materials himself.⁵⁰ He devoted his remaining time in London completely to arranging to get the Australasian film and lantern slide rights for the Scott, Mawson and Shackleton expeditions, making multiple prints of the films and lantern slides, and writing the patter to accompany them when he presented them in Australia. When he left London in early August he thought that the exhibition was, indeed, on a provincial tour of England, and had no idea that the bulk of it was to be sent to Australia.

Meanwhile Bean was, in his own way, attending to the propaganda potential of photographs. Whilst Hurley was arguing with the High Commissioner, Bean was cataloguing official Australian photographs which were to be made available for sale directly from Australia House at a shilling each. By this stage Beaverbrook's British

⁴⁹ 'Papers concerning the proposed exhibition of Australian 'war pictures' in Australia', 1918, Australian War memorial.

⁵⁰ 'Information given by Captain Frank Hurley (Official Photographer A.I.F.) during interview with Principal Librarian on 27/6/19', 27 June, 1919, State Library of New South Wales.

Ministry of Information was already selling official photographs directly to the public from a shopfront at Piccadilly. The High Commission made twelve sets of lantern slides, and Bean wrote an accompanying lecture for recruiting purposes in country towns in Australia. As Bean admitted, “the originator of this scheme was really Hurley.”⁵¹

Propaganda exhibitions in Australia

Back in Australia Hurley was amongst friends once more. In early 1919, after the armistice, he got permission from the Minister for Defence to exhibit his personal collection of the smaller AIF photographs at Kodak’s Sydney Salon, who also paid for the framing and mounting. The proceeds of the exhibition, some £300, were donated to the Red Cross. At the same time his Palestine footage was screened in cinemas, advertised as “5000 feet of film”.

He used the press consummately to complain about his treatment in London. A talk he gave to the Photographic Society of NSW was reported under the headline “Australian War Pictures Kept In England”⁵², (although the majority, were in fact in Australia). And two correspondents wrote letters of support to the Sydney Morning Herald, which conveniently allowed Hurley to reply.

MR HURLEY’S WAR PICTURES. TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD

Sir, After seeing Captain Frank Hurley’s wonderful war pictures ... I cannot help wondering how it is that we have not become acquainted with them before. They are the real thing, and are of historic value. They reflect incident after incident of the various phases of the war—its horrors and its pathos. Every Australian who had a relative in the war zone must feel a heartfelt interest in them. These pictures should be taken over by someone in authority and screened, not only for the Australian man and woman, but for the Australian schoolboy and girl. Captain Hurley was the official photographer for the AIF. He is an Australian and his heart

⁵¹ ‘C. E. W. Bean Diary’, 26 June 1918.

⁵² F Hurley, ‘Press cuttings’, National Library of Australia.

is in his work. I believe this collection is only one third of the pictures he has photographed on the battlefield, the others are in the keeping of military authorities in London. Why have they not reached Australia? Isn't it worthwhile making some effort to obtain them for our National Art Gallery or Mitchell Library or some other place where they could have a permanent home, and serve as a memento of what our soldiers actually did in the great war, when they travelled 12,000 miles to help the Motherland. I write as an Anzac's sister. I am etc. May Summerbelle⁵³

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD.

Sir, In reply to 'Anzac Sister', her wish that the collection of Australian war photographs now in possession of the High Commissioner for Australia, London, should at once be brought to Australia, has already been expressed to me a thousand times. Where are they and why have they been withheld? I will endeavour to explain. On reaching London, after 2 and a 1/2 years antarctic service with Shackleton, I at once joined up, and a few weeks later was in Flanders. Acquiescence had been granted that after sufficient data had been collected, and an exhibition made, I was to be given home leave. The exhibition was duly made and I offered to take the collection to Australia. This was resolutely refused and the reply I received was that the pictures would tour provincial towns in England to defray their cost of production! The pictures were so large and the transport difficulties so great that this spelt ruination. I at once offered to make a duplicate set, which again met with flat refusal. The more I urged the greater were the barriers placed in the way. The result was that I returned to Australia without the pictures and, further, was made to sign an agreement which precluded me in any way exhibiting my own private collection. This was eventually overruled by the Minister for Defence. A fine cinema record was made both in France and Palestine as well as a magnificent collection of Paget natural colour plates. These have all been withheld. The boys of my department were fine fellows, and willing to lay down their lives to record the work of their

⁵³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19/3/19.

comrades. On the large collection we expended all our experience, enthusiasm and zeal—striving always to attain the ideal and do our best. The last I heard of the collection of pictures was that they rested in peace, or rather pieces, in the vault of Australia House, London, in a shroud of red tape and cobwebs. Surely, indeed, this is gross injustice to the people, and a poor tribute to those who had deeply at heart the immortalisation of doings great in the history of our nation. I am powerless to move myself in the matter without the cooperation of others. I am etc. Frank Hurley, Captain.⁵⁴

Hurley's Kodak Salon exhibition received much publicity. The composites were reproduced in many different newspapers and magazines. Hurley had assured the AIF that there would be 'no delusion to the public', and in the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition he freely admitted that: "In order to convey accurate battle impressions, I have made several composite pictures, utilising a number of negatives for the purpose".⁵⁵ However the catalogue does not identify the composites, and when the composites were reproduced sometimes their composite nature was noted, sometimes not. All the time, however, the authenticity of the composites was stressed. The catalogue noted that "The elements of these composites were all taken in action and submitted to the G.O.C. A.I.F. who gave his approval for their production."⁵⁶ Explaining himself to his old camera club readership, Hurley appropriated the word 'impression' in order to validate his composites. 'Impression' was generally used to describe 'artistic' 'pictorial' photographs; but more specifically, in the technophilic camera club discourse of the time, it described an authorised auteurial mode of photographic malleability.

Special permission was granted for the making of 'Photographic Impression Pictures'—pictures made to produce a realistic impression of certain events by the combined use of a number of negatives. None but those who have endeavoured can realise the insurmountable difficulties of portraying a modern battle by camera. To include the event on a single negative, I have tried and tried, but the results are hopeless. Everything is on such a vast scale. Figures are scattered—the

⁵⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20/3/19.

⁵⁵ C. F. Hurley, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of War Photographs*, Sydney, 1919.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

atmosphere is dense with haze and smoke – shells will not burst where required – yet the whole elements are there could they but be brought together and condensed. The battle is in full swing, the men are just going over the top – and I snap! A fleet of bombing planes is flying low, and a barrage burst all around. On developing my plate there is disappointment! All I find is a record of a few figures advancing from the trenches – and a background of haze. Nothing could be more unlike a battle. It might be a rehearsal in a paddock. Now if negatives are taken of all the separate incidents in the action and combined, some idea may be gained of what a modern battle looks like.

He also took the opportunity to reply, *inter alia*, to Bean's original interdiction, and potential complaints such as those levelled by Treloar at the fakes in the original London exhibition. Whereas Treloar had conveyed the complaints of officers in his letter to the Australian High Commission, Hurley cited the ultimate authority – the digger.

During a recent exhibition held in London by the High Commissioner for Australia, one such picture, depicting a scene near Zonnebeke, was enlarged up to 300 square feet. Attired in civilian dress, I often mingled with the 'diggers' to hear their scathing criticism. When I find they approve and pass favourable judgement, then I feel convinced such impression composites are justified.⁵⁷

Newspaper reviews took up the same theme.

War Pictures. Realistic Collection.

Capt. Hurley's work.

'The Dawn of Passchendaele' immediately arrests attention, this is a very striking picture with all the sinister suggestions appropriate to that dreadful day. It was taken under machine gun fire at a spot where some stretcher-bearers had laid down their stricken burdens overnight to await for a relief party. The recumbent, shrouded figures – the attitude of complete exhaustion in which a guarding bearer leans against a wall – tell a mute story of suffering and endurance which gives the heart a sharp pang and stirs the imagination to a perhaps more intimate

realisation of what prodigies of devotion and sacrifice those shell swept trenches of Flanders witness.⁵⁸

The pictures were shown in London last year, and are photographs taken at great risk during battles, and not fancy pictures faked from a safe position behind the lines. I received this news from the mouth of a returned soldier who said, “They are the goods, in the thick of the fight was Hurley with his camera, both he and his camera must have been charmed.”⁵⁹

Like the extended catalogue captions to the Canadian and British battle composites, these responses to Hurley’s composites are themselves a kind of composite: the reading of the ‘sinister suggestions’ conforms to a conventional mode of pictorial decipherment which uses a generic lexicon derived from academic painting; whilst at the same time the knowledge that the component parts are actual adds a ‘sharp pang’ of authenticity. The word ‘fake’, here, is used to distinguish composites made from authentic components from staged re-enactments. But even at this early stage that distinction was being fudged, since *The Raid* was composed of re-enacted components, whereas other composites, such as *The Morning of Passchendaele* or *Death’s Highway* simply add skies, shell bursts and planes to ‘actual’ photographs.

Immediately after his exhibition Hurley offered to sell his prints to the National Art Gallery (now the Art Gallery of New South Wales) and they were eventually acquired by the Mitchell Library. The permanent home in which to pictorially enshrine Australia’s memory of the war, which had been called for by ‘Anzac Sister’, was to come eventually, but it was to come on Bean’s and Treloar’s terms. Two years later, in August 1921, the first Australian War Museum exhibition of photographs opened at Melbourne Aquarium, it was seen by 83,000 people in five weeks (they could also view the fish for the price of admission). Mural-sized enlargements, probably the ones that were sent to the Prime

⁵⁷ C. F. Hurley, ‘War Photography’, *The Australasian Photo-Review*, 15 February, 1919.

⁵⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13/3/19.

⁵⁹ *The Sun*, 12/3/19.

Minister's Office from London in 1918, were on display, and particular photographs could be ordered to raise money for the future memorial.

Judging from the respective installation photographs, the mural enlargements were hung quite differently in 1918 and 1921. In London they were the focal-point of the hang, addressing viewers at eye-level from the end of the gallery. In Melbourne, and later in Sydney, the emphasis was on Bean's collected relics and expository dioramas, and the mural photographs, along with paintings, were skied to high above the crowded floors. But as in Hurley's Kodak Galleries show, the exhibited photographs reproduced the horror of the war on an immediate, visceral level:

There, most truly and vividly, war in all its frightfulness is pictured ... The horror of all those things so vividly shown in these photographs makes itself most terribly felt. ... Every phase of the war is presented without trimmings or politeness. It is a real record, and one which Australians will value and be proud of. The photographs have been selected from 20,000 negatives in the possession of the War Museum's committee. They were so accurate and complete that the military censors in France insisted on their being treated as secret documents.⁶⁰

⁶⁰'Australian War Pictures: A Wonderful Collection', *The Age*, August 20, 1921, Melbourne.



Australian War Memorial display at the Sydney Exhibition Building. The photographic enlargement *An Australian Band in Baupaulme*, which was probably the enlargement made for the *Imperial War Exhibition* at the Royal Academy, London in 1918, is hanging high up on the left. Australian War Memorial. AWM J2198

This exhibition was able to achieve more, even, than had Hurley's own exhibition: the archival monumentality of the 20,000 negatives in the nation's collection, plus their ontological status as 'real records' which at one time even had the strategic status of 'secret documents', gives these images an extra artefactual solidity. In addition the exhibition was a mnemonic event which directly addressed itself to each returned digger and each grieving relative individually.

Probably no Australian soldier will visit the exhibition of enlarged official war photographs ... without seeing at least one picture which makes a direct personal appeal to him. The preoccupations of civilian life have seemingly overlaid most men's impressions of their war experiences. But perhaps it is a glimpse of the hideous shell torn bog at Passchendaele; of a jolly group of "diggers" telling stories around a bramer fire in a dug-out; or of a stretcher squad carrying a maimed comrade through the desolation of Delville Wood, which revives a flood of poignant memories. ...The enlargements will probably be shown in other parts of Australia, where, as here, they would be a timely reminder to the Australian

people of their obligations to returned soldiers, and to the dependents of those who had fallen.⁶¹

[I]t is estimated that nearly 60 percent of the personnel of the A.I.F. appear in the views, which are 'keyed' and indexed so that it is possible to identify nearly every man who was 'snapped'. ... By means of a unique system of indexing hundreds of relatives have been able to see photographs of men who were killed or missing, and soldiers who have returned have identified themselves and their comrades on the battle fronts. ... The orchestra, which is wholly composed of returned soldiers, helps to revive the sentiment by playing 'Roses of Picardy' and all the old favourites which were lustily sung as the men marched along the cobbled roads of Flanders in the days of their great adventure.⁶²

Two years after that, in 1923, the twelfth volume of Bean's Official History was devoted entirely to photographs, 753 in all, each one meticulously captioned and each one, Bean was careful to note in his introduction, "as far as possible, scrupulously genuine. ... The pictures here printed have not been retouched in any way except to remedy scratches or other obvious flaws in the negatives."⁶³

However despite Bean and Treloar's distaste for the fake the Australian War Memorial, now headed by Treloar, continued to use Hurley's composites. *The Raid* had been included in the sets of lantern slides that Bean had made for recruiting campaigns in 1918, and it was one of the images licensed, and titled 'A 'Hop-Over' at Ypres 1917', to the cigarette card manufacturer L. C. Moss in the early 1920s.⁶⁴

⁶¹'War Photographs, Realistic A.I.F. Record', *The Argus*, August 20, 1921, Melbourne.

⁶²'Display of War Pictures, Appeal of the Personal Touch', *The Argus*, August 21, 1921, Melbourne.

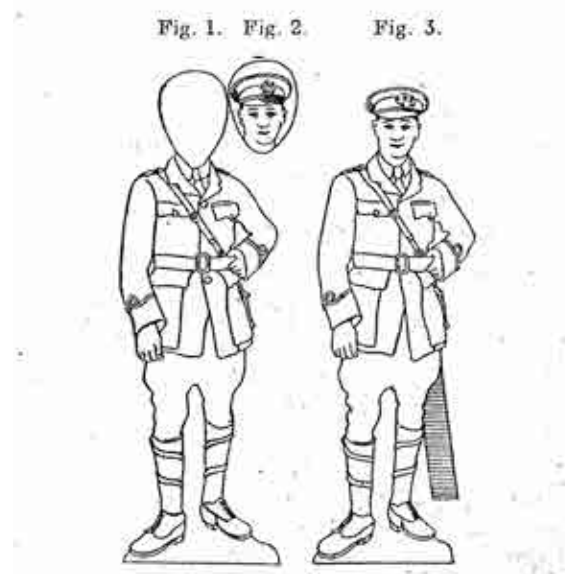
⁶³ C. E. W. Bean and H. S. Gullett, *Photographic Record of the War: Reproductions of Pictures taken by the Australian Official Photographers*, 1923 pviii.

⁶⁴ *Australian Official War Photographs*, 'For enlargement of these photographs in Black and White, Sepia, or Artist Coloured Apply Australian War Museum, Exhibition Buildings, Fitzroy Melbourne. For sets of these Cards and Albums apply L. C. Moss, Maddon Street, Albert Park, Melbourne'. National Gallery of Australia.

THREE

PHOTO-COMPOSITING THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR

Reconnecting the disconnected



Reassembling the blown-to-bits soldier's body:

Combination Photographs Patent No 115967, *Patent for combining any existing portrait with a photograph of a uniform to simulate a formal portrait of a uniformed soldier.*

"The invention consists of a method of making photographic representations of persons in uniform or other costumes, which consists in first photographing a person in any desired uniform or costume, removing the head and neck from such photograph, affixing the prints of such photographs (minus head and neck) to cardboard or the like. A hollow cutter is formed, the shape of which conforms to the outside of the photograph, but with an outline at the top of the cutter considerably larger than the head and neck. The prints of photographs affixed to cardboard are cut out with the cutter (with a blank piece of cardboard at the top larger than the head and neck). Then a photograph is made of the head of any person desired of corresponding scale to that of the body and a print of the head affixed to the blank portion of cardboard at the head of the body, then the extraneous cardboard is cut away by hand around the head and neck, to thus form the finished photographic representation." *British Journal of Photography*, 12 July 1918. Caldicott and Frenkel, *British Journal of Photography*, London, 1918.



'Trafalgar Square, transformed into a model battlefield to stir the imagination of those at home in order to increase contributions to the War Loan. *Photo: Topical, The Story of Twenty-Five Eventful Years in Pictures*, Odhams Press, London, 1935, p178.



Domestic experiences were also transported photographically to the Front as a psychic salve for the soldiers. In July 1915 The Snapshots from Home League was set up, apparently by the YMCA, but actually with the backing of the photographic manufacturing and retailing industry. By 1916, 10,000 amateurs from 250 towns were enrolled in the scheme. They provided 200,000 men at the Front with pictures they had taken of the men's families at home. The costs of the free photographs, the *Amateur Photographer* reported, were borne by the "patriotic and philanthropic" members of the leisured classes, "from the lady of the hall or rectory ... or

from members of weekend holiday making parties, who, in a motor trip from London to the coast, have taken the opportunity to visit some of the addresses obtained from the League before starting":¹

'The above is a reduced facsimile of the Diploma which is to be issued by the Snapshots from Home League to those who can satisfy the adjudicating committee that they are entitled to it.' *British Journal of Photography*, 11 July 1916. British Library.



Personal snapshots were returned from the battlefield to Britain, to stand in for the lost bodies of soldiers: 'THESE WERE PICKED UP WHERE OUR SOLDIERS FELL', The *Daily Sketch*, 13 September 1915. From J Taylor, 'War Photography: Realism in the British Press', 1991.

¹ Taylor, "War Photography: Realism in the British Press", London, Routledge, 1991, p26.

Spectres of memory and estrangement



Spectral faces of fallen men above Christ's head in T. Noyes, 'Hard Hit! Lean Hard', a postcard for the Church Army. From J Laffin, *World War 1 in Post-cards*, 1990, p112.



H. Piffard, *The Thin Red Line*, *Canada in Khaki: A Tribute to the Officers and Men now serving in the Canadian Expeditionary Force*, London, Canadian War Records Office, 1917, p136.



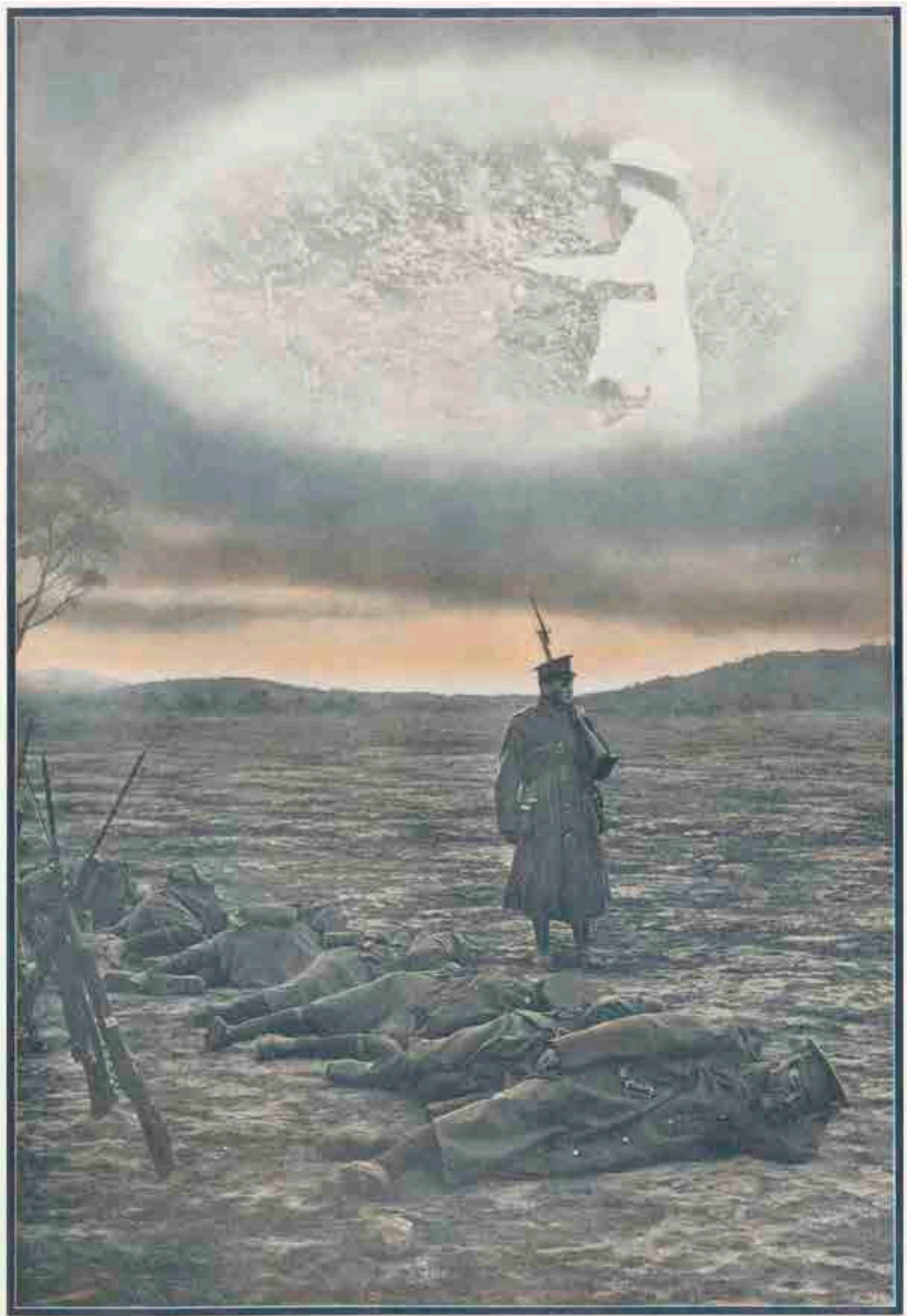
'Eclipsed!', *Canada in Khaki*, 1917, p47.



H. Piffard, *His Constant Companion*, *Canada in Khaki*, 1917, p112.



The Mother's Daydream, The Weekly Times Annual, Melbourne, 4 November 1915, p12.



The Son's Lonely Vigil, The Weekly Times Annual, Melbourne, 4 November, 1915, p13.

Cloudblasts: Spectres of an industrial uncanny connecting the earthly and the spiritual worlds

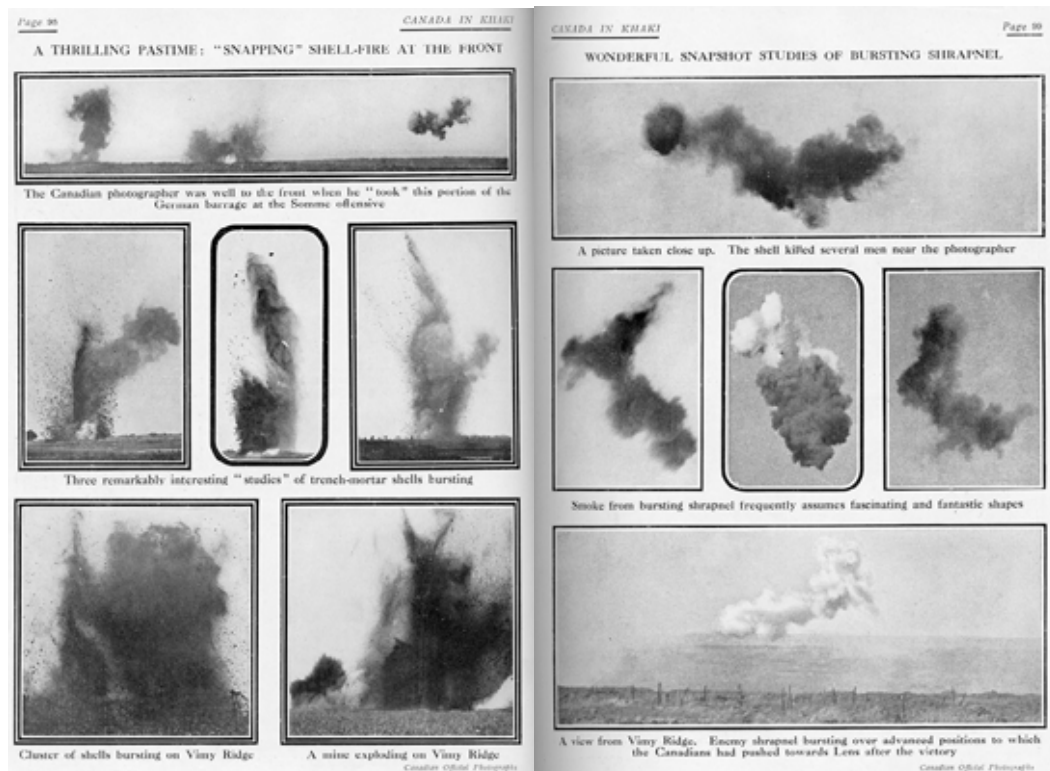


Harry Phillips, *War Clouds*, 1909. "This most remarkable photograph was taken on the evening of March 25th, 1909, at Katoomba, Blue Mountains, NSW, and is absolutely free from faking and retouching. ... Directly in the centre of the photo, and obscuring the sun, is a cloud resembling the German Eagle poised with outspread wings. Securely clutched in its talons is a figure that appeared to me to represent Belgium. The eagle's head is turned to the right of the picture, looking defiantly at the second black cloud, which represents the British Lion, Between the eagle and the Lion is a light spook-like cloud symbolising the War Spirit. It is facing and looking down on the Eagle as if pondering whether to wedge itself between England (the Lion) and Germany (the Eagle) or to withdraw and let them wage war upon each other. England and Scotland are represented in one cloud, the latter by a fully clad Scotchman, who is anxiously looking to see what Russia's representative, the Bear, will do. On top of the third black cloud is a chicken or 'young Turkey'. Directly beneath the Scotchman's knee is an anxious face looking towards the German eagle. Does this represent Ireland? Turn the picture upside down and on the other end of the black cloud and almost muzzle with the Russian Bear is the head of a Leopard. The Leopard is used prophetically as a type of the Grecian Empire and of the anti-Christian power (Dan. Vii.6; Rev. xiii. 2). Turn the picture right way up and near the centre on the left hand side two faces can be seen; one represents a corpse, with a face immediately above. This represents the horror of a battlefield. Directly above there is a cloud like an exploding shell. Here are five distinct human heads and faces. One resembling the Czar of Russia, with a woman looking over his head, and a Jew is depicted with a flowing beard. Now turn the picture with the left corner to the top, and a typical Russian face is seen, the hair of the woman and the beards of the Jew and the Russian are represented in the same black spot. Next to the Russian is a head resembling our late beloved

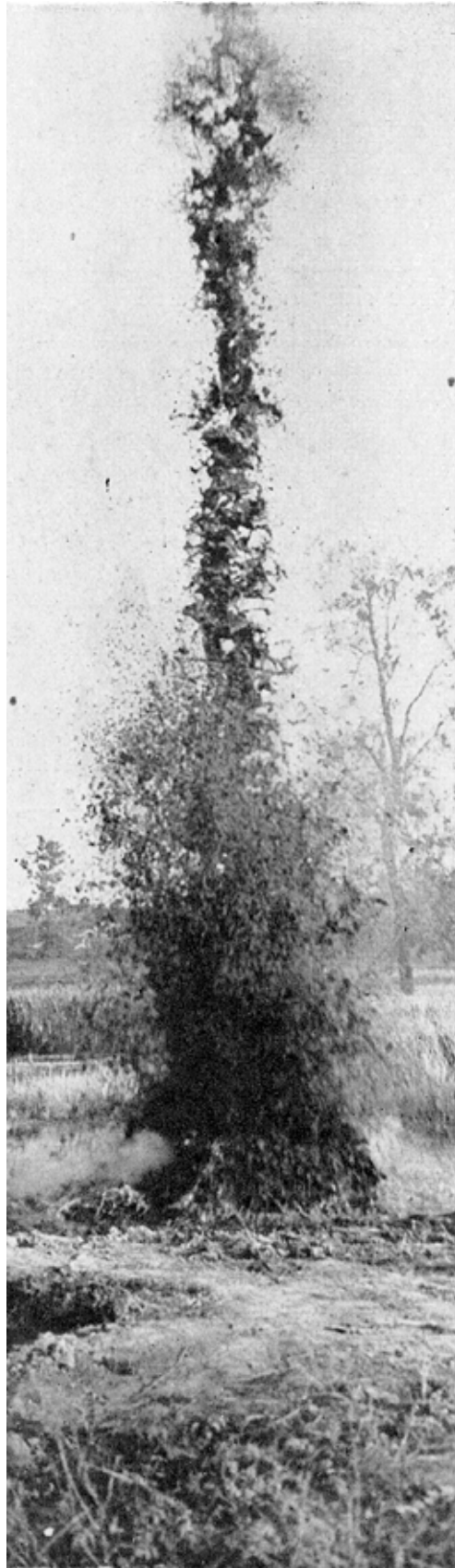
Queen Victoria with a white cap on her head. I am strongly impressed with the opinion that this apparently exploded shell represents the past, and that the future is clearly shown on the opposite or right hand corner. Turn the picture right way up, and over in the right hand top corner a dark skull like face is seen. This black cloud is like a skull with patches of white, and reminds one of the pictures of Mephistopheles or Satan, about to be loosed on the earth." *The Cloud*, Harry Phillips, 1914, reprinted in *The Far-Famed Blue Mountains of Harry Phillips*, Second Back Row Press, Leura, 1985.



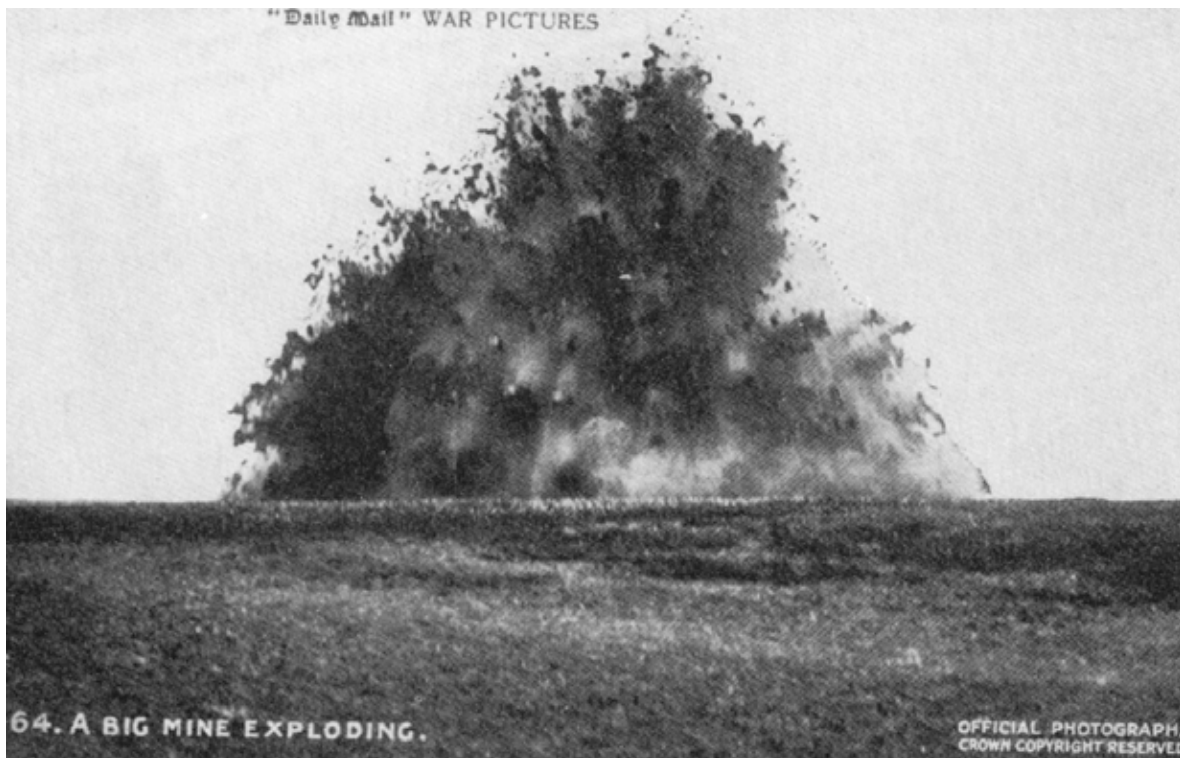
Frank Hurley, *Power*, Supplement to the *Australasian Photo-Review*, 23 January 1911.



'A THRILLING PASTIME: 'SNAPPING' SHELL-FIRE AT THE FRONT, WONDERFUL SNAPSHOT STUDIES OF BURSTING SHRAPNEL', from *Canada in Khaki*, 1917, pp98-99.



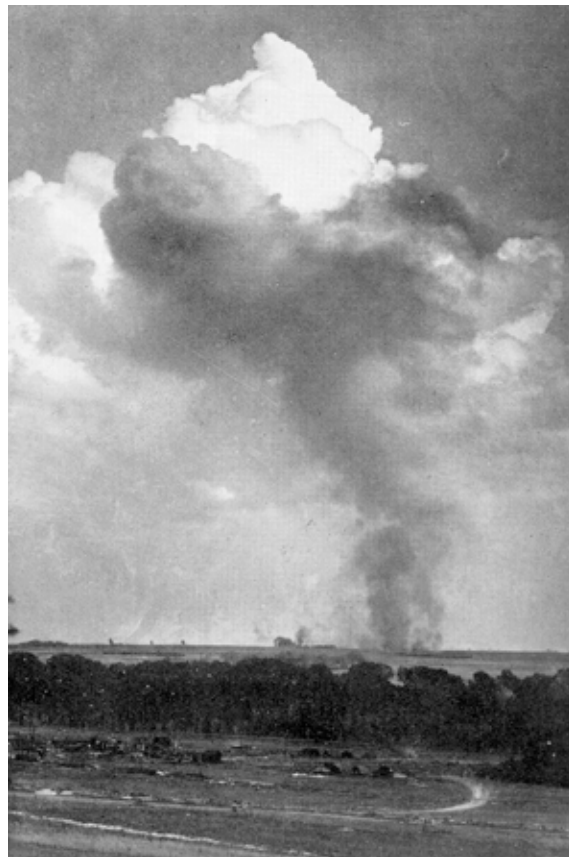
'A bomb in a swamp trying to look like a tree', from *Canada in Khaki*, p112.



'Daily Mail War Pictures postcard series, '64. A Big Mine Exploding', Official Photograph, Crown Copyright reserved'. From J. Laffin, p36.



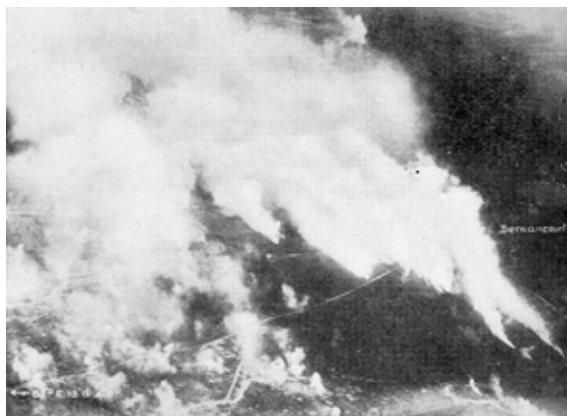
'428. German shrapnel fired at a British aeroplane.' Bean and Gullett, 'Photographic Record of the War: Reproductions of Pictures taken by the Australian Official Photographers', *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1923.



'547. The advance from Péronne—Tincourt-Boucly, 6th September 1918, (Smoke rising from a dump set on fire). 'Photographic Record of the War', 1923.



'671. Sunrise over the Sea of Galilee, 1918'. 'Photographic Record of the War', 1923.



'495. Air-photograph of a British gas attack at Dernancourt, 25th July, 1918'. 'Photographic Record of the War', 1923.



Martyn Jolly, 'Australian War Memorial Diorama', 1983.

War painting and war photography



'A 'Tank' by John Hassall, R. I. The Picture which attracted so much attention at this year's Academy', *Strand Magazine*, September 1917, p272.

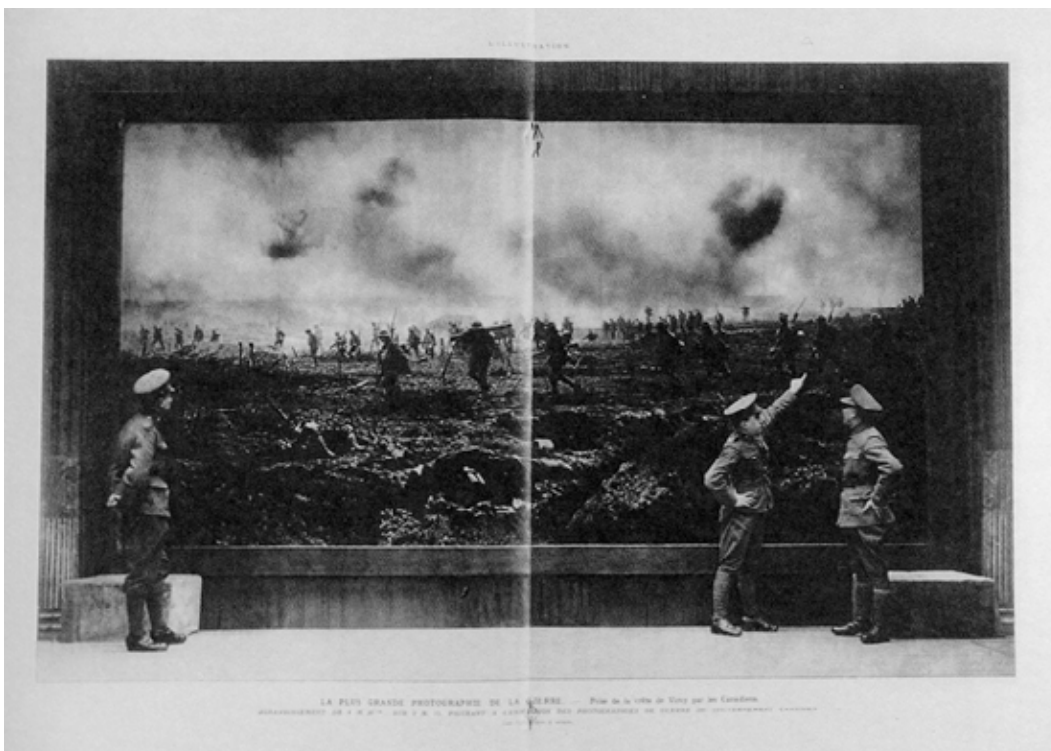


'One of the monsters which 'loomed up through the mist and heaved its bulk across the crater-petted surface of no man's land towards the startled Huns. Phot by Canadian War Record', *Strand Magazine*, September 1917, p272.

Iterations of an image—*The Battle of Vimy Ridge*



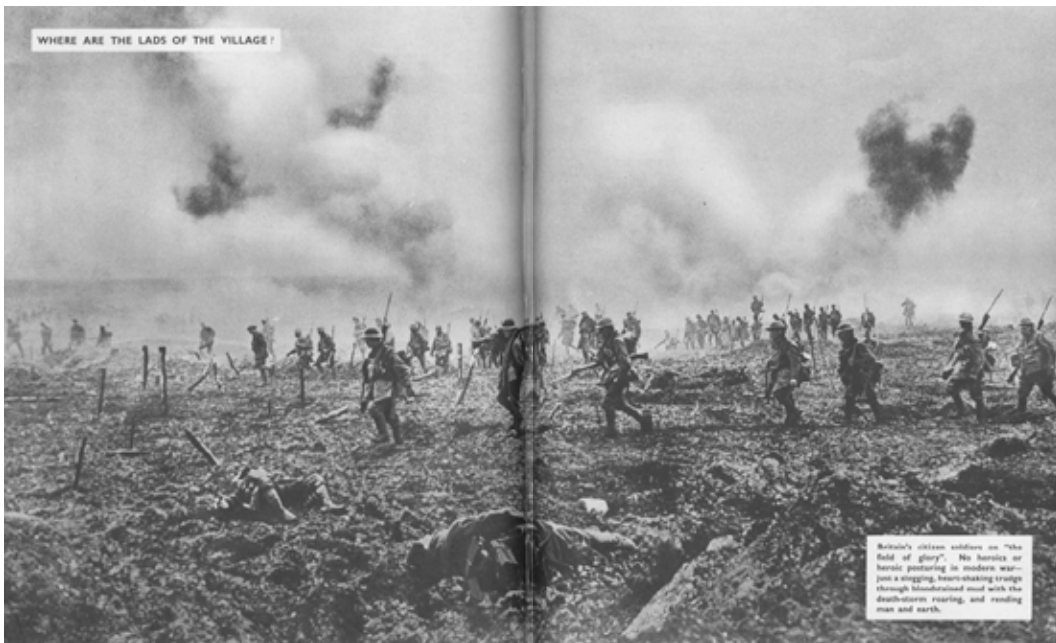
Ivor Castle, *Battle of Vimy Ridge* on view in Paris, 1918, postcard published by Underwood & Underwood, New York. From *The Indelible Image: Photographs of War 1846 to the Present*, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1985.



'The biggest photo of the war (610 x 335cm) in an exhibition of war photographs arranged by the Canadian government. Photographer's name not given', published in *L'illustration* 29 December 1917. From *Kiosk: A History of Photojournalism*, Stiedl, Cologne, 2001.



Ivor Castle, 'Battle of Vimy Ridge on display in Paris', Imperial War Museum. CO 2764.



After the war Ivor Castle became picture editor of the *Daily Express* which in 1934 published a trenchant anti-war book featuring gruesome photographs of war and a special sealed section titled 'MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN' containing photographs of war atrocities. The cover proclaimed: "The purpose of this book is to reveal the horror, suffering and essential bestiality of modern war, and with that revelation, to warn the nation against the peril of foreign entanglements that must lead Britain to a new Armageddon—All the pictures are taken from authentic photographs." Castle re-used his most successful war propaganda image *The Battle of Vimy Ridge* in this new anti-war context, and re-titled the image to indicate that they were British soldiers:

'Where are the lads of the village? Britain's citizen soldiers on 'the field of glory'. No heroics or heroic posturing in modern war—just a slogging, heart shaking trudge through bloodstained mud with the death-storm roaring, and rending man and earth'. *Covenants of Death*, Daily Express Publications, London, 1933.

Iterations of an image—*Morning After the Battle of Passchendaele* and *The Raid*





'World War 1 photographer Frank Hurley's famous image of Australian soldiers on the Western Front', part of a photo-illustration in *The Australian*, 4 July, 2002, p9.

FOUR

THE FAKE AND THE AUTHENTIC

Hurley hasn't much news sense which is necessary to the job: he goes mad about bloody native boats, and mosques and clouds (cumulus variety only) – Damien Parer, 1940.¹

World War One and the emergence of modern documentary photography

World War One is a crucial period for the development of photography because it stands on the cusp of 'the age of mechanical reproduction'. World War One propagandists and photographers were media savvy, and were intimately involved in the formation of new ways of figuring themselves as reporters, and new ways of figuring the photograph as a historical document. But within this developing conception of photography's special historical mission, they were still willing and able to draw on residual nineteenth century formats as well as formats from other emerging mediums and genres.

