The ancestral image in the present tense

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Summary
When photographs in museum collections are involved in community research, our understanding of them as representations is radically altered. Drawing on archival research and fieldwork in West and South Australia, this paper presents a number of examples of the metonymic 'presence in absence' (Runia 2006: 6) of the past through photography that indigenous people experience when connecting with archival imagery.

Introduction

This article draws on archival research, as well as fieldwork in South and Western Australia[1], to argue for an anthropological approach to historical photography that foregrounds the way in which images mediate the experiential and lived presences of the past in the present. In contrast to approaches which either see photographs as historical documents, carriers of information about the past, or as sites for the contestation of indigenous political rights (Lydon 2012), the argument developed here seeks to blend insights from the philosophy of history, especially that of Runia (2006), and anthropology, in order to refocus attention upon the lived experience. Both the historical subjects of photography and those engaging with photographs today are bound into this set of socially-meaningful experiences, which move beyond issues of representation and meaning and towards how photographs, in Barthes's phrase become 'at once evidential and exclamative' (1984: 113), that is, are affective social objects that cannot be reduced to what they 'mean' or 'are of' but how they socially enfold historical experience.

Placing photographs

In the Australian Aboriginal Cultures gallery at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide, what Runia describes as the 'presence in absence' (Runia 2006: 6) of metonymy, confronts each visitor as they enter. For me the *punctum* of this display as I encountered it in August 2013 was the shock of recognition; a woman's face that I had seen before leapt from of the display. The cord holding her blanket tight around her shoulders and her hairband stood out more prominently in this backlit display than I remembered the same image in the form of a century-old print in Oxford.

The montage does not mention photographers, historical encounters, donors; it does not allow the curator or historian to establish meaning, or qualify the representation. The images are both physically and metaphorically overlapping in space and time, denying textual description its usual discontinuous borderlands, and instead

creating a sense that the Australian Aboriginal people seen in historical imagery belong together, an identity and community that can be reclaimed through their various presences in the archive.

The metonymy of the photographic portrait, in which the absence of the individual is marked by their photographic presence here and now, means that this display does its intended job very well. The historical discontinuity of the photographic document is overwhelmed by the collective presence of the ancestral image in the present. But it is also the sort of display in which place matters; both in the more specific sense of an Aboriginal Cultures gallery rather than a world cultures museum, but also since it is a display located in Australia. In the Australian context, place, land and belonging are of crucial importance to how metonymy operates in relation to photography, and the experience of the ancestral image. Place-as-presence can here be understood as enfolding both Australian Aboriginal notions of a deep spiritual connection between a person, kin group and a particular place or area, and also the way in which that set of connections plays out in the recognition of land or country when viewing historical images. As Deborah Bird Rose points out, 'People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person … [p]eople say that country knows, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy' (1996: 7).

The presence of dislocated country in the photographic archive has been a relatively overlooked dimension to date. Despite the abundance of photographs that either document landscape, environmental conditions or the socio-spatial contexts of ethnographic objects or people, little anthropological attention has been paid to indigenous engagements with place in the ethnographic archive, despite the fact that in the Australian context this has been integral to legal research in the context of native title and its associated documentation. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is a preoccupation with Aboriginal concepts of time and history, at the expense of approaching things from an Aboriginal perspective. As Swain points out '… the entire discussion of time – linear, cyclical or Dream – has diverted our attention from the uncompromising position of place in Aboriginal worldviews' (1993: 23). The assumption that historical photographs should be explored with Aboriginal informants predominantly as images from a linear 'past' disconnected from the present by 'time' misses the more important connecting point of place.

