

Australian Photography and Transnationalism

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Transnationalism is a theoretical concept which today is widely used to describe the relations that have formed, and continue to form, across state boundaries (Howard 3). Used initially by scholars in the early 2000s to refer to the flow of goods and scientific knowledge between nations that ‘has increased significantly in modern times beginning with trade and empires in 1500’ (Howard 4), it has in recent years come to include the category of culture, a development that has in turn sparked a flood of publications aimed at interrogating nationalist histories. Among the first of these publications in Australia was Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake’s ground-breaking work *Connected Worlds* (2005), which radically transformed our conception of Australia’s past by repositioning Australian history ‘on the outer rim of Pacific and Indian Ocean studies, as a nodal point in British imperial studies and connected, or cast in a comparative light, with other settler colonial nations’ (Simmonds, Rees and Clark 1).

Less than two years later in 2007, David Carter invoked what has come to be called the ‘transnational turn’ when he challenged scholars of Australian literature to focus on ‘the circulation of cultures beneath and beyond the level of the nation’ (Carter 114–19). His call, like that of Curthoys and Lake, was in response to several decades of scholarship emphasising the cultural nationalism which as Robert Dixon, in his compelling study of the photographic and cinematographic works of Frank Hurley observes, ‘began in the 1960s’ and ‘peak[ed] probably in the decade from 1977 to 1987’ (Dixon xxv). Dixon explains: ‘the problem with the cultural nationalist approach is that it prevents us from exploring the connections that exist outside of—or in a complex set of relations to—that national space’ (Dixon xxv). Dixon himself does not cast the nation state aside entirely, but like Tony Ballantyne refers to it as just one of the more significant ‘structures governing human action and cross-cultural engagements’ (Ballantyne 32). He does, however, draw a sharp distinction between the national and transnational frames when he says the transnational turn ‘challenges us to imagine new types of cultural history that are concerned with the traffic of people, capital and practices, ideas and institutions within but also beyond the conceptual space of the nation’ (Dixon xxvi).

Dixon’s focus was on using Hurley’s photography to demonstrate the non-centralised circulation and movement of photographers and their products around the English-speaking world or ‘Anglosphere,’ as he calls it, as this existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While my focus is similar, it also extends to the ways in which international modes of photography were taken up and transformed by Australian photographers to create images that were distinctive to Australia. In the following essay the focus is on two periods when the transnational movement of photographers and photographic goods was particularly strong. The first of these periods, which lasted approximately from 1860 to 1880, saw large numbers of talented photographers arriving in Australia, many of whom specialised in studio and ethnographic portraits and/or landscapes. Most were migrants and colonists from Britain, but there was also a small number of highly skilled photographers from France and Germany. Although landscape was a prominent genre in this period, my focus is on the period’s most dominant genre—studio portraiture. The second period, 1925–1945, witnessed an uptake of the international photographic style known as Pictorialism. This was immensely popular with those

practitioners who sought to make photography an art form. Here my focus will be primarily on landscape photography as the genre most favoured for artistic expression.

The Nineteenth Century

The first person to succeed in ‘fixing’ a photographic image was the Frenchman Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, who used silver-coated plates for this purpose in 1839. This was followed almost immediately by the Englishman Henry Fox Talbot’s invention of paper negatives, which not only fixed images, but also allowed multiple copies to be made. From these beginnings, photography spread across the globe within just a few decades. The first daguerreotype was made in the USA in late 1839 less than a year after Daguerre’s invention was reported in America’s newspapers; while in Australia this occurred in 1843 (Cato 2–3).¹

In Australia, the links to photographic developments in France, Germany and Britain remained especially strong throughout the mid to late nineteenth century, partly because of the inherently transnational activities of the cultural and scientific institutions that promoted photography as an effective tool for the cultivation of civility and progress; but partly also because of the relative absence of border controls that disrupted the free flow of merchandise and people. In the case of the British Empire, such borders were virtually absent, making it possible for many male photographers in particular to lead an ‘itinerant’ lifestyle. During this period, notable numbers of British photographers either travelled to or settled in Australia. The list includes: Thomas Bock, Walter Woodbury and James Page, Samuel Sweet, Douglas Kilburn, John Watt Beattie, Charles Bayliss, Nicolas Caire, Richard Daintree, Thomas Chuck, and the amateur female photographer Louisa How, to name but a few. There were also a small number of Australian photographers who travelled to New Zealand and vice-versa.

