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SYDNEY COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

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The University of Sydney

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (VISUAL ARTS)

2007

THESIS & EXHIBITION

Into this wild abyss:

learning through fabricated
photographs

by

Sara Oscar
Photomedia

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ABSTRACT

This research examines fabricated photographs in the context of archives, history and photographic theory. It looks at four examples of fabricated photographs that were found in archives and photographically illustrated books that served to construct and reconstruct visual knowledge about history and the landscape. It focuses on photographs that were fabricated to visualise scenes that were rarely seen before. By considering the production methods, contextual motives and historical significance of these fabrications, the research draws insights into the paradoxical nature of photography and visual representation.

The four case studies are Larry Schaaf's *Anniversary Facsimile Edition of The Pencil of Nature* (1981) against Henry Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* (1841 – 1850); James Nasmyth's fabricated photographs in *The Moon* (1874); Frank Hurley's misrepresented photographs from the British Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition (1914 – 1916); and photographs from the fake Australian convict ship museum, the *Success* (1920s).

With the focus on the fabricated photograph in repositories of memory and knowledge, the research project calls into question the role of the photograph and the archive. The research examines what the impact of fabrication is upon knowledge and history, in particular what can be learnt from fabrication. The research seeks to find what fabrications say about history, representation and identity.

Fabricated photographs are photographs that have been intentionally altered, constructed, replicated, reconstructed, enhanced, and misrepresented with the intention of representing the real. This research on fabricated photographs has resulted in a dissertation and a body of studio works in the exhibition *Into this wild abyss* at the SCA Gallery, Sydney College of the Arts in February 2007. The works in this exhibition play on the themes, production methods and material focus mirrored in the case studies to produce a body of photographs and models.

*Into this wild abyss,
The womb of nature and perhaps her grave,
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,
But all these in their pregnant causes mixed
Confusedly, and which thus must ever fight,
Unless the almighty maker them ordain
His dark materials to create more worlds,
Into this wild abyss the wary fiend
Stood on the brink of hell and looked a while,
Pondering his voyage ...*

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book II

PREFACE

My father's family immigrated to Australia from what was then called Bombay, India after Independence in 1957. They brought with them a collection of family photographs and many memories of the days of the Raj. My grandfather and grandmother were of European expatriate descent and they identified with this outlook in the way they perceived themselves within the Indian caste system in Colonial India. Influenced by the heyday of the Raj, my father's family took this way of life with them to Australia and to me. I heard the same stories about the glory of the Empire repeated time and time again, told slightly differently through each family member. Trying to integrate into Australian culture, some family members erased their history with India entirely. My great uncle, for example, adopted an American accent and didn't seem to acknowledge India at all.

The only way I came to learn about my distant genealogy and cultural heritage was through the extensive photographs that my grandfather, an amateur photographer, made with his Roliflex camera. He worked in cinema and was deeply fascinated by optics, spending all of his life experimenting with photography, building cameras, making optical instruments like zootropes and stereoscopes, and creating animations on old reels of film. My grandfather spoke about India to the extent that it seemed like he had never left the place. He was a nostalgic man who always looked at old photographs and never really stopped talking about an Empire that was no longer.

When my grandfather died, I looked through his photo albums of a family that I only knew twenty years later. Without being aware of it, I suppose I was searching for images of a heritage that I had never known. I came across a picture that my grandfather took in India in 1920 of an Indian man carrying a load of cameras on his back. He must have been lugging them around for my grandfather when he travelled through India, installing cinema equipment for the thriving Bollywood industry. The man was completely covered in cameras on his left and right shoulder, his middle back, his left hip, his right hip, and on his chest. No part of his body was spared except for two ancient spindly legs that held him, and the instruments signifying the new craze for movies. My grandfather took that opportunity to photograph on his travels. This photograph in particular stood out to signify what I thought my grandfather saw of India, images.

Through his photo albums, I noticed that my grandfather had begun to cut up his photographs from India – slicing out figures from frames, taking out some people, inserting others. I looked at landscape photographs that featured absent white silhouettes of figures standing in the foreground. It was an abandoned project. Did he do this when he had reached Australia? I thought my grandfather's fabrications were about erasing history, forming other histories. It was his way of changing the past and perhaps his way of getting in contact with it again. Those sliced up pictures spoke more to me about the role of photography to heritage than any of the other photographs in my family collection did because they had been manipulated. It was not the image that was important to me, but the task that my grandfather undertook

to see the past differently and the impact that it had on my sense of history years later.

The way that my grandfather used fabrication raises questions for me about its relationship to photography. In the chapters that follow, I explore other historical projects that utilised photographic fabrication out of a desire to understand the role that photography plays in bridging the divide between the present and the past, and the proximal and the distant. This personal relationship to photographic fabrication forms the background to this research into manipulated images of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

INTRODUCTION

It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the term fabrication developed negative connotations. At that point, it came to be aligned with terms such as deception, forgery, falsification, imitation, invention, and alteration.¹ Significantly, this shift in meaning also coincided with the inception of the new medium of photography. Photography's close alignment with truth and objectivity was demonstrated by the positivistic desire to privilege sight as a way of acquiring knowledge, identifying and remembering.

This is a research project about fabrication and the entanglement of two seemingly opposing forces in photography: truth and fiction. A fabricated photograph is a fake photograph; it is an image that is artificially produced. But while a fake photograph attempts to trick its viewer into believing in the 'false reality' that it represents, a fabricated photograph does not always try to deceive. It can be distinguished from a fake because it does not always assume that the viewer is passive. Fabricated photographs are powerful because they are produced out of the viewer's desire to see, which overrides any assumption of truth or fiction in the image. A fabricated photograph is a broad term that can be used to describe a fake, a reconstruction, a facsimile, or re-enactment of a scene that stands in place of the real thing.

¹ David Lowenthal. "Fabricating Heritage," *History and Memory*, (Volume 10, Number 1. Spring 1998)

Because they are artificial prosthetics, fabricated photographs challenge us to think about how much faith we place in vision and our relationship to landscape, heritage and history through modern forms of archiving and representation. This dissertation seeks to explore the role of fabrication to photography with this in mind. In the early twenty first century and the age of the digital image, computer generated images have brought about an awareness that all photography is subject to the manipulation of its maker. This research focuses on fabrication in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to understand the role it played in the context of the imperialist desire for travel, the age of science and the creation of knowledge and identity.

This research focuses on instances where fabrications have been found in repositories of memory and knowledge such as archives, museums and photographically illustrated books. Finding photographic fabrications in repositories, like archives, photographically illustrated books, or even a family photographic album, emphasises the fragility of history and memory. One of the objectives of this research is to examine how fabrications impact on photography in the context of history and knowledge and to thematically explore this in the context of a body of studio work which plays on themes of nature and artifice, misinformation, the blurring of truth with fiction, and the urge to see and know.

Theoretical underpinnings

In the era beginning in the nineteen seventies, an era that is broadly termed postmodern, the photograph is seen to be part of a dominant scopic regime. No time

has ever been so down on the visual, on the eye. The era of postmodernity has criticised the privilege of vision in the acquisition of knowledge as being responsible for conditions that they believe are prevalent in our society. This discourse generally deals with ideas that we are now in an age where history no longer moves forward, and where space and time have collapsed. In this era, photography no longer has anything new to photograph. We are also in the society of surveillance and the spectacle which govern identity and stereotypes. Reality has also been obliterated by 'vampiric' images, and photographs now govern reality. Furthermore, it is not possible to distinguish between truth and fiction, or original and copy. This has been attributed to by the proliferation of images and the use of images to classify and know every aspect of the world.

This research sets out to 'read' the fabricated photograph with this context in mind and to show that these conditions were also prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are illustrated in historical accounts of photographic fabrication. The research focuses on four case studies and considers how and why photographs were fabricated according to their historical and contextual significance.

These four case studies are: William Henry Fox Talbot's introduction of photography to the world in his *The Pencil of Nature* and the historian Larry Schaaf's *Anniversary Facsimile Edition of the Pencil of Nature*; James Nasmyth's fabricated photographs in *The Moon*; Frank Hurley's fabricated photographs from the Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition and finally, photographs from the

Australian fake convict ship museum, the *Success*. The research into fabrication and photography has also resulted in a studio work in the form of fabricated photographs and sculptures which have developed in parallel with the writing of this dissertation.

The main finding of these four case studies is that the desire for totality, for a complete visual archive of the world fostered the production of fabricated photography. Although the motivations for fabricating varied, each case study in this dissertation illustrates a similar compulsion to fill in the blank spaces of knowledge and history using the fabricated photograph. These studies demonstrate how photographers have come to terms with distance, absence, temporal loss, gaps in memory and knowledge through fabrication. To this extent, these photographs are 'micro records' of what people have desired to see, know, believe and remember about the world using photography. These studies show that seeing has now developed into a positive form of believing and knowing.

The next sections of this chapter set out the key theoretical discourses that this research engages with and contributes to. This has been grouped into three sections which are: the privilege of vision; photography about photography and the archive. The chapter then outlines the research methodology, provides an overview of the structure of the thesis and the chapters that follow.

The privilege of vision

The privilege of vision is one of the primary discourses underlying this research. In the context of this paper and my studio work, these ideas are central to a number of debates that I engage with, in particular the scientific and cultural faith in the eyes, the desire for photographic knowledge and the falsification of reality.

From its inception in the nineteenth century, photographs have been primers to experience that govern and affect our relationship to the world. Today, culture's faith in the camera is realised in the ubiquity of photographs in all aspects of life. In family albums, magazines, newspapers, books, advertisements, billboards, satellite photographs and online, images are hard to escape. The photograph's circulation within such disciplines as History, Natural History, Science, Sociology and Anthropology also illustrates the investment that culture has placed in the photograph to order, contain and disseminate visual knowledge.

The photograph's longstanding 'traditional' relationship to truth and objectivity coupled with culture's faith in the eyes has contributed to the proliferation of photography to this day.² That photography's birth in the nineteenth century also coincided with the rise of the positive sciences such as astronomy and anthropological societies has been pointed out by critics of vision such as Michel Foucault, as representing a huge shift in the way that culture saw itself in the modern

² Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*. (California: University of California Press, 1994)

age.³ Because photography was used within these institutions of knowledge and power as a classificatory tool, Foucault has claimed that the photograph (as part of the visual) becomes part of a greater order of surveillance and identification. It is therefore responsible for dividing up the world in terms of similarity and difference within the archive.

However, photographs that have been taken of their objects in the real living world, present the illusion of making a perfect copy of the real. But over time, photographs no longer resemble their referents. The real world changes: light changes, people age, change their hair colour, objects are moved, even photographs fade and so on.⁴ The photograph cannot perfectly copy the world because the world is changing and time is moving. At the same time, the photograph also bounces between being an autonomous *object in itself* which has its own formal and intrinsic values, on to what it refers to in reality⁵: there is always a tension between the photograph and its referent. Another limit to photographic representation is the dilemma of representing three dimensional objects in two dimensions and the fragmentation of information. Photographs present the illusion of providing an image of totality, but they never do. Yet despite all of these limits of photographic representation, the photograph continues to be used within systems of classification, identification and knowledge.

³ This forms the topic in the book by Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, (London: Routledge Classics, 1966)

⁴ See Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the age of photography: the legacy of British realism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999)

⁵ See Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

When photographs are discovered to be deceptions, or fabricated versions of the real, the veracity of the photograph is called into question along with the context in which it appears. As Susan Sontag put it:

The consequences of lying have to be more central for photography than they ever can be for painting, because the flat, usually rectangular images which are photographs make a claim to be true ... A fake photograph (one which has been retouched or tampered with, or whose caption is false) falsifies reality.⁶

When a photograph is found to be a fake, the photograph's truth effect is effectively reversed, destabilising the faith in the eyes, exposing the conflict between the medium and the reality. As the historian Martin Jay put it, 'rather than confirming the eye's ability to know nature and society, photography could have the opposite effect.'⁷

In his book *Downcast Eyes*, Jay provides an account of the rise and fall of vision within French philosophy, calling into question why the sense of sight has become the topic of criticism within dominant French theorists like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Jean Baudrillard. Whilst these theorists engage with different aspects of cultural criticism, Jay has noted that they all illustrated a simultaneous fascination and scepticism of the visual in their discourses. He describes the rise of vision as a dominant sense and maintains that instruments such

⁶ Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 98

⁷ *ibid*, p.136

as the camera have helped to foster the rise of the dominant ‘scopic regime’ in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because of its traditionally seen relationship to truth, and single-point perspectivalism, photography has been included in the critique of vision. Jay however questions how, despite the constant attack of the visual and representation, vision has continued to prevail as the dominant sense despite its paradoxes, contradictions and varieties.⁸

As a practising artist and theorist working with photography and themes of vision, I identify with Jay’s line of questioning and I engage with this ‘triumph’ of the visual through my theory and practise. In the chapters that follow, I engage with the different ways that fabricated photography has continued to provide antidotes for critiques of vision and called into question the nature of photography. What these chapters focus on is to what extent the use of photographic fabrications and the eagerness to see has countered criticisms of vision through the act of producing fabrications. I also engage with and respond to these ideas in my studio work using photography and sculpture through sight and touch.

Photography about photography

The meta-narratives that arise in photographic discourse are also central to my research and practise. In this context, some of the ideas that I engage with are photography about photography, the ideas of artistic relocation and a ‘photographic way of thinking,’ the *mise en abyme* and hyperreality.

⁸ Jay, p. 594

Through the rise of the twentieth century, the denigration of vision has been most prevalent within theories of hyperreality, simulation, surveillance and discourses about photography. These theories are evident in the works of canonical postmodern artists from the same era particularly in some common themes in their work. The postmodernist art photography of the nineteen-sixties and its making of 'photography about photography' has called into question the medium's own relationship to truth, and its function as a system of identification and classification. This has been realised through art photography in a myriad of areas such as feminist photography, photography that takes on taxonomical aesthetics, or that uses staging to play on the photograph's relationship to time. The reflection of postmodernist themes in art, such as the rejection of absolute truth, grand narratives, the obsession with bringing together binaries such as absence and presence, original and copy, truth and fiction have played out in the works of particular canonical photographic artists.⁹

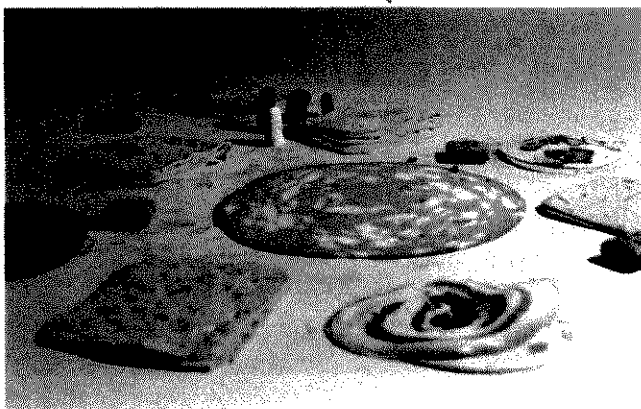


Figure 1.0 Fischli & Weiss, *Im Teppichladen* (At the Carpet Shop) from 'Sausage Series,' Photograph, 1979 from Douglas Fogle, *The Last Picture Show: Artists using Photography 1960 – 1982* (Walker Art Centre: Minneapolis, 2003)

⁹ I acknowledge that this is a broad term with many different meanings, however I am using postmodernism to describe characteristics that emerged in the art photography of the nineteen sixties.

Canonical feminist and conceptual artists such as Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, Ed Ruscha, Richard Prince, and the Swiss artists Peter Fischli & David Weiss began to draw on the aesthetics of taxonomy and addressed the issue of understanding what a photograph is and its role within systems of classification. These artists utilised low-fi forms of production and books, magazines, and advertising to ensure a circulation of photography outside of institutions such as the museum. They questioned notions of authorship, of original and copy and the extent to which reality and fiction were blurred lines. What was postmodern about this work was precisely its step away from the traditions of modernism, and the authority of the museum.

Artistic relocation

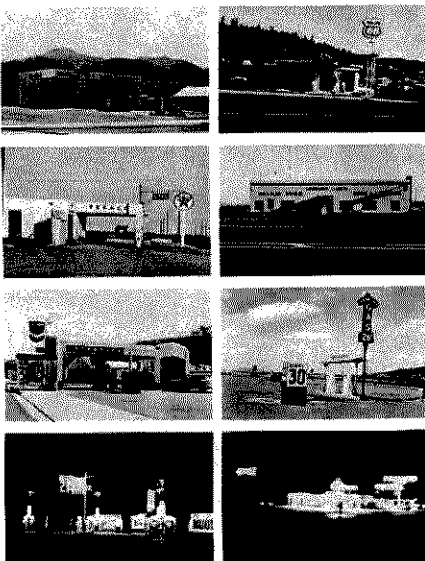


Figure 1.1 Ed Ruscha, *Twenty Six Gasoline Stations* (1962), Photograph, from Douglas Fogle, *The Last Picture Show: Artists using Photography 1960 - 1982* (Walker Art Centre: Minneapolis, 2003)

Ed Ruscha's photographic work, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962) (fig.1.1) documents the inconsequential and unimportant, playing on the institutional drive to

know and order everything through the photograph. Bringing taxonomy to art and applying the formulas of taxonomy and classification to the inconsequential, Ruscha's work brings humour to the meticulous routine of classification. In making work that is characteristically flawed, inaccurate or by focusing on the unimportant, this type of work exposes the photograph's internal resistance to singular classification (such as an art photographic work about gas stations being taken literally).¹⁰ Ruscha's work challenges the photograph's role within the museum by using the photograph itself – in effect drawing attention to the role of the institution by using technology, production methods and artistic relocation together.¹¹



Figure 1.2 Richard Prince, *Untitled (four single men with interchangeable backgrounds looking to the right)*, Photograph, 1977 from http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/HD/pcgn/hob_2000.123_av1.htm

¹⁰ Douglas Crimp, *On The Museums Ruins*, (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1993) for example, wrote in his book that he got a kick out of finding a misplaced copy of Ed Ruscha's work filed away in the Motor Vehicle section of the local library he used to work in.

¹¹ Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: les presses du reel, 2002)

When Richard Prince (fig.1.2) rephotographed advertisements from magazines, he relocated advertising photographs into an art context. By focusing on the image, Prince played on the indexical and iconic relationship between the material surface of the photograph and the external reality of stereotypes and mythical figures. In doing so he illustrated the extent to which 'our reality had been invaded by fiction.'¹²

Photographic way of thinking

The art critic Nicholas Bourriaud calls the focus on artistic relocation a 'photographic way of thinking.'¹³ It is what he describes as using the possibilities that technology provides for creating an artwork. Bourriaud states that art, because it relocates, draws attention to production methods, and human relationships produced by technology. By shifting these production methods, it makes them more visible, 'right down to the consequences they have on day to day life.'¹⁴ Through the photography of Prince and Ruscha, for example, their use of photography highlighted the pervasion of fiction into the sphere of reality, and the absurdity of systems of classification in art. Their relocation took the photograph out of its original context of advertising and classification and turned the work into a play on these techniques.

¹² Kate Linker, "On Richard Prince's photographs" *Richard Prince*, (Villeurbanne: Le Nouveau Musée), as cited in Schwarz. *The Culture of the Copy*, (NY: Zone Books, 1998), p.474

¹³ *ibid.*, p 66 - 67

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p 67

To adopt Bourriaud's 'photographic way of thinking' about fabricated photographs is to examine the ways that production methods and visual techniques draw attention to attitudes towards photography. In this light, it is possible to see particular trends emerging through the production of fabricated photographs which reveal attitudes towards both the technology of photography and the context in which the fabrication was made. In this thesis, I use this as an analytical tool and explain how fabricated photographs have provided a means of escaping these modes of power and classification through replication. I have adopted this approach in my focus on the fabrications made by photographers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Through an examination of the works of Henry Talbot & Larry Schaaf, James Nasmyth, and Frank Hurley for instance, this research project engages a 'photographic way of thinking' to examine the extent to which these works reflect a changing approach to vision, to artificial memory and knowledge.

Photographs of photographs – mise en abyme

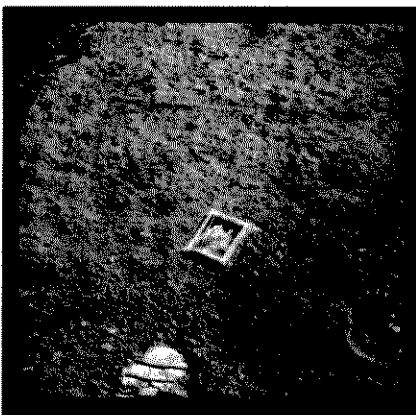


Figure 1.3 Michael Light, *A snapshot of Charles Duke and his family in their Houston, Texas, backyard, left at the Moon's Descartes Highlands* (taken by Charles Duke), Photograph, 1999 from Michael Light, *Full Moon* (London : Jonathan Cape, 1999).

The art historian Craig Owens drawing on the notions of photography *en abyme* and photographs *mise en abyme* claims that by studying the internal structure of the photograph, photographs are driven further from their external relationship to reality.¹⁵ Owens argues that because the photograph can have an intrinsic meaning and value outside of reality, it is resistant to classification. He claims that photographs of photographs and photographs (fig. 1.3) that feature a point of reduplication inside their frame prevent them from representing the external reality that they are supposed to convey. According to Owens, the historical information in the frame of the photograph slips further away because it is clouded by the formal properties of the image. This Owens refers to as the *mise en abyme*, which he defines as a blazon - a structure that in miniature replicates the structure of a text as a whole. This tells us in a photograph, what a photograph is.¹⁶ By stating that the photograph has the capacity to internally organise meaning within itself - *mise en abyme*, Owens argues that reality is 'wholly conditioned by the properties of the image,' so that the perception of reality is thoroughly informed by the photograph itself.¹⁷ According to Owens, the photograph then informs the way that we see reality, which becomes something like a giant photograph.

In this paper, I illustrate that this way of seeing the world like a 'giant photograph' was in effect long before the photograph was invented. It was evident in the pattern

¹⁵ Craig Owens, "Photography *en abyme*" in *OCTOBER*, Volume 5, (Summer 1978), pp. 73 - 78

¹⁶ Owens concept of the *mise en abyme* is a way of looking at fabricated photographs. Owens' claim that photographs that reduplicate inside their frame (such as photographs of photographs) can also be applied to the fabricated photograph, which is itself a reduplication. Composite photographs for example reduplicate multiple photographs within the same frame; photographs are also reduplications because they are copies of photographs and fake photographs such as photographs of models are reduplications of the reality they are supposed to convey.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.85

of thinking about the world, in the desire to invent photography, in the codes of the picturesque, and in cultural stereotypes. This circular relationship between photograph and reality constitutes a paradox which becomes apparent in the case studies which I address in further detail in the following chapters.

Hyperreality

The idea that photographs have placed a barrier between ourselves and reality, that they have taken the 'real' out of 'reality' has been put forward by theorists like Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard, who were led along the way by Michel Foucault's criticism of the society of surveillance. Their claims that history is now a 'landscape of events'¹⁸ and that the map now precedes the territory¹⁹ have contributed to the idea that we now live in hyperreality, in excess of vision. The proliferation of images has reduced the need for the real thing,²⁰ and in the culture of the spectacle, events and history have to be turned into images before they can be perceived as real. In the following chapters, particularly in the case studies of *The Moon* and the *Success* I argue that fabricated photographs have illustrated that these boundaries were confused right from the very inception of photography. By engaging these theories in my examination of my case studies, I want to address what impact fabrications have on this line of criticism within photographic discourses, and how fabrications challenge these ideas.

¹⁸ See Paul Virilio, *Landscape of Events*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000)

¹⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1984)

²⁰ Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, (Paris, Semiotext(e), 1991)

The influence of the theories of the hyperreal upon the obliteration of reality and its impact on photography is best illustrated through the writings of Susan Sontag. In 1977 when Sontag wrote her influential and canonical book *On Photography*, she stated that photographs (particularly documentary images) prevented audiences from getting closer to the real. In this work she claimed that while photographs, upon their first viewing make things seem more real, after repeated viewing, photographs reduce our sensitivity to reality. Sontag believed that photographs are responsible for a shift in the way that we 'see' reality. What she termed as the desire to photograph everything in the world has resulted in a 'cool' aestheticised and detached way of seeing, and not experiencing reality. But close to twenty years later, Susan Sontag changed her view in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). She stated:

In the first six essays in *On Photography* (1977), I argued that while an event known through photographs certainly becomes more real than it would have been had one never seen the photographs, after repeated exposure it becomes less real ... I wrote, photographs shrivel sympathy. Is this true? I thought it was when I wrote it ...²¹

What happened for Sontag in this shift in her opinion between these two books? Speaking in response to the theories of hyperreality and the spectacle, it took for Sontag to live in, and experience the trauma and reality of war to call into question her previously held opinions about photography. At the same time, these theories of hyperreality were useful to Sontag's own questioning of the effects that photography had on her relationship with reality and what she considered to be real.

²¹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003), p. 94

The idea that photography has helped to contribute to the denigration of the real has had a huge impact on the way that I myself view photography and my studio practise. For a time, these theories influenced me to stop taking pictures entirely and convinced me that photography was a limited means of representation, that photography was not a useful tool for memory, or for knowledge. It made me feel as if photographs were not enough and that photography had just about seen all there is to photograph. What, I asked, then was the point of taking photographs?

But just as Sontag experienced, there were times when the photograph played a role in making the real seem more real, in helping people to remember the past, and as a way of supplementing their vision. In this research, I ask why, despite its limitations the photograph continues to be used in repositories of knowledge? Through an investigation of the fabricated photograph, the research seeks to understand this in greater detail. By focusing on photographic fabrication, the research asks what methods photographers have used to get closer to knowledge and what their engagements with fabrication tell us about photography.

In making photographic and sculptural work for the exhibition *Into this wild abyss* that is about vision and the desire to see and know, I engage with themes that run in parallel with postmodernism. In the final chapter, I address this in the context of my studio work.

The archive

The final discourse that is central to this research is the theory of the archive. In my engagement with it, I give additional consideration to the archive in the context of British imperialism as each of my case studies are closely connected to this milieu. The three discourses on the archive are Roland Barthes' ideas of the photographic paradox, Derrida's theory of archive fever and paradox, and the imperialist desire to unify the expanse of the empire in an archive.

Barthes' photographic paradox

In *Camera Lucida*, what moves Barthes the most is the photograph's 'having been there,' its carnal relationship to the object it was once connected to.²² For Barthes, it is the realisation of the photograph's relationship to time and lost time that affects him. It makes him aware of the anxiety of his own gaze.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes searches for the genius of the photograph. He wants to know if photography has an identity all of its own. Throughout the book, Barthes plays on dualisms: on the public and the private roles of the photograph, between history and forgetting, and between the *studium* and the *punctum*. For Barthes, the photograph's *punctum* is the photograph's private function, it is a detail that sits within the frame of the image that triggers something in the viewer, it could be a gesture or something in the frame of the photograph- something that pricks the viewer to feel. On the other hand, the photograph also has a historical connotative

²² *ibid.*, p. 3

power, the *studium*. For Barthes, the photographic paradox is located within these two relationships. The *punctum* is the prick that triggers memory privately, and unexpectedly and the *studium* is what brings the viewer back.

Barthes' asked whether photographs could escape contextual coding and only exist as objects in themselves, until his mother died and the trauma of her death began to make him see photography in terms of its power of emotional affect. When Roland Barthes wandered through an archive of photographs of his mother, he was in search of a photograph that best represented her.²³ The haunting of his mother in the Winter Garden photograph taken in the late nineteenth century was to Barthes an image of his mother that captured her alive. It also illustrated what for him represented the true nature of the photograph, its power to prick and have an affect on its viewer. Barthes called this the photograph's *punctum*.²⁴

Yet on the other hand, Barthes says that history and forgetting are one and the same thing. He puns that history (*historique*) is a hysteric (*hysterique*), an amnesiac that is only ever forgetting. But this works against what the photograph is intended to do and so it constitutes for Barthes a photographic paradox: while the photograph is meant to affirm life, it is death.

²³ Barthes, p.90

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27

Derrida's archive fever

Similarly, Jacques Derrida claims that the archive is what is forgetting. He claims that whatever is included in the archive is forgotten, and what is not included is always haunting. Derrida has linked the archive to the house, claiming that there we find the relationship between the public and the private spheres as mutually governed through the archive.²⁵ The archive therefore reflects the internal and the external relationship to realism and reality, which is always striving to put what is outside on its inside and what is inside on its outside.

In my case studies, I examine the fabricated photograph in the context of repositories of knowledge such as the archive. I examine the idea that the photographic archive is what is forgetting and I consider what it means to include artificial memories within the archive. In my studies of *Talbot* I consider Barthes' notion of the photographic paradox through Schaaf's fabrication. In my study of the *Success*, I engage Derrida's notion of archive fever to show how replicas included within the archive challenge the idea of history and its capacity to generate memory and knowledge of the visual kind.

Imperialism and the archive

This research project examines photographs from explorations in the mid nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from England and Australia. It focuses on how

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever, A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

photographs were used to construct lands that were never seen before, in the context of the era of imperialism.

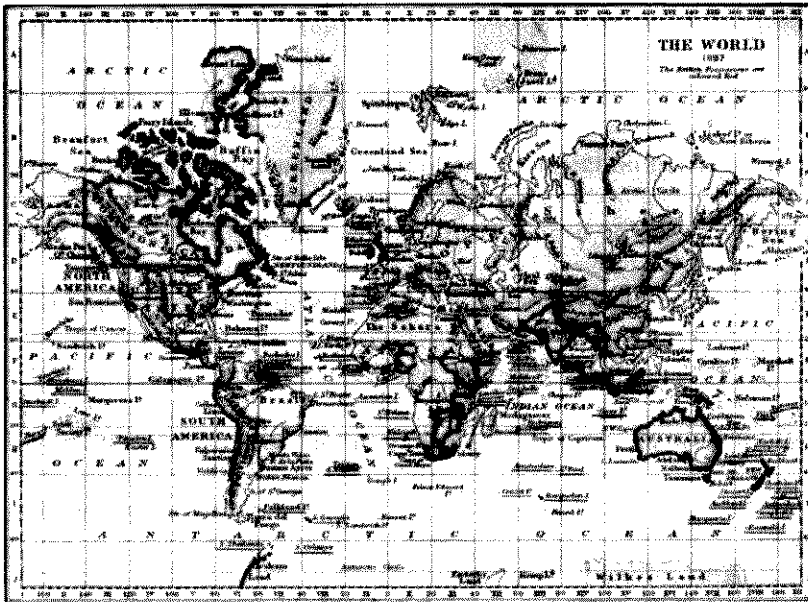


Figure 1.4 Author unknown, *The World 1897: The British Possessions are coloured Red*, c.1897, from <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/pinkbits1897.htm>

The image featured above (fig.1.4) is a map of the world in 1897 with the British colonies marked in red. How the British shed light on the vast expanse of their empire – such as Africa, India and Australia – is illustrated in the proliferation of travel and exploration material of the era. From the postcard photograph,²⁶ to stereoscopes of views, to such disciplines as botany, taxonomy, archaeology and ethnography, the classification of diverse plants, animals, ruins, people and landscapes unified the vast space of the world within collections such as the

²⁶ Luc Sante, "American Photography's Golden Age", *New York Review of Books*, April 4 1996, p. 62, Sante illustrates that postcard photographs of landscape scenes were one of the most significant disseminators of photography in the late nineteenth century.

archive.²⁷ It is within the logic of the archive too, that the British identified species, animals and sceneries that they couldn't identify, things they had never seen before.

For the British, the archive was there to establish the unity of the empire, and photography was to be used to establish a connection between the realism contained within the archive and the reality surrounding it. At the invention of photography, this archive was constructed using the camera. In the era of imperialism, the desire to travel was full of romance and wonder for the undiscovered world and the photograph was seen as facilitating this. The problem was not what to photograph but how to photograph.

The focus on the use of fabricated photography in the era of imperialism and discovery ties together notions of landscape, the idea of repetition and the paradox of seeing and discovery. It brings back Owen's notion of the *mise en abyme* and the notion of the archive to examine how fabricated photographs of undiscovered landscapes illustrate the blurring of original and copy. In the following case studies, on Talbot, Nasmyth and Hurley, I show that this desire to see the landscape and fabricate it was led by a desire to see the landscape in a particular idealistic way. I explain that photographer's who fabricated scenes of the undiscovered world, in particular Frank Hurley, were driven by themes of heroism, adventure and imperialism and this limited their ability to see the landscape outside of these themes.

²⁷ For an analysis of how Victorian children were compared to Arab children by the photographer Thomas Barnado, see Lindsay Smith, "The Politics of Focus," from *The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art*, Mary Cowling, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1989)

In the final chapter I look at what effects the fabricated photograph has on the archive, artificial memory and national identity. I examine the effects that the fabricated photograph has on knowledge and the identity of foreign places. I also explore this further in my studio work, and I try to capture something of the child like wonder and marvel that nineteenth century photographers felt when they were picturing places that were rarely seen, nonetheless through fabrication.