The traditions of documentary photography had been accumulating since the nineteenth century, but its self-conscious ethos wasn't developed and named until the 1920s and 1930s. Most histories of documentary photography, while often citing nineteenth century and early twentieth century precedents, radically discount the importance of World War One photography. Because the photographers were working for the armies, rather than 'independent' news organisations, and because they weren't producing reportage snapshots precisely ascribable to a particular time and place but official propaganda and record images, they are condemned to either oblivion or opprobrium. For instance for Jorg Lewinski,

The First World War – a conflict of cataclysmic dimensions – did not produce one single photographer who stands out from the anonymous mass of cameramen and

¹ D. Millar, *Snowdrift and Shellfire*, Sydney, David Ell Press, 1984, p127.

shows both the grandeur and the depths of calamity. ... The general attitude to the use of photographs as illustrations had not altered since the beginning of the century. Editors continued to show little enthusiasm for photographs. ... The camera had still to achieve the status of witness for the prosecution.²

This downgrading of World War One photography is necessary to preserve the self-perception of the modern photojournalist, who needs to be born unsullied into the 1920s and 30s as an auteur independently selling snapshots to a burgeoning market of picture magazines.

But the sudden surge in demand for scarce photographs which World War One caused led directly to the establishment of picture agencies, which quickly became absolutely vital to photojournalism. And the World War One press landscape was nowhere near as barren and sanitised as standard histories make out. It is true that the daily press in Britain was by no means full of vibrant images of warfare. But it certainly consistently featured, particularly towards the end of the war, compelling images of human suffering, such as the haunted eyes looking up to Frank Hurley's camera in 'On the Menin Road. Wounded waiting to be taken to a dressing station', and 'Mud-begrimed wounded at a dressing station', published in the *Daily Mirror*, 29 September 1917. Uncanny images of modern industrialised warfare were also frequently reproduced, such as Hurley's 'Masked Gunners on the Western Front', published in the *Daily Mirror* 28 July 1917. John Taylor's survey of the period reveals aerial photographs of the progressive blasting of the landscape published in the *Daily Mirror* of 9 April 1917, a proto-Heartfield collage published in the *Daily Sketch* of 24 June 1916, and even a photograph taken by a soldier at the moment he was shot, 'Photograph that a dead man took' in the *Daily Mirror* of 6 November 1915.³

² J. Lewinski, *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day*, London, W. H. Allan & Co, 1978. For the German historian of war photography, Rainer Fabian: "During the First World War pictures of war were castrated by the censor and sprayed with disinfectant. Photographers worked for the archives." R. Fabian and H. C. Adam, *Images of War: 130 Years of War Photography*, New English Library, 1985.

³ J. Taylor, *War Photography: Realism in the British Press*, London, Routledge, 1991.



'MASKED GUNNERS ON THE WESTERN FRONT. Australian gunners working during a gas attack. The Anzacs have been through some exceptionally heavy fighting recently and have once more acquitted themselves splendidly. (Australian official photograph).' The *Daily Mirror*, 28 July, 1917. British Library.



'AFTER THE GREAT BATTLE OF MENIN ROAD. On the Menin road. Wounded waiting to be taken to a dressing station. Mud-begrimed wounded at a dressing station.' The *Daily Mirror*, 29 September 1917. British Library.

Scrolling through the microfilm of these newspapers today one is still left with a slightly nauseous feeling in the pit of the stomach as uncanny images of the mechanised warfare and moving images of enemy dead and allied wounded regularly repeat themselves. The popular picture press 'screened' the war in both senses of the word; they sanitised and censored it, certainly, but they nonetheless kept a tragic and compelling image of it alive and potent in the public imagination over at least three gruelling years from 1916 to 1918.

World War One propaganda photography was not the negative term from which the great documentary tradition had to extricate itself in order to discover photography's true path. Nor were strands of true documentary practice lying hidden and repressed within World War One Photography. Rather it was a period with its own logic, a logic which was not superseded, but persisted as a component of documentary and photojournalism.

Bernd Hüppauf mounts an interesting discussion of Hurley's World War One composites, which he sees in terms of a complex transition from nineteenth century to modern modes of realism. For Hüppauf, Hurley's composite photographs uncomfortably straddle two realities, a residual attachment to the coherent reality of the past, and the need to document the newly fragmented reality of modernity. This forced Hurley to use the technique of montage, which he had learnt from the nineteenth century, but which had been overtaken and transformed to be used as the technical underpinning to the theory of modernity in the twentieth century—which was ironically the very thing that made montage necessary for him in the first place:

The Biblical image of God's creation remained the model of his photographic images, which represent scenes of extreme cruelty with a technical perfection that creates its own aesthetic beauty. In his photographs the senseless destruction of the modern front and the extreme fragmentation of reality experienced by soldiers are hardly ever visible, as an aesthetically created coherence makes them disappear in a display of beauty borrowed from a world of the past. While a nimbus of beauty surrounding many of his images can easily be criticised as tricks of misrepresentation played upon viewers eager to be deceived, it is surprising to note how close his work in the darkroom came to the opposite and modernist approach to photography, namely that of montage.

While it was Hurley's aim to hide from the viewer his technical manipulations with negatives, the technique of montage, based on a theory of modernity, exposed its artificial processes in a provocative manner. The camera's inability to capture reality was not seen as merely accidental but as a result of the nature of modern reality, which was disjointed, abstract, complex, and the product of technical, including photographic, constructions. In the underlying philosophy of this image of modernity, God's creation has lost its cohesion, meaning and completeness. It appears amorphous, and its perceived order is the product of a continuous process of scientific-technological change and cultural construction, accessible only to a perception that is guided by theory. This philosophical problem of apperception, constitutive for the highly theoretical and political concept of montage, was alien to Hurley's aesthetic approach to photography, which was based on his pragmatic belief in 'observation' and sought a cohesive image unwittingly modelled on theories of the nineteenth century.

...Although Hurley had personally observed the nature of modern warfare, his representation of this war was still conditioned by prewar images of beauty, cohesion, and harmony. Montage, however, incorporated into its technical processes and forms of representation the experience of the destructive qualities of modernity. War was then no longer the mere object of the lens; it constituted the very position of the camera and the photographic process within reality. It was this type of observation made by Hurley that provided support for theories concerned with the disintegration of the concept of reality and the related emergence of new theories and practices of photography.⁴

Although this image of an unwitting Frank Hurley caught in a circular bind at the cusp of modernity is fascinating, its attempt to project his composite photographs along a Virilioesque historical trajectory, even by positioning them as the exact 'inverse' of modernist montage, displaces them too far from the actualities of his practice. He wasn't

⁴ B. Hüppauf, 'Modernism and the Photographic Representation of War and Destruction', *Fields of Vision: Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology and Photography*, L. Devereaux and R. Hillman, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, pp102-4.

an unwitting monteur struggling with new forms of reality, but a supremely cognisant cinematographer/adventurer/photographer/showman drawing upon, and adding to, a range of special effects, which included montage amongst other tools, to create visual spectacle within modernity. For instance his 'nimbus of beauty' surrounded extremely disjunctive images of flashlit men in gasmasks, the haunted eyes of wounded men blankly returning the camera's gaze, and uncanny bomb blasts crowning wasted cadavers.

Discussing modernity in a colonial context Robert Dixon develops his own discussion of Hurley's World War One composites from the basis of Hüppauf's argument.

Hüppauf argues that to grasp the full impact of modernity we must look to the new aerial photography that emerged during the final years of the Great War. ...In developing a theory of war photography [Hüppauf] therefore identifies two distinct forms that might be characterised, in Raymond Williams's terms, as emergent and residual. The emergent form, which we [see] in aerial reconnaissance photographs, reveal that industrial war is abstract and technical; that it requires an absence of human consideration for its efficient operation. The latter, more conservative mode attempts to mask the shock of modernity by aestheticising its destructive effects on nature and human experience. To do so it drew on an increasingly anachronistic set of visual codes—the codes of pictorialism—which preserved the idea that individual experience, morality and heroism might be held apart from, and even survive, the abstract, depersonalised space of modern war. ...The final years of the Great War were therefore a moment of crisis in visual representation, when an emergent modernity was masked by the aesthetics of pictorialism and humanism. ... Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Frank Hurley's work as official photographer for the AIF is that his individual photographs are riven by this crisis in representation. At the very moment when aerial photography was disclosing the abstract nature of industrial modernity, Hurley's most distinctive photographs strive to preserve a space for nature and humanity that is outside it amoral, technical processes and which, the photographer labours to imply, might survive into the post-war era. ...The important point is that Hurley was on the edge of realising that modern war was

unrepresentable in the language of pictorialism, with its humanist ideals of beauty, cohesion, and harmony. Instead of pushing beyond this crisis, however, Hurley continued to aestheticise his pictures, investing them with pictorial values and emphasising the human presence, the heroism of individual troops. Finally, despite their 'combination printing', his photographs seek to occlude the unrepresentable field of modern war by interpellating a humane observer who occupies a coherent, moral space outside of war. The result was that his sublime or beautiful pictorial effects often look strangely at odds with the violent and destructive consequences of the warfare they record.⁵

But Hurley's quintessentially entrepreneurial photographic, theatric and cinematographic practice can't be encapsulated into connoisseurial terminology such as his personal 'aesthetic'. Rather than retreating back to pictorialism in the face of modernity, he in fact larded the codes of pictorialism into his formidable arsenal of thoroughly modern technical special effects. As a war photographer he saw his prime function as interpellating the viewer back in Britain or Australia, who was eager to feel, more than just see, something of the experience of warfare.

Documentary's various authenticities

It is important to remember that Hurley's photography and film making, although dealing with actuality, exploration and adventure is not documentary. His actuality adventure presentations, such as *Home of the Blizzard*, 1913, *In the Grip of the Polar pack Ice*, 1917 or *With the Australians in Palestine*, 1919, had none of documentary's diegetic logic, nor did they assume the objective invisibility of the film maker. Rather they revolved around Hurley's actual physical presence as the returned hero who was not so much auteur of, as physical witness to, the disjointed sections of film projected on the screen. He was also, of course, the showman impresario of the various technological effects he created and displayed. They therefore conform to the 'cinema of attractions'; that is, a cinema of presentation, rather than representation, where the space and time of the projected film,

⁵ R. Dixon, 'Frank Hurley and the Ross Smith Flight', *Prosthetic Gods: Travel Representation and Colonial Governance*, Brisbane, UQP, 2001, pp49-56.

and the space and time of the audience in the auditorium, remain continuous; where the phenomenological apperception of the audience has not been subsumed under the illusion of cinematic montage and the diegetic drive of narrative; and where the audience remains aware that they are watching an 'attraction' comprised of technological effects.⁶

An ad placed in the *Adelaide Mail* by Hurley sums it up:

IN THE GRIP OF THE POLAR ICE.

HEAR FRANK HURLEY'S THRILLING STORY!.

Captain Frank Hurley talks to you as the pictures are showing. He tells you the plain unvarnished truth of the perils and privations of the men who were lost in the ice. He was one of the gallant party—he went through it all carrying his camera and fighting to save these films. What you see and what you hear will give you the greatest entertainment you have ever had. It is more than drama—stranger than fiction—and absolutely true.

UNPARALLELED PICTURES OF REAL THRILLS

Everything in these magnificent pictures is real—photographed at the risk of life a score of times among the grinding icepacks of Antarctica. And everything is new—nothing you have seen before. Nothing of the old commonplace Polar pictures about them—for no Polar party ever suffered the disaster and hazards of Shackleton and his intrepid band.

ONE HOUR OF THRILLS. SIX BIG REELS OF LIFE⁷

Hurley called his actuality cinema 'adventure films', and saw them transcending other actuality films and competing for an audience directly with Hollywood fiction films—and on the same terms of audience reception. Like the Hollywood film Hurley looked for his authenticity not in the film's adherence to a prior reality, but in the affect it produced in its audience. Drafting a newspaper article *Adventure Films and the Psychology of the Audience* he wrote:

⁶ T. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectators, and the Avant-Garde', *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative*, T. Elsaesser, London, BFI, 1990, pp56-62.

⁷ *Adelaide Advertiser*, 20 December, 1919.

Against the overwhelming captivation of the world's screens by American producers, there is only one class of production that forces a ready market: subjects that are entirely unique—sensational and adventurous. Judging by what we see Romance of an amorous kind rules America. ... To feel that it lies within your power to carry [the audience] beyond the shackles of a city to help them to forget the worries of trammelled civilisation and lead them along the magic carpet of romance to the godlike spaces of freedom is a triumph and reward that any man might well venture his life a hundred times to accomplish.⁸

But by the 1930s the actuality genre had been technically and formally superseded, and the dominant fiction genre had been joined by visually sophisticated picture magazines, documentary features and newsreels which had trained their users to read the reportage image of an event not as a performative attraction, but as a means to vicariously experience the event itself from the contingent point of view of a participant. The popular World War One figure of the intrepid official photographer changed into the 1920s and 30s figure of the heroic photojournalist. The glass-plate camera with a wide-angle lens and a slow shutter speed evolved into the faster snapshot camera. In one sense cinema and photography grew closer together as cameras such as the famous Leica were built around strips of cine film, but in another sense the mediums also grew apart as photography established the technical function of the snapshot as the core, the first and the final, function of photography.

Most histories see the heroic tradition of modern war photography born fully formed under the clear light and clear politics of the Spanish Civil War. And the most famous image from that war, Robert Capa's *Death of a Republican Soldier*, 1936, is rightly used as the best exemplar of this new conception of photography's essential function and historical mission. Capa snaps his shutter blade, slicing an instant of time out its continuum, at the same time as a bullet enters the brain of the soldier, suddenly stopping the continuum of his life. The soldier is shot twice, and simultaneously. The instant is frozen into the photograph at the same time as the soldier's life is frozen into the corpse. It must therefore

⁸ F. Hurley, 'Adventure Films and the Psychology of the Audience', c1928, National Library of Australia.

come as a disappointment to some that this, perhaps one of the most iconic images of twentieth century photography, and sacred to its own image of itself as a medium, has lately been realised to be, too, a fake. Caroline Brothers points out that another shot, of another soldier falling on exactly the same spot at about the same time, was printed just below the image when it was first published in *VU* magazine. However to Brothers, finally proving what had long been conjectured⁹, does not mean that it no longer has any power as historical evidence. Only the valency of its historical evidence has changed.

As an archetypal symbol of death in war the image will retain a certain aura, even if its status is diminished, although as a touchstone for war photographers its power will fade. For the historian, however, its power as evidence is only enhanced. No longer the documentation of an individual death in a particular battle at a specific time and place, the photograph bears the trace of something broader, of the desired beliefs of a particular historical era. The fame of this photograph is indicative of a collective imagination which wanted and still wants to believe certain things about the nature of death in war, even in the face of the massive technological negation posed by the end of the First and the whole of the Second World War. What this image argued was that death in war was heroic, and that the individual counted and his death mattered. The very fact that the unknown soldier was photographed at all testifies that his death was noticed. Nor was his dying in vain. His sacrifice was in the name of a cause, and was steeped in the idealism with which he fought. Moreover, it was aesthetic. Clean, rapid, and taking place in a natural world where mountains and a lake and an open sky were visible from mountains where he fell, the circumstances implied that death had its own particular beauty. ... The very divergence of his image from the experience of most twentieth century wars is so weighted with cultural allusion that it cannot

⁹ This long standing conjecture was first raised in, P. Knightly, *The First Casualty: from the Crimea to Vietnam: the War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975, the subsequent debate is covered exhaustively but inconclusively in, A. Kershaw, *Blood and Champagne: The Life and Times of Robert Capa*, MacMillan, 2002. See also J. Taylor's discussion in *Body Horror: photojournalism, catastrophe and war*, New York, New York University Press, 1998, p59.

help but constitute an historical source replete with evidence of attitude, belief and resistance to the reality of change.¹⁰

Using the terms established by commentators such as Hüppauf, Dixon and Brothers it could be argued that both Hurley and Capa 'faked' their images for exactly the same reason: to re-establish a residual ideology of meaningful death in war within the industrial context of modern warfare. The only difference between the two was that Capa faked his image in front of the camera, within the emergent snapshot aesthetic, while eighteen years earlier had Hurley faked his image in the darkroom, using the residual composite technique.

In any case, by the time *Death of a Republican Soldier* was being published internationally in the picture magazines of 1936 its audience had been fully trained in the phenomenological modality of documentary to appreciate the sense of physical proximity to the actual moment it appeared to convey—from a spatially immersed point of view, and with a strong sense that its frozen moment was still somehow eternally caught up in the unfolding temporality of the actual event.

In contrast, the contemporaneous viewer of Castle's or Hurley's composite tableaux almost two decades before would not be searching in them solely for the instantaneous moment of their literal truth. Rather their literality would be just one element of the viewer's comprehension of them as a complex scenographic attraction. Had they been forced to account for the use of composite imagery they would probably have seen the photographer's use of composite techniques not as illicit fakery, but as an entirely licit 'special effect'—where it is the production of an effect worthy of emotional and phenomenological investment by the viewer that counts. In 1919, therefore, the *Sydney Morning Herald* is confidently able to report a digger saying of Hurley's composites that 'they are the goods', because he assumed that the diverse components which Hurley had montaged together into spatio/cinematographic legibility had each been separately taken under fire. (An incorrect assumption, as it turned out, since the bomb blasts and 'over the

¹⁰ C. Brothers, *War and Photography: a Cultural History*, London, Routledge, 1997.

top' components of his composites were shot behind the lines, and the planes were probably shot in Palestine.)

Likewise, back in 1917, Bean's piety in relation to the purity of the photograph related more to its status as a fragmentary relic than an instantaneous snapshot. To Bean photographs had little internal narrative ability, they needed to be expositied by the authority of his larger history. Bean valorised the photograph not because of any autonomous 'documentary' ability it might putatively have to synecdochically capture a self-evident historical truth, but because of the evidential anchoring it gave to the vast canvas of his narrative, which was also made up of dioramas, picture models and relics.

From Bean's point of view, the point of view of History and an anticipated sacred memory, Hurley's composites threatened to violate the indexical status of the relic. From Hurley's point of view, the point of view of a showman, they would be verifiable by reference not to historical reality but to the reality of their affect—on an emotional and ideological as well as a pictorial level.

Hurley's approach to photography was well and truly outmoded by the World War Two, and his composites and re-enactments were left behind as egregiously outdated. When he was sent to North Africa with Australian troops at the beginning of the war as head of the Department of Information's film unit he ran into trouble once more; but this time with the requirements of the department for exciting newsreel footage, as well as with his younger colleagues, such as Damien Parer and George Silk, who were intoxicated by the documentary ethos. He shot large quantities of travelogue style footage, and covered battles panoramically with a long lens. As an exasperated Damien Parer wrote back to Max Dupain:

Hurley hasn't much news sense which is necessary to the job: he goes mad about bloody native boats, and mosques and clouds (cumulus variety only)...[and] worries about 'quality'.¹¹

He continued to make a few composite photographs which appear incongruous amongst the nimble work of the younger documentary photographers.¹² And he sent back material that was unusable by the newsreel companies. Cinesound reported back to the DOI that his footage of the crucial Battle of El Alemein contained,

some faked material supposedly in the Front Line. This was crudely faked and very little of it can be used. ... Newsreel Editors are not looking for artistic camera effects, but are looking for NEWS.¹³

Documentary fact and fiction

However the heroic documentary ethos has never been able to put to rest issues of the fake. Damien Parer, who became Australia's most celebrated news cameraman, got Australian soldiers to re-enact their raid on a hut in New Guinea in 1942. Although clearly marked on his dope sheet as a re-enactment, Ken Hall used the shots to represent real action in the Academy Award winning Cinesound newsreel *Kokoda Front Line*.¹⁴

During World War One British propagandists had deployed their official footage within the Hollywood film *Hearts of the World*, simultaneously allowing the blockbuster production to benefit from the prestige of the actual. They had also toyed with the idea of making official 'story films' to stimulate the jaded palates of their public. As it subsequently emerged the genre of documentary continued to rely more on the genre of fiction than its own self-definition admitted. In the seminal film of the documentary tradition *Nanook of the North*, 1922, Robert Flaherty recast and renamed its 'authentic' actors. He invented and directed scenes which were not only filmed in the new Hollywood diegetic syntax, but also cut together into an identificatory narrative.¹⁵ The *March of Time* newsreels launched in 1935 used actors and re-enactments. Henry Luce, the founder of LIFE called it "Fakery in allegiance to the truth." And Frank Capra's World War

¹¹ D. Millar, 1984, p127.

¹² 'Untitled', National Library of Australia, H9/5; 'Tanks Waiting to Advance on the Dawn of the Battle of El Alemein', NLA h9/9 & H9/3.

¹³ D. Millar, 1984, p120.

¹⁴ N. McDonald, *War Cameraman: The Story of Damien Parer*, Melbourne, Lothian, 1994, p140.

¹⁵ B. Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Griersonian Documentary and its Legitimations*, London, British Film Institute, 1995.

Two series *Why We Fight* also used Hollywood fiction footage as stock.¹⁶ Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack made documentaries in the 1920s and then went on to make *King Kong* in 1933.

In 1926, after the success of his New Guinea adventure film, *Pearls and Savages*, 1922, Hurley disastrously attempted to merge this own 'adventure romance' genre with Hollywood's competing 'amorous romance' genre in two location feature films *The Jungle Woman*, 1926, and *Hound of the Deep*, 1926.¹⁷ He was more successful in merging actuality and fiction in the early 1930s when he was Cinesound's chief cameraman, where he developed his affinity with advanced technology, grand operatic presentations, and special effects in the context of a modern film production company. At Cinesound he was able to add his actuality experience to Cinesound's series of Hollywood style nationalistic location based features which were directed by Ken G. Hall. Thus, for instance, for *The Squatter's Daughter*, 1933, he devised the opening sequence of a mob of 10,000 sheep oceanically flowing between the pastoral folds of two hillsides. (He also helped Hall devise the film's final climatic bushfire sequence, lit by festooning the trees with thousands of feet of Australia's film heritage in the form of flammable nitrate stock.) He became something of a specialist outdoors and effects cinematographer throughout the 1930s. Charles Chauvel brought him in to shoot the horse charge on Beersheba sequence in *Forty Thousand Horsemen*, 1939, a feature about the Australian Light Horse in Palestine. Shooting on the Kurnell sand dunes, south of Sydney, Hurley placed the camera in a deep pit over which the horses jumped. This was the second time in his career that Hurley had shot the charge on Beersheba. He had photographed and filmed the real Australian Light Horse re-enacting their already famous charge in Palestine in 1918, getting the willing assistance of General Chauvel, Charles Chauvel's uncle, in marshalling the troops to ornament his picturesque views, and in choreographing full-scale re-enactments of decisive battles, re-oriented around his camera. On the afternoon of 7 February 1918 two regiments had turned out for his camera and re-enacted their famous charge for Hurley's camera.

¹⁶ E. Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983, p121.

¹⁷ R. Dixon, 2001.

The scene was filled with excitement, and I can well imagine the demoralising effect on the enemy of two regiments with bayonets drawn sweeping down on them. In some small degree I sensed the excitement myself, for the charge was directed against the position which I occupied.¹⁸

This re-enacted charge was screened in Australia in 1919, the year following the armistice, as the actuality attraction *With the Australians in Palestine*. Hurley and Hall's acted charge was screened in 1940, to raise patriotic morale in the second year of the Second World War. *Forty Thousand Horsemen* was judged by critics at the time to come through handsomely when graded against the highest standards set by British and American films because, for the first time, acting, photography, editing and set construction were used to their fullest and 'rang entirely true'.¹⁹

John Grierson's catchphrase definition, 'the creative treatment of actuality', which he coined in 1926 in order to distinguish the auteurial, socially aware documentary style he was championing from the brute reality of newsreels, is an oxymoron. In even the most honest efforts the presence of the camera itself, the assumed omniscience of the narrator, the sequencing of the raw footage, the requirement for narrative closure, and so on, all creatively contradicted actuality.

Perhaps it wasn't until the British Free Cinema movement of the 1950s or the US Direct Cinema and French Cinema Verité movement of the 1960s – when with the use of lighter equipment and sync-sound filmmakers were able to become more observers than commentators, participants and provocateurs rather than compilers – that the bedrock of authenticity became finally consistently achievable, and a strict 'optical' and 'contingent', as opposed to a 'diegetic' and 'hermeneutic', definition of the non-fake was able to be consistently claimed.²⁰ This genre's absolute concentration of its denotational guarantors into the automatic technic of the shutter and lens of the camera inevitably led to contemporary documentary practice which often includes the act of documentary making

¹⁸ F. Hurley, 'My Diary', 7 February 1918.

¹⁹ S. Cunningham, *Featuring Australia: The Cinema of Charles Chauvel*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1991, p119.

itself, and the presence and desires of the documentary maker themselves, into its profilmic actuality.

However even recent 'guerilla' autorial practices and the spate of vicarious surveillance camera and amateur video compilations have not, in fact, succeeded in firmly cementing the non-fake into an optical transcription of an unmediated pro-filmic event. Contemporary TV documentaries rely more than ever on computer simulations and cursorily identified re-enactments. Documentaries on historical topics routinely confuse authentic newsreel footage with footage from old fiction films, without discrimination, in order to denote the past.²¹

Tabloid TV news seems to still maintain a relationship to available footage, and the role of the reporter as authorising agent, that is reminiscent of the situation in 1917 and 1918. On 26 February 2002 for instance Richard Carlton took to the witness stand in his defamation case against the ABC TV program *Media Watch*. The program claimed he had lifted material from a BBC documentary without attribution in a report of his on *60 Minutes* about a Serbian massacre. "Perhaps it's plagiarism, certainly it's lazy journalism," *Media Watch* had said. Carlton wiped away tears as he told about his drive through the countryside near Srebrenica at the time of the 1995 massacre. "I saw the cruelty", he said. He wept again the following day, when he recounted that after the *Media Watch* accusation of plagiarism he had been taunted in a chemist shop queue. "I'm now like somebody accused of pedophilia", he said. "Plagiarism is to journalists what pedophilia is to the general community." However the following day he was forced to admit that a considerable amount of footage had been lifted unattributed from a prior BBC documentary; that footage of a 1992 massacre in Prijedor was made to stand in for the Srebrenica massacre three years later and 300 kilometres away; and that his piece-to-camera shot at Prijedor was subtly scripted to give the impression he was at Srebrenica. He eventually admitted that he had lied, in the 'technical' sense of the word. He was finally cornered into claiming that having driven the story, and risked his and his crew's

²⁰ E. Barnouw, 1983.

²¹ D. MacDougall, 'Films of Memory', *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V.A.R. 1990-1994*, L. Taylor, New York and London, Routledge, 1994.

lives travelling to dangerous Serbian strongholds, he was not responsible for the final product. He had not written the draft script and couldn't recall which of the *60 Minutes* four veteran film editors had compiled his report. He 'couldn't care less' about the subtitles added to Channel Nine's report, which disguised the BBC's subtitles and were different in content to the originals, and he didn't choose the footage used and didn't view the final cut of his story until it went to air.²²

Carlton's witness stand tears, the public demonstration of the auto-affectivity of his own story, demonstrates that in the contemporary tabloid TV newsroom the terms of reportage are not dissimilar to those of 1917. The affectivity of the story – produced by a free-form montage of diverse elements assembled under familiar genre rules and syntaxes and merely impresarioed by the witness/reporter – is now, as then, still an acceptable horizon of authenticity for some news organisations.

Authenticity in the archive

The advent of TV inaugurated a new ground of authenticity and actuality on which documentary filmmakers could build: the archive. In this genre archival photographs were animated and narrativised by a rostrum camera. In the US the first TV documentary to do this was the *City of Gold*, 1957, which used large 8 x 10 negatives over which the camera scanned, followed by *The Real West*, 1961, and *End of the Trail*, 1965.²³ Ken Burns perfected the style in his nation defining series *The Civil War*, *The West*, *Baseball* and *Jazz*. To Burns:

Good history doesn't attempt to judge the past from the present, it seeks to make the past come alive. And there is no better way to do that than through the window that a still photograph offers.²⁴

However this successful style, where an omnipotent camera eye zooms in and out of archival photographs and pans across them from narrative incident to narrative incident,

²² M. Price, 'When inspiration turns to perspiration', *The Australian*, 2-3 March 2002, Sydney. The judge concluded that although *Media Watch's* claims were true, they did not constitute plagiarism.

²³ E. Barnouw, 1983 p200.

²⁴ K. Burns and A. Trachtenberg, 'Freezing Time: Photography as archaeology'. From the WWW series 'Communication, the Human Imperative', <http://www.meu.edu/meu/programs/glp/transcpt.htm>, .

intercut with moody shots of landscapes, personal letters read out by actors, and a stentorian voice-over, uses the photograph as anything but a limpid window to the 'alive' moment of the past. In fact it takes the instant of the snapshot and dilates and narrativises it, rewriting it intergenerically and giving it an exegetic legibility.

Burns' style is now widely imitated, particularly in documentaries which try to take a grand overarching historical viewpoint to redefine some aspect of nationhood or collective historical understanding. An example is the Australian Broadcasting Commission series on Aboriginal/white relations in the nineteenth century, *Frontier*, produced by Bruce Belsham.

In its creation of a second degree actuality – not the real scene in front of the camera's lens, but the archival photograph under the rostrum camera – and in its dilation and merging of separate decisive moments into an affective ensemble which conforms to a cinematographic expository logic, this genre of documentary practice also shares technical elements, and auteurial attitudes, with the WW1 composite murals.

Conclusion

In documentary practice, if not in the documentary ethos, authenticity has never been the absolute, one and only, legitimating force in the image. Rather it has been a fungible quality, producing truths as it is transacted within manifold modes of meaning. Documentary photography and film have not left the fake and the composite behind like a miss-spent youth. Their logic, albeit publicly disavowed, continues to be an essential part of many contemporary forms of truth telling.

FIVE

DIGGER SPIRITUALITY

Nor could we today be harvesting the benefits of a great past were it not for the fact that our nation builders were imbued with a sublime patriotism ... The bounty of the earth impels us to look up to the good will which is in the heavens and to say 'We Thank Thee' – A Nation is Built, 1938.

C. E. W. Bean and the spiritual emanations of the artefact

During World War One, the idea of a home grown Australian spirituality began to be deployed for the first time. As Bean reported on the war he began to elaborate in his own mind on the function of the war relic (a word he began to use in place of war trophy)¹. He came to regard the relic as both a vivid historical expository device, and as a kind of spiritual 'shipping container' with which to bring some essence of the experience of the Anzacs back to Australia from France, where many of their bodies were to remain. In the month of his argument with Hurley, Bean had written an article *Australian Records Preserved as Sacred Things* in which he took his ideas beyond the modest war record schemes which had so far been proposed by the Canadians and the British. Every country, Bean predicted, would have museums and galleries built to house the "records rendered sacred by the millions of gallant, precious lives laid down in their making". The Australian collection would comprise war diaries, photographs, maps and drawings as well as "the things our men have actually used in battle or the German has used against them". Throughout the article Bean used language steeped in spiritual connotations. He wrote, for example, that the Australian War Records Section would "preserve and tenderly care for the sacred things which will some day constitute the greatest public possession

¹ C. E. W. Bean, *Gallipoli Mission*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1948, p6.

Australia will have". He referred to the photographs as "sacred records—standing for future generations to see forever the plain, simple truth."²

To Bean photographs were becoming more than just factual records to be kept as grist for the future mill of his history; they were also beginning to form part of a continuum which included the eternally sacred relic. Both photograph and relic received and retained direct indexical impressions of the fighting. For instance in July 1918 Bean arranged with the commander of a brigade which was about to take part in an attack to select after the attack two men who had fought particularly well. He had two front and back, anthropological style, views taken of them just as they were when they came out of the fighting.³ Then he had their uniforms and all their gear taken from them and replaced by a completely new outfit. In the words of Bean's biographer:

Everything that was taken from these soldiers, with all the emanations evocative of battle, fear, death, endurance and heroism, was to be sealed up, just as it came from these men, and sent back to Australia so that their countrymen might feel these emanations and be reminded what manner of men these had been.⁴

Relics also established an archaeological substratum for the nascent Australian nation. Bean referred to the relics collected by the Australian Historical Mission to Gallipoli in 1919 as "'antiquities' only four years old".⁵ A keen classicist, Bean was sensitive to the fact that Gallipoli was only a short distance from other foundational archaeological sites, such as Troy. Members of the Gallipoli Mission, returning to the Peninsula immediately after the armistice, spread out in a line, each man separated by ten paces, and combed the ground for relics. These were then forensically examined to determine how far inland the Australians had penetrated on the morning of the first landing. Significant finds were photographed in situ. A seemingly insignificant Wilkins photograph of a water bottle lying under a bush, *Australian relics on the north-easternmost spur of battleship Hill*, is only activated into historical, and spiritually mnemonic, life by the caption: "This was probably

² M. McKernan, *Here is Their Spirit*, Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1991, p42.

³ AWM E2818, E2819, 'Two diggers from the 5th Australian Division', 30/7/18.

⁴ D. McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: the Story of C. E. W. Bean*, Sydney, John Ferguson, 1983, p34.

the point reached by Tulloch's Company on 25th April 1915".⁶ The text to *Gallipoli Mission* further elaborates on the scrupulous valedictory labour which archaeologically read this relic as both quasi-classical 'antiquity', and forensic evidence.

Even an un-damaged Australian water bottle might well have been carried by a Turk. But a bottle with holes through it was no use to anyone. These relics were 300-400 yards from the ground on which we found the line of Turkish ammunition packets and cartridges. The fire of these Turks I noted "must have been against Tulloch's men" (no one else on our side came near the place); and I felt sure that the traces of Australians that we now saw showed where Tulloch's company had crawled through the scrub in the last 100 yards of its advance.⁷

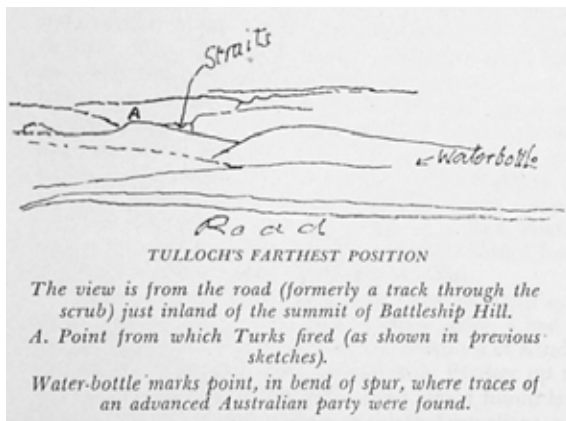


Charles Bean, 'Australian Relic on the Northeastern-most spur of Battleship Hill, This was probably the point reached by Captain Tulloch's Company on 25th April 1915', *Gallipoli Mission*.

⁵ C. E. W. Bean, *Gallipoli Mission*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1948, p4.

⁶ p111.

⁷ pp99-100.



Charles Bean, "TULLOCH'S FARTHEST POSITION", Water-bottle marks point, in bend of spur, where traces of an advanced Australian Party were found.', *Gallipoli Mission*.

Throughout the war Bean, along with the head of the Australian Records Section, John Treloar, and Bean's favourite war artist, Will Dyson, progressively developed their ideas for what was to become the Australian War Memorial. In March 1918 Bean wrote to the Australian Minister for Defence with his plan for a war memorial/museum. The building would consist of three parts: "The great central building to be the museum, one wing to be the gallery, the other wing to be the library". Twice Bean referred to the notion that photographs of all Australia's war dead should be included in a frieze in some kind of central display, perhaps "around the waist of the central hall". He believed that it would be "a great pride for future generations of Australian people to go to such a place and point to their ancestor there who gave his life for his country". It wasn't until 1923 that the idea of this great central photographic frieze was finally given up as being too impractical, in favour of a Roll of Honour.⁸

However the continuum which included the photograph and the relic stopped short at the actual bodies of the dead Anzacs left buried in France. Both Bean and Treloar, who was to become the Australian War Memorial's director, resisted frequent attempts to bring out to Australia an Unknown Australian Warrior for entombment, as the British had in London. They realised that it would make redundant their own innovative but elaborate argument for a tri-cameral gallery/museum/library which produced sacredness in the internal combustion of exposition and artefact. It wasn't until the 1993 that the then Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating, deftly inserted an Unknown Australian Soldier into the

Memorial's Hall of Memory, replenishing the spiritual charge of the place with a new battery.

Frank Hurley and the spiritual effects of the photograph

If Bean revered the photograph as inviolable historical record and immutable spiritual artefact, to Hurley it was a manipulable, spectacular showcase. While Bean wished to have himself seen as the historian of Australia's emerging nationhood, Hurley's colleagues in the trade such as the film director Ken G Hall and the World War Two journalist Maslyn Williams, referred to him as a 'showman'.⁹ They understood that he himself was the essential subject of all his work, which was orientated to its affectivity on an audience.

Like every other visitor, Hurley was overwhelmed by the horror of the front and the futile bravery of the Anzac soldiers, which he immediately saw in the same nation forming terms as Bean. He described the Battle of Menin Road on September 20 as "One of the most glorious days in the annals of our Australian history".¹⁰ His picturesque imagination was excited by the weird juxtapositions of modern warfare, where expansive scenes of pastoral beauty existed within a few kilometres of the compacted hell of the trenches – and both were overseen by awesome new technologies.

It is a noble approach to Ypres. Here and there on either side are small hamlets – the outskirts of the town, demolished by shellfire. Up high in the sky is the line of sausage balloons, which "spot" on our artillery fire and report its effect. They trail in a long line across the sky, parallel with the front line and out of the range of Fritz's shrapnel. Like great horseflies circling and flashing in the sun, are numbers of our scouting aeroplanes. On the road trailing through the dust, march on the endless procession of men and machines.¹¹

⁸ M. McKernan, 1991, p58.

⁹ K. G. Hall, *Directed by Ken G. Hall*, Melbourne, Lansdowne Press, 1977, J. Thomas, *Showman*, National Library of Australia, 1990.

¹⁰ F. Hurley, 'My Diary', National Library of Australia, 20 September 1917.

¹¹ 3 September 1917.

He frequently took time out from the front lines to visit and photograph the bombed cathedrals of Ypres and Albert. Visiting the ruins of Ypres he plucked a single rose that was still growing beside a shell crater.

It is a weird, awful and terrible sight, yet somehow wildly beautiful. For my part Ypres, as it now is, has a curious fascination and aesthetically is far more interesting than the Ypres that was.¹²

A large part of Hurley's darkroom activity during World War One wasn't, as he had claimed during his argument with Bean, and subsequently in the Australian photographic press, to create scenographically legible battle tableaux so as to better document the brutal realities of war. His addition of piles of cumulus or storm clouds through which shafts of sunlight are breaking, or the proscenium frames of church architecture, add no narrative information. *Death the Reaper*, a simple composite of two negatives, one probably taken at St Pol trench mortar school, the other probably somewhere on no man's land, is spatially and diegetically incongruous. The caption to the image when it was exhibited in London at the *Australian Exhibition of Official War Photographs* draws the viewer's attention to the skill of the photographer in capturing this new, uncanny apparition of modern warfare, but also gave it a further supernatural reading.¹³

Death the Reaper.

A composite picture. This remarkable shell burst was secured after many exposures. The earth thrown up by the explosion assumed the form of a skeleton with the skull looking down towards the battle-torn earth.¹⁴

¹² 3-4 September 1917.

¹³ A supernatural reading was also suggested by Hurley in his diary description of the image, see chapter 2.

¹⁴ *Catalogue of Australian Official War Pictures and Photographs: Pictures of Gallipoli, the Western Front, and Palestine*, 1918.



Frank Hurley, *Death the Reaper*, 1918. Composite photograph.

Hurley was always keen to photograph unusual, quasi-supernatural phenomena. For instance he made a special trip behind the front to photograph, in silhouette, *The Famous Leaning Madonna and Child at Albert*:

Early in the War a German shell hit and almost severed the supports of the statue which surmounted the tower. In falling, the base became entangled with some ironwork and for a long time remained poised, head downward, with the child

held out suppliantly to those who passed beneath. The peasantry firmly believed that when the statue should fall, peace would come. Strangely enough the Armistice was signed only a short while after the statue fell to the ground.¹⁵



'206. The Tower of Albert Cathedral. 1917.' Bean and Gullett, 'Photographic Record of the War: Reproductions of Pictures taken by the Australian Official Photographers', *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1923.

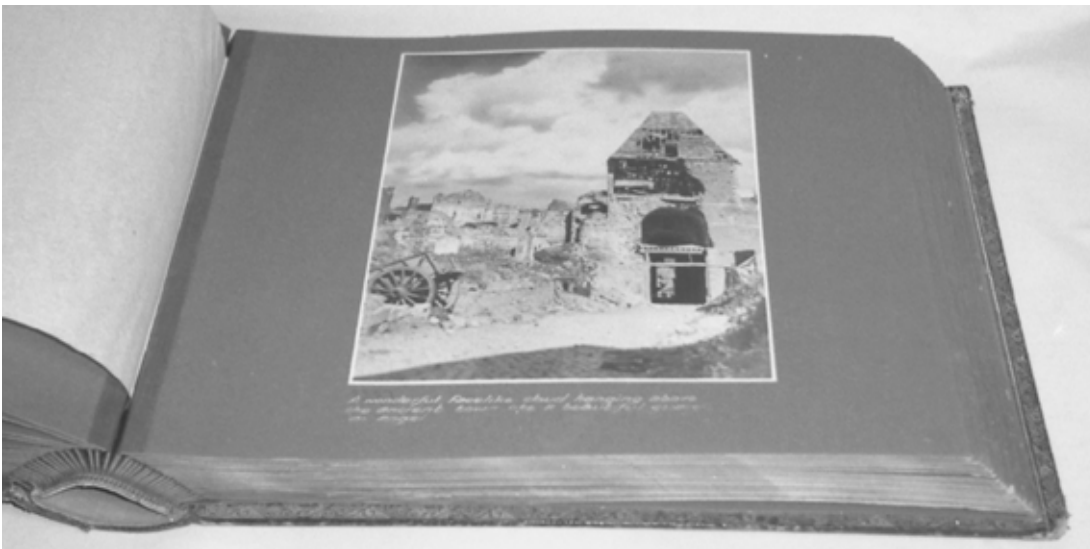
Artistically, Hurley's special effects are his response to the picturesque weirdness of the front; but, when exhibited in London or Sydney, they also became pictorial tropes of the sacred and the sublime which provide the moral benediction of God and Nature to imperial victory. Hurley's cloud effects had a specific legibility at the time. A pervasive myth, which was widely believed during the war, was that a host of angels had appeared in the sky over the Battle of Mons at the very beginning of the war and, witnessed by many soldiers, had directly assisted the English in resisting the Germans.¹⁶ Angelic imagery was common for the rest of the war. Hurley's cloud effects—where the presence

¹⁵ C. F. Hurley, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of War Photographs*, Sydney, 1919.