The free flow of goods between Britain and its colonies enabled photographers in places like Australia and New Zealand to obtain the most up-to-date photographic equipment and manuals, but also knowledge of the latest techniques, trends and styles. In Europe and North America, the daguerreotype and its less expensive variant the ambrotype were soon replaced by the albumen process, followed by the gelatin silver process. Each of these processes represented an improvement on the previous process, however throughout this whole period it was the realist style of photography that dominated; and this was the case wherever in the world the new technology was practised. Photography’s reputation for being a mechanical eye initially set it apart from drawing and painting as the ideal medium for recording people, objects and events, and this also explains why in the 1850s daguerreotypes and ambrotypes were so swiftly appropriated to commercial use. It was the popular American author Edgar Allan Poe, among others, who gave the public its initial belief that photography was a detailed imitation of reality. He wrote:

If we examine a work of ordinary art by means of a powerful microscope, all traces of resemblance to nature will disappear—but the closest scrutiny of the photographic drawing [i.e. daguerreotype] discloses only a more absolute truth, more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented. (Poe 26)

In Australia as in Britain and the USA, the most common commercial application of the daguerreotype was the manufacture of portraits for the buying public. The public were attracted to the idea that the daguerreotype was a quick and relatively inexpensive way to make a ‘likeness’ of a person compared to a painting. They also liked the fact that photographs possessed the ability to render people more beautiful and successful-looking than they were in

reality: skilled professionals could achieve such effects by using flattering forms of lighting and camera angles. But the settings were no less significant. People were photographed in studio spaces whose props evoked the luxurious drawing rooms of gentility. As observed by Lalvani:

These are the spaces that savour the hegemony and presence of a particular class: spaces not of labor, but of cultivated leisure, characteristic of a capitalistic class; . . . their Grecian columns and voluminous drapes exud[ing] a civilizing and civilized air. (Lalvani 68)

British photographers like John Mayall had been capturing the ‘likenesses’ of members of royalty since the 1840s using lighting methods and poses borrowed from portrait painters (McCandless 50), and this was a development that swiftly became universal. As in paintings, poses suggested a person’s social rank, with the men adopting poses ‘that symbolically evoke[d] the bourgeois cultural ideal’ (Lalvani 52). A particularly striking example of this ideal was the ‘statesman-like pose’ which was designed to suggest the high moral standard befitting a political leader. This was the invention of the New York photographer Mathew Brady who used it to photograph President Lincoln and many other ‘illustrious Americans’ (Trachtenberg 26). With the emergence of the *carte de visite*, which comprised an image mounted on a card the size of a formal visiting card, portraits of celebrities were soon being produced by commercial photographers all over the world, many of them featuring the statesman-like pose. Daguerreotypes and ambrotypes were expensive and not everyone could afford them. By using the *carte de visite* format, photographers could produce portraits of celebrities at a fraction of the cost without sacrificing the sharpness of the image. Furthermore, unlike daguerreotypes and ambrotypes which were one-offs, *cartes de visite* could be produced in large numbers. However, as Steve Edwards has observed, the practice also arguably resulted in the ‘pastiche’ of fine art portraiture (Edwards 64).

The Melbourne studio of Batchelder and O’Neill in Collins Street East was one of the first Australian studios to produce *cartes de visite* of celebrities. Both Batchelder and O’Neill were originally from Massachusetts, so it is possible that they were aware of Brady’s portraits. Among the Australian dignitaries they photographed were Lady Barkly who was a talented botanist, and Sir Henry Barkly who was Governor of Victoria between 1857 and 1863. Like Brady’s portrait of President Lincoln, Sir Henry stands with one hand resting atop a fluted pillar, his gaze confidently directed toward the camera (Figure 1). In contrast, Lady Barkly, her diminutive body trapped within abundant folds of crinoline, stands tentatively beside a large mirror in which is reflected the reverse side of her body. The bedroom mirror was a common symbolic prop for respectable ladies in the Victorian period where it featured as a symbol for intimacy and femininity (1832) (Figure 2). Indeed, in the same year the amateur British photographer Lady Clementina Hawarden used the device of the reversing mirror in several photographs she made of her three adolescent daughters in the privacy of their bedrooms. Andrea Henderson suggests that in Hawarden’s photographs the device may have been an analog for ‘the perceiving mind’ and for the camera’s relation to ‘physical reality generally’ (Henderson 134), but in the case of Lady Barkly it was probably meant to show that the photographer did not need to use any clamps or contraptions to hold the subject steady for the photograph.

The studio portrait was not the only type of photograph whose conventions were exported to Britain’s colonies. Writing in the 1980s, cultural historian Allan Sekula contrasted the honorific portrait tradition in which photographs were made for bourgeois consumption with the anthropometric portraits created for the purpose of surveillance and social control (Sekula 345).