A notable exception is Edwards's (1994) discussion of responses made by Goodenough Islanders Tomokivona, Uledoma and Mataivu to photographs taken by Diamond Jenness in 1911. Looking at a photograph of islanders fishing in Mud Bay, their commentary to anthropologist Michael Young pointed out aspects of land use and ownership indicated by wisps of smoke rising from the treeline on the opposite shore. For Edwards, 'only through reference to these points did people enter the story … asserting their identity and associated control of the land', a process which indicated 'points of intersection of different ways of telling history' (1994: 12). The role of the archival photograph in socially emplacing ancestors within such indigenous articulations of history is obviously one that involves the image in a complex of contemporary politics, as well as indigenous notions about the authority of such external documents to question or confirm received local histories. In Bell's account of discussing photographs by F. E. Williams in 1922 with a man called Ke'a in the Purari Delta of Papua New Guinea, land and particularly the rights to use it, and thereby social status, also figure significantly: 'Ke'a pointed out the breadfruit, rosewood, and coconuts, which framed the structure's open entrance, and named their various owners … to the left of the building

just out of the photograph's frame was a creek where his grandmother, Ikopie, used to catch fish and prawns' (2008: 129-30).

During my own fieldwork I showed a postcard of a Corroboree to Rod Garlett, a Noongar Aboriginal man from Western Australia, during a series of community meetings in Perth. He identified one of them as his great-great grandfather Joobaitch, a senior Noongar law man, standing with four other men painted for corroboree (Figure 1). Rod's eyes were held by the figures of Joobaitch and the others for a short time. But immediately he posed a rhetorical question, 'could that be the Perth Hills? … I just get a huge feeling that that is the Perth Hills in the background … the escarpment … Pop's old dance ground … That's country … so, all of Pop's country was from King's Park that come right through here and up to the hills. That was all of his land.'

The profile of the Perth Hills does more in this moment of recognition than locate the image, it emplaces it, connects ancestor and descendent through ongoing relations to country. Whilst the concept of location might connote the objective space inhabited by the lens, it says little or nothing about the human experience of place. For Rod Garlett, the ability to place Joobaitch in his own country within the image is central to the photograph's power in the present. As he later said, 'I was overwhelmed at the photographs and what I saw, and to think that I would be able to look back in Noongar history to see the face of my great-great grandfather of Whadjuk country. He was a senior law man for this place here. Law lived here, in his days. And we had a powerful people, that looked after this land.'

Figure 1: Postcard showing senior Noongar men dancing. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum [1998.279.20]

Photographic emplacement here comes through an active engagement with the past in the present – Rod speaks of standing, looking, seeing – as Barthes noted, a set of actions that move the image beyond the merely evidential toward the exclamative. So alongside emplacement we must set the exclamative potential of names, or rather of naming. In their recent essay on photography and naming in central Australia, Bradley, Adgemis and Haralampou discuss the frustrations felt by an Aboriginal community with the inability to name ancestors in the historical imagery of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen. Without a documented name, distress was expressed at the inability to situate an ancestor within their relevant kin network today and the ability to give the image social meaning. This is contrasted with Spencer and Gillen's emphasis on the importance of names in their ethnography, where they describe eight different forms of name that each man carries. As Bradley et al state, 'the image of an unidentified kinsman, now deceased, is cast adrift in a nameless, kinless void that frustrates the act of recuperative remembrance' (2013: 56). Personal names and country are also connected in complex ways. Merlan (1998: 97-101) for instance describes the way in which the Aboriginal community around Katherine in the Northern Territory would frequently take part of their name from the area in which they had been born, or even from the vegetation nearby. When names and identities allow for connections with living relations, photographs become agentive, affective objects (Edwards 2009). The affective nature of viewing images of ancestors was memorably described by one Aboriginal man, Gordon Machbirrbirr, as:

> It's like a life coming to you. Like you have your life coming back … I have never seen my ancestors, but I would like to see them in the photo … And when you look at the photo and say,

“Ahh”, and you think that the spirit of that person came to the life. And lived. (Quoted in Poignant R. & A. Poignant, 1996: 2).

One of the key points here is the recognition, again signalled by Deborah Bird Rose, that ‘knowledge, in all Aboriginal systems of information, is specific to the place and to the people’ (1996: 32). This means that photographs are re-placed into country at the same time that the knowledge within them is recognized, understood, remembered. This insight accords with my own fieldwork observations on the way in which photographs were engaged with, as in the example of Rod Garlett. As Luke Taylor notes, ‘In these respects the country, Ancestral species, and contemporary humans can be considered to be spiritually continuous’ (2012: 27).