Methodology

When I first came to conduct this research project, I wanted to examine the repetitive classificatory style within documentary photography. It was Jacob Riis' documentation of airshafts in New York tenement houses which he labelled his 'battle with the slums' that initially intrigued me. In order to provide a vision of the slums to the socially concerned bourgeoisie, Riis had taken hundreds of frontally composed photographs of the sides of buildings, eliminating the ground and the sky.²⁸ The airshaft was the central component of the image, which was a negative space vertically framed by two brick walls. Riis had included these photographs with one central image of a family and included the photographs in an exhibition featuring maps that charted areas which were afflicted with contagious diseases; and an architectural model of tenement areas. Riis' work facilitated social change

²⁸ Jacob A Riis. *How the Other Half Lives, Studies Among the Poor* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston Searle and Rivington, 1891)

through seeing.²⁹ Whilst there was little visual information in the images that he provided, voyeuristic audiences who went to see Riis' exhibition inferred information onto the photograph with other forms of documentation. What I wanted to examine was how eager audiences took snippets of visual information and believed in places they had never travelled to before.

Since all photography is basic manipulation, I wanted to understand how photographers represented the world through fabrication which would demonstrate what they wanted to see in their 'falsification of reality.'³⁰ I have therefore looked into archives of knowledge such as photographically illustrated books, and photographic archives for fabrications. I have specifically chosen images of the undiscovered to understand how photographers came to terms with new ways of seeing the landscape.

Part of the process involved in this research project was an extensive amount of meandering through photographically illustrated books and archives. Fabrications that I discovered, but chose not to pursue became part of the studio work. Methodologically, my studio work engages with the production methods and themes that were explored in the case studies and during the course of the research. The studio work plays on the material affectations of the photograph, and uses the materials that have traditionally been used in photographic special effects to trick audiences into believing that what they are seeing is real. The work has used these

²⁹ See Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary in America 1890 - 1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)

³⁰ Sontag, p. 98

'special effect' materials, together with photography and sculpture and applied them to systems of classification and taxonomy to visually identify and know the world.

The order of the thesis and chapters

This dissertation has been structured into four individual chapter essays that each focus on a case study. The primary research material within each chapter examines separate instances in British and Australian history that share the themes of fabrication, epistemology and exploration in the context of vision and photography. The final chapter focuses on the studio work. I have placed this discussion at the end of the thesis because the theories and the production methods explored in the following chapters have been important to the development of themes and ideas realised in the studio work.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, the research focuses on William Henry Fox Talbot's *Pencil of Nature* alongside Larry Schaaf's *Anniversary Facsimile Edition of the Pencil of Nature*. Despite Talbot's proposed functions for photography to archive, to reproduce, to classify, and to look like paintings; his calotypes were unstable and sensitive to light and atmosphere and therefore faded from the moment they were printed. To ensure the book's survival through time, the facsimile edition was made by photographic historian, Larry Schaaf. Next to the facsimile edition, the original *Pencil of Nature* is an inverse version of meta-photography, illustrating the failed idealism of Talbot's first photographically illustrated book – faded photographs illustrate the descriptive text that praise the archival properties of the

photographic medium. The images themselves are a faded testimony next to the text they were once meant to proclaim. I have chosen Talbot's *Pencil* and the *Facsimile Edition of the Pencil* as the starting point with which to illustrate the circuitous path of the desire to fabricate and reconstruct through photograph.

In the second chapter on James Nasmyth's *The Moon*, I look at the way Nasmyth used the truth effect of the photograph in order to provide enough evidence to support his theories of what the moon would look like as a spectator, standing on the lunar surface. Nasmyth's fabrication of photographs of the moon that he only saw through a telescope served the purpose of seeing what the moon would like in photographs. The chapter illustrates Nasmyth's paradoxical process of documentation: in order to represent what the moon would look like from the position of the spectator, Nasmyth must first establish a system of documentation which is best understood as trying to fill in the blank spaces on a map -- his goal is to make what is invisible to the naked eye, visible through the photograph. Because the photograph cannot technically do this, he fabricates his own photographs from models in order to get closer to the moon using domestic materials to compare to the lunar surface such as a pea, a shrivelled apple, cracked glass and an old wrinkly hand. The absurdity of using materials such as these shows the lengths he will go to fill in the blank spaces in his documentation of the moon.

The third chapter looks ahead to the twentieth century to Frank Hurley's misrepresentation of photographs from the Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition.

Hurley's fabricated photographs of Antarctica are best understood in the context of his other photographs from the expedition. Hurley's embellished photographs of Antarctica illustrate a gap between the portrayal of the 'ideal' Heroic Age and the 'real', prompting him to fabricate images that promoted him as a heroic frontier photographer with superstar vision who brought home visions of the uncharted regions of the world. Hurley's fabrications tap into the audiences' desire for images of the uncharted regions of the world as a means to further his career as a photographer.

The fourth chapter looks at the fake Australian convict-ship museum the *Success*, in its historical context and in a contemporary one. The *Success* had over a million visitors and sailed from Australia to England and to America educating people about convict history. The differing responses to the *Success* varied from country to country, in Australia audiences were angered at the misrepresentation of convict history. Overseas, it was a different story with the *Success* forming part of the craze for exhibitions of human suffering and difference. This chapter focuses on how the fabrication triggered responses in different audiences and what that means for identity and heritage. By looking at the records of the *Success* in contemporary Australian archives, the chapter examines what the implications are for fabricating photographs and how they function to turn vision into knowledge.

The final chapter of the dissertation goes into detail about my studio practise and what it set out to achieve. This chapter looks at the methodologies, the materials I

chose to use and the inspiration for the exhibition. Here I detail each of the studio works that were made and I provide some background into the type of work that I was making before I embarked on this project. Having gone through the previous four case studies, this chapter sets out to illustrate the relationship between my own experiments and the studies of photographic fabrications.

2. COPYING TALBOT'S PENCIL: William Henry Fox Talbot's *Pencil of Nature* and *The Anniversary Facsimile Edition of William Henry Fox Talbot's Pencil of Nature*

Abstract

In the mid-nineteenth century, Henry Talbot demonstrated what he saw to be the many applications for the invention of photography in his book, *The Pencil of Nature*. Paradoxically, the more applications that he sought to attribute to his medium, the closer he came to realising the limits of photographic representation. Talbot's doubts about the exact nature of his medium are illustrated in the *Pencil* and they bear a particular relevance to contemporary photographic discourse. In this chapter Talbot's views on photography and its possibilities for history and archiving are applied to the Talbot historian Larry Schaaf's, *150th Year Anniversary Facsimile Edition of The Pencil of Nature*. A historical reconstruction of Talbot's original book, Schaaf's fabrication was made to facilitate seeing the past through nineteenth century eyes. By discussing Schaaf's fabrication of the past, and Talbot's photographs and writings, I draw relationships between Talbot's uncertainties and the contemporary discourse of photography that deals with the nature of its identity; such as Roland Barthes' and Geoffrey Batchen's theories on desire and photographic identity. The focus on fabricating the past and the distant is a way of gaining insight into the nature of photography through fabrication, and the desire for visual memory. This chapter argues that Talbot's uncertainty as to the nature of the medium is mirrored in postmodernist discourse that is concerned with locating photography and its paradox within history and the self-referential. Additionally, I show that Talbot's theories are particularly relevant in the context of postmodern themes, such as those proposed by Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard on reproduction, recycling and facsimiles.

Introduction

It has often been cited that William Henry Fox Talbot's desire for the invention of the photograph arose while travelling to the Lake of Como in Italy in 1833.¹ Talbot claimed that his original idea for photography arose out of his failed attempts to draw a landscape scene through a Camera Lucida. These poor drawing skills contributed to his inability to use the drawing instrument to any great effect, leading him to find another means to fix the image in the Camera Lucida.

Talbot's invention of photography can be reduced to certain factors and circumstances that merged together *at a particular point in history*. The first had to do with nature, as sunlight was a fundamental component of the process of photography. Secondly, Talbot had to want to capture what it was that he saw through his Camera Lucida. The third factor was circumstance, travelling inspired Talbot to find a way of attaining a visual memory of the landscape of the Lake of Como. Talbot has attributed his idea to invent photography out of regret for the loss of images he found to be beautiful and a desire to preserve them.

The circumstances and factors contributing to Talbot's invention of photography came to affect what he thought to be the true 'identity' of his medium. Since nature was central to Talbot's invention, he understood it to be absolutely integral to the process of photography itself. Talbot even described photographs as being drawn by the 'hand

¹ *The Triumph of Painting*, Exhibition catalogue, (London: The Saatchi Gallery, 2005), Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 88, Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999)

of nature itself² and identified the photograph as 'nature's painting destined to fade away.'³

The extent to which nature, language and drawing were key elements of photography's 'identity' is illustrated in Talbot's naming of the first photographic book, *The Pencil of Nature*. In the book that revealed photography to the world, Talbot demonstrated what he believed to be the applications of photography: to copy accurately, to contribute to posterity, to see what the eye can't see, to render mechanically what the human hand cannot. To the nineteenth century reader of the *Pencil*, photography's occupations were abundant and full of promise to the many industries of law, art, science, botany and exploration.

Reading each of Talbot's writings on his photographs in the *Pencil*, it is apparent that photography challenged Talbot's definitions of nature, culture, art, copying, history, preservation, classification, and writing. In the pages of the *Pencil*, Talbot sought to locate the identity of his medium and realise its potential applications. Nonetheless, this task proved to be manifestly paradoxical. In his writings, it is no stretch to see that Talbot encountered the blurring of real and representation; that he held a broad definition of the terms copy and original, realised the limits of photographic representation, and caught a glimpse of the limitless number of photographs that could be taken of a three dimensional object. Most significantly, Talbot in the *Pencil of*

² Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Vol. 1, unpaginated

³ Henry Talbot, *Anniversary facsimile edition of the Pencil of Nature*, (New York: Hans P Kraus Jr, 1989), unpaginated

Nature came to realise that photographs only drew attention to the fragility of history and to the transience of time.

The Australian photography critic Geoffrey Batchen, in his book *Burning With Desire* argues that the first photographers all reportedly experienced a degree of uncertainty over the true nature of their medium. Batchen also maintains that the crisis of photography's identity is prevalent to contemporary photographic discourse and the digital age of photography. Batchen attributes this crisis to be:

... one technological (the introduction of computerized images), and one epistemological (having to do with broader changes in ethics, knowledge and culture). Taken together, these crises apparently threaten us with the death of photography, with the 'end' of photography and the culture it sustains ... ⁴

The death discourse has always been a theme for significant photography theorists such as Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Eduardo Cadava, and Roland Barthes.⁵ With death being an integral part of photography, Batchen asks what has previously defined photography that prompts this contemporary crisis. He attributes the crisis of identity to certain myths that the photograph is the arbiter of truth and not manipulation, and that the photograph represents life and not death.

⁴ Batchen, p.207

⁵ Siegfried Kracauer *The Mass Ornament, The Weimar Essays*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass, 1995), Eduardo Cadava *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Walter Benjamin, ed. Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations*, (New York, Schocken Books, 1969)

With its blurring of real and representation and copy and original, Talbot's *Pencil of Nature* could be seen to have been a precursor to issues raised in the contemporary post-modern photographic discourse of the nineteen sixties, seventies and late eighties and the 'crisis of photographic identity.' It was also well timed that in 1989, at the 150th year anniversary of the invention of photography, the historian Larry Schaaf should create a facsimile edition of the *Pencil of Nature*. Produced as a measure to save the disappearing original copies, Schaaf's work illustrates Talbot's views on history, his photography about photography, its applications, and paradoxes that are relevant to contemporary discussions about the 'death of photography' and the crisis of contemporary photographic discourse. Just as Talbot's desire to invent photography arose out of the desire to see and capture the transience of nature, Schaaf produced the *Facsimile Edition* out of a desire to experience the past in the eyes of the nineteenth century. Both of these themes are central to the paradox of photography and themes on death and history.

This chapter addresses issues raised in Larry Schaaf's fabrication of Talbot's *Pencil of Nature*. It focuses on Talbot's attempts to identify the functions of his medium of photography; and it looks at the way that he used text to introduce the medium to unfamiliar audiences. By comparing the *Facsimile Edition* against the original, the chapter highlights the persistence of some of the issues in early photography such as the desire to see and remember through seeing, reproduction and identity. The sections that follow look at how Schaaf came to produce the facsimile edition and show that Talbot's proposed functions and philosophies on the photograph highlight the

contemporary issues surrounding photographic identity. The chapter concludes that Schaaf's *Facsimile Edition* is a model for understanding what photography is through the motivations behind fabrication and draws the notions of invention and 'seeing for the first time,' closer together.

The Anniversary Facsimile Edition of the Pencil of Nature

Larry Schaaf's *Facsimile Edition of the Pencil of Nature* was made in 1989 to celebrate the birth of photography in the same era it was announced to be dead. As a historian, and an authority on Talbot,⁶ Schaaf stated that he wanted to 're-create as closely as possible the state of a freshly issued copy as it might have been received by one of Talbot's contemporaries.'⁷ This is what he says are his reasons for doing so:

Perhaps this will rekindle in our visually jaded society the excitement that we know its initial readers felt a century and a half ago. Talbot's readers did not have our specialized terminology and constant exposure to photographic imagery. It is hoped the experience of this edition will facilitate seeing Talbot's seminal work through their eyes. It should also make Talbot's work more widely available and reduce the need to handle the fragile and scarce surviving original copies...⁸

⁶ Larry Schaaf, *Out of the Shadows- Herschel, Talbot and the Invention of Photography*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992), *Selected Correspondence of William Henry Fox Talbot 1823 - 1874*: drawn from the Talbot collection of the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, (Science Museum and National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, 1994), *Records of the dawn of photography: Talbot's P & Q notebooks*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996), *The photographic art of William Henry Fox Talbot* (Princeton University Press, NJ, 2000) .

⁷ Schaaf, Introductory volume to *Pencil of Nature*, p.5

⁸ *ibid*, p.5

By wanting to remind the twentieth century audience that images once had an ability to stir up marvel and awe, Schaaf's fabrication was driven by the desire to see and experience the past through the eyes of the nineteenth century. This attempt to recreate the experience of seeing a photograph for the very first time is interesting considered in light of the process that Schaaf used to establish just what an original *Pencil* looked like.

When Schaaf first started up the project, he realised that he and others had little visual knowledge about the original *Pencil*, and stated that there was even 'less agreement amongst owners as to just what they had.'⁹ Conducting a census, he learnt that:

The plates in the various surviving 'Pencils' collectively form a miserable lot. Most are bleached more or less completely. The rest are generally fading in from the edges. Stains and spots are not uncommon and only the occasional loose print retains the vigor Talbot expected. While some deterioration undoubtedly continues, it is likely that the bulk of this degradation became apparent during the late 1840s. Most copies are now stored under controlled archival conditions and can be assumed to be on a long term plateau.¹⁰

Schaaf stated there was 'no *bona fide* complete original copy that even approaches being in uniformly good condition – it would be a futile hope to seek one.'¹¹ In short, all of the published copies of the *Pencil* had faded, and this prevented Schaaf from

⁹ibid, p.6

¹⁰ibid, p.6

¹¹ibid, p73

making a 'copy' of one of the editions because they all varied so much.¹² This actually came to inform the kind of *Pencil* that he would recreate, which was authentically based on Talbot's ideas of the copy.

Reading Talbot's diaries and writings on photography, Schaaf was able to realise that Talbot's original intentions for the *Pencil* existed in a few copies which had been preserved at his home in Lacock Abbey. The *Facsimile Edition* was a composite of these few editions, supplemented by primary source material, mainly preserved at Lacock and in the Science Museum.¹³

To reconstruct the photographs of Talbot's *Pencil*, Schaaf states that he used a combination of 'high-tech wizardry' and 'old world craftsmanship.'¹⁴ Talbot's original photographs were scanned and digitally restored to look like how they would have when they were issued. Accordingly, the *Facsimile* copy also varied in tone from edition to edition, just like Talbot's original copies:

The color of the plates in the six facsimile volumes of the present edition has been varied from plate to plate within a range that is typical of Talbot's prints. A 19th C reader would have been presented with a similar variety, although, of course, the distribution of colors would have varied from set to set.¹⁵

¹² *ibid*, p.73

¹³ *ibid*, p.5

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.6

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.26

Remaining true to the nature of Talbot's original prints, Schaaf's *Facsimile Edition* recreates a version of the *Pencil* based on variability and the idea of the 'one-off' copy. It is produced in line with Talbot's own ideas about facsimiles and history using the very new technology of photography. In this way, Schaaf differentiates his reproduction from the twentieth century 'jaded' notion of reproduction.

Talbot and the copy

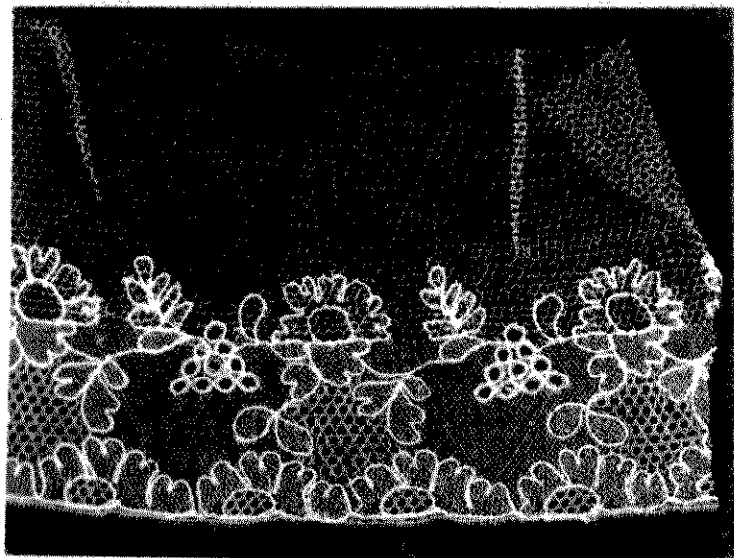


Figure 2.0 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 5, plate XX, "Lace" from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library : reading the photograph in the book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

Talbot believed copying to be one of the primary applications of the medium. The first photographs that Talbot made, for instance, were contact prints of leaves and flowers from his herbarium, and lace.¹⁶ These were also the images that caused Talbot's

¹⁶ Talbot, "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing," p.24

confusion over the identity of photography. Of the photograph of lace, Talbot is recalled to have said:

I showed it to some persons at the distance of a few feet, with the inquiry, whether it was a good representation? when the reply was, 'That they were not to be so easily deceived, for that it was evidently no picture, but the piece of lace itself.'¹⁷



Figure 2.1 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, plate VII, "Leaf of a Plant", 1845 from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library : reading the photograph in the book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

The photograph's resemblance to reality was so close it caused Talbot himself to question whether or not the photograph was indeed the lace or a representation of it.

¹⁷ Talbot, "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing," p. 23

Geoffrey Batchen has pointed out that this image of lace also caused his audience to want to believe that the photograph had in fact become reality.¹⁸ Having confused representation and real, Talbot continued to invest in the belief that accuracy was of prime importance to the application of the medium and its ability to ‘copy’ history.

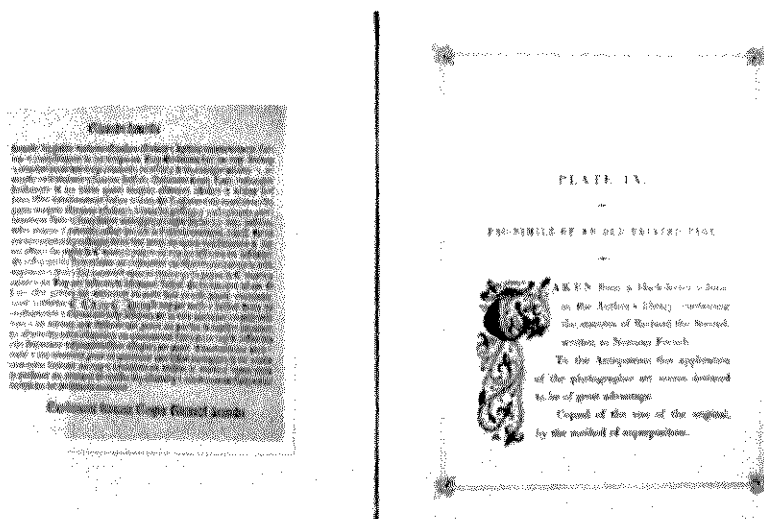


Figure 2.2 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 2, plate IX, “Fac-simile of an Old Printed Page”, 1845, from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library : reading the photograph in the book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

In the *Pencil of Nature* Talbot illustrated how such an accurate method of copying would be of good use to preserving the past. ‘Facsimiles,’ he stated ‘can be made from original sketches of the old, and thus they may be preserved from loss, and multiplied to any extent.’¹⁹ This statement was made in accompaniment to the photograph ‘Facsimile of an Old Printed Page,’ (fig. 2.2) where Talbot had made a direct contact print of a page in a book from his library at Lacock. Using the same method that he used to make his accurate copies of leaves and lace, Talbot demonstrated that the confusion between real and representation could be seen to be an advantageous thing.

¹⁸ Batchen, p.68

¹⁹ Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Volume 2, unpaginated

A contact print of a printed page blurred the ability to distinguish between the paper photograph of the printed page and the printed page itself. Interchanging the facsimile for a picture of posterity, Talbot promoted photography as a history saving device. His decision to make a contact print of an old book also displayed his desire to perpetuate the antiquary and to inscribe the new medium of photography with the culture of the old world.

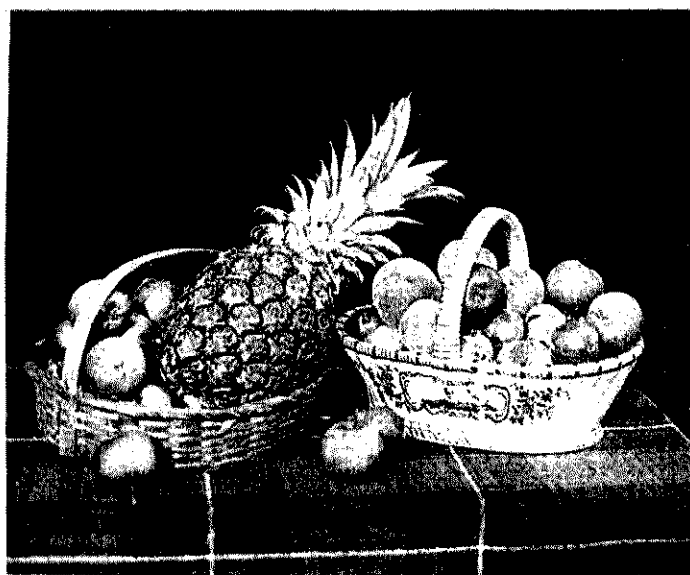


Figure 2.3 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 6, plate XXIV, "A Fruit Piece", pre 1843 from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library : reading the photograph in the book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

Talbot saw photography as being of prime importance to the preservation of history through multiplication. Whilst it may seem that he thought accuracy to be pertinent to the visual preservation of history, it appears that accuracy didn't play too much of a role in what Talbot considered to be the process of copying: a copy and a facsimile

were to him two different things. This is best illustrated in his description to the photograph “A Fruit Piece” (fig. 2.3):

The number of copies which can be taken from a single original photographic picture, appears to be almost unlimited, provided that every portion of iodine has been removed from the picture before the copies are made. For if any of it is left, the picture will not bear repeated copying, but gradually fades away ... But supposing this accident to have been guarded against, a very great number of copies can be obtained in succession, so long as great care is taken of the original picture. But being on paper, it is exposed to various accidents; and should it be casually torn or defaced, of course no more copies can be made ... accordingly the Camera can once more be directed to the original objects themselves, and new photographic pictures obtained from them, as a source of supply for future copies. But the circumstances of light and shade and time of day, &c not altogether corresponding to what they were on a former occasion, a *slightly different but not a worse result* attended the experiment.²⁰

What was Talbot suggesting? On the one hand he was saying that there were no limits to how many copies could be made from a single negative. On the other, he acknowledged the fragility of his natural chemical process offering that the reader could make a slightly different, but not same copy by going back to rephotograph the original object. By going back to photograph the original scene for a ‘source of supply for future copies,’ was Talbot suggesting, by including these comments next to a still life photograph, that the past could be saved in the future by rephotographing?

²⁰ Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Volume 6, unpaginated, my emphasis

In the photograph, two fruit baskets hold many similar types of stone fruits, which illustrate the object of collecting according to an order of the same. Where one basket resembles the other save for the pineapple, metaphorically speaking, it mirrors Talbot's own description of the photograph's ability to copy. *Apples and peaches are slightly different but they are more similar to each other than pineapples* is what the photograph says, mirroring Talbot's definition of the copy, and photographic classification.²¹

In Carol Armstrong's opinion, "A Fruit Piece" is 'an index of and to the fact of the photograph's fragility, its material susceptibility to damage and disintegration, despite the idea, prevalent throughout the book, that the photograph preserves the thing it records.'²² 'A Fruit Piece' Armstrong adds, is also a *variable* copy that foregrounds the discourse of original and copy and differentiates Talbot's era of reproduction from our age of mechanical, digital reproduction.²³

Perhaps Talbot, by likening the instability of the photograph to nature and the inability to control what happens to it, wanted to maintain a definition of the copy that was closer to nature than it was to mechanical reproduction. Which calls to mind Schaaf's desire to make an 'authentic' reconstruction of the *Pencil* by ensuring that each copy varied in tone from the next as a means to 'facilitate seeing' Talbot's work in the eyes of the nineteenth century. Schaaf's *Edition*, in its reproduction of the original features

²¹ This is also noted in a discussion of the same photograph by Carol Armstrong in her essay "A Scene in A Library," in *Scenes in A Library: Reading the Photograph in the Book* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT press, 1998), p.176

²² Carol Armstrong, p. 176

²³ *ibid*, p.176

of the book, articulates Talbot's confusion as to the specific meaning of such terms as *copy*, and *original*, outlining his beliefs in the paradox of the medium.

The significance of Talbot's conflicting definitions of the copy in terms of his applications for the medium, his search for the identity of the photograph, and to his 'photographs about photography' come to reflect the many issues in contemporary photography and its 'crises.'²⁴ Yet technology has since advanced as have definitions of terms such as nature, culture, copy, and original since changed. But these are still unresolved terms, and the belief in the death of photography as a medium still lingers, inasmuch as the visual still triumphs over the other senses.

Before we look further at the contemporary context surrounding Schaaf's fabrication which, to repeat what was mentioned earlier, was to 'facilitate seeing in the eyes of the nineteenth century,' it is necessary at this point to address Talbot, the *Pencil of Nature* and his applications of the photograph. It will also be necessary to look at the way that Talbot introduced the photograph to the reader, consider the way he introduced his invention to the unfamiliar audience and tried to teach them how to see.

Talbot and the *Pencil of Nature*

As it was mentioned earlier, Talbot's idea to invent the calotype arose while he was travelling through Europe. During this excursion, Talbot was drawing landscapes from nature and was collecting botanical specimens from the different regions of Europe that he wrote extensive descriptions of. Talbot, who was also a Botanist, Fellow of the

²⁴ Geoffrey Batchen, p. 207

Royal Society, and Fellow of the Linnean Society was concerned with understanding the natural world. The extent to which this influenced Talbot's views and applications of the medium is illustrated in Talbot's engagement in a major botanical taxonomic project recording plant specimens²⁵ at the same time as he invented photography.

Botany is concerned with collecting species from the vegetable kingdom and reordering the natural world according to their succession and resemblance. This process is concerned with knowing the world by mapping it with visual representations supplemented by detailed descriptions. Botany more than just contributed to Talbot's search to find an alternate means to record, it also influenced the way that Talbot tried to define a corpus of photography in the *Pencil* in much the same way that Botany attempts to outline all the plant species in the world. This desire to know the natural world influenced the way that he saw photography. Talbot's involvement in Botany indicates that he already had applications in mind for photography as a discipline before he invented the medium. This was not only led by his fascination with nature, but was influenced by the discipline of Botany and its related tasks to classify, identify, define and know.²⁶

The *Pencil* was a collection of Talbot's photographs of landscape views, staged pictures, and writings on photography. Talbot's style of photography is illustrated in

²⁵ See Katie Fretwell, "Fox Talbot's Botanic Garden" in *Apollo*, April 2004, v 159, i506, p25, and "Lacock Abbey Botanic Garden Study," (The National Trust, unpublished report, 1998)

²⁶ See ed Carol Armstrong, and Catherine de Zegher, *Ocean Flowers: Impressions from Nature* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2004)

this list of things he wrote that he would like to photograph, even before he had a name for the medium:

Objects. Sun behind a cloud. Moon. View by Moonlight. Fire. Lighted candle. Vase, at first screened from sunshine ... White clouds. Diffraction bands. Spectrum darkroom with chemical rays introduced. Cobra. Agapanthus.²⁷

The *Pencil* follows the style of the 'Chinese encyclopaedia,' and has no particular ordering system according to themes or narrative, and each page simply features a photograph with an accompanying body of descriptive text laid next to it. The purpose of the book was to articulate Talbot's views and applications on the medium and it could be said to be the first photographic work about photography.

The first two pictures and 'Bridge of Orleans'

In the *Pencil of Nature*, Talbot introduced his medium to a public audience for the first time. As he described it, 'the photograph has no (technical) analogy to anything in use before'²⁸ with concepts like *positive* and *negative* having to be explained to the tabula rasa audience. It is of particular significance to look at the photographs that Talbot chose to familiarise his audience to the medium, and analyse what he wrote about them as a means to understand what he thought the photograph was. For this task, Talbot selected architectural photographs to introduce the reader to the photograph.

²⁷ Schaaf, *Accompanying Volume*, p.105

²⁸ Talbot, *Pencil*, Volume 1, unpaginated

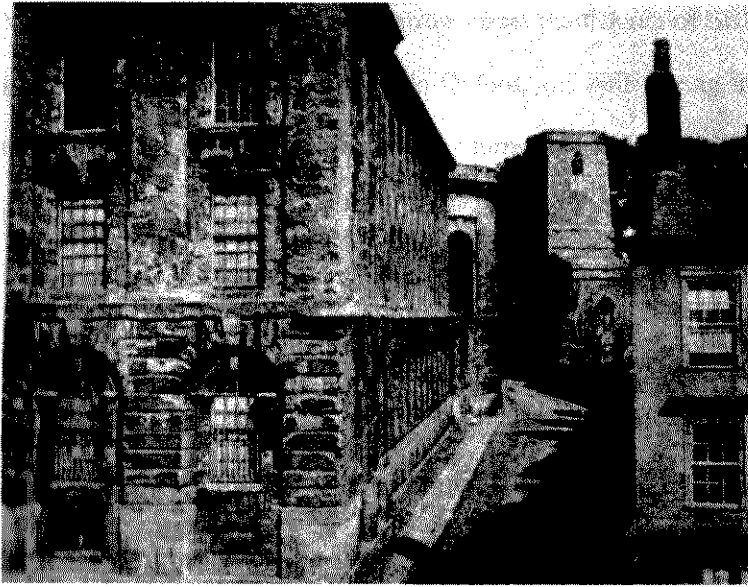


Figure 2.4 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, plate 1 “Part of Queen’s College, Oxford”, 1843 from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library : reading the photograph in the book. 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

Oxford University was the feature of Talbot’s first photograph, which he took while travelling there. “Part of Queen’s College Oxford” (fig. 2.4) featured the prime uses that Talbot saw in the medium such as the ability to record detail and illustrate perspectival correctness. This was how Talbot introduced the first photograph of the *Pencil*:

This building presents on its surface the most evident marks of the injuries of time and weather, in the abraded state of the stone, which probably was of a bad quality originally.

The view is taken from the other side of the High Street – looking North. The time is morning.

In the distance is seen at the end of a narrow street the Church of St Peter's in the East, said to be the most ancient Church in Oxford, and built during the Saxon era. This street, shortly after passing the church, turns to the left, and leads to New College.²⁹

In this description, it is clear that Talbot intended for his photograph to be seen as both an index to time and nature, 'evident marks of the injuries of time, the time is morning;' and to attest to the presence of the photographer, 'the view is taken from the other side of High Street.' From here, Talbot refers to the 'ancient Church' of Oxford, and he invites the reader to travel through the lines of the image, leading the eye along the lines of architecture so that it is led to the top of the frame and beyond to 'New College.' Moving between the photograph as a mark of 'time and weather,' and beyond to attest to what exists outside of the frame of the photograph, Talbot demonstrates that a photograph is both what is visible and invisible to the reader. As we can see, by describing the scenes in his pictures, Talbot is trying to teach his reader how to read photographs, so the reader looks at the photograph, reads the text, looks back to the photograph, and so on.

This is again realised in the second plate 'View of the Boulevards at Paris.' Like the previous photograph, it was taken while Talbot was travelling. 'View' is stylistically in keeping with the Oxford photograph than it is with any other images in the *Pencil*, which indicates that these two photographs were instrumental in highlighting the photograph's primary ability to reproduce reality *as it is*. Unlike the other plates,

²⁹ Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, unpaginated

Talbot describes the photograph, and the reader's position in relation to where Talbot stood at the time. He tells the reader that they are looking North East, and with the sun illuminating shutters on buildings in the right hand side of the photograph, the reader can deduce that the time is afternoon. In repetition of the first plate, Talbot notes the weather again – this time not the effects of the weather on a building, but describes his own physical experience of the weather as hot and dusty. Here, Talbot leaps from using the photograph as evidence 'the instrument chronicles whatever it sees ... with the same impartiality,' to then testify to what the eye cannot see, to what is verbally described in the text.