This latter category includes the photographs of Indigenous people that Thomas Huxley in his role as president of the Ethnological Society of London requested from government agents in 1874 as part of a grand scientific project to ‘classify’ the various ‘races’ of the British Empire. The anthropometric style was an outgrowth of Charles Darwin’s claim, expounded in his *Descent of Man* of 1871, that Indigenous people belonged to that lower rank of human races which he referred to as ‘savages’ (Darwin 181–82); and to the extent that it required the removal of clothing and the application of a measuring stick to demonstrate anatomical differences, this form of photography objectified and dehumanised Indigenous people. Several Australian agents refused Huxley’s request citing humanitarian as well as practical reasons (Huxley 86), but one photographer who embraced Huxley’s method was the Northern Territory policeman Paul Foelsche (1831–1914). An immigrant from Germany who was also a highly talented amateur photographer, Foelsche assumed the role of the colony’s official photographer when commissioned to produce views of the newly established settlement for the Intercolonial Exhibition held in Melbourne in 1865. Soon after this, he shifted his focus to ethnographic photography. Foelsche photographed the Aboriginal men and women who were being held in the Palmerston Gaol in the Northern Territory using the strict method of anthropometry advanced by Huxley (Cooper and Harris 18). However, he also created another set of photographs based on a modified version of the method mandated by Huxley that involved photographing only the upper half of the body minus the measuring stick. The modifications he made may have been the result of his Aboriginal subjects’ refusing to be photographed using the dehumanising method devised by Huxley, or because some of his Aboriginal subjects were merely visitors to the gaol and he felt he had to treat them with more respect. Whatever compelled Foelsche to take this new direction, it involved an Australian photographer adapting a British mode of representation to local conditions and, in the process, producing a style that is arguably more personalised than Huxley’s (Figure 3).

In 1881 Foelsche was invited to read a paper on what he had learned about Northern Territory Aboriginals to the members of the Royal Society of South Australia.² The Royal Society of South Australia was part of a much larger imperial network of scientific institutions that were constantly sharing and exchanging data about Indigenous people. The various missionary and humanitarian societies that were positioned throughout the empire formed part of this same interconnected web; members regularly corresponded with one another and many also sent each other photographs. As Alan Lester has observed, both natural science and humanitarian societies were vital players in the system of colonial networks that were erected to enable the British government to keep control of the empire in the nineteenth century (Lester 230). Lester and increasing numbers of contemporary scholars, Dixon among them, have also observed that the flow of information across these networks was not always from centre to periphery. Instead, the colonies often sent data back to the heart of the Empire, albeit data compiled according to British conventions. Frequently displayed at international expositions held in London including the London Intercolonial exhibitions of 1861 and 1872, many were also sent to the leading medical and ethnological schools and establishments of Britain, Ireland and Scotland. Foelsche’s photographs of Larrakia people are a case in point: they were commissioned by the South Australian Government for the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle where they formed part of a display of scientific specimens.

In addition to anthropometric portraits, Australian photographers produced studio portraits of Aboriginal people in what was a more philanthropic mode. Examples include the sennotype photograph that Australian photographer Henry Albert Frith (active in Australia between 1857 and 1867) produced in 1864 of the last remaining survivors of the Oyster Cove Aboriginal community in Tasmania (Figure 4); and those made two years later of the same group by

Tasmanian-born photographer Charles A. Woolley who owned a portrait studio in Hobart (Gough 46). Sennotypes were coloured photographs made by hand-colouring a waxed (transparent) albumen print that was placed over an identical print, resulting in a three-dimensional, life-like effect. The sennotype process was itself born of a technique that had been imported into Australia by professional photographer Charles Wilson who had learnt it from the American inventor, then subsequently worked for a short time in Melbourne with Frith (Knight 184).

Frith's group portrait features Lalla Rook (Truganini) from the Bruny Island tribe who at the time was about 52 years old, Maryann whose age was not known, Bessie Clark who was 39 years old, and William Lanney who was from the Coal River Tribe and about 30 years old. Frith's photograph was taken at a time when there was concern about the fate of these people and their race. Separated from their original communities, most of whom had died at the hand of the white settlers' shooting sprees, the survivors were exiled to Wybalenna on Flinders Island in Bass Strait. However, in 1847 they were returned to mainland Tasmania on Governor Denison's orders because of ill health and rapidly declining numbers. Now living in the old convict settlement at Oyster Cove near Hobart, they were all that remained of the traumatised group that thirty years earlier had been rounded up and left in the care of George Augustus Robinson of the Church Missionary Society of London. The individuals themselves, their bodies and clothes and the room at Government House in which they were photographed, give the image geographical and historical specificity, as do the events that culminated in the making of the photograph. Interest in and concern about the Tasmanian Aboriginals' survival had been growing since 1849 following the Governor and Lady Denison's visit to Oyster Cove and their discovery that most of the Aboriginals placed under protection there had died from European diseases. According to Norman James Brian Plomley:

On August 25, 1864, four of the six Aborigines then alive were present at a ball at Government House, and their photograph there was taken as an official record by Frith. On this visit they also went to the theatre. (Plomley 180)

Frith's photograph, in which its subjects are dressed in their finest clothes and pose in the drawing room of Government House where they had been brought especially for the occasion of being photographed, was intended to bestow an air of respectability—and was itself possibly occasioned by the group's conversion to Christianity. As noted by Helen Ennis, the neoclassical columns in Government House are a marker of western civilisation that lent the image the effect of a history painting—hence her remark that Frith's image is 'a grand statement that is technically superb and laden with gravitas' (Ennis, *Photography and Australia* 65). Titled 'The Last of the Native Race of Tasmania,' it was reproduced as a lithograph in the *Illustrated London News* on 7 January 1865 although, as noted by Lehman, the engraver replaced the columns with a curtain thereby erasing the classical reference (Lehman 293). It was also widely circulated in Australia in the form of a stereograph. The image's global mobility and indeed the global mobility of the discourse of extinction that it drew on, is demonstrated by the fact that in 1882 a large copy of the original negative was purchased from the Royal Society of Tasmania by the former governor of New Zealand Sir George Grey for inclusion in his private collection of ethnological photographs (Gough 45).