¹⁶ P. Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American, and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914-1933*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1987, pp103-105.

of the supernatural is implied, if not directly depicted –were therefore also offered as spiritual succour to grieving relatives.

Even in official presentation albums mawkish tropes of the sacred were never far away, for instance an unidentified photograph of Jericho in an album of Official Australian War Photographs is captioned 'A wonderful facelike cloud hanging above the ancient town like a beautiful guardian angel.'



'A wonderful facelike cloud hanging above the ancient town like a beautiful guardian angel.', *Official Australian War Photographs*, National Museum of Photography Film and Television, UK.

Although Hurley was generally not religious, and eschewed religious conventions, he had personally experienced at least three occasions where weather or natural light effects seemed to both signal to him, and create within him, some kind of personal spiritual revelation or message. In 1910 his Sydney postcard business had collapsed, but one night after climbing up the stairs to his premises feeling overwhelmed by his misfortune he saw "a silvery beam that shone through a window and flooded the stairway with light".¹⁷ With that he felt a renewal of energy to carry on and "turn the corner". Soon after he was off to the Antarctic as an official expedition photographer for the Mawson expedition. On that expedition he and some companions were caught by the weather whilst returning from an

¹⁷ F. Hurley, *Argonauts of the South*, New York, Putnam, 1925, p11. Quoted in G. Newton, 'The Perfect Picture: James Francis Hurley', *South With Endurance: Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914-1917, the Photographs of Frank Hurley*, J. Wright, Viking, 2001, p39.

attempt to reach the Pole by sled. All seemed lost, then the weather cleared and the exhausted party suddenly found themselves looking at Commonwealth Bay:

A strange feeling came over me, infinitely comforting. Some indelible force seemed to be beside me and guiding me on. In a state of high exaltation I knew we were going to win through. Our jaded bodies, still and frostbitten, rebelled, but WILL won.¹⁸

Digger spiritualism

But even on this plane of the evocation of the sacred there was no possibility of reconciliation between Bean and Hurley. Bean's plans for the Australian War Memorial were imbued with a spiritualist yearning, but Bean's grief-driven spiritualism was different to Hurley's showy sublimity.

In the late 1920s, with the development of an Anzac memorial culture in Australia, the spirit digger became a potent symbol. Just before Anzac Day 1925 Melbourne *Punch* described Anzac day as "that solemn day, on which ... the spirits of the nation's gallant dead come back again for a space, on 'Home Leave'."¹⁹ Bean's favourite war artist Will Dyson used the spectral digger in several newspaper cartoons. On Anzac Day 1927 Dyson published his best known cartoon in the Melbourne *Herald*. In *A Voice from Anzac* two ghostly Diggers left behind at Gallipoli draw solace from hearing the feet of the Returned Men marching in Australia.²⁰ One of them says to the other: 'Funny thing, Bill—I keep thinking I hear men marching!'. Treloar unsuccessfully attempted to buy this cartoon for the Memorial, but 1000 copies were presented to the Victorian RSL for sale.

¹⁸ F. Hurley, 1925, p90. Cited in G. Newton, 2001, pp 43-44.

¹⁹ R. McMullin, *Will Dyson: Cartoonist, Etcher and Australia's Finest War Artist*, London, Angus & Robertson, 1984, p226.

²⁰ Unfortunately, under US linguistic imperialism, the phrase 'Returned Man', with its Stygian connotations, has been lost to Australia's vocabulary, replaced by the more prosaic 'veteran'.



Will Dyson, 'Funny thing, Bill—I keep thinking I hear men marching!', 1927.



Will Dyson, untitled cartoon, c1930s.

In Dyson's *Calling Them Home*, published in 1929, the ghosts (but not the bodies) of Australia's dead are called home to the proposed War Memorial.



Will Dyson, 'Calling Them Home', 1929.

The Memorial's most popular painting, Longstaff's *Menin Gates at Midnight*, 1927, depicts a psychic vision Longstaff had during a midnight walk after the unveiling of the Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres, when he saw soldier spirits rising from the cornfields around him. When the painting toured Australia in 1928 and 1929 it was seen by perhaps half a million people, who viewed it to the accompaniment of sombre organ music.²¹ The special effects of the painting's liminal optical illusion is still enhanced in the Memorial by the darkened grotto in which it is spot lit.

²¹ A. Gray, 'Will Longstaff's *Menin Gate at Midnight*', Canberra, Australian War Memorial,



Will Longstaff, *Menin Gates at Midnight*, 1927. Oil on Canvas. Australian War Memorial.

The emotional legibility of Longstaff's and Dyson's spectral imagery derived at least some of its power from spiritualist photography. Spiritualist ideas were pervasive after the war, for example not only was Will Dyson's mother a spiritualist, but his famous brother-in-law, Norman Lindsay, briefly dabbled in it as well,²² and the 1920s' most famous proselytiser of spiritualism, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, lectured to packed houses and grateful bereaved mothers in 1920/21.²³

But the War Memorial's ghosts are directly connected to the experience of mass grief, and index the absent gravesite. Hurley's holy card imagery must have seemed gratuitous to Bean, and abstracted from the grass roots experience of the war he wanted Australians to feel. Bean had been in battle for two and a half years by the time of their argument, Hurley was only to remain in Flanders for that many months.

Hurley's domestication of sublimity and spirituality

For the rest of his career Hurley retained his attachment to scenes topped by whipped-cream clouds and split by crisp wafers of sunlight straight from Heaven. Early examples can be found amongst the material he shot in Palestine in 1918; later examples, where often the same favourite cloud negative is used to top off several different scenes, are

²² R. McMullin, 1984.

found in abundance in Hurley's many 'Camera Study' books of the 1950s and 60s. These books ended up selling a total of 168,500 copies. The books are quite different to other 'Australiana' books of the period. Unlike, say, Ernestine Hill, or Ion Idriss, Hurley is not interested in collecting and stringing together anecdotal travel stories or eccentric characters as signs of nationhood. Rather he is interested in nationhood enacted by scenery itself. His landscapes are conceived of as gigantic prosceniumed stage sets complete with all the theatrical machinery of flies, flats and backdrops. His people are not characters, but extras. His added in clouds and sunrays have mutated from being tropes of imperial sacrifice, to being tropes of nationalist benediction on the fertile pastoral lands, or bustling modern cities, that spread themselves out beneath the heavens.



Frank Hurley, *A Nation is Built*, 1938.



Frank Hurley, *A Nation is Built*, 1938.

²³ Doyle is discussed in more detail in the next section

In the montages of the hyper-nationalistic film *A Nation is Built*, 1938, shot for the nation's sesquicentenary, Hurley's sublime clouds, as well as being a pictorial trope, also provide an additional spatial vector to the nationalist imagery. In an early, acted-out prologue, Governor Phillip imagines a modern 1930s style city rising up out of his Sydney Cove tents through the composite special effects of double exposure and masking. In the film's central montage sequence the camera pans around in proprietorial survey of the bounty of Empire. Wipes and dissolves move us horizontally along in a cavalcade of imperial history, but then the camera also lifts us up ecstatically to the clouds for us to receive a supposedly ahistorical, transcendent blessing on our 150 years of progress. The hortatory voice-over intones:

The amazing transformation of a country of wild bush land into a highly developed commonwealth in a brief one hundred and fifty years has no parallel in history. Nor could we today be harvesting the benefits of a great past were it not for the fact that our nation builders were imbued with a sublime patriotism ... Nor are our peoples unmindful of the beneficence which has been showered down upon our land by the Creator of all things. This lovely scene inspires us to something more than mere admiration. The bounty of the earth impels us to look up to the good will which is in the heavens and to say 'We Thank Thee'. Just as those of the past had visions of the greatness of the future, so we builders of today must build towards our nation's mightiness of the morrow. In harmony and consort our voices are raised: 'God who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet'.²⁴

²⁴ This crypto-fascistic film is closely related to other propaganda films of the period, and not only in its conflation of nation, people and land. The use of a camera ascending to and descending from the heavens is reminiscent of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, for instance.



Frank Hurley, 'A scene from *A Nation Is Built*', from F. Legge in collaboration with T. Hurley, *Once More on My Adventure*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1966.

Hurley's nationalist sublime is much more circumscribed than the Burkian sublime of astonishment, terror and awe at a power far greater than the human—a power which paradoxically uplifts us because it threatens to annihilate us, whose immensity provokes a crisis in the viewer which can only be resolved by their identification with it. Hurley had experienced and recorded many moments of this Burkian sublimity early in his career. For instance in early 1915, stationed in the crow's nest of the *Endurance* amidst the icebergs, nature, inspiration and personal will were all once more brought into conjunction for him, as they had been before when he was lost on the ice on the Mawson expedition, or in despair at the loss of his postcard business.

[A]lone in the intense silence and vastness, I realised the helplessness of our vessel and our utter insignificance. The will that gives man might to rule and dominate avails nothing here. The breeze which wafts the snowflake, the ripple which stirs the lead, the tiny crystals which in countless millions build this gleaming ice-world, are all indifferent to man's word or will.²⁵

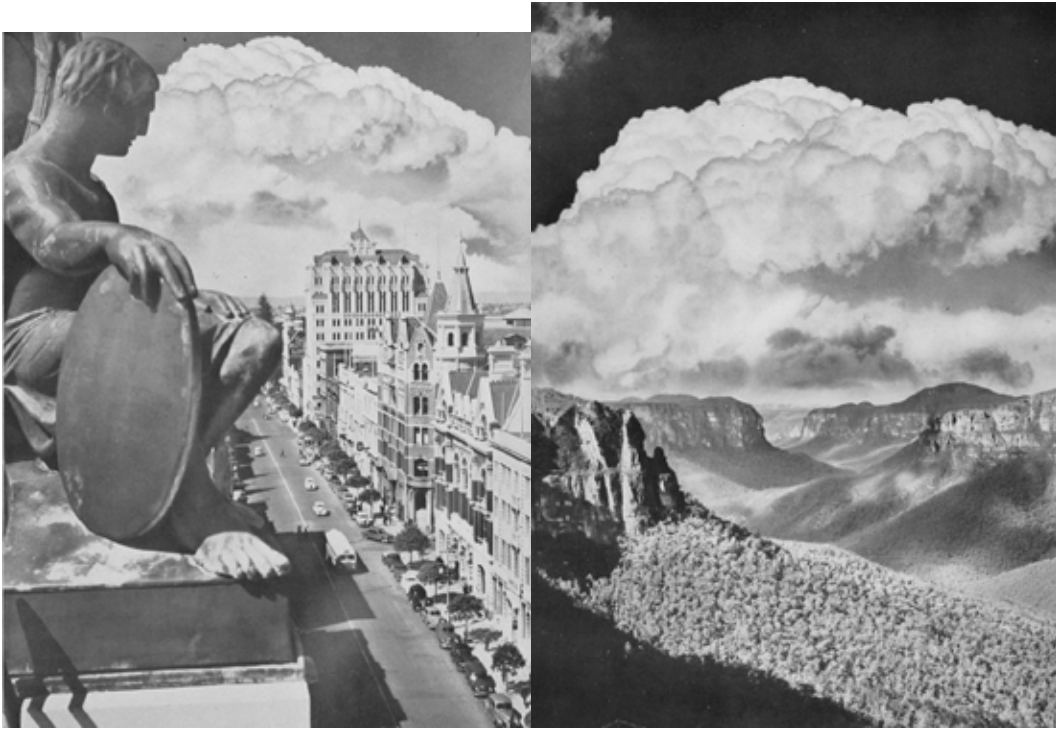
But by the 1950s his sublime has become attached to the Australiana market, and therefore much more circumscribed. It had become much more domesticated, even, than the 'Manifest Destiny' of the nineteenth century American Luminists, with their ideological investment in the natural inevitability of the great American nation evidenced by its sublime wildernesses. Hurley's own vision splendid takes place within a comforting horizon of civic, industrial or pastoral scenery. His nation's manifest destiny is domesticated and almost suburban. In all of the 220 pages of *Australia: A Camera Study* of 1955 there are only a few pages devoted to outback scenery, and virtually none devoted to what we would now affirmatively call wilderness, a word which had entirely negative connotations for Hurley. Aborigines do not appear at all.

His photographs are curiously evacuated, rather like empty stage sets. They are images of an imperial potentiality, a libidinal void waiting to be filled with flowing floods of sheep or churning turbines. All his landscapes are technologised to some extent, mechanically and repetitively clunking themselves through their pictorial machinations. They encourage us to lob our gazes, almost ballistically, across them. Hurley's ballistic gaze was frequently directly augmented by the technology of flight. From his first experience of flight with Ross Smith in 1918 in Palestine Hurley was an enthusiastic aerial photographer. The sense of an aerial view – from the 'magic carpet' above 'trammelled civilisation' in the 'Godlike spaces of freedom'²⁶ – became fundamental to his photography, whether from a plane's cockpit or terrestrially.²⁷

²⁵ F. Hurley, *Shackleton's Argonauts*, 1948, cited in Helen Ennis, *Man with a Camera*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 2002.

²⁶ F. Hurley, 'Adventure Films and the Psychology of the Audience', c1928, National Library of Australia.

²⁷ R. Dixon, 'Frank Hurley and the Ross Smith Flight', *Prosthetic Gods: Travel Representation and Colonial Governance*, Brisbane, UQP, 2001.



Same cloud negative used twice. Frank Hurley, *Australia: A Camera Study*, Angus And Robertson, Sydney 1955. p152 and p64.

Conclusion

Charles Bean and Frank Hurley took contrary attitudes to photography and its role within a home-grown Australian spirituality. To Bean the photograph was an artefactual relic, and Australian spirituality was rooted in the unknowable sacrifice of Australians themselves. To Hurley the photograph was a mutable image, and Australia's spirituality was ascribed to it by sublime heroic, pastoral or industrial spectacle. In Hurley's photography special effect and spiritual affect met in the image as an ecstatic spatialisation and visualisation of experience. As I will describe in subsequent chapters, photography – as both artefact and image, and spirituality – as both a cult of the dead and a trope of national identity, continued to twist themselves together as they ran through modern Australian culture, right up to the present day.

2

**SPIRIT
PHOTOGRAPHY**

SIX

PHOTOGRAPHING THE DEAD

Does it not appear dastardly cruel and harsh that individuals, especially women, should resort to these spirit photographs, thereby ridiculing those heroes of war, and perhaps causing sorrow and distress in many homes? – Daily Sketch, 1924.¹

Early Spiritualist Photography

In 1848 two young sisters, Maggie and Kate Fox, who lived in a small house in upper New York State, began to hear rapping sounds in their bedroom, and modern Spiritualism was inaugurated. Thirteen years later mysterious 'extra' figures began to appear on the glass plates of the Boston photographer, William Mumler, and spirit photography was inaugurated. Public interest in Spiritualism and spirit photography peaked in the 1870s but had subsided by the turn of the century. But both underwent an extraordinary revival from the time of the First World War and throughout the 1920s.

The most famous example of spirit photography in the nineteenth century phase was the documentation, in the mid 1870s, of the full body ectoplasmic materialisation of the spirit Katie King, supposedly produced by the medium Florence Cook. Katie King was the daughter of a 200-year-old pirate. Florence Cook, the teenage medium from Hackney in London who produced her, was sponsored by, and the photographs were promulgated by, the eminent chemist Sir William Crookes, the discoverer of the element Thallium and

¹ 'SPIRITS' WHILE YOU WAIT', *Daily Sketch*, 18 November 1924, London.

researcher into cathode rays. This erotically charged ménage à trois, of an older, scientific, patriarchal sponsor and proselytiser; a supposedly passive, honest, ingenuous female medium; and a young coquettish spirit 'control' from beyond the grave, was quite common within spiritualism.



William Crookes, 'Katie King, a full body materialisation supposed produced by the medium Florence Cook, with James M. Gully, photographed by electric light', 1874. From Rolf H. Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow*, 1994, p120.

As with all of the cases I'm going to discuss it is only within the dynamics of the various personal investments of these relationships, the personal desire of the client to believe, and the seductive scenarios enacted by the medium, that we can account for the fact that time and time again obvious fakes are declared to be true. Sir William Crookes built up an ongoing relationship with the spirit Katie King. He reported that she was supremely beautiful, and felt and breathed like a living person, and he was convinced that she had a different height, heart rate and hair colour than the medium who ectoplasmically produced her as she supposedly lay in a supine trance in her cabinet.

And we too, at a stretch, can just be convinced how Crookes, flattered by the attentions of this Pre-Raphaelite spiritual beauty in the crepuscular hush of a Victorian parlour, lit by a

galvanically powered arc light,² could be persuaded to momentarily believe she was supernatural, and then out of pride and scientific arrogance, refuse to recant for the rest of his life. It is probable that in fact Crookes, a married man, was having an affair with his young and beautiful medium at the time of the Katie King materialisations.³ Also, in the 1870s, still in the period of the photographic glass wet-plate, before the mass dissemination and reproduction of the snapshot, the medium of photography was removed from the public ken enough to be sufficiently mysterious in itself to sustain the overheated theatrics of these documents.

The Crookes photographs were supposedly images of a spirit who had physically materialised in front of the camera's lens. However most nineteenth century spirit photographs weren't necessarily conventional portraits of the spirits. Spirit 'extras' could appear which were separate images imprinted psychically onto the plates. The reformist journalist and ardent spiritualist W. T. Stead had for many years been in contact, through automatic writing, with a spirit-guide Julia, the spirit of a dead American journalist. He had even used Julia to conduct posthumous interviews with ex British Prime Ministers, which he then published in the popular magazine he edited, the *Review of Reviews*. He was desperate for a picture of Julia. He sat for a London medium photographer in 1895, was delighted when he saw a beautiful female extra behind some ferns, but disappointed when Julia told him (through automatic writing) that it wasn't in fact, an image of herself, but her 'thought form' poured into the 'mould' of the unidentified lady in the picture. Stead asked her how spirit photographs were made from the point of view of those on the other side. She replied:

The picture or bodily mould which appears in the photograph is only a shape created by thought or by the mind for the sake of showing the identity. ... if you

² R. H. Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow: The Role of Photography in Certain Paranormal Phenomena: An Historical Survey*, Nazraeli Press, 1994.

³ T. H. Hall, *The Spiritualists: The Story of Florence Cook and William Crookes*, London, Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1962.

use your thought to create a picture, and you present this picture in a materialised shape before the camera, it can be photographed.⁴



W. T. Stead with a 'thought mould' produced by his spirit guide Julia. c1890s. From F. Gettings, *Ghosts in Photographs*, 1978.

In another instance the deceased wife of a widower Brisbane business-man called F. C. Barnes told him, by speaking through a direct voice trance medium at a Brisbane séance, to travel to London to visit the medium photographer Boursnell. In Brisbane, Barnes had read and been greatly impressed by a book called *The Martyrdom of an Empress*, about the assassination of the Empress of Austria. He was surprised when the frontispiece portrait from this book appeared as an extra at his first sitting in London. However it transpired that this was only the Intelligent Operators of the Invisible using a picture that was already strongly present in his mind as a means of opening a channel between the Two

⁴ F. Gettings, *Ghosts in Photographs: The Extraordinary Story of Spirit Photography*, New York, Harmony Books, 1978, pp13-14.

Worlds. At his second sitting, when he brought along his children, his wife duly appeared as an extra.⁵

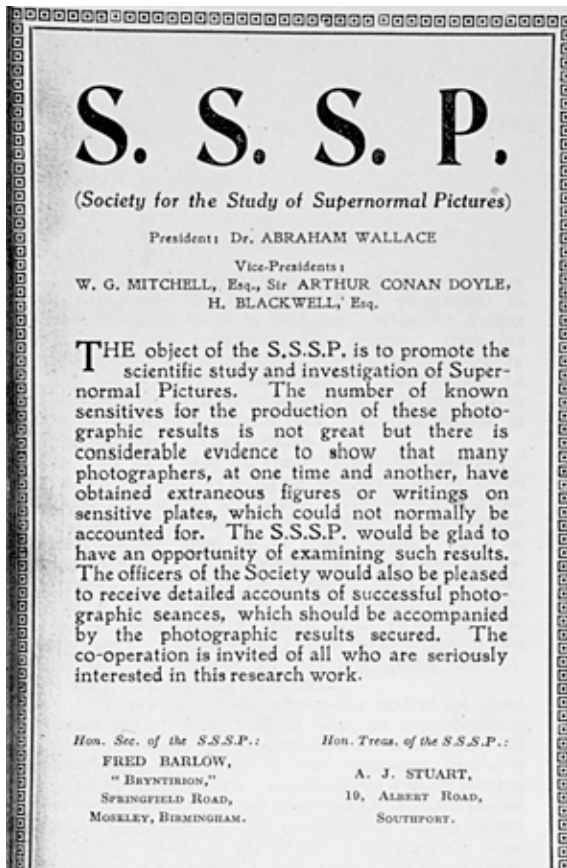
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and William Hope

The most famous British medium photographer of the early twentieth century was William Hope who worked with a partner from a studio in the north of England from the 1900s and regularly produced negatives containing spirit manifestations of the living dead. Often these extras appeared swathed in cocoons of material which was identified as an ectoplasmic like substance. Hope's work was eagerly examined and endorsed by the SSSP, the Society for the Study of Supernormal Pictures, which had been formed by a group of well credentialled and eminent Spiritualists in 1918.



William Hope. Portrait of the psychic researcher Harry Price with unidentified extra in ectoplasmic shroud. c1920s. Barlow Collection, British Library.

⁵ J. Coates, *Photographing the Invisible: Practical Studies in Spirit Photography, Spirit Portraiture, and other Rare but Allied Phenomena*, New York, Arno Press, 1911, pp103-105.



SSSP advertising flyer.



William Hope. The Society for the Study of Supernormal Pictures. Arthur Conan Doyle is on the left, an image of the spirit of the uncle of one of the society's members appears on its side within an ectoplasmic cloud in the centre. 1922. Barlow Collection, British Library.

Spirit photography had several high profile advocates. The famous creator of that arch-rationalist Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was an evangelical spiritualist. He went to William Hope in 1919 to try to obtain a photograph of his son who had died as a result of wounds received in the Great War. He published the resulting image in Britain's *Sunday Pictorial*, and in Melbourne's *Herald*. In his testimonial letter Doyle wrote:

The plate was bought by me in Manchester. On reaching Mr Hope's studio room in Crewe, I opened the packet in the darkroom and put the plate in the carrier. I had already carefully examined the camera and lens. I was photographed, the two mediums holding their hands on top of the camera. I then took the carrier into the darkroom, took out the plate, developed, fixed and washed it, and then, before leaving the darkroom, saw the extra head upon the plate. On examining with a powerful lens the face of the 'extra' I have found such a marking as is produced in newspaper process work. It is very possible that the whole picture, which has a general, but not very exact, resemblance to my son, was conveyed onto the plate from some existing picture. However that may be, it was most certainly supernatural, and not due to any manipulation or fraud.⁶

This quote is characteristic of many people's experience of spirit photography. There was a 'laying on of hands' of the spirit photographer, the presence of the sitter during the alchemical processes in the darkroom and, despite obvious signs that the spirit image came from another source, ultimate belief because there was nonetheless a revelation of recognition and it appeared as though fraud was impossible.

Doyle had been a jingoistic propagandist during World War One, during which he lost his son and his brother. Virtually every other family was experiencing similar grief. Since that war the, "sight of a world which was distraught with sorrow and eagerly asking for help and knowledge"⁷, had compelled him to use his fame and personal wealth to proselytise the cause in bluff pugnacious lectures delivered from platforms across the

⁶ 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his Son', *Harbinger of Light*, October, 1919.

⁷ N. Fodor, *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science*, London, Arthurs Press, 1933, p106.

world. In 1920 and 1921 he spoke to 50,000 people in Australia alone. He was feted by Spiritualists, courted by politicians, and criticised by churchmen. In Brisbane he invested £2000 in Queensland's future by buying Government Bonds. The Government Photographer turned up to take his portrait, but Sir Arthur was obscured by a cloud of ectoplasmic light on the plate.⁸



'Curious photographic effect referred to in the text. Taken by the Official Photographer, Brisbane. 'Absolutely mystifying' is his description.', from A. C. Doyle, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, 1921.

In each town and city he gave three lectures, two on spiritualism, and one, illustrated by lantern slides, on spirit photography. Conan Doyle's lectures provided implicit comfort to the bereaved. The *Melbourne Age* reported:

Unquestionably the so-called 'dead' lived. That was his message to the mothers of Australian lads who died so grandly in the War, and with the help of God he and Lady Doyle would 'get it across' to Australia.⁹

Spirit photographs, in their openendedness, functioned in quite a different way to the monumental, closed, mute, funeral portrait. In 1919 the Australian Spiritualist newspaper *Harbinger of Light* took delight in quoting the Rev. T. E. Ruth, the minister of the Collins Street Baptist church, Melbourne:

I have been impressed by the fact that [spiritualist literature] has been concerned with the practical comfort of mourning multitudes, while ordinary church papers

⁸ A. C. Doyle, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, London, Hodder and Staughton, 1921, p252.

⁹ 'Conan Doyle in Australia', *Light*, December 18, 1920.

have been almost as deficient in spiritual consolation and guidance as that dreadful 'In Memoriam' doggerel about there being nothing left to answer but the photo on the wall.¹⁰



Mrs Deane, unidentified spirit photograph, 1920-23. Society for Psychical Research Collection, Cambridge University Library.

Spiritualism was always followed for selfish reasons. It was not concerned with the transcendently numinous, so much as the immediate desires of each individual soul for solace. For instance, when the Fox sisters publicly confessed to their childhood fraud in front of a packed house at the New York Academy of Music in 1888, forty years after they began Spiritualism, it was reported that, "spiritualists throughout the house cried out at having to face again the loss of loved ones they thought restored to them for ever".¹¹

Spiritualism had such a major revival in the context of mass post-war grief because of its one simple message: the dead live, and can communicate. The most popular spiritualist book by far during this period was *Raymond: Or Life and Death* written by Sir Oliver Lodge. Lodge was another eminent scientific person and prominent Spiritualist. He was a respected physicist who had been involved in the development of wireless telegraphy, as well as attempts to measure the presence of 'ether', an immaterial interstitial substance that

¹⁰ 'Different Viewpoints!', *Harbinger of Light*, October, 1919.

¹¹ R. Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983.

was postulated to be the medium that carried light and electro-magnetic waves. His youngest and most adored son was killed on the Somme in 1917, but got quickly back in touch with the family in London through various direct voice mediums using the spirit control Freda, a giggling young girl. He established his identity by referring to photographs that had been taken at the Front but not yet seen in London, and by referring to childhood incidents verifiable by family snaps. His message to his father, and to the thousands of readers who read the book during its nine impressions from 1916 to 1932, was that he was still alive, along with the thousands of his fallen comrades, on the Other Side in a place he called 'Summerland'. Summerland was a place rather like an English Country Club. His comrades, he reported, were all happy and well, and proud to have given their lives for their Motherland. They wanted their loved ones back on the Earth plane to grieve less because they were not gone, but living alternate, higher lives.

This book spawned many imitators, with texts usually received from the other side by automatic writing: *Subaltern in Spirit Land*, *The Nurseries of Heaven*, *Rachel Comforted*, *Thy Son Liveth*, *The Dead Have Never Died*, and so on. *Raymond* and its imitators seemed to have supplied solace to mainstream readers, not just to Spiritualist adherents. As I established in earlier chapters, spiritualist imagery had mainstream currency, and imagery of apparitions, either as metaphors for divine omnipresence, or as visual tropes of specific mnemonic presence, was common in postcards and Soldier's Souvenir Books.

The idea of intercontinental telegraphic spirits had particular relevance for Australian War mourners because the bodies of their fallen remained in Turkey and France. As discussed in the previous chapter, a direct link with Spiritualism can be seen in the Digger ghosts which rise from their foreign graves, in Will Longstaff's 1927 painting *Menin Gate at Midnight*, and the ghosts stranded on the shores of Gallipoli who draw solace from hearing the sound of their living mates marching in their memory, in Will Dyson's cartoon of the same year.

The Spirit Photography of Mrs Ada Deane

In 1920 another spirit photographer joined William Hope on the British Spiritualist scenes: Mrs Ada Emma Deane. Although she had had many psychic experiences as a child – she

played with a spirit girl in an attic, was teased by a spirit boy whilst lying in bed, and was seen by some nuns to float down a set of stairs—it wasn't until 1920, when she was 58 years old, that she began to develop her psychic powers.

Her husband had left her many years before, and she had brought up three children on her own by working as a servant and charwoman. With the children grown she branched out into other occupations. She began to breed pedigree dogs, and she purchased a rickety old quarter-plate camera for nine pence with which she photographed her children, friends and neighbours. She also became involved in Spiritualism.

Once, when photographing a friend, Mrs Deane got a freakish result on her photographic plate: the head appearing on the shoulders of the sitter was not that of the sitter herself. Later, while attending a local séance in North London, the medium conducting the séance predicted that she would become a psychic photographer. She sat with that medium regularly for the next six months attempting to develop her powers, and finally obtained her first psychic photograph in June 1920. Her reputation soon spread amongst Spiritualists and she became one of Britain's busiest photographic mediums, holding over 2000 sittings where clients were photographed and, upon development, spirit 'extras', faces of their Departed, appeared on the plates.¹²

Late in 1920 Mrs Deane, accompanied by her daughter Violet who was also developing psychic abilities, visited the Birmingham home of the psychic researcher Fred Barlow, secretary of the Society for the Study of Supernormal Pictures, to submit herself to a series of tests and experiments. He had supplied Mrs Deane with a packet of photographic glass-plates two weeks before the tests for 'pre-magnetisation'. (Derived, perhaps, from mesmerism's theory of 'animal magnetism', this process involved keeping the plates close to the medium's body). On development, the portraits Mrs Deane took held the faces of psychic extras swathed in either chiffon-like, or cottonwool-like surrounds.

¹² F. W. Warrick, *Experiments in Psychics: Practical Studies in Direct Writing, Supernormal Photography, and other phenomena mainly with Mrs Ada Emma Deane*, London, Rider and Co, Paternoster House, 1939.

"It appears", Barlow reported, "as though the plates in some peculiar way became impregnated with the sensitive's aural or psychic emanations". The psychic extras had a flat appearance, which led Barlow to suggest, "I do not think the lens had anything to do with the formation of the psychic images which appear to have been printed on the photographic plate". Closely examining the plates Barlow found signs that the shape of the plate-holder's guiding channels had been exposed twice onto the edges of the plates. To him this was consistent with a psychic double exposure where the plate was, indeed, exposed twice: once to the normal spectrum through the lens, and once again at some other indeterminate point in the process when the wafer-thin space between the dark-slide of the plate-holder and the surface of the plate became filled with a psychic light, imprinting the psychic image. Barlow also noticed that some psychic extras were exactly duplicated, although the arrangement of their diaphanous surrounds had altered; to him this suggested that somehow the psychic images had been kept and used again by the mysterious operators from the Other Side of the Veil.

A final photograph, taken just before they said goodbye, confirmed for him that he had discovered in Mrs Deane an extraordinary phenomenon. Using his own half-plate camera, and his own photographic plate, Barlow took a group portrait of himself and his wife, along with Mrs and Miss Deane, arranging and then at the last moment rearranging the group himself. During their stay the mediums had mentioned several times that their spirit 'guides' had promised to be with them. After exposure he immediately developed the plate and was delighted to see that the beautiful guides of the 'sensitives' were to be seen on the negative and in correct relation to the sitters: 'Bessie', Mrs Deane's guide appeared right above her head; whilst 'Stella', the guide of Miss Deane appeared above hers. To Barlow the manifest beauty of this psychic picture was in itself wonderfully evidential.¹³

¹³ F. Barlow, 'Psychic Photographs, Interesting Experiments with a New Sensitive', *The Two Worlds*, 19 November 1920.



The spirit guides 'Stella' and 'Bessie' along with Mrs Barlow, Mr Fred Barlow, Miss Violet Deane, and Mrs Ada Deane, 1920. Barlow Collection, British Library.

If Barlow was seeking any further proof that Mrs Deane was genuine he found it a year later in August 1921. In the interim his father had died, and in the last solemn moment of his father's earthly life Barlow's repeated but unspoken cry was: "Father, if it is possible,

come back and prove to us that you still live." Barlow's young female cousin was visiting the family, and at a home séance her Uncle Harry, Barlow's father, manifested himself and told her, "Don't return home yet – stay on a little longer!". The following day Mrs Deane and her family arrived to spend their August holidays with the Barlows. After a short religious service Barlow's cousin, who had taken the spirit's suggestion and decided to stay on, was photographed by Mrs Deane. On one of the plates they secured as an extra a likeness of Uncle Harry, unlike any existing photograph, but clear and distinct and immediately recognised by all of the family as very similar to how he had appeared during the last moments of his earthly life. Barlow concluded: "Our would-be critics are silenced! How can they be otherwise in face of perfect proof, such as this, which week by week is steadily accumulating?"¹⁴

A World Distraught with Sorrow

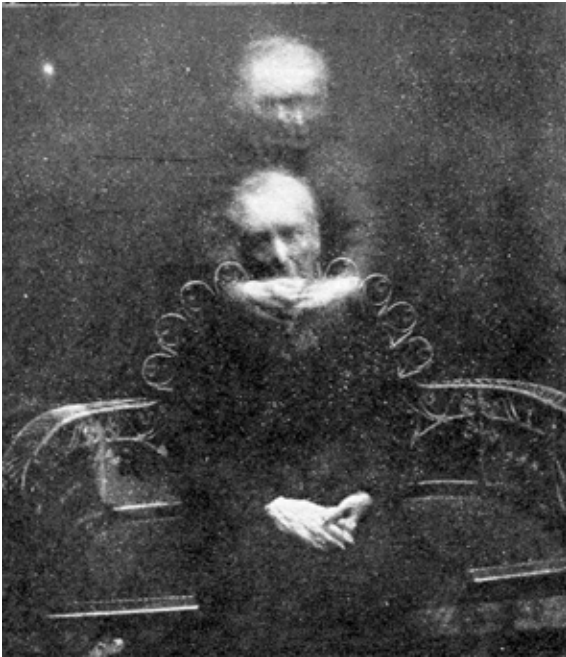
Mrs Deane did have her detractors, though. By this stage she had joined William Hope in offering sittings for one guinea each at the British College of Psychic Science in West London. The satirical newspaper *John Bull* sent two anonymous investigators to a sitting. They had refused to send in their plates for pre-magnetisation and didn't receive any clear extras. But, amazingly, Mrs Deane agreed to give them some plates which she had already pre-magnetised. They immediately took these to the photographic manufacturer Ilford who examined them and confirmed that they had been pre-exposed to light in a plate-holder. The paper headlined with: AMAZING SPIRIT CAMERA FRAUDS, PSYCHIC EXPERIMENTER CAUGHT RED HANDED IN TRANSPARENT DECEPTION AND TRICKERY.

The reporter described the experience of a psychic sitting with Mrs Deane:

We were asked to sit on a wicker settee before a dark screen or background. Then, handing us each a hymn book, a hymn was selected and sung. At the close of this Mrs Deane commenced to sing vigorously *We Shall Meet on the Beautiful Shore*, and intimated that we should 'join in'. We did so, but I must confess that the reverence usually associated with the singing of sacred verse was difficult to maintain. The

¹⁴ F. Barlow, 'Psychic Photography. Perfect Proof', *Light*, 20 August 1921.

broad daylight; Mrs Deane's somewhat shrill voice; the absence of any accompaniment to the singing; the business like appearance of the studio; all of these things were entirely opposed to the creation of a 'spiritual atmosphere' such as one would regard as being most essential when dealing with the 'living dead'. Mrs Deane then collected our slides in her hands, placing one at the top and one at the bottom. She instructed us to place our hands in a similar manner over hers, and in this position we recited the Lords Prayer. The next minute she was bustling about the studio arranging the camera and ourselves, and as soon as we were focussed six different exposures were made, each on a separate plate and each plate in a separate slide.¹⁵



Self portrait of Mrs Deane, with psychic extra, taken at the British College of Psychic Science, C1921. Warrick, *Experiments in Psychics: Practical Studies in Direct Writing, Supernormal Photography, and other phenomena mainly with Mrs Ada Emma Deane*, London, Rider and Co, Paternoster House, 1939, frontispiece.

Other debunkers were also on to Mrs Deane. The Society for Psychical Research had been established by a group of scientists in 1882. Although enthralled by the possibilities of psychic phenomena, they held themselves aloof from the religious enthusiasms of the Spiritualists and styled themselves as scientifically impartial. They devoted much time and energy to examining and debunking Spiritualist mediums. In the 1920s they were

¹⁵ B. W. Charles Pilley, *John Bull*, 17 December 1921.

large enough to employ a professional research officer, Eric Dingwall, who in 1921 sent an anonymous sitter, a Mrs Creasy, to Mrs Deane. When the British College of Psychic Science confirmed her appointment and requested she send in her plates for pre-magnetisation their letter advised: "The plate should not be wrapped in a metal box or cotton wool as both these materials seem to be impervious to magnetising and a careful sealing of a cardboard box is obviously quite as sufficient a precaution against possible fraud as yards of cotton wool and metal boxing."¹⁶ On this occasion the hymn sung was *Blest are the Pure in Heart* chosen, according to Mrs Deane, because it was short. She exposed the plates long enough to allow her to step to one side of the camera, fold her hands, put her head slightly to one side and close her eyes for a moment or two. The plates were exposed by lifting the black cloth from over the lens and replacing it after Mrs Deane had had her little rest. The result was inconclusive and Mrs Creasy was unable to detect any fraud, but she left, "with a lively desire to try again to circumvent the wily lady".¹⁷

The Occult Committee of the Magic Circle, an exclusive group of stage magicians and conjurers, also attempted to expose fraudulent mediums as a way of generating publicity for their own abilities in illusionism. They tested Mrs Deane on February 1922 and found that a box of plates they sent in for pre-magnetisation had been tampered with. Shortly afterward Eric Dingwall himself made an appointment to visit Mrs Deane, accompanied by a Mrs Osmaston. He elaborately sealed the package of plates he sent in for pre-magnetisation, dyeing the ends of the cotton with invisible ink, lightly gluing sable hairs across the folds of paper and pricking aligned pinholes through the layers of paper. On their arrival for the appointment, however, they found that the packet had not been opened. They opened the packet themselves and loaded the plate-holders themselves, before giving them to Mrs Deane. But, Dingwall observed, Mrs Deane had ample opportunity to switch the plate-holders as she then proceeded across the room and thrust her hands, with the plate-holders, into her capacious handbag in order to retrieve her prayer book for the first hymn.

¹⁶ British College of Psychic Science, Letter to Mrs Creasy, 1921, Deane Medium File, Society for Psychical Research Archive, Cambridge University Library.

¹⁷ Mrs Creasy, Letter to Eric Dingwall, 1921, Deane Medium File.

Although Dingwall was quickly convinced that Mrs Deane was a fraud, he was unable to convince the Spiritualists. Mrs Deane visited Sir Oliver Lodge on his estate and stayed there for three nights taking several psychic photographs with the aid of one of Lodge's trusted assistants. The results were so successful that Lodge offered Mrs Deane a substantial fee to stay near his estate for several months to undergo more experiments. But, because she had three children to look after in London, she had to decline. What had ultimately convinced Lodge of Mrs Deane's power were the comments that the spirit of Raymond made about his experiments on Mrs Deane. These remarks, which showed a clear knowledge of what went on in the experiments, and also identified who the extras were meant to be, were made at two independent London séances. "To get such a result", Lodge patiently reasoned with the sceptical Dingwall, "we should have to assume that both Mrs Leonard and another and amateur lady medium were in the trick in collusion with Mrs Deane."¹⁸

The Spiritualists' other big gun, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, also supported Mrs Deane against her exposure by the Magic Circle:

The person attacked is a somewhat pathetic and forlorn figure among all these clever tricksters. She is a little elderly charwoman, a humble white mouse of a person, with her sad face, her frayed gloves, and her little handbag which excites the worst suspicions in the minds of her critics.¹⁹

¹⁸ Sir Oliver Lodge, Letter to Eric Dingwall, 1922, Deane Medium File

¹⁹ A. C. Doyle, *The Case for Spirit Photography*, London, Hutchinson and Co, 1922, p53.



Mrs Ada Deane. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with unidentified psychic extra, C1922. Barlow Collection, British Library.

He sat for Mrs Deane himself and got a female face smiling from an ectoplasmic cloud above his left shoulder. The plate she used wasn't his, so the image could have been easily faked. However Doyle chose to believe it was genuine because he had already been incontrovertibly convinced by the well publicised evidence of a sitting that Mrs Deane had had earlier that year – the so called Cushman Case. Dr Allerton Cushman was the director of the National Laboratories in Washington. He had suffered the loss of his daughter Agnes, but got back in touch with her through automatic writing. Her spirit agreed to cooperate in trying to get an image of herself back across from the Other Side. He came to London and immediately went to the British College of Psychic Science without an appointment or introduction. When he arrived he found Mrs Deane in the act of leaving. But he persuaded her to give a sitting and, then and there, he obtained a photograph of his dead daughter which was, he declared, unlike any existing one, but more vital and characteristic than any taken in life. To Doyle this was, "the very finest result which I know of in psychic photography".²⁰

The Spiritualist press was peppered with other similar accounts of Mrs Deane's abilities. For instance, Mr W. T. Lingwood-Smith, a photographer and fingerprint expert from the South Australian Criminal Identification Department, travelled to London with his wife and sat with Mrs Deane. He was present in the darkroom as she developed the plate, which revealed an image of his father who had died many years previously without ever being photographed. He pronounced her genuine. Another American spiritualist, Dr Carrington, sat with Mrs Deane and during the exposure mentally willed a shaft of white light to appear from his right shoulder. It did, surmounted by a form that reminded him of a cabbage. During a later sitting his friend, a Miss M, sat out of range of the camera during the exposure. She occupied herself by looking intently at her own hand and admiring her new ring which had just been given to her. On development a female hand was discovered floating in an ectoplasmic cloud above Carrington's head.

Another Spiritualist believer, Mr F. W. Fitzsimons, also couldn't understand how such a simple, earnest soul, who had brought comfort and joy to thousands of sorrowing hearts, could be periodically attacked by sceptics and accused of cheating her clients with elaborate sleight-of-hand tricks. He visited Mrs Deane at her home and discovered the old lady busily washing a number of pedigree puppies. He found Mrs Deane to be a cheery, pleasant faced old soul, simple and uneducated in the ways and evils of the world of men, and with the hallmark of absolute honesty imprinted on her face. He could have talked dogs with her all afternoon, but finally she bustled off to wash her hands, slip off her overalls, and get out her rickety old tripod and camera. On another visit Fitzsimons found that his appointment time clashed with that of a sad, care-worn-looking man in the garb of a clergyman (appointment clashes weren't uncommon with Mrs Deane). The clergyman was clutching a psychic photograph of his recently deceased wife that had been taken by the spirit photographer William Hope.