The text in the *Pencil of Nature* is of huge importance to the comprehension of the photographs and it makes up half of the books content, as suggested by the title of the work the *Pencil of Nature*. Talbot not only saw the photograph to be a form of writing, he also tried to demonstrate how the photograph replaces writing. However this presented Talbot with a photographic conundrum. Talbot wanted photography to replace writing, and he introduced photography to the world as writing itself. However, he needed writing to describe how this would and could happen.

By offering the reader his interpretation of his own photographs, Talbot uses text to reconstruct the time in the photograph. Talbot treated these photographs as marks of time and weather and used the photograph like a scientific, evidentiary tool to deduct causes from visible effects. In the Oxford photograph, for example, Talbot discussed the marks in the sandstone, and noted how they came to be there – doubling the

erosion in the sandstone with what the photograph does. Because Talbot's first two photographs illustrate their accompanying descriptions with great similitude, they reconcile image with text, and prompt the reader to infer the imagination onto the image thereby reconstructing scenes based on the information in the frame. These photographs about photography introduce the medium as indexes to truth, time and objective vision through their ability to replicate scenes in miniature.

This all seems to go astray in Talbot's photograph 'The Bridge of Orleans,' which was featured in Part 2 of the *Pencil* and taken on Talbot's travels to the Loire. Here is an over exposed image of a bridge at the centre of the frame hovering over water. It would be indecipherable if not for the accompanying text that claims:

This view is taken from the southern bank of the river Loire, which passes Orleans in a noble stream. A city rich in historical recollections, but at present chiefly interesting from its fine Cathedral; of which I hope to give a representation in a subsequent plate of this work.³⁰

This description again positions the reader to where the photograph was taken at the time, but unlike the other two photographs it reveals very little visual information in the frame for the reader to reconcile text with photograph. In the previous two descriptions, Talbot interpreted his photographs as indexes to time, reconstructing the past through description. In order to do that, Talbot in the previous two images suggested it was the reconciliation between the described and the photographed that

³⁰Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Volume 2, unpaginated

was of prime importance to being able to facilitate this reconstruction of time. But this photograph challenges the photograph's relationship to its text, and to what exists in the photograph, suggesting that it is the materiality of the photograph that contributes to its identity as an arbiter of the truth.

In the census that Schaaf conducted on the *Pencil*, he reported that this image was uniformly the most degraded and was sickly, cloudy and indistinct when it was issued.³¹ This explains why Talbot mentioned in his description that he intended to rephotograph the Cathedral. By including this virtually blank photograph, Talbot suggests that descriptions and not photographs are of fundamental importance to the perception of the photograph, playing a major role in its perception. The material surface also contributes to the readers' ability to read the description, suspend their disbelief, and reconstruct the past through the inference of their imagination onto the missing details of the photograph.

In the introduction to the dissertation I stated that it was my intention to look at fabricated photographs that served the purpose of constructing and reconstructing visual knowledge about history and the landscape. I stated that fabricated photographs articulate two things, the recognition of what the material status of the photograph represents, its *fundamental identity* that is truth, and secondly, they illustrate a desire to see. In order to illustrate this, I need to address first of all what the identity of the photograph is: nature, writing, drawing. Talbot, as the inventor of photography gave a lot of thought to this and these are reflected in the *Pencil*. So far, I have shown how

³¹ Schaaf *Accompanying Volume*, p.54

Talbot's titling of the *Pencil of Nature* refers to writing, and how Talbot used writing as an analogy that served the purpose of identifying the photograph. I have looked at photographs that Talbot used in his *Pencil* to illustrate the connection between photography and writing, and how this was also a measure of his uncertainty over the identity of the photograph. At this point it will be necessary to understand why and how Talbot thought the past should be ordered and where it should be ordered, illustrating the influence of natural science over the way he wanted to order his photographs. Following this, I address the contemporary issues of photography's identity and look at Schaaf, who as we remember made the *Pencil* to facilitate seeing the past. I then demonstrate that Schaaf's fabrication re-articulates the identity of the photograph as Talbot saw it, and a particular desire to see something, again.

Inventory photographs and rendering objects

Turning to the staged photographs made in his home studio, "Articles of China" (fig. 2.5) and "Articles of Glass" (fig. 2.6) both demonstrate Talbot's investment in the photograph to render objects in a taxonomical grid. Metaphorically, they are signs of Talbot's greater aim to turn his *Pencil* into a museum of photographs particularly in relation to the institutional, commercial and the domestic spheres.³² They also illustrate the desire to use the visual, the photograph as a form of knowledge over other forms of knowledge. For instance, in the description, Talbot stated that if a thief were to steal the treasures, the photograph would be useful as evidence in a court of

³²Russell Roberts, *Specimens and Marvels: William Henry Fox Talbot and the Invention of Photography*, (Bradford : Aperture, National Museum of Photography, Film and TV, 2000), p. 6

law, or as he claimed it would constitute 'evidence most certainly of a novel kind.'³³

This also illustrates a desire to shift information from the text to the image, one that also mirrors the contextual positivistic influence to privilege information and knowledge that was visual.³⁴



Figure 2.5 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, plate III, "Articles of China", 1844 from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library : reading the photograph in the book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

"Articles of China" displays four shelves of China, each in perfect and symmetrical order. Look at the bottom two shelves on this photograph: the cups and objects on either side of the bowl reflect one another perfectly in reverse. Talbot has composed the photograph in such a way as to draw attention to the similarities in the articles so that they achieve a perfect balance of symmetry and difference, illustrating that what the photograph does to picture in a short space of time would take hours to describe accurately. On the top shelf, the second tea cups from the ends are both balanced. Doubling each other, in order and disorder, Talbot demonstrates visually what he

³³Henry Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, unpaginated

³⁴For a reading of Talbot's fascination with the invisible, see Rosalind Krauss "Tracing Nadar," in *OCTOBER* (Summer, 1978), pp 29 - 47

doesn't state in the accompanying text. "Articles of China," attests to the ability for the photograph to exist as an alternate form of writing, potentially saving the collector of old China from hours of laborious descriptions. The more "strange and fantastic" the forms of the teapots, Talbot claimed, the more advantage pictures would have replacing descriptions.³⁵



Figure 2.6 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, plate IV, "Articles of Glass", 1844 from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library: reading the photograph in the book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

Talbot uses the photograph 'Articles of Glass' to describe the problem of accurately representing transparent objects. Here the reader learns that the medium responds to different colours with varying sensitivity and while china and glass may be included in the same frame, it was not recommended that they be since:

³⁵ Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, unpaginated

... the colour is not a pure blue: since blue objects affect the sensitive paper almost as rapidly as white ones do. On the contrary, green rays act very feebly – an inconvenient circumstance, whenever green trees are to be represented in the same picture with buildings of a light hue, or with any light coloured objects.³⁶

This text changes the standing of the first plate, and as Talbot put it – ‘an inconvenient circumstance when green trees are to be represented in the same picture with buildings of a light hue.’³⁷ Talbot’s problem with photographic exposure was also demonstrated in the later work of nineteenth century photographer Henry Peach Robinson.³⁸ Robinson used the composite method in his work in order to obtain an even exposure between the figure and the ground. Robinson used sections of multiple photographs in order to acquire a single, evenly exposed print which would represent nature *as it is*. Robinson’s canonical style of art photography of the nineteenth century arose out of the limits of photographic representation and as we will see in the following chapters, the tendency to engage fabrication and photography illustrates the need to supplement the limits of vision and photography.

In the 1842 and 1843 editions of the *Pencil*, Talbot included two photographs taken from different perspectives of the same bust (fig. 2.7). In the first edition, Talbot stated that the ‘delineations are susceptible of an almost unlimited variety,’ and that the photographer must decide how to portray the object, which can be turned around to produce ‘a second set of variations no less considerable than the first.’ Following that

³⁶ *ibid*, Volume 1. unpaginated

³⁷ *ibid*, Volume 1. unpaginated

³⁸ See Henry Peach Robinson, “Art Photography,” *Amateur Photographers Library* No. 4. (London: Hazel, Watson & Viney Limited, 1890)

he added 'it becomes evident how very great a number of different effects may be obtained from a single specimen of sculpture.'³⁹

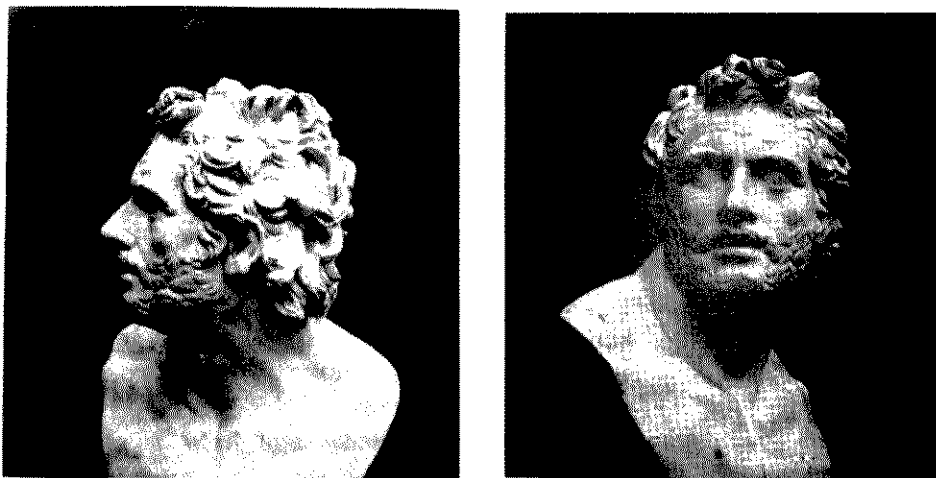


Figure 2.7 Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 1, plate V, "Bust of Patroclus", 1844; and Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, Volume 4, plate XVII, "Bust of Patroclus", 1845 from Carol Armstrong, *Scenes in a library : reading the photograph in the book, 1843-1875* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1998)

Talbot's discussion of the second "Bust" illustrates his awareness of the unlimited variety of photographs that can be taken of a three-dimensional object.⁴⁰ This photograph is dedicated to showing just how photography can replace drawing by illustrating that no artist would take the time to draw scenes in so many different ways, which also mirrors the photograph's capacity to replace writing. In addition, Talbot could also be seen to have recognised the problems with photographically representing three dimensional objects in one photograph.

It is evident that Talbot was realising the potential complications of representing three dimensional space outside of traditional forms of representation, such as from a single

³⁹ *ibid*, Volume 1, unpaginated

⁴⁰ Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Volume 4, unpaginated

point of perspective. This is a notable contradiction to the ideas that Talbot put forward in his 'Inventories of China,' in particular his choice to photograph objects in a grid like structure and from a frontal perspective. However, Talbot's inclusion of two photographs of the same sculpture illustrates that he realised that a three-dimensional object has endless potential to be photographed, according to size, lighting and angle. As it was noted in Talbot's discussion of the plate "Articles of Glass," the issue of the photograph's sensitivity to different colours differs greatly from his treatment of the plate "Articles of China," making the reader question the fundamental quality of the photograph to render scenes with accuracy. This constant change between what and what the photograph can't do, as we have seen is characteristic of many of Talbot's irresolute descriptions of his photographs.

Though he never used the word *paradox*, Talbot's attempts to outline the photograph's fundamental material characteristics against cultural institutions and disciplines can be applied to contemporary photographic discourse and its drive to 'locate' the photograph. The inability to determine fixed meaning within the space of the photograph, the uncertainty about the photograph's relationship to objectivity, the uncertainty of the meaning copy and original; all of Talbot's attempts to draw relevance between the material nature of his medium and its nineteenth century context resulted in his realisation of the limits of photographic representation. He could be seen to be the first to have written, unconsciously, about the photographic paradox, followed on by the major influences in photographic theory: Roland Barthes, Geoffrey Batchen, Eduardo Cadava and Paul Virilio. In the following section, I will

outline their takes on the photographic paradox in further detail and apply them to Schaaf.

Various paradoxes of photography

'The first photograph a man contemplated,' said Barthes, 'must have seemed to him to resemble exactly certain paintings.'⁴¹ In a passage from *Camera Lucida*, Barthes asks how the early inventors of photography came to terms with the identity of their new medium. Barthes describes the likely experience that French inventor of photography, Nicephore Niépce had when first faced with a photograph as being as if 'his consciousness posited the object encountered outside of any analogy, like the ectoplasm of what-had-been.'⁴² Likening the first photographs to paintings was one of the ways Barthes claimed, that inventors approached and saw their medium. Inventors of photography drew likenesses between the photograph and the painting because there was nothing else that came close to its being. According to Barthes, the significance of such analogies were evidence of how photographers attempted to come to terms with the photograph's being and aspired to identify this new reality.

Over years of writing on the photograph's semiotic and cultural values in books such as *Image Music Text*, *The Photographic Message*, and *Camera Lucida* it was clear that Barthes was dedicated to finding a language for photography *in itself*. Whilst these books differed in the types of photographs that were studied, there was a common thread throughout Barthes writing: the sense that the photograph is a paradox. Looking

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.87

⁴² *ibid.*, p.87

at photographs in the context of advertising, art, semiotics, writing, and history, Barthes always returned to the fundamental characteristic of the photograph and its refusal to generate fixed meaning or an identity *in itself*. To Barthes, the photograph always challenges what it is purported to represent: memory, history, language and meaning.

Barthes' dedication to finding an identity for photography is best illustrated in his final book, *Camera Lucida*. One hundred and fifty years after the invention of photography, Barthes was still coming to terms with questions that early photographers asked of their medium, 'I wasn't sure it had an identity of its own' was how he once put it.⁴³ In *Camera Lucida*, what made locating the identity of photography so difficult for Barthes was represented by a significant paradox: 'the same century invented History and Photography.'⁴⁴

For Barthes, the cultural desire to use photography to communicate history is a paradox because it pushes the past further away when it is meant to pull it closer. So why does culture keep taking photographs? The answer for Barthes lies in a dualism that best describes the paradoxical identity of the photograph, which is mirrored in the structure of *Camera Lucida* and in two key terms known as the *studium* and the *punctum* – the power of emotional affect.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.3

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 86

Barthes strategically divides *Camera Lucida* into two parts. The first section of the book is dedicated to establishing the photograph's visual currency for history, what Barthes illustrates as public photographs that have a historical effect and can be studied. These photographs can be scanned for their *studium* which contributes to their value to posterity. Every photograph primarily has a *studium* and thus an ability to be studied as a trace of the past. Public photographs such as newspaper images act in this way, as did Henry Talbot's photographs from the *Pencil of Nature*.

The second section of the book takes a private turn as Barthes describes his posthumous search for a photograph of his mother through a collection of photographs. What he is looking for is a photograph with an *emotional affect*, that 'pricks' him. Barthes eventually finds a photograph of his mother however he never reveals it to the reader because he thinks that the photograph would only be valued for its *historical effect*. True enough, we do not know Barthes mother and would never experience the *emotional affect* that Barthes does when he sees the photograph of his mother standing in a garden in winter. Rather than reveal his Winter Garden photograph to the reader, Barthes keeps this photograph private and describes in words the personal, emotional experience that is gained from the act of looking at the photograph. Barthes calls this an unexpected prick, or a twinge which he terms the *punctum* of the photograph.

For Barthes, photographs are always pushing and pulling between public and private spheres, between their *historical effect* and their *emotional affect*. All photographs

have *studium*, but there is disconnect when engaging with photographs for this reason because they only draw attention to the viewer's own gaze; these photographs are not personal which is why Barthes does not want to show the photograph of his mother to the public. The Winter Garden photograph is for Barthes' eyes only.

While all photographs have a public function as a *studium*, not all have *punctum*. However for Barthes, the very power of the photograph is in its ability to prick, to remember in a manner that escapes the act of looking. Yet this is a rare and unexpected event; and paradoxically, the effect always precedes the affect. Through this aid to memory, the photograph blocks memory insofar as it always draws attention to the act of looking itself. Therefore, the photograph can never be a pure memory of the thing it represents. For Barthes, the photograph is thus an affirmation of death and a blockage to memory which brings about an awareness of death when it is meant to affirm life. This constitutes what he describes as being the paradox of the simultaneous invention of photography and history.

Similarly, Eduardo Cadava writing after Walter Benjamin states that the photograph's significance is in its relationship to artificial memory and forms of archiving that 'obliges us to rethink what links these processes of technological reproduction to our so-called psychological and interior memory.'⁴⁵ Benjamin wrote extensively on the effects that technology has on our day to day life, both politically, and historically. He claims that photographs, rather than bring us closer to the singular and unique drive us further

⁴⁵ Eduardo Cadava. *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History*, xvii

away from it through reproduction.⁴⁶ Just like Barthes wrote on photography's affirmation of the irrevocability of time, Benjamin and Cadava believed that photography was the paradox that drove one further away from the real, further away from the distant. Death for Cadava is the central focus of the photograph's identity:

Death, both the word and event, is a photograph that photographs itself – a photograph. A photograph therefore speaks *as* death, as the trace of what passes into history. I, the photograph, the spaced out limit between life and death, am death. Yet speaking as death, the photograph can be neither death nor itself.⁴⁷

The self reflexive nature of the photograph is therefore reflected in the emphasis that death is the photograph that photographs itself. This paradox of wanting to 'capture' time is recognised by Cadava as inescapable because the photograph, in his view represents death itself. Again, the paradox of time in the photograph arises just as Barthes described in *Camera Lucida*.

With time being the central focus of the paradox, Paul Virilio also devoted much of his theory to explaining how and why technologies such as photography collapse and abolish our sense of time. To him, this collapse is a consequence of the desire for immortality, of 'man's' desire to be everywhere, and to have a complete perspective of the world.⁴⁸ Using photographs to attain immortality and ubiquity is to Virilio a paradox. The photograph only provides an incomplete perspective, paradoxically

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, ed. Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations*. (New York, Schocken Books, 1969)

⁴⁷ Cadava, p.128

⁴⁸ Virilio, *Aesthetics of Disappearance*, (Paris: Semiotext(e), 1991) p.23

driving one away from 'complete' knowledge and certainty. In his view the more knowledge grows 'the more aware we are of its incomplete fragmentary nature.'⁴⁹ This perpetuates the desire to fill in the gaps of knowledge in a collection, resulting in the diminishing of interest in the world, and the growing interest in representations.

To this end, Virilio states that photography reaches its limit of having photographed *everything*, and is incapable of finding anything new to photograph.⁵⁰ All we see is a repetition of signs, and the same kinds of photographs. The proliferation of images is thus a result of the inability for the photograph to convey totality, and is instead stuck in an 'endless loop.' Photography to Virilio is destined to cause the disintegration of the real through a loss of interest in the world, and to this end it constitutes a death. Photography as a technology is to Virilio therefore dead, caught in an endless repetition of landscapes, ruins, and copies of genre paintings.⁵¹ For Virilio, photography was once alive photographing the new. Now its 'death,' to engage the analogy, is the death of the endless loop of repetition, and the same types of photographs. So whilst Barthes and Cadava believe that the photograph has always been the affirmation of death, Virilio believes it is now dead.

Similarly Jean Baudrillard believes that we live in the age of the procession of simulacra.⁵² According to Baudrillard, lived experience has degenerated and we now live in hyper-reality, where meaning is not fixed and the world is no longer real,

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p.45

⁵⁰ Virilio, p.47

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 47

⁵² See ed. Richard Appignanesi, *The End of Everything: Postmodernism and the Vanishing of the Human*, (London: Icon Books, 2003)

except in images, in representation. Both Baudrillard and Virilio's views on photography come to flavour post-modern discourse and its critique of the gaze. What we come to see in postmodernism is thus 'the transformation of reality into images,' or rather the study of the world through images.⁵³ For them, the death of photography is therefore, cynically, the death of reality.

Schaaf, as we remember, made his fabrication of the *Pencil* in the era that photography was proclaimed to be dead. At the 150 year anniversary of the invention of photography, Schaaf's agenda was to rekindle in 'our visually jaded society,'⁵⁴ the wonder and awe that audiences felt in the nineteenth century. At a similar time, Geoffrey Batchen was claiming 'now, a little over 150 years later, everyone seems to want to talk about photography's death.'⁵⁵ What was the relationship between Talbot's all round uncertainty over the origins of his photographic identity, and Schaaf's attempts to reinvigorate the perception of photography through fabrication? And what was the relationship between Barthes' belief that photography has always been an affirmation of death, and Virilio's theory that photography had reached an impasse, an end?

Post-modern theorists such as Baudrillard and Virilio reject single perspectives, and grand narratives, locating photography in its association with truth and objectivity as one of the main subjects to their writings, which largely focus on simulacra,

⁵³ Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" in *The Anti Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, cited in Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, p. 544

⁵⁴ Schaaf, p.73

⁵⁵ Batchen, p.207

duplication, the denigration of vision, and the consequential inability to distinguish between real and fiction, thing and sign. They claim that postmodernity represents the transformation of reality into images, that reality is only perceived as 'real' when it becomes an image.

All of these issues come to inform what Batchen locates as the medium's two crises of epistemology and technology. These make up and are concerned with the very nature of photography's being and they challenge what the identity of the photograph is – recalling what Talbot grappled with early on in the *Pencil of Nature*. With the invention of the pixel age of photography, notions familiar to the characteristics of the photograph such as truth, objectivity, nature come to be challenged, therefore also challenging the photograph's affiliation with such notions.

On that note, Geoffrey Batchen has argued against a postmodern way of looking at photography, and challenges these beliefs with his investigation of photographic identity in the nineteenth century. For Batchen, like Barthes, Cadava, and Benjamin, photography has always constituted death, the paradox of photography lies in the attempt to grasp the identity of the medium which is so closely related to language and writing: as we saw with Talbot's labelling of photography as *The Pencil of Nature*, of his position of the photograph within the space of writing.

Batchen also recalls that the proto-photographers were unsure whether the photograph was produced by nature or culture, and locates nature at the central point of the

photographic conundrum. As he put it, 'everyone was sure that nature was central to his idea of photography, but no one was quite sure what nature was or how to describe her 'mode of existence.'⁵⁶ Regardless of this confusion, the invention of photography still proliferated as part of a greater cultural shift towards a history of looking. To this extent, Batchen claims that the proto-photographers were 'burning with desire' to photograph and represent the past for history.

As for postmodernism's rejection of absolute truth and grand narratives that threaten to render photography and its relationship with truth and objectivity as dead, photography as most critics agree, has always involved manipulation. Photographic theory has omitted manipulation from its discourse outside of the arena of art, because it disrupts the integrity of its own history, and thus the history of the world. To Batchen, it is that which has been omitted by the canonical history of photography that gives us a greater understanding of what the photograph is. Returning to truth on his search for photographic identity when he claims 'photography is nothing but that history,'⁵⁷ it could be argued that an understanding of photographic identity is what lies in what truth is not: fabrication, invention, fakery.

In his essay "Vernacular Photography," Batchen calls for a rethinking of photography's commonly told history. Focussing on the gaps in photography's history,⁵⁸ on topics that photographic discourse has omitted such as fakery and vernacular snap shot photography, he claims we are in a better position to understand

⁵⁶ Batchen, p.69

⁵⁷ Batchen, p.212

⁵⁸ Batchen, "Vernacular Photography" in *Each Wild Idea*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), p. 58

what photography is.⁵⁹ I would add that by focusing on what photographic history *is not*, we are still trapped in the endless cycle of postmodernism's focus on binaries, presences and absences, still caught in the desire to fill in the gaps of history.

Schaaf's fabrication of a facsimile edition of Talbot's work comes to illustrate, through the act of reduplication, the situation of photography 150 years after its invention. The act of fabricating the *Pencil* also drew attention to the fragility of Talbot's medium, and to the conflicting opinions that Talbot had about photography as they were illustrated in the fading of his photographs. Schaaf's facsimile was a celebration of antiquity, an attempt to see the past through the eyes of a different era for the pleasure of seeing it come to life. Whilst it was made out of the desire to 'save' photography from the cynical gaze of the postmodern era, it could also be seen as contributing to the object of its very criticism. Through Schaaf's desire to 'rekindle' the experience of the new by recreating the old, the *Facsimile Edition* paradoxically reflects what Paul Virilio claimed was photography's inability to find anything new to photograph constituting the death of reality through the endless recycling of images from the past. In this way, Schaaf's fabrication can be applied to postmodern theories that explain what *drives* the urge to fill in the gaps of the past, the desire for visual totality just as we saw with Talbot's applications for the medium.

⁵⁹ Batchen, "Vernacular Photography", 'As a parergon, vernacular photography is the absent presence that determines its medium's historical and physical identity; it is that thing that decides what proper photography is not. Truly to understand photography and its history, therefore, one must closely attend to what that history has chosen to repress,' p.59

With that said, Schaaf's task also drew attention to what postmodernism neglects from its own discourse: love, pleasure and sentiment. It highlights that by fabricating, repeating what was made in the past, Schaaf facilitates seeing through the kinaesthetic act of reproducing. By re-presenting what Talbot wanted to create of an archive of posterity, and reproducing the *Pencil* as part of that archive, Schaaf fabricated the *Facsimile* for the pleasure of seeing the past come to life. This is not too far a desire from what originally inspired Henry Talbot to invent the photograph. He put it like this:

At the very commencement of my experiments upon this subject, when I saw how beautiful were the images which were thus produced by the action of light, I regretted the more that they were destined to have such a brief existence, and I resolved to attempt to find out, if possible, some method of preventing this, or retarding it as much as possible.⁶⁰

What is opened up in the act of duplication is what Owens described as telling us something about what the photograph is, or what Batchen also claimed was our ability to better understand photographic discourse.

As we will come to see in the following chapters, fabrication illustrates other paradoxes of vision and discovery in the era of exploration. The following chapter looks at how James Nasmyth handled using photography to present the new landscape

⁶⁰ Talbot, "Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing, or the Process by Which Natural Objects May be Made to Delineate Themselves." from Beaumont Newhall (ed.), *Photography: Essays and Images*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1980), p.23

of the moon to a public audience. I examine the ways that Nasmyth's fabrication simultaneously portrayed the influence of both positivistic and romantic thinking on the way he imagined the landscape of the moon. I show how this contributed to the paradoxical situation he faced when attempting to represent the moon in images. This engages with what Virilio claimed was the desire for ubiquity, but at the same time it challenges these notions of death and photography by raising questions about originality, and photography's inability to find anything new to photograph.

3. THE EDUCATION OF THE EYES:

James Nasmyth's fabrication of photographs from *The Moon: Considered as a World, a Planet and a Satellite* (1874)

Abstract

This chapter examines James Nasmyth's fabricated photographs of the moon's surface from the mid-nineteenth century. It looks at how Nasmyth's fabrications of simulated models of the moon were fuelled by the science of astronomy, and a desire to fill an empty picture map of the moon. Engaging Michel Foucault and his investigation of systems of ordering and classification in the Modern Age, the chapter examines the methods that Nasmyth used to materialise the astronomical world. In doing so, the chapter shows how Nasmyth's fabrication reflects a way of seeing the natural world in both positivistic and romantic terms, two influential philosophies in that era. By drawing similarities to John Herschel and his theories on natural philosophy and magnetism, I show how Nasmyth's use of photography to picture the moon reflects the milieu's crisis of nature. The chapter focuses on the ways that Nasmyth blended the artificial with the real, and earth time with the eternal lunar time and bridges postmodern concerns about simulation and the nineteenth century. The chapter argues that Nasmyth's compulsion to fabricate the moon was conceived out of a desire to make the first picture map, which was already trapped into the codes of the picturesque, an already established form of landscape representation. Showing that Nasmyth's picturing of the lunar landscape was itself a re-presentation of the earth landscape, the chapter returns to theories of postmodern photographic discourse, photographic identity and the effects of simulation.

Introduction

In the 1840s, James Nasmyth attempted to make the first picture map of the moon. At a time when only descriptions and rudimentary skeletal maps existed on this territory, Nasmyth took it upon himself to contribute to astronomy by adding to its lack of visual knowledge of the moon. He believed that a picture map of the moon would benefit posterity, allowing future generations to witness any change that may take place to the lunar surface. And so Nasmyth set about drawing every lunar crater that he could see through his telescope. Once he had established a collection, he fabricated plaster models from the drawings and photographed them to look like the real thing.

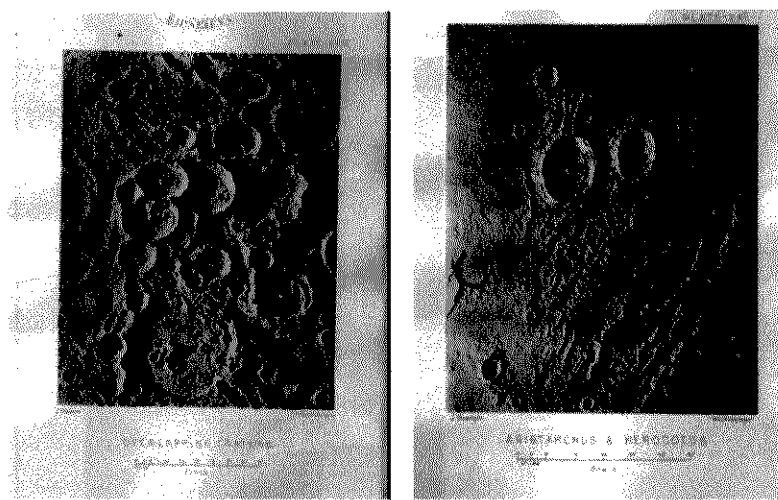


Figure 3.0 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Plate XXII, "Overlapping Craters" and Plate XXI, "Aristarchus & Herodotus", 1874

When Nasmyth wrote *The Moon: Considered as a World, a Planet and a Satellite* (1874) he was trying to prove that lunar craters on the moon resembled once active volcanic mountains on the earth.¹ To illustrate this theory, Nasmyth inserted the

¹ James Nasmyth and John Carpenter, *Moon Considered as a Planet, a World and a Satellite*,

collection of fabricated photographs of plaster lunar models into his book. By using fabricated photographs as the basis of a body of evidence and by proving that the moon was once an active volcano, Nasmyth was able to come to conclusions about what the moon looked like to a spectator standing there. Seen in the context of nineteenth century science, Nasmyth's project reflects the scientific task of the Modern era to identify, classify and order the visible natural world. But the moon was not a visible place, and it is illuminating to focus on how Nasmyth attempted to come to terms with this distance using the camera, fabrication and the telescope. This chapter will show how Nasmyth was conflicted as to how to materialise the moon in images, and how it illustrates the greater cultural period of change.