Names and stories

The reattachment of personal names, and the resocialisation of the archival object within indigenous social networks is an integral feature of the contemporary research process and its associated methodologies of photo elicitation and visual repatriation. In 2011 for instance a number of daguerrotypes of Aboriginal people were discovered in a small mission cottage museum in Port Lincoln in South Australia. Recognizing their significance as potentially among the earliest portraits of indigenous people in South Australia, they were taken to Adelaide to be examined by scholars and conservators. Among those to look at them was a local historian, Tom Gara, who was able to name one of them as James Wanganeen since he had previously seen another portrait of the same man in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, captioned ‘Wongannin, aged 25, catechist’ (Figure 2). This carte-de-visite is part of a set of images of Aboriginal members of Poonindie mission as well as images of non-missionised ‘traditional’ Aboriginal people. It has all the hallmarks of a ‘before-and-after’ set of images compiled by a cleric to illustrate the work of the church in South Australia.

Figure 2: Portrait of James Wanganeen. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [1998.249.33.9]

James Wanganeen, possibly originally named Wanganni, was an Upper Murray Maraura man born around 1836. He is thought to have left the Upper Murray area as a young boy after unrest there, and attended the Aboriginal school in Adelaide. When this closed down in 1852 he was sent to Poonindie Mission that had been recently established by Archdeacon Mathew Hale. As a result of the research into the Pitt Rivers Museum’s early South Australian photographs, a direct descendent of James Wanganeen, Lynnette Wanganeen, was contacted by Australian scholar Jane Lydon. Lynnette was then able to visit Port Lincoln to see the recently identified daguerreotype of her ancestor put back on display there.

In August of 2013 during my own visit to Adelaide, I was able to meet Lynnette and give her a copy of the Oxford portrait of James Wanganeen (Figure 3). As a revered ancestor from whom many now take their name, Lynnette said that she had always wondered what he looked like. ‘Finally’, she said, ‘we’ve got a face to a name.’ But his presence for her goes much further than being able to visualize an important ancestor. For her the portrait has a significant spiritual presence, helping make spiritual connections between generations.

Figure 3 – Lynnette Wanganeen with a copy of the Pitt Rivers Museum's portrait of James Wanganeen. Courtesy Pauline Cockrill.

Another photograph from South Australia reveals the fragmented presence of stories rather than names (Figure 4). The caption underneath reads "Port Lincoln, S. Australia. Married a sealer, shipwrecked, and said to have swum 15 miles to Port Lincoln. 1836."

The story caption is corroborated by early newspaper accounts. The *Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser* (New South Wales) for 24 October 1849 brought news from South Australia including a report of a fatal accident on 16 September that year. The report states that:

> Two men, named C. J. Hinneley and Robert Jackson, together with a native woman from Encounter Bay, the companion or wife of Hinneley for the last four years, and his two children, started in a boat on a sealing expedition. When near the outer reef some ten miles off Coffin Bay the boat capsized and all were drowned except the woman. The poor woman had been stolen by sealers from Encounter Bay when a child, and has become the object of general sympathy at Port Lincoln. (p. 3)

Figure 4 – Portrait of a woman, Port Lincoln. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [1998.249.33.8]

One might suggest that the local fame of this woman after the events of 1849 precipitated this photograph. The portrait is small, only 3.5cm high, and inexpertly trimmed into an oval, perhaps to fit a small vignette frame. Its material form resonates with domestic and personal display. The way in which the story is here transcribed under the portrait as a textual caption gives pause for thought about the presences and absences of oral culture, the local stories that sometimes travel with photographs, or that, more usually, become disconnected from them. In this case, the Pitt Rivers Museum curator, Henry Balfour, has faithfully transcribed a note presumably made on the reverse of the square mount. But who originally chose to stick the story to the photographic object, at what time, and what was the motivation? Such texts give archival presences to storytellers that disrupt the disciplinary reframing of images as they enter the archive. In a museum box of photographs illustrating Australian Aboriginal peoples, the presences of such stories reinsert images into the oral cultures in which they were originally collected, handled, spoken about, remembered, displayed and discussed.