"My wife and I had been married twenty years, and we were childless", he explained, "she was all I lived for. Recently she died, and my religion has given me no comfort or solace. I was in despair, and grew resentful against God. A friend told me about faces of deceased

people appearing on photographs. I had four exposures made. Two were blanks, one had the psychic face of someone I did not recognise, and the other held that of my wife, and here it is."

"Can such a thing be true?", he asked Fitzsimons, tears gathering in his eyes, "To me it seems impossible, yet I succeeded in getting the picture of my wife."

"If such a thing be true, why does not the suffering, anguished world know about them?", he cried.

"Because", Fitzsimons answered, "people as a whole are steeped in materialism, self-conceit, ignorance, intolerance and bigotry".²¹

The indefatigable Dingwall kept on Mrs Deane's tail however. He suspected that Mrs Deane's brother, who was a professional photographer and who had initially taught her amateur photography, might be supplying her with the photographed heads she would need to manufacture fake spirit extras. He found out who employed the brother and wrote to them asking to look through the firm's old proof sheets. The head of the firm politely declined, but was nonetheless intrigued enough, and ambivalent about Spiritualism enough, to suggest:

Perhaps I could obtain a sitting with Mrs Deane, she need not know who I am and if she is genuine she can perhaps produce the image of my boy who I lost in the war, on the other hand I may be able to detect the fraud, in which case I would do my utmost to expose it.²²

Experiments in Psychics

Dingwall had no more success in convincing another psychic researcher, F. W. Warrick, that she was a fraud. Warrick was the wealthy chairman of a large London firm of wholesale druggists who became progressively obsessed by Mrs Deane, and her predominantly female household. Over eighteen months from 1923 to 1924 Warrick visited Mrs Deane's house twice a week for personal sittings during which she exposed over 400 plates, mostly of Warrick himself. Mrs Deane's ingenuous personality

²¹ F. W. Fitzsimons, *Opening the Psychic Door: Thirty Years Experiences*, London, Hutchinson & Co, 1933, p241.

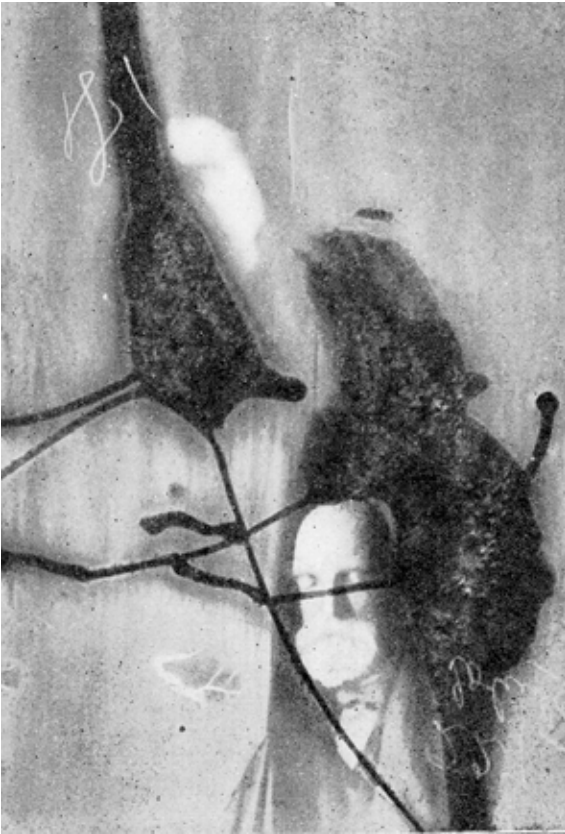
²² Mr Beaufort, Letter to Eric Dingwall, 1922, Deane Medium File.

immediately convinced him that her psychic powers were real, a view he never wavered from even after 1400 inconclusive experiments with her. He assured Dingwall, "She makes no profession of honesty, but she is just honest." He told Dingwall:

Mrs Deane is very friendly towards me. I now know her family well and have entree to their kitchen and scullery. I am perfectly convinced that Mrs D practices no fraud. I admire her character and the sturdy independence of her spirit. She is not 'out for money'.²³

Nonetheless Warrick imposed increasingly rigorous conditions on his experiments, cunningly sealing the packets of plates he gave to Mrs Deane for pre-magnetisation, and insisting on using his own camera and, most importantly, plate-holders. Although, as he admitted to Dingwall, the imposition of these stringent conditions resulted in the departure of the veiled extras, he determined to go on as long as Mrs Deane was willing, and his opinion of her remained the same. He switched his attention from the extras to the multitude of 'freakmarks' – chemical smudges and smears, and bursts of light – which appeared on her plates. These further investigations were also fruitless, but they did eventually lead him to undertake another 600 inconclusive thought transference experiments on Mrs Deane over the next three years. These tested her ability to write letters on sealed slates and to make marks on pieces of cartridge paper placed against her body. For the purposes of these experiments Warrick had Mrs Deane and her family move into a house he owned. One room was reserved for séances and a darkroom was built into it, as well as a small sealed cabinet for the thought transference experiments. Whilst Mrs Deane sat in the cabinet with her hands imprisoned in stocks, Warrick crouched outside and attempted to transmit his thought images to her.

²³ F. W. Warrick, Letter to Eric Dingwall, 1923, Deane Medium File.



Mrs Ada Deane. Example of 'freakmarks' on an image of F. W. Warrick, exposed and developed by Mrs Deane, c1925. Warrick, 1939, p33.

Warrick scrupulously recorded all of his experiments. He eventually compiled and published them, along with his extended but inconclusive reasoning as to what they might mean, in a monumental 400 page book, *Experiments in Psychics*. Warrick reasoned that the disappearance of Mrs Deane's extras as more stringent conditions were applied might be because his own desire for scientific proof was putting off Mrs Deane's Invisible Operators; or perhaps his excessive precautions might be producing a subconscious inhibitory resentment in Mrs Deane herself. This view was confirmed for him at the weekly private séances he attended with the Deane household. At these Mrs Deane fell into a trance and spoke in the direct voice of her various spirit guides. At one of the séances Warrick asked a spirit guide Hulah—a young girl—about the absence of the extras, she replied that Warrick, "worried the medium". At a later séance another of Mrs Deane's spirit guides, the American Indian Brown Wolf, also confirmed that Warrick himself was the cause of the non-success of his own experiments.



F. W. Warrick. A psychic materialisation at one of Mrs Deane's home séances, 1924. Warrick, 1939, p231.

Despite these commentaries from the Other Side, Warrick's examination of the evidence of the photographic plates themselves still forced him to the conclusion that some of the extras which she had previously produced, and still produced with other sitters, could be nothing else than pictures cut from newspapers and photographed against pads of cotton wool against a black background. But, his inexorable reasoning continued, how could anybody, let alone someone as conspicuously guileless and simple hearted as Mrs Deane, produce such obvious fakes when they were sure to attract opprobrium. Yet someone, or something had done it. The question was, who? Theoretically the Invisible Operators could as easily appropriate a newspaper picture from this side of the Veil to use as a psychic image-mould, as prepare an original image-mould on the Other Side. Alternatively they could easily induce trance states in Mrs Deane. Therefore the only answer he could possibly come to was that the Invisible Operators were producing psychic effects that looked like fakes, or inducing Mrs Deane to fake some of her psychic photographs whilst in a trance, out of sheer mischievousness.



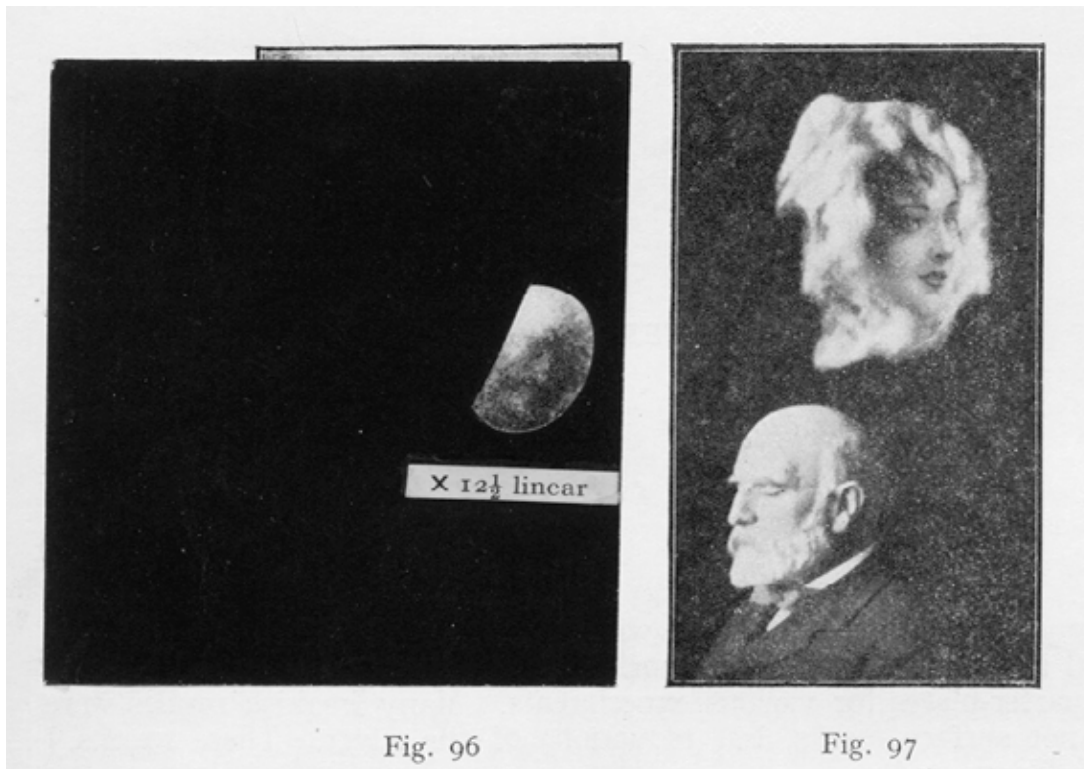
Photographs taken by Mrs Ada E. Deane 1920-1923, Dozen No. 36. Album printed and assembled by F. W. Warrick. Cambridge University Library.

Nonetheless Warrick's obsessive fascination with Mrs Deane's extras remained. She gave him access to her negative collection and he had 1000 of them printed up and bound, in grids of twelve per page, into four large albums, embossed with her name, which he presented to her. He asked the Society for Psychical Research to be responsible for their eventual preservation because, "the prints may be of great value – and may be sought after the world over for the purposes of study. They are unique in the world."²⁴

He scrutinised and worried over each portrait and extra. In November 1923 Mrs Deane took a portrait of Warrick on a plate that hadn't been subject to his precautions against faking. An extra of a young woman duly appeared. Warrick thought he saw a peculiarity in the forehead of the extra and had it enlarged. Wandering over the enlargement with a

²⁴ F. W. Warrick, Letter to Eric Dingwall, 1924, Deane Medium File. These albums are now in the Society for Psychical Research Archive at the Cambridge University Library. They formed the basis of the exhibition *Faces of the Living Dead*, the appendix to this thesis.

strong lens he was astonished to see, in the pupil of the right eye of the extra, the image of his late father. Although indistinct it had a certain expression of the mouth which was strongly reminiscent of him. He had the eye further enlarged and the image was recognised by many people who knew his father. He had a commercial artist make a drawing of the image, and that too was recognised. He then had the eye enlarged a third time by a photo-microscopist who also testified that the image was the head of a man.



Warrick, 1939, p45.

Eventually Warrick's exhausting experiments and exhausted reasoning led him to the conclusion that Mrs Deane's extras weren't portraits of the dead at all, but mental pictures, reproductions of memory images fixed in some as yet undiscovered mental substance (which he called mnemoplasm), held in vast banks within ourselves but also accessible to an Invisible Operator (or an inhabitant of the fourth dimension, who he called a tetramet) through the mediumship of Mrs Deane. In a phone call to the Society for Psychical Research in 1954, when he was 95 years old, he left his final reasoning on the subject:

All psychic photographs are 'memory pictures exteriorised' and in the future doctors will be able to read the brain in post mortems and thus see individuals' memories.²⁵

Unseen Men at the Cenotaph

Mrs Deane's moment of greatest notoriety came in 1924 through her involvement with Estelle Stead, another eminence of the Spiritualist movement who ran a Spiritualist church and library called the Stead Bureau. Estelle Stead was the daughter of the W. T. Stead who had been photographed in the 1890s with the 'thought mould' extra of his spirit guide Julia. Stead was clairvoyant, but this faculty didn't prevent him from booking a passage on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*. Shortly after he drowned, however, his spirit reappeared at a London séance and continued his Spiritualist activities as busily as ever. He transmitted the posthumous experience of the passengers on the *Titanic* through automatic writing to his daughter, who published them as *The Blue Island*.



Mrs Ada Deane. Estelle Stead with the spirit of her father W. T. Stead. 1920s

²⁵ F. W. Warrick, Note of telephone call, 1954, Deane Medium File.

Towards the end of 1921 the discarnate W. T. Stead told his daughter, through automatic writing, that a group of 'Tommies' and 'Hearts of Oak Men' (sailors) who had passed on in the Great War had been prepared, and if she carried out their directions they had every hope of getting their image onto a photographic plate. The spirits requested that Mrs Deane take a picture of the platform during the Two Minutes Silence of the Stead Bureau's Armistice Day service. In the resulting photograph an arch of fifteen men appeared surmounted by an American Indian Chief, thought to represent Mrs Deane's spirit guide Brown Wolf.

A year later Estelle Stead received another 'wireless message' from her father that they should arrange for Mrs Deane to take a photograph in Whitehall during the Two Minutes Silence that year. A group of spiritualists were placed in the crowd to produce a 'barrage of prayer' and so concentrate the psychic energy, and Mrs Deane took two exposures from a high wall over the crowd, one just before the Silence, and one for the entire two minutes of the Silence. When the plates were developed the first showed a mass of light over the praying Spiritualists, and in the second what was described by the discarnate W. T. Stead as a "river of faces" and an "aerial procession of men" appeared to float dimly above the crowd.



Mrs Ada Deane. Ectoplasmic spirit energy amongst the crowd before the Two Minutes Silence at the London Cenotaph, 1922. Barlow Collection, British Library



Mrs Ada Deane. Spirit extras above the crowd during the Two Minutes Silence at the London Cenotaph, 1922. Barlow Collection, British Library

Spirit messages received from the Other Side gave further details about how the images were produced:

Material is used from the active body of the medium to build up the picture. The material is either impressed by the communicator directly himself, or moulds are made beforehand. The armistice photographs were probably prepared beforehand in groups and either impressed upon the plates before, during, or after the Two Minutes Silence.²⁶

The discarnate W. T. Stead added that there was always a difficulty in the way of the communicators who were working to press the impressions into the plates. This was because on the spirit side there was such competition for results that the crowded atmosphere made it very difficult to use the medium.

Conan Doyle took this image with him on his second tour of America, which featured an entire lantern slide lecture on Spirit Photography. In April 1923 he lectured to a packed house at Carnegie Hall. When the image was flashed upon the screen there was a moment of silence and then gasps rose and spread over the room, and the voices and sobs of women could be heard. The spirit of a deceased mother of a fallen soldier, who was keen to tell other bereaved mothers what had become of their sons, suddenly possessed a woman in the audience who screamed out through the darkness, "Don't you see them?"

²⁶ E. Stead, *Faces of the Living Dead*, Manchester, Two Worlds Publishing Company, 1925, p22.

Don't you see their faces?", and then fell into a trance.²⁷ The following day the *New York Times* described the picture on the screen:

Over the heads of the crowd in the picture floated countless heads of men with strained grim expressions. Some were faint, some were blurs, some were marked out distinctly on the plate so that they might have been recognised by those who knew them. There was nothing else, just these heads, without even necks or shoulders, and all that could be seen distinctly were the fixed, stern, look of men who might have been killed in battle.²⁸

Two more photographs were taken during the following year's Silence. Although the heads of the Fallen were impressed upside down on Miss Violet Deane's plate, the pictures were circulated through the Spiritualist community. Many people recognised their loved ones amongst the extras, and those on the Other Side often drew attention to their presence in the group. H. Dennis Bradley, for instance, was in contact with the spirit of his brother-in-law who told him, through a direct voice medium, that he was, "on the right-hand side of the picture, not very low down". On the following day Bradley obtained a copy of the photograph and, to his astonishment, among the fifty spirit heads visible in the picture he found one in the position described which, under the microscope, revealed a surprising likeness to his deceased brother-in-law.²⁹ A Californian woman, Mrs Connell, received a copy of the picture out of the blue from a friend. Intuitively feeling that it might be meant for her particularly, she got out her ouija board to communicate with her fallen son David. She asked him if he was in the picture. "Yes", he said, "to the right of Kitchener". She found Lord Kitchener's face and there, to the right of it, was her son.³⁰

²⁷ K. Jones, *Conan Doyle and the Spirits: The Spiritualist career of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, The Aquarian Press, 1989.

²⁸ 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at Carnegie Hall', *Harbinger of Light*, July, 1923.

²⁹ N. Fodor, *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science*, London, Arthurs Press Limited, 1933, p80.

³⁰ Mrs Connell, Letter to Society for Psychical Research, 1925, Deane Medium File.



Examples of recognised faces from Mrs Deane's Cenotaph photographs. E. Stead, *Faces of the Living Dead*, Manchester, Two Worlds Publishing Company, 1925.

During 1924 there was much excitement on both sides of the Veil in the lead up to Armistice Day. Estelle Stead was continually getting messages about preparations on the Other Side, where there seemed to be a great deal of training and grouping and other excitements. She was even told to give up smoking and meat to enhance her psychic sensitivity. At Mrs Deane's own private séances there was also much discussion amongst her various spirit guides about the upcoming event. Hulah said that the spirits were trying

to arrange for a border of nurses' heads to frame the boys. And on 21 October the guides requested that there be no more sittings until after Armistice Day to store up power.

Mrs Deane and her daughter took two more photographs of the Cenotaph at Whitehall during the Two Minutes Silence. By this time Mrs Deane no longer required the plates beforehand for pre-magnetisation, and Mrs Stead supplied her and her daughter with special, factory sealed plates on the day. The *Daily Sketch* beat its rival the *Daily Graphic* to get the rights to the pictures from Estelle Stead and reproduce them in their pictorial section. Initially the paper took an ambivalent approach to the images. The caption simply asked of the unseen faces: "Whose are they?".³¹

The paper thought it had answered its own question with its front page story two days later: HOW THE DAILY SKETCH EXPOSED 'SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY', 'GHOSTS' VERY MUCH ALIVE, FACES OF POPULAR SPORTING IDENTITIES IDENTIFIED IN ARMISTICE DAY PHOTOGRAPH. It reproduced the portraits of thirteen footballers and boxers, matching with the faces in the Armistice Day photograph. It was no longer ambivalent:

The exposure of truth in regard to alleged spirit photography, which deeply interests and affects multitudes of people, would not have been possible if the *Daily Sketch* had not, at the risk of some obloquy to itself, submitted the pictures to the rigorous searchlight of publicity, and thereby set at rest the minds of thousands who at various times have been tempted to believe in 'spirit' photography.³²

³¹ 'UNSEEN MEN AT CENOTAPH', *Daily Sketch*, London, 13 November 1924, p2.

³² 'HOW THE DAILY SKETCH EXPOSED 'SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY'', *Daily Sketch*, London, 15 November 1924, p1.



Daily Sketch, 15 November 1924. p1.

But, Estelle Stead protested, if anybody wanted to deliberately perpetrate a trick, the last thing they would do would be to use such easily recognised images. Besides, a person as simple as Mrs Deane would have no idea how to prepare such a picture. The paper found Mrs Deane herself to be unflappable. This little grey-haired middle-aged woman was the least disturbed person of the lot. Unlike the others she said little but answered all questions put to her with a practised ease that bespoke an unusually capable woman. She simply refused to accept that the sportsmen's faces were the same as those in her print.

Three days later one of the paper's staff photographers duplicated Mrs Deane's effects under the same test conditions. He explained how he had secreted a positive transparency of copied faces into the front of his plate-holder through which his ordinary plate was exposed (thus offering one explanation for the extraordinarily long exposure times of Mrs Deane.) The paper also published some readers' views on the incident. "Does it not appear dastardly cruel and harsh", one reader wrote, "that individuals, especially women, should resort to these spirit photographs, thereby ridiculing these heroes of war, and perhaps causing sorrow and distress in many homes?" Another reader agreed, "when it comes to monkeying about with something as sacred as the Two Minutes Silence you are going just

a step too far and are guilty of something more than merely bad taste. That certain people should claim to have recognised some of these spirit faces merely goes to prove what remarkable tricks imagination may play on us."³³

The next day the paper published a letter from Conan Doyle defending Mrs Deane. Like her, he refused to accept that there was a likeness between the faces in the first place, and like Estelle Stead doubted that she had the technical ability to rig up a fake photograph in any case. Finally he cited the Cushman case where Mrs Deane had produced a recognised extra without the chance of any preparation. "Taking all these things together", he concluded, "I think that her complete innocence is manifest."³⁴

That day the paper also challenged Mrs Deane to produce spirit photographs using its equipment and facilities. Not surprisingly, she refused. "She is a charlatan and a fraud", the paper claimed, "who has already too long imposed on the sorrows and hopes of those who lost sons and husbands and brothers in the war."³⁵ Mrs Deane replied:

You challenge me to do a psychic photograph under your conditions. Do you not understand that I cannot do one under any conditions? They do not come from me. They come from some power which works through me over which I have no control. My results are often very different from what I expect. Such a power may work to console the afflicted folk. But I doubt if money would tempt it to come at the bidding of a newspaper man.³⁶

The discarnate W. T. Stead seemed very pleased with the newspaper furore. "We want to impress the Crowd", he said, "it is all important – that is what our work at the Cenotaph is for." Any publicity was good publicity for the cause.

³³ 'SPIRITS' WHILE YOU WAIT', *Daily Sketch*, London, 18 November 1924, p2.

³⁴ A. C. Doyle, 'SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE CRITICISM OF THE DAILY SKETCH EXPOSURE', *Daily Sketch*, London, 19 November 1924, p2.

³⁵ '£1000 TEST FOR MEDIUM BIG SUM FOR CHARITY IF CENOTAPH CLAIMANT CAN TAKE 'SPIRIT PICTURES UNDER FAIR CONDITIONS, WILL MRS DEANE ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE', *Daily Sketch*, London, 19 November 1924.

³⁶ 'SPIRIT' PHOTOGRAPHER RUNS AWAY', £1,000 CHALLENGE DECLINED, Mrs Deane a Charlatan and a Fraud: Former Charwoman who Duped War Bereaved, 'Spirit' photography test refused', *Daily Sketch*, London, 21 November 1924, pp1-2.

As in the case of the 1923 photographs many people claimed to recognise their loved ones in the photographs. Conan Doyle saw his nephew, and Mr Pratt from Burnley saw his son Harry who had been killed in action in 1918. "This knocks the *Daily Sketch* argument on the head", he wrote, "for if only one is claimed, the case for genuine spirit photography is made out."

"I Do No More Understand How Or Why Than You Do"

After this incident Mrs Deane was no longer as publicly active, but she continued her spirit photography for at least another ten years. When Arthur Conan Doyle died in 1930 his spirit returned immediately at séances conducted by several different mediums. His spirit manifested itself regularly at a London séance circle. Speaking in direct voice through the medium the spirit said: "I am endeavouring to give you a proof on a photographer's plate", the medium turned to a sitter named Mrs Caird, "and you are very necessary". The following day Mrs Caird made a hasty appointment with Mrs Deane, where she duly received an image of Conan Doyle as an extra.³⁷ Doyle's face also featured as the centrepiece of an arrangement of Fallen Soldiers in Mrs Deane's Armistice Day photograph of 1931.

When Estelle Stead's mother, W. T. Stead's widow, died in 1933 she also chose to return as an extra on a Mrs Deane plate. Her spirit was asked to explain the process, and although she professed to know little about the details of the process, her account is the only one that differs markedly from the accepted model of prepared moulds being impressed into the medium's photo-ectoplasm. The technical analogy for this particular spirit's experience of psychic photography is not so much the block maker's psychic printing press as the photographer's psychic studio. Her guides told her to look into a bright light and to think of those on Earth who loved her. She did so and found herself in the room with her daughter. But apart from that she could not remember taking any part in producing the

³⁷ I. Cooke, 'Thy Kingdom Come.....': A presentation of the Whence Why and Wither of Man, A record of messages received from one of the White Brotherhood, believed to have been known on Earth as Arthur Conan Doyle, London, Wright & Brown, nd.

photograph. This spirit may not be the best witness, however, since she also said that one of the first things she had to learn in the spirit world was to do as she was told, and that it was wise to obey those who knew so much more than she did about life in spirit realms.³⁸

At about the same time as she was photographing the spirit of W. T. Stead's mother, Mrs Deane's very first sponsor in Spiritualism, the former secretary of the Society for the Study of Supernormal Pictures Fred Barlow, created a kafuffle by publicly repudiating his earlier passionate belief in, and promotion of, William Hope and Mrs Deane as genuine spirit photographers. Writing simultaneously in the sober pages of the Society for Psychical Research *Proceedings* and in the popular Spiritualist magazine *Light*, he now accused them both of fraud.³⁹

Mrs Deane's remaining staunch friend and patron, F. W. Warrick, asked her what she thought of Barlow's sudden apostasy. Mrs Deane reminded him of the photograph whose self-evident beauty had most impressed Barlow in 1920, and like the Cushman case seemed impossible to fake.

It was a sorry day for me when I discovered this photographic power. My life has lost all its ease and serenity. Before that I was respected and happy in my work, though poor; and to-day I am poor and look back on twelve years of worry and trouble and am a cock-shy for any newspaper penny-a-liner. I cannot understand Mr Barlow now saying that every Extra face that appeared on plates used by me has been put there by me fraudulently. In those days I was unsuspecting and not resentful of inquiry nor fearful of accusations. I had no knowledge then of the length the sceptic will go in his treatment of an unfortunate medium, as I am called. I put no obstacle in Mr Barlow's way and was willing to accommodate myself to his every wish. In addition, I would call your particular attention to the following incident which Mr Barlow published and no-one can explain away. Two large Extras appeared on [his own] plate, one above me which I recognised as my

³⁸ *The Greater World*, 11 March 1933.

³⁹ F. Barlow, 'Psychic Photography Debated: Major W.R. Rose and Mr Fred Barlow State Their Case Against William Hope's Work', *Light*, 19 May 1933. Fred Barlow, 'Report on an Investigation in Spirit Photography', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, XLI, March 1933.

'guide'. Now it is a curious fact, and Mr Barlow has published it, that I strongly pressed upon Mr Barlow to be allowed to be seated otherwise than he had placed me, but Mr Barlow would not permit the change; yet my 'guide' came above me in the picture. Surely this half-plate picture, taken on the spur of the moment and in Mr Barlow's house, cannot be questioned. Once again, Mr Warrick, I assure you I have never consciously deceived sitters; I admit that many of the results obtained through me (in a way I have not the least inkling of) have every appearance of having been produced by trickery but I do no more understand how or why than you do.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ F. W. Warrick, *Experiments in Psychics*, p310.

SEVEN

PHOTOPLASM

The sensitive photographic plate can register so much more than the retina of the human eye. That is why it is so valuable a material witness for the Truths of Spirit return – Lady Conan Doyle. 1931.¹

The authenticity of affect not effect

I am interested in the spirit photograph because, on the one hand, in the emotional effect it had on its audience and in the visceral connection with their absent loved ones which it gave them, it seems to confirm all that is most powerful about photography. However, on the other hand, in its structure and its execution and in its use of amateurish 'special effects', it seems to erode the very ontological foundations on which that photographic power is built. For me, therefore, the spirit photograph enables an, admittedly eccentric, critique of the normative epistemology of the twentieth-century photograph.

On one obvious level these elaborate explanations which the spiritualists came up with to explain the effects were their attempts to maintain belief in the face of what were more easily explainable as signs of fraud (flat looking extras, hard cut-out edges, the presence of half-tone dot screens, different lighting, etc). But in doing so they invented and sustained an extraordinarily compelling, moving, and poetic photographic system.

The complex theory of spirit photography sees the spirit photograph as a completely different thing to the ordinary photograph. The locus for the spiritualist system of photography is not the camera, the lens and the shutter. That technical assemblage, of a shutter vertically slicing a rectilinearly projected image, has been central to photographic

theory, with a direct lineage going back to the Renaissance. Instead, the locus for spiritualist photography was the sensitive photographic plate alone.

The process of making a spirit photograph is not that of 'snapping' an image of an anterior scene and thereby making a direct stencil from the Real; rather it is a process of activating the photographic emulsion as a soft, wet, labile membrane between two worlds—the living and the dead, experience and memory. The spirit photograph's emulsion is sensitised chemically by the application of developers, and magically by the meeting of hands and the melding of mutual memories. The resultant image is not the mute and inert residue of an optical process, decisively excised from time and space, but a hyper-sensitised screen which two images had reached out from opposite sides to touch, both leaving behind their imprint.

Scientifically inclined spiritualists, and the anti-spiritualist media alike, were obsessed with establishing whether the spirit photograph was either an authentic, or a fake, document of an anterior psychic phenomenon. But for the mediums themselves, and their sitters, this missed the point. Authenticity was not found in the photograph as document, but in the photograph as transactional object. The spirit photograph was a voodoo or votive object passed between spirit, medium and sitter in the private ritual of the portrait sitting. The authenticity of the psychic photograph was not based on how closely it laminated itself to an anterior event, but how strongly it effected affect in its users.

Sceptics at the time pointed out again and again that the process of photography was thoroughly familiar, and the phenomena of double exposure, montage, light leaking, and chemical fogging were well known to any knowledgable person. (Indeed popular theatre and cinema had long been reproducing spiritualist and séance illusions, and thereby exposing them as explicit mechanical and optical effects.²) Maddeningly for the sceptics, the spiritualists quite agreed with them. But, as they wearily replied time and time again,

¹ L. C. Doyle, 'My Husband's Return', *News Chronicle*, 7 April 1931, London.

² T. Gunning, 'Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, magic Theatre, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny', *Fugitive Images: From photography to Video*, P. Petro, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, p61. See also the Georges Melies film *A spiritualist Photographer*, 1903.

just because spirit photographs could be faked, didn't mean they were faked. Those on the Other Side had access to the same techniques as any Earth Plane photographer to manifest their presence.

The spiritualists were not concerned that the effects of the psychic photograph were shared by stage magicians or Hollywood films, or could be easily duplicated by fraudsters. In their ecumenical universe everybody—magicians, filmmakers, fraudsters, and the 'Mysterious Operators of the Invisible'—had access to the same effects, but they could not, ultimately, produce quite the same affects in an audience. Only the Mysterious Operators could personally deliver to each and every viewer his or her own personal uncanny experience.

The spiritualists certainly wanted their beliefs to be positively validated. They wanted them to be scientifically authentic, and that authenticity required evidence. And when they were absolutely compelled to recognise the face on a photographic plate as that of a departed loved one, that was their positive evidence. But, by its nature, this positive evidence, the conviction of recognition, could only manifest itself within the cocoon of their own previously formed belief and desire. The two reinforced each other, and no amount of scepticism was able to prise the couplet of recognition and belief apart.

The body and technology

The central Spiritualist tenet was that the human personality survived beyond bodily death. This belief downgraded the specificity, and the spatial and temporal obduracy, of the life lived within our bodies. Instead, Spiritualists valorised linkages: webs of connections, filial binds, and ties of mutual memory between people living and dead. Spiritualists, like all good early twentieth century modernists, were entranced by new technology, but they did not see technology as alien to the body. For them technology and the body interpenetrated each other, or interfaced with each other. For instance, in the early 1920s somebody invented the psychic telephone, in which an ordinary 1920s telephone was dismembered and a balloon filled with breath expelled from the lungs of a medium was attached to the telephone speaker's diaphragm. Supposedly the medium's

breath was able to pick up spiritual communications as vibrations and transfer them to the telephone.

New technology played a vital role in the spiritualist crusade. Like all technologists, spiritualists saw themselves as pioneers of a new historical epoch. The modern march of technology, with the spectrum being pushed in both directions towards both radio waves and x-rays, proved that there was a 'beyond' to human knowledge of unknowable extent which could be, and was being, advanced upon by scientific investigation.

The spiritualist idea that human consciousness could be disembodied in death, but then supernaturally transmitted and re-embodied within the cast or template of an image, is not such an astonishing one in a technological context where living human bodies were already being delaminated, doubled and dispersed, peeled apart and projected, by the wireless, the telegraph, the wire picture, the x-ray and the telephone. Spirits were early adopters of this new technology, using all of it to get in touch with the Earth Plane.

Poetic metaphors and positivist analogies

Besides spirit photography there were many other ways in which the dead made their continuing existence known to the living. Spirit guides acted as go-betweens, taking possession of the medium, speaking with her voice, and relaying messages from relatives and loved ones whilst she was in a trance. Spirits also moved planchettes or ouija boards to spell out messages letter by letter, or tapped in code. The uncanniness of new technology, where material opacity melts and the unique became multiplied, operated as both a poetic metaphor and a positivist analogy for spiritualist practices. Hence, for instance, Estelle Stead referred to messages received from her deceased father by automatic writing as wireless messages.

Besides the direct-voice trance-medium, automatic writing was the most common means of communication. This was done either in a complete trance or whilst semiconscious. Spiritualist theories of automatic writing didn't draw on surrealist models of inspiration, delirium or poetic suggestion, rather they drew on technological models of telecommunication. For instance his daughter describes the experience of William Howitt:

My father had not sat many minutes passive, holding a pencil in his hand upon a sheet of paper, ere something resembling an electric shock ran through his arm and hand; whereupon the pencil began to move in circles. The influence becoming stronger and ever stronger, moved not only the hand but the whole arm in a rotary motion, till the arm was at length raised, and rapidly – as if it had been the spoke of a wheel propelled by machinery – whirled irresistibly in a wide sweep, and at great speed, for some ten minutes, through the air. The effect of this rapid motion was felt by him in the muscles of the arm for some times afterwards. Then the arm being again at rest the pencil, in the passive fingers, began gently, but clearly and decidedly, to move.³

This was a mechanical model, seeing the medium as a kind of human telegraph machine. Within this model even infants could become automatic writers. Mr Wason, a well-known spiritualist from Liverpool, saw a six months old baby write: "I love this little child. God bless him. Advise his father to go back to London on Monday by all means – Susan." Celina, a child of three and a half, wrote: " I am glad to manifest through a charming little medium of three and a half who promises well. Promise me not to neglect her."

This direct machinic model of automatic writing was complemented by another model of collaborative amanuensis. This relied on a more complex quasi Freudian model of an inner and outer mind which, in an analogous way to the 'thought mould' and 'photoplasm' model of the spirit photograph, separated an imagistic notion of an essential 'thought message' out from the language and scriptography into which it was translated. When the psychic pioneer Frederick Myers died he continued to write from the Other Side through a medium called Miss Cummins. His discarnate spirit wrote:

The inner mind is very difficult to deal with from this side. We impress it with our message. We never impress the brain of the medium directly, that is out of the question. But the inner mind receives our message and sends it on to the brain. The

³ N Fodor, *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science*, London, Arthurs Press Limited, 1933, p26.

brain is a mere mechanism. The inner mind is like soft wax, it receives our thoughts, their whole content, but it must produce the words that clothe it.⁴

Another closely related assemblage⁵ of poetic metaphor and positivist analogy became the lantern slide screen. For instance a message psychically telegraphed from the discarnate W. T. Stead in 1917 asked people receiving thought messages from the Other Side to keep their minds blank, so the images projected were not obliterated:

[T]he living self in the unseen must flash itself on the living self in the seen. [T]he screen of the conscious mind must be bare of images, so that the active mind in the unseen can throw its images onto a clear surface... While the conscious mind incarnate is active it is busily picturing what it desires... The screen of the mind is full of these thought images, and the images received from us are blotted and indistinct, confused and dimmed.⁶

The assemblage of the screen was technically related to the unexposed photographic plate and to the cinema screen, but it also drew upon every individual Spiritualist's communal, but nonetheless intensely intimate, relationship with the lantern slide lecture. In 1917 in London Frank Hurley had placed himself at the forefront of the technology of showmanship by getting a special lantern made that used a 60 amp current to project an image a distance 24 metres without melting the colour lantern slide. Three years later Arthur Conan Doyle arrived in Adelaide to begin his lantern slide lecture circuit through Australia and a strange phenomenon occurred which he could only explain as a ghost inhabiting the machine itself.

I had shown a slide the effect of which depended upon a single spirit face appearing amid a crowd of others. This slide was damp, and as photos under these circumstances always clear from the edges when placed in the lantern, the

⁴ p256.

⁵ To Gilles Deleuze an assemblage is, "simultaneously and inseparably a machinic assemblage and an assemblage of enunciation". Jonathan Crary discusses modernity in terms of two related assemblages: the camera obscura and the stereoscope. See J. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1990, p31, and J. Crary, *Suspension of perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1999.

⁶Stead, Estelle, 'And Some of Them are Photographed', *Harbinger of Light*, February 1918.

whole centre was so thickly fogged that I was compelled to admit that I could not myself see the spirit face. Suddenly, as I turned away, rather abashed by my failure, I heard cries of "There it is", and looking up again I saw this single face shining out from the general darkness with so bright and vivid an effect that I never doubted for a moment that the operator was throwing a spotlight upon it. ... [N]ext morning Mr Thomas, the operator, who is not a Spiritualist, came in in great excitement to say that a palpable miracle had been wrought, and that in his great experience of thirty years he had never known a photo dry from the centre, nor, as I understood him, become illuminated in such a fashion.⁷

Spirit communicators kept pace with the thickening density of audio and visual technologies. Transmitted messages began to be received less as one-to-one psychic telegraphs, projections or impressions, and more as general psychic broadcasts. As the twentieth century progressed spiritual forces progressively revealed themselves to those inhabiting this side of the Veil in the temporarily legible patterning of chaotic matrices: from those who picked up transmissions from the dead in the static of radio receivers; to those who heard voices in the sound of tape hiss; to those who saw faces on their TV screens after the stations had shut down for the night.⁸

The theory of the spiritualist portrait

It is an important point that the theory of the spiritualist portrait does not conform to the more obvious model of the photographer's studio, with spirits manifesting themselves to be photographed in front of the camera. Rather the dominant model is the printer's press, or sculptor's foundry, where prepared moulds are filled with ectoplasm, or impressed into soft photoplasmic emulsion.

⁷ A. C. Doyle, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, London, Hodder and Staughton, 1921, p76-77.

⁸ These reports were amongst the stories which motivated the British artist Susan Hiller in her long term engagement with the power of the paranormal in contemporary experience. See, S. Hiller, *Psi Girls*, Sheffield, Site Gallery, 2000.

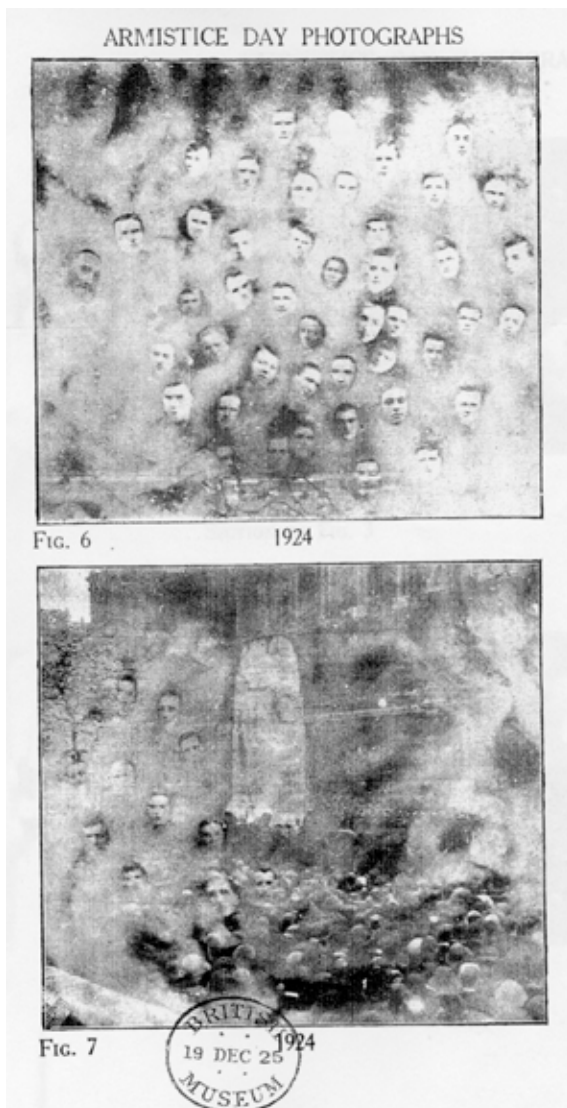


Albert von Schrenck-Notzing. The medium Eva C. 1911.

Photographic emulsion—creamy, gelatinous, sensitive to light, bathed in chemicals and cradled by hands—became poetically and technically related to the most mysterious, potent substance in the spiritualist's world: ectoplasm. Ectoplasm was definitely rooted in the materiality of the body, it was feminine, moist and labile and often smelt of the bodily fluids to which it was imagistically related to (because, in fact, it was usually chiffon secreted in the medium's vagina, or ingested by her before the séance). Researchers noted that the medium's body got lighter as the ectoplasm was extruded, and often the medium screamed if it was suddenly touched or exposed to light. Ectoplasm could form itself into shapes (in the nineteenth century it could even embody, or body forth, complete material spirits, such as Katie King, who would walk around the room and flirt with guests), but it could also act as an emulsion—receiving imprints or filling moulds. So this substance was not only a physical stage in a process of transubstantiation, but also a technological interface, a bio/techno diaphragm. As Lady Conan Doyle explained:

A photographic medium is one who gives out enough special ectoplasm ... for the Spirit folk to use in impressing their faces on the plate with the human sitter.⁹

⁹ L. C. Doyle, 'My Husband's Return', *News Chronicle*, 7 April 1931, London.



Mrs Deane's 1925 Cenotaph pictures as reproduced in E. Stead, *Faces of the Living Dead*, 1925.