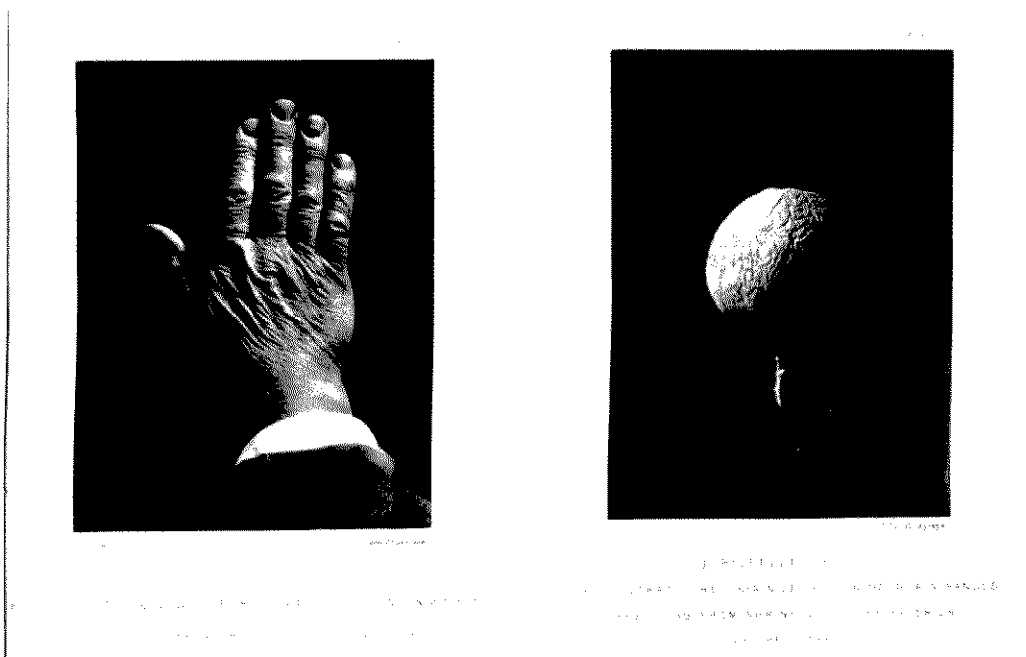


Figure 3.1 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*. Plate II, "Back of hand to illustrate the origin of mountain ranges resulting from the shrinkage of the interior", and Plate III, "Shrivelled Apple to illustrate the origin of mountain ranges resulting from the shrinkage of the interior of the globe", 1874

(London: John Murray, 1885)

In the period of the mid-nineteenth century, popular books such as Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* and *Voyage of the Beagle* facilitated a different way of looking at the world for Victorian audiences. This evolutionary shift involved a change in the perception of the age of the earth from about 8,000 years to millions of years, and it introduced a new way of looking at the world in terms of positive science.² All of this culminated in different forms of natural sciences changing their philosophy of time and origins; for instance, the study of geological formations shifted from the sphere of the theological to the evolutionary.³ Geology was not the only discipline to undergo such a change. Astronomy also shifted in its perception of space from heavenly to celestial.⁴ The nineteenth century could be seen as the era when religion became separated from science, and when science disrupted the belief in religion, in the immaterial.⁵

² Theophile Gautier, "Art in 1848" reproduced in ed. Harrison Wood & Gaiger, *Art in Theory: 1800 – 1900 An anthology of Changing Ideas*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) p. 317

³ Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, p. 59

⁴ For an excellent analysis of this shift in the perception of space, see Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A history of space from Dante to the Internet*, (New York: Doubleday, 1999)

⁵ Mary Midgley, *Science and Poetry*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 49

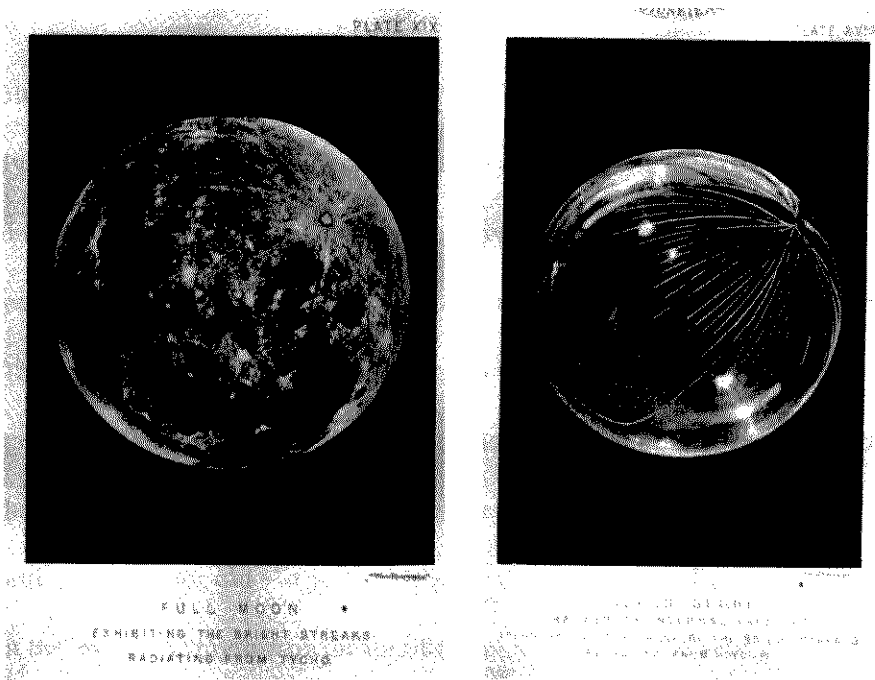


Figure 3.2 From *The Moon*, Warren de La Rue, Plate XIX, "Full Moon exhibiting the bright streaks radiating from Tycho" and James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Plate XVII, "Glass globe cracked by internal pressure illustrating the cause of the bright streaks radiating from Tycho"

This shifting attitude to the origins of nature, time and geology is exemplified in Nasmyth's project. When Nasmyth was observing the moon through the telescope and drawing its picture, he was overwhelmed by what he believed to be an image of millions of years, untouched. As he put it:

The surface, with all its wondrous details, presents the same aspect as it did probably millions of ages ago. ... This consideration vastly enhances the deep interest with which we look upon the moon and its volcanic details. Hence the appearance of the wonderful details of the moon's surface presents us with objects of inconceivably remote antiquity.⁶

⁶James Nasmyth, *James Nasmyth Engineer: An Autobiography*, ed. Samuel Smiles, LL.D (London: John Murray Albemarle Street, 1883)

Ultimately, what Nasmyth saw in the moon was the culmination of millions of years. By drawing this ancient landscape, he was drawing the face of eternity offered up by his telescope. His project of documenting, fabricating the moon could therefore be seen as a comment on the desire to see nature in a fixed and permanent state. By drawing similarities between the unchanged surface of the moon and the changing age of the earth in his documentation, Nasmyth was coming to terms with the idea of change in nature, and time. As Geoffrey Batchen put it, 'this is a nature that is neither young nor old – it just is.'⁷ By likening the moon to a once erupting volcano on the earth, Nasmyth's picturing of the moon can also be read as his attempt to deal with the changing views of the origins of the earth that were a part of the nineteenth century mindset. This chapter will explore this idea further in an analysis of Nasmyth's ideas about the moon, in his illustrations and his fabrications.

The previous chapter illustrated how Henry Talbot was uncertain about the identity of photography, and the ways it was reflected in his *Pencil of Nature*. His confusion over the identity of the medium was in part due to the medium's entanglement in the nature and culture debate, and the shifting views of nature which vastly affected the mid-nineteenth century. This uncertainty was illustrated in Schaaf's fabrication, where Talbot's project was effectively turned in on itself, highlighting the many discrepancies and conflicting views that Talbot held on photography. At the same time, Schaaf's fabrication reflected what, paradoxically, was seen as one of the effects of the postmodern age of photography: the blending of real with artificial, the

⁷ Batchen, p.59

collapsing of time, and the problem of distinguishing truth from fiction. If it did anything, Schaaf's fabrication reiterated Talbot's own confusion, calling into question whether or not these terms were ever singular and fixed. Nasmyth's fabrication, like we saw with Schaaf, highlights the self-referential and paradoxical characteristics of the photograph by focusing on the use of artificial photographs to identify and classify the undiscovered. Just as invention was not without its problems of identification, so too was the fabrication of uncharted territories such as the moon.

This chapter builds on the last chapter's concepts with its focus on the ways that Nasmyth made fabricated photographs that privileged the artificial over the real out of a desire for exploration. It focuses on Nasmyth's presentation of the original landscape of the moon as a space that was framed in much the same way as a landscape painting of mountains on earth that was bound in the tradition of the picturesque. This suggests that Nasmyth's 'photographic exploration' was already caught in an endless cycle of presentation and re-presentation. Paradoxically, his system for identifying the moon was based on the logic of nineteenth century natural science which itself privileged the visual and attempted to establish relationships between the seen and the object.

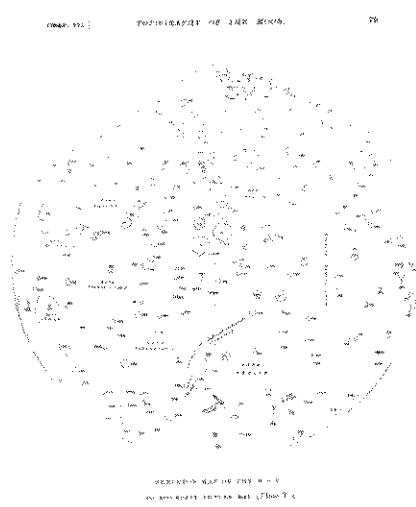
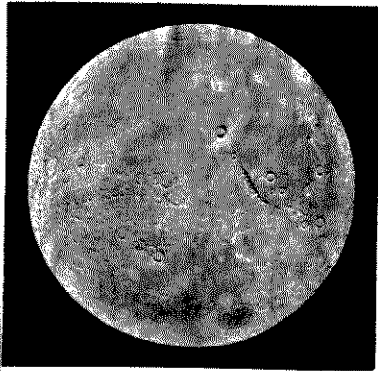


Figure 3.3 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Plate V, "Picture-map of the moon", 1874; and "Skeleton-map of the moon to accompany Picture Map (Plate V)" from *The Moon Considered as a World a Planet and a Satellite*, p.79

Nasmyth's desire to tabularise the moon within the order of nature, and classify and identify it, illustrates the object of Michel Foucault's criticism of the Modern and Classical era, and the emergence of the natural sciences. What Foucault was primarily interested in was the desire to isolate, confine and establish systems for visual identification which established an artificial order upon the world. Foucault explained that the object of classification was to impose relationships between objects in the world based on their succession and resemblance, which were not natural. These formed the basis of relationships between knowledge, power and vision that paved the way for photographic theorists such as John Tagg, who adopted Foucault's critique of the panopticon in order to question the identity of photography as a system of identification.⁸

⁸ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: essays on photographs and histories*, (London: Macmillan Education, 1988)

The first section of this chapter will provide an overview and analysis of *The Moon: Considered as a World, a Planet and a Satellite* through the investigation of Nasmyth's production methods and his presentation of the new lunar landscape. The chapter illustrates that Nasmyth's obsession with classification, discovery and time hindered his ability to document the moon as an original and undiscovered landscape. In the following sections, the relationship between Foucault's critique of the Modern era and the natural sciences will be considered in relation to Nasmyth and photographic theory. From this analysis, I show how the case study of Nasmyth and the moon play out, adding a layer of complexity to the drive to fabricate photographs and to document new landscapes.

The Moon: Considered as a World, a Planet and a Satellite

As a nineteenth century book, Nasmyth's *The Moon* provides a diverse example of photographic processes and printing techniques.⁹ Its inclusion of fabricated photographs, drawings, real photographs, photographs of objects, and forms of lithographs and woodbury-types are all used to illustrate his knowledge, also illustrating that photographs were not just his sole means of picturing the distant landscape. His use of modelling and drawing were illustrated in the books as his way of coming to terms with distance through touch.

⁹ *The Moon* was written by Nasmyth along with his friend James Carpenter who worked at the Royal Observatory. However, Nasmyth makes it quite clear in his autobiography that the idea for the book and the drawings were his. Other accounts of Nasmyth's photographs also credit only him for the work.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Nasmyth's book served the purpose of proving that the moon was once an active volcano, like the earth. It provides an overview of historical accounts of the moon based on myths and ends on 'ideal' illustrations of what the moon would look like to a spectator standing on its surface.

The first six chapters in *The Moon* are dedicated to describing the moon, and its geological makeup through observation. It provides 'pre-telescopic' accounts of the moon and meditates on the quaint myths of the 'man in the moon' and the 'face' of the moon. The following chapters progress from fictional to factual accounts of the moon, progressing from Nasmyth's construction of the picture map to establishing his findings of the 'true nature of the moon': that it was once a volcano. From here Nasmyth discusses the appearance of lunar peaks and ranges and the topography of the moon as it would appear from the perspective of a spectator standing on the surface.

As a way of supporting his theories, Nasmyth inserted fabricated photographs and illustrations of ideal landscapes potentially seen by the traveller to the moon. Just how they were connected and how they functioned together to prove Nasmyth's theories will be analysed in the following section.

Nasmyth's urge to fabricate moon photographs

Let us recall that Nasmyth's original motivations for making *The Moon* were due to the inaccuracy of skeletal maps around at the time. Discussing these maps, Nasmyth

claimed that they did not ‘pretend to be a picture.’¹⁰ In saying this he meant that they were unsatisfying to look at, as maps did not serve to facilitate an ‘impression of the territory.’¹¹

Clearly, distance hindered Nasmyth from making a real photographic picture map of the moon. Out of this distance arose his compulsion to fabricate photographs and insert them into the book. The fabricated photos in *The Moon* serve a dual function. They provide a picture map of lunar craters, and they also serve to support Nasmyth’s ideas of what the lunar surface would look like to someone who had travelled there. For Nasmyth, the fabricated photographs would pave the way to an imaginary voyage to the moon.

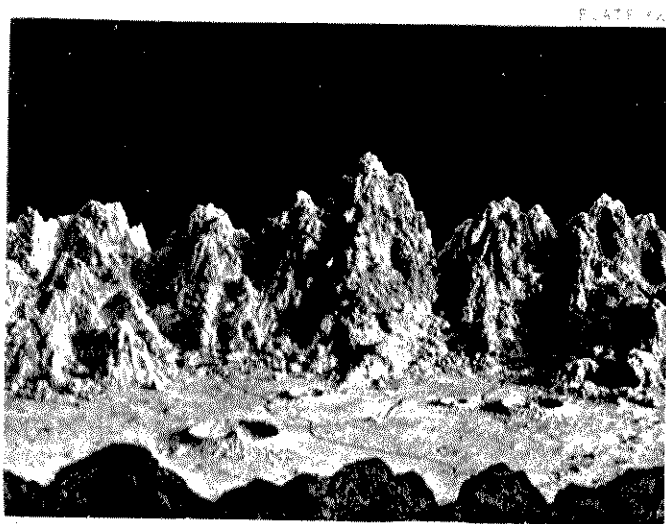


Figure 3.4 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Plate XXV, “Group of lunar mountains ideal lunar landscape, 1874

¹⁰ Nasmyth, *The Moon: Considered as a World, a Planet and a Satellite*, p.78

¹¹ *ibid*, p.78

This is how Nasmyth described his compulsion to make the map of the moon:

...we are invoking the conception of things that actually exist; and that [sic] we are not, like some imaginary voyagers to the moon, indulging in mere flights of fancy. Although it is impossible for a habitant of this earth fully to realise existence upon the moon, it is yet possible, indeed almost inevitable, for a thoughtful telescopist ... Seated in silence and in solitude at a powerful telescope, abstracted from terrestrial influences, and gazing upon the revealed details of some strikingly characteristic region of the moon, it requires but a small effort of the imagination to suppose one's self actually upon the lunar globe ... under these circumstances there is an irresistible tendency in the mind to pass beyond the actually visible, and to fill in with what it knows must exist those accessory features and phenomena that are only hidden from us by distance and by our peculiar point of view...¹²

Three illustrations appear in the back of Nasmyth's book: "An Ideal Sketch of "Pico" an Isolated Lunar Mountain 8000 feet high as it would probably appear if seen by a spectator", "Group of Lunar Mountains – Ideal Lunar Landscape", and "Aspect of an Eclipse of the sun as it would appear as seen from the moon"; which picture Nasmyth's imaginary voyage to the moon. These are the three illustrations the book ends on, illustrating Nasmyth's leap from his 'telescopically' viewed moon to picturing what the moon would look like if he'd landed on it. Even though his illustrated lunar landscapes are hypothetical, Nasmyth's fabricated photographs are

¹² *ibid*, pp.152 – 153

instrumental in illustrating the leap between visual knowledge and the imagination, between seeing things for the first time and picturing them. This process of materialisation will be left for now and returned to after a discussion of Nasmyth's fabrications.

The fabrication of the moon using photography

In *The Moon*, Nasmyth tells the reader that his production of fabricated photographs began when he was drawing the moon through the telescope. As a way of illustrating how accurate his photographs were, Nasmyth stressed how closely his drawings resembled the original object. As he described it, his original drawings were:

... again and again repeated, revised and compared with the actual objects, the eye thus advancing in correctness and power of appreciating minute details, while the hand was acquiring, by assiduous practise, the art of rendering correct representations of the objects in view.¹³

By claiming that his drawings were accurate and drawn over and over again, Nasmyth was able to claim that his fabricated photographs were also accurate representations of the moon, for the drawing and the photograph were exactly the same as what Nasmyth saw through his telescope. Throughout the book, drawing and photography are used interchangeably, drawings are made from photographs, and photographs are made from drawings and models.

¹³ *ibid*, viii – ix

This treatment of all mediums as a form of documentation was again followed through when Nasmyth transcribed his drawings of the moon into miniature plaster models. These plaster models were then placed outdoors and exposed to sunlight, whose chiaroscuro effect would produce realistic shadows. The models were then photographed, resulting in simulated photographs of the surface of the moon, and were a comment on what Nasmyth believed to be the process of photography itself. Note what Nasmyth says about what happens when the models are placed in sunlight:

... when placed in the sun's rays, would faithfully reproduce the lunar effects of light and shadow, and then photographing the models so treated we should produce most faithful representations of the original.¹⁴

With the stress on a 'faithful' rendering of chiaroscuro effects on the object, Nasmyth simulates the effect of light falling on to the moon, which is close enough to being there. His method of production illustrates what Nasmyth thought about photography's relationship to knowledge, drawing and sunlight.

Roland Barthes described this relationship as being central to the photograph's ability to attest to the proof of physical presence, proof that the photograph once traced light from the original object. As he described it in *Camera Lucida*, 'the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me ... light, though impalpable, is

¹⁴ *ibid*, ix

here a carnal medium.’¹⁵ The connection then between light and drawing is thus the knowledge that the photograph is the direct trace of what it has seen. By placing his models into sunlight and allowing it to cast a ‘natural’ chiaroscuro effect, Nasmyth draws relationships between light, knowledge and the process of photography itself. His use of the models as representations of the original object, which were then photographed, was his way of suggesting the physical presence of man situated on the moon.

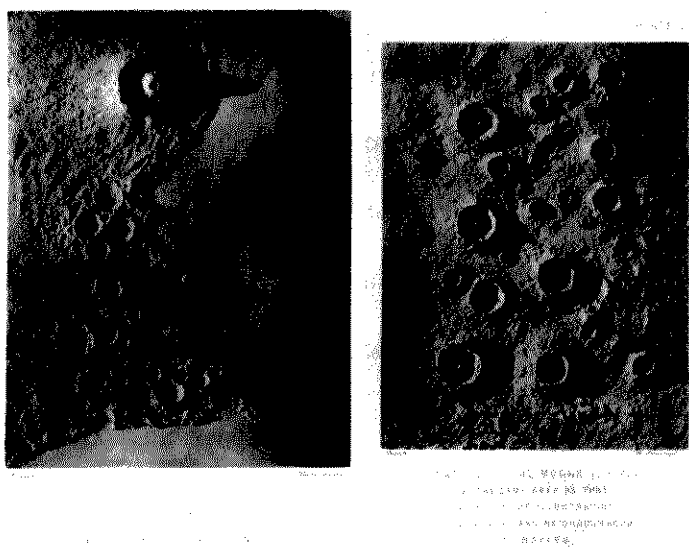


Figure 3.5 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Plate VI, “Vesuvius and the neighbourhood of Naples,” 1874; and Plate VII, “Portion of the moons surface of the same area as that given in Vesuvius and the neighbourhood of Naples,” 1874

Historian Weston Naef has stated that readers in the nineteenth century were misled to believe that Nasmyth’s fabricated photographs of the moon were photographs of the surface of the moon itself, despite his inclusion of detailed descriptions on how he came to produce the work.¹⁶ It is illuminating to note how Nasmyth used

¹⁵ Barthes, pp. 80 – 81

¹⁶ Weston J Naef, “From Illusion to Truth and Back Again,” in Weston J Naef & Lucien Goldschmidt, *The Truthful Lens: A Survey of the Photographically Illustrated Book 1844 – 1914*, (New York: The Grolier Club, 1980), p.10

fabricated photographs, and the way that he privileged them over the real. In fact, Nasmyth did not mislead the reader into thinking that his fabrications were real pictures at all and he was very clear about their method of production. However, he treated these photographs in such a way as to make the reader want to believe in the fabrication, to 'pretend' they were looking at the real thing.

The filmmaker Georges Méliès speaking on special effects once said that 'the cheapest tricks have the greatest impact.'¹⁷ Paul Virilio says that Méliès' work illustrates the extent to which our eyes can be fooled, claiming that he used the non-seen as the basis of the production of appearance. This highlights to what extent we are 'eager to perceive malleable forms.'¹⁸ Following that, Virilio exclaims, the pursuit of forms is only a pursuit of time – to the human eye details such as the moon are invisible. It is a way for Virilio to show how photography and cinema use technological effects to fill in the missing details of vision, and doing so they collapse the experience of time by attempting to force the artificial upon sight.

¹⁷ Virilio, *Aesthetics of Disappearance*, p.16

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.16

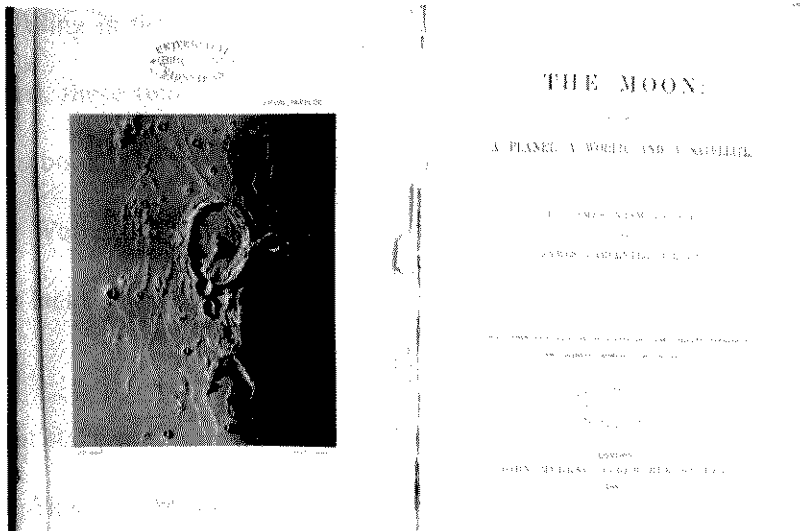


Figure 3.6 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Frontispiece "Gassendi"

The frontispiece to *The Moon* features a close-up photograph of a fabricated lunar crater, *Gassendi*, accompanied by a scale of miles, as it appeared on the '7th of November in 1867 at 10pm.' With its fictional relationship to time and place, this photograph sets the precedent for Nasmyth's prioritisation of the fabricated photographs in his book. Situating the first photograph in perfect clarity and detail, Nasmyth gets started early, when he privileges the fabrication over the real and this relationship carries through until the very last page, with fabricated photographs scattered throughout the book.

In another instance, Nasmyth included the fabricated photograph "Picture map of the moon" and situated it next to a "skeleton map of the moon".¹⁹ Here Nasmyth proves that skeletal maps do not 'pretend to be a picture.' Because of the layout of the images, there is the tendency to move from picture map and back to skeleton map as

¹⁹ Nasmyth, p.78 - 9

a way of filling in the details. To add to Nasmyth's further privileging of the fake over the real, these two maps were placed next to the only real photograph of the moon in the book. The one real photograph that Nasmyth included was taken by the astronomer Warren de la Rue, of the moon as it would appear to the naked eye. The photograph lacks any great detail and is less real than Nasmyth's fabrications.

What was at stake for Nasmyth's privileging of fabricated photographs over the real was the blurring of boundaries between nature and artifice; Nasmyth's photographs became better than the real thing. Using light as a 'carnal medium,' Nasmyth was aware of the photograph's power to suggest his physical presence on the moon. His fabrication using photography and its ability to 'trace' the original object adds another layer of accuracy and believability to the moon project. By informing the viewer that what they were seeing was indeed a fabrication, Nasmyth created friction between binaries of original and copy, real and representation, calling into question the nineteenth century definitions of these terms.²⁰

²⁰ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity*, (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1990)

The photo-map thus produced has been photographed to a size convenient for this work; and in order to make it available for the identification of such objects—namely lunar craters—as we may have occasion to refer to, we have prepared a classified comp. (p. 79) which includes the most conspicuous objects of that nature. The programme numbers in the numbered list refer to the skeleton map on page 19, and the descriptions of the objects to which they are attached will be found on pp. 62...100.

1. Arago	21. Piazzi	41. Beer
2. Beer	22. Riccioli	42. Campanus
3. Birt	23. Riccioli	43. Riccioli
4. Birt	24. Riccioli	44. Riccioli
5. Birt	25. Riccioli	45. Riccioli
6. Birt	26. Riccioli	46. Riccioli
7. Birt	27. Riccioli	47. Riccioli
8. Birt	28. Riccioli	48. Riccioli
9. Birt	29. Riccioli	49. Riccioli
10. Birt	30. Riccioli	50. Riccioli
11. Birt	31. Riccioli	51. Riccioli
12. Birt	32. Riccioli	52. Riccioli
13. Birt	33. Riccioli	53. Riccioli
14. Birt	34. Riccioli	54. Riccioli
15. Birt	35. Riccioli	55. Riccioli
16. Birt	36. Riccioli	56. Riccioli
17. Birt	37. Riccioli	57. Riccioli
18. Birt	38. Riccioli	58. Riccioli
19. Birt	39. Riccioli	59. Riccioli
20. Birt	40. Riccioli	60. Riccioli
21. Birt	41. Riccioli	61. Riccioli
22. Birt	42. Riccioli	62. Riccioli
23. Birt	43. Riccioli	63. Riccioli
24. Birt	44. Riccioli	64. Riccioli
25. Birt	45. Riccioli	65. Riccioli
26. Birt	46. Riccioli	66. Riccioli
27. Birt	47. Riccioli	67. Riccioli
28. Birt	48. Riccioli	68. Riccioli
29. Birt	49. Riccioli	69. Riccioli
30. Birt	50. Riccioli	70. Riccioli
31. Birt	51. Riccioli	71. Riccioli
32. Birt	52. Riccioli	72. Riccioli
33. Birt	53. Riccioli	73. Riccioli
34. Birt	54. Riccioli	74. Riccioli
35. Birt	55. Riccioli	75. Riccioli
36. Birt	56. Riccioli	76. Riccioli
37. Birt	57. Riccioli	77. Riccioli
38. Birt	58. Riccioli	78. Riccioli
39. Birt	59. Riccioli	79. Riccioli
40. Birt	60. Riccioli	80. Riccioli
41. Birt	61. Riccioli	81. Riccioli
42. Birt	62. Riccioli	82. Riccioli
43. Birt	63. Riccioli	83. Riccioli
44. Birt	64. Riccioli	84. Riccioli
45. Birt	65. Riccioli	85. Riccioli
46. Birt	66. Riccioli	86. Riccioli
47. Birt	67. Riccioli	87. Riccioli
48. Birt	68. Riccioli	88. Riccioli
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51. Birt	71. Riccioli	91. Riccioli
52. Birt	72. Riccioli	92. Riccioli
53. Birt	73. Riccioli	93. Riccioli
54. Birt	74. Riccioli	94. Riccioli
55. Birt	75. Riccioli	95. Riccioli
56. Birt	76. Riccioli	96. Riccioli
57. Birt	77. Riccioli	97. Riccioli
58. Birt	78. Riccioli	98. Riccioli
59. Birt	79. Riccioli	99. Riccioli
60. Birt	80. Riccioli	100. Riccioli

1. Arago	101. Beer	201. Riccioli
2. Beer	102. Riccioli	202. Riccioli
3. Birt	103. Riccioli	203. Riccioli
4. Birt	104. Riccioli	204. Riccioli
5. Birt	105. Riccioli	205. Riccioli
6. Birt	106. Riccioli	206. Riccioli
7. Birt	107. Riccioli	207. Riccioli
8. Birt	108. Riccioli	208. Riccioli
9. Birt	109. Riccioli	209. Riccioli
10. Birt	110. Riccioli	210. Riccioli
11. Birt	111. Riccioli	211. Riccioli
12. Birt	112. Riccioli	212. Riccioli
13. Birt	113. Riccioli	213. Riccioli
14. Birt	114. Riccioli	214. Riccioli
15. Birt	115. Riccioli	215. Riccioli
16. Birt	116. Riccioli	216. Riccioli
17. Birt	117. Riccioli	217. Riccioli
18. Birt	118. Riccioli	218. Riccioli
19. Birt	119. Riccioli	219. Riccioli
20. Birt	120. Riccioli	220. Riccioli
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26. Birt	126. Riccioli	226. Riccioli
27. Birt	127. Riccioli	227. Riccioli
28. Birt	128. Riccioli	228. Riccioli
29. Birt	129. Riccioli	229. Riccioli
30. Birt	130. Riccioli	230. Riccioli
31. Birt	131. Riccioli	231. Riccioli
32. Birt	132. Riccioli	232. Riccioli
33. Birt	133. Riccioli	233. Riccioli
34. Birt	134. Riccioli	234. Riccioli
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41. Birt	141. Riccioli	241. Riccioli
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43. Birt	143. Riccioli	243. Riccioli
44. Birt	144. Riccioli	244. Riccioli
45. Birt	145. Riccioli	245. Riccioli
46. Birt	146. Riccioli	246. Riccioli
47. Birt	147. Riccioli	247. Riccioli
48. Birt	148. Riccioli	248. Riccioli
49. Birt	149. Riccioli	249. Riccioli
50. Birt	150. Riccioli	250. Riccioli
51. Birt	151. Riccioli	251. Riccioli
52. Birt	152. Riccioli	252. Riccioli
53. Birt	153. Riccioli	253. Riccioli
54. Birt	154. Riccioli	254. Riccioli
55. Birt	155. Riccioli	255. Riccioli
56. Birt	156. Riccioli	256. Riccioli
57. Birt	157. Riccioli	257. Riccioli
58. Birt	158. Riccioli	258. Riccioli
59. Birt	159. Riccioli	259. Riccioli
60. Birt	160. Riccioli	260. Riccioli

The strong family likeness prevailing throughout the moon's surface is manifestly in conformity with the general character of the moon's surface, which is everywhere of the same nature, and of the same height or depth. We have, however, thought that a few remarks upon the subject would not be out of place.

Figure 3.7 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Accompanying table to "Skeleton-map of the Moon" listing names of known moon craters, pp. 80-81

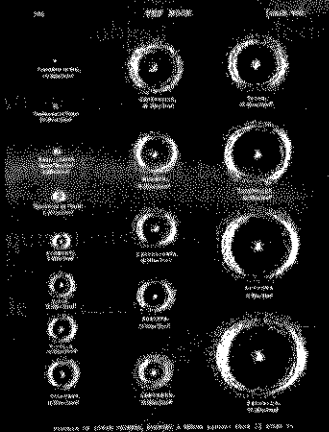


Figure 3.8 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, "Diagram of lunar craters, forming a series ranging from 13/4 miles to 78 miles in diameter, all containing central cones, p106

When Michel Foucault wrote *The Order of Things* he claimed 'man is an invention of recent date,' adding, 'and one perhaps nearing its end.'²¹ He attributed this to the seventeenth century construction of an idea of humanisation within a violent reordering of nature and its systems.²² Ordering social bodies through the same

²¹ Foucault, p.422
²² ibid, p. 132

Linnaean method as natural science first proposed, Foucault's greatest fear was that if:

those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility – were to cause them to crumble ... then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea...²³

The event of the death of man according to Foucault would paradoxically be caused by the subject's very desire to represent itself, to see itself reflected in an image. Attributing this to the desire for order and classification according to the logic of the Same, Foucault believes that the 'knowledge of identities, differences, characters, equivalents, words' will disappear as sight is privileged as the means of identification.

In his critique of the visual, Foucault summed up what would pave the way for postmodernity and the society of the spectacle. Turning the world into an image would mean the vanishing of the human in the age of representation. This, he believed, was best illustrated in the archetypal post-modern character, Don Quixote. Quixote goes travelling out into the world after only ever having read about it in novels, and is imprisoned in the artifices of representation, experiencing everything in relation to what he read in books.

²³ *ibid*, p. 132

Foucault dedicated his theoretical concerns to the privileging of the visual and the births of cultural institutions and inventions in a variety of books.²⁴ In the *Order of Things*, Foucault was concerned with the ordering of the world and the invention of man through the way that natural history (primarily Linnaeus' system for classification) set up isolated systems which imposed order on the natural, visible world, and reduced it to groups based on similarities and differences. Foucault wrote that it was the desire 'to find a new way of connecting things both to the eye and to discourse'²⁵ which characterised the discipline. To Foucault, the setting up of archives, inventories and catalogues illustrated the desire to establish an order of the same onto nature, which to him represented a 'new way of making history' in the seventeenth and nineteenth century. These systems paved the way, he believed, to the culture of the panopticon, the creation of stereotypes through visual means of identification as a means of acquiring knowledge and control in institutions of power to this day.

John Tagg was the first photographic theorist to adopt Foucault's theories and apply them to photography. Because photography's birth coincided with the rise of the institution, it fostered the dominance of the visual regime. Claiming that photography needed these institutions to circulate, it is through these hegemonies that photography is given its identity. For Tagg, photography is given its currency through these institutions, and it therefore has no identity, history or meaning of its

²⁴ For instance, *Madness and Civilization :A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (London: Routledge, 2001), *The Will to Knowledge: History of Sexuality I* (London: Penguin, 1976)

²⁵ Foucault, p. 143

own.²⁶ In this light, a critique of photography would also be a critique of the power institutions which enable it to circulate. For Tagg, following Foucault, the photograph is not neutral. For example, Tagg asks, in what context would a photograph of the Loch Ness Monster, or a UFO be believable? By drawing attention to the coding of particular photographs, Tagg draws on Foucault's criticism that vision is a cultural construction.

When Nasmyth began systematically drawing every lunar crater on the moon, he was complying with the task of natural history to establish relationships between what he saw through his telescope and what he was fabricating. Using the currency of the taxonomical system established by natural science, Nasmyth said 'the strong family likeness pervading the craters of the moon renders it unnecessary that we should attempt a description of each of them or even of one in twenty.'²⁷ In Nasmyth's terms this evidence went 'beyond words,'²⁸ and presented visual facts in place of descriptions. But Nasmyth's collection of fabricated lunar craters illustrated the fragility of the Linnaean system, whose authority is given currency through the integrity of information within it. In this case, Nasmyth's work is like a mermaid in the curiosity cabinet, a fantastic creation inserted into the gaps of the classifying imagination.