Archival presences and lived experiences

Texts sent with images, written on their blank reverse sides, mounts, or in accompanying letters, are sent to communicate meaning or context. If knowledge is assumed, texts are usually absent, hence the usual lack of captions in family albums. But when texts prove to be inaccurate, their continued presence in the archive as historical documentation becomes problematic. A case in point is the portrait of another South Australian Aboriginal man in the Pitt Rivers collection (Figure 5). The print was sent by John Bagot, a wealthy pastoralist, briefly a South Australian politician, and a well-connected member of the Adelaide Club, from where his one surviving letter which accompanied his donations of photographs was written. Bagot had a share in a large

cattle station at Anna Creek in Strangways Springs to the west of Lake Eyre, and was asked by Balfour to send to Oxford any photographs of Aboriginal people he could procure. It is likely that Bagot was mentioned to Balfour as a likely source of photographs by the anthropologist Edward Sterling of the South Australian Museum, who Bagot mentions in his letter.[2] The caption underneath, transcribed from Bagot's notes, reads 'Wanamuchoo. Hanged for the murder of a shepherd'. Contemporary press accounts of the circumstances surrounding this photograph however tell a different story.

Figure 5 – Portrait of Wanamuchoo. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [1998.249.38.4]

Wanamuchoo was arrested at Cordillo Downs near Innamincka in 1893 for the murder of a man called Wellparika. He was then brought 850 miles to Adelaide for trial by Trooper Barrett. Many questions were asked at the trial and in the press regarding in whose interests it served to arrest and bring Aboriginal people hundreds of miles to Adelaide for trial, when Aboriginal customs might be better left to run their course.[3]

The Crown Solicitor stated that the principle was to preserve the life of Wanamuchoo, who would almost certainly have been killed by the deceased's relatives, and to see justice done. But since the tracker who had been able to communicate with him was not brought to the trial, Wanamuchoo was unable to understand one word of his trial. He was declared insane by the doctor and jury, and committed to Parkside Lunatic Asylum in Adelaide, where he managed to exist for another ten years.[4]

The photograph of him in the Pitt Rivers Museum collection was taken on his arrest. There is a reference in the *South Australian Register* in 1897 to photographs sent by 'Messrs Rigby' as part 22 of their series 'Glimpses of Australia' which contains an account of Wanamuchoo's photograph being taken at the Adelaide City Watchhouse: 'when confronted with the camera he appeared to think it was some awful instrument of the white man's vengeance'.[5] If he did in fact think this, we might now consider such an understanding entirely justifiable.

Copies of Wanamuchoo's portrait had obviously circulated widely in the years after his trial at Adelaide. John Bagot had obviously been able to acquire a print of the photograph very quickly after it had been taken, since he sent a copy to Balfour only a few months later, in November 1893. Being so well connected in Adelaide, it may have been no problem for Bagot to acquire such images from official sources. But the question remains why he sent the photograph to Oxford with the incorrect information that Wanamuchoo had been hanged. We know that he sent written information since the back of the print is annotated in red ink 'see written memorandum', visible in reverse through the front of the print. One explanation may be that Bagot had confused some of the details of the case with other Aboriginal trials that year. For instance, a Croker Island Aboriginal man called Wandy Wandy had been hanged in the Northern Territory for murder in July of 1893, and Bagot may have confused the trials, or simply assumed a similar fate befell Wanamuchoo.