According to Patrick Brantlinger, extinction discourse was an extrapolation from the theory of progressive human development proffered by Darwin in his *Descent of Man* (Darwin 160–63). He adds, it 'was found wherever and whenever Europeans and white Americans encountered Indigenous peoples' (Brantlinger 1). The fact that Frith's photograph appeared a good seven

years before Darwin's book was published suggests that an earlier version of this discourse was already circulating in Australia by the early 1860s, influenced most likely by James Fennimore Cooper's famous Leather Stocking series of novels and in particular the immensely popular *The Last of the Mohicans* (1857); but also the humanitarian societies of Australia, most of which had strong links to the abolitionist movement in the USA. Jane Lydon, for example, has noted that even in the 1850s the humanitarian societies of Australia were likening the treatment of Australian Aborigines to the treatment of American slaves (Lydon 59). As for the discourse of extinction, Lydon notes the fundamental role it played in supporting the colonisation process when she remarks that 'the brutal realities of colonization, such as the diseases that ravaged Indigenous populations, were authorized by an inevitable belief in extinction' (55).

Frith himself exemplified the transnational mobility of nineteenth-century Australian photographers. He had immigrated from England in 1855 and set up a commercial portrait studio in Melbourne before moving to Hobart. He remained there until 1869 when he closed his Tasmanian studio and relocated to Dunedin in the South Island of New Zealand where he worked for twelve years before moving to Auckland and opening another commercial studio in Shortland Street. His Auckland works included landscape photographs of the area around Thames showing the devastation to the landscape caused by gold mining, but he also made studio portraits of Māori that fetishised their reputation for warlike behaviour.

The photograph collection at the Auckland Museum holds a full-length Albumen silver photograph by Frith of a Māori warrior wearing a piupiu (flax skirt) around his waist and holding a rifle (Figure 5). Reproduced as a *carte de visite* in 1870, the pencilled inscription on the verso reads 'the supposed murderer of the Rev. Mr Volkner on the East Coast. He stood his trial, for want of evidence he was acquitted . . . He is a savage devil [who] is in his native . . . flax petticoat.'³ Both the 'savage devil' label and the words 'flax petticoat' alert us to the way in which much ethnographic photography at this time was not just catering to white people's curiosity about other cultures, it was also being used to reinforce the sort of negative racial and cultural stereotypes that might justify colonialism—indeed, where Frith's ethnological photograph of Tasmanian Aborigines emphasised his subjects' human qualities, this photograph emphasised his subject's savagery—a quality given further emphasis by the rumours that were circulating about the man in the photograph. This was Kereopa Te Rau of whom it was rumoured that not only had he cut out Volker's eyes and swallowed them, but he had famously described one eyeball as Parliament and the other as the Queen and English law. Although he was later arrested by government forces and hanged for the murder, when photographed by Frith he was still a free man ('Trial of Kereopa' 6).⁴

The portrait genre that Frith deployed in New Zealand featured Indigenous people, but it did so without recourse to anthropometry or the discourse of extinction. Such images, which were loosely described as ethnographic portraits, were common to Australia and New Zealand but they were by no means confined to those countries; nor did they originate in these locations. Among the earliest ethnographic photographers of Indigenous people were Americans Charles DeForest Fredricks and William Henry Jackson. Their *cartes de visite* photographs of Sioux, Pawnee, Arapaho and other tribes, were among the first studio portraits made of Native Americans, and they consequently helped lay the foundations for the photographic treatment of Indigenous people in the studio (Yarwood 89). One of the defining features of Fredricks's studio work was photographing Native Americans wearing European clothing as opposed to the traditional deer skin clothing they had worn in pre-colonial times. Jackson, on the other hand, beginning in 1867, produced photographs of Native Americans wearing the representative native dress that stood for pre-colonial clothing, an approach that reinforced the

concepts of extinction and Manifest Destiny while also anticipating the later ‘salvage’ photographs of Edward S. Curtis. Both categories were widely circulated throughout the English-speaking world (Yarborough 121), and both were equally popular with the buying public, especially once the skirmishes and battles over land had subsided and the notion of Indigenous peoples as doomed races began to take hold.