²⁶ Tagg, "The Currency of the Photograph," in *Thinking Photography*, p. 117

²⁷ Nasmyth, p 120

²⁸ Nasmyth, *James Nasmyth Engineer: An Autobiography*, (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1883), p. vii

But the great paradox of Nasmyth's attempt to illustrate the landscape of the moon is very similar to Don Quixote's entrapment in the self-referential loop of his represented world. Nasmyth was by no means the fool who lived in a world of books that Don Quixote was; yet the way he pictured the moon can be seen as being caught in the endless cycle of presentation and representation that Foucault pointed out in Don Quixote. Nowhere is this revealed more than at the end of Nasmyth's book, when he discusses the moon as a world. Stepping out of his fabricated photographs and into his imagination to represent what was obstructed through his telescope, Nasmyth was unable to picture the moon as a new place. This was how he described it:

While earnestly studying the details of the moon's surface, it was a source of great additional interest to me to endeavour to realise in the mind's eye the possible landscape effect of their marvellous elevations and depressions ... I endeavoured to illustrate the landscape scenery of the Moon, in like manner as we illustrate the landscape scenery of the Earth.²⁹

What Nasmyth was suggesting was that to imagine the moon's surface in his 'mind's eye,' he had to liken the moon to a landscape that he knew. Identification was linked to vision, and it was the very source of his problem of representing the moon as an original landscape, without any analogy. When Nasmyth published *The Moon*, for example, he claimed that he was 'describing scenes that never have been

²⁹ Nasmyth, *Autobiography*, pp. 333-334

such in the literal sense of the word, since no eye has ever beheld them.’³⁰ The problem with his attempt to identify and subsequently illustrate the landscape of the moon like a landscape of the Earth shows that he was already caught in the problem of identifying the original landscape.

Up until now, this chapter has explained that Nasmyth’s fabrication of photographs was led by a desire to travel to the moon, and to create a picture map. It was illustrated that Nasmyth’s attempts to identify and classify the moon fitted in to nineteenth century natural history, which has come under critique by theorists such as Foucault for its ‘invention of man’ according to an order of the same. We have seen how postmodernist frameworks can be brought to Nasmyth and his privileging of the fabrication over the real. Likewise, Nasmyth’s picturing of the landscape of the Moon – which he had never actually seen – like a landscape of the Earth can also be seen to resemble theories of hyperreality that propose that we are trapped in an endless ‘precession of simulacra.’³¹ What we have not explored is why Nasmyth did this, how he had to come to terms with materialising what he saw in his telescope, and how this reflects the nineteenth century’s changing views of nature. From there, the chapter will return again to the issue of fabrication and Foucault’s critique of vision and classification.

³⁰ *ibid*, p.152

³¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1994), p.1

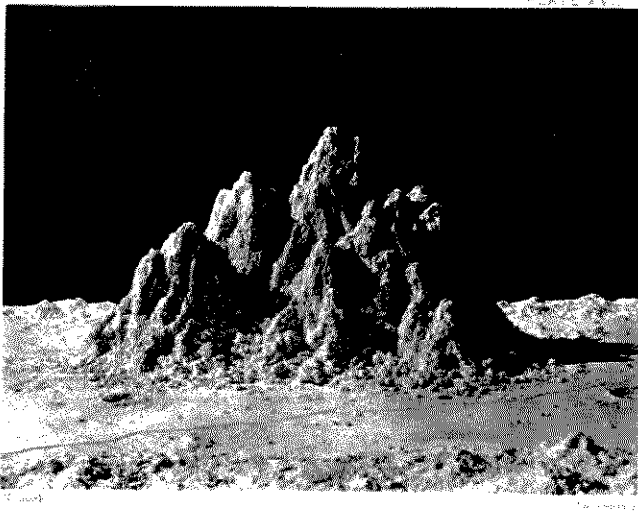


Figure 3.9 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*, Plate XVII, "An ideal sketch of 'Pico' an isolated mountain 8000 feet high as it would probably appear if seen by a spectator", 1874

Martin Jay describes the telescope, amongst other inventions such as the microscope and the camera obscura, as being 'instrumental – in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense – in fostering the Cartesian perspectivalist regime so dominant in most of the modern era.'³² In saying that optical instruments such as the telescope fostered the perspectivalist regime, Jay means that such instruments positioned the 'observer' within a particular position. In painting, or in photography this single point perspective is subsequently displaced onto the viewer, perpetuating a way of looking out at the world as if through a window.

At the same time, instruments like the telescope and the microscope also prevented the rest of the body from experiencing the world, and established a connection solely

³² Jay, pp.135 - 136

between the eye and the mind.³³ The telescope formed the connection between Nasmyth's eyes and the moon, yet it also drew awareness to the impossibility of his other senses experiencing, touching, or hearing the landscape. This was how he described it:

A legitimate extension of the imagination leads us to impressions of lunar conditions upon other senses than that of sight, to which we have hitherto confined our fancy. We are met at the outset with a difficulty in this extension; for it is impossible to conceive the sensations which the absence of an atmosphere would produce upon the most important bodily functions.³⁴

For Nasmyth, the telescope brought about an awareness of his mortality causing him to realise that he could only observe and not experience the landscape. This therefore confined him to seeing in a particular way, and therefore optical instruments like the telescope perpetuated a way of seeing the world through the confines of a frame.

Similarly, Henry Talbot's use of the camera lucida also fostered his desire to capture the landscape based on how he had drawn it: his view of nature was equally confused by the optical instrument. This recalls Owens' comments on the *mise en abyme*, discussed in the introduction to this paper, that the photograph, the camera, fosters a way of looking at reality based on representation. This was of the utmost importance for Nasmyth to facilitate his journey to the moon, the desire to see what it looked like, to see the moon as if it were a picture.

³³ See Catherine Wilson, *Descartes's Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

³⁴ Nasmyth, *The Moon*, p. 188

How Nasmyth had to materialise the moon to make it real

Part of the problem with using an instrument like the telescope was the question of whether or not one could trust that the view through the telescope did indeed exist. Scholars such as Hillel Schwarz and Margaret Wertheim state that astronomers who looked through their telescopes at distant landscapes had to initially believe that what they saw through their telescopes was material and physical beyond what their eyes could see.³⁵ They claim that they had to trust that what they were seeing through a telescope was not an optical illusion, but something positive. Moreover, astronomers had to transform their perception of light, and abandon the double image of light as sensational or psychic and focus on light as a physical entity. Sight had to be physical, which meant shifting the theological perception of light to a positive perception of light.³⁶

In the words of Wertheim, it would be impossible to ‘even dream of treading on the lunar surface until we had firstly come to see the moon as a physical place.’ She explains how astronomers *conceived* of the moon as a physical place by referring to the astrophysicist Johannes Kepler in the seventeenth century.³⁷ Kepler, who wrote about an imaginary voyage to the moon, described the moon as instrumentally similar to the planet Earth, with mountains, foliage, rivers and reptiles that were like

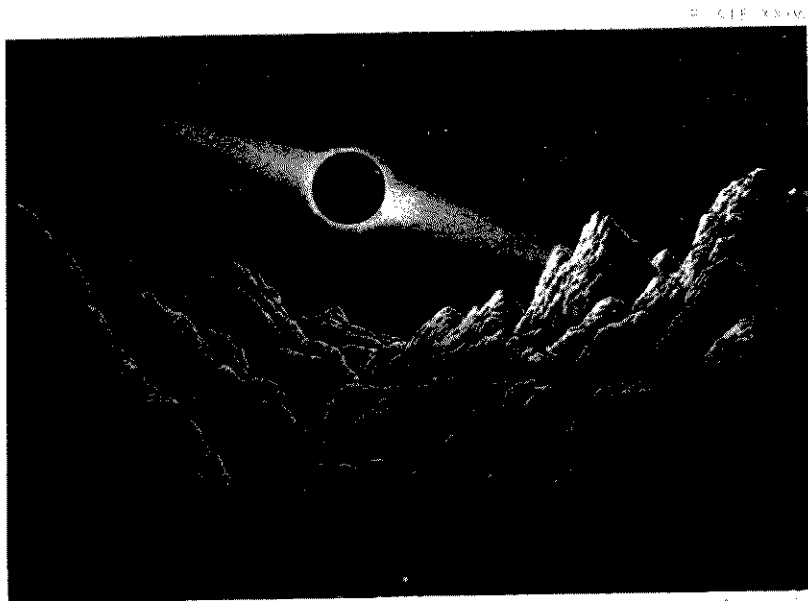
³⁵ Wertheim, *Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*, pp.139 - 142. See also Schwarz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*, p.182

³⁶ Prior to the age of the Scientific Revolution, astral bodies were considered to be part of the dual realm between heaven and earth. See Wertheim, pp.33 – 34, ‘medieval Christian World Picture encompassed both a physical and a spiritual order. A crucial element of this cosmology was that the two orders mirrored one another, and in both cases humanity was at the center ... humanity was at the centre of an invisible spiritual order.’

³⁷ Wertheim, p. 139

humans. Kepler's description of the moon was not about preserving the conventions of *pictorial* presentation; Kepler had to refer back to the known in order to conceive of the new and undiscovered. According to Wertheim, that was the moment that mankind landed on the moon, when it ceased to be a 'celestial' space and became positive and scientific.

Nasmyth's attempts to materialise what he saw through the telescope, and imagine the moon as a landscape of the Earth, were not unlike Kepler's likening of the moon to the Earth. Rather than present 'new' images of the uncharted lunar landscape, Nasmyth chose to use the codes of an already long established pictorial tradition that served to illustrate that the moon was once a volcano like the earth. For Nasmyth to conceive of the moon, he had to see it and therefore turn it into an image; in this sense, drawings, models and photographs helped Nasmyth to turn seeing into knowing.



ASPECT OF AN ECLIPSE OF THE SUN BY THE EARTH AS IT WOULD APPEAR
AS SEEN FROM THE MOON.

Figure 3.10 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*. Plate XXIV, "Aspect of an eclipse of the sun by the earth as it would appear as seen from the moon", 1874

Landscape and the picturesque

It is worth mentioning here that Nasmyth's father, Sir David Wilkie, was the founder of landscape painting in Scotland. Nasmyth's drawing skills came from his father, and so too is the book dedicated to the memory of him.³⁸ It is interesting that Nasmyth chose to represent the moon using the technique of landscape painting, given that he wanted so much to travel there. It was also a fundamental belief of Nasmyth that drawing was the education of the eye, and that it went beyond language.³⁹ However, in order to educate his eye Nasmyth had to disengage his eye from his body because the thought of his body in the landscape was 'impossible to conceive.' Before we go on establishing the relationship between Nasmyth, vision

³⁸ Nasmyth, *Autobiography*, vii.

³⁹ Nasmyth, *Autobiography*, vii

and the landscape, let's consider Nasmyth in the context of the period of the nineteenth century and its shifting approach to nature.



Figure 3.11 Sir David Wilkie, *A Woody Landscape*, 1822 from Tate Modern website:
<http://213.121.208.204/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=16178&searchid=12823>

In the nineteenth century, landscape painting adhered to a set of codes known as the picturesque. Nasmyth essentially utilised this tradition in his drawings of the moon. The picturesque tradition was a way of seeing and representing the landscape in formal conventions of framing, which was a way of appreciating nature as if it were a painting.⁴⁰ The theory of the picturesque was based on the idea that nature presents itself as a picture. By picturing nature within the confines of a frame, nature appears neat and tame at a particular distance and a perspective. The picturesque presents nature as a static image, always the same.

⁴⁰ Allen Carlson, "Aesthetic Appreciation of the Natural Environment," in ed. Susan Feagin and Patrick Maynard, *Aesthetics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p.32

It was established by Rosalind Krauss when she wrote on the myth of originality in modernism that the idea of landscape was a paradox that collapsed the divide between original and copy. According to Krauss, there is no such thing as originality, with all landscape being a re-presentation of a previous landscape. On landscape painting, Krauss stated that 'landscape becomes a reduplication,' it is no longer singular. For Krauss, the landscape is a copy of a copy, disturbing the myth of originality.⁴¹ Like the chicken or the egg, Nasmyth's picturing of the 'original' landscape of the moon illustrates Krauss' theory. Following Krauss, Craig Owens' theory of the *mise en abyme* is also reflected in this notion of reduplication, which we established in the introduction. The reduplication of the picturesque mode informs the way we see and perceive reality, which becomes 'something of a giant photograph.'

Historically, the notion of the picturesque was not always about conventions but about substituting the pleasing view of the landscape with the subjective emotion it triggered in the viewer.⁴² In this way, the picturesque could be seen in romantic terms as the representation of the metaphysical and the intangible through the image of nature.

⁴¹ Rosalind Krauss, *Originality of the Avant Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981) p 162.

⁴² Carlson, p. 32



Figure 3.12 John Constable, *Noon at the Hay Wain*, 1821 from <http://www.abcgallery.com/C/constable/constable15.html>

The British landscape painter John Constable wrote in the nineteenth century that the landscape was full of religious and moral feeling.⁴³ His landscape paintings, for instance *Noon at the Hay Wain* (1821) (fig. 3.12), rendered in great detail the chiaroscuro effects on the landscape, painting the effects of light on the water, and the fields in the distance mirroring the clouds which are painted in the sky. In Constable's paintings simple imagery conjured up feelings of the heavenly and the sublime that illustrate the influence of romanticism. When Nasmyth went to great lengths to describe his process of placing his models out in the sunlight to photograph them as a way of achieving natural effects of light and shadow on the landscape, he could be seen as complying with this landscape tradition of rendering light as part of the picturesque.

⁴³ R.B. Beckett, *John Constable's Discourses* Ipswich: Suffolk Records Society, Vol.XIV, from *Art in Theory*, p. 127

It has also been pointed out by Geoffrey Batchen that the picturesque was a standard of representation that prompted the desire to photograph. He points out that the early vocabulary of photography such as *view*, *prospect* and *effect* mirror the picturesque tradition in a way that suggests that the photograph was conceived through the picturesque.⁴⁴ Batchen uses the picturesque as a way of illustrating the emergence of the desire to photograph. He claims that the picturesque was responsible for stirring up the desire to capture nature through the use of drawing instruments like the camera lucida, which promoted drawing and painting within the conventions of the landscape genre.

Having established that the picturesque was tangled in the idea of nature, Batchen refers to the picturesque as part of the shifting framework of nineteenth century positivism and romanticism. Both of these movements had very different views on what nature was and what it represented. Nature had many meanings, which could be applied to aesthetic, intellectual, spiritual, and religious uses.⁴⁵ Nasmyth's documentation of the moon, which he regarded as nature, illustrates this crisis and like we saw with Talbot in the previous chapter, nature for Nasmyth was a complicated term that came to affect the way that he looked at the moon, and represented it using photography and drawing.⁴⁶ According to Batchen, the picturing

⁴⁴ See Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, pp. 71 – 78

⁴⁵ For a reading of Nature in the context of nineteenth century America which is not dissimilar to this, see Eduardo Cadava, *Emerson and the Climates of History*, (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997) for an analysis of Emerson's application of nature to language and history.

⁴⁶ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Croom Helm, 1976)

of nature, or geology 'came to be synonymous with the rapid expansion of time itself.'⁴⁷

Poetry and science in Nasmyth's *Moon*

The introduction to the chapter noted how the shift in definitions of nature changed in the period of the nineteenth century, and our aim has been to see how fabrications of photographs reflected the milieu from which photography was borne, to understand the desire to see and know. A reading of Nasmyth is a framework for illustrating the shifting philosophies of the mid-nineteenth century between the logic of positivism and romanticism. In this section, I will attempt to show that Nasmyth's view of the moon combined both the conflicting philosophies of positive science and the poetic that was reflected in his fabrication, which illuminates what he saw in photography. Before we go on, definitions of what is positively scientific and poetic about Nasmyth's work need to be clarified.

Auguste Comte originally presented the philosophy of positivism as the synthesis of science with philosophy.⁴⁸ Having believed that the dissatisfaction of culture was both a cause and effect of romanticism in the French Revolution, Comte rejected what he considered to be the prevalent romantic philosophy's focus on the intangible and immaterial. As such, positivism separates knowledge into three

⁴⁷ Batchen, p. 59

⁴⁸ Positivism has now developed into the movement of sociology. Whilst Comte was French, his works were brought over from France by John Stuart Mill see *Mill's Essays on Literature and Society* Ed. J.B. Schneewind, (London: Macmillan, 1965) and Kenneth Thompson, *Auguste Comte: The Foundation of Sociology*, (London: NELSON, 1976); see also *The correspondence of John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte*, trans. Oscar A. Haac, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1995)

stages, the theological (fictitious), the metaphysical, and the scientific or, the positive. This recalls Kepler's attempts to turn the imagined space of the moon into a visible one as a way of making it materialise. Positivism rejects the uncertainties of metaphysics, claiming that anything outside the realm of the visible is doubtful and does not exist. Positivism regarded the visible as the highest form of knowledge and as such it moved away from metaphysics and romanticism.⁴⁹ The movement peaked in popularity in the mid-nineteenth century in Britain, and most certainly influenced John Herschel, the astronomer and good friend of Nasmyth and Henry Talbot.⁵⁰

Photography critic Carol Armstrong believes that the photo-mediated illustrations in *The Moon* are an exemplification of Comte's positivistic mode.⁵¹ She states that 'positivism's narrative tabular natural method, with its emphasis on observation, experiment and comparison ... may be seen to constitute a kind of formula for the phototextual configurations of the photographically illustrated book,' such as *The Moon*.⁵² Armstrong claims that it was Nasmyth's focus on observation, his experimental attempts to show the reader what the moon looked like as a photograph and his comparison between telescope and camera that made his work positivistic. Critical of his fetishistic use of the photographic medium's truth effect, Armstrong likens Nasmyth's task to photographer Garry Winogrand who surreptitiously

⁴⁹ Grady "Philosophy and Photography in the Nineteenth Century: A Note on the Matter of Influence" from *Reading Into Photography: 1959 -- 1980* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1982), p. 145. For an in depth discussion on the move from positivism to utilitarianism see JS Mill *Mill's Essays on Literature and Society* who claimed that positivism ultimately had in mind the good will and happiness of society.

⁵⁰ See Victoria Olsen, *From Life Julia Margaret Cameron and Victorian Photography*, (London: Aurum Press, 2003) p.36

⁵¹ Armstrong, p.76

⁵² *ibid*, p. 18

photographed attractive women 'to see what things look like as photographs.'⁵³

Focusing on Nasmyth's objectification of nature to prove that his project was positivistic, Armstrong does not address how Nasmyth's work moves away from metaphysics, or how it is paradoxically tied to both the romantic and the positive; which was a strangely complicated entanglement of desire, metaphysics, nature and artifice.

When Nasmyth described his motivations for making the moon, he stated:

I cannot find words to express the thoughts which the impressive grandeurs of the Stars, seen in the silence of the night, suggested to me; especially when I directed my Telescope, even at random, on any portion of the clear sky, and considered that each Star of the multitude it revealed to me, was a SUN! the centre of a system! Myriads of such stars, invisible to the unassisted eye, were rendered perfectly distinct by the aid of the telescope ... Nothing can convey to the mind, in so awful and impressive a manner, the magnificence and infinite extent of Creation, and the inconceivable power of its Creator!⁵⁴

From this statement it is clear that Nasmyth felt an overwhelming sensation when observing the expansion of the universe, and creation. What he saw in his telescope were an infinite number of solar systems, and his recognition of the Burkean sublime

⁵³ Armstrong was likening Nasmyth's project to Garry Winogrand's street photographs of girls who he shot from the hip, which when probed as to the nature of his motivations for doing so, said 'I photograph to see what things look like as photographs.'

⁵⁴ Nasmyth, *Autobiography*, p. 324.

had materialised in time and infinity.⁵⁵ His project was thus in part a psychological grappling with creation, the universe and the expanse of it. What Nasmyth saw in the moon wasn't the moon, but time itself. It is in this way that Nasmyth's project could be seen as romantic. Romantics saw creation as 'an emanation on the model of rays of light sent out from the sun, and the mind as a projector of these images,' which is implied in Nasmyth's statement.⁵⁶ The romantics thought of optics as being predominantly about spirituality, the imagination and nature and were not at all materially led.⁵⁷ This is most evident in the way that Nasmyth presented the lunar landscape with the effects of light and shade

John Herschel & the magnet

James Nasmyth is best understood in the context of John Herschel, his friend and colleague. Herschel had written a number of books on Natural Philosophy and it is well worth noting that James Nasmyth's original idea to produce *The Moon* came from the advice of Herschel.⁵⁸ Understanding Herschel illuminates Nasmyth's views of nature and his visual approach to documenting the moon.

Classifying nature into groups was, for Herschel, the fundamental objective of Natural History. As a devout follower of Francis Bacon, Herschel believed that nature was there to be controlled, ordered and *seen*. As Herschel put it, it was up to mankind to disentangle the 'confused and interwoven mass of nature that represent

⁵⁵ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958)

⁵⁶ Jay, p.108

⁵⁷ Anita Brookner, *Romanticism and its Discontents*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2001)

⁵⁸ Nasmyth, *Autobiography*, see pp.382–388

the elements of all our knowledge.’⁵⁹ In his theory, the collection and ordering of knowledge made available to mankind in the future would lead to its ultimate progress. The purpose of this rationale was to place the kingdom of ‘man’ above the rest of nature, and by establishing knowledge of the natural world it could be controlled and understood.

Herschel’s method for obtaining knowledge was spurred on by a desire for visual knowledge. To him, learning and science were synonymous with visual mapping and discovery. Herschel, who loved to travel and draw was not interested in making ‘great inroads into science.’ He wanted, in his words, to ‘loiter on the shores of the ocean of sciences and pick up such shells and pebbles ... for the pleasure of arranging them and seeing them look pretty.’⁶⁰

Herschel also sang the praise of photography and its ability to group things together. For instance, to describe the photographic production of the calotype, Herschel used the terms positive and negative – terms that he borrowed from electromagnetism⁶¹. An organic compound made from silver, Herschel described the photograph as a magnet itself. Even in his *Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*, Herschel described particles of light as ‘a sort of little magnet revolving rapidly about its own centre.’⁶² This theme of magnetism comes through in

⁵⁹ John Herschel, *Preliminary Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*, (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1833), p. 166

⁶⁰ Herschel, as cited in Günter Buttman *Shadow of the Telescope*, (Lutterworth Press, Guildford and London) p.56

⁶¹ See Batchen, pp. 152 - 155

⁶² cited in Batchen, p. 154

Herschel's theories of collection, Natural Philosophy, astronomy, and photography. His first photographs, for example were of a forty-foot long telescope.⁶³ That he repeatedly pointed his camera to a device that was instrumental in bringing the distant into closer proximity, Herschel's photographs characterised his 'magnetic' theory and belief that photography had brought together science and art, the imagination and geography.⁶⁴

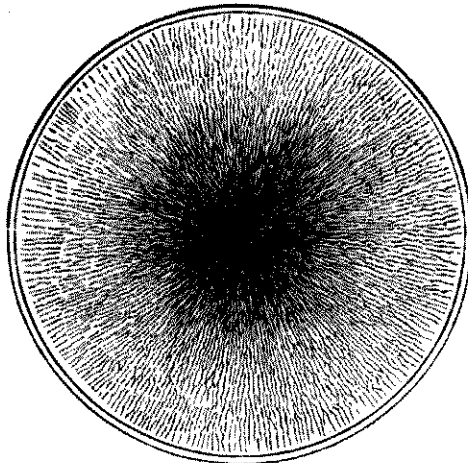


FIG. 1.

Figure 3.13 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, diagram illustrating the effects of cooling iron filings, *The Moon*, p.21

By conducting experiments by melting and cooling iron, Nasmyth observed that when iron begins to cool in a pot, it accumulates in a patch with most of the metal converging from the circumference into the middle, like magnets drawing together. Based on the observations from this and similar experiments, Nasmyth drew similarities between the flowing and cooling of lava in what he pictured as a

⁶³ Herschel took the same photograph several times.

⁶⁴ Olsen, *From Life*, pp. 36 – 49

volcanic eruption on the lunar crater Mount Vesuvius in 1864, and the formation of craters on the moon, coming to the conclusion that the moon was itself once a big volcano. Volcanoes were what made the earth and the moon similar, yet different in age.

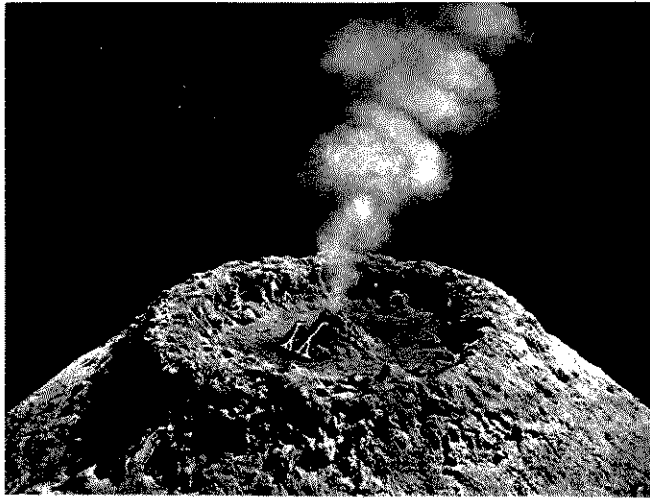


Figure 3.14 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, *The Moon*. Plate I, "Crater of Mount Vesuvius 1864", 1874

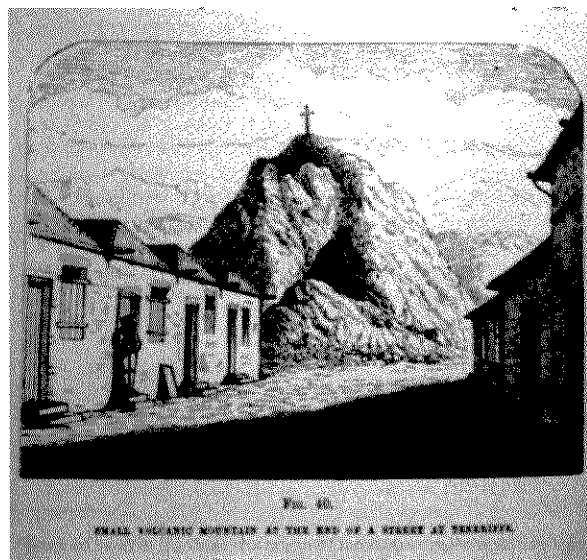
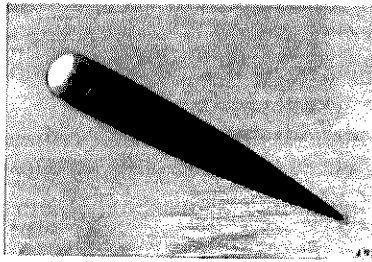


Figure 3.15 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, "Small Volcanic Mountain at the End of A Street at Teneriffe," from *The Moon*, p.146

It is in this section of the book where Nasmyth's attempts to reconcile science and the romantic are best illustrated by drawing the two together, like Herschel's magnet. Here, Nasmyth went to great lengths to domesticate the vastness of the lunar landscape, and bring it closer in visible similarity to the earth. Using the tactility of objects as a substitute for the moon, he infers meaning onto objects which are then photographed, establishing a relationship between the big and the small. Nasmyth drew similarities between the surface of the moon and the wrinkles on the back of a hand to illustrate 'the origin of certain mountain ranges resulting from shrinkage of the interior,'⁶⁵ and he used the wrinkle as an analogy to describe mountains on the face of the moon. This section also features a photograph of a decaying shrivelled apple as a way of illustrating the formation of mountain ranges. Again, Nasmyth compares the unchanging surface of the moon to the organic by including a diagram of the shadow cast by half a pea to illustrate light falling on the moon (fig. 3.16).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Nasmyth, *The Moon*, Plate II, "Back of hand to illustrate the origin of mountain ranges resulting from the shrinkage of the interior", and Plate III, "Shrivelled Apple to illustrate the origin of mountain ranges resulting from the shrinkage of the interior of the globe"

⁶⁶ Nasmyth, *The Moon*, p.147



F.g. 11.

Figure 3.16 James Nasmyth and James Carpenter, "Copy of an actual photograph of the shadow cast by half a pea", from *The Moon*, p.147

In what could be seen as a beautiful yet failed attempt to categorise the moon within the order of the domestic, Nasmyth tried to provide the link between the earth and the heavens. However, resemblance can't convey the similarity as Nasmyth uses the most remotely related objects to compare to the moon such as an apple and mountain, half a pea and so on. Doing this, Nasmyth only draws attention to differences. Demonstrating that what happens when an apple shrivels is similar to the formation of mountains on the moon, fails to do so because there is more that is different between the moon and the apple than there is the same. His project only draws attention to the absurdity and impossibility of the task at hand.

It is no stretch to see the influence of Herschel over Nasmyth's attempts to visually bring the moon closer to the earth. Nasmyth's collection of fabricated photographs, drawings, and superimposition of the traditional picturesque landscape onto the moon recalls Herschel's magnet theory, his positive/negative labelling of the photograph and his pledges that photography had brought together the imagination

and geography and, art and science.⁶⁷ By drawing relationships between Herschel's view of photography as a complicated term that encompasses both positive and negative, I am calling into question what Nasmyth thought about using photography and power to create truths, to create landscapes; calling into question what Nasmyth believed to be the photograph's relationship to the artificial and the natural, the visible and the invisible and so on. On a greater scale, Nasmyth's photographic project can also be seen to reflect Herschel's theory of magnetism in its grouping together of like upon like objects. This confusion of terms illustrated in Nasmyth through Herschel calls into question the traditional currencies of photography to illustrate truth, to construct space and to illustrate time.

Nasmyth and contemporary issues

Positivism is a major influence in Foucault's research, and Comte is at the heart of Foucault's *Order of Things*. According to Martin Jay, the pertinence of the visual in Foucault's work could be seen as 'inaugurating the spatializing logic of postmodernism.'⁶⁸ Jay believes that Foucault's work and critique of the society of the panopticon set the scene for postmodern critics of the 'society of the spectacle,' such as Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio to critique the gaze in the context of its construction of social spaces and the spectacle.⁶⁹ However Jay, following Michel de Certeau, has questioned to what end Foucault's focus on the visual failed to see just

⁶⁷ James R. Ryan, *Picturing empire: photography and the visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1997) p.7

⁶⁸ Jay, p.385

⁶⁹ Jean Baudrillard. *Forget Foucault*, (New York: Semiotext, 1987)

how other 'micropractises' of everyday life subvert the power of the gaze. He asks, 'Can Foucault himself be said to have offered a visual antidote?'⁷⁰

Tales, according to Michel de Certeau frequently reverse the relationships of power, and are 'internal manipulations of a system.'⁷¹ Following this, de Certeau states tropes for example 'inscribe in ordinary language the ruses, displacements etc. that scientific reason has eliminated from operational discourses in order to constitute "proper meanings."⁷² What he means by this, is that by deploying stories, games, or fables that rest outside daily life to systems, certain accounts such as these turn systems on their head. This is similar to Owens' theory that reduplications have the capacity to internally organise and generate meaning within their frame, functioning as 'little museums'⁷³ within the larger structure.

I draw relationships between de Certeau's illustration of power reversal through myths, tales, legends and Nasmyth's fabrication of the lunar landscape. Nasmyth's moon project serves to challenge the authority of the classification techniques of the natural history method. Nasmyth's fictional invention of an invisible landscape serves to illustrate simultaneously what role photography serves in highlighting the investment in the faith in the eyes. Making a fictional moon in accordance with the mode of collecting based on resemblances, Nasmyth's project is an example of the photograph's simultaneous ability to construct and subvert its own construction.

⁷⁰ Jay, p.413

⁷¹ Michel de Certeau, p.23

⁷² *ibid.* p.23

⁷³ *ibid.* p.23

At the same time, Nasmyth's privilege of the simulation over the real in order to bring the distant into closer proximity, his inability to see anything like an original landscape serves to challenge the traditional identity of photography as it does the authority of institutions such as natural science. It is interesting that what prompted Nasmyth in the first place to make a picture map of the moon was the inaccuracy of previous skeletal maps. In his opinion 'a bad artist was as likely to mislead posterity as a bad historian,' which prompted him to take it upon himself to artificially create accuracy.⁷⁴ Like Talbot, that Nasmyth's definitions of terms such as accuracy, truth, and nature seemed to be interchanged with fiction and artifice also serves to illustrate the extent to which these terms were also a fundamental aspect of photographic identity.

The following chapter, *Master of the Undiscovered: Hurley's Photographs from the British Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition* investigates how photographing new landscapes in the era of exploration was informed by idealism which in turn informed Frank Hurley's ways of seeing. I take forward this chapter's theme of the myth of originality and look at how this has been generated according to the ideals of Heroism and the picturesque through Hurley's photographs from Antarctica.

⁷⁴ Nasmyth, *The Moon*, p. 78

4. MASTER OF THE UNDISCOVERED

Hurley's Photographs from the British Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition

Abstract

This chapter examines Frank Hurley's photography from Ernest Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica, 1914-16. Exploring themes such as exploration, heroism and the myth of originality, this chapter shows how Hurley's Antarctic work was formed by the ideals set up in the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration. The Shackleton expedition has served as instrumental in creating a sense of landscape and identity in the imagination of Empire and Hurley's photographs can be understood to have reflected a pattern of heroic suffering that was synonymous with Antarctic exploration. In this chapter, I draw relationships between Hurley's invention of himself as a superstar photographer and the fabrication of his photographs. I demonstrate that what came out of the gap between what he experienced in reality and ideality fostered his rise to fame. His photographs fed a hunger for photographs of the undiscovered world which then fostered a way of seeing the Antarctic landscape. Moreover, this chapter also argues that Hurley's photographs fed his national identity as both an iconic Australian photographer and the myth of masculinity. How his photographs have come to reflect the national paradigm illustrates the extent to which reality is fed by such fabrications. Drawing on the repetition of pictorial symbols and his references to the movements of 'romantic philosophy' the chapter calls into question how Hurley framed the landscape according to already established ideals, and simultaneously portrayed it as an original place.