A more elaborate description of this photoplasm was received in 1925 when, at her discarnate father's suggestion, Estelle Stead sent copies of Mrs Deane's two 1924 Cenotaph photographs (illustrated above) to the medium Mrs Travers-Smith asking her to submit them to her spirit guide Johannes, to get further technical comments from the Other Side about how the images were produced. He said, through the medium:

This (Fig 6) is an arrangement prepared beforehand from our side. The person who took this (Mrs Deane) must have been very easy to use. I see this mass of material has poured from her. It is as if smoke or steam were blown out of an engine. This material has made the atmosphere sufficiently clear to take the impress of the prepared mould which you see here. It is not as it would be if the

actual faces had pressed in on the medium's mind. A number of faces were wanted for this photograph, so a mould was prepared. The arrangement is unnatural and does not represent a crowd pressing through to the camera because it has all been carefully prepared beforehand. Examine the strange forms the black background takes on this picture (Fig 6). These black spaces are due to rents in the ectoplasm. It is blowing too thin in these spots. The impress is stretching upwards in irregular lines. It is a stream from the body of the medium which is pouring out as if it came from a syringe in which the holes are not place round, but in irregular lines. Of course the medium took part in the emotion of the day with the crowd, and the flow would be less regular. You can imagine that if a fluid like this comes from the medium's chest it must be effected by the breathing apparatus. The effect of this picture is not that of the usual background with a foreground. It is a background and a foreground which are overlapped by the stream which has issued like a vapour from the body of the medium. On the picture you see the vapour, you see the faces and the background which is black. What I want you to understand is that the background is ours as well as the foreground. It is all an arrangement from the vapour which is pulled from the body of medium, the actual place in which this was taken is hardly visible. We made the whole arrangement. The dark background is the atmosphere simply and the foreground is the vapour. These faces have been imprinted on the vapour. Note that some of the faces appear on a light background and some on a dark one. That could not be so if the exposure were natural. The plate could have caught this impression without any exposure. In the less distinct one (Fig 7) the ectoplasm was much thinner. The medium probably did not give out so much as in the former. It is too diffused here¹⁰

History

Spirit photography is undergoing another revival. In the last few years it has begun to receive historical and critical attention. Rolf H. Krauss has written a po-faced and

¹⁰ Estelle Stead, *Faces of the Living Dead*, pp59-60.

exhaustive historical account in his book *Beyond Light and Shadow*.¹¹ The historian of early cinema, Tom Gunning, has read the seance as an analogue of photography itself, and like photography concerned with the uncanny effect of doubling, duplication and recursion. He sees spirit photography as evidence of another side to the photographic effect within modernity: "caught up in the endless play of image making and reproduction and the creation of simulacra."¹² And the cultural historian Jay Winter has also discussed spirit photography as an integral part of coping with the trauma of the World War One in his book *Sites of Memory Sites of Mourning*.¹³

But for many decades spirit photography had absolutely no place in any reputable history of photography.¹⁴ That it is why it is difficult to think back eighty years to the 1920s when these images were scandalous, certainly, but also, in a sense, possible. That is, the affects of their effects had substantial currency. They briefly played big time in the mass media. By the 1930s, however, they had become impossible. They still had their adherents, but by then Conan Doyle's regular posthumous appearance on the photographic plates of William Hope and Mrs Deane must have increasingly seemed to newspaper readers to be stories about human gullibility and eccentricity, rather than the possibility of seeing the dead. By then picture magazines were well established as the mass medium of the day. And their address to their readers was driven by a valorising of the photographer's index finger, jerking in empathic response to fleeting scenes as they sped through time. The picture magazines fetishised the camera's guillotining shutter blade slicing up this linear time—which moved in one direction only, from the past to the future—into historically fixed instants. When, occasionally, spirit images appeared in the popular press, such as "Camera 'evidence' of Conan Doyle's return" on the front page of the *News Chronicle*¹⁵, they appeared as laughable curiosities because they ran counter to the press's now well

¹¹ R. H. Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow: The Role of Photography in Certain Paranormal Phenomena: An Historical Survey*, Nazraeli Press, 1994

¹² T. Gunning, 'Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, magic Theatre, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny', *Fugitive Images: From photography to Video*, P. Petro, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, p67.

¹³ J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995

¹⁴ Exceptions are Helmut and Alison Gernsheim's tongue in cheek 'Photographing Ghosts', in *Photography*, London, Vol. X11, p53. Cited in R. H. Krauss, 1994, p135.

¹⁵ L. C. Doyle, 'My Husband's Return', 1931, London.

established logic of reportage. They were no longer reproduced as press photographs in their own right, reporting on strange psychic phenomena, as they had at least the potential to be in the 1920s, they were now reproduced as second degree documents of human interest – objects of curiosity.

By the 1930s all photographs, even personal snapshots, had tended to become attached to the logic of press reportage, the logic of the decisive moment.¹⁶ All photographs became irrevocably about pastness, about the instantaneous historicisation and memorialisation of time. But spirit photographs cheerfully included multiple times, and multiple time vectors. As personal snapshots kept in albums or cradled in hands they did not represent the exquisite attenuation of the 'that has been' of a moment from the past disappearing further down the time tunnel as it was gazed at in the present, nor the frozen image's inevitable prediction of our own mortality, rather they were material witness to the possibility of endless recursions, returns and simultaneities.

These images are performative. They work best when their sitters had seen them well-up from the depths of the emulsion in the medium's developing tray, or seen them suddenly flashed on the screen in a lantern slide lecture. Their power lies not in their reportage of a pro-filmic real elsewhere in time and space, but in their audience's affective response to them in the audience's own time and place. They solicit a tacit suspension of disbelief from their audience, while at the same time they brazenly inveigle a tacit belief in special effects. These special effects are traded from other genres such as film or stage-craft using the currency of the audience's thirst for belief. They shamelessly exploit the wounded psychology of their audience to confirm their truth, not by their mute indexical reference to the real, but through the audience's own indexical enactment of their traumatic affect. Their truth is not an anterior truth, but a manifest truth that is indexed by the audience as they cry out at the shock of the recognition of their departed loved ones.

The recent resurgence of interest in spirit photography indicates that the photograph can still be regarded as something other than a snapshot image, it can still be recognised as an

auratic object. Current interest in spirit photographs reveals the continued power and enigma of the photograph, despite predictions in the 1990s of its demise at the hands of universal digitisation. For me the spirit photograph of the 1920s especially resonates with the ways the photograph as artefact is still used today in both public and private rituals of memory, mourning and loss. Memory, mourning and loss, of course, also underpin the canonical theory of the photograph as it was developed during the twentieth century. And these issues are dealt with in detail in subsequent chapters.

¹⁶ I am here bringing forward the famous phrase which wasn't coined until later by Henri Cartier-Bresson in his book *The Decisive Moment*, Simon and Schuster, 1952.

3

THE FAKE TODAY

EIGHT

CANONICAL PHOTOGRAPHIC THEORY AND THE FAKE

[Photography] does not invent; it is authentication itself; the rare artifices it permits are not probative; they are, on the contrary, trick pictures; the photograph is laborious only when it fakes – Roland Barthes, 1982.¹

Throughout the twentieth century a distinct stream of thought has developed around the significance of the photographic image. The theorists of photography who carry most authority and are most often quoted in discussions of the medium—Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Andre Bazin, John Berger and Roland Barthes—were all concerned with discussing the medium on its own terms, with reference to the technological and phenomenological characteristics that seemed proper to it alone. I don't want to over-emphasise the univocality or consistency of these critics, whose texts about photography stretched over fifty years and were each part of larger critical projects coming out of distinctive intellectual traditions. Nonetheless these writers can be discussed together because each took as their subject the essential nature of the photograph within modernity in general. In addition their texts were all taken up by the anglophonic photographic discourse at about the same time, from the late seventies to the late eighties, forming a relatively coherent, and canonical, foundation for subsequent photographic theory up to the present day.²

¹ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1982, p87.

² See for instance recent books of photo theory which all rely on the familiar roll call, supplemented with other big gun proper names, such as the discussion of photography and narrativity in C. Scott, *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language*, London, Reaktion Books, 1999; the discussion of photography in terms of its various technologies in P. Maynard, *The Engine of Visualization: Thinking through photography*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997; the discussion of photography and a new externalised technologised identity in C. Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, memory, identity*, London, Routledge, 1998; the discussion of photography and maternity in M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997; and so on.

Indexicality and time

For each of these writers photography was a natural and technological phenomenon before it was a cultural one. And for them the natural and technological essence of photography was what also principally defined the whole cultural epoch of modernity. For instance for Siegfried Kracauer, writing in 1927, in photography, "for the first time the inert world presents itself in its independence from human beings."³ Photography's two principle technological relationships with nature define it as a medium and give rise to its human significance. They are that photography allows an anterior real to automatically reproduce itself in the image, and that the photograph excises an instant from time's flow.

In Walter Benjamin's *A Short History of Photography*, written in 1931, both the irresistibility of the reality with which the image is 'seared', and the resultant ambiguity of its relationship to time, are evocatively set out.

[T]he most precise technology can give its products a magical value, such as a painted picture can never again have for us. No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it. ⁴

To Roland Barthes, writing *The Rhetoric of the Image* in 1964, the photograph introduced a new consciousness because it belonged to a new space-time category, it combined spatial immediacy with temporal anteriority. It was the illogical conjunction of the *here-now* and the *there-then*. The photograph was a real unreality, its presence in the now was unreal, since it was a piece of the past. Its reality was *having-been-there*: "for in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of *this is how it was*, giving us, by a precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered."⁵

³ S. Kracauer, 'Photography', *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, T. Levin, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, p62.

⁴ W. Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', *One Way Street and Other Writings*, London, NLB, 1931, p243.

⁵ R. Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', *Image Music Text*, Glasgow, Fontana/Collins, 1977, p44.

To John Berger, a decade later, although the photograph was an unmediated, language-free transcription of reality, its power and its poetry came from the photographer's ability to interrupt the temporal continuum, to isolate, remove and focus the attention of a viewer on a centripetal moment, a moment which draws other moments into it:

The true content of a photograph is invisible because it derives from a play not with form, but with time. ... the photograph bears witness to a human choice being exercised. The choice is not between photographing *x* and *y*: but between photographing *x* moment or *y* moment. The objects recorded in any photograph (from the most effective to the most commonplace) carry approximately the same weight, the same conviction. What varies is the intensity with which we are made aware of the poles of absence and presence. Between these two poles photography finds its proper meaning. (The most popular use of the photograph is as a memento of the absent.) A photograph, whilst recording what has been seen, always, by its nature, refers to what is not seen. It isolates, preserves and presents a moment taken from a continuum. ... The language in which photography deals is the language of events. All its references are external to itself. Hence the continuum. The only decision [the photographer] can take is as regards the moment he chooses to isolate. Yet this apparent limitation gives the photograph its unique power. *What it shows invokes what is not shown.*"⁶

These two signal characteristics—physical indexicality and temporal ambiguity—which define photography and photography alone, and give rise to the medium's mysteries, powers and enigmas, are in their turn produced by two technical operations: the lens projecting an image of an anterior scene into the camera, and the blade of the shutter slicing that cone of light into instants. As Andre Bazin put it:

Originality in Photography as distinct from originality in painting lies in the essentially objective [punning on *objectif* – camera lens] character of photography. For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a non-living agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of

⁶ J. Berger, 'Understanding a Photograph', *The Look of Things*, Viking Press, 1974, pp180-181.

man. ... Photography effects us like a phenomenon of nature, like a flower or a snowflake whose vegetable or earthly origins are an inseparable part of its beauty⁷

Artistic effects corrode photography's ontological core

The canonical theory of photography tends to downplay other aspects of the photographic process. Although the skills and talents of the photographer in framing the scene are recognised, it is the contingency of the framing, rather than its intention, which is valorised. Any other supernumerary interventions after the moment of exposure are quickly dismissed. Kracauer likens self-consciously 'artistic' photographers to rhythmic gymnasts, mechanically aping a mere semblance of the spiritual.⁸ Benjamin contemptuously dismisses art photographers by comparing them to amateur hunters only able to shoot small game.⁹ They are either trying to make photography something it is not—a fine art like painting for instance; or they are simply misguidedly getting in the way of the clarity and ontological power of the real writing itself into the image.

Writing his Structuralist analysis of the news photograph, *The Photographic Message*, in 1961, Barthes listed trick effects as one of its six connotational procedures: those social codes which in the photograph are paradoxically, and dangerously, built on top of the innocent, natural, message-without-a-code of the optically denoted analogical image. But, unlike the confidence with which Barthes describes and analyses the other five connotational procedures—pose, objects, photogene, aestheticism and syntax—he finds trick effects hardest to discuss within his Structuralist schema and his conclusion about them is a non-sequitur. Barthes attempts to bulk trick effects in with two other connotational procedures, 'poses' and 'objects', because they are also modifications of the scene to be photographed. All three therefore secrete their languages elusively within photographic denotation, such that they might even manage to elude the scrutiny of the semiotician himself.

[T]he photograph allows the photographer to *conceal elusively* the preparation to which he subjects the scene to be recorded. ... there is no certainty from the point

⁷ A. Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', 1967, p241.

⁸ S. Kracauer, 'Photography', 1995, p53.

⁹ W. Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', 1931, p254.

of view of subsequent structural analysis that it will be possible to take into account the material they provide. ... The methodological interest of trick effects is that they intervene without warning in the plane of denotation: they utilise the special credibility of the photograph ... in order to pass off as denoted a message which is in reality heavily connoted; in no other treatment does connotation assume so completely the 'objective' mask of denotation.¹⁰

But in fact the trick effect isn't a connotational procedure in itself, it is merely the process of inserting not just elusively, but surreptitiously, one might even say illegally, other connotational procedures into the anterior scene. The trick effect only retains access to connotation because it masks its covert operation by the seamless incorporation of a fragment of denotation purloined from elsewhere. Therefore Barthes is unable to sit it comfortably with his other connotational codes. In the trick effect, he concludes lamely, the "code of connotation is neither artificial (as in true language) nor natural, but historical."¹¹ Barthes is unable to deal with the trick effect because it transgresses the supra-historical underpinnings of the photograph. It belongs to the grubby politics of its historical moment.

Three years later he is more emphatic. Photography has nothing to do with special effects, or even pictorial illusionism. The photograph doesn't magically create an illusion of presence for us because its image remains, illogically, in the past while merely sharing our space with us in the now. The overwhelming power of the photograph's evidence that *this was so* easily defeats our attempts to imaginatively or psychologically project ourselves into the image. For this reason the photograph is entirely different to film. In film the *having been there* of the individual photographic frame easily gives way to the *being there* of the film as audiences project themselves into its temporal diegesis. Therefore there can easily be a history of cinema continuous with previous forms of fiction (novels, theatre, painting), whereas:

¹⁰ R. Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', *Image Music Text*, Glasgow, Fontana/Collins, 1977, p21.

¹¹ p22.

[T]he photograph can in some sense elude history (despite the evolution of the techniques and ambitions of photographic art) and represent a 'flat' anthropological fact, at once absolutely new and definitely unsurpassable.¹²

To Barthes, therefore, two things are not proper to the photography. The first is the art of fiction applied to the photograph—montage, for instance. The second is an invitation for the audience to psychologically project themselves into the image, thereby conflating the ineffable distance between the *there-then* and the *here-now*. Both techniques and ambitions corrode photography's precious miracle, its existence as a flat anthropological fact outside history.

In *Camera Lucida*, written in 1980, Barthes even confesses to preferring black and white photographs to colour ones, because colour, although superficially more 'lifelike' because more optically descriptive, seems to him to be less transcriptive. It interferes with the sense of physical connection with the photographed body he craves.

What matters to me is not the photograph's 'life' (a purely ideological notion) but the certainty that the photographed body touches me with its own rays and not with a superadded light.¹³

Death and resurrection

In this current of thought photography is often compared to embalming, resurrection, or spectralisation. The horrible, uncanny image of the corpse, with its mute intimation of our own mortality, haunts all of this writing. For instance, because a photograph is good at preserving the image of the external cast-off remnants of people, such as their clothes, but cannot capture their real being, to Kracauer the photograph: "dissolves into the sum of its details, like a corpse, yet stands tall as if full of life."¹⁴ For Barthes the photograph's indexicality makes it tautologically both sign and referent:

It is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the moving world: they

¹² R. Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', *Image Music Text*, Glasgow, Fontana/Collins, 1977, p45

¹³ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, p81.

are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures.¹⁵

Yet, like the processes of embalming, resurrection or spectralisation, our embrace of the photograph's corpsesness is also a pathetic attempt to beat death. To Bazin,

Hence the charm of family albums. Those grey or sepia shadows, phantomlike and almost undecipherable, are no longer traditional family portraits but rather the disturbing presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration, freed from their destiny; not, however, by the prestige of art but by the power of an impassive mechanical process: for photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption.¹⁶

In his condemnation of the mass media's blind reproduction, and the masses blind consumption, of thousands upon thousands of photographs, Kracauer sees the photograph as attempting to banish organic, oral memory in order to also banish organic memory's implicit acceptance of death:

What the photographs by their sheer accumulation attempt to banish is the recollection of death, which is part and parcel of every memory image. In the illustrated magazines the world has become a photographable present, and the photographed present has been entirely eternalised. Seemingly ripped from the clutch of death, in reality it has succumbed to it.¹⁷

In attempting to, but failing to banish death, all photography does is continually remind us of it.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes' almost necrophilic meditation on photography written while in the grim grip of grief for his mother, he reduces the essence of photography down to an exquisite *that-has-been*, produced not so much optically as chemically; not so much through

¹⁴ S. Kracauer, 'Photography', 1995, p55.

¹⁵ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, pp5-6.

¹⁶ A. Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', 1967, p242

an iconographic description of a prior scene as an effluvial emanation of another body – "an ectoplasm of 'what-has-been': neither image nor reality, a new being really " – captured as the body held itself momentarily before a lens.¹⁸ Photographs of corpses are therefore uncanny, and their uncanniness reveals for Barthes something essential about photography.

[I]n the case of photographing corpses ... if the photograph then becomes horrible, it is because it certifies, so to speak, that the corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing. For the photograph's immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, because of that delusion which makes us attribute to reality an absolutely superior, somehow eternal value; but by shifting this reality to the past ("this-has-been"), the photograph suggests that it is already dead.¹⁹

The photograph corpses time. Each photograph contains the imperious sign of our future death. "All those young photographers who are at work in the world, determined upon the capture of actuality, do not know that they are agents of death", Barthes declares.²⁰

The privatised photographic experience

Within this stream of thought the experience of photography tends to be a privatised one. The photograph atomises the mass and comes to meet each individual half way.

In Siegfried Kracauer's very negative response to photography as it began to manifest itself as a mass medium, the photograph's contingency to surface reality makes it fatal to proper memory and true history. Photography is the very "secretion of the capitalist mode of production"²¹, stripping nature of its meaning. Each photograph might have had the ineffable natural beauty of a snowflake for Bazin, but in Kracauer's earlier response to the

¹⁷ S. Kracauer, 'Photography', 1995, p59.

¹⁸ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, p87.

¹⁹ p79

²⁰ p92.

²¹ S. Kracauer, 'Photography' 1995, p61.

emergent mass media, each of these snowflakes had already been multiplied and reified into a blizzard:

If [illustrated newspapers] were offering [themselves] as an aid to memory, then memory would have to determine the selection. But the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. The assault of this mass of images is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the potentially existing awareness of crucial traits. ... Never before has a period known so little about itself. In the hands of the ruling society, the invention of illustrated magazines is one of the most powerful means of organising a strike against understanding. ...The *contiguity* of these images systematically excludes their contextual framework available to consciousness. ... The blizzard of photographs betrays an indifference toward what the things mean.²²

But consistent with Kracauer's Marxist historical thought, a new politically liberated consciousness may be able to construct new revolutionary meanings by reorganising this alienated detritus of history:

Less enmeshed in the natural bonds than ever before, [photography] could prove its power in dealing with them. The turn to photography is the *go-for-broke* game of history. ... [Photography's] warehousing of nature promotes the confrontation of consciousness with nature. ... The images of the stock of nature disintegrated into its elements are offered up to consciousness to deal with as it pleases. Their original order is lost; they no longer cling to the spatial context that linked them with an original out of which the memory image was selected. But if the remnants of nature are not orientated towards the memory image, then the order they assume through the [photographic] image is necessarily provisional. It is therefore incumbent on consciousness to establish the *provisional* status of all given configurations, and perhaps even to wake an inkling of the right order of the inventory of nature.²³

²² p58.

²³ p62.

Similarly, in Benjamin's *A Short History of Photography*, the fact that photography allows its images to be totally possessed by separate viewers signals an epochal break from past modes of experience. Photography can break the thralldom of aura, it can prise objects from their auratic shells:

Now to bring things *closer* to us, or rather to the masses, is just as passionate an inclination in our day as the overcoming of whatever is unique in every situation by means of its reproduction. Every day the need to possess the object in close-up in the form of a picture, or rather a copy, becomes more imperative. And the difference between the copy, which illustrated papers and newsreels keep in readiness, and the picture is unmistakable. Uniqueness and duration are as intimately conjoined in the latter as are transience and reproducibility in the former. The stripping bare of the object, the destruction of the aura, is a mark of a perception whose sense of the sameness of things has grown to the point where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness—by means of its reproduction.²⁴

Benjamin, famously, had an ambiguous relationship to his concept of aura. But to both him and Kracauer there was a potentially explosive political power buried within the atomisation of communal experience being brought about by photography. Photography does not make a communal address to its audience. Rather each reproduced photograph interpellates each individual member of the mass—simultaneously privately and collectively.

Although it is a mass medium, most often the photograph is apprehended as a personal contemplation: held in the hand; seen in a book, album or newspaper; regarded from a distance; surveyed and scrutinised; trawled for poignancies or atmospheres from the past. This mass privatisation and Cartesian individuation of the moment of photographic apprehension is complementary to, but quite distinct from, the audience's distracted and collective absorption into the film.

²⁴ W. Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', 1931, p250.

For Barthes all photographs are private, but in our age they are promiscuously consumed publicly. Because of the forceful intimacy of every photograph—even the press photograph—"each photograph is read as the private appearance of its referent: the age of Photography corresponds precisely with the explosion of the private into the public."²⁵ In re-experiencing his mother's death through photographs Barthes tries to resist this, to consolidate the intractable truth of his grief around his own few hidden photographs, and to jealously shelter these photographs, as precious, private artefacts, from the brash world of images.

I experience the photograph and the world in which it participates according to two regions: on the one side the Images, on the other my photographs; on the one side unconcern, shifting, noise, the inessential (even if I am abusively deafened by it), on the other the burning, the wounded.²⁶

At the beginning of *Camera Lucida* Barthes is overcome with an 'ontological desire' to know the essence of photography. At the end he confesses that this essence is mad. Society has tamed photography's madness; first by art, by imposing other rhetorics on it, and secondly by generalisation, by making photography the model of all images so that its specific nature is lost. At the conclusion of the book he rhetorically confronts himself with a choice to either accept the public taming of the photograph, or to maintain the privacy of its madness. "The choice is mine: to subject [photography's] spectacle to the civilised code of perfect illusions, or to confront in it the wakening of intractable reality."²⁷

Photography's inappropriateness for rituals of memory

For Benjamin, modernity was profoundly transforming experience itself: away from the deeply communicable to the superficially commodifiable, away from a grounding in the body, to being a product of technology. These changes in experience were related to changes in modern memory.

²⁵ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, p98.

²⁶ p98.

²⁷p119.

A reading of Marcel Proust allowed Benjamin to make the distinction between voluntary memory and involuntary memory. Voluntary memory is in the service of the intellect, and can give information about the past, but can retain no trace of it affectively. However the past can become accessible to involuntary memory when it is found, Proust says, “unmistakably present in some material object (or in the sensation which such an object arouses in us).”²⁸ To Proust this involuntary memory could only come by chance. But to Benjamin the fact that the fullness of involuntary memory was only a chance phenomenon was itself a product of the historical changes in experience. Modernity’s subjects were “increasingly unable to assimilate the data around him by way of experience.”²⁹ For instance the characteristics of newspaper information—immediacy, brevity, comprehensibility, and above all, the lack of connection between individual news items—worked to isolate events from the realm in which they could effect the experience of the reader. Even the fact that newspapers were mass-produced meant that they did not enter into any traditional forms of oral circulation or narration. To Benjamin, the “replacement of the older narration by information, of information by sensation, reflects the increasing atrophy of experience”. It is only through a massive effort, such as Proust’s, that voluntary memory and involuntary memory, communal and estranged memory, can be united once more.

Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combine with material of the collective past. The rituals with their ceremonies, their festivals ... kept producing the amalgamation of these two elements of memory over and over again. They triggered recollection at certain times and remained handles of memory for a lifetime. In this way, voluntary and involuntary recollections lose their mutual exclusiveness.³⁰

Recasting Freud, Benjamin describes the role of consciousness in modernity as a protective shield against stimuli. Experience that enters consciousness expires there and becomes subject to protective voluntary remembrance, only that which has not been experienced explicitly or consciously enters memory and can therefore become the subject of

²⁸ W. Benjamin, ‘On Some Motifs in Baudelaire’, *Illuminations*, H. Arendt, Fontana, 1973, p160.

²⁹ p160.

³⁰ pp161-162.

involuntary memory. Benjamin therefore distinguishes between two types of experience: the deep experience (*Erfahrung*) that will inform involuntary memory, and which harks back to the epic forms of our oral past; and a superficial experience (*Erlebnis*) whose function is to parry the shocks of modernity, an experience in which events consume themselves by being consciously lived through, and are only accessible through dry, intellectual, voluntary recollection.

The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more effectively it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience (*Erfahrung*), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour of one's life (*Erlebnis*). Perhaps the special achievement of shock defence may be seen in its function of assigning an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents. This would be a peak achievement of the intellect; it would turn the incident into a moment that has been lived (*Erlebnis*). Without reflection there would be nothing but the sudden start, usually the sensation of fright which, according to Freud, confirms the failure of the shock defence.³¹

Photography belongs firmly to the realm of *Erlebnis*, and is central to the range of new technologies recasting modern experience.

Of the countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like, the 'snapping' of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch of the finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock as it were. Haptic experiences of this kind were joined by optic ones, such as are supplied by the advertising pages of a newspaper or the traffic of a big city. Moving through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks and collisions. At dangerous intersection, nervous impulses flow through him in rapid succession, like the energy from a battery. Baudelaire speaks of a man who plunges into a crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy. Circumscribing the experience of the shock, he calls this man 'a kaleidoscope equipped with consciousness'. Whereas Poe's passers-by cast glances

³¹ p165.

in all directions which still appeared to be aimless, today's pedestrians are obliged to do so in order to keep abreast of traffic signals. Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training.³²

These themes, of photography's intrinsic role in the estrangement of experience, memory and history, had already been broached by Kracauer. To Kracauer the photograph could not capture a person's living truth and presented the facts of their past only in muffled outline: "In a photograph, a person's history is buried as if under a layer of snow."³³ The photograph served historicism, but displaced memory. To Kracauer photography was the perfect tool for the growth of historicist thinking under capitalism because historicists believe:

That they can grasp historical reality by reconstructing the course of events in their temporal succession without any gaps. Photography presents a spatial continuum; historicism seeks to provide the temporal continuum.³⁴

For Kracauer, although photography stockpiled the crumbled elements of time, it could not give meaning to them. Photography exterminated memory because it was unable to determine what was significant. Memories filtered what was relevant, photography could only record every surface presented to it.

From [photography's] perspective, memory images appear to be fragments—but only because photography does not encompass the meaning to which they refer and in relation to which they cease to be fragments. Similarly, from the perspective of memory, photography appears as a jumble that consists partly of garbage.³⁵

Ironically for a medium so intimately bound up in the reality of the past, photography does not aid memory. In fact it exterminates memory. As Barthes says, there is "nothing

³² pp176-177.

³³ S. Kracauer, 'Photography', 1995, p51.

³⁴ p49.

³⁵ pp 50-51.

Proustian in a photograph".³⁶ The photograph does not restore the past to the present, rather it attests to the irrevocable distance between past and present.

For Barthes, although the photograph is concerned with death above all else, the photograph cannot be used in rituals of mourning. Because it is a natural artefact, not a cultural one; and because it blocks memory, rather than evokes memory; and because it is not visually passive, but violent, filling the sight by force with an unendurable plenitude, the photograph cannot be used to turn the natural emotion of grief into the cultural process of mourning. It remains a wound in time.

Photographic effect and affect

I have always found, and still find, the texts from which I have drawn the themes represented above to be enormously compelling. But I am also fascinated by the thought of large, artificially coloured, composite murals displayed above craning and jostling crowds in propaganda exhibitions; or the thought of fraudulent spirit photographs received with awe as their images well up before their customers in a developing dish. According to the canonical theory of photography described above these images are not even essentially photographs. They use 'art' and special effects, which sever the golden thread between image and referent, making them historical and cultural, not natural and technological objects. The propaganda photographs, hybrids of several prior fictional genres, were received communally, not just collectively, by crowds in a distracted state, not privately in moments of intensified experience. Their task was to invite their audience to project themselves into their illusionism, not to provide positive evidence of a 'that has been'. The spirit photographs, although received privately by their faithful audience, confounded the ordinary photograph's ambiguous relationship to time and death into an even more complex one, where, indeed, time was reclaimable, and death wasn't inevitable. Yet the strong production of affect in their contemporary audience demand that they be accounted for within, rather than dismissed from, photographic theory.³⁷

³⁶R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, p82.

³⁷ This is already happening within visual anthropology and cultural studies, see for instance T. Gunning, 'Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, magic Theatre, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny', *Fugitive Images: From photography to Video*, P. Petro, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995; M. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, New York,

The canonical theory of photography tends to write itself in the physical and conceptual space between a single anterior reality and the lens and shutter assemblage of the camera. It is what goes on in the relationship between the scene and the glass lens of the camera at the moment the shutter guillotines time that counts. Of course there is a particular, if unspoken, viewing scenario implicit in all of this writing: Barthes places himself before us hunched in the small pool of light from his desk lamp, onanistically shuffling through the same dog eared pile of photographs; and we know Kracauer and Benjamin have perched their eye glasses on their noses, lit their cigarettes, and settled in their armchairs to scrutinise this week's delivery of illustrated magazines. But their phenomenological relationship to the photographic image remains laminated to the image's representational relationship to its referent, just as tightly as image and referent are apparently laminated in the photograph. This dominant topology has left relatively undeveloped the theoretical space within the other ocular pyramid of photography: not the one between the anterior scene and the camera, but between the surface of the photograph and the body of the viewer.

Recent re-interpretations of Barthes have already begun to shift theoretical attention from the anterior-scene/camera-lens optical pyramid, to the image-surface/viewer's-body optical pyramid. Barthes was already making this shift himself in the 1970s. In 1979, in *S/Z*, he said: "Denotation is not the first meaning, but it pretends to be, with this illusion, it is finally the last of the connotations."³⁸ Reality was an effect of photography, shared with other genres, not its exclusive a priori ontology:

Our entire civilisation has a taste for the reality effect, attested by the development of specific genres such as the realistic novel, the private diary, documentary literature, the news item, the historical museum, the exhibition of ancient objects, and, above all, the massive development of photography, whose sole pertinent

Routledge, 1993; J. Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: The Great War in European cultural history*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

³⁸ Quoted in, P. Edwards, 'Against the Photograph as *Memento Mori*', *History of Photography*, Volume 22, Number 4, Winter, 1998, p382.

feature (in relation to drawing) is precisely to signify that the event represented has really taken place.³⁹

Some commentators have seen Barthes' stated aim in *Camera Lucida*—to find the ontological essence of photography—after he had already concluded that denotation was actually the last of photography's connotations, as a mere alibi for writing a metaphysics of his own personal sentiment. By emphasising chemical touch over optical transcription Barthes famously complicates the tense of the photography, but he also implicates the viewer's perception intrinsically into the photograph:

[H]e asserts a condition of necessary presence—a past presence—distinguishes it from any other system of representation, a technological encoding of the future anterior. Such a condition displaces the more rudimentary notion of the index through its superimposition of temporal duration upon actuality, its shift in tense to past perfect (the 'this-has-been'), making the photograph's sovereignty not a question of transcriptive exactitude but of reality-in-time. The distinction is important: Barthes is arguing this essence to be located not in the object itself, but in the process of its cognition by a viewer. The sensation he describes is not one of indexical authority or legibility, but of disorientation and madness—the 'vertigo of time defeated', a 'temporal hallucination'—as distinct orders of time collide in perceptual simultaneity.⁴⁰

Barthes wants to learn at all cost what photography is 'in itself', but only in order to fail so as to experience something else instead:

In this investigation of Photography, I borrowed something from phenomenology's project ... [b]ut it was a vague, casual, even cynical phenomenology, so readily did it agree to distort or evade its principles according to the whim of my analysis. ... [M]y phenomenology agreed to compromise with a power, *affect*; affect was what I didn't want to reduce: being irreducible, it was thereby what I wanted, what I ought to reduce the photograph *to*; but could I

³⁹ R. Barthes, 'The Discourse of History', *The Rustle of Language*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1986 p139.

retain an affective intentionality, a view of the object which was immediately steeped in desire, repulsion, nostalgia, euphoria. ... at the moment of reaching the essence of photography in general, I branched off; instead of following the path of a formal ontology (of a Logic), I stopped, keeping with me like a treasure, my desire or my grief; the anticipated essence of the photograph could not, in my mind, be separated from the 'pathos' of which, from the first glance, it consists. I was interested in photography for 'sentimental' reasons I wanted to explore it not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think.⁴¹

Whatever essence photography has, it is only worth anything for Barthes, when it is also one of affect. An anterior reality is merely one of photography's effects. The two produce each other in the process of the viewer apprehension of the photograph. Barthes confirms his prioritisation of affect in his discussion of the *punctum*, the private 'prick', which like the sudden flood of Proustian involuntary memory disturbs the public, historicist field of the photographed scene—its *studium*. *Punctums* are incommunicable and mad. They don't even exist in the photograph, but are an affective quality spontaneously felt in the viewer. Yet they are implicit in all photographs, or all moments of photographic apprehension.

Incorporating photographic affect into the discussion immediately shifts the terms of the debate. As Nickel says:

This emphasis on reception, as opposed to traditional history's privileging of intentionality and the conditions of production, undermines the interpretative presumptions upon which most photographic criticism has heretofore been founded, and the object classifications that have bolstered them for the past hundred years. A history of photography after Barthes (if one could even call it that) might well be radically reoriented towards the vernacular, and might, as such, retain some of the political 'madness' he held in esteem.⁴²

⁴⁰ D. R. Nickel, 'Roland Barthes and the Snapshot', *History of Photography*, 24, 3, Autumn, 2000, p233.

⁴¹ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, pp20-21.

Theoretically deploying the vernacular

Geoffrey Batchen has identified vernacular photography – hand assembled albums, photo-jewellery and photo sculpture – as a genre whose idiosyncratic morphologies have been expelled from normative photo history and photo theory.⁴³ Vernacular photo-objects entangle both touch and sight. They depend entirely on the viewer's privatised use of the photograph haptically within the viewer's own corporeal space. Like Barthes' sentimental fascination with the photograph, vernaculars are founded on the photograph's chemical indexicality, its tactile contiguity with the past. This indexicality is sometimes doubled when locks of hair from the sitter, for instance, are woven into the object. Sometimes the indexical substrate of the image is completely covered by a thick overcoating of stiff, formal handcolouring, yet although this erases optical indexical particularity, it seems to poignantly increase the object's tactile indexical effect.⁴⁴

Contrary to Barthes' and Kracauer's description of the photograph as pernicious to memory, and too 'visually violent' for mourning ritual, vernacular photographs are part of authentic mnemonic rituals that work against the photograph's fateful declaration 'that-has-been'.

Where the photograph normally speaks to us of the past, the past in which the photograph was taken, a [vernacular such as a Hispanic photo-sculpture] stolidly occupies the eternal horizon of the present. The photograph speaks of the catastrophe of time's passing, but the [photo-sculpture] also speaks of eternal life; it posits the possibility of a perpetual stasis, the literal, fully dimensional presence of the present.⁴⁵

But this pretension comes only at the price of turning the photograph into something else Barthes said it could not be: a monument, resisting its own decay in time.

[T]hese otherwise humble portraits declare, 'do not forget me', with as much intensity of purposes as any pharaohs tomb. ... Could it be that in the midst of an

⁴² D. R. Nickel, 'Roland Barthes and the Snapshot', 2000, p235.

⁴³ G. Batchen, 'Vernacular Photographies', *Each Wild Idea*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001

⁴⁴ p62.

⁴⁵ p76.

age in which as Marx puts it, everything solid melts into air, [vernaculars] are attempts to restore a certain monumentality to both modern memory and the photograph? ⁴⁶

To Batchen, if photo historians and photo-theorists took this diverse set of practices seriously they could challenge the smooth flow of the standard formalist and historicist photographic theory, and bring it into line with other more productive modes of enquiry, such as autobiography, Foucauldian archaeology, anthropology and the study of material culture.⁴⁷

Photography and postmodern memory

Many recent commentators on the canonical tradition of photographic theory have emphasised the crucial importance of the personal work of reading an image. Far from being reifying, fragmenting and masking, as they were to Kracauer, technologies of recall such as photography are now familiarised and incorporated into the personal work of remembering.

Catherine Keenan, for instance, argues that the distinction made between *mémoire involontaire*—ritual and authentic human memory images—on the one hand, and *mémoire volontaire*—historicism and photography—on the other, is too clear cut. For her memory is a labour that takes place in the present, and deals with mental memory images that traverse the twin poles of absence and presence. Therefore technologically retained photographic images, and mentally retained memory images, are more congruent than traditional photo theory suggests. Incorporated into our lives, in use within our processes of filial memory, they can be invested with all the auratic reciprocities of true memory. Keenan uses the example of the pin board which is covered with photographs of family and friends who are physically absent, but ever present in our personal and mental space.

The inseparability of the photographic image from the person it represents means that, as I see the photograph on the board many times a day, the image of it that

⁴⁶ p62 and 76.

becomes implanted in my memory comes to be indissociable from the other memories I have of that person. The photograph, that is, creates an image that loses its unfixability by being emplotted within the narratives of memory, which then re-writes the photographic image as a memory image, surrounding it in the aura of associations that surround other memory images.⁴⁸

It is only its use, its performance within the personal, that determines whether a photograph works to remember, or to forget.

[I]f the photographic image is relatively similar to [our] memories, and if it is incorporated into the present, it becomes a part of our memories and can truly function as a memory image. But if, after being neglected and rediscovered, it contradicts them, then the photograph can only stand as a testimony to the ever present possibility of forgetting.⁴⁹

Marianne Hirsch also places the photograph within the close fuggy atmosphere of personal enaction. In her discussion of family photography she uses the 'familial suturing' of the family snap as an overarching metaphor for photography. Under certain conditions photographs can elicit affiliative looks.

The work of reading isolated images necessarily becomes a work of overreading, determined by the particular familial or extrafamilial relation we hold to them. Recognising an image as *familial* elicits ... a specific kind of readerly or spectatorial look, an *affiliative look* through which we are sutured into the image and through which we adopt the image into our own familial narrative. Akin to Barthes's move from the studium to the punctum, it is idiosyncratic, untheorisable: it is what moves us because of our memories and our histories, and because of the ways in which we structure our own sense of particularity. What I see when I look at my family pictures is not what you see when you look at them: only my look is

⁴⁷ He applied the aspect of touch, fundamental to the theory of vernacular photography, to some contemporary photomedia artists in G. Batchen, 'Short Memory/Thin Skin', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, Volume 2, Number 2, 2002.

⁴⁸ C. Keenan, 'On the Relationship between Personal Photographs and Individual Memory', *History of Photography*, 22, 1, Spring, 1998, p62.

⁴⁹ p63.

affiliative, only my look enters and extends the network of looks and gazes that have constructed the image in the first place.⁵⁰

The fake in theory

Clearly, then, there has been a general shift by writers interested in extending and rethinking the canonical tradition of photographic theory towards the affiliative, or affective, space between photograph and viewer. Writing in this relatively uncongested space can recuperate rejected objects and practices into standard photographic history, and begin to describe our continued use of the photograph as a mnemonic and affective artefact within our lives. My understanding and appreciation of the affective power of composite propaganda murals and spirit photographs for their audiences is one more example of this shift in historiography and theory.

‘Fake’ was an accusation which historically has struck alarm into traditional photographers. I realise that the word will never lose its pejorative sense, but nonetheless I wish to develop it as a trope in order to throw into sharper relief the blind spots in photographic theory. The scandal of the fake can be used to look at historical and current uses of the photograph from a new angle. Scandals destabilise accepted truths. Fakes cause us to doubt the authority of singular, originary authorship and evidential reality. The scandal of the fake may therefore be a useful trope with which to examine our current media environment, where, in fact, it appears that long standing notions of authorship and denotation may have undergone a seismic shift.

⁵⁰ M. Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University press, 1997, p93.

NINE

DIGITAL REALITY EFFECTS

As I stared more, at images of people in business suits, on picnics, in a taxi, I became frightened. I looked at the people sitting across from me in the subway car for reassurance, but they too began to seem unreal, as if they were also figments of someone's imagination. It became difficult to choose who or what was 'real', and why people could exist but people looking just like them in photographs never did.

I became very anxious, nervous, not wanting to depend upon my sight, questioning it. It was as if I were in a waking dream with no escape, feeling dislocated, unable to turn elsewhere, even to close my eyes, because I knew when I opened them there would be nowhere to look and be reassured – Fred Ritchin.

1990.¹

Digital dislocations

In the early 1990s, with the mass marketing of image manipulation software packages such as Photoshop, a sense of apocalyptic panic spread through photography. Books with titles like *The Reconfigured Eye*, and *In Our Own Image: The Coming Revolution in Photography*,² foretold a seismic upheaval in photography. In *In Our Own Image* the main worry for Fred Ritchin, a *New York Times Magazine* picture editor, was that seamless and undetectable computer manipulation of the photograph would erode a viewer's faith in the inherent veracity of photography, and compromise the bond of trust photojournalists had historically built up with their audience. In *The Reconfigured Eye*, William Mitchell's worry was that in its translation into mutable computer data photography was losing its historical specificity as a medium. These, and the slew of books that followed, assumed that we were sliding into a new age of the photograph where it had permanently slipped

¹ F. Ritchin, *In Our Own Image: The Coming Revolution in Photography*, New York, Aperture Foundation, 1990.

² W. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post Photographic Era*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992. F. Ritchin, *In Our Own Image: The Coming Revolution in Photography*, New York, Aperture Foundation, 1990.

its moorings from the real and become nothing more than a liquescent, lubricous flow of data.³

Writing a few years later, and with a wider technological horizon, Lev Manovich was more clear-headed when he described the digital photograph as just one more superficial category of new media object. To Manovich the digital photograph no longer has any unique qualities. In the language of new media there is no unique photographic 'essence'. In the new media virtual environment the photographic image is just one more data stream amongst many. The logic of the digital photograph is no longer analogical reproduction, but computational generation. It is created not by recording an anterior scene, but by the technical process of selecting source data from various libraries of prior data streams. (One of these source data sets may still, however, be a 'base plate' of a scene digitally recorded from reality.) These sets of source data are then 'filtered' and 'composited' seamlessly together. The resultant digital photograph is structurally identical to other data streams – video sequences, VR simulations, graphic animations. It is a spatio-temporal new media object just like them, it is contiguous with them, and can seamlessly absorb them, or be absorbed by them, in another technical sequence of 'selection', 'filtration' and 'compositing'.