Searching for Wanamuchoo in the South Australian Museum archives, I finally found traces of him there. At the Adelaide Watchhouse they had taken several photographs of him, one holding an axe, and at least two looking straight at the camera. One of these, I realised, also formed the basis for a smaller vignette portrait which was also in the Pitt Rivers Museum collection, but which had not previously been identified. But along with these portraits were photographs of his skull taken by the notorious

Adelaide coroner and surgeon William Ramsay Smith, who had acquired Wanamuchoo's body from the asylum, prepared it, and sent the skeleton to Edinburgh University for their medical collection. In fact Smith sent the remains of over 500 individuals to Edinburgh over a number of years, in an attempt to gain favour there (Scobie 2009: 34). According to Michael Pickering at the National Museum in Canberra, Wanamuchoo's skeleton was mounted in Edinburgh and probably spent many years on display due to its soot-blackened condition (Scobie 2009: 34). In 2000 his skeleton was returned to Australia as part of the national repatriation programme for Aboriginal human remains, and finally in 2007 he was reburied near Innamincka by elders from the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka Aboriginal Corporation.

Wanamuchoo's various archival and photographic presences, in newspaper accounts and museum collections in Australia and Europe, as both a prisoner and an anatomical specimen, are also the presences of nineteenth-century colonial scientific enquiry. As a man from the remote interior of the country (referred to as the "Far North" in contemporary newspaper accounts), unable to communicate with Europeans, Wanamuchoo was the subject of some fascination in Adelaide. Reports write of his going 'frantic with terror at the sight of the Glenelg Railway engine as it came up the street'[6] and of having a 'vacant expression at one time and savage expression at another'[7]. William Ramsay Smith himself described Wanamuchoo as 'the very lowest black-fellow I've ever seen' (Scobie 2009: 34), and thereby a good 'type' specimen for his Edinburgh colleagues. But as discussed earlier, as the basis of a biographical presence or lived experience, Wanamuchoo's portrait cannot be contained by its representational interpretation as the scientific desire to describe, categorize and tame the colonial periphery. The presence of contemporary debate, opinion, stories, misremembered details, and community memory, all establish productive routes beyond representational boundaries and bring the image into a new evidentiary relationship with the present.

Spiritual repatriation

Australian Aboriginal artist Christian Thompson's 2012 art series *We Bury Our Own*, which drew on the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, was a project he himself described as the 'spiritual repatriation' of the colonial archive.[8] Of course the physical repatriation of Aboriginal human remains is also a process with deep spiritual significance and resonance to those communities involved in receiving them. But in the case of archives–and in particular photographs–those ancestors held in the images remain in the storerooms of remote institutions even after copies have been returned or shared online. The reproducibility of the photographic image means that the surface information it holds can easily be shared, especially in the digital age. But the images of ancestors, as ethnographic studies around the world now show us (Morton and Oteyo 2015; Peers and Brown 2009), are more than the chemical traces of light on a surface – they have a direct and spiritual connection to the person photographed, and so hold significant spiritual and emotional qualities. It is this creative tension, between the archive as a permanent ancestral resting place, and yet as a reproducible, recodable, and dynamic historical resource, that lay at the heart of Thompson's concept of the exhibition space as a spiritual zone.

Figure 6: Christian Thompson's 'Desert Melon' (2012), from the *We Bury Our Own* series. Courtesy of the artist / Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [2013.18.1].

Although not visually quoted in the work made as a result of this engagement, both the experience of looking at archival images, the modes of representation they carry, and the painful histories they hold, can be understood as lying at the heart of the work (Figure 6). Rather than directly invoking or re-presenting historic imagery, as is evident in the work of other Aboriginal artists such as Brook Andrew (who has also worked extensively with archives), Thompson chose to take the history of photographic representation of Aboriginal people as a starting point for a 'spiritual repatriation' via the redemptive process of self-portraiture. Importantly, this process did not involve drawing on those historical markers of identity which are so prevalent in ethnographic imagery, but rather his own fluid and evolving transcultural identity, as well as biographical markers of another recent identity, that of an Oxford student in formal dress. Although archival imagery is a key inspiration in Thompson's work generally, he is inspired by the materiality and composition of a wide variety of images from many different reference points, such as contemporary fashion, film, and music. It is this playful blending of genres and reference points that not only makes Thompson's approach distinctive, it also resonates historically with the blending of scientific and popular genres in the archival imagery.