Introduction

In 1916, Frank Hurley thanked his lucky stars he'd survived on Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition. Having spent two years trapped in Antarctica after a failed attempt to cross the continent, Shackleton and his crew lived on shifting ice floes, a sinking boat, an upturned rescue boat, and eventually made it back home. To this day, the Shackleton expedition continues to fascinate the public imagination having featured as an exhibition at the American Natural History Museum, and has now been turned into a BBC mini-series. The expedition is undeniably a legend in the history of Antarctic exploration. The Shackleton expedition boosted Hurley's reputation, making him a rock-star frontier photographer of the South Pole. Out of this expedition came three documentary-nature films, a collection of sought after photographs and a book – which made Hurley's career and paved the way for a life of adventure, travel, entertainment and exploration. However, Hurley played a false card to get there as he fabricated some of the key images from Shackleton's rescue mission.

In an era when exploration into the Antarctic was a rare occurrence, Hurley's photographs helped to produce an image of him as a showman and simultaneously helped to generate an image of heroism, and suffering which was synonymous to Antarctic exploration.¹ His photographs have been instrumental in shaping the perception of the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration by bringing photographs and

¹ Caroline Alexander, *The Endurance: Shackleton's legendary Antarctic expedition*; in association with the American Museum of Natural History (New York: Knopf, 1998)

films back from the uncharted wilderness that have been framed and constructed in a highly stylized way. With the focus on the legendary character of Frank Hurley and his role in the photographic construction of Antarctica, the chapter builds on themes explored in the earlier chapters such as the tension between truth and fiction, the paradox of vision and representation throughout photography, and the desire to see history and the faraway. Antarctic exploration began in the age of the camera, and for this reason it is of particular interest to the themes being explored in this thesis. The previous chapter on James Nasmyth illustrated his desire to use photography to explore the uncharted region of the moon, reflecting the desire for exploration in the nineteenth century. By using fabrication, Nasmyth came to terms with his distance from the moon even though he was unable to visualize its landscape without the framing devices of the picturesque. What Nasmyth's fabricated photography provided was an analogy to vision and the problem of identifying, recognizing and representing a landscape that existed in his imagination.

Critics of Frank Hurley such as Bernd Hüppauf and Robert Dixon have argued that Hurley's use of photography and film in the era of modernity, colonization and the camera served to provide audiences with a visual sense of the expansion of Empire. They say that Hurley's photographs were instrumental in building a language that affirmed in audiences a vision of the exotic and the other.² They further argue that Hurley's photography vanquished space, time and distance through his compositing

² Robert Dixon, "Pictures at an exhibition: Frank Hurley's *In the Grip of the Polar Pack Ice* (1919)", *Journal of Australian Studies* 78 (June 2003): 123(18). Bernd Hüppauf "Experiences of modern warfare and the crisis of representation," *New German Critique* 93:59 (Spring/Summer) 41(36)

and framing of photographs.³ Other critics such as Julian Thomas have also called Hurley a showman, as having misrepresented the truth, and criticized his visual colonization of foreign landscapes such as Papua New Guinea and Indigenous Australia.⁴ In this chapter I will engage with these concepts in further detail, but add that Hurley's resort to fabrication of key incidents of the Shackleton expedition were a result of photography's failure to convey the already established heroism implicit in the codes of pictorialism that were deeply embedded in the culture of exploration. I argue that Hurley sought to make his work live up to these codes in order to perpetuate himself as a photographer who could see what others could not see.

This chapter will look at the symbolism in Hurley's work and examine the pictorialist framing devices he used. Setting this context, the chapter shows that Hurley attempted to reconcile his ideas of photographic beauty, truth and the ideal with the trauma and high-drama reality of what was going on around him. As such, Hurley's photographs reveal a way of seeing the landscape based on repetitions of what images have taught audiences to see, thus reflecting the paradox of observation and discovery. In addition, the chapter explores his desire to be the one of first photographers to represent the unknown land and to be seen as adventurer, hero and pioneer through his photographs and his showmanship.

³ Robert Dixon, "The Prosthetic Imagination: Frank Hurley and the Ross Smith Flight", *Journal of Australian Studies*, 66, (2000): 1-22

⁴ Julian Thomson, *Showman: The Photography of Frank Hurley* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1990)
Jim Specht, *When the cause of science is not enough: Frank Hurley in Papua*, (Armidale: University of New England, 2003)

This chapter is ordered into two sections. The first section recounts Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition as a way of providing some context to the Era of Exploration and the imperial desire to cross the Antarctic wilderness with the camera in the name of science and knowledge. In order to do so, it adopts a narrative approach and retells the story and attempts to recreate the scene which is instrumental in providing insight into the photographs that are discussed in the following section. The second section critically analyses the photographs taken by Frank Hurley on this expedition and examines them against his writings. The section also examines the repetition of symbols in Hurley's work. Following this, the chapter looks at how other photographers have represented the Antarctic in light of Hurley.

The British Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914 –1917

"We shall die like gentlemen," were the famous last words of explorer Robert Falcon Scott before he perished in the Arctic snow.⁵ In 1911, Scott and his crew made it to the South Pole, only to find the Norwegian flag had just been raised. Regardless they raised the British flag, took photographs and died in a blizzard on the way back to base. Having lost the prestige of being the first country to make it to the South Pole, Scott's colleague, Ernest Shackleton attempted to pioneer another race for Britain.⁶ 'After hearing of the Norwegian success,' responded Shackleton, 'I began to make preparations to start a last great journey – so that the first crossing of

⁵ Alexander, p. 9

⁶ Ernest Shackleton, *South : the Endurance expedition*, (London: Penguin, 2004), p. X

the last continent should be achieved by a British expedition.’⁷ Shackleton’s idea was to stage the first crossing of the Antarctic continent, starting from the Weddell Sea and finishing at the Ross Sea, via the South Pole. Apart from its historic significance, Shackleton’s expedition was intended to be an expedition of great ‘scientific importance in the fields of geography, glaciology and geology.’⁸

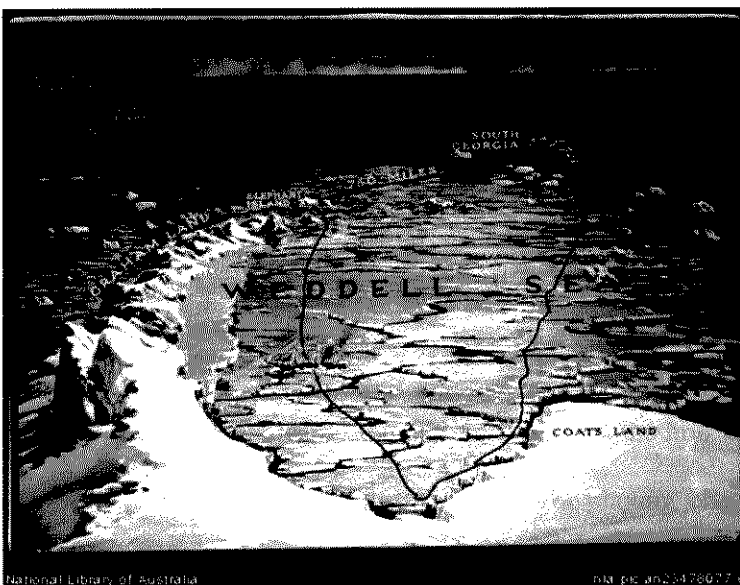


Figure 4.0 Frank Hurley, photograph of sketch by George Marston, *Map of the Weddell Sea*, Photograph, courtesy National Library of Australia (NLA PIC 244 780 77)

Shackleton was determined to perpetuate the presence of the Empire in the Antarctic after Scott. This is noted in Frank Hurley and Ernest Shackleton’s film on the expedition, *South* which states that it was a:

...story of British heroism, valour and self sacrifice in the name and cause of a country’s honour ... The doings of these men will be written in history as a glorious

⁷ Shackleton, p. XX

⁸ Shackleton, p. XX

epic of the great ice fields of the South, and will be remembered as long as our Empire exists ...⁹

Shackleton's British Imperial Trans Antarctic Expedition set out in 1914 on the announcement of the beginning of the Great War. The expedition failed before it even began when the expedition's ship, the *Endurance*, became trapped in pack ice in the frozen waters of the Weddell Sea before they even reached the mainland. They remained trapped there for a whole winter, while the tides below governed the perpetually moving layers of ice. Trapped in the ice, Hurley took hundreds of photographs of his surroundings: the ship from every angle, icebergs, the crew, and the sled dogs.

As the frozen waters began to thaw, the ice pierced the hull while Shackleton's men were sitting on board, ensconced for the night playing chess and listening to the gramophone.¹⁰ The scramble to abandon the ship in the freezing Antarctic night ensued, with the crew grabbing tents, off loading the three rescue ships, the dogs, warm clothing, some food supplies, an excerpt from the bible's Book of Job, and a cookbook.

The historian Caroline Alexander has explained that underneath the talk of scientific significance, the real objective of the expedition was to 'win it for Britain.'¹¹ She

⁹ Frank Hurley, *South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic* (National Film and Sound Archive, 1998 restored)

¹⁰ Shackleton, p. 100

¹¹ Alexander in association with the American Museum of Natural History, *The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition*, p. 5.

claims that Scott's first Antarctic trek set up a 'pattern of heroic suffering,' which was followed through with Shackleton and his race to win the Antarctic back.¹² Alexander points out that this was illustrated by both parties being ill prepared for the expeditions. Shackleton for example, ignored advice that the *Endurance* wouldn't make it through pack ice and forgot to take worming tablets for the sled dogs.¹³ For Alexander, heroism was an implicit part of Antarctic adventure, along with suffering and Empire.

When the ship went down and the mad scramble to get all crew and dogs off the boat ensued, the photographs were the last priority. But as Hurley put it, 'a large sum of money had been advanced against the motion picture rights to help finance the Expedition and these were the assets.'¹⁴ So the legend goes, Frank Hurley returned to the ship the following morning while it was sinking and rescued his four hundred glass plate negatives from the freezing waters of the Weddell Sea. Hurley in what he refers to as a 'painful hour,' chose one hundred and fifty of these photographs and smashed the rest. Hurley was down to a hand held camera and two rolls of film.¹⁵

¹² *ibid*, pp. 5 – 6

¹³ Alexander, p.5-6

¹⁴ Hurley, *Argonauts of the South* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1925) p. 196

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 196



Figure 4.1 Frank Hurley, *In the pride of her youth, the Endurance breasting the Antarctic ice packs at the outset of the Shackleton expedition, 1914-1916*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (PIC FH/1258); and Frank Hurley, *The ship was dead, her proud timbers were rent apart and in scattered confusion, Captain Frank Wild and the Endurance in the Weddell Sea, Shackleton Expedition 1915*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (PIC FH/1233)

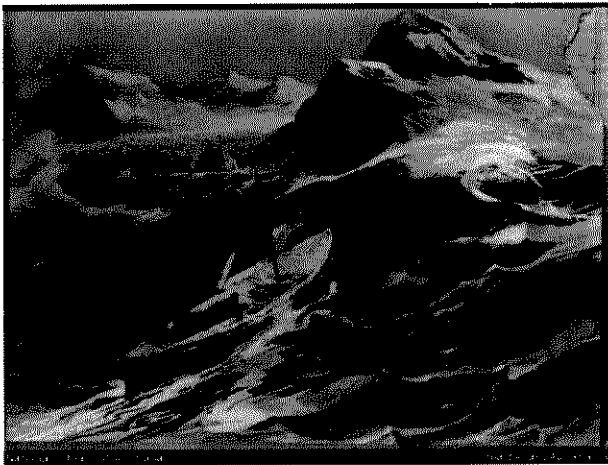


Figure 4.2 Frank Hurley, *In sight of our goal nearing South Georgia drawn from material supplied by the boat party*. Photo of sketch by George Marsden, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1177)

Shackleton's crew remained at what they called Patience Camp for six months – living in their tents on the shifting ice floes, where they waited for the ice to break up so they could finally launch the rescue boats and attempt a journey for land. They reported tales of killer whales attempting to break the ice beneath them for food, freezing conditions and ice floes breaking beneath tents. Eventually, the crew launched the boats into the dark, choppy and icy waters, sailing for five days until

they reached Elephant Island and found a small stretch of beach surrounded by cliffs and glaciers. Leaving his crew on the island, Shackleton set off on a rescue mission to the whaling station where the *Endurance* was initially docked. He left twenty-two men behind, including Frank Hurley, who was there to record the departure mission on film.¹⁶

Two versions of Shackleton and Worsley setting out from Elephant Island:



Figure 4.3 Frank Hurley, *Ernest Shackleton Captain Frank Worsley and crew setting out from Elephant Island Easter Monday*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (1916, PIC FH/10902);



Figure 4.4 Frank Hurley, *Ernest Shackleton Captain Frank Worsley and crew setting out from Elephant Island Easter Monday*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1033)

¹⁶ Shackleton, p.159

Meanwhile, the crew waited in their derelict upturned boat, drank watered down methylated spirits, urinated in the same can, talked about tropical weather and had long, considered discussions about doughnuts.¹⁷ Hurley's photographs from this period are minimal. When Shackleton did return to save the crew, three months had passed. It was Hurley who saw the rescue boat, and recorded the rescue on film with his last three photographs. The photographs feature the crew scattered around on the beach, with a blown out sky, a fire, and a fishing trawler in the distance. Only Hurley did not portray the incident like this, and swapped the image of Shackleton leaving from Elephant Island to stand in place of his return. Rather than featuring men scattered on a beach, Hurley chose to represent the crew waving, welcoming Shackleton as a group who bravely waited for him to return. These photographs have continually been misrepresented, and pictorially enhanced; with Hurley fabricating different versions of the event, as can be seen in the photographs featured below. In these photographs, he has used Shackleton's departure mission and swapped it for an image of the return, and he has enhanced the sky with dramatic lighting effects common in the landscape tradition.

¹⁷ Shackleton, p.271



National Library of Australia

nla.pic-an24039525-v

Figure 4.5 Frank Hurley, *A vessel came in sight Elephant Island Shackleton expedition 30 August 1916*, Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1170)



National Library of Australia

nla.pic-an23998520-v

Figure 4.6 An enhanced version of the rescue. Frank Hurley, *A small ship came into sight Wild gave orders to kindle the beacon. Relief had come at last!*, Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1194)



National Library of Australia

nla.pic-an2398522-w

Figure 4.7 Frank Hurley, *Thirteen men on Elephant Island wave farewell to Sir Ernest Shackleton Frank Worsley Timothy McCarthy A.B., Tom Crean, Harry McNeish, the Carpenter, and Vincent, the boatswain, as the leave for South Georgia, Monday, 24 April 1916*; Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1196)



National Library of Australia

nla.pic-an23476523-w

Figure 4.8 An enhanced version of Shackleton's departure mission altered to represent the return. Frank Hurley, *A boat was lowered for the shore ringing cheers greeted its approach, a terrible chapter in our lives was drawing to a close*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1047)

Within a month, the crew arrived in England with Hurley there for the first time as a national hero. Two years prior, the *Endurance* set sail at the outbreak of world war one announcement. The ship's crew was deeply patriotic, and for two years had lived with the knowledge that they had not participated in the war. *South*, as such, is dedicated to 'my comrades who fell in the white warfare of the South, and on the red fields of France and Flanders' hinting that Shackleton himself felt guilt for not participating in the war.¹⁸ The film *Endurance* for example tries to justify the benefits of Antarctic exploration by linking Antarctic exploration to the discovery of whales, which resulted in oil and glycerine production used for tankers and explosives in the war.¹⁹ The link between the heroism of war, and the heroism of the Antarctic adventure therefore had to be portrayed photographically as well.

The portrayal of heroism despite the failure of the expedition was important for Shackleton as he put it in his best selling ghostwritten book *South*:

...in memories we were rich, we had pierced the veneer of outside things. We had 'suffered,' starved, and triumphed, groveled down yet grasped at glory, grown bigger in the bigness of the whole. We had seen God in his splendors, heard the text that Nature renders. We had reached the naked soul of men.²⁰

A romantic and a poet, Shackleton describes coming face to face with the sublime and terrifying beauty of the Antarctic wilderness and conveys much of the heroic

¹⁸ Shackleton, p. XX.

¹⁹ Frank Hurley, *Endurance: The Story of a Glorious Failure* (motion picture) 1958

²⁰ Shackleton, *South*, p.200

suffering implicit in Scott's final death wish to 'die like gentlemen.' The appeal of being an adventurer was the glamour of being the first to do or see something, and the high-risk lifestyle that came with it.

Hurley it appears also shared Shackleton's view and conveyed it in his book *Argonauts of the South*:

I have tried to tell of the wonders we saw; of the dangers we faced; of *the glamour of being the first to penetrate the unknown*; of our successes and of our failures, – just as glorious – and to picture as far as words can the incredible beauties, as well as the awesome desolation, of that vast unpeopled continent – Antarctica...²¹

Hurley was very clear to state that the glamour of being an adventurer was all about being the 'first to penetrate' and 'picture' the unknown. To Hurley, being a photographer was about picturing the world in ways that people had never seen before, and like Shackleton and Scott, he visualized Antarctic exploration as a heroic venture. His previous journey into the region with Sir Douglas Mawson was also marked with disaster and heroism. This also set the scene for the rest of Hurley's career and it is illustrated in the trajectory of Hurley's body of work – from Antarctica twice to two World War's to Papua New Guinea.

²¹ Hurley, *Argonauts of the South*, foreword. p.v, *my emphasis*

When Hurley misrepresented his photographs of the Antarctic, he enhanced and swapped the photographs of Shackleton's rescue mission so that they would convey a sense of the heroism within the rescue. This calls into question whether or not Hurley went into the Antarctic already engaged in a pattern of Heroic suffering like that proposed by Alexander.

Helen Ennis has suggested that external factors had a huge bearing on Hurley's work. She states:

As a photographer and an individual, Hurley's orientation was always towards the outer world. His diaries were filled with voluminous amounts of descriptive detail, confirming that he rarely dealt with aspects of experience associated with the inner world even in the most charged of moments – such as his rescue from Elephant Island which ended months of privation and suffering.²²

Ennis argues that Hurley's relationship to the external world dominated his inner world and that this informed the style of photographs that he took. By pointing out that the traumatic event of his rescue from Elephant Island brought about no emotions, Ennis states that Hurley's photographs were framed with the external world in mind.

²² Helen Ennis, *Man With a Camera: Frank Hurley Overseas*, (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002), p.6

Shane Murphy has also stated that Hurley often wrote in his diary with the view to it being published.²³ According to Murphy, there were many discrepancies between Hurley's version of the Shackleton expedition and what the other crew members said. What does this say about Hurley and the way that he traveled through and saw the Antarctic? Why is it that Hurley, who fabricated his photographs, is always pictured so negatively by historians? Did Hurley choose to repeat the pattern of heroic suffering as a means to tap into a 'public' recognizable language of photography that his audiences could read? Before we go on, we need to first establish what the pattern of seeing was in the Antarctic, and we will then return to Frank Hurley.

Nineteenth century and the Antarctic

In the first chapter of this dissertation it was noted that Talbot's desire to invent photography was triggered on his exploration of Europe. His invention was spurred by a desire to capture beauty and to visualize the world so that it could contribute to a body of knowledge for the future. However, his calotype photographs were not technically ready to do so. But by 1850, as the previous chapter on the moon illustrated, photographers were experimenting with photography to capture places in ways that audiences had never seen before, with mirror image clarity and a degree of technical permanence.

²³ Shane Murphy, *Shackleton's photographer: the annotated diaries of Frank Hurley, expedition photographer, Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1914-17 : a book*, 1st Electronic edition (Scottsdale, Az: Shane Murphy, 2000)

In 1839, the voyage to Antarctica headed by Sir James Clark Ross was being planned at the same time as the patenting of photography. Ross' colleague, John Herschel had also been planning for the 1839 expedition to the Antarctic along with his friend, Henry Talbot who was also placed on the Royal Society's Committee of Botany to help consider what botanical objects and other subjects would be worthwhile taking on the expedition. Letters to Talbot recognized the camera:

to be of incalculable value, in delineating the various objects of Natural History, which we may meet with during our voyage to the Antarctic Regions; more particularly, in obtaining faithful representations of those evanescent forms, inhabiting the Ocean...²⁴

Whilst no cameras were taken on this expedition, there was the idea to take them. This failed attempt to take cameras on the Ross expedition demonstrates a photographic way of seeing the Arctic landscape that preceded actual physical travel there.

This desire to represent the world as a representation no doubt fuelled all Antarctic exploration, which took place in the age of the camera. It is also bears repeating here that Shackleton's exploration was portrayed as one that would be of 'great scientific importance,' whilst it did nothing of the sort. It is difficult to conceive of the Shackleton expedition in the light of James Clark Ross' 'scientific voyage' of

²⁴ Larry Schaaf, *Out of the Shadows*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Letter from Robert MacCormick to Henry Talbot, July 1839, p. 79

discovery to the Antarctic. Next to Ross' voyage, Shackleton's expedition is a pulp adventure story best portrayed through the photographs of Frank Hurley.

Hurley's photographs and documentaries taken on Shackleton's expedition are obviously more about adventure than science. Few of the images pretend to be geared towards science at all. Even the photographs taken while the *Endurance* was trapped in pack ice only feature a few photographs taken in the name of science. One photograph, as pictured below (fig.4.9) shows the expedition's biologist looking through a microscope at deep-sea plankton, and another image features men at a dinner table covered in foliage.



Figure 4.9 Frank Hurley, Marine Biologist "Bob" Clark, captain of the *Afterguard* soccer team, in his lab tweendecks after the ship was converted to winter quarters. An expert taxidermist, Clark often bemused the men by doing his work on the crew's dining table, the evening meal sometimes laid around a carcass. February to March 1915, from *South With Endurance* Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914 – 1917, *The Photographs of Frank Hurley*, (London, VIKING, 2001)



Figure 4.10 Frank Hurley, *Blizzard at Winter*. The Mawson Base was established in the windiest known spot on the face of the globe. Winds with gusts up to 200 m.p.h. were recorded. The mean, hourly wind velocity throughout the first year was 49.9 m.p.h. Mawson Expedition 1, Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/10897)

Hurley's portrayal of adventure over science was not an isolated incident, and he was well involved in this process of embellishing and manipulating the meaning of his photographs on the Mawson expedition. For example in his photograph *Blizzard at Winter*. The Mawson Base was established in the windiest known spot on the face of the globe. Winds with gusts up to 200 m.p.h. were recorded. The mean, hourly wind velocity throughout the first year was 49.9 m.p.h (fig.4.10), Hurley photographed men picking ice for water supplies but chose to represent this iconic photograph as an adventurous, heroic image. All of his titles convey this sense of heroism and adventure. Even the documentary films made of the Shackleton expedition such as *In the Grip of Polar Pack Ice* and *South – The Story of a Glorious Failure* features the adventure story of the Shackleton expedition and then moves into quasi nature documentary, detailing the comic anthropomorphic qualities of

Arctic wildlife. In these documentaries, science comes secondary to adventure, which is synonymous with heroism and empire.

Masked underneath the scientific agenda was a desire to colonize the landscape according to specific visual codes that we will come to see in Frank Hurley's work. Hurley became part of a larger cultural phenomenon which he used, as we will come to see, to advance his own career as a showman within the culture of the visual.

Hurley brings the Antarctic back home

Robert Dixon in an essay on Hurley's film *In the Grip of Polar Pack Ice*, argues that Hurley's career was an artifact of modernity, its international cultures, and as such was colonialist.²⁵ He believes that Hurley's career formed and was formed by the new technologies brought about by modernity. Dixon states:

In the cinemas, audiences saw with their own eyes how the new technology vanquished distance and difference, offering a strategic visual reference point to the imperial subject that placed him at the centre of – indeed connected him prosthetically to – a powerful, modern technology that impacted the geographical space of nation and empire.²⁶

Implicating Hurley's work within all of this, Dixon believes that the effects of his subject matter in his photography and film had the effect of collapsing the

²⁵ Dixon, "Pictures at an Exhibition: Frank Hurley's *In the Grip of Polar Pack Ice* (1919)," *Journal of Australian Studies*, 66, (2000): 1-22

²⁶ *ibid*, p. 16

boundaries between colonies. Dixon merges this argument with Paul Virilio's thesis on the effects of new technologies and speed on culture's experience of time to then show how Hurley used the technology of compositing and fused it to spectacles of modernity. According to Virilio, photography's proliferation within the sphere of new technologies had the effect of collapsing space and time, and it is through this logic that Dixon says that Hurley visually reaffirmed a sense of empire in his patriotic audience. However, showing how Hurley collapsed distance between his representations of the faraway and his audience fails to see Hurley for the attraction that he made himself out to be.

Martyn Jolly claims that Frank Hurley the Showman actually got in the way of facilitating such a collapse. He points this out in an advertisement for his film *In the Grip of Polar Pack Ice*:

Captain Frank Hurley talks to you as the pictures are showing ... What you see and what you hear will give you the greatest entertainment you have ever had ... UNPARALLELED PICTURES OF REAL THRILLS ... Everything in these pictures is real – photographed at the risk of life a score of times among the grinding ice packs of Antarctica. And *everything is new – nothing you have seen before...*²⁷

Jolly adds that Hurley's insertion of himself as a speaker in front of his films prevented his films from vanquishing distance in his audiences. From his insertion of this advertisement, it is clear that Hurley sold himself as the focal point, and used

²⁷ Martyn Jolly, *Fake Photographs: Making Truths in Photography*, PhD dissertation (Sydney: The University of Sydney, 2003) p. 102

the myth of originality to sell his work. Jolly's argument is that Hurley used pictorial effects in his photograph to produce an emotional affect in his audience. In addition, this suggests that Hurley was subscribing to the already established codes of pictorialism which his audiences knew how to read. Content was also important – where Hurley says 'everything is real' and 'nothing you have seen before' also ties in to his awareness about what audiences desired to see. Antarctic exploration and its 'pattern of suffering' can be seen as hugely instrumental in shaping the image of Captain Frank Hurley, and the attraction of his work.

Showman

Critics such as Julian Thomas, Robert Dixon, Jim Specht and Bernd Hüppauf agree that Hurley was involved in a larger world of colonial expansion and photographs were an integral part of fostering a sense of governance within this area.²⁸ As we have come to see, this was, by and large, already a pattern established by Robert Falcon Scott and illustrated in the early days of Ross and his desire to photograph the Antarctic region. To this end, Hurley's involvement with portraying the external world as adventurous and heroic was itself a repetition that went well beyond him.

Julian Thomas labeled Hurley a Showman, claiming that:

²⁸ This is argued in the following articles and books: "Julian Thomas, *Showman: the photography of Frank Hurley*, (National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1990) . Robert Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods: Travel, Representation & Colonial Governance* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2001) and Bernd Hüppauf "Experiences of modern warfare and the crisis of representation." *New German Critique* 93:59 (Spring/Summer) 41(36)

I want to emphasize that this adventuring identity was an act of imagination, for both Hurley and his audiences. It was ... an edited version, a selection of certain aspects of his life and a repudiation of other parts. The figure of the adventurer was not simply a play which Hurley used to attract people to his work, since it was a central part of that work. Nor did showmanship end there: an adventurous story required an adventurous world, a world which was strange and dangerous ... if heroism ... consisted in penetrating an unknown country, then the way of the adventurer had to be shown as difficult and obstructed.²⁹

Like Helen Ennis, Thomas believes that Hurley was simultaneously a product and a producer of the exterior world of adventure and exploration. Believing that Hurley was truly a showman, Thomas argues that Hurley's involvement in Antarctic exploration emphasized the 'romance' and achievements of white settlement, and Australia's place in the Empire.³⁰

Snow, Sand and Savages is a documentary on the life of Frank Hurley as the patriotic Australian adventure photographer. The documentary often skips from film footage to the camera panning over still photographs of Hurley's projects. It also swaps photographs around from the Shackleton expedition, misrepresenting the photograph of Shackleton's departure from Elephant island on a rescue boat with the image of Shackleton's return. The image is accompanied with the voice of narrator Leo McKern quoting Hurley:

²⁹ Thomas, p. 3- 4

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 8

The trawler hove to, dropped for the shore... It was a worthy occasion to expend one of my three remaining films and despite everything it had been through it recorded faithfully that truly historic scene...³¹

The real image that would have accompanied that 'truly historic scene' was six of the crew idling around on a beach, with a boat in the distance and fails to convey heroism, suffering, exploration or, empire. Hurley's desire to aesthetically realize these ideals resulted in his misrepresentation and fabrication of the expedition.

A significant amount of the expedition's documentary footage was filmed at a later date. When it came to making the documentary film about the Shackleton expedition, there wasn't enough footage to make a substantial documentary film.³² Consequently, Hurley organized a return trip to South Georgia Island to film footage of penguins, albatross, sea lions, icebergs and the landscape to visually flesh out the Shackleton story. Some of the photographs of figures trekking through the snow even evoke an image of reenactment with an isolated image of a figure that is meant to evoke Shackleton on the final leg of the rescue mission across glaciers to the whaling station. In the documentary films about Shackleton's expedition, the additional footage, as well as photographs and paintings made by the expedition's artist, George Marston from the Shackleton story have been inserted into the films, the camera panning across them as a way of reanimating the photographs again, a means of achieving complete coverage of the expedition.

³¹ *Snow Sand and Savages*, narrated by Leo McKern, motion picture

³² Gael Newton, *Frank Hurley, South With Endurance – Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914 – 1917 - The Photographs of Frank Hurley*, (Camberwell, Vic.: VIKING, 2001), p. 98

So why did Hurley use the imagery that he did when he fabricated his images? What can be learnt about Frank Hurley through the repetition of symbols in his work? The following section looks at Hurley's deliberate attempts to construct his sense of reality of the expedition.

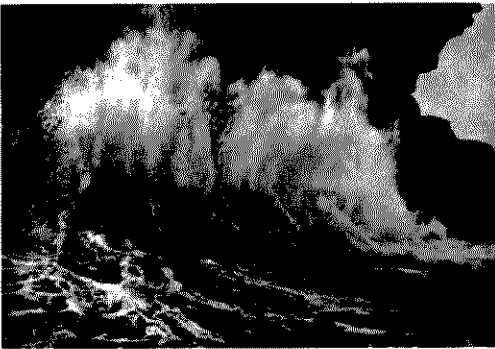


Figure 4.11 Frank Hurley, *The Last Break Sydney*, carbon photograph, from *Frank Hurley, South With Endurance – Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914 – 1917 - The Photographs of Frank Hurley*, (Camberwell, Vic.: VIKING, 2001)



Figure 4.12 Frank Hurley, *Sydney Harbour Bridge from Circular Quay*, c.1940, gelatin silver photograph, from *Frank Hurley, South With Endurance – Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914 – 1917 - The Photographs of Frank Hurley*, (Camberwell, Vic.: VIKING, 2001)

Frank Hurley – hero, master of the undiscovered

*Whoever fakes an illness, can simply stay in bed and make everyone believe he is ill.
Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms*³³.

Frank Hurley had a reputation for being a cowboy photographer. He jumped in front of trains, spent nights in the rain, and rode on ships masts just to get the right shot.³⁴ Hurley's photographs were not just about constructing and repeating an aesthetic image of adventure, his work was also about portraying what the adventure-hero-photographer saw and experienced of the world. While Hurley fabricated only some of his photographs of the world, he believed heroism and adventure to be implicit to the scenes he created. It was essentially the consequences of such idealistic belief in imperialism, rampant nationalism, adventure and heroism that prompted Hurley to fabricate a photographic version of ideality.

According to Joseph Campbell, a hero goes off on his journey from the everyday world 'into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.'³⁵ This notion of the hero, in Campbell's definition of it, is a repetition throughout the myths of man. He believes that within all the world's mythologies, there is a classic example of a hero. This patterning, Campbell believes is deeply embedded in every culture as a universal

³³ Litre as cited Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*. trans Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.3

³⁴ Newton, pp. 36 – 37, Jolly, p. 44

³⁵ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. (New York: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 30

figure. The classic example of this is illustrated in the hero's return, when the hero enlightens those he returns to. Frank Hurley is an archetypal example of the masculine cultural hero, who brings back photographs of the exotic place which, in Campbell's terms, bestows many opportunities on the hero and enlightens those he returns to. By claiming that this notion is repeated throughout history and a diverse range of myths, Campbell makes a comment on the myth of originality also.

In the context of art, the hero can be seen in the work of the sculpture and performance artist Joseph Beuys. As a fighter pilot in World War II, Beuys contestably crashed his war plane into the Siberian desert and was rescued by Tartars who healed him by wrapping him in felt and fat.³⁶ He returned to Germany and portrayed himself as a shaman and used this for the rest of his career, making works that fostered a return to nature. Beuys used the figure of himself as the shaman to draw a crowd, and often incorporated himself into his own work amongst nature and animals. In the context of Campbell, there are similarities between Beuys and Hurley whose career as a showman used the idea of the homeward bound hero as part of his public construction, and his photographs also tapped in to this ideal.