A further example of an Australian photographer who worked in the ethnographic mode was the Queensland-based photographer Harriett Pettifore Brims (1864–1939). Although she assumed the traditional role of wife and mother, she defied the gender conventions of the time by working out of doors and photographing Indigenous people. Not only did she photograph Australian Aboriginals who were living in the bush, she also photographed Melanesian labourers who had been ‘blackbirded’ and brought to Queensland to slave in the sugar cane plantations. In 1894 Brims married a Scottish engineer, and the couple lived variously in Townsville, Ingham and Mareeba. It was while living in Mareeba that she produced her portraits of Melanesians. Created in the 1890s, they were executed in the same ethnographic style as that used throughout North America, Australia, and New Zealand; indeed, one sees the same sort of studio props, neutral walls and floor tiles and the same full body frontal view and exotic-looking attire under which can be seen bare feet (Figure 6). On the other hand, as with Frith’s image of Kereopa, it is the unique style of clothing her Melanesian subject is wearing and his characteristic physical attributes that alert us to the fact that this image was made in Queensland. On the other hand, Brims is also a good example of an Australian photographer who was able to innovate and adapt an international genre to deal with local conditions. In the early part of her career, for example, because she lived so remotely, Brims was obliged to use the dry-plate cameras her husband crafted for her from maple wood, sheet brass and discarded opium tins (*Brims Fulcher* n.p.). This meant that her cameras had only one shutter speed, a feature which gave her photographs enormous depth of field.

The above examples demonstrate the extent to which nineteenth-century photography in Australia was by characterised by a strong engagement with international developments and was primarily about obtaining a likeness of the objects photographed with less emphasis being placed on the medium’s artistic qualities. This is not to say that nineteenth-century Australian photographers like Foelsche, Frith and Brims did not apply aesthetic principles to their works—they certainly did, but expressing themselves artistically was not their primary objective. In the case of Foelsche, the main consideration was documenting his subjects’ physical features for purposes of scientific measurement and classification. By contrast, Frith’s photograph of the Tasmanian Aboriginals sought to make a documentary record of the few remaining members of a race allegedly doomed to extinction, while in the case of Frith’s New Zealand photograph the aim was to exploit the public’s fascination for the racially exotic—a position more in keeping with a commercial outlook.

The Twentieth Century

Australian photography experienced another strong transnational moment in the early twentieth century. Driving this development was a surge in amateur photography. Many of the people who took up photography in an amateur capacity believed that photography’s long-standing compact with commerce had degraded its reputation and that it was now time to explore its artistic potential. These people banded together to form photography clubs and societies, a development that in turn saw the emergence of the new international style of art photography known as Pictorialism, which broke with realist conventions and the emphasis on portraits that dominated the nineteenth century, in favour of a style and subject matter that facilitated self-

expression. Francis Ebury explains the rationale behind the new style thus: 'At the heart of their case was the belief that a straight out, or unaltered, photograph was not art' (Ebury 34). Ebury adds that Pictorialists 'subscribed to the view that a photographer could express creativity only by some kind of intervention,' and that for most Pictorialists this 'took place at the printing stage using manual processes such as gum bichromate, bromoil and carbon pigment' (34).

By the 1930s, Pictorialism in Australia was mainly a home-grown product with most adherents inspired by works that featured in local exhibitions, but its beginnings can be largely traced to the Pictorialist movement that sprang up in Europe in the 1890s. Inspired by European painting, including Impressionism and Art Nouveau, this movement 'also took inspiration from the aesthetic ideas of the Symbolist painters and poets' (Smith and Lefley 66). Its main purpose however was to embrace the concept of photography as fine art. Pictorialists typically eschewed realism for beautifying effects. As Gael Newton has explained: 'Theoretically, the movement was an extension of the eighteenth-century notions of the Picturesque and nineteenth century Romantic ideas' (Newton, *Max Dupain* 16). In line with Peter Emerson's theories about the imprecision of human vision, many also used soft focus to create a gentle blurring of the subject. The participants in Australia's clubs may have been amateurs in the sense that they did not view photography solely as a means of making a living; rather for them, as with their counterparts in Europe, photography was a serious activity that could produce objects of considerable beauty.

From Europe, Pictorialism spread rapidly to other parts of the world, including Britain's settler colonies. By the late 1890s, exponents and practitioners of Pictorialism could be found in Austria, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Russia, but also in the USA and Australia (Ennis, 'The State of Photography' 171). By the early 1900s the movement had also reached Canada, New Zealand and Japan. No less than men, women were attracted by the movement's emphasis on allegory, symbolism and the rarefied processes of photography; and they were active participants in the photographic societies and camera clubs through which the movement spread around the globe.