In addition, the digital photograph has an entirely different archaeology to the analogue photograph. Its ancestor was not the camera obscura in the nineteenth century, nor the snapshot in the twentieth century; but the Diorama, the magic lantern slide and the composite print in the nineteenth century, and the photomontage in the twentieth century. The digital photograph's essential lineage is montage, and "[e]diting, or montage, is the key twentieth-century technology for creating fake realities."⁴ (From this perspective, the admonishment of Frank Hurley that his montages owed their historical allegiance to *recherché* nineteenth-century blandishments and not progressivist twentieth-century

³ See, for instance, M. Jolly, 'Photography's Afterlife', *Photography Is Dead! Long Live Photography!*, L. Michael, Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996, M. Lister (ed.), *The photographic image in digital culture*, London, Routledge, 1995, and S. Kember, *Virtual anxiety: photography new technologies and subjectivity*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998.

⁴ L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001, p148.

disjunction and distantiation, seems to be as redundant as the other admonishment that his montages devalued the documentary coinage of his entire oeuvre.)

The digital photograph breaks the indexical link of the image to a prior reality, but for laid-back new media aficionados like Manovich this severing of the photograph's umbilical connection to space and time is nowhere near as significant an epochal change as the fact that the photograph now becomes, potentially, a 3D navigable virtual space, just like every other new media object. Ironically, however, these various new media objects, and particularly digital photographs, still use the traditional analog photograph as their model. The goal of computer simulation is not realism but photorealism, not the simulation of reality, but the simulation of a photograph of reality. "What is faked is only a film-based image. Once we came to accept the photographic image as reality, the way to its future simulation was open. What remained were small details."⁵

During the twentieth century the technologies of photography and cinema dominated visual culture, their artefactual looks defined the real. But in the twenty-first century, because this look isn't the natural technological 'default' of computational media, it has to be simulated.

The paradox of digital visual culture is that although imaging is becoming computer-based, the dominance of photographic and cinematic imagery is becoming even stronger. But rather than being a direct, 'natural' result of photo and film technology, these images are constructed on computers. 3-D virtual worlds are subjected to depth of field and motion blur algorithms; digital video is run through special filters that simulate film grain; and so on. ... *The visual culture of a computer age is cinematographic in its appearance, digital on the level of its material, and computational (ie software driven) in its logic.*⁶

Is this simply the phenomenon of one epoch initially adopting the familiar formats of its predecessor, and destined to work itself out in a historical process as technology

⁵ p200.

⁶ p180.

determines new more appropriate forms?⁷ For Manovich, the answer to that question is, surprisingly, no. Because:

Cinematographic images are very efficient for cultural communication. Because they share many qualities with natural perception, they are easily processed by the brain. Their similarity to 'the real thing' allows designers to provoke emotions in viewers, as well as effectively visualise nonexistent objects and scenes.⁸

So the umbilical cord of the digital image grows back, not to reality, but to the model of the photograph of reality, because over the last century this model had become the default for signifying 'reality' to our brains, and because it in fact still continues to share some ontological 'qualities' with reality. Transcriptive realism is the DNA which digital photography can be engineered to share with analogical photography, and which analogical photography 'naturally' shares with reality.

But even though the new digital technology continues to recognise an *a priori* affinity between photographic realism and reality, in another sense photography, even in its analogical heyday, never had the direct unmediated access to the ground of the real. Objects and people are always already, in one sense, signs of themselves even before they are signified by the camera. Geoffrey Batchen cites Derrida on this point: "no ground of nonsignification ... stretches out to give it foundation under the play and coming into being of signs."⁹ We are returned to one of Barthes' formulations of the 1970s: the real is one of photography's effects, not its foundation. It is produced within the endless play of signification, it is not the bedrock of signification.

⁷ This was a political phenomena which was very important to Benjamin, see, for instance, S. Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1989.

⁸ L. Manovich, 2001, pp180-181.

⁹ G. Batchen, 'Ectoplasm', *Each Wild Idea*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001, p142



'Bittersweet victory: The rape victim, accompanied by a salvation army counsellor, leaves court in Sydney yesterday after her attackers were found guilty'. Picture Alan Pryke. *The Australian*, 12/7/02, p1.

The new new-media object of the digital snapshot

This would seem to be confirmed by the new 'new-media object' of the digital snapshot. In the same way that T2, the liquid metal cyborg from the seminal early-nineties film *Terminator 2*, is able to close over a major wound before our very eyes, the digital image-file appears to have in effect grown back its umbilical connection to truth, via the 'default' of photorealism. We still routinely believe the thousands of digital photographs we see each day in our newspapers and on our TV screens, despite the many examples of them not hesitating to use their new powers to "intervene without warning in the plane of denotation"¹⁰ and alter their reported reality for their own tendentious purposes.¹¹ We still receive visceral cathartic shocks from some news agency digital photo files, "where the fact, surprised, explodes in all its stubbornness, its literality, in the very obviousness of its obtuse nature."¹² For instance a particular digital-photo data-file which had been composited into the newspaper page-layout data-file was still stomach churning enough to make three people complain to the Australian Press Council, and fifty people complain to *The Australian* newspaper itself, when it published what it freely admitted was,

¹⁰ R. Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', *Image Music Text*, Glasgow, Fontana/Collins, 1977, p21

¹¹ For instance negroidising O. J. Simpson's face or maddening Martin Bryant's eyes. See G. Batchen, 'Ectoplasm', 2001 and M. Jolly, 'Photography's Afterlife', *Photography Is Dead! Long Live Photography!*, L. Michael, Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996.

¹² R. Barthes, 'Shock-Photos', *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1979, p73.

by any measure, a confronting photograph. The right-wing Dutch politician, Pim Fortuyn, lying dead on the road where he was shot less than an hour before. Blood has seeped into a gauze bandage on his skull, his hands are wrapped in plastic bags and his mouth has the open gape of death. Not the kind of scene you want staring back at you as you tuck into your breakfast. But there it was splashed in colour on page one of last Wednesday's *The Australian*.¹³

Clearly, changes in technology, even epochal changes, do not automatically cause the disappearance of an entire culture of the image.¹⁴ Human culture still desires a reality effect, and will readily invest visceral affect into the digital image, particularly when the image is backed up by a century's worth of viewing protocols developed and exploited within the news media. Digital news photographs manipulate their limitless powers of selection, filtration and compositing to re-generate optical indexicality. The reader's assumption is that the photojournalist has taken a snapshot of an anterior scene by briefly exposing a CCD screen to light, and that they have treated the resultant data set with professional respect, subjecting it to only cosmetic digital filtration and compositing. This seems to be enough to sear the image with a magic spark of reality.¹⁵

Perhaps now, not only the historical, *mémoire volontaire* of the studium is restored to the digital file, but also the affective, *mémoire involontaire* of the punctum as well. It is not hard to imagine a twenty-first century Roland Barthes finding an old folder on his computer's desktop, idly double clicking on a jpeg's thumbnail, and being instantly plunged into hallucinatory communion with the past, since the light reflected off the face of the photographed loved-one so long ago has survived in the pure mathematics of its code to be phosphoresced once more by the computer monitor.

¹³ A. Dodd, 'Readers snipe at paper over maverick murder shot', *The Australian*, 16 May 2002, Sydney.

¹⁴ To Geoffrey Batchen photography is, any case, not a single medium, but a "persistent economy of photographic desires and concepts [including things like] nature, knowledge, representation, time, space, observing subject and observed object. Thus ... we might say that photography is the desire, conscious or not, to orchestrate a particular set of relationships between these various concepts", G. Batchen, 'Ectoplasm', 2001, p140.

¹⁵ Issues of ethics and truth in the contemporary press are discussed in J. Taylor, *Body Horror: photojournalism, catastrophe and war*, New York, New York University Press, 1998.

The digital and the analogical are not so ontologically distinct after all. As has been pointed out, the logic of the mathematical chain of one-to-one iteration in the digital image has a historical and structural affinity with the perfect iterations of reality imprinting itself, surface to surface, in the photogram.¹⁶ Digital image-files are also able to capitalise on their computational affinity with statistical data. On the shared level of computation two kinds of indexicality can be grafted together: the analogical, optically transcriptive indexicality of the photograph, and the mathematical indexicality of the data-set. Statistical population information can be given a photographic face¹⁷, or a corporeal indexical armature can underpin a photographically texture-mapped, computer-generated, 3D animation. For instance in the TV series *The Human Body* the recorded movements of a real crawling baby animated a computer generated image of its skeleton.

Composited reality

To Lev Manovich it is in the heritage of new media objects to fake. Their powers of simulation come down to them from a history of visual dissimulation. But they produce the effect of the real, and an affective truth, because efficient human brains want them to.

There are therefore, on the face of it, many parallels between the historical moment of World War One when tacit fakes were nervously promoted to a public eager to consume 'reality', and now when the shift from one logic of image production to another has also produced 'nervous objects' – tacit fakes nonetheless avidly consumed because of the unprecedented doses of the reality effect they are able to deliver.

The artificially coloured composite propaganda murals were intergeneric objects. The overwhelming nature of their reality depended not only on the indexicality of their component parts before they were 'composited' in the darkroom; their reality was also a reflected effect of their affectivity which was produced through their kindredness with academic oil painting on the one hand, and cinematic montage on the other.

¹⁶ G. Batchen, 'Photogenics', *Each Wild Idea: Writing Photography History*, 2001

¹⁷ See for instance the well known work of the artist Nancy Burson, or the famous *Time* magazine cover 'The New Face of America' in G. Batchen, 'Ectoplasm', 2001 and M. Jolly, 'Photography's Afterlife', *Photography Is Dead! Long Live Photography!*, L. Michael, Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996.

Similarly digital photographs are now not only an intimate part of a broader family of data-streams, but their reality effects are produced relationally. The special effects of Hollywood cinema, and the visceral vertiginous thrills of the action movie, become the ultimate benchmark for all new media reality effects, even those produced within the genre of reportage. Manovich makes an interesting point in comparing two such benchmarks. In *Jurassic Park* the digital dinosaurs had to have digital noise added to degrade their fidelity back down from their mathematical perfection so they would blend in with their analogically filmed backgrounds, whereas in *Terminator 2* the cyborg returned from the future was left un-degraded to contrast him with the analog backgrounds of the present. Manovich concludes: "if a traditional photograph always points to a past event, a synthetic photograph points to a future event."¹⁸

But the traditional and the synthetic are also interacting in even more complex ways in our media to point to either the decisive moment of the snapshot, or the dilated graphic transmutations of the data-stream. In the newspapers of the early twentieth century photographic half tone blocks were routinely manipulated by hand to add definition and detail, indistinct chin lines were etched in, intrusive details were burnished back. To our eyes this gives their reproduction a strange, ambiguous, painterly kind of look. And it is hard for us to see how the indexical charge of verisimilitude which the early illustrated newspapers were capitalising on was not irredeemably compromised by these hybrid image surfaces. But a close look at a contemporary newspaper reveals image surfaces which, far from being photographically inscrutable, are strewn with digital artefacts: aliased edges as fragments from video grabs are enlarged beyond the resolution of the original data file, intrusive lines of digital noise as unsharp masks have been used to attempt to define indistinct chin lines, and so on. Yet paradoxically, within the new media literacy of the contemporary newspaper reader, these digital artefacts become signs of verisimilitude, reality effects. Digital noise becomes, like the gravelly grain of over-developed Kodak Tri-X film, a connotation of reality with a heightened sense of contingency.

¹⁸ L. Manovich, 2001, p203.

The HANDOVER

HOW THE DEAL WAS DONE AT LAST

Hebron attack in the middle of Israeli political speculation... Then Gold, his chief foreign policy adviser, said in an interview.

"He will require backing of the Centre-Left in order to advance his centre-right agenda."

What brought Netanyahu so far so fast remains a matter of intense debate in Israel.

Gold argued that Netanyahu had proved "that when he says he's committed to agreements that his predecessors signed, he means it. More than that, Gold said, Netanyahu's rightist credentials enabled him "to deliver something"—the Hebron withdrawal—"which his predecessors, factually, didn't deliver."

Ehud Barak, the favourite to succeed Shimon Peres as leader of the opposition Labour Party, said he doubted Netanyahu was "crossing the Rubicon" to a sincere commitment to the peace talks pioneered by Peres and the late Yitzhak Rabin.

He said it galled him, even so, to see Netanyahu "delighting one by one the same step he described as crimes when they were taken by Rabin".

Netanyahu has made it clear that his bedrock beliefs have not changed. He reiterated to rabbis this month that the Oslo accord on which yesterday's pact was based was "a bad agreement" that his predecessors should not have signed.

Yitzhak Shamir, the last Likud prime minister, said in an interview from retirement that Netanyahu had shown himself to be weak—abandoning "all the ideas of his movement" in order "to please the United States".

"In my opinion every agreement with Arafat and every concession to the Arabs can only weaken Israel, and not strengthen it," he said.

"I don't know who invented the principle that the decisions of the previous government have to be fulfilled," he added. "That is naive and malicious."

In the end, the costs of

Hebron: Jewish settlers in Hebrew action the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Benjamin Netanyahu, of selling them out by agreeing to hand the West Bank city over to Palestinian rule.

"Netanyahu has fallen into Arafat's trap," said Mr Nissan Arnon, a spokesman for the 400 militant Jewish settlers living in West Bank cities of 120,000 Palestinians. "It'll be us down."

Mr Moshe Ben Zimra, former spokesman for the settlers, said "what we want is in Hebron, and will fight its way there forever."

"We will also look into legal ways of fighting against the surrender of Benjamin Netanyahu," he said.

Alex leaders of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories held an emergency meeting in Jerusalem before the Netanyahu-Arafat summit which wrapped up the deal on handing over Hebron to Palestinian rule.

They plan to put pressure on ministers and MPs to block a deal, which they fear would lead to the surrender of most of the territories captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

While the Jewish settlers were enraged by the Hebron agreement, leaders from around the world welcomed it.

The United States President, Mr Bill Clinton, said the US would do all it could to support the peace process.

"This achievement brings to a successful conclusion the talks that were launched in Washington last September and it brings us another step closer to a lasting, secure Middle East peace," Mr Clinton said. "Once again, the forces of peace have prevailed over a history of division."

Mr Clinton said the two leaders called to tell him the news and he thanked them for their efforts, but he urged all sides to remain vigilant in ensuring the continuation of the peace process.

"It takes a time to relax,

The Handover, How the deal was done at least. *The Australian*

The layout styles of contemporary newspapers are splitting in order to conserve and protect the indexical charge which is still the newspaper's main stock-in-trade. In the magazine sections—business, sport, lifestyle—photographic images are losing their edges and merging with other graphic, textual and illustrated visual information. These busy continuous surfaces are not only more in tune with the intrinsically computational nature of newspaper layout programs (which are themselves just another new-media object) but they also becoming very like the surfaces of early illustrated newspapers where text, decoration, hand-engraving and photo-mechanical engraving were freely imbricated, and the images themselves were often montaged or re-enacted. However the hard news sections of the newspapers have been quarantined from the lubricious new-media potential of image manipulation and layout programs. The autonomous, inviolable frame, with its signification of an unmediated snapshot of reality, remains the reigning structuring principle of hard news layout, even as it is no longer necessary within the logic of the layout software itself.¹⁹

¹⁹ Some newspapers have found it necessary to re-pledge allegiance to the snapshot within the digital domain. The *Canberra Times* in publishing their “Photographers’ and artists’ ethics code” pledged: “The editor must always approve any ‘enhancement’ that affects the composition of the photograph.” *Canberra*

The snapshot, or frame grab, redefined politics in the twentieth century, and will continue to define it in the twenty-first. For instance terrorists commit terrorist acts in order to create a spectacle which will be photographed and videoed, and broadcast and published, in order to terrorise the people of the governments they oppose. Terrorism only works within a new media landscape still defined by the logic of the snapshot. Terrorists attempt to re-organise history around a decisive moment by interrupting and re-organising the routine diurnal circulation of the media with a terrible frozen image. When each terrorist image is re-broadcast it returns the viewer to the instant in time which now feels out of time, the instant before which everything was different, and after which nothing will be the same.²⁰

Although the politics of the image are becoming more and more volatile, recently accusations of digital faking have died down. In late 2001, during an election campaign defined by racism and xenophobia, the Australian government published some frame grabs from a Royal Australian Navy video which purported to prove that asylum seekers had deliberately thrown their children overboard in order to put ‘pressure’ on the Australian government and people. After the election campaign had been won by the government it transpired that the frame grabs were frauds, and the fact that they were frauds had been known to the government during the campaign. But the faking hadn’t involved a manipulation of the image. Rather it was a fraudulent ascription of the few images, which showed nothing more than people floating in the water, to a longer video sequence supposedly officially documenting the incident. It was the exegesis that was fraudulent, the pictures, which in fact never ever documented any pertinent details in the

Times, 4 May 1996. However these protocols do not extend to glossy magazines. Readers of those magazines now accept that in the glamour portraits of their favourite celebrities not only will the celebrity’s epidermis be ‘digitally airbrushed’, but that more radical cosmetic surgery will have been performed as well – enlarging breasts, removing tummies and even lengthening legs – to hybridise the actual celebrity with a synthetic fantasy model. The same readers, however, assume that the paparazzi shots of the same celebrity in the same magazine will be left unmanipulated, in keeping with the celebrity’s ultimate fate of being merely mortal after all.

²⁰ There are discussions of the politicality and spatiality of photojournalistic images in the context of the Middle East crisis in, A. Azoulay, *Death’s Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001.

first place, were simply published to give the already confused verbal accounts some non-specific denotational authority.

These examples illustrate the parallels between the media landscapes of the early twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. In both contexts there is a feeling that public opinion will be formed more readily if the public sees, as well as hears. In both cases there seems to be a heightened sense of connection between seeing transmitted images and connecting, viscerally, emotionally and affectively, across abysses of estrangement. And crucially, in both periods, the nature of the image itself is relatively volatile. In the early twentieth century the snapshot model for photographic verisimilitude was still being formed. In the early twentieth-first century that model was re-forming itself, shoring itself up, so it could persist as one key element within a broader, more liquid, new visual logic. In both historical moments anxieties about fakes and frauds were a sign of the renegotiations and trade-offs taking place on a day-to-day, practical, micro-political level.

What the parallels between these two moments teach us is not so much a historicist cyclicity, but something about photography. The photograph's connection to reality is a political, social and cultural need, as much as a technological and natural endowment. Photographic truth is produced as much by its 'performance' for audiences which have specific expectations and who are trained and retrained in protocols of looking, as it is by an ontological contiguity with reality.

4

PHOTOGRAPHIC TRUTHS TODAY

TEN

THE PHOTOGRAPH IN HISTORY AND MEMORY

More than you remember, an experience you'll not forget – Australian War Memorial ad, 2000.

Despite everything, despite the structural dissolution of the medium into motile digital data, and despite a long history of its slippery semiosis, photography still persists in producing photographs, each with some degree of denotational content, and each still more or less contained within a rectangular border and defining a perspectival space. Indeed, perhaps never in photography's manifold history has the photograph as object been such a potent cultural artefact. For instance, as will be illustrated in subsequent chapters, it has become a journalistic cliché to photograph people who are traumatised by some memory or event in their past in the act of clutching to their chest, or holding out to the camera, a talismanic photograph. And it is rare now to see a monument unveiled which does not incorporate a photographic image, often a private snapshot, somewhere in its architectural design.

In the past within photographic theory, the photograph was seen to be inimical to both memory and history, or at least to problematise both terms irrevocably. But both these current uses of the photograph as object—the haptic 'performance' of it as talisman, and the architectonic deployment of it as monument—seem to confirm photography's necessity for the contemporary public observance of memory and history.

Benjamin and Barthes were keen to distinguish the conscious labour of *mémoire volontaire* from the pure rush of *mémoire involontaire*, and they placed photography on the side of the former against the latter. Kracauer and Benjamin were also keen to distinguish the false

consciousness of historicist narratives from a political understanding of historical contradictions, and they considered that although photography was intimately involved in the former, it could bring the fragmentation and reification of historical consciousness to such a pitch as to finally induce the latter.

But now the theoretical niceties of these distinctions seem swept away by the enormous turbulence in the contemporary experience of collective memory and public history. A turbulence, dislocation and fragmentation which have been caused above all else by the ubiquity of photography and film

Historical consciousness and photography

The past is now indubitably either a photograph or a film. We cannot 'think' the past, any period of the past, without first filtering it through a photographic image, either a Hollywood fabulation, an archival image, or a personal snapshot. In fact the very notion of 'seeing' the past only gained currency with the late eighteenth century proliferation of book illustrations that began to accustom people to the past as a visual, rather than an oral, sensory, or kinaesthetic, experience.¹ But with the invention of photography we not only thought the past visually, we began to think it photographically. The photograph has become the paradigmatic object of history: it is not only in itself a tangible patinated artefact that travels through time and displays its auratic accretions, but it is also a limpid window, a temporal worm-hole, directly back to the past.

As discussed in previous chapters, documentary film makers have fully explored Benjamin's optical unconscious by putting photographs under a rostrum camera and zooming in or out of them or tracking over them in order to narrativise the various secret details that were incidentally frozen in that historical instant. But some historians see the seductions of this concept of 'live' history as dangerous. They can become addictive and, eventually, upset the traditional temporal order of history. To Raphael Samuel for instance:

¹ D. Lowenthal, *How We Know the Past, The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p257.

When historians first turned towards old photographs, it was a way of modernising [history], of bringing the outside in and bridging (or vaulting) the gap between past and present. It promised to turn our subjects, metaphorically speaking, into contemporaries, physiognomically recognisable as likenesses of ourselves, whatever the contrasts in comportment and dress. It was a way of seeing the nineteenth century with twentieth century eyes ... Matters changed with the ... growing disenchantment with the promise of Modernism ... Images came to be chosen—not least by historians themselves—not for their intimation of the shape of things to come, or as an exemplification of those larger unities which transcend mere temporal division, but for their aura of 'pastness'. The history which accompanied them ... turned on a dialectic of 'now' and 'then', rather than—as in the more traditional historical narrative, with its sequence of events or developmental laws of change—'before' and 'after'. Instead of the past being a prelude to the present it was an alternative to it, a reverse image of the way we live now, and 'period' photographs were chosen accordingly. ... The cumulative effect of these discoveries, at least in the popular imagination and, albeit subliminally in that of historians, was to create an iconography of the national past (at any rate the recent past) in which lifestyle rather than politics or economics became the subject of history's grand narrative.²

This generates problems for the historian. Most historic photographs are far more readily the occasion for investment and psychological projection by the present viewer, than sober historical exegesis. Photography turns chance historical residues into precious icons. This puts the past up for grabs by any passing fad of the present: the ironic retro-chic of popsters; the sentimental appeals of social conservatives; the traditionalist programs of back-to-nature counter-culturist; advertisers looking for connotations of old fashioned quality and service to adhere to their latest products; and the desperate genealogical searches of economically dislocated and geographically orphaned populations for origins and purpose beyond the regimes of corporatised globalisation.

² R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London, Verso, 1994, p332-333.

In addition the Hollywood institutional mode of representation has trained viewers to assume a historically omnipotent camera eye, and has stimulated their lust to know and see everything. In documentary film practice, photographs and film footage are now automatically and unquestionably used as visual stand-ins for recollection, regardless of whether they come from factual or fictional sources.³

The main manifestation of this new form of post-modern memory is the expansion of a museal culture beyond the institutional boundaries of the museum. The museal now encompasses such global phenomena as the restoration of entire, mnemonic urban precincts; the 'retro' in all its pop cultural manifestations; the self-musealisation of the video camera and the genealogical quest; and the shift of the subterranean archive to the eternal electronic glare of the on-line database.

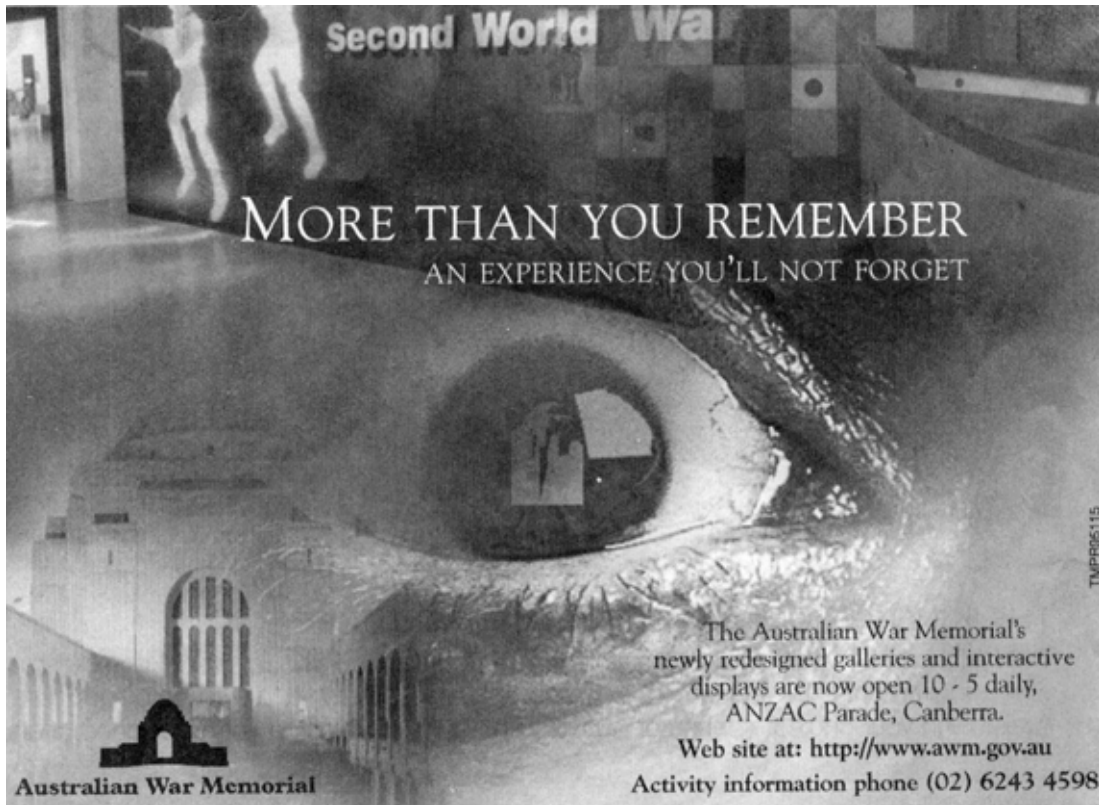
To Andreas Huyssen the "museum in this broad sense has become a key paradigm of contemporary cultural activities".⁴ The museum can no longer be dismissed as merely a modernist symbol of reactionary ossification, it is now a performance site for a spectacular array of technological effects which resurrect the past within the present. The museum now exceeds its original role as ideological repository. Although it still retains some mausoleal connotations of burial, decay and forgetting, it is now also the site of spectacular phantasmagoric resurrections of the past—all of which are not only mediated by photographic and video technology but also inevitably contaminated by the lifestyle fantasies of the present.

The old museum experience has changed irrevocably. The museum is being used in new and unpredictable ways by memory-hungry visitors. Older feelings of a continuity of cultural possession which the museum may once have embodied are replaced by annual blockbusters on random themes—treasures of this or that ancient civilisation one year, the romance of this or that epoque the next. The private moments of contemplation and

³ D. MacDougall, *Films of Memory, Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V.A.R. 1990-1994*, L. Taylor, New York and London, Routledge, 1994.

⁴ A. Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking time in a culture of amnesia*, New York and London, Routledge, 1995p14.

personal connection to the past through the auratic object which it may once, perhaps, have evoked, are replaced by the hyper-reproducibility of an iconic media image and the new 'sublimity' of total immersion in the swells and surges of the oceanic blockbuster crowds.



Newspaper ad for the Australian War Memorial. 2000

It is easy to dismiss the experience of the post-modern museum as debased and shallow, historically free floating rather than grounded in tradition, impersonal and commodified rather than epiphanic and meditative, a matter of evanescent intensities and effects rather than of feelings of permanent connection to the great river of history and culture. However the most serious charge against the post-modern museum is that it displaces time itself as it spatialises history and memory in its synchronous mise-en-scène of technological special effects and pat historical tableaux. But perhaps the post-modern museum is performing an important function after all, perhaps the heterogenous present is demanding a heterogenous past as well. The postmodern museum may be being used by fragmented postmodern subjects to pragmatically attempt, in Huyssen's words, to "live with the fragments, even to forge shifting and unfixed identities out of such fragments,

rather than tracing some elusive unity or totality.”⁵ The post-modern museum may be failing to offer convincing meta-narratives, but it is still potentially able to offer useful multiple narratives to a hybridised present.

Photography and digital photography are intrinsic parts of this new museal mise-en-scène. Their phantasmagoric effects are used by the deracinated crowd to forge, within the museum, a provisional experience of identity out of fragments which are both deterritorialised and deteleologised. The experience of the contemporary museum visitor can be used to cast light on the experience of the viewer of propaganda exhibitions trying to bridge historical abysses of the early twentieth century. They too attempted to forge out of intergeneric fragments temporarily fixed nodes of national identity and historical connection, using as the medium for reconnection the production of communal affectivity by technological special effects.

The memory boom

We feel less and less embedded in time, less and less cradled by the past, but at the same time we are undoubtedly going through a memory boom. The previous temporal verities of past, present and future are being fragmented into a kind of hybrid temporality.⁶ Now the ordered temporality of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is fragmenting. The rise of throwback ethnic tribalisms and the existence of Third World experiences within the First World have produced a hybrid geopolitical temporality. At the same time electronic networks such as telephones, satellite television, and latterly the World Wide Web are globally instantaneous and synchronous. Through instantaneous access to stored information and data archives they synchronously provide multiple images of the non-synchronous. On the net, yesterday, last year or last century either exist in its instantaneous, synchronous present—or they don’t exist at all. Not only are temporal categories of past and future eliminated, but temporal qualities like agedness and newness, contemplation and anticipation, familiarity and surprise, auratic original and subsequent copy, are also bleached away by the perpetual replenishment of the pixel. To Huyssen, writing in the midst of eighties media theory hyperbole, post-modern subjects

⁵ p28.

might imagine that the past is being gravitationally pulled into the fatal vortex of the present.

Speed destroys space, and it erases temporal distance. In both cases the mechanism of physiological perception is altered. The more memory we store on data banks, the more the past is sucked into the orbit of the present, ready to be called up on the screen. A sense of historical continuity or, for that matter, discontinuity, both of which depend on a before and an after, gives way to the simultaneity of all times and spaces readily accessible in the present.⁷

At the same time the black hole of the present is getting smaller and smaller and more and more intense as life speeds up. The voracity of late capitalism's built-in obsolescence of each brand-new new is shrinking the temporal dimensions of the now. Yesterday's scientific, technological and cultural innovations are being consigned to the past at faster and faster rates. And they exist in the past no longer to be a cradle or wellspring for the present, but rather to be randomly resurrected as today's momentary retro style. The more the past is latently stored in various data banks for instantaneous and non-synchronous resurrection in the present, the less our culture's willingness and, indeed, ability to engage in active processes of remembrance. The result is technological amnesia.

The response of the post-modern subject to the combined historical forces of today's technological amnesia, chronological fragmentation, and temporal contraction is, paradoxically, a memory boom. This memory boom contests the claustrophobic cocoon of timelessness spun by the electronic networks and is an expression of the basic human need to feel at home in time once more, to live within extended and stable structures of temporality.

The postmodern memory boom is not like the nineteenth-century invention of legitimating national and imperial traditions which Nietzsche attacked as giving cultural coherence to conflictive societies in the throes of the industrial revolution. Nor is it the

⁶ p8.

⁷ p253.

counter-hegemonic, lived alternative to objectifying modernist history that will lead to a better future, which Benjamin sought. Memory today is not a process of an ongoing, respectful, coherent, dialogue with the past. Rather,

[T]he mnemonic convulsions of our own culture seem chaotic, fragmentary and free floating. They do not seem to have a clear political or territorial focus, but they do express our society's need for temporal anchoring when in the wake of the information revolution, the relationship between past, present and future is being transformed.⁸



Martyn Jolly, Man with photographs of fellow workers at 'Junction Shaft 1957' around his neck, Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme Reunion, Lake Jindabyne, 17 October 1999.

These mnemonic convulsions seek to slow down the speed of information processing and to resist the dissolution of time in the synchronicity of the data bank. They are attempts to drop anchors and throw out lifelines, in any direction, from a present which might appear to be breaking up amidst temporal turbulence.

In these terms the spirit photograph can be seen as a personal mnemonic convulsion. The 1920s was a climate of mass grief over the mass death of World War One and its aftermath in the flu epidemic—a death rate with no historical precedent and no historical logic. The

spirit photograph was an attempt to extend the positivist logic of photographic technology along the trajectory of personal memory, to throw a lifeline across the chasms of death to people suddenly torn out of time.

Media monumentalities

Today even the mass media itself seems to be acquiring some of the qualities formerly the preserve of the museum or the memorial. In 1997 two and a half billion people, including six million Australians, are estimated to have tuned in to the funeral of Princess Diana where, for literally hours on end nothing happened in conventional televisual terms as, accompanied by only occasional gnomic commentary and ad-free, the gun-carriage was pulled through London's streets and later the hearse was driven from London all the way to Northhamptonshire.⁹ This thickening and solidification of TV temporality appears to be occurring more and more frequently, with the broadcast of funerals and other mnemonic services. This sombre enactment of an entropic dilation of media time is always scheduled, and forms the opposite pole to the sudden decisive moment of the terrorist or disaster image as it punctures the TV schedule.

Media images have become a collective family album, used analogously to the individual family album—emblematically, ritually, or as a way of coping with and accommodating the past. After massive collective trauma there may not be any films or documentaries for many years, and then a spate of representations—from serious minded documentaries to mawkish Hollywood melodramas— as a form of collective exorcism. The classic films and books of World War One weren't released until the 1930s. In the case of the American War in Vietnam it was only after such a media purging in the 1980s that the Washington memorial was initiated and built. As in the process of individual anamnesis, the media performs the work of mourning by repetition, reduction, familiarisation and simplification.

⁸ p7.

⁹ 'Millions of Australians tune in to Say Goodbye and 'Half The World Watched', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September, 1997, p4 and p5.

Certain film and TV images also aggregate into lithic media presences through ritual repetition: every ANZAC day we are shown the same few seconds of weary feet pushing down through the mud of the Kokoda Track, or the same lone bugler against the sunrise. Repetition becomes the key factor in this commemorative use of images. Media images which are not repeated are not remembered. When media memory has substituted for our organic memory we cede our ability to remember. Because images package up experiences of the past, they can just as easily be used to dispose of it as to retain it. (Remember how you were glued to the telly during the Gulf War? How much of it can you remember now?) Every photographic image is therefore a function of an archive, an archive in which photographs are much more likely to lie dormant and forgotten, as to be retrieved to reintroduce the past to the present.

How history, collective memory and personal memory condition each other

History and collective memory are in a dialectical relationship with each other. History is removed from the flow of life, installed in texts and housed in institutions. Maurice Halbwachs has described history as self-conscious, analytical and abstract. It is generically structured, dealing with themes, teleologies, taxonomies and causations. It is written at a standardised, methodical, chronological pace. It is putatively subject to the rule of empirical proof. History accumulates data from which it derives patterns. Memory, on the other hand, is lived, instinctual and spontaneous. It is subjective and organic, warmly alive in concrete images, social actions and inhabited landscapes. Memory warps chronology. It is more likely to measure time in terms of generations – ‘in your grandfather’s day’; or by randomly occurring markers – ‘before the war’; or as a measureless mythical presence – ‘in the olden days’. It occurs in spontaneous, ephemeral fragments and it needs no proof other than conviction. Memory deals with the exceptional and the sensational which have scarified the past.¹⁰ Memory is a means of inhabiting a particular space and time with our lived bodies, history consists of ‘disciplinary chronicles’ that aim to certify supposedly universal aspirations.¹¹

¹⁰ R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, London, Verso, 1994, page ix.

¹¹ C. Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p74.

But history does not simply begin where memory ends. It is not simply the active intellectual labour which lays down in a concrete, stable form transient evanescent memories. Nor, on the other hand, does it necessarily seek to exterminate memory, replacing our holistic past with their doctored version of it. Both anamnesis and historiography are intellectual processes. Each relies on the other to refresh and authorise itself. Each requires the labour of perpetual re-inscription through myriad anniversary acts or commemoration, or through continual tussles of revision.

Collective memory takes place within a large range of psychological functions – not only in overt grief or celebration, but also in unconscious quotidian habits, personal linguistic anomalies and catchphrases, and so on. In collective memory this interior anamnesis is shared and supported within a large range external mnemonic mechanisms, such as public rituals, significant landscapes or precincts, local toponymies, books and film, museum displays, historical texts themselves and, more and more importantly, the mass media.

An individual's personal memory is in constant dialogue with collective memory. Individual memories need validation from collective memory if they are to endure. We need other people's memories to confirm our own. Sharing and validating memories sharpens them and promotes their recall. Events we alone know about are less certainly, less easily evoked. In the process of knitting our own discontinuous recollections into narratives, we revise personal components to fit the collectively remembered past, and gradually cease to distinguish between them.¹²

Through the process of anamnesis individual memories are revised to fit in with collective narratives, until they merge. We flatter ourselves by linking our own recollections with great moments from public history, and take every opportunity to link our private historical temporality with the grand temporality of history through the knitted lineaments of memory. We remember where we were when this or that great public figure

¹² J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992, p47.

died, and sometimes erroneously project ourselves back into the heart of famous events, or the foreground of famous images.¹³

In addition collective memory continually grinds against history. This memory history dialectic has been a key talking point in recent historiography.¹⁴ Oral historians are well aware that history affects and changes memory, bending and mutating it to fit in with itself. Alistair Thomson's book *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* chronicles instances of the traumatic reorganisation of the memory of individual Anzac soldiers under the rule of mythic Anzac history.

[T]he apparently private process of composing safe memories is in fact very public. Our memories are risky and painful if they do not fit public myths, so we try to compose our memories to ensure they do fit with what is publicly acceptable. Just as we seek the affirmation of our personal identities within the publics in which we live, we also seek affirmation of our memories.¹⁵

We no longer have a situation of the flood of photographed history sweeping away the dams of memory, or the photographic *mémoire volontaire* repressing the sensual *mémoire involontaire*. Instead we have personal memory grinding within collective memory which grinds against history. We have the media performing the role of both a collective family album, and a new form of public memorial. We have the photograph being used within private 'memory convulsions' which seek to stabilise individual identity as it rocks on a sea of temporal turbulence. And we have the photograph being used within museal phantasmagorias of the past as an alternative present. In the following chapters I will discuss specific uses of the photograph within this complex context. In contemporary indigenous art photomedia practice, for instance, photography is once again called upon to conjure uncanny ghosts from the past into the present. In my collection of 'haptic

¹³ D. Lowenthal, 'How We Know the Past', *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985 p197; M. Jolly, 'The Returned: Memory and History in Classic Australian Photographs', *Media International Australia*, 78, November, 1995; A. Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994.

¹⁴ P. Hamilton, 'The Knife Edge: Debates About Memory and History', *Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia*, K. Darian-Smith and P. Hamilton, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994

¹⁵ A. Thomson, 1994

photographs' we can see how photographs are expertly 'performed' to call history and memory together into the same corporeal space. And in my collection of 'monumental photographs' we can see the photograph becoming intergeneric and interpellating the viewer as object and architecture, before it is screen and image.

ELEVEN

THE SPECTRES OF ABORIGINAL HISTORY

This is where the 'ghosts' which may cause us to 'smile' or to 'worry' continue to flourish – Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs, 1998.¹

Spectres haunted the iconography of World War One. They were convenient visual metaphors for the persistent ties of memory despite experiential estrangement, and for the persistent presence of the dead within the experience of grief for those left behind. Some spiritualists also saw photographic spectres as positivist evidence that the dead had not simply been ascribed to the past, but were still involved in the affairs of the present. In contemporary Australian visual culture photography has once more been used to call up the dead. Just as in the historical crisis of World War One, in the current crisis of indigenous history and memory images of the dead have returned as visual metaphors, but also to invoke the actual, almost palpable presence of past ancestors within the present.

During the past two decades there has been a flowering of Australian indigenous photography, mostly by urban Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Before the 1980s there were very few active indigenous photographers—Mervyn Bishop is virtually the only example. During the course of the eighties, as Bishop's own career came to be recognised², a few other indigenous photographers also came to prominence: most

¹ Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, Melbourne University Press, 1998, p42.

² *In Dreams: Mervyn Bishop Thirty Years Photography 1969-1990*, curated by Tracey Moffatt, Australian Centre for Photography, 1991.

spectacularly Tracey Moffatt, but also Michael Riley, Brenda Croft and Ricky Maynard.³ But in the 1990s there was a veritable explosion.⁴ There was also a general change in the style of indigenous art photography: away from a relatively straightforward documentary style—as was used in the Australian Bicentennial documentary project *After Two Hundred Years*⁵ and in the indigenous documentation of the Bicentennial protests—and towards a more postmodern, theoretically savvy, ‘art school’ style.⁶

This explosion parallels similar explosions of urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creativity in painting, film and theatre. But more importantly it also parallels a growth in indigenous history telling, inaugurated by Marcia Langton’s *After the Tent Embassy* project documenting the background to the contemporary Aboriginal struggle, much of which relied on archival photographs.⁷ As well, this explosion accompanied a ratcheting up of the pitch of popular debate about indigenous issues and in particular our ethical responsibility to the history and memory of race relations in Australia. Those fateful few words—Mabo, Wik and The Stolen Children—not only resonated plangently in Australia’s historical consciousness for a brief time, they also planted a specific array of images in our collective visual consciousness: barefooted kids in orphanages, Aboriginal ‘murderers’ in chains, and the bearded Mabo himself.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that contemporary urban indigenous photography is characterised by two things: a wordiness, a play with meaning or struggle with the weight of words—both English and indigenous; and the re-use of old photographs—both historical documents and family snapshots.

³ The first group exhibition of Aboriginal photographers, *Naidoc Week Aboriginal and Islander Photographers Exhibition*, was held in Sydney in 1986. See an exhibition review by Tracey Moffatt, *Photofile*, Summer 1986.

⁴ National Gallery of Australia, *Re-take: Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Photography*, 1998–1999.

⁵ P. Taylor (ed.), *After 200 years: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia Today*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988.

⁶ K. Gellatly, ‘Showing the Moment to Itself: indigenous documentary practice’, *Photofile*, 58, December, 1999.

⁷ M. Langton, *After the Tent Embassy*, Sydney, Valadon Publishing, 1983. Catherine De Lorenzo, ‘Delayed Exposure: Contemporary Aboriginal Photography’, Brenda Croft ‘Blak Lik Mi’, *Art In Australia*, 1997, 35, 1.

Virtually all indigenous photographers have, at some time or other, re-used old photographs: Leah King-Smith, Brook Andrew, Rea⁸, Julie Gough⁹, Fiona Foley and the painter Gordon Bennett have all directly copied and re-used archival museum and gallery photographs; Fiona Foley, the early Tracey Moffatt¹⁰ and Darren Siwes have renegotiated their relationship to these 'received' images by some kind of performative response in the present; Brenda Croft, Destiny Deacon and Gordon Bennett have directly re-used family snapshots in their work; and received styles or retro atmospheres have also been evoked latterly by Tracey Moffatt, Destiny Deacon and Brenda Croft.