Hurley used this notion of heroism to foster his career in photography as a way of becoming a visual tourist of the undiscovered in Antarctica, in outback Australia, in Papua New Guinea and in the Middle East. This call to adventure he writes about in

³⁶For a critical discussion of Beuys and the utopian myths of heroism and shamanism see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh: 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol,' *Artforum*, Vol.5, no.18 (January 1980), pp.35-43

his *Argonauts of the South* where he states that he felt the 'fabulous force' of the pull to adventure. This was how Hurley put it:

I was like a ship tossing idly on turbulent tides without control. Every wind of fancy drove me where it listed and I was heading for the rocks of disaster... But soon I found a new toy ... Soon I became so deeply absorbed in "this new fad" as my friends called it, that everything else fell into neglect. From the time I first gazed wonderingly at the miracle of chemical reaction on the latent image during the process of development, I knew I had found my real work, and a key, could I but become its master, that would perhaps unlock the portals of the undiscovered world.³⁷

From this comment it is clear that photography would be instrumental in aiding Hurley to not only picture the 'undiscovered world,' but also be the gateway to it. That he uses the undiscovered world in the same sentence with 'unlock the portal,' 'miracle' and 'wonder' also arouses a sense of the supernatural and natural in his work. While Hurley states that he has to master photography as a way of getting to the undiscovered world, he also believes that his photographs have to be 'masterly perfect' in order to penetrate the 'undiscovered.' This suggests why Hurley fabricated his images and that the lure of the undiscovered world prompted him to do so.

³⁷ Hurley, *Argonauts of the South*, p.10

Perfect pictures

It is illuminating to note that Hurley resorted to fabricating his images when he felt that he didn't have choice or the time to spend with a subject such as a landscape. On his photographs of the *Endurance* Hurley wrote:

The vessel itself made the connecting link between the vast and lifeless solitudes of the south and the living humanity of the north. It was a symbol to all of us; but to me it had a double interest, for as a factor in any pictorial composition, it was invaluable, giving point and interest, perspective and comparison to many a picture.³⁸

For Hurley, pictorial composition consisted of 'symbols' combined with a point of interest in the photographs. Photographs of the *Endurance* always featured a point of tension between the formal and the documentary properties of the image. The photographs of the ship symbolize the small figure of civilization surrounded by nature, and yet they also serve to contain nature. Applied to Hurley's definition of pictorial composition, the ship itself stands in for Empire and it is used to turn the rugged wilderness into a colonized and 'tame' space. This effect was emphasized when Hurley realized that the ship was a goner, and the crew would be left without it:

In itself, too, the ship was an object to muse over. As time went on it became more and more evident that she was doomed. I conceived the ambition of making some

³⁸ *ibid*, p.158

pictures of the *Endurance* that would endure, and I spent days and weeks studying her from all angles and positions. She was never twice the same. She was indeed a lady of infinite variety.³⁹

Conceiving that the *Endurance* would soon no longer exist, Hurley took it upon himself to make photograph the ship for posterity's sake. From this statement, it is very clear that Hurley himself was more than aware of the fragmentary nature of reality, and of the variations within three dimensional space. In order to photograph the *Endurance*, it was necessary for him to capture the ship from as many perspectives and in as many lights as he possibly could. In these groups of photographs, Hurley's photographs of the ship repeat the same symbolism over and over again – the ship icon of culture, trapped in the desolation of Antarctica, providing a sense of scale to the magnitude of the landscape.

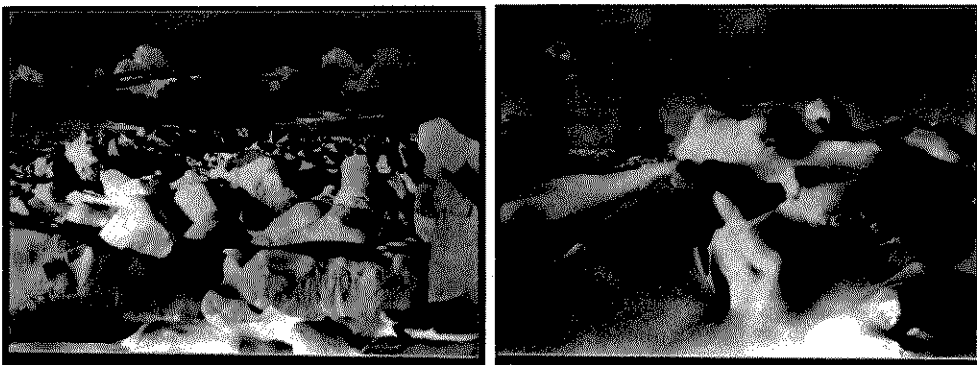


Figure 4.13 Frank Hurley, *Beset by heavy pack, our ship offered a precarious refuge from the white hell that threatened to engulf us*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (PIC FH/1232); Frank Hurley, *Endurance behind rounded in the Weddell Sea, Shackleton expedition, 1914-16*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (PIC FH/1184)

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 158

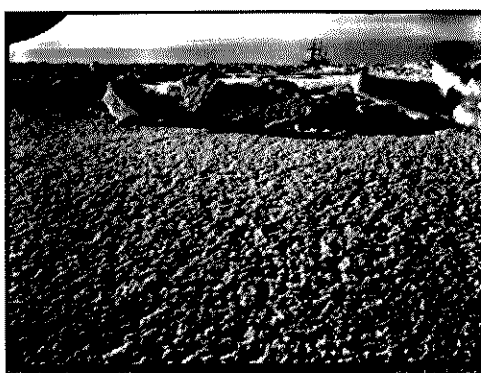
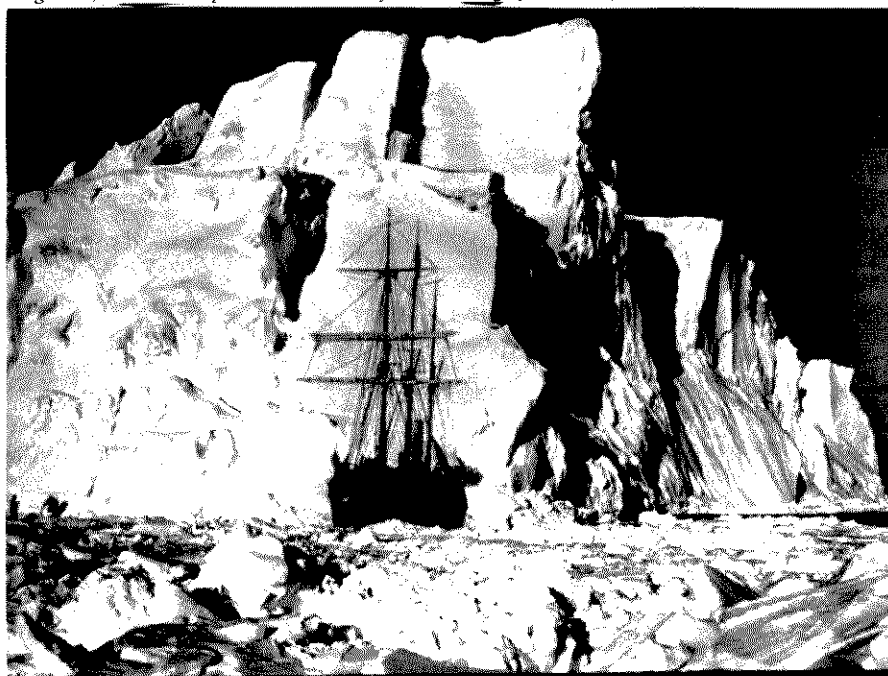


Figure 4.14 Frank Hurley, *Almost overwhelmed, the Endurance on the Shackleton expedition, October 1915*, Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (PIC FH/1085); Frank Hurley, *Surface of a newly frozen lead was covered with delicate crystal rosette formations resembling nothing so much as a field white carnations, the endurance beset, in the background, Shackleton expedition, 16 February 1915*, Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (PIC FH/1028)



National Library of Australia

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Figure 4.15 Frank Hurley, *A mighty iceberg ploughed its way through the pack and bore down upon the imprisoned ship*, Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1195)

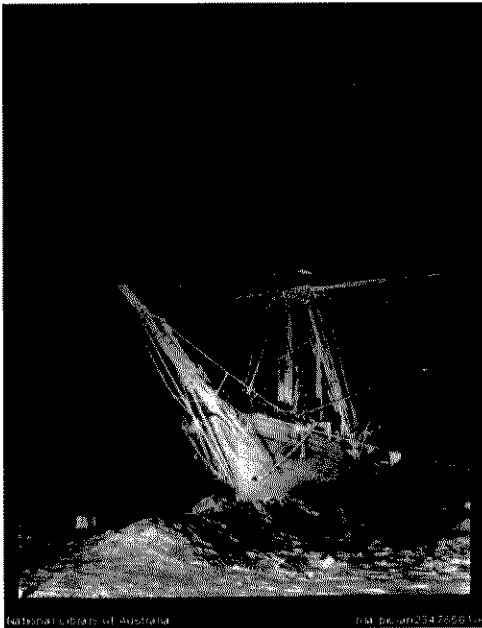


Figure 4.16 Frank Hurley, *The long, long night, the endurance in the Antarctic winter darkness, trapped in the Weddell Sea, Shackleton Expedition, 27 August 1916*. Photograph, Courtesy of National Library of Australia (c1910-1962, PIC FH/1100)

Unlike his countless photographs of the *Endurance*, Shackleton's rescue did not offer Hurley the luxury of time to explore a variety of perspectives and meander around his subject. The urge to create iconic photographs was therefore what led Hurley towards using fabrication. This is also noted by Shackleton in his description of the launching of the rescue boat the *James Caird*, when two of his men fell into the water. Shackleton wrote:

Hurley, who had the eye of the professional photographer for 'incidents,' secured a picture of the upset, and I firmly believe that he would have liked the two unfortunate men to remain in the water until he could get a 'snap' at close quarters

...

⁴⁰ Shackleton, p. 159

This comment by Shackleton suggests his awareness of Hurley's desire for time and an endless supply of film to attain iconic and perfect photographs of his subjects.

When Shackleton returned to rescue his crew, Hurley had three remaining films. His decision to slice up, and pictorially enhance his photographs so they would represent the ideals of heroism demonstrates a desire to create an aura around his work. This could also be interpreted as Hurley's desire to rewrite the past according to the way that *he* remembered it, to visualize his emotional experience at the time. Beaming light appeared throughout Hurley's entire career of photographs, but were they empty symbols that Hurley used to perpetuate his career as a Showman or did Hurley invest any emotion in the external world?

Rendering the chiaroscuro

Gael Newton in "The Perfect Picture," links the symbolism of Hurley's beams of light to a passage from Hurley's *Argonauts*, where Hurley describes having a sublime experience triggered by moonlight after the death of his father. He states that he:

...turned in the landing, suddenly the blackness was pierced by a silvery beam that shone through a window and flooded the stairway with light. An eerie sensation crept over me. I was very young and highly impressionable ... For a moment I stood stock still. Surely this heaven-sent moonbeam was an omen... I felt transformed.⁴¹

⁴¹ Newton, p. 36

The symbol of beaming light from the sky carries through in Hurley's composited war photography and throughout his whole career, and as such they are in keeping with the pictorialist and mid-Victorian sentimentalist themes of high charged drama. The moody skies first appeared in Hurley's fabricated image of Shackleton's rescue when Hurley was printing the photographs in London.⁴² However, neither Hurley's diaries nor *Argonauts* feature the presence of any such emotion, or transformation from the experience.

Helen Ennis points out that after Hurley's involvement in the Shackleton expedition, he wrote in his diary that he is not all that 'susceptible to emotions.'⁴³ But at the same time, Hurley often wrote with the external world in mind, which was led by heroism, masculinity, a desire for adventure, to unlock the portal to the undiscovered world, and public life. Hurley's emotional wrought, as he describes it in his *Argonauts*, was caused by the thought of not being able to photograph again. This is how he puts it:

One night I returned to the studio in a gloomy block of buildings, inexpressibly depressed for I had resolved to give up. The bitter word failure had never found a place in my lexicon before, but physically and mentally I was on the verge of collapse. As I laboured up the dark stairway with heavy heart I reflected on what seemed to be my wasted efforts. How utterly hopeless the future seemed and how futile my ambitions.⁴⁴

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 36

⁴³ Ennis, p. 6

⁴⁴ Hurley, p. 11

The death of Frank Hurley's father contributed to his fear of being distanced from the undiscovered world. His father financed his photographic business and without photography there would be no adventure. However, what is there to say that Hurley did not transport the emotions that he himself could not publicly express, into the symbols of beaming light in his photography?

Victorian Photography & the split between the real and the ideal

Hurley's drive to imbue his photographs with Romantic aesthetics such as the strong repetition of chiaroscuro renderings in his photographs can be likened to Henry Peach Robinson's nineteenth century method of compositing and its strive to maintain the 'seamless illusion' of the photograph. Robinson combined different photographs, from a number of scenes and created a multiple layering of visual disjunctions within the same frame. Robinson insisted that there was no 'sleight of hand to photography, that the illusions in the photograph be kept intact.'⁴⁵ Hurley adapted this innovative method of art photography to his own form of aesthetic photographic documentation, choosing to represent his experience in the seamless artistic style of Pictorialism. As he put it, 'your camera is only a piece of apparatus. To copy nature, as seen in the viewfinder, has nothing to do with Pictorial Art.'⁴⁶

Hurley's book *Argonauts of the South* features quotes from Romantic poets and quotes from William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Rudyard Kipling,

⁴⁵ Armstrong, p.146 – 147

⁴⁶ Frank Hurley, *Snow Sand and Savages*, narrated by Leo McKern

Shakespeare and Marcus Aurelius. The British romantic's love of nature and their belief that the soul is reflected in nature itself is reflected throughout Robinson's and Hurley's photographs. Robinson also believed in remaining true to nature in his photographs, cutting up his photographs so that they would convey pictorial vision. In the Romantic quest for knowledge, fancy is merged with fact.⁴⁷ In Frank Hurley's photography, the ideal is blended with the real. However, this is problematic for some photography historians.

Critic Bernd Hüppauf writes on Hurley's later career in war photography in his essay 'Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation.'⁴⁸ He argues that Hurley grappled with representing modern warfare on the battle field, and that he could not present what he saw on the battle field with his nineteenth century form of pictorial representation. Hüppauf argues that Hurley's way of seeing the world through the pictorial lens of the nineteenth century was not compatible with the reality of war. As he puts it, 'his approach was based upon a pragmatic belief in "observation" and sought a cohesive image unwittingly modeled on theories of the 19th century'⁴⁹ to which he attributes to a turning point in the history of photography, the order of simulacra. Hüppauf claims that Hurley's photographs reveal the gap between 'reality' and the mimetic capacity of documentary photography:

⁴⁷W. David Shaw, "The Optical Metaphor: Victorian Poetics and the Theory of Knowledge," in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 3, "Poetry becomes the organ, not of truth, but of mere illusion or make believe" p. 293

⁴⁸ Bernd Hüppauf, "Experiences of Modern Warfare and the Crisis of Representation" *New German Critique*, No. 59, Special Issue on Ernst Junger (Spring - Summer, 1993), pp. 41-76

⁴⁹ Hüppauf, p.54

He maintains the view of an integrated, complete, and continuous reality which he developed in peaceful Australia and Antarctica and which conditions his perception of the modern battlefield even under the most devastating conditions. The biblical image of God's creation remains the model for his photographic images ... the extreme fragmentation of reality experienced by the soldiers are hardly ever visible in his photographs...⁵⁰

Hüppauf attributes Hurley's adopted aesthetic to the early days of Antarctica and Australia, which as we have seen was neither integrated nor complete. This strive for the omnipotence of vision and the desire for totality was modeled on what Hüppauf believed to be the nineteenth century notion of God and pictorial vision. He believes that this outdated mode of seeing was not reconcilable with modern warfare, and it conflicted with soldiers' accounts of the battlefield. However, Antarctica was by no means peaceful: it was perpetually freezing cold, uncertain and life threatening. In Antarctica, Hurley's adoption of the pictorial code was aesthetic, a way of coming to terms with the trauma of the experience through beauty.

Martyn Jolly on the other hand claims that Hurley 'larded the codes of pictorialism into his formidable arsenal of thoroughly modern special technical effects,' as a way of making his British and Australian audience 'feel, more than just see, something of the experience of modern warfare.' Jolly states that Hurley pitched his 'adventure

⁵⁰ Hüppauf, p. 53

films' to 'the affect it produced in its audience.'⁵¹ Jolly points out that Hurley used Burkean sublimity early in his career, adding that his experience on the *Endurance* was of this vein, likening this to the experience of when Hurley was in despair over the loss of his postcard business.

In Frank Hurley's writings on Antarctic exploration, many of Hurley's stories conflict with those of the crew, even his reports of emotional transformation conflict with his opinion that he was not very 'susceptible to emotions.'⁵² In the context of imperialism, Hurley's entire body of work was tied in to his self-portrayal as an adventurer, a patriot and a heroic figure. Perhaps Hurley's silence and failure to be susceptible to emotions was also a condition of being a patriotic Australian male living in the Edwardian era. What perpetuates today is a way of seeing Antarctica based on Romantic pictorial representation such as Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Clouds* (fig.4.17) which was adopted by Frank Hurley in the way that he chose to present the landscape. This was again perpetuated by the myths of heroism and adventure and this continues to foster a way of seeing the Antarctic landscape.

⁵¹ Jolly, p. 101

⁵² Ennis, p. 6

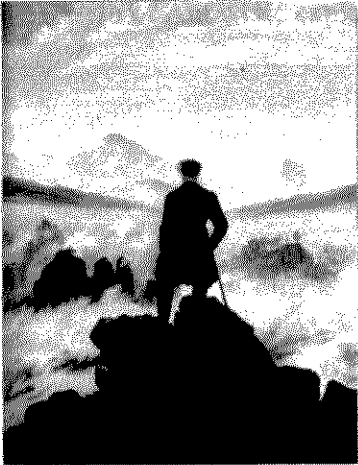


Figure 4.17 Caspar David Friedrich, *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*, Wanderer above the sea of fog, 1818 from http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/his/CoreArt/art/resourcesd/fri_wand.jpg

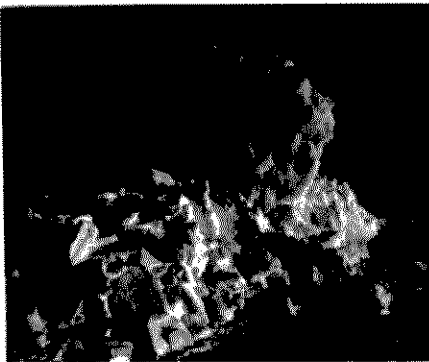


Figure 4.18 Frank Hurley, "Worsley's manly figure illustrates the size of what the *Endurance* members considered a typical pressure ridge" (1915), Photograph, from *South With Endurance Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914 - 1917*

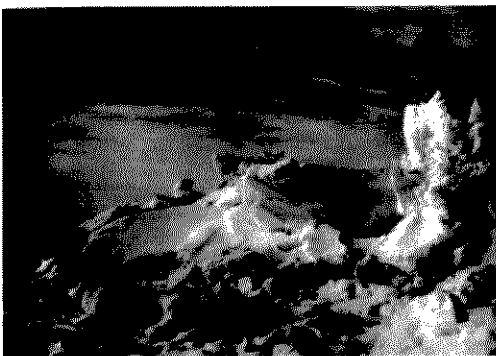


Figure 4.19 Frank Hurley, "In the afternoon Hurley and I do a 6 mile round with the camera... I dispose my manly figure in more or less graceful poses as an accessory to the surrounding scenery – a kind of human meter to gauge the sublimity of Nature," (1914 -1916), Photograph, from *South With Endurance Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition 1914 -1917*

The myth of Antarctic exploration today

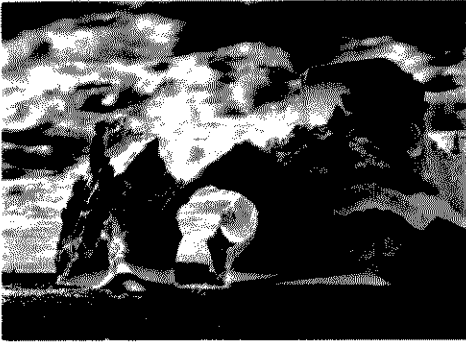


Figure 4.20 Sebastiao Salgado, an iceberg that looks like a mediaeval castle from the *Genesis* series, (2005) Photograph, from <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/salgado/0,,1294976,00.html>

When the contemporary photojournalist, Sebastiao Salgado went to photograph the Antarctic as part of his *Genesis* project (fig. 4.20), he wanted to avoid all visual preconceptions of the area. His method was to steer clear of looking at any photographs of Antarctica, except for the iconic images taken by Frank Hurley in the early twentieth century.⁵³ On his expedition, he reportedly ignored all the Antarctic coffee table books left by the documentary film crew who were assigned to follow him around. On his photography he said, 'I'm completely open for what comes. I have no organized idea.'⁵⁴ It is jarring to read of Salgado dodging visual representations of the Antarctic for it seems that imagery of this place has a ubiquitous presence in every imagination, every travel section of a newspaper, in advertisements and on wildlife documentaries.

⁵³ Ian Parker, "In A Cold Light," *The New Yorker*, 4/18/2005, Vol. 81 Issue 9, p142-160, 17p, 2bw

⁵⁴ *ibid*, 143

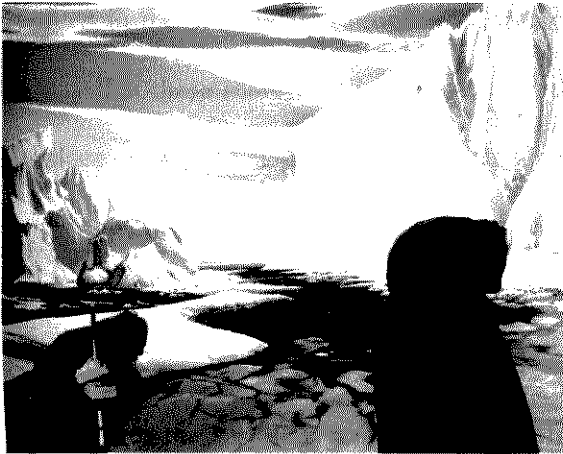


Figure 4.21 Anne Noble, *International Antarctic Centre, Christchurch*, 2003, image from Sophie McIntyre, *Breaking the Ice revisualising Antarctica*. (Wellington: Adam Art Gallery Victoria University of Wellington, 2005)



Figure 4.22 Anne Noble, *Wilhemina Bay, Antarctica* 2005, image from Sophie McIntyre, *Breaking the Ice revisualising Antarctica*. (Wellington: Adam Art Gallery Victoria University of Wellington, 2005)

The New Zealand artist Anne Noble has made work that plays on the myth of originality in Antarctic representation. She photographs both the real Antarctica and representations of Antarctica that can be found in museums and amusement parks across the world. In her exhibition of photographs *White Lantern* (Stills Gallery, 2006), photographs of the real Antarctica were juxtaposed with photographs of the artificial constructions of Antarctica. In these museums, audiences can experience Antarctica in simulation, experience freezing temperatures, sea penguins and so on. In making this work Noble wanted to highlight the extent to which we are all

involved in the colonization process of Antarctica.⁵⁵ She also wanted to highlight the way that these representations of Antarctica in turn informed our way of seeing the place as a tourist. In the photograph, *Wilhemina Bay*, 2005 (fig. 4.22) for example, Noble has photographed a tourist lookout-point that positions the spectator into a specific way of looking at the landscape. Plastic chairs and tables are lined up on a lookout balcony with a floor lined with fake grass. In this way, Noble demonstrates the way that representations affect our way of seeing landscapes and views of places like Antarctica.

Original landscape and simulated landscape, truth and fiction, real and ideal, all of these themes have been explored in the context of Frank Hurley as confused and inextricable from each other. It is questionable which seemed to originate first, particularly considering that the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration was already characterized by traits of heroism and adventure. With that said, the idea of Empire was also caught in this loop too, with the masculinity of Frank Hurley as an emotionless, strong adventurer coming to exist as an icon of national Australian photography.

If Frank Hurley came to terms with the trauma that he experienced in the freezing cold and the uncertainty of the Antarctic, he revealed it in his absolute silence. That his photographs were also beautifully iconic and fed the ideals of suffering and heroic adventure illustrates the disconnection between what he experienced of the

⁵⁵ Sophie McIntyre, *Breaking the Ice revisualising Antarctica*, (Wellington: Adam Art Gallery Victoria University of Wellington, 2005)

world and what his photographs provided. At the same time, critics of Hurley such as Helen Ennis, Julian Thomas and Robert Dixon have used this lack of emotion and desire for adventure as a way of aligning him with the idea of the showman.

Just as Hurley's own success in his career was perpetuated by the fact that he was providing imperial images for an audience equally eager for such visions, the convict exhibition ship the *Success* was also providing visions of history for eager audiences. In the following chapter, I follow up on the themes of national identity that were touched on in this chapter, examining the capacity for photographs to generate and challenge a language of nationhood through fabrication.

5. LOOKING AT AND BACK AT THE *SUCCESS*

The fake convict ship the *Success*, tapping into national identity through fabrication

Abstract

This chapter examines fabrication in the broader context of cultural identity, nation and history. Engaging Derrida's theory of archive fever, the chapter explores the desire to house and remember, in addition to the consequences of archiving fabricated photographs. By drawing relationships between the photograph and the archive, this chapter explores the implications of fabricating and its impact on cultural heritage, faith, and identity. In order to do so, the chapter will explore the case study of a fake convict ship museum, the *Success* in its nineteenth century context, and in contemporary archives today. Through an investigation of differing audience responses to the ship, such as anger in Australia and popularity in England and America, the chapter draws conclusions about fabrications and their solidification of cultural heritage.

Introduction

The National Museum of Australia has an exhibition on the ship the *Success*, which was popular in the 1890's and early twentieth century as a museum of Australia's early convict history. It featured photographs and other artefacts from penal history, including wax models of convicts in the cells below deck, torture instruments, a ships chapel, and re-enactments of convict torture. But the *Success* never was a convict transport ship. She was bought by a con-man in the nineteenth century and was converted into "the oldest ship in the world."

Audiences responded in mixed ways to the fabricated museum. In Australia, docked at Circular Quay in Sydney Harbour the *Success* angered the audiences who viewed her. As evidence of this audience fury, the *Success* was vandalised and scuttled to sink to the bottom of the harbour. Notwithstanding this attempt to protect Australian heritage, the *Success* was raised and sailed for Britain, and then the States, where she attracted over 15 million people, turning over £90,000 per annum over a period of ten years.¹

¹ Edna Ingram Moore, "The 'Success' Returns to Australia," from *The Home*, April 2nd 1929, pp. 55-56



Figure 5.0 John Watt Beattie, *Prison Hulk 'Success' at Hobart*, Photograph, no date, National Library of Australia

This chapter will take the museum of the *Success* in its historical and contemporary context as the starting point to examine the differing audience response to fabrication, and what effect this has on identity, history and heritage in Australia. Until this point, the previous chapters have focused on instances of photographic fabrication that were both a product and effect, of their historical framework. Each study has been treated as a micro-reflection of what people have desired to see and

know of the spatial and temporally distant through fabrication. We saw how this was illustrated in the context of the fictitious construction of the undiscovered moon's landscape and in the Antarctic wilderness, which reflected the desire for exploration and discovery. What each chapter has shown is that fabrications could not escape concepts such as originality, masculinity and nation, which have limited the capacity to imagine and picture the undiscovered landscapes of the Moon and Antarctica.

In the last chapter, Frank Hurley's photographs of Antarctica were attempts to visually rewrite history according to the language of unification and nation. This style of photography also promoted Hurley as a heroic, adventurous, laconic and masculine Australian figure. Through Frank Hurley, we encountered myths of Australian identity that were made visible through fabrication. These chapters provide a framework for this chapter which examines the construction of national history and heritage of Australia through fabrication, shifting somewhat in focus from the production of fabrication to its reception in archives and museums today.

Archives house knowledge, public memory, and identity. Jacques Derrida describes the function of the archive as the desire to establish a patriarchal, authoritarian point of origin in history. He argues that because the archive wears the theory of its own infrastructure, it is a paradox. It is a house that strives to put what is inside on the outside and what is outside on the inside, or in other words it is constantly striving to integrate public and private spheres of memory. For this reason, the archive bears a tight relationship to the public and private spheres, with what is included in the

archive and what is excluded from it. On this account, the archive is seen to store a cohesive, unified history and identity, and because of its 'inside outside' relationship it is governed by public attitudes towards history and identity. In this chapter, I engage with Derrida's theory of the archive to examine the *Success* in both a historical and a contemporary context.

The Success

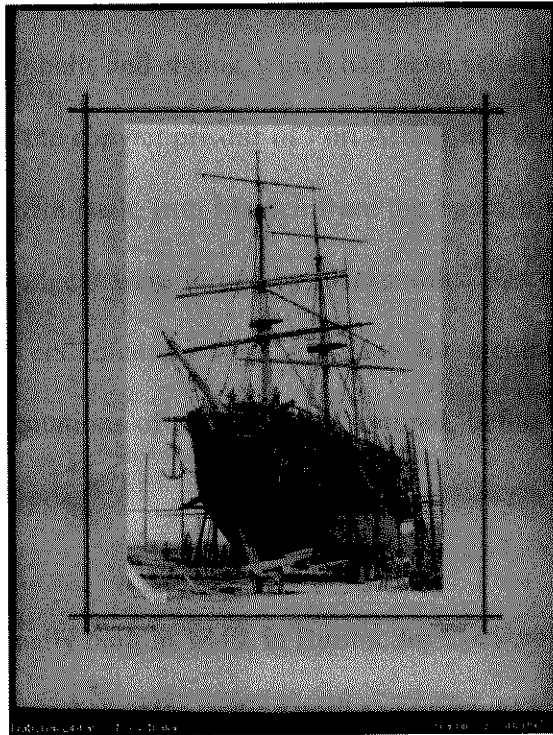


Figure 5.1 Photographer unknown, *Convict hulk "Success" at Williamstown*, State Library of Victoria, no date.

In 1890, a man known as Mr Alexander Phillips had the idea to buy a ship called the *Success* and have it transformed into a convict ship museum. Originally a British passenger ship, the *Success* was bought by the Victorian Government in 1853, where she was converted into a floating prison in Hobson's Bay, Victoria until 1858.² She was already a prison housing one hundred cells when Phillips had the cells below deck filled with wax-work figures displaying scenes from criminal history. These scenes depicted the most notorious criminals taken to Australia. In one cell, Ned Kelly stood with his sister and members of the Kelly Gang. On the upper decks of the ship, the museum displayed 'real' torture instruments such as manacles, whipping posts, convict balls and chains, which had been acquired from second hand stocks purchased from the convict prisons of Port Arthur in Tasmania.³ Other torture devices such as the Coffin Bath, Iron Maiden from the Spanish Inquisition, and Ned Kelly's armour and headgear were forged by blacksmiths.⁴ On the stern of the main deck, cabins and officers' quarters were set aside for etchings and photographs which featured representations of people being tortured, before Australia was even discovered.⁵

The *Success* was originally built in 1840, in Burma, for Cockerell & Co. of Calcutta, India. She was used for Indian spice trading until she was sold in 1842 to the English and then was chartered to take settlers to the Swan River settlement in Western

² Kenneth Binns, "Australia and the *Success*", *Inland Seas – Quarterly Bulletin of the Great Lakes Historical Society* 3:2 (April, 1947), p.107

³ Author unknown, "American Public Hoaxed," *Geelong Advertiser*, 8 December 1934. Binns, p. 108

⁴ Binns, p. 107

⁵ Moore, p. 56

Australia, and from 1847 until 1852 voyaged from England to Australia with emigrants.