In some countries, including Australia, Singapore, New Zealand and the West Coast of the USA, Pictorialism lasted for more than thirty years, and enormously varied images were produced under its auspices. In Europe, literary influences and paintings had played a prominent role in the Pictorialists' choice of subject matter, but in other parts of the world, including Australia, there was an equally strong emphasis on outdoor subjects—mainly landscapes, but also seascapes, architectural scenes and cityscapes. In Australia, photographers John Kauffmann, Harold Cazneaux and the young Max Dupain were the movement's most well-known exponents and their focus was primarily on landscapes and cityscapes. Kauffmann, who was born in Truro, South Australia in 1864, had travelled to London when only twenty-three. While studying chemistry there, he learnt photography, but he also got into the habit of spending his weekends taking photographs of the English countryside. It was after seeing an exhibition of photographs by the pioneer Pictorialists Alfred Horsley Hinton and Henry Peach Robinson at the Photographic Society of London that he realised that photography could be an art form. Having decided to commit to using the camera as a vehicle for artistic expression, Kauffmann returned to Adelaide, but he remained in contact with photographic societies in Britain. Gael Newton notes that by the time he left Europe he was well-versed in the 'low tone' style of Pictorialism similar to that of Horsley Hinton who was a member of the Royal Photographic Society. Hinton, an Englishman, typically used Platinotype, gum bichromate processes and sepia inks (Fike 16) which gave photographs a dark and murky appearance. Cato, Newton and Ennis have all argued that Australian photography can be divided between the low-toned early style of Kauffmann and the later Sunshine School that was inspired by Harold Cazneaux, which

embraced bright sunlight and strong contrasts.⁵ The greater value placed on sunlight is abundantly clear from works like Cazneau's 'Spirit of Endurance' (1937) (Figure 7) which features an ancient gum tree of magnificent proportions standing alone on a dry sandy plain, its stalwart limbs ravaged by the relentless sun. Although this emphasis on lighter tones does not characterise all of Cazneau's photographs, it would seem that his works nevertheless underwent a series of shifts that was consistent with the idea that 'a distinctive School of Australian photography was emerging' (Miles 20).

Born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1878, Cazneau had moved to Sydney as a young man where he was appointed to an apprentice position in the studio of Freeman & Co. During his first years of employment, however, he used his free time to hone his photographic skills by documenting the early architecture of Sydney. By 1907 he was exhibiting at the Photographic Society of New South Wales and in 1909 he held his first one-man exhibition (Cato 150–52). In 1916 he founded the Sydney Camera Circle, a small specialist group whose aim as stated in their manifesto was 'to work and to advance pictorial photography and to show our own Australia in terms of sunlight rather than those of greyness and dismal shadows' (Cazneau, Letter n.p.).

Critics have argued that along with the focus on landscape, Cazneau's emphasis on sunlight was one of the more notable features of Australian Pictorialism that distinguished it from British and American Pictorialisms. That Cazneau himself regarded sunlight as a defining feature of Australian photography seems clear from the essay he wrote outlining the year's achievements in Australian photography for the 1920 issue of *Photograms of the Year*. Here, Cazneau identified what he saw as a major problem facing Australian photographers in particular, saying:

I must add to notes the problem we are still find in dealing with our sunshine conditions. Brilliant hard clear atmosphere conditions oft times discourage the worker; the soft-focus lens has not yet solved the problem of dealing with these conditions. The printing medium, to my mind, is still the nearest solution, combined with careful work on the glass slide of the negative to overcome the depth and clearness of distant tones in our landscapes on typically Australian sunny days. (Cazneau, *Photograms* 18)

Writing about the beginnings of Australian settler identity, Melissa Miles has remarked on the particularly powerful mythology in photography that has grown up around the idea of a distinctive Australian light (Miles 73) and she has singled out Cazneau as one of the key forces behind this mythology. However, she also notes that Australia has 'not been alone in its cultural investment in light. Myths of a distinct national light and the use of the sun as a symbol of the nation are evident world-wide' (4). This is a factor which, she rightly surmises, 'throws into relief their status as invented traditions' (76). David Martin and Nicolette Bromberg have argued that each of the different Pictorialisms that manifested across the USA tended to 'reflect the characteristic light and atmospheric conditions of each particular (American) region' as well as its industrial makeup and natural terrain (Martin and Bromberg 2). It was the same with photographers from New Zealand. Miles herself notes that 'The singularity of the sun, and light's status as an origin that precedes all others, also inform myths of a unique national light popularised in countries from New Zealand to Norway' (Miles 4). She adds that in each case the focus on a distinctive light coincided with the birth of cultural nationalism.