This is not unique to indigenous photography. Old photographs, both personal and historic, and retro atmospheres, both oppressive and kitsch, haunt contemporary photography globally. In particular migrant artists such as Elizabeth Gertsakis, for instance, in her 1989 work *A Glamorous Private History*, have used old photographs to talk about their dislocation from the past and their, at least partial, alienation from a present which still marginalises their heritage. Many settled white artists, such as say Narelle Jubelin who made needlepoint copies of colonial photographs, or Fiona MacDonald who interwove different colonial photographs, also re-used old photographs in the 1980s to talk about general issues of post-colonialism in Australia and elsewhere. But then, as Andreas Huyssen points out, and as discussed in the previous chapter, today everybody is dislocated from their past. It is part of our general millennial condition in which we have been cast adrift by the multitude of twentieth century geopolitical diasporas, and muffled by mediating technologies which make historical consciousness and collective memory vicarious experiences.¹¹

Indigenous photography is a more politically intense instance of this general phenomenon. The political stakes for indigenous appropriation are that much higher, because, as Hannah Fink has observed:

⁸ Rea, *Look Who's calling the Kettle Black*, Kodak digital prints, 1992, digitally collaged archival photographs of 'missionised' aboriginal women being trained as domestic servants. See Rea, *Ê'EYE/I'MABLAKPIECE*, Sydney, Boomali, 1997.

⁹ Julie Gough, *She Loves Me She Loves Me Not*, c1996, installation with laser disc printouts.

¹⁰ Tracey Moffatt, *Some Lads*, gelatine silver photographs 1986.

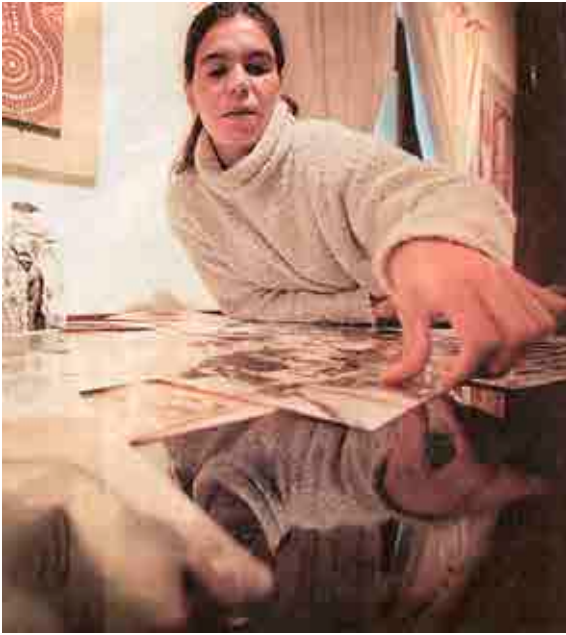
Representations of indigenous people are not only part of Australia's imaginary but most often are literally imaginary, part of the nation's mythic unseen. Destiny Deacon, Brenda L. Croft, Michael Riley, Leah King-Smith and Brook Andrew each deal with the received imagery of the Aboriginal phantasm, whether a nineteenth century photograph taken for 'anthropological' purposes, a garden gnome of the 'noble savage', or 'native' designs used to decorate an ashtray, in a 'theatre of politics in which self-representation has become a sophisticated device'.¹²

Certainly few peoples have been so brutally dislocated from their past as Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. And they have long used photography both symbolically and forensically to find their past. Many indigenous narratives of historical discovery start with family snapshots. And several Australian museums now take a proactive role in using their collections to re-forge individual historical connections. For instance the South Australian Museum's Aboriginal Community and Family History Unit helps Aboriginal people learn more about their families and communities using photographs originally taken by Norman Tindale and Joseph Birdsell and held in the Museum's Anthropology Archives.¹³

¹¹ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking time in a culture of amnesia*, New York and London, Routledge, 1995, , Introduction pp3-9.

¹² Hannah Fink, 'Cracking Up', *Australian Humanities Review*, <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-1999/>

¹³ See also the Berndt Collection in the Western Australian Museum, and the exhibition *Portraits of our Elders* by the Queensland Museum. Michael Aird, *Portraits of our Elders*, Brisbane, Queensland Museum, 1993. For an important discussion of the relationship between a contemporary traditional indigenous community and anthropological photographs of their community taken in the 1950s see, R. Poignant and A. Poignant, 'Life History', *Encounter at Nagalarramba*, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1996.



Coming to terms with history: Lorraine Hunter catalogues photographs at the Berndt Museum, Picture Megan Lewis, *The Australian*, 14/7/99 p44.

However the irony is that unlike a white person using family snaps as *aide mémoires* at a family reunion, or historical images as forensic genealogical clues, indigenous seekers after their family history are often using anthropological photographs that were not made to document individuals, but to identify anthropological types; and not as systematic social records, but as fragmented scientific specimens. They were originally taken not to confirm historical presence, but to file away an archival record in order to posthumously confirm the historical extinction of their subjects. It is this bitter irony that makes the symbolic use of old photographs in urban indigenous art, and the forensic use of old photographs by Aboriginal people of the stolen generation, more prevalent, and potentially more historically potent, than migrant or mainstream uses of old photographs.

In the late eighties and early nineties Gordon Bennett was making paintings such as *Tryptych*, 1989, one section of which, titled *Requiem*, superimposed the geometric lines of three perspectival pyramids 'shooting' towards an image of Trucanini derived from the well know C. A. Woolley photograph of 1866. The image was made spectral and degraded by a process which looks like multiple photocopying. But to Gordon Bennett even perspective itself is politicised

[P]erspective may be seen as symbolic of a certain kind of power structure relating to a particular European world view ... Aborigines caught in this system of

representation remain 'frozen' as objects within the mapped territory of a European perceptual grid.¹⁴

Lately anthropological portraits have been held up by indigenous artists as not only the theoretical paradigm of colonial attempts at genocide, but also as acts of violence technically akin to, and instrumentally part of, that very process of that attempted genocide. For this reason the photographs used by urban indigenous photographers cannot be used as monuments, because they do not commemorate a historical closure on the past. In a way they are anti-monuments, images of unquiet ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves. Their re-use attempts to capture a feeling of active dialogue with the past, a two way corridor through time, almost a voodoo quality, or a sense of New Age channelling. Brenda Croft in her Barthesian meditation on nineteenth century colonial Aboriginal photographs 'Laying Ghosts To Rest', comes closest to articulating this feeling. She allows herself the indulgence of retroactively investing the agency of political resistance in the portraits when she says:

Images like these have haunted me since I was a small child and ... [and] were instrumental in guiding me to use the tools of photography in my work. ... The haunted faces of our ancestors challenge and remind us to commemorate them and acknowledge their existence, to help lay them, finally, to rest. ¹⁵

¹⁴ Gordon Bennett, 'Aesthetics and Iconography: an artist's approach', *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians*, Dusseldorf, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1993.

¹⁵ Brenda L. Croft, 'Laying ghosts to rest', *Portraits of Oceania*, Judy Annear, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997, p9 & 14.



Leah King-Smith. *Untitled (4/17)*, Cibachrome photograph, 1.2m x 1.2m. 1991

One of the first indigenous photographers to receive unexpected international success with a series that re-used old photographs was Leah King-Smith. Her exhibition *Patterns of Connection*, 1992, travelled nationally and internationally. In her large deeply coloured 'photo-compositions' anthropological photographs were liberated from the State Library of Victoria to be superimposed as spectral presences on indigenous landscapes. In the catalogue the process was described as allowing:

Aboriginal people [to] flow into the land, into space reclaimed for them by the photographer ... From the flaring of velvety colours and forms, translucent ghosts appear within a numinous world.¹⁶

Clare Williamson describes how King-Smith pictorially, rather than rhetorically, invests her original images with the same ability Brenda Croft feels to project the past into the present.

It is instructive to examine King-Smith's imagery alongside the historical images which are her sources. These small black and white photograph's 'contain' their aboriginal subjects as objects which can be held in the hand, collected, stored and viewed at will. Their placement of the figure within a fabricated European (or a

¹⁶ J. Phipps, 'Elegy, Meditation and Retribution', *Patterns Of Connection*, Melbourne, Victorian Centre for Photography, 1992.

constructed 'native' one), and set well back from the picture plane, creates a gulf between viewer and subject, and an inequitable relationship in favour of the viewer. King-Smith reverses the order. Large colour saturated images 'impress' the viewer. The figures are brought right to the picture plane, seemingly extending beyond the frame and checking our gaze with theirs.¹⁷

Brook Andrew invests the bodies of his nineteenth century subjects – who he releases from the closet of the past by copying their images from the archive of the nineteenth century postcard photographer Charles Kerry – not only with a libidinous body image inscribed within the terms of a contemporary 'queer' masculinity, but also with defiant Barbara Krugeresque slogans such as *Sexy and Dangerous*, 1996, *I Split Your Gaze*, 1997 and *Ngajuu Ngaay Nginduugirr, [I see you]*, 1998. These works attempt to reverse the relationship of subject and object in the nineteenth century colonial portrait around the axis of the trajectory of the gaze, and to make the contemporary viewer the subject of a defiant, politically updated gaze returned from history itself.

¹⁷ Clare Williamson, 'Leah King-Smith: Patterns of Connection', *Colonial Post Colonial*, Melbourne, Museum of Modern Art at Heide, 1996, p46.



Brook Andrew, *Sexy and dangerous*, digital photograph, 1996



The centre image of this sheet of photographs is the archival source for Brook Andrew's appropriation: Charles Kerry, sheet of copied photographs, 1880s-1890s, Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Even when the contemporary indigenous artist's body ritualistically and purgatorially takes on colonial subjugation, the historic photograph and, more significantly, the alignment of gazes, is still the vitalising channel of connection. In the work of Brook Andrew the historical objectifying gaze is simply reflected straight back to the present moment to be immediately re-inscribed in a contemporary politico-sexual discourse. However, in contrast, in Fiona Foley's re-enactments of the colonial photographs of her

Badtjala ancestors, *Native Blood*, 1994, the gaze is stopped dead in its tracks by Foley's own obdurate, physical body. To the post-colonial theorist Olu Oguibe:

In Foley's photographs the Other makes herself available, exposes herself, invites our gaze if only to re-enact the original gaze, the original violence perpetrated on her. She does not disrupt this gaze nor does she return it. She recognises that it is impossible to return the invasive gaze, that what purports to be a returned gaze is only a mimicry. Instead Foley forces the gaze to blink, exposes it to itself.¹⁸



Fiona Foley, *Native blood*, 1994.



Tosca Studios, *Candelo, West Queensland Aboriginal*, c1900, Queensland Museum.

In all of these contemporary uses of the colonial photograph the intention of the original historic photographer is evacuated. We find ourselves in his empty shoes, shuttling back and forth along a two way channel formed along the alignment of the two interlocking gazes of sitter and viewer, object and subject, past and present. Certainly, to at least some extent, this sense of channelling pervades all the contemporary uses of old photographs.

But the indigenous use of old photographs gives this channelling a different political valency to equivalent uses of old photographs by migrant or long-term settler photographers.

In their book *Uncanny Australia* Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs use Australian ghost stories to describe the uncanniness of Australia's relationship to indigenous spirituality. In postcolonial terms they see hauntings as a productive occurrence:

'Ghosts' simply could not function in a climate of sameness, in a country which fantasises about itself as 'one nation' or which imagines a utopian future of 'reconciliation' in which ... all the ghosts have been laid to rest. But neither can they function in a climate of nothing but difference, where the one can never resemble the other, as in a 'divided' nation. A structure in which sameness and difference solicit each other, spilling over each other's boundaries only to return again to their respective places, moving back and forward in an unpredictable, even unruly manner—a structure in which sameness and difference embrace and refuse each other simultaneously: this is where the 'ghosts' which may cause us to 'smile' or to 'worry' continue to flourish.¹⁹

Aboriginal ghosts remind Australia that there is unfinished business. Gelder and Jacobs quote Raymond Williams who has made a distinction between the archaic and the residual in the contemporary experience of the past, the 'residual' is "still active in the political process". Anthropological indigenous photographs cannot yet be monuments because they are still left over from the past, residual to history.²⁰

The idea of ghosts soliciting the fickle memory of a too self-absorbed, too quickly forgetful later generation also scans across to the role of Anzac ghosts in Australian collective

¹⁸ Olu Oguibe, 'Medium and Memory in the Art of Fiona Foley', *Third Text*, 1995-96, Winter 1995-96, pp58-59.

¹⁹ Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, Melbourne University Press, 1998, p42.

²⁰ Raymond Williams 'Dominant, Residual and Emergent', *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1977. Quoted in. Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*, Melbourne University Press, 1998, p18.

memory. Examples already discussed are Will Dyson's *A Voice From Anzac*, and Longstaff's *Menin Gates at Midnight*, 1927. More recent examples are the eerie freeze frame at the end of Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli*, 1982, and the digital ghosting used in a video projection behind one of Australia's most priceless possessions—a Gallipoli landing boat in the Australian War Memorial's Orientation Gallery—in which War Memorial staff wearing World War One uniforms were shot against a blue screen in Sydney and digitally dissolved so as to appear to disappear into footage shot at Anzac Cove in Turkey.

This cross-scan to a twentieth century settler spectral tradition of the Anzac myth is implicitly referred to a series of photographs by Aboriginal photographer Darren Siwes taken from 1999 to 2002, which have also proved to be extraordinarily popular with curators nationally and internationally. By ghosting himself standing implacably in front of various buildings in a series of night photographs taken around Adelaide he refers to an indigenous haunting, certainly; but in many images he is ghosted standing to attention whilst wearing a generic suit, so he also evokes the feeling of being surveilled by a generalised, truculent Australian masculinity—exactly the same feeling that an Anzac memorial statue gives.



Darren Siwes, *Church 1*, 2000.

New Agers have often appropriated Aboriginal spirituality for use in their own impromptu spiritual systems, and at the same time contemporary Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and New Agers are occasionally fellow travellers.²¹ Leah King-Smith is

²¹ L. R. Hiatt, 'A New Age for an Old People', *Quadrant*, 1997, 16, 337.

perhaps the most explicitly New Age of contemporary Aboriginal artists. She concludes her artist's statement by asking that: "... people activate their inner sight to view Aboriginal people."²² Her work animistically gives the museum photographs she re-uses a spiritualist function. Referring to Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Anne Marsh describes this as a 'strategic essentialism'. She says:

There is little doubt, in my mind, that Leah King-Smith is a kind of New Age evangelist and many serious critics will dismiss her work on these grounds. Others will point to the artist's misplaced desire to represent Aboriginal Australia: to talk for the subaltern, as it were. But I am interested in why the images are so popular and how they tap into a kind of cultural imaginary and use the mythology of photography's syntax ... to conjure the ineffable. ... Leah King-Smith's figures resonate with a constructed aura: the skin which is shed onto the photographic plate is given an enhanced ethereal quality through the use of mirrors and projections. The 'mirror with a memory' comes alive as these ancestral ghosts, already simulacra in their Anglo costumes, seem to drift through the landscape as a seamless version of nineteenth century spirit photography.²³

This sense of Aboriginal ancestors, re-born as spiritually replete by the demands of their descendants, and liberated by contemporary Aboriginal artists to drift through a numinous landscape, is also present in the work of Michael Riley. In the photographic series *Sacrifice*, 1993, and *Flyblown*, 1998, Riley used objects like crucifixes as both literal and allegorical symbols of mission-life oppression. But in a later series, *Cloud*, 2000, these symbols have taken on a more autonomous spirituality. They have lost some of their grounding in past historical circumstances, but gained access to a New Age style symbolic bricolage.

[The have] shifted from terra firma to other-worldly locations, including the paranormal. There are resonances of *Sacrifice*, in the dreamlike quality evoked by the seductive, digitally manipulated images of the Magritte-like bovine 'seraph'

²² Leah King-Smith, 'Statement', *Patterns of Connection*, Melbourne, Victorian Centre for Photography, 1992.

²³ Anne Marsh, 'Leah King-Smith and the Nineteenth century Archive', *History of Photography*, 1999, 23, 2, p117.

from the 'mission'; and the flight of the boomerang (or *barrgan/balgarrn* in Wiradjuri) echoed in the wings of the plaster/marble/concrete angel, its face averted, back turned to the viewer, and, again, in the splayed wings of the blackbird, the eaglehawk or crow; and in the crucifix like span of the native *Galang-galang*, or locusts' wings.²⁴

The role of performance is also important to these photographs. In discussing the *Bringing Them Home* report on the Stolen Generation of 1997, John Frow comments that the report supplements the standard historiographic citation of the past with collaged-in fragments of first-person testimony. He quotes De Certeau who contrasts collage with historiographic citation. Citation allows the past to lend an effect of reality that validates historical knowledge in the present, through citation the present makes the past intelligible, but also separates past from present. Collage on the other hand gives the past direct affectivity and answerability within the present. In the Stolen Generations inquiry the unmediated, cathartic, performed testimony of witnesses allows the past to report on the present, just as the present is supposedly meant to be soberly reporting on the past.²⁵

Similarly, in their re-use of old photographs, indigenous photographers do not see themselves as citing them, or 'appropriating' them in the standard ironic mode of postmodernist quotation, so much as collaging them into the present, using them to demand an answer from the present. They are trying not to so much appropriate them across culture, as collage them across time. They 're-perform' the old photograph in the present in order to generate this sense of temporal collage.

²⁴ B. Croft, 'No need looking', *Photofile*, 66, September, 2002.

²⁵ John Frow, 'The Politics of Stolen Time', *Meanjin*, 1998, 57,2, In the debate between the so-called 'black armband' and 'white blindfold' view of the history of white Australia's contact with indigenous Australians the 'admissibility' of evidence which is not forensically factual, but based in oral history, myth and even the numinous, is one major point of contention. For instance a revisionist article disparagingly quotes the experience of the anthropologist Dr Bruce Shaw, called as an expert witness in a Native title case: "I ... experienced a shift of awareness when reading some of the longer passages [to the court]. At times I felt like those men were speaking through me. That is not to suggest that I have the abilities of a spiritualist medium; it means that I was experiencing the same sort of responses as some of my listeners ... when such narratives are recited in court the subjective, which includes the metaphysical and at times the *numinous*, slips into proceedings." Quoted in Rod Moran, 'Was there a massacre at Bedford Downs?', *Quadrant*, November 2002.

But just how successful, really, are these attempts at temporal collage or New Age channelling. Leah King-Smith might bring her ghosts forward out of the past right up to the picture plane, and they might re-inhabit their ancestrally spiritual landscape, but ultimately they remain trapped in the images that simply repeat the original archival photograph's threnody. For Hannah Fink, for instance:

The claustal space between the figures and the landscape, between the received image and its resuscitation, contain a past that is ungraspable, an abruption of memory. The unpeopled landscape may host a natural religion, but in King-Smith's scheme it is one without practitioners: the darkness from which the images emerge is the darkness carried by one born without a mother tongue.²⁶

It might be the intractable, irreconcilable severance of the photographs of the past from the present, combined with the urgently felt need to nonetheless re-perform them for a current audience which, for me, gives much urban indigenous photography its overwrought feeling. It often seems histrionic, melodramatic, and pictorially overproduced. In their attempts to ritualistically get in touch with their ancestors to bear witness to their present circumstances indigenous photographers sometimes seem to use an excessive bricolage of special effects verging on the banal to generate a sense of connection.

For instance, Brenda Croft in *In My Father's House*, and *In My Mother's Garden*, 1998, overlays family snaps of her father, mother and grandmother with repeatedly floating words like 'bereft' and 'weeping', in multiple layers of Photoshop, in cursive fonts, at different colours, sizes and levels of transparency. Certainly these literally over-wrought surfaces were partially a result of the acute personal grief these works deal with,²⁷ but this quality also characterises her later work such as *Irrisistable/irresistible*, 2000, as well as the work of many other indigenous artists with a more inter-generational yearning for the lost ancestors they never knew.

²⁶ H. Fink, 1999, second page.

²⁷ "For the artists ... photography and family histories entwine as the act of making art becomes a way of dealing with grief." K. Gellatly, 'Photography and Family', *Brenda L Croft: In My Father's House*, Destiny Deacon: Postcards From Mummy, B. Croft, Sydney, Australian Centre for Photography, 1998



Brenda L. Croft, *Don't go kissing at the garden gate (Love is blind but the neighbours aint)*, 1998.



Brenda L. Croft, *My mother recognised the man in the little boy*, 1998.

In the context of Australia's fraught race politics, an important aspect of the affectivity of these works for white viewers is the supplementation of the viewer's own sense of shame—our desire (or otherwise) to say 'sorry' for the crimes of our ancestors, which we bring to the image. The imprecatory tone of many of the works I have discussed is best understood in that context. For instance shortly after being elected to office Australia's new conservative Prime Minister, John Howard, discussed Aboriginal reconciliation and native land tenure with the populist magazine *Who Weekly*.

Most Australians—now don't misunderstand this—most Australians grow up not having any contact with Aboriginal people. Now, that's not their fault but equally they shouldn't sort of be blamed for something in which they played no part. Aborigines were terribly treated in the nineteenth century, I understand that, and in many cases into the twentieth century. I accept that completely and it ought to be taught in schools and understood. I understand all that, but if you grow up in a neighbourhood where you didn't have any contact with Aborigines—and that was the lot of most Australians, I mean I didn't have any contact with Aboriginal kids

when I grew up because there weren't any living in my suburb. In some country areas and a few urban areas there were. And that was it. Now to say to me and to say to my kids and to say of my parents, who never treated them poorly, to say you're all to blame and you should apologise, it's something people just can't get a handle on and they think it's odd.²⁸

This kind of thinking allocated to the indigenous community a deracinated sense of history and an experiential forgetting which inevitably weakened the indigenous stake in Australia's future. If Howard's view – that any historical processes affecting the Aboriginal community which were not personally experienced may be discounted in favour of a synchronic assessment of social need – were applied across the board, then all of the structures he holds dear would collapse. The bonds of nationhood, the Westminster system, and the common law all rely on the diachronic transmission of a sense of ownership and responsibility not only directly, person to person, but also indirectly through collective assumptions and investments which are shared and transmitted experientially – narratively and imagistically.

Indeed the Prime Minister's sense of his own statesmanship is closely interwoven with his mission to keep Anzac memory alive.²⁹ This also requires an affective remembering where those who come from the past are seemingly brought up to witness the present. For instance Anzac rituals such as the Minute's Silence or the Dawn Service encourage us to homeopathically re-experience long past historical moments. The sacred phrase 'Lest We Forget' warns us against letting the experience of war slip away.

In Australia there has not only not been a social and historical reconciliation between black and white, there has also not been a reconciliation between the two mnemonic traditions. Will they co-exist? Will they merge? Will one extinguish the other? These questions remain stalled in history. This background of fraught race politics and conflicting mnemonic

²⁸ J. Howard, T. Moore and D. Webster, 'Howard's Way (Interview with John Howard)', *Who Weekly*, 30 December, 1996.

²⁹ See for instance: 'Keep the Anzac fire alight', *The Australian*, 26 April, 2000, p1; and 'Statesmanship forged on a fatal shore', *The Weekend Australian*, 29 April-2000, Pp3.

traditions goes at least part way to explaining the over-wrought, imprecatory tone of much contemporary urban Aboriginal art, as well as the curatorial success which has greeted the ghosts it has attempted to call forth.

Both the well established Anzac mnemonic tradition, and the emergent indigenous mnemonic tradition, seem to be developing along very similar structural and iconographic lines, both incorporating at various times spectral photographic imagery. As we have seen, in other historical moments—in World War One and its aftermath—when memory, history and experience are in crisis and trying to reconcile themselves to each other, photography's special effects, its power to not just reproduce the real, but to conjure apparitions and laminate them to the present, are called upon.

Contemporary indigenous artists have politically deployed the spiritual, spectral magic of photographs of their ancestors on a wide scale. This strategic deployment has a higher valency than standard appropriation because the photographs are being reactivated to call the present to account. But are these precious old photographs, whilst being made politically active in the present, kept in a dialectical relationship to it? These photographers are compelled to use historic photographs because they are much more than just the pictorial representations of the ancestors from whom they have been torn. As objects they can become stand-ins for their lost bodies. As images they can be floated in the present as their ghosts. But as the claustrophobic atmospheres or histrionic attitudes of many of the resultant works of art indicate the photographs, like all photographs, ultimately belong to the past, not the present. Are contemporary indigenous photographers, such as for instance the sassy and savvy Brook Andrew with his home-eroticised 'sexy and dangerous' nineteenth-century aboriginal men, hijacking this past for their own strategic politico/aesthetic ends?³⁰ In their attempts to break through the historical impasse that tragically freezes contemporary Australian political discourse are

³⁰ The aboriginal curator Gary Lee, for instance, criticised as 'disrespectful' Brook Andrew's use of aboriginal shields from the Australian Museum in an installation featuring road-work barriers and a flashing LED display called *Menthen ... queue here* at the djamu Gallery, Sydney Customs House. T. Magnusson, 'Love Magic', *Sydney Star Observer*, 1999.

they, not unlike a supplicant to a spirit photographer, attempting to collapse time itself, by co-opting the past into a fantasy of presentness that risks being banally synchronic?

As will be seen in subsequent chapters, historic photographs are regularly and successfully brought into Australia's present, across a broad front of both public and private rituals of memory. But in a situation such as contemporary Australian race politics, where the relationship between past and present has never been more fraught, and the past has never been called on more frequently to bear witness to the present, it is interesting that the historic photograph itself has proved most intractable, and has put up its own resistance to strategic contemporary deployment.

TWELVE

HAPTIC AND MONUMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Everything, today, prepares our race for this impotence: to be no longer able to conceive duration, affectively or symbolically – Roland Barthes, 1982.¹

Haptic photographs and memory

To Roland Barthes, because each photograph contained the ‘imperious sign of our future death’, each photograph addressed us outside of any social generality. While the narratives of film are made to be consumed collectively, the moments of the photograph were taken to be looked at alone. Yet paradoxically the medium of photography was also complicit in public commodification of the private.

The age of photograph corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public, or rather the creation of a new social value, which is the publicity of the private: the private is consumed as such, publicly.²

From the beginning photographs have been used as public talismans of private memory. In the nineteenth century post mortem daguerreotypes were sometimes re-photographed, being cradled by grieving relatives. As Geoffrey Batchen has pointed out this vernacular performance of the photograph reinforces the sense of touch already inherent in the photographic image.³

Over the last couple of years what was initially an occasional semi-private ritual performed in the photographer’s studio, has become a bit of media stunt, performed again

¹ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1982, p93.

² p98.

and again at the behest of newspaper and magazine photographers. They are public statements, declarations of loss or trauma. They are mute testimonies, where the intractable visual evidence of the photograph voices the mute silence of the witness.

Sometimes, as in the case of Australian Aborigines from the Stolen Generation, it is archival, government photographs which are held, re-personalising the public record and performing a grim parody of the anthropological photograph. Sometimes it is already published journalistic images which are cradled, connecting individual and public memory, direct and mediated experience.

Haptic photographs and their relationship to spirit photographs

As can be seen in the collection of newspaper and magazine clippings that follow, the effectiveness of these media images depends on two gestures, two aspects of the way the private photograph is literally ‘performed’ in the public: the quality of touch between the sitter and the photograph they hold; and the expression on their face. Is the photograph cradled, clutched, formally perched alongside, or primly pinched between thumb and forefinger? Is it defiantly held out to the camera, or half hidden beneath encircling arms? Does the sitter look wistful, lost in internal reverie, or defiant? Despite the clichéd reiteration of these types of images in our press the combination of gesture and expression still frequently produces an effective and moving image, which connects with anxieties about contemporary memory and history. The indexical verity of the photographic image which they hold anchors the sitter in history and legitimates their memories.

Structurally, haptic photographs share some characteristics with the spirit photographs of the 1920s. An element of ritual pervades both. Both types of image have the same slightly stilted, ungainly air, where the image begins to buckle under the weight of the duties imposed on it. The photographer, either hard-bitten photojournalist or ingenuous spirit photographer, becomes a thaumaturge who orchestrates a theatre of the mutuality of touch and memory, where once severed temporal connections are re-forged. The photographic surface of the haptic photograph becomes a membrane which seals together

³ G. Batchen, ‘Vernacular Photographies’, *Each Wild Idea*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001.

two images from two times, the past and the present, just as in the spirit photograph the sheet of emulsion is hypersensitised to the imprint of two images from two worlds, life and death.

Monumental photographs and history

Haptic photographs are one way of connecting memory and history. But just as personal photographs are being held out into the glare of public view, or archival photographs are excavated for use as votive offerings in public ceremonies of memory, so are personal and archival photographs being monumentalised—taken out of the haptic dimension and transmogrified into architectonic screens of granite, glass and steel.⁴

To Barthes, of course, the photograph could never be monumental. It was constructed out of time itself, and so can never transcend time.

Not only does [the photograph] commonly have the fate of paper (perishable), but even if it is attached to more lasting supports, it is still mortal: like a living organism, it is born on the level of the sprouting silver grains, it flourishes a moment then ages ... attacked by light, by humidity, it fades, weakens, vanishes; there is nothing left to do but throw it away. Earlier societies managed so that memory, the substitute for life, was eternal and that at least the thing which spoke death should be immortal: this was the monument. But by making the (mortal) Photograph into the general and somehow natural witness of 'what has been', modern society has renounced the monument. A paradox; the same century invented History and Photography. But history is a memory fabricated according to positive formulas, a pure intellectual discourse which abolishes mythic Time; and the photograph is a certain but fugitive testimony; so that everything, today, prepares our race for this impotence: to be no longer able to conceive duration, affectively or symbolically.⁵

⁴ A broader architectural and historical context for this trend is discussed in, J. Macarthur, 'The Image as an Architectural Material', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101,3, Summer 2002.

⁵ R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1982, p93.

But photographs are being eternalised today, to stand as affective, public monuments to duration. Photographs have long stood on mantelpieces in improvised household shrines to remembered dead and acknowledged ancestors, but now historic photographs also have the unprecedented privilege of being the centrepieces of virtually every official commemoration. In these public ceremonies official photographs are performing the same role for the nation, city or town, as the faded snapshot or sepia studio portrait does for the family.

For most of this century the photograph, as a form of media reportage, has traded on the fact that it was able to pluck a fleeting instant out of the rush of time. But in the case of the Kodachrome slide which was cropped, enlarged to cinematic size, and etched into granite for the Vietnam War Memorial, the evanescent instant captured by the army public relations photographer has been literally turned to eternal stone. Within this commemorative context the shutter blade's slice of time acquires not only an architectonic presence, but becomes the locus for the same contemplative temporal dilation as a roll call of the dead, or a minute's silence.

Monumental photographs and their relationship to propaganda murals

As in the composite, artificially coloured, propaganda murals of World War One, transformations of scale and material are important to contemporary monumental photographs. The composite murals were generically hybrid: between photographs, academic paintings and cinema. Monumental photographs are hybrid too, between the obduracy of the mute architectural obelisk, and the evanescence of the virtual photographic image. As can be seen from my documentation of monuments which follow, rather than being haptically performed by a body, monumental photographs perform the bodies of their viewers. They either tower over them and physically interpellate them in their nationalist ideological subjectivity, or they compel them to proceed past, or through them, in a spatialised memory/history experience.

Photographs and films are the lifeblood of the contemporary museum, and similar architectural or design transformations are carried out on museum display photographs: enlargement, projection, construction etc. But the transformation of the monumental

photograph is not towards a phantasmagoric array of materials and surfaces, but towards a historically eternalised set of elemental minerals: stone, glass and metal. This takes the organic, perishable, gelatinous emulsive flesh of the photograph and smelts it into the marmoreal, the vitreous, and the metallurgical. The images are also removed from the air-conditioned, trans-historical horizon of the museum hall into the outdoor, meteorological environment of a city's ceremonial precinct. Both memory and history are equally grist to these civic memory mills – private snapshots are recuperated as avidly as archival record photographs.

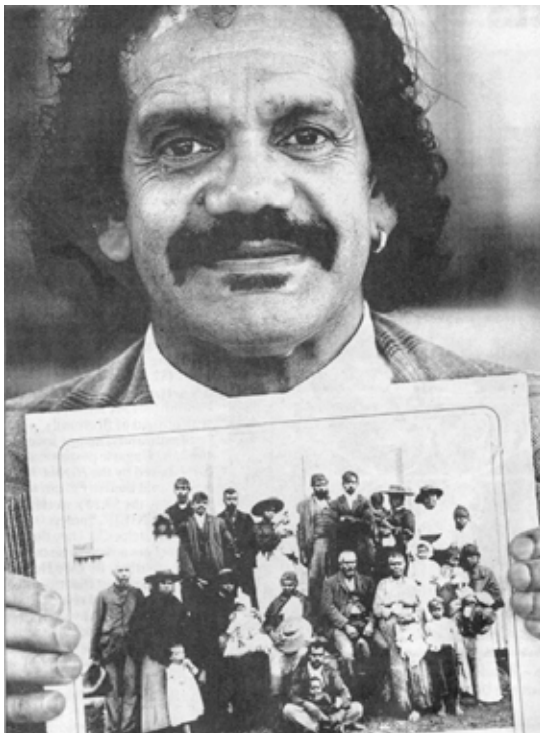
HAPTIC PHOTOGRAPHS



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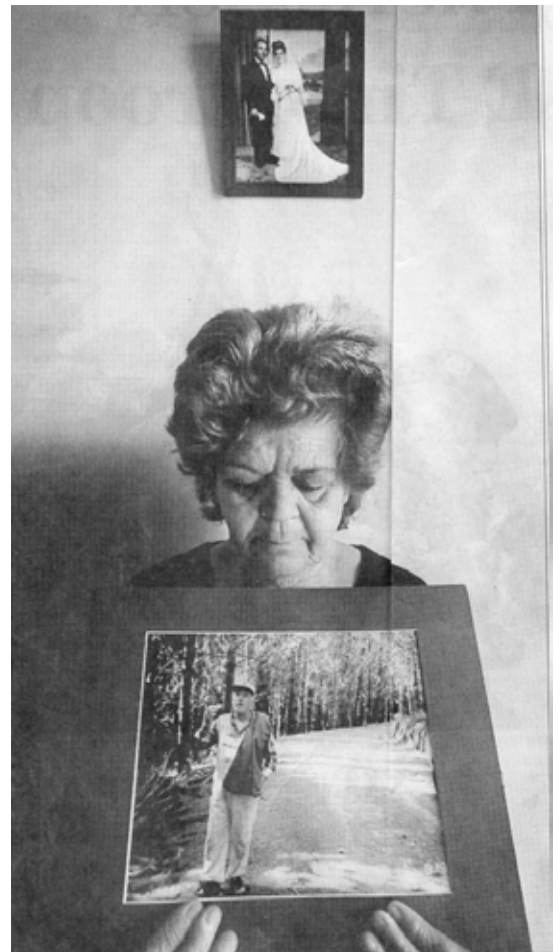
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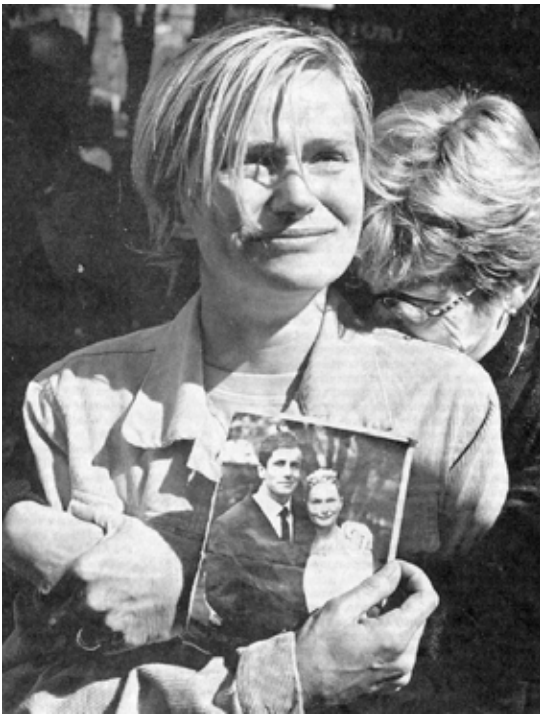
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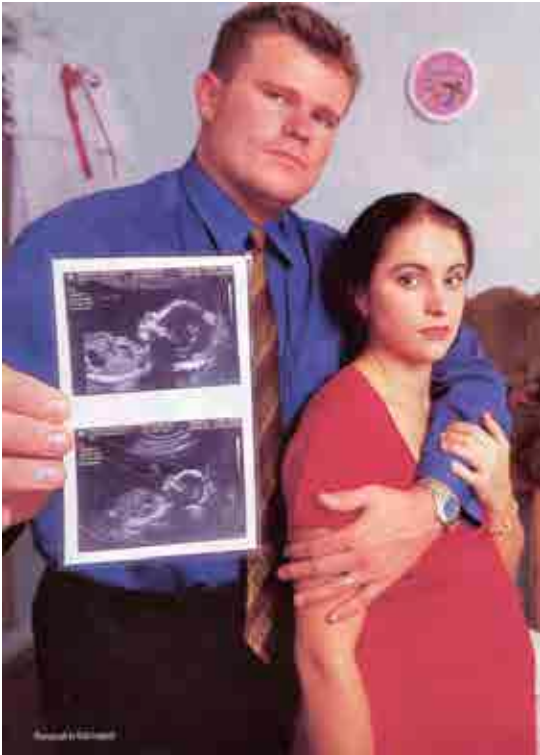
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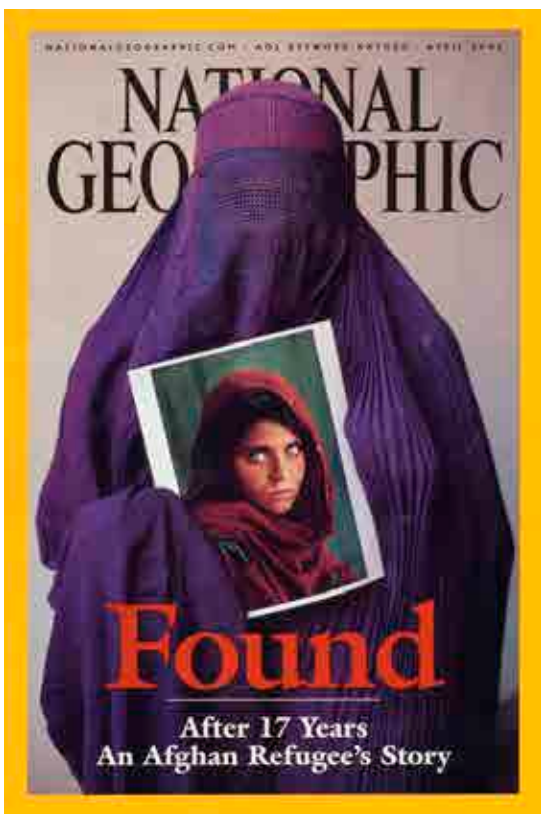
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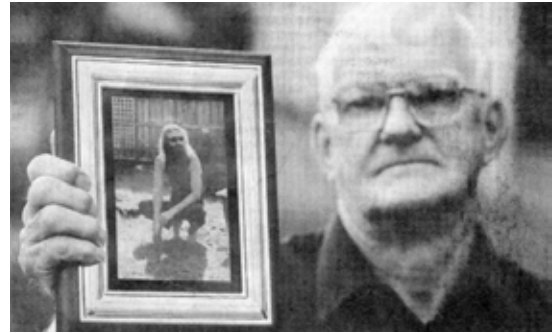
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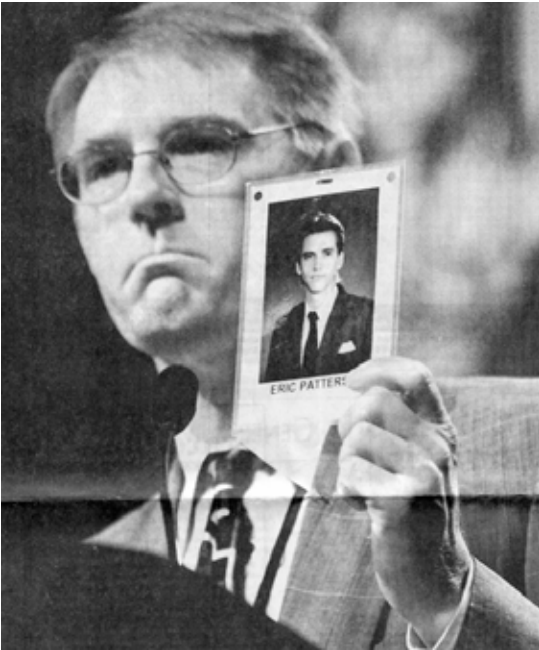
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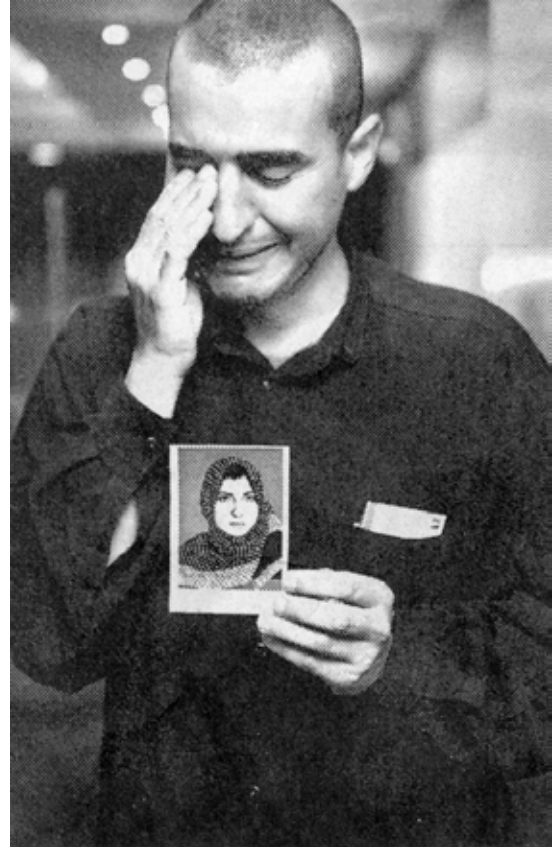
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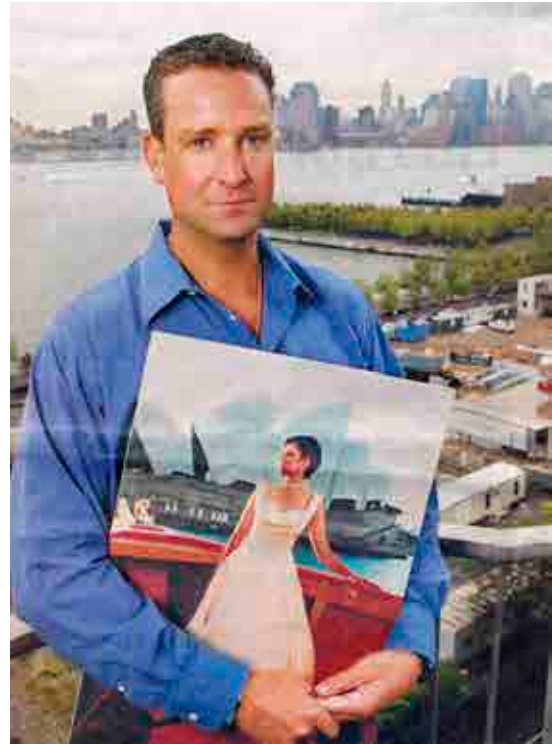
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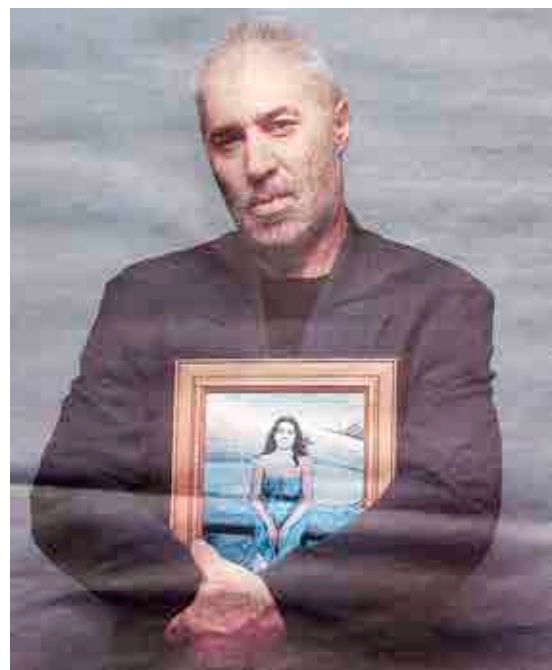
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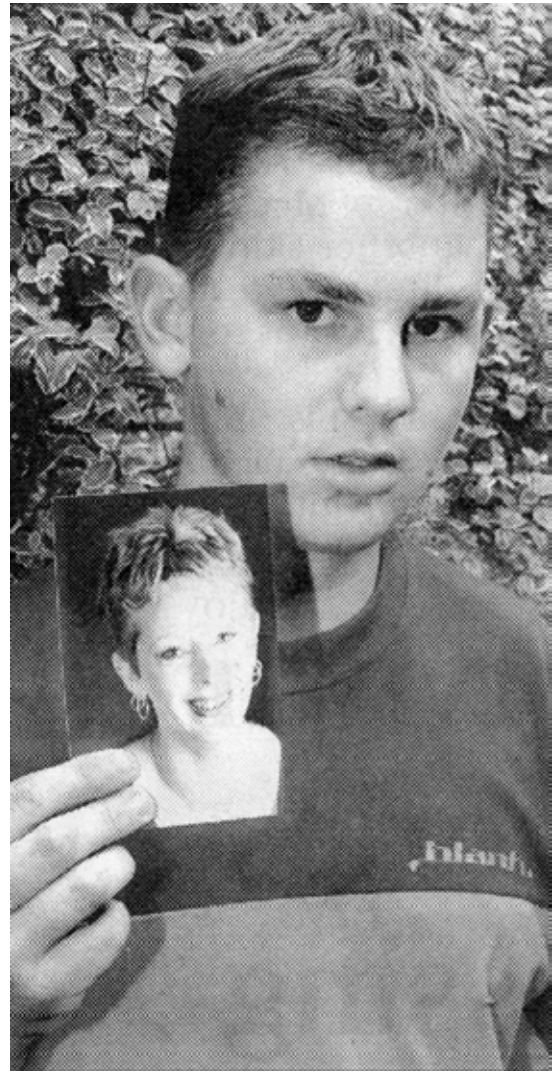
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HAPTIC PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Burnum Burnum, actor and business man, born 1936 removed at five months of age. Spent 10 years at the United Mission Aboriginal home at Bomaderry and 6 years in Chincilla Boys Home at Kempsey. Lola McNaughton, case worker with Aboriginal organisation Link-Up. Born 1946, removed 1951 to Cootamundra Girls Home where she spent 13 years, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24/5/1997, p29.
2. Mr Alec Kruger ... 'I remember children being breast fed through the wire fence' — Picture Patrick Hamilton, *The Australian*, 1/8/97, p5.
3. **Also for History Week, James Wilson-Miller will speak at the Powerhouse about his forebears, in the 1907 photograph he holds**, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20/9/97, p13.
4. **Leila Penrith (middle, third from right) holds a photo of her Cootamundra class**, Photograph by Adam Pretty, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18/5/98, p6.
5. **Case Closed:** Ms Hagis with a picture of her late husband, Nick. Picture Brett Faulkner, *The Australian*, 30/10/98, p7.
6. **Joyce Braithwaite with wedding photographs of her late husbands, both of whom were in the Sandakan prisoner of war camp**, *The Canberra Times*, 28/2/99, p1.
7. **Missing them:** An Albanian girl returning to Dakovica, south-west of Pristina, at the weekend shows photos of her brothers, missing since Serbs invaded the town, *The Australian*, 21/6/99, p8.
8. Pat Keane, left, Judith Stoney and Anne McDonald, daughters of Captain Scurry, inventor of the drip rifle, ... with his medals, *The Canberra Times*, 18/9/99, p7.
9. Man with photographs of 'Junction Shaft 1957' around his neck, Snowy mountains Hydro –electric scheme reunion, Lake Jindabyne, 17/10/99, Martyn Jolly.
10. Surrogate mother Sharon Ryan at her Sydney home last night looks fondly at a christening phot of Hamish, Picture John Grainger, *The Canberra Times*, 12/5/00, p1.
11. **Sadness in victory:** Wife Leah and son Philip with photographs of Browne, a victim of asbestos poisoning. Picture Mark Williams, *The Australian*, 6/4/01, p6.
12. **Dot Angell:** After just four month in Vietnam, this nurse's wounds will never heal, *The Australian magazine*, 21-22/4/01.
13. **Lasting Legacy:** World War 1 veteran Tom Robinson's son Merv and grand-daughter Carol Thistelton look through Tom's photo albums in Adelaide yesterday, *The Australian*, 24/4/01, p5.
14. **Top Shot:** Bradman, right, shows Clark a photo of him playing cricket with Aboriginal friends as a boy, Picture John Feder, *The Australian*, 20/5/01, p2.
15. **Tom O'Donoghue's cottage, with photographs of Tom and Lily**, *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 21-22/5/01, p14.
16. **Memories:** At home in Sydney yesterday, Mr Loxton holds a photograph of himself taken in November 1945, a month after he was released from prison camp. Picture: Lindsay Moller, *The Australian*, 25/4/01, p5.
17. **'Two tragedies':** Mr Yates yesterday with a picture of his family, *The Australian*, 23-24/6/01, p13.