One of the main points of reference to the colonial archive in the work is the use of the more scientific end of nineteenth-century ethnographic portraiture; head-and-shoulders, full-face, looking directly into the camera, as in the work of policeman Paul Foelsche of Darwin in the 1870s. The scientific scrutiny of the colonial lens is dramatically inverted in *We Bury Our Own* however, with the indigenous appropriation of the means of representation through the self-portrait, as well as the inversion of a key marker of cultural identity – dress. By wearing Oxford academic dress in the portraits, *We Bury Our Own* makes a powerful statement about historical and political processes of identity formation within contemporary Aboriginal communities. As one of the first two recipients of the Charlie Perkins Scholarship to Oxford University, the reference to Oxford in the work is full of historical resonance. Charlie Perkins himself was the first Aboriginal person to become a university graduate, from the University of Sydney in 1965. The biographical connections within *We Bury Our Own* to Charlie Perkins are also evident in the theme of mining through the use of crystals, such as amethysts, since Perkins worked as a coal miner in England for a period in the late 1950s. Speaking about this time in 1998, he said 'It was dirty, filthy, driven high winds driving coal in your face all the time, embedding it in your skin, and you know, in winter time it was freezing. And when you get down in the pits, right down below, it's warm, and then you go down when it's dark and you come up when it's dark in England.'[9] The use of crystals by Thompson was intended to partly point to beliefs, not necessary Australian Aboriginal, in the healing qualities of certain stones, and that their physical contact with the body will channel the spiritual world into the corporeal. The spiritual mediation of crystals in the work connects the various strands of history, culture and representation, and places the work in a new context – that of the spiritual connectivity between the museum, the archival images of ancestors, and the embodied viewer. It is this set of temporal and corporeal connections that Thompson sees as the creative process of 'spiritual repatriation'.

Thompson's *We Bury Our Own* exemplifies the argument presented here that the concept of metonymy is a productive one when trying to understand contemporary social or artistic engagements with the past and especially the photographed past. Historical absences are metonymically signaled in Thompson's work

in a number of ways, especially the presence-in-absence of the archive that informed the work, the presence-in-absence of ancestors, whose ethnographic images are mirrored in Thompson's use of self-portraiture, and the presence-in-absence of country referenced in the Ghost Gum tree image on his head. Thompson's series transfers these historical absences into presences through metonymy, meaning that 'the thing that isn't there is still present' (Runia 2006: 10). This is partly what makes the series such a powerful vehicle of historical Aboriginal experience.

Stolen and returned

At a community meeting organised in the Perth suburb of Kwinana, an Aboriginal woman, Cheryl Martin, spoke to me about the only photo of her great-grandfather. It is a police mug shot taken after his arrest on a spurious charge. 'We know it is [a police photo]' she said, but 'we are all happy to get to him, to have the face.' Cheryl is using the police images as the basis for a painted portrait of him, which will reimagine his likeness in a new medium and a new visual context. The metonymy of the photograph here is such that new visual and material presences emerge from the contemporary matrix of social and kinship connections.

Figure 7: Theresa Walley's genealogical canvas. Photo by the author, 2013.

Cheryl's mother, Theresa Walley, a senior Noongar elder, has done a lot of family history research, and the visual representation of kinship connections through photographs forms an integral part of it. She has begun a large painted canvas that is designed to act as a visual family tree, with circular apertures to accommodate copied portraits of ancestors that she has found in books and archives (Figure 7).[10]

Theresa is from the Stolen Generation, and was brought up without connections to her parents, siblings, language and culture. Theresa's family history research is a way for her to reclaim a set of historical, familial, and cultural identities that she was denied through past state policies. Her canvas is a material and visual expression of the hidden presence of these identities in both state and religious archives in Western Australia.

Figure 8: Photocopy of a New Norcia mission photograph of monks and Henry Inditch. Collection of Theresa Walley. Photo by the author, 2013.