In addition to light, British, American Australian and New Zealand Pictorialists frequently focused on trees. The craze for tree studies started in Britain and spread to art societies throughout Australia and New Zealand before also turning up in the exhibitions of the West Coast of the USA, including the famous Seattle Camera club. There are many Australian examples, but two that are noteworthy are Kauffmann's 'Fairy Woods' (circa 1920) (Figure 8), and 'The Three Witches' (1937) (Figure 9) by the Brisbane-based Pictorialist Rose Simmonds. In their deployment of dark tones to achieve a brooding atmosphere these are remarkably similar to the tree studies of British Pictorialists. Even the young Max Dupain caught the tree fever for a while as demonstrated by the romantic-looking 'Palm Beach Landscape' (1930), and 'Weather of Tartarus' (1933) (Figure 10). These early tree studies of Dupain suggest he was not averse to following international trends. On the other hand, the fact that he often photographed trees that were native to Australia and furthermore he photographed them in ways that highlighted the ravages caused by Australia's strong sunlight and harsh, dry climate, suggests that, like Cazneaux, he also sought out features that were distinctive to Australia. Simmonds, by contrast was known for her dexterous use of the bromoil process to achieve romantic effects, techniques which align her more closely to Kauffmann and the British school of Pictorialists. And like Kauffmann her choice of subject matter was also more attuned to British tastes. The Queensland Art Gallery features her many pastoral scenes with their sheep, cows and dilapidated homesteads; her boat studies, and her photographs of crashing waves, sand dunes, still life arrangements with bottles, roses, cherry blossoms and orchids, and old buildings and churches. She was active in the Queensland Camera Club, but she also participated in exhibitions organised by the Photographic Society of New South Wales and the Sydney Camera Circle in 1938. The importance that this Society and others like it in Australia placed on forging transnational connections is clear from the fact that in 1937 like several other aspiring Australian Pictorialists, Simmonds sought and attained the status of Associate of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain (Hall and Mather 77–78).

The examples of Kauffmann and Simmonds and, to a lesser extent, Cazneaux suggest that despite the growing numbers of local societies and exhibitions, links to Pictorialist circles in Britain remained strong. However, apart from the elite Sydney Camera Circle, Australian acolytes of the British-based Link Ring Society (also known as 'The Brotherhood of the Linked Ring') appear to have been few (Newton, *Max Dupain* 20). This is the name for the more exclusive group of Pictorialists who 'broke away from London's long-established Photographic Society on the grounds that it gave insufficient support to those wanting to explore creative photography' (7). The group was founded in 1892 by Henry Peach Robinson, former Photographic Society member George Davison, and Henry Van der Weyde. The Brotherhood was 'a means of bringing together those who are interested in the development of the highest form of Art of which Photography is capable' (Hannavy 1220). To ensure that the highest standards prevailed, membership of the group was exclusively by invitation. As already mentioned, this group served as the model for the Sydney Camera Circle while in America it served as inspiration for the highly exclusive New York-based 'Photo-Secession' group headed by Alfred Stieglitz.⁶

Newton has noted that there appears to have been 'no direct contact between Australians and the new Photo-Secession' (Newton, *John Kauffmann* 16), rather the contact was second-hand, as when the 1903 Photographic Society of New South Wales held an international salon which included the work of Edouard Steichen and Stieglitz (16). This lack of direct contact can probably be explained by the fact that Australian photographers relied heavily on British magazines such as *The Amateur Photographer* and *Photograms of the Year* for their knowledge of new trends. Adding to this, and helping to ensure that the Photo-Secession's increasingly

experimental direction went largely unnoticed, is the greater emphasis that Australia's artists placed on European culture. For most Australian artists of the early twentieth century, save for those involved in commercial art, the perceived centres of culture were still London and Paris, something that was not to change until after the Second World War.

To conclude, this essay has identified at least two key moments when Australian photography was both shaped by and contributed to transnational trends. From the mid nineteenth century up until the 1880s, transnational engagement with British and to a lesser extent American styles and traditions were especially notable in the specialist fields of studio portraiture and ethnographic photography, where it manifested in a preoccupation with making visually accurate recordings of settlers and Indigenous Australians, some of which subsequently made their way into the wider imperial networks of production and exchange. In the twentieth century, by contrast, the specialist field in which transnational exchanges arguably flourished most was Pictorialist photography. Unlike the earlier period, when it was thought that the photographer's job was to look outwards at the world and record it in an ostensibly mechanical way, this field (which sat alongside popular cultural uses of photography such as leisure hobbyism and tourism) saw photographers looking increasingly inwards and using highly manipulative techniques associated with painting and printmaking for purposes of self-expression. One might characterise this as a shift from ethnographical otherness, with its implicit acknowledgement of the nation's violently imperialist underpinnings, to white self-reflection in twentieth-century landscapes. At the same time, there emerged during this second transnational moment a new form of art photography celebrating light and place whose transnational dimensions have until recently remained overshadowed by the importance placed on cultural nationalism. By pointing to these two moments in Australian photography, it becomes possible to appreciate not just the ways in which one aspect of Australian culture—namely photography—has been influenced by both internal and external forces, but the extent to which these same forces helped shape the styles and approaches to photography practised in the other settler colonial nations comprising what Dixon has called the 'Anglosphere.'

PERMISSIONS

Permission has been obtained from the following institutions to reproduce the photographs shown below:

Figure 1. Batchelder and O'Neill. 'Sir Henry Barkly': National Portrait Gallery, Australia.

Figure 2. Batchelder and O'Neill. 'Lady Barkly': National Portrait Gallery, Australia.