18. Have you seen my brother? Relatives seek news of lost loved ones, *The Canberra Times*, 15/9/01, p2.
19. **Families shattered ... Mary Ortele holds tight a picture of her missing husband, Peter**, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2/11/01, p14.
20. **Split Family**: Mr Bakhtiyari holds up photos of his five children, who are being held with his wife in Woomera, Picture Chris Crerar, *The Australian*, 11/3/02.
21. **AFTER SHOCK: September 11 survival stories**, *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 16-17/3/02, p1.
22. Chris and Lisa Caproni on September 14, *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 16-17/3/02.
23. **Couple with ultrasound**, *Who Magazine*, 2002.
24. **Found: After 17 Years An Afghan Refugee's Story**, *National Geographic*, April 2002, cover.
25. **Held to account**: Mr Nixon, holding photo of son Michael, who died in 1999 after developing throat cancer, *The Australian*, 13-14/4/02, p4.
26. **"He's committed no crime" ... Maha Habib and one of her children last night**. Photo: Peter Morris, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19/4/02, p1.
27. **Keith Crowley with photographs of his son Jonathan who was shot by police in Chapman last year**, *The Canberra Times*, 11/5/02, p1.
28. **A look at life on the road**: Angie and John with images of the unborn child they might never have had under West Australian law, *The Australian*, 11-12/5/02.
29. **Deep scars ... Mark Serrano shows the conference the photograph of a fellow abuse victim who committed suicide**, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15-16/6/02, p15.
30. **Hazam Al Rowaimai lost his wife, four children and his mother when the SIEV-X sank**. Phot Simon Schluter, *The Australian*, 22-23/6/02, p30.
31. **In the dark**: Mrs Hecht, *The Australian*, 27/6/02.
32. **Outpouring**: Bak Bong-hee with a picture of her son, Hwang Do-hyun, a South Korean sailor killed in the sea battle, *The Australian*, 1/7/02, p5.
33. **Concern**: Mr Bakhtiyari in bed yesterday at his home in Sydney's western suburbs, surrounded by pictures of his family, *The Australian*, 23/7/02, p5.
34. **Ali Bakhtiyari with pictures of his detained children**. Photo: Kate Geraghty, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27/7/02, p3.
35. **Lost Horizons**: Mr O'Keefe with a picture of Lesley, on their New Jersey balcony from which she took a photo of the pre-9/11 skyline, inset, *The Weekend Australian*, 31/8-1/9/02, p1.
36. Phil Cleary with a picture of his sister Vicki Cleary, *The Canberra Times, Panorama*, 7/9/02, p7.
37. **More Pain**: Sally Regenhard, left, who lost her son, and Monica Gabrielle, whose husband died in the 9/11 attacks, at the inquiry, *The Australian*, 20/9/02, p7.
38. **Double Loss**: Mrs Stewart mourns the loss of her son, pictured third from left, *The Australian*, 15/10/02, p2.
39. **Lost Son**: Bill Hardy, father of missing tourist Billy, *The Australian*, 15/10/02, p3.

40. **Brothers in Arms:** Ben Thwaites, 22, left, and Sam, on the Gold Coast with a photo of their brother, Robert, who died in the Bali blast. *The Australian*, 16/10/02, p8.
41. **Devoted:** Travis, *The Australian*, 18/10/02, p3.
42. **Frustration and Worry:** Mr Vanrenen, right, with daughter Sarah, son Daniel and a photo of missing son Charlie, *The Australian*, 22/10/02, p3.
43. **Perfect match:** Mr Croxford with a photograph of Donna, *The Australian*, 30/10/02, p6
44. **Not the end of the line:** Mrs Kennedy at her home near Ipswich with her favourite portrait of daughter Deidre, *The Australian*, 10/12/02, p1.

MONUMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHS



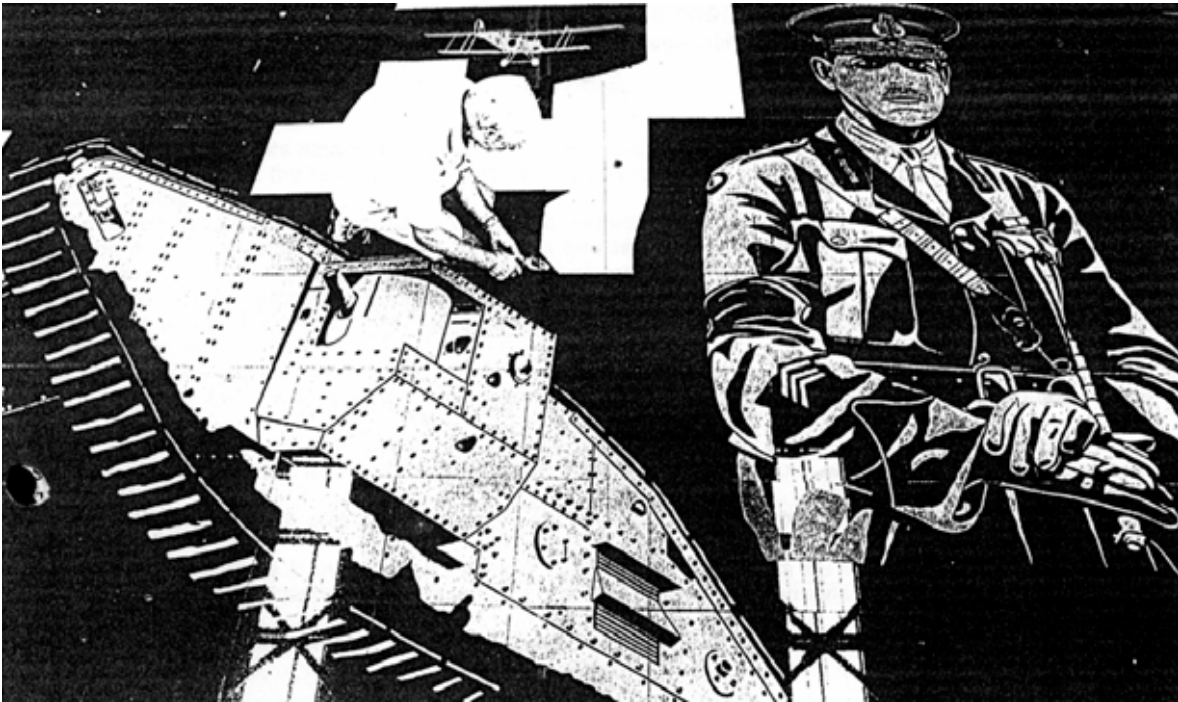
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MONUMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Vietnam War memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra.
2. World War Two memorial, Anzac Square, Brisbane
3. Kokoda Track memorial, Concorde, Sydney.
4. Battle of Hamel Memorial in preparation in Sydney before installation in France.
5. Magna Carta Place, Parkes, Canberra.
6. Australian Service Nurses national memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra.
7. Korean War memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra.
8. Royal Australian Airforce national memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra.
9. Reconciliation Place, Parkes, Canberra.

CONCLUSION

The photograph is still with us. It is still a common object handled in our lives, and a ubiquitous image seen on our screens. The overwhelming majority of photographs are still realistic, and as a medium photography is still fundamentally about truth. We still 'rely' on photographs in much the same way as we have always done—to reproduce the world for us and to stitch us, however ambiguously, into the flow of time and the dispersal of experience.

For much of the twentieth century the truths that photography told were seen to be embodied in its realism. The camera truthfully reproduced an anterior scene of the real. The thread of photographic indexicality trailed from the photographic plate, across the threshold of a virtual window, to the scene beyond. If the frame of this window was altered the glass was shattered and the thread was severed. Moreover the rectilinear, optical geometry of the window provided an orthographic matrix against which to perpetually test photography's realistic truth.¹

Conceptual models such as these pervaded photography, and were the unspoken but firmly held assumptions behind virtually every person's engagement with every photograph. But not quite every person, nor every photograph. There is a sporadic, but nonetheless long subterranean history of photographers reconstructing, either tacitly or surreptitiously, photography's limpid window. This history includes not only the examples I have discussed here, but also, it turns out, epitomes of photojournalism such as

¹ For a meditation on the window and photography see, G. Batchen, 'A Philosophical Window', *History of Photography*, 26, 2, Summer 2002.

Robert Capa's *Death of a Spanish Soldier* 1936, as well as the oft quoted examples of egregious editorial Photoshopping which took place in news magazines of the 1990s.

Likewise, from time to time, viewers have made a choice to not simply passively regard photographs as eternal windows on an external world but, as in London in 1918, actively experience them as visual spectacles contingent to the viewer's own particular time and place—spectacles which they decided were worth investing in with the excess of their own sentiment. Other viewers, such as those who chose to hold photographs in order to participate in the journalistic visual trope of the 'haptic' photograph, became users, adopting certain photographs to play the role of votive objects in private ceremonies or public performances of yearning.

Indubitably fake and fraudulent photographs are not actually true. What these images purport to reproduce never happened. But the images still appeared realistic, and were still used to produce an affective truth for their audience. The scenographic window is not necessarily shattered, but may be provisionally reconstructed and layered, when different negatives are montaged together into a tableau. Or it may be provisionally transformed into a membrane when a single negative is double exposed with two faces. And in both these, admittedly unstable, reconstructions of photographic realism, indexical truth persists as a key element in the experience of these photographs for many of their viewers, and a key component in whatever affectivity the images generated.

If a visitor to a propaganda exhibition in 1918 purchased and read their catalogue carefully they would have realised that some of the images were composites, but they would have been in no doubt that the component parts were 'real' and taken on the battlefield. Even in a re-enactment, the viewers may have rationalised to themselves, real soldiers went through their real drills just behind the real front line. A visitor to a spirit photographer may well have been troubled by an inkling that the photographer might be mechanically introducing the 'extra' image into the process themselves, but who was to say, for instance, that real spirits didn't take advantage of the opportunity to transubstantiate themselves into these images in any case? And that was certainly their own undeniably real face uncannily sharing the photographic plate with the extra. So, just as in

photography's paradigmatic object—the snapshot—fake and fraudulent photographs also affected their audience by combining a pictorial realism with an indexical charge.

I think viewers made these kind of tacit apperceptive adjustments to reconstruct, within the act of experiencing or using the photograph, a kind of provisional, bricolaged truth in the place of photography's more usual instantaneous, denotational one. But both truths—a truth performed in the act of viewing the photograph, and a realistic truth seen through the 'window' of the image—were driven by photographic indexicality.

The probative truth of the snapshot is based on the viewer's automatic faith in the camera's lens and shutter assemblage to excise a moment of prior time. The enacted truth of the fake photograph, on the other hand, was based on the viewer's decision to use their emotional investment in re-cohering the photograph's fragmented pictorial realism, and re-splicing the frayed strand of indexicality, within a bubble of experienced time. The audience's theatricalised reception of the fake photograph was related to other bubbles of visual experience where similar investments were made, for instance the collective willing-suspension-of-disbelief of the cinema audience, or the auratic enthrallment of the audience for the unique art object in the temple of the art museum. But the peculiar authority of the snapshot, and the individuated interpellation of the photograph, lent the tacit investment in fakes by their contemporaneous audiences a higher valency of realism than in those examples.

Of course those who queued for entry into the propaganda exhibition, or paid their guinea for a spirit sitting, were duped and deluded. But the tacit adjustments and investments they made are also made, albeit incrementally, by all people who let photographs affect them, even by people who are not duped and deluded but experiencing the probative truth of the snapshot. Once they are cast adrift from their contingent moorings in the real and circulate through our media and our culture all photographs composite multiple truths as they form themselves into series and sequences and cross pollinate with one another, or migrate from one family of images to another, or move from one institutional context to another, or are written into one exegetic narrative or another. This compositing of the virtual archive of snapshots takes place in the media, in visual data-bases, and in

our own memories. Like memory itself photographic truth ebbs and flows in our visual culture. Through the process of linking, sequencing and editing snapshots, some of their truths stretch to become universalised, others mutate and change or invert themselves, while still others shrink and disappear because of lack of interest.

A sense of indexicality is an important component of the affective power of both the snapshot and the fake photograph. And even in the documentary snapshot indexicality is a fungible quality within larger systems of meaning. Because the fake and the snapshot share, in the end, this same DNA, an understanding of how the fake has worked with its audience, when it was more than just the decrepit residue of fraud, will cast light on how snapshots also work when they are incorporated into the macro media-flows and micro personal-rituals of our lives. When people grasp hold of snapshots and use and re-use them in their lives, or experience them and then re-experience them in different contexts, the photograph's truths are both adopted and adapted, stripped down and customised, to act as an indexical power source for larger more elaborate systems of personally manifest truths. This is analogous to the way the viewer provisionally reconstituted the shards of truth when experiencing a theatricalised fake photograph.

Every photograph we see in the media is now a digital photograph, with no technically intrinsic bedrock in the real. But such is the demand for the reality effect that in some contexts digital technology has been able to reverse engineer an indexical link back to the real. The digital snapshot relies on the assumption that the established protocols of the 'decisive moment' have been followed to protect the linkages of conventional optically-transcriptive realism as the data travels through the three-stage computational process of selection, filtration and compositing. But in the new digital terrain the digital snapshot is just one, albeit privileged, type of photograph amongst many others. An understanding of how audience affectivity produced a reality effect in the fake photograph can help us understand the more complex interaction of technical effect and viewer affect in this new environment. More than ever before in photography, viewers are now determining, and creating within the act of viewing, a valency of truth to ascribe to each media photograph. Image by image and second by second they are tweaking their photographic apprehension of each and every image they see, which are all built from computationally identical

streams of data, but which may be perceived, for instance, as either a probative news photograph, a digitally 'enhanced' celebrity portrait, or a synthetic photo-illustration.

Fakes and frauds have always scandalised the normative discourse of photography. Any discussion of them has usually been to condemn them for betraying photography itself, to scoff at their meretriciousness, or to pity them for not being able to live up to the power and responsibility of the realistic photograph. But fake photographs should be considered as intrinsic to the medium. They have much to contribute to the ongoing discussion of photography. In their reliance on their affective appeal to their audience to make their truth manifest in the act of experiencing the image in real time and real space, they help shift the centre of gravity away from the locus of the photographer's index finger and towards the viewer's desires and investments. In addition, all of the kinds of photographs I have discussed here have to some extent hybridised with other mediums: cinema and painting, in the case of the World War One battle tableaux; theatrical and thaumaturgic ritual in the case of the spirit photographs; architectonic space; talismanic objects and confessional performance in the case of haptic photographs; and civic precincts in the case of monumental photographs.

Both this shift in the centre of gravity, and this hybridity, can help us enlarge the terms with which we have previously discussed photography. For instance I have identified that photography, in order to deal with various crises in the representation of the past and the present, has from time to time allowed its audience compelling access to the presence of the uncanny apparently within the documentary real—despite its pervasive commitment as a medium to objective realism. During the last century photography has frequently folded its clear window in on itself to produce spectres, haunting presences called from across abysses of memory or experience to directly witness the here and the now. Photography has not always, either, been committed to the crystalline delineation of geometrised reality: some photographers have shown a fascination with the terrible billowings of cloudblasts which they have used to implicitly link, and attempt to reconcile, the two planes of existence—the spiritual and the earthly, the monstrously industrial and the numinously natural—which seemed rent apart by the twentieth century.

It seems clear that the snapshot is set to persist in the digital media terrain, but only as the most privileged term amongst several different types of photograph. The shifts in photographic history and theory we will need to make to understand the historical power of the fake will help us to deal with the key role the photograph, and the snapshot, will continue to play into the twenty-first century. It is time to take the affectivity of the fake photograph seriously. It is time to see it as not simply a fraudulent snapshot but a reconstructed, performed, intergeneric photograph in its own right. It is time to see the fakes of photographers like Frank Hurley and Mrs Ada Deane as not simply diversions which needed to be overcome in photography's climb towards documentary truth, but as works whose various truth effects flowed along many of the same channels as the snapshot.

APPENDIX

FACES OF THE LIVING DEAD

As an artist I have been working with archival material of various sorts for most of my career. I have usually paralleled a historical and theoretical investigation of a particular area of photography with an optical, aesthetic and intuitive investigation of a particular archive of photographs. My artwork comes from a compulsive fascination with old photographs, stemming as much from a generalised libidinous drive for the vicarious contact with the bodies and spaces of the past which they allow, as from their value as historical documents. My personal work flows from the conviction, shared by many of the canonical writers discussed in chapter 8, that old photographs are their own magic objects which exceed every photographer's intentionality and exceed every viewer's exegesis.¹ I see the old photographs I choose to work with as continually productive sites from which new meanings or feelings can be mined. I have deliberately cultivated an idiosyncratic voyeurism in order to plunge into these images using a visceral means of navigation through them, freely relinquishing all historical propriety to not only read myself in them like a mirror, but read myself into them, like an invisible participant.

For instance in the early 1990s, when I was writing about 1930s Australian nationalist propaganda imagery in terms of a modernist re-spatialisation of the city and the crowd, I was also re-photographing the pictures in *Australiana* picture books from the same period. I was treating the opened pages of these books as a smoothly curved terrain which I traversed with my camera to take oblique, anamorphic samples from the original images, the historical 'punctums' of which were picked out within thin ribbons of photographic sharpness that curled across a dilated field of blur. The resultant exhibitions, *Wonderful*

¹ For another contemporary Australian response to the archival photograph see, R. Gibson, 'The Keen Historic Spasm', *South of the West*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1992.

Pictures, 1994, and *Wonderful Pictures in Colour*, 1994, were accompanied by a small catalogue where I condensed the nationalist rhetoric that supported the images in the original books by reproducing the original texts with most of the nouns removed, leaving only an adverbial and adjectival 'hyper-rhetorical' textual distillate. I also generated a mock index from one of the books I had photographed by indexing not its nouns or proper names, but its adjectives.

In a subsequent body of work, *Nineteen Sixty-Three: News and Information*, 1997, the mode of optical investigation I used to explore the archival photograph changed. Instead of using a large format camera to produce a new photographic negative where a narrow depth of field was used to direct the viewer's attention, I used a flatbed scanner to digitally excoriate the original image to produce a high resolution computer file, which was then cropped, enlarged, enhanced and printed. Working in the Australian Archives I made my way through 3000 propaganda photographs taken by the Australian News and Information Bureau during 1963. The metaphor I had in my mind was no longer an anamorphic view across history, but an excavation of the original mise-en-scene for photographic details to be isolated like archaeological artefacts. In both cases I gravitated not towards the main subject of the image, but towards its background or its incidental detail. I avoided faces and the centripetal force of the eyes, and instead drifted towards body language—the tensing of muscles or wricking of limbs; and the wearing of clothes—the gaping of lapels, hitching of cuffs and rucking of crotches. I was also interested in textures and material surfaces, as well as the re-vectorisation of the photograph's original spatial composition that re-cropping allowed.

The body of work which is submitted as a supplement to this thesis, *Faces of the Living Dead* is derived from a set of four albums entitled *The Spirit Photography of Mrs Ada Deane 1920-1923*. As described in chapter 6, in 1923 Mrs Deane's main patron, F. W. Warrick, had borrowed over 1000 negatives from Mrs Deane, which she had taken of her clients and only used to make a single print to give to them. Warrick paid to have new prints made which were mounted, unlabelled, into the albums in grids of twelve per page. He eventually gave the albums to the Society for Psychical Research, who included them in

the files they kept on fraudulent mediums and eventually stored them at Cambridge University Library.

This archive was very different to the previous photographic sources I have used for my artwork. It was not a flat, boring archive of neutral bureaucratic images taken by anonymous or functionary photographers—a mullock heap of history in which I was able to fossick for the odd fragmentary gem. Instead it was an intense, potent, 'alive' archive, where the bereaved faces of a fascinating cross section of British society yearned still. Instead of a dispersed field of detail, the spirit photographs consisted of extreme intensifications of visual energy around two faces, the face of the sitters, and the face of the spirit extra. And the face of the sitter was more intense than the obviously appropriated face of the extra because of that most quintessentially photographic of ironies—the people who were photographed trying to channel down an image of their lost loved ones as evidence of life beyond the grave are now themselves all dead, but revenant for us in their photograph.

Because the presence of Mrs Deane herself still inhabited the archive—seemingly so ingenuous, but so canny; seemingly so generous, but so elusive—I had to make a relationship with Mrs Deane before I could occupy her photographs. I wrote and published a short biography of her using the texts which she had already generated about herself at the time of her greatest notoriety: Fred Barlow's breathless announcement that he had discovered a new 'sensitive'; the various tabloid exposés; the forensic documentations of her fraudulence filed away by the SPR's investigator Eric Dingwall; Estelle Stead's promotional booklet *Faces of the Living Dead*; and F. W. Warrick's magnum opus, *Experiments in Psychics*, which took him over ten years to write and publish. Through this process of literary amanuensis I think I negotiated the right to at least temporarily cohabit her photographs with her.

I saw the exhibition *Faces of the Living Dead*, and the book *Faces of the Living Dead: The Spirit Photography of Mrs Ada Deane*, as being very much two parts of the same artistic project. (At the same time, of course, as both were helping me think through spirit photography's usefulness for rethinking photography more generally, through the trope of the 'fake'.) For

me Mrs Deane's story was not only fascinating in its own right, but also helped to occupy the space left vacant by the unspoken and lost-to-time stories of yearning which had led her sitters to her studio in the first place. I selected eighty images from the 1000 in the albums and had CUL make slide copies for me. These I edited down further and scanned and cropped to produce a final thirty images. These were digitally enhanced by reproducing them in duo-tone with a cold 'ethereal' blue colour, feathering them slightly around the edges, and printing them onto large glossy sheets of photopaper.

Although I still tried to direct the viewer's attention towards the photograph's implicit body language—sibling leaning against sibling, scrawny wrist protruding from manacle-like cuff, and so on—my edits had no choice but to follow the logic of Mrs Deane's photography and concentrate on the faces, either isolated in their own bubble of yearning, or in uncanny dialogue with a gormless extra which was already laying latent for them in the emulsion during the moments of their self-portraiture.

FACES OF THE LIVING DEAD

EIGHTY YEARS AGO MRS ADA DEANE OPERATED AS A SPIRITUALIST PHOTOGRAPHER IN LONDON. FOR ONE GUINEA, PEOPLE SEEKING AN IMAGE OF THEIR DECEASED LOVED ONES COULD HOLD A SITTING WITH MRS DEANE. SHE WOULD SING HYMNS WITH THE SITTER, AND PREPARE THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATE BY CLASPING IT BETWEEN THE SITTER'S AND HER OWN HANDS WHILE SHE RECITED THE LORD'S PRAYER. SHE WOULD THEN TAKE A PORTRAIT OF THE SITTER. UPON DEVELOPMENT AN IMAGE OF A DISEMBODIED FACE WAS USUALLY FOUND ON THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATE, WHICH WAS USUALLY SUCCESSFULLY IDENTIFIED BY THE SITTER AS ONE OF THEIR DEPARTED LOVED ONES.

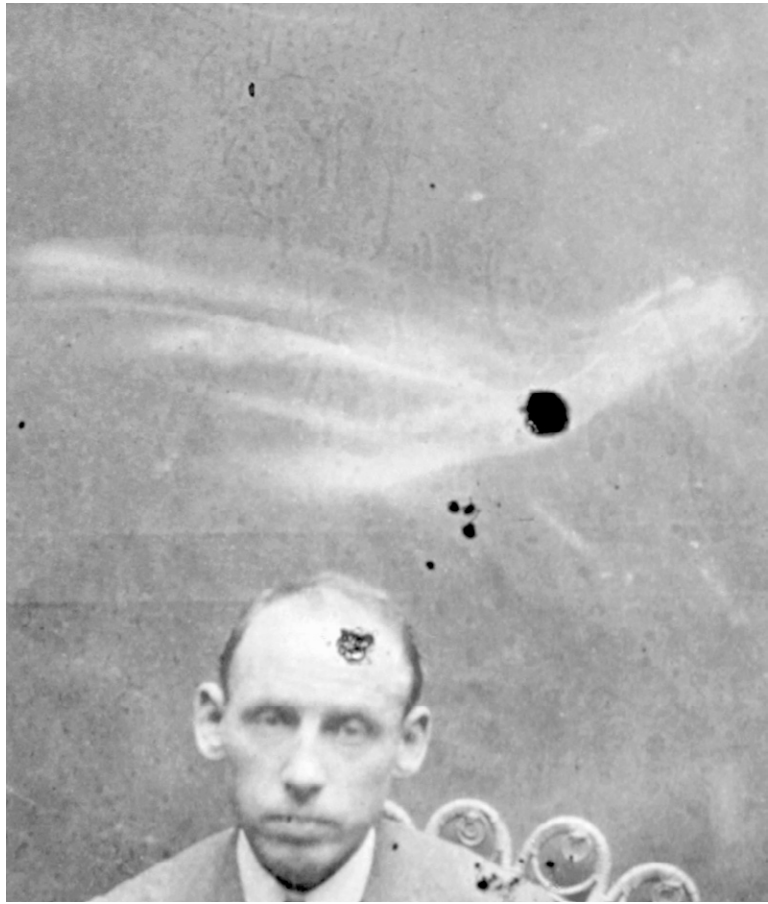
ONE THOUSAND OF THESE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE NOW HELD IN THE ARCHIVES OF THE *SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH*.

THESE IMAGES DERIVED FROM FRAGMENTS OF SOME OF THEM.



















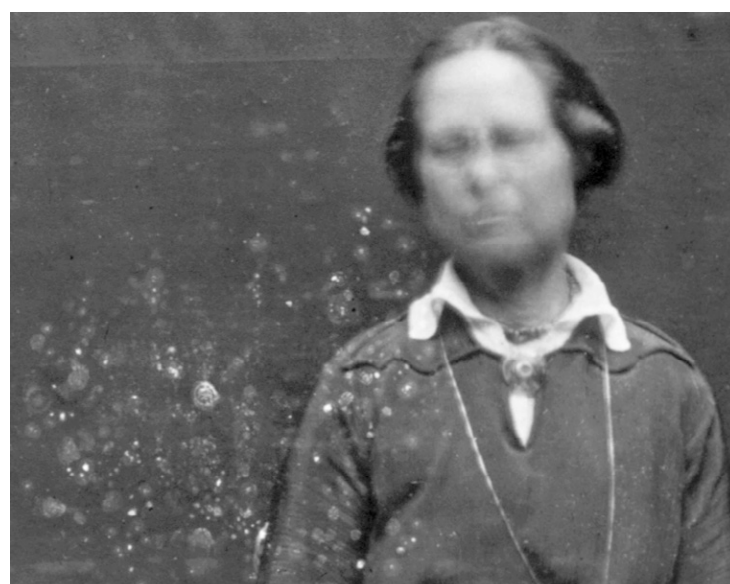






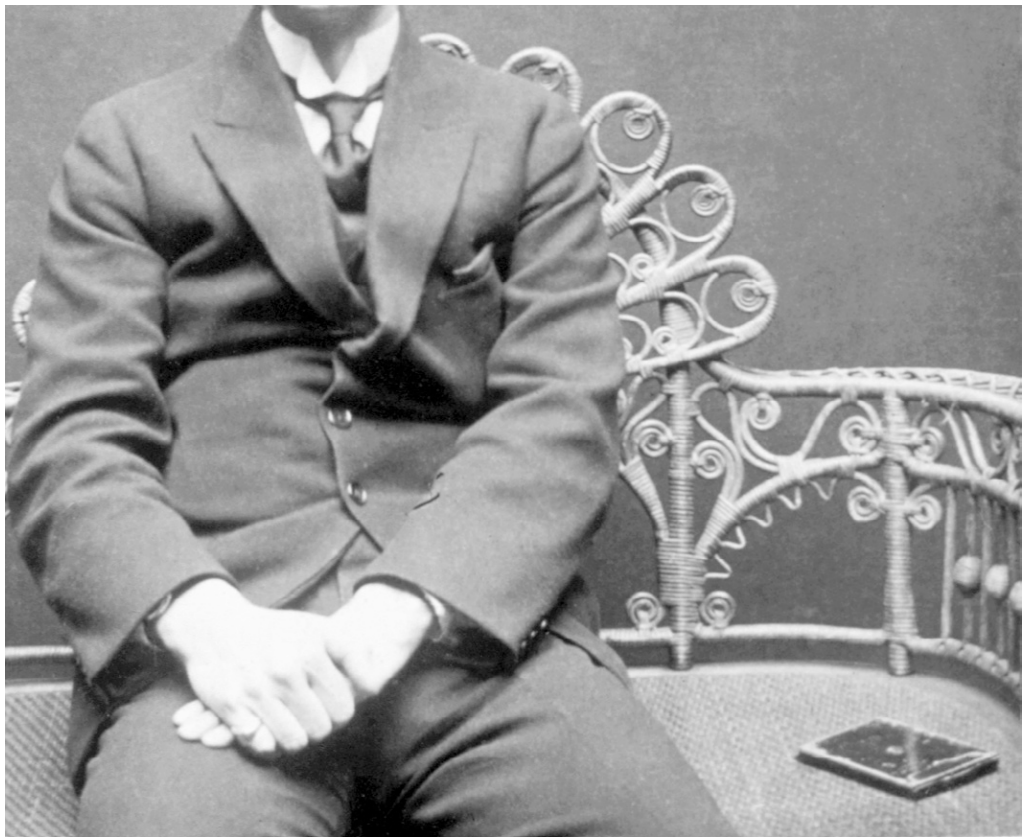










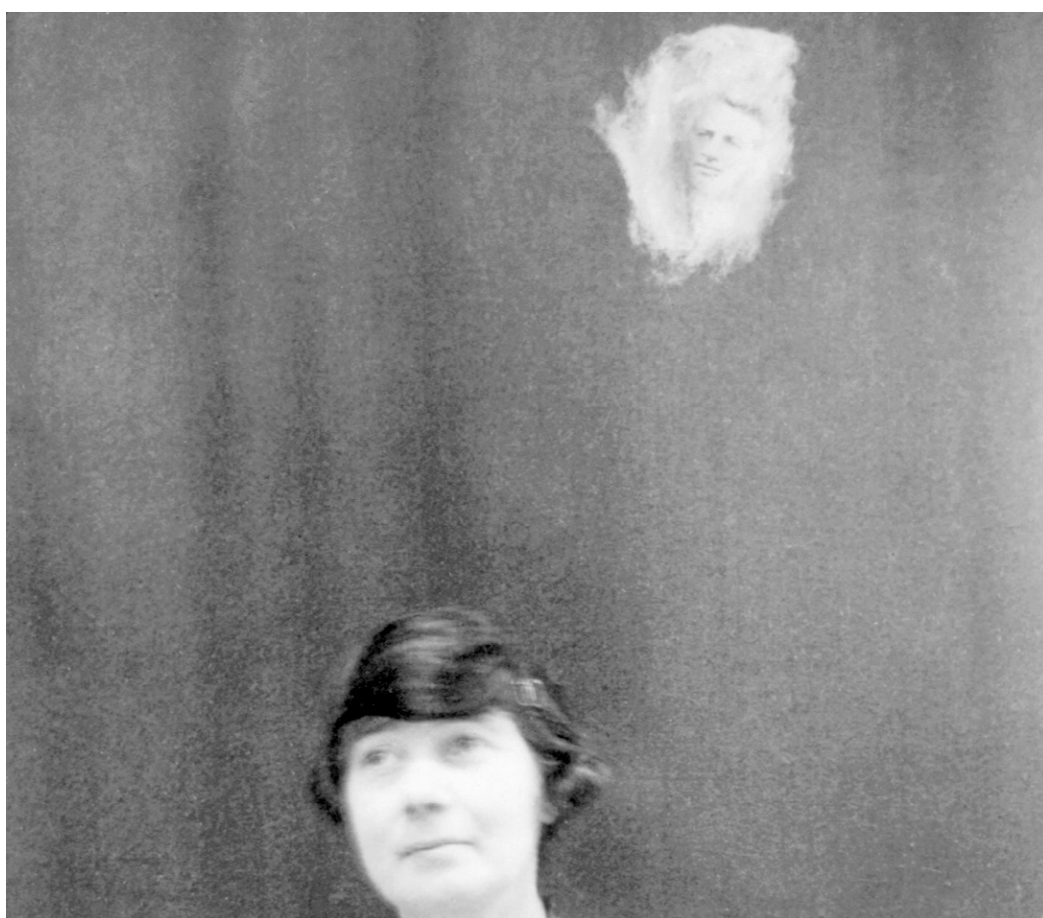












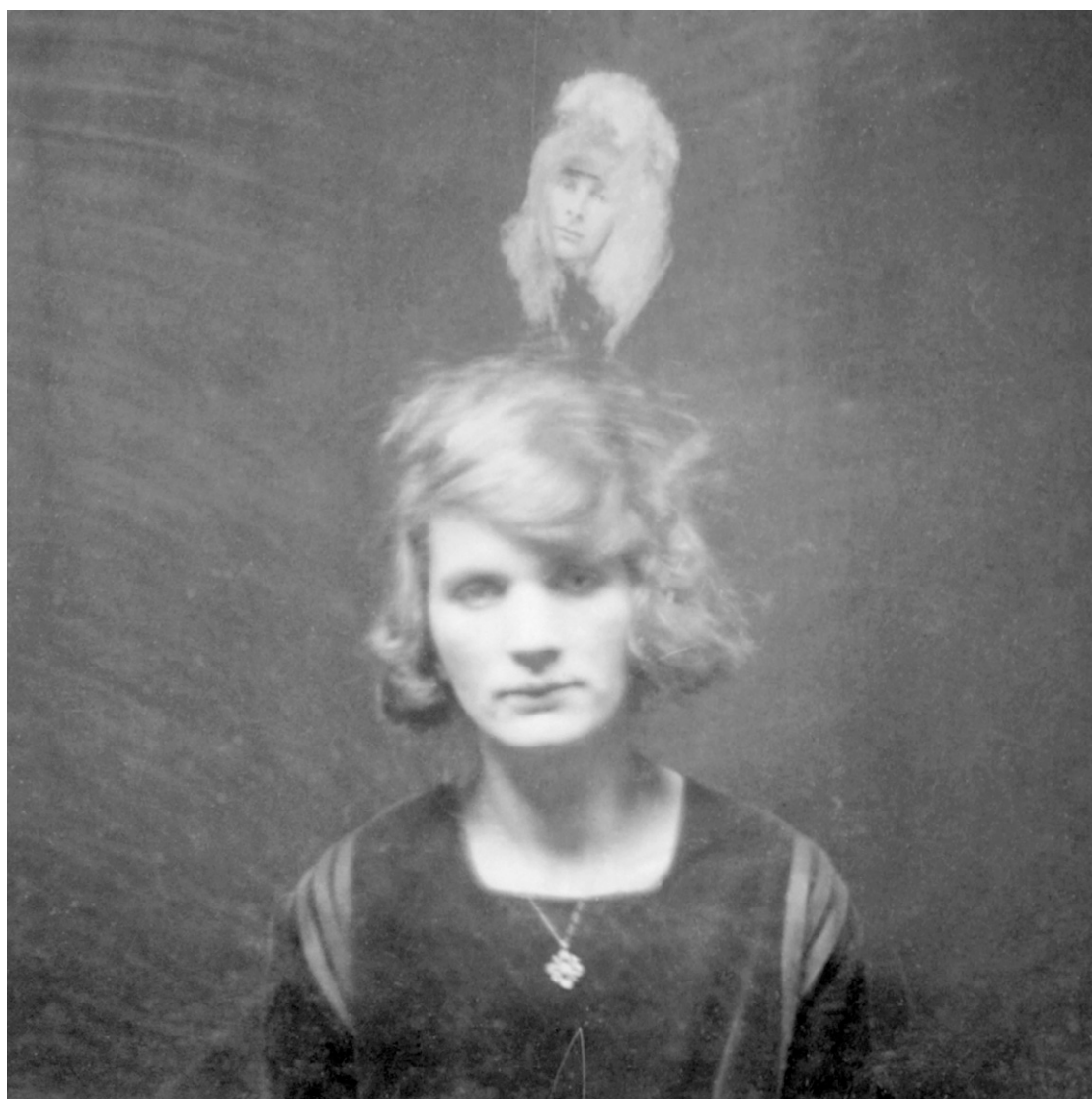














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