In a photocopied image from the New Norcia mission archive in Theresa's collection, a monk with two adult Aboriginal men pose with scythes, whilst a youth stands between them holding a rake (Figure 8).[11] The youth is Henry Indich (1857-1896), Theresa Walley's great-grandfather. On her family tree canvas, Theresa has cut out his image from the dominating mission context that once surrounded him (Figure 9). In her family tree, Henry Indich is his own visual person in close proximity to his direct family, and not a mission child isolated from his kin.

Figure 9: Portrait of Henry Indich, from Theresa Walley's genealogical canvas. Photo by the author, 2013.

The visual proximity of kin on Theresa's canvas forms an emotional, inverse relationship to the forced disconnections between family members experienced by many Aboriginal

people historically. Especially for Stolen Generation people, there is something powerfully redemptive in the act of visually reclaiming and reasserting the presence of such ancestral connections in the present, which is both a powerful political statement about the survival of culture, as well as a personal expression of desire. On Theresa Walley's canvas, the portrait of Henry Inditch is metonymic in the sense of being part of a larger original photograph that is quite different in nature, but also in the sense of standing for the absence of family and the denial of history.

Conclusion

As Runia notes, 'our past–though irremediably gone–may feel more real than the world we inhabit' (2006: 6). This article points toward an anthropological understanding of historical photographs that sees them as the basis for lived experiences of such a real past in the present. For Runia, the discontinuity of being between the past and present is addressed through the concept of metonymy, a 'presence in absence' that acts as a metaphor for the interwoven nature of historical continuity and discontinuity. The case studies from Australia discussed in this paper have exemplified different dimensions of the photograph as a metonymic object: the presences of ancestors, country, spirit, performative space and creative expression are moments of historical experience. They are not secondary to, or derivative of, the 'meaning' of historical photographs as representations, but an integral part of the way the past is known and experienced in the present. As Runia argues, the problem with representationalism has been its reliance on the transfer of meaning in accounting for the past, and by extension, accounting for the past in the photographic image. The work of anthropology is allied to Runia's shift away from historical representation and towards an understanding of how photographs as social objects speak to a past that is experienced and understood in the present tense. Photographs are history, but they are history right now – a history 'that can be "visited" on the plane of the present' (Runia 2006: 1).

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[2] Pitt Rivers Museum Manuscript Collections, Balfour Papers, Box 8, item B9.

[3] Newspaper accounts of Wanamuchoo’s 1893 trial are recorded in *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), Saturday 25 February, p.1, Wednesday 1 March, p.7, Friday 10 March, p.6; *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* (Hobart, Tasmania), Wednesday 1 March, p.3; *The Argus* (Melbourne), Wednesday 1 March, p.5.

[4] Wanamuchoo’s death is recorded in *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), Saturday 12 March 1904, p. 8, as having taken place in the second half of 1903. They estimated his age as 64.

[5] *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), Wednesday 1 March 1893, p.7.

[6] *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), Monday 26 July 1897, p.4.

[7] *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), Wednesday 1 March 1893, p.7.

[8] The exhibition took place in the Pitt Rivers Museum’s Long Gallery between 26 June 2012 and 17 February 2013; see: http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/christianthompson.html. He describes the exhibition, and the term ‘spiritual repatriation’ in the accompanying video by Michael Walter, see: https://vimeo.com/44050317. *We Bury Our Own* also emerged from the wider context of an international research project in which the Pitt Rivers Museum is involved,.

[9] Interview with Charlie Perkins by Robin Hughes, 1998: http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/perkins/interview3.html

[10] One of the most important sources of genealogical information and images for Noongar people is Lois Tilbrook’s 1983 book *Nyungar Tradition: Glimpses of Aborigines of south-western Australia 1829-1914*.

[11] New Norcia is a Benedictine mission in a remote location in Western Australia 132km north of Perth, founded by Rosendo Salvado. Until the 1970s local Aboriginal children were sometimes forcibly removed from their families and sent to live at the mission.