Figure 3. Paul Foelsche. 'Almarara': South Australia Museum, Adelaide.

Figure 4. Henry Albert Frith. 'The Last of the Native Race of Tasmania': Auckland Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Figure 5. Henry Albert Frith. 'Portrait of Māori Man': Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

Figure 6. Harriett Pettifore Brims, 'Melanesian Man': John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

Figure 7. Harold Cazneaux. 'Spirit of Endurance': Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Figure 8. John Kauffann. 'Fairy Woods': Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Figure 9. Rose Simmonds. 'The Three Witches': Queensland Art Gallery.

Figure 10. Max Dupain. 'Weather of Tartarus': National Gallery of Victoria.



**Figure 1. Batchelder and O'Neill, 'Sir Henry Barkly' circa 1863.
Albumen photograph on carte de visite 9.7 cm x 6.0 cm.
National Portrait Gallery, Australia. Accession number: 2010.34.**



**Figure 2. Batchelder and O'Neill, 'Lady Barkly' circa 1863.
Albumen photograph on carte de visite 9.7 cm x 6.0 cm.
National Portrait Gallery, Australia. Accession number: 2014.53.**



**Figure 3. Paul Foelsche, 'Almarara,' Alligator River 1870s.
Glass plate negative print 12.5 cm x 17.5 cm.
Ramsay Smith Collection, South Australia Museum, Adelaide. REF AA96/2/42/5.**



**Figure 4. Henry Albert Frith, 'The Last of the Native Race of Tasmania' 1864.
Black and white photograph, hand-coloured 20.0 cm x 16.8 cm.
Auckland Gallery Toi o Tamaki. Gift of Sir George Grey 1893. ID 149 1893/2.**



**Figure 5. Henry Albert Frith, 'Portrait of Māori Man' circa 1870.
Albumen silver print 9.2 cm x 6.0 cm.
Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira. PH-TECH-575-170.**



**Figure 6. Harriett Pettifore Brims, 'Melanesian Man' n.d.
Glass plate negative.**

John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. Accession number 31054-0001-0731.



**Figure 7. Harold Cazneaux, (New Zealand; Australia 1878–1953) ‘Spirit of Endurance’
1937.**

Gelatin silver photograph 28.1 cm x 33.1 cm.

Art Gallery of New South Wales. Gift of the Cazneaux family 1975. REF 134.1975.



**Figure 8. John Kauffann (Australia 1864–1942), ‘Fairy Woods’ circa 1920.
Carbon photograph 21.2 cm x 29.6 cm.
Art Gallery of New South Wales. Gift of John Bilney 1979. REF 29.1979**



**Figure 9. Rose Simmonds (Australia 1877–1960), ‘The Three Witches’ circa 1937.
Bromoil transfer photograph 25.5 cm x 30 cm.
Queensland Art Gallery. Gift of Dr J.H. Simmonds 1982. REF 3.0048.**



**Figure 10. Max Dupain, 'Weather of Tartarus' 1933.
Bromoil print 21.6 cm x 30.0 cm.
National Gallery of Victoria. PH10-1992.**

NOTES

¹ America benefitted from Daguerre's 'free patent to the world.' However, the patent was not made available to Britain or to its colonies. This came about because just one man in the whole of England and Wales—the entrepreneur Richard Beard—purchased the sole patent rights for £1050 and he required people to pay a licensing fee. See Steve Edwards, 'Beard Patentee': Daguerreotype Property and Authorship,' *Oxford Art Journal* 36. 3, (2013): 369–94. George Goodman, who produced Australia's first daguerreotype, purchased the patent from Daguerre himself in 1841 before arriving in Sydney in 1842. See Cato 3.

² Foelsche's paper 'Notes on Aborigines of North Australia' was published in *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, Vol 5 (1881–1882): 1.

³ See catalogue entry for this photograph by Frith at the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

⁴ Almost 135 years later, on 21 June 2014, the *New Zealand Herald* reported that the NZ Government had issued Kereopa Te Rau with a rare statutory pardon for the murder of Carl Volker as part of a Treaty of Waitangi settlement with a Rotorua iwi.

⁵ Francis Ebury has pointed out that Cazneaux was not the first photographer in Australia to call for a distinctive Australian Pictorial Photography by championing a lighter and brighter tone, and he points to the small group of Pictorialists from the State of Victoria who gathered around the figure of Archibald J. Campbell. According to Ebury, Campbell called for stronger light and greater clarity of the image prior to 1917 as a result of 'taking up photography in order to illustrate a work of natural history' (Ebury 35).

⁶ Beginning in the 1890s, Stieglitz had produced a series of high quality soft-focus works aimed at setting the standard for American art photography. In 1902, disillusioned with the standard of work being produced by America's leading photography group—the Camera Club of New York—he formed his own exclusive circle of photographers. At the same time, he published the important quarterly *Camera Work* and opened the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession on Fifth Avenue known as '291,' where members could exhibit their works.

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