Figure 5.2 John Watt Beattie, *Officers Quarters Prison Hulk 'Success,'* National Library of Australia, no date

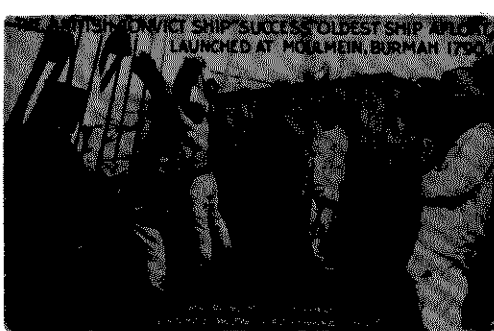


Figure 5.3 Photographer unknown, Postcard of the *Success*, no date and, Photographer unknown, Postcard from the *Success*, from <http://www.judnick.com/images>

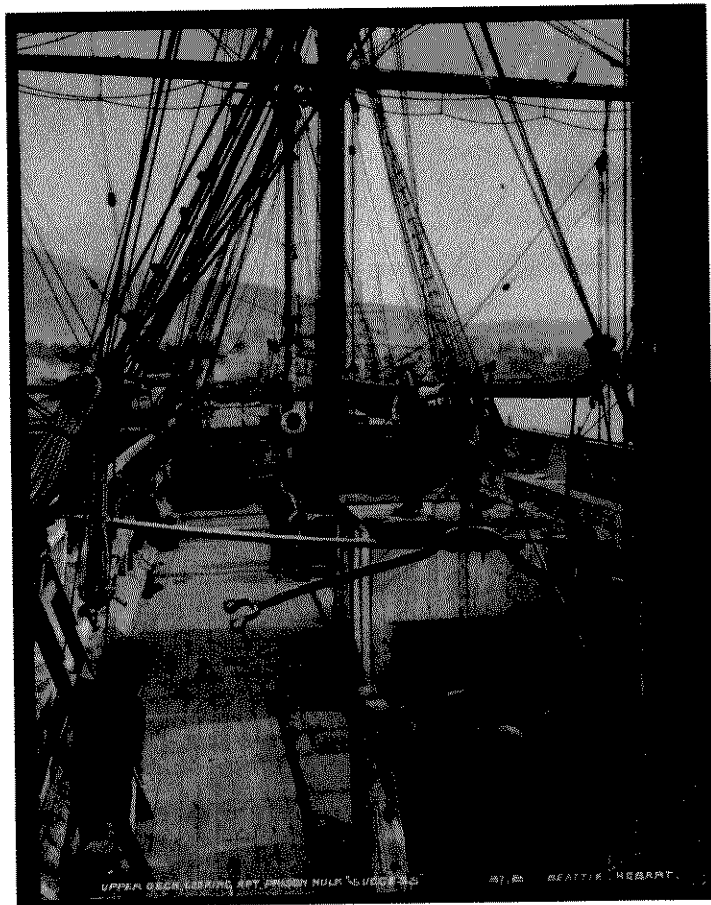


Figure 5.5 John Watt Beattie, *Upper Deck Looking Aft, Prison Hulk Success*, no date, National Library of Australia

The ship toured around the ports of Australia, until 1895 before it sailed to England touring the British Isles, the Thames in London, and then the United States. For thirty years, the ship toured across the States along both the east and west coast, was exhibited at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, through the Mississippi River and in the Great Lakes, finally ending its exhibition in Cleveland, Ohio in 1943.

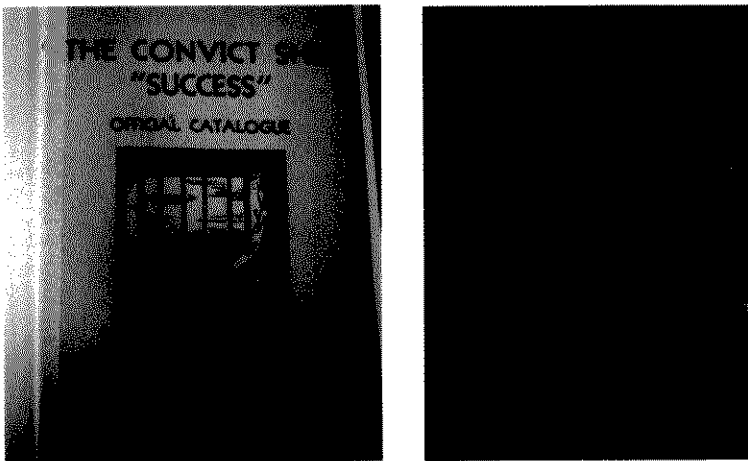


Figure 5.6 Copies of pages from Alexander Phillips, *The Convict Ship "Success," official catalogue, the oldest ship in the World Visited by over Twenty One Million People* (Chicago, 1933)

The *Success* was advertised as the 'Last Convict Ship,' a 'Sight of a Lifetime' and was marketed for its rarity and age. This was also fostered in a book published by the *Success*' owner, *A History of the Convict Ship 'Success.'* The book was sold on board the *Success* and gave a detailed historic account of the ships invented life as a convict transport ship. It illustrated this with photographs of the wax figures, such as 'Iron Punishment Band' and illustrations that accompanied the written accounts.

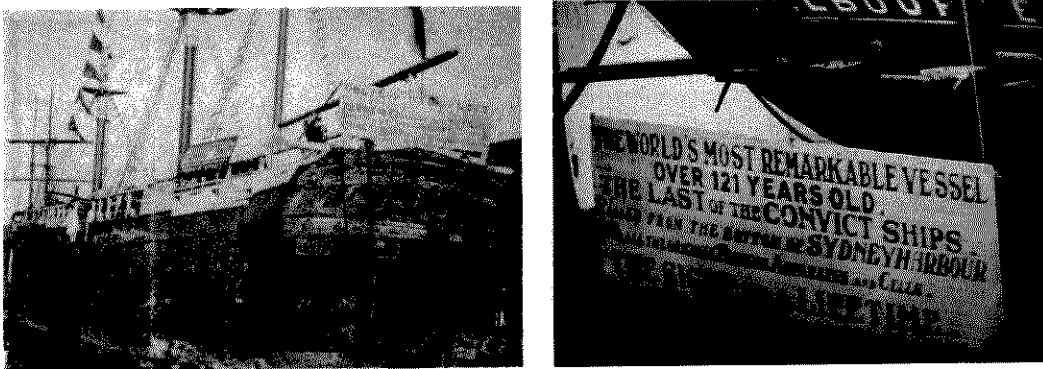


Figure 5.7 Photographer unknown, *The old Australian convict ship Success*, State Librate of Victoria, 1821; and Photographer unknown, *Providence*, Mitchell Library, c.1821.

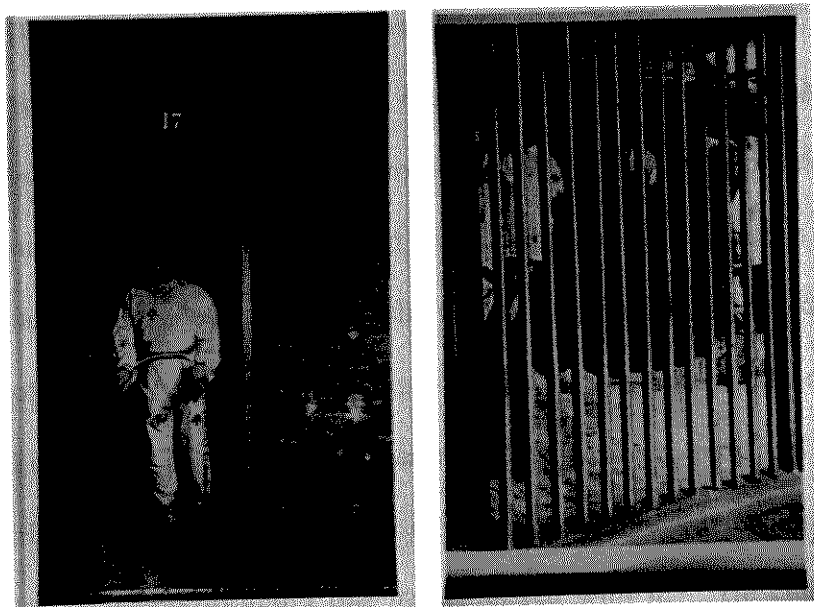


Figure 5.8 J.W. Beattie, *The Iron Punishment Band*, Mitchell Library; and J.W. Beattie, *Convicts on the prison hulk, Success*, Mitchell Library, no date.

Postcard photographs were sold on the ship. In Australia, these were made by the Tasmanian photographer, John Watt Beattie when the *Success* toured there. The photographs featured images from the cells below, the various torture instruments above deck, and the artefacts and details from the ship itself. Other photographs were made when the ship was in the States however these are now scarce.



Figure 5.9 J. W. Beattie, *Convict chains guns and whips*, Photograph, National Library of Australia, no date; J.W. Beattie, *Prison Cells*, Photograph, Mitchell Library, no date; and J.W. Beattie, *Middle deck, looking forward*, Photograph, State Library of Victoria, no date.

Differences of opinion: cultural heritage and history

When the *Success* first made it to Circular Quay, Sydney, she angered audiences who were outraged that the museum should be a misrepresentation of Australian history. This was demonstrated with a degree of violence when the ship was once set on fire. On another occasion she was scuttled, and consequently sank to the bottom of Sydney Harbour.⁶ What this demonstrates is what the historian David Lowenthal believes to be the threat of having public memory and local identity destabilised. Having faith in the stability of past lineaments Lowenthal says, 'explains [an] unwillingness to admit one has tampered with it.'⁷ He claims that by exposing fabrications, one will regain the 'true' past, and be able to 'celebrate antiquity exactly as it was.'⁸



Figure 5.10 Photographer unknown, *View of Circular Quay about 1890 with the old convict ship Success moored to the Wharf*, Photograph, National Library of Australia, c.1890

⁶ Binns, p.178

⁷ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p 286

⁸ *ibid*, p 286

Despite Australian attempts to protect the fidelity of convict history, the *Success* was raised from Sydney Harbour at the turn of the century and shipped to England, and moored on the Thames as an exhibit.⁹ This was around the same early part of the twentieth century that Ernest Shackleton was exhibiting his Antarctic ship *The Nimrod*.¹⁰ The popularity of exhibits such as these, it has been argued by Nancy Armstrong, provided audiences with a taste for more and more images of the foreign and the historical.¹¹ The relationship between vision and cultural imperialism was thus established through colonial displays in the period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and had the effect of producing the 'craze' for images of difference.¹² In this sense, the *Success* served the purpose of providing audiences in England and America with an exhibition of artefacts and wax figures from white colonial Australia which they could no longer see. The fact that the English and, as we will soon learn, Americans, were swallowing the gross inaccuracy of the hoax angered Australians who were protective of their past.

⁹ Ian Nicholson, *Log of Logs: A Catalogue of Logs, Journals, Shipboard Diaries, Letters and All Forms of Voyage Narratives, 1798 to 1988 For Australia and New Zealand and Surrounding Oceans*, The Australian Association for Maritime History INC.

¹⁰ Caroline Alexander, *The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition*; in association with the American Museum of Natural History; (NY, Knopf, 1998). pp. 5-6, Shackleton exhibited the *Nimrod* to raise money for Antarctic exploration.

¹¹ Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, pp. 81

¹² *ibid*, p. 81

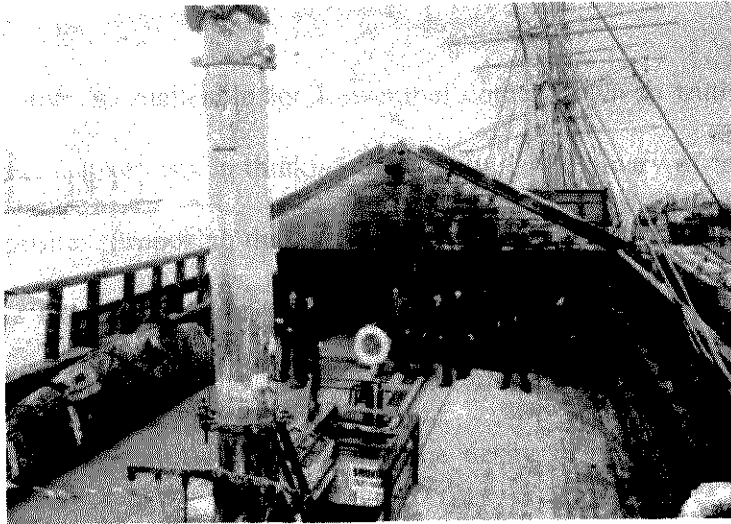


Figure 5.11 Photographer unknown, *The Success*, c.1920, photograph courtesy State Library of Victoria

History versus heritage

In his essay, *Fabricating Heritage*, historian David Lowenthal argues that fabrications and heritage are connected through faith. Whilst history is based on truth, heritage is based on the belief in ancestry. Fabrications provide a new framework for people to view their heritage, reconsider it, or forge it. Lowenthal states that fabrications are vital to the construction of a culture's identity and heritage. On the other hand, history, for Lowenthal is based on truth and fidelity, and constantly changes in meaning and significance from generation to generation. Because of its emphasis on truth and the integrity of facts, fabrication for history works against the essence of its identity. As he puts it:

History seeks to convince by truth, and succumbs to falsehood. Heritage exaggerates and omits, candidly invents and frankly forgets, and thrives on ignorance and error. Time and hindsight alter history, too.¹³

¹³ David Lowenthal, "Fabricating Heritage," *History and Memory*, (Volume 10, Number 1, Spring 1998)

What makes history so malleable for Lowenthal comes down to truth. Lowenthal believes that the mistake rests in thinking that fiction is the binary of fact, when the two are not opposites. Proposing that we instead focus on heritage, which for him is history that has been personalised, Lowenthal adds that fabrication is integral to heritage because it calls faith into question. Fabrication points out that it is not truth or history that forms identity, but faith and the desire to believe. Applied to the *Success*, it is clear that the ship was instrumental in providing early twentieth century Australians with a new way of looking and responding to their own identity through the lens of fiction. The scuttling of the *Success* twice in Sydney Harbour clearly indicated that Australians were angered about the misrepresentation of their history which in turn strengthened their heritage.

That *Success* was a museum meant that it functioned just like an archive to group together signs of the past that would, as a whole, represent a collection of artefacts on convict history. The convict ship formed the connection between Australia and England representing one of the colonies of the Empire. That a convict ship should be fabricated, and then passed off for the real in England caused anger because the unity of the Empire's history had been impeached. For the Australians who sang *God Save The Queen*, having history misrepresented, disrupted the view of history as singular and unified. It represented the lack of unification between Australia and England in terms of belief and heritage.

Representations have been made to the owners of the vessel and to the American papers at various times, asking that the truth concerning this vessel should be published, and so remove the stigma attached to the fair name of Australia by showing the vessel under this title.¹⁶

Similarly, here is a letter to the editor of the *West Australian* from as late as 1939:

It ill becomes Australians to jeer at the 'Yankee showmanship' which flaunts this relic for the sake of gain, since it was a syndicate of Australians, and not Americans, who first launched the *Success* on its career as a convict show-boat. And English papers, even more than American papers, create and foster legends about the old ship which do not bear the light of investigation.¹⁷

The Labor Daily in Sydney in 1934 reporting on the *Success* also mentioned an 'angry crowd, incensed that their country's shame should be hawked around.'¹⁸ This demonstrates that Australians were enraged by the misrepresentation of colonial history because they believed it to be a false advertisement of Australian colonial identity.¹⁹ Again in 1932, the Commonwealth government appealed to the US government for the truth to be told about the vessel.²⁰ What angered Australians so much was that their shameful convict heritage was paraded to the antipodes, and that it was a fabrication of an aspect of history that wanted to be forgotten.

¹⁶ Author unknown, *The Age*, 27.10.1928

¹⁷ Cyril Bryan, London, *The West Australian*, 5 November 1939

¹⁸ Author unknown, *London Daily Sydney*, 4 April 1934

¹⁹ Letter to the editor, *Telegraph Sydney*, 1934, *Truth Melbourne*, 31 3 1934

²⁰ Binns, p. 117

The fabrication's ability to provoke such heightened emotion about the past illustrates Lowenthal's theory about heritage. As the letters from Australians demonstrated, the power of the fabrication rested in its ability to arouse such an emotive response from audiences as it forced them to distinguish truth from fiction. The fabrication also prompted audiences to reconsider the faith that they had in their knowledge of heritage, and to go to great lengths to protect it. The fabrication of Australian heritage produced an emotional affect in audiences that resulted in a forging of Australian identity and ancestry. The fabrication in effect 'personalised' Australian history for Australians.

This fabrication served an important and emotive role in that it made audiences rethink key aspects of their cultural identity that were becoming known to the world. Australian audiences refused to believe in the fabricated blemish of their heritage and they went to great lengths to get rid of what they did not want to believe. The scale of this reaction was also perpetuated by the popularity of the fabrication to the rest of the world and the worlds' 'suspension of disbelief' in the fabrication for the sake of the historical entertainment. The worldwide display of the fabrication forced Australian audiences to feel a sense of ownership over their past heritage and want to make it private.

On the other side of the world, the overseas popularity of the *Success* demonstrated the audiences hunger for seeing the past. Despite the anger reportedly felt amongst Australians, the *Success* continued on as a showboat, earning millions for its owners

overseas. The reason for the *Success*' popularity was suggested by Edna Ingram-Moore in a 1929 edition of *The Home* magazine. In her review, she believed that the museums exhibits had a powerful effect on audiences, who were moved by the authenticity of the instruments and the cells below the deck. Moore anecdotally reported hearing one woman exclaim as she was leaving, 'But however could they? Oh! How dreadful-I never dreamed,' suggesting that the museum served to allow audiences to emotionally respond to the displays.²¹ In other words, the visual display facilitated a feeling of compassion and empathy for the distant criminal body.

As an Australian in New York, Moore was asked by the *Home* to investigate whether or not the *Success* had been returned to Australia upon the appeal to the US government. Having viewed the *Success* in Rochester, New York she stated that she went along to see the exhibit as an Australian curious to see national identity reflected in the *Success*:

As Australians we were interested. As Australians in America we were fascinated. For to our consternation, we saw reflected in faces and manners of many Americans the impression which masterful advertising was creating.²²

When it came to writing the article, Moore was aware of the power of the past to 'create' the face of Australia. Despite her awareness that most of the crimes never took place on the *Success*, Moore believed the exhibit was still representative of the

²¹ Moore, p.55

²² Moore, p.56

old convict fleet in its conveyance of horror, punishment and suffering. In the era of sentimentalism, wax work displays of human suffering coupled with visions of the ‘oldest ship in history’ did wonders to ensure the popularity of the *Success* with its engagement of realism, its inclusion of artefacts, photographs and other forms of documentation.²³

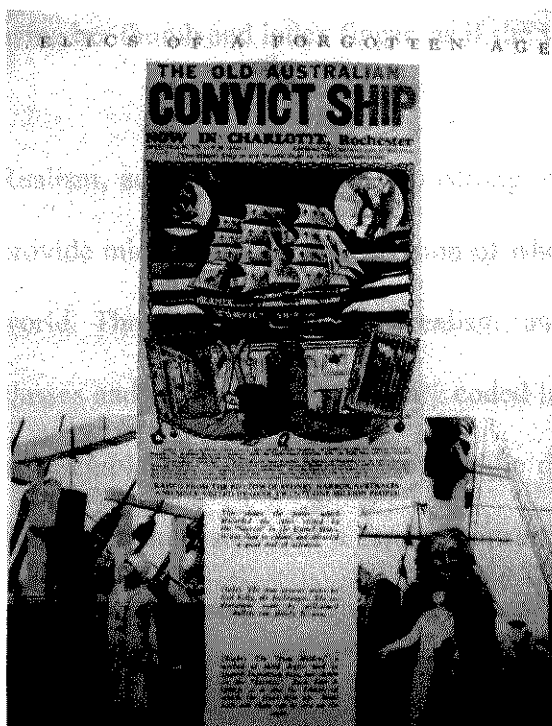


Figure 5.13 *Home* magazine, “Relics of a forgotten age,” Photo spread on the *Success*, *The Home*, April 2nd 1929

In all of the photographs that accompanied the article, two stood out the most to visually describe what audiences would have felt as the wonder of looking at the past. One of the most anachronistic photographs illustrating the article features an

²³ The recognition of human suffering was seen as an inward reflection of moral good. For instance Robert Falcon Scott’s ‘heroic’ attempt to cross Britain resulted in the publication of his diary edited by the author of *Peter Pan*, James Barrie. For accounts of how Sentimentalism came to affect Victorian culture and the rise of social documentary, see Fred Kaplan *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987) p3, “Most Victorians believed that the human community was one of shared moral feelings, and that sentimentality was a desirable way of feeling and expressing ourselves morally.” See ed. Shirley Samuels, *The Culture of Sentiment: Race Gender and Sentimentality in Nineteenth Century America*,(New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Edwardian woman wearing a white dress and hat (fig.5.13), holding a handbag and coat in one hand. In her other hand, she touches the replica of armour worn by Ned Kelly as she looks up to his mask, smiling. In the next photograph she appears again, inside a torture device called the Iron Maiden from the Spanish Inquisition. In the photo, with a dainty grasp she opens the door from the inside of the torture device using her thumb and index finger, as if she were drinking tea from a porcelain cup.

Realism, according to Nancy Armstrong, served a purpose in the Victorian era to provide middle classes with a vision of where they stood in the great archive of the world. Through the culture of realism, audiences were able to learn about other classes and places through a highly coded language of stereotypes based on the idea of resemblance.²⁴ She claims that middle classes were able to establish differences between a mug shot and a family portrait, and thus placate themselves within an order, if not a visual order of things. These images, and in this case, the artefacts on board the *Success* served to provide a clear division between ‘culture and the criminal underworld.’²⁵ Looking at these ‘other worlds,’ audiences could get a glimpse of historical cultural subcultures from the safe distance of the observer. In the antipodes however, the *Success* served to provide Australians with what they knew to be a different image of the Australian criminal world which was closely linked to heritage and the Empire.

²⁴ Armstrong, p. 19

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 19

The archive

What Derrida calls archive fever is the desire to simultaneously create history and establish a patriarchal authority over that history. Derrida argues that the purpose of the archive is thus to locate a historical beginning and a patriarchal authority in the same place. According to Derrida, these two objectives are fundamentally inseparable in meaning from one another, in that they are both signified by the single term, order, which has two meanings.²⁶ Through this, the archive always carries with it the theory of its own institutional make up, it is always striving to make what is external, internal, and what is internal, external. In addition, the archive Derrida claims, gathers together signs that articulate 'the unity of an ideal configuration.'²⁷ In order to articulate this unity, the archive must include the rules that determine what it must include into history and what it must exclude; this is also to say that the archive is therefore the house of public memory and it governs what is remembered and what is repressed from memory. The archive is instrumental in governing the public and the private sphere.

For a 'historical instance' of attempting to create a unified archive of the world through the photograph, Nancy Armstrong claims, 'one can go almost anywhere in Victorian culture.'²⁸ Armstrong points out that the archive was perceived as being instrumental in unifying the expanse of the British Empire, even though it never achieved such unity, only distance. By including all the known people, species,

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1995)

²⁷ Derrida, p.3

²⁸ Armstrong, p.15

plants and places into the archive, the archive would serve to provide a complete, unified vision of the colonial world that also established geographical differences through this mode of classification.

There are similarities between Derrida's archive and Michel Foucault's theory of the birth of the modern institution and his criticisms of systems of power and control through the visual and verbal classification of social bodies such as the criminal, the immigrant, the insane, and so on. This notion of order – to find a single patriarchal point of origin, resembles Foucault's theory of surveillance which uses the observing eye as the point of order. The penal colony that early white Australia was illustrates the geographic distancing and profiling of the criminal body.

As a museum come archive, the *Success* drew together 'artefacts' and images from penal history that were rearranged to provide the public audience in England and America with a vision of the classified Australian criminal body. Despite the fact that the archive was a reproduction of the classificatory techniques of this system and threatened to call into question the logic of this order, white Australian audiences were focused on the inaccuracy of the information in the archive. It is significant that what Australians desired to forget of the convict ship the *Success*, kept coming back. The instability of their history and an independent cultural identity, the blurring of the lines between truth and fiction, the lack of unification between centre and periphery; all were made apparent through the fabricated show

boat. Despite the early Australian response to the horror hoax, the *Success* continues to haunt white colonial history in national archives today.

Paradoxically, as Derrida likes to put it, because the archive wears the theory of its own creation of historical memory, it carries the logic of its very destruction. As such, the archive bears the mark of always being compiled retrospectively. According to Derrida, the paradox of the archive is that whilst it strives to remember it is only ever forgetting, the archive carries the mark of its own death. The death drive, he says 'incites forgetfulness, because the archive ... will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience.'²⁹ For this reason, every reproduction, every compulsion to reproduce, and every repetition that is *included* in the archive cannot be severed from the death drive itself.³⁰ But what is *excluded* from the archive to begin with, is repressed or suppressed, which is what lives on and it continues to return, as haunting.

Archive fever is what Derrida claims is the painful desire for a return to the authentic and singular origin.³¹ It is also what Barthes described as the photographic paradox: that refusal of the photograph, as archive, to offer up the past or to allow the past to be conceived of as duration. Derrida's idea of haunting and the paradox of the death drive that is experienced through archive fever resembles so much the photographic death discourse of Roland Barthes, Cadava and Benjamin that it is impossible to not interchange the written letters of Sigmund Freud which illustrate

²⁹ Derrida, p.9

³⁰ Derrida, p. 85

³¹ Derrida, p.85

Derrida's theory to the photograph itself.³² Is it not this archive fever which causes us to rethink what effects photography as archive has on our interior memory?

With this relationship between public and private memory, voluntary and involuntary memory, what is at stake for fabricating artificial memory within this context, and what is the effect that this on national identity, history and heritage? In the following sections, we will explore, through the contemporary photographic archives, the possibility that fabrication has for providing a new framework for approaching the ways we look at photography, vision, faith and belief.

Success in national archives today

The history of "Success" was gradually blurred until the old trading ship turned prison hulk became known as the 'convict ship from Australia'. A little more exaggeration and "Success" became a convict ship from the First Fleet.³³

Until April 2005, the National Library of Australia (NLA) did not distinguish that *Success* was a fake convict ship. It was possible to learn of such a detail, however this involved looking into the ship in the 'Ships' archive of the NLA. For the average viewer in the picture archive, *Success*' photographs intermingle with other photographs of convict artefacts and empty convict prisons. The photographs of the *Success* amount to ten out of 600,000 images that there are in its holdings.

³² The topic of Derrida's archive fever are the letters of Sigmund Freud and email.

³³ Judy Newland, Pictures Collection, NLA, <http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/gateways/archive/74/success%20photo.html>, April 2005

Considered in the context of this archive as a whole, the *Success* photographs form a comparatively minor part of Australian heritage. However, within the subdivision of genres such as convict history, and the photographer John Watt Beattie's collection, the number of images form a greater part of settlement history. In these categories the *Success*' real history is not distinguished.



Figure 5.14 J.W. Beattie, *Tehaka -Maori Warriors Bound For Egypt*, Mitchell Library, 1914; and J.W. Beattie, *Aborigines Oyster Cove*, Mitchell Library, 1900-1925 Beattie



Figure 5.15 J.W. Beattie, *Adamson's Peak, Port Arthur*, National Library of Australia, no date; and J.W. Beattie, *Bush Log Hauler Saw Mills*, National Library of Australia, no date

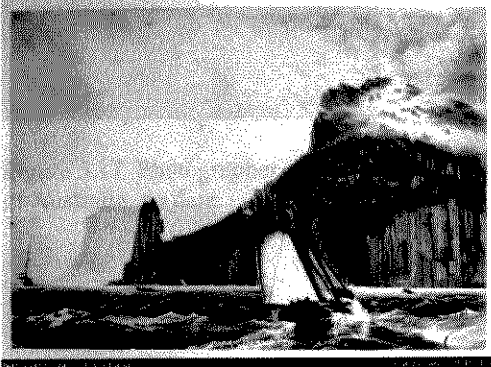


Figure 5.16 J.W. Beattie, *Cape Pilar, Tasman's Peninsula*, National Library of Australia, nd; and J.W. Beattie, *Interior model prison Port Arthur*, Mitchell Library, no date

Most of the photographs of the *Success* exist through those taken by John Watt Beattie, Tasmania's official photographer.³⁴ Beattie was a prolific photographer in Tasmania of landscape scenes, the prisons of Port Arthur, the West Pacific, and printed Roald Amundsen's photographic records from his expedition to South Pole. Most of his photographs form a large part of documentation on Tasmania which he documented extensively and compiled into albums. Beattie's albums are now in the collection of the National Library of Australia, the Mitchell Library, the State Library of Victoria, and the National Museum of Australia, and the State Library of Tasmania.



Figure 5.17 Photographer unknown, *J.W. Beattie Photographer South Sea Islands*, National Library of Australia, no date.

³⁴ Michael Roe, *Australian Dictionary of Biography online*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070230b.htm?hilite=beattie>, October, 2005.

It is not known whether or not Beattie originally knew that he was photographing a hoax. However he was known for painting over his photographs, and stretching the truth in this way.³⁵ Notably, his collection also contained photographs of paintings depicting scenes prior to the invention of photography, demonstrating that he believed that photographing replicas were another way of attaining stand in visual representations. Photographed in the same style as the rest of his photographic subject matter, the *Success* blended in with photographs of paintings of Tasmanian landscapes, prisons of Port Arthur, Indigenous, death masks, the chained Indigenous, photographs of illustrations, governors, model panoptic prisons and so on.

As a national archive, the NLA's picture holdings as a whole provide an ever expanding fragmentation of images of Australia and the history of Australians, along with its diverse multiculturalism, its colonial past, and pictures of the Indigenous in the various stages of their inclusion and exclusion from the archive. Beattie's photographic album serves to provide an illustration of the fragmentary images, and the *Success* provides artificial visual memories of convict cells which have now become a part of the Australia's First Fleet heritage. Without any distinction between truth and make believe, *Success*' is inserted into both Beattie's archive and the convict archive.

What is included in our national picture archive spans across paintings drawings and photographs, and a number of these are available through an online database. Here

³⁵ Michael Roe, *Australian Dictionary of Biography online*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070230b.htm?hilite=beattie>, October, 2005.

all of history appears to be at your fingertips: from Beattie's Tasmania in the nineteenth century to Sydney in the twentieth. However, the foreseeable complications within this expanding photographic universe, are that visual images do not translate to verbal classifications, and they do not readily subdivide into distinctions between truth and fiction. The limitations of archiving techniques and the difficulty of reconciling visual descriptions with written ones throw us even further away from the *distant*. With the shift from the archaic filing cabinet to the internet based archive our national history is now separated from the tactile experience of touching the analogue photograph (unless one goes to the much greater effort of visiting the picture archive in person). Experiencing the past is now a visual experience.

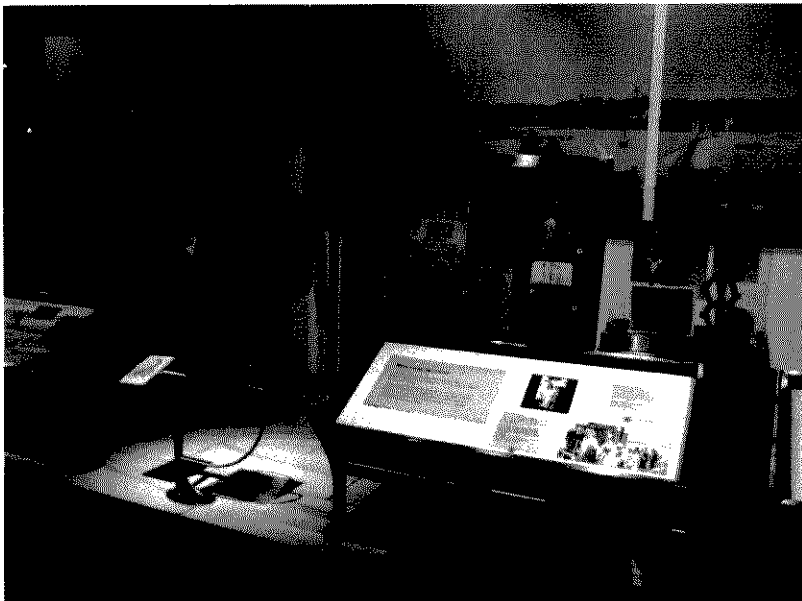


Figure 5.18 Photographer Sara Oscar, *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia Since 1788*, National Museum of Australia, 2007



Figure 5.19 Sara Oscar, *Success* display, *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia Since 1788*, National Museum of Australia, 2007

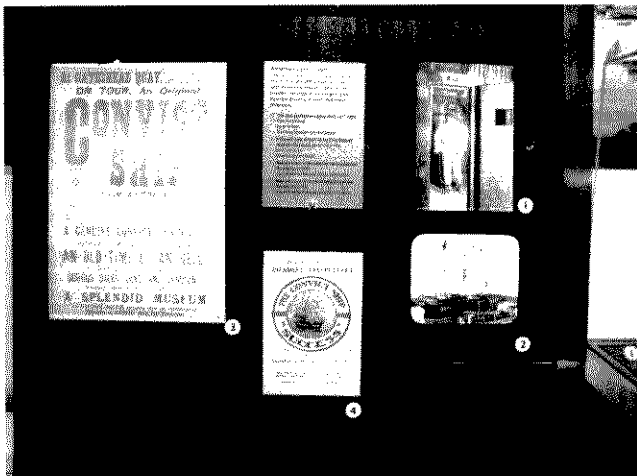


Figure 5.20 Sara Oscar, *Success* display, *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia Since 1788*, National Museum of Australia, 2007

If our approach to fabrications and simulacras has changed since the modern era, it is well demonstrated in the inclusion of the *Success* within the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The National Museum houses a section devoted to Australia's convict settlement history called *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia Since 1788*. The exhibit displays many items and articles that have come to be considered icons

of this aspect of white Australian identity. Along one wall of *Horizons* is a small display of four photographs from *Success*. Alongside this is a plaque that states it was:

A floating convict museum, *The Success* was a former convict transport ship. In the early 1890s it was fitted out with waxwork scenes of convict life, which included real relics. It drew large crowds in Australia, Britain and the United States of America.³⁶

This message doesn't distinguish that the *Success* was a fabrication either, taking up the fictional account of the *Success*. This message sits next to Beattie's photograph of a life size wax figure of a hand-cuffed convict in a prison cell, a photograph of the floating *Success* museum docked at Circular Quay, a Broadsheet advertisement from the early nineteenth century, and a tourist brochure from the *Success*. Next to this display is a glass cabinet that contains the covers of canonical books on convict heritage, such as Sir Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life*, and Robert Hughes' historical account in *The Fatal Shore*. On the other side of the *Success* exhibit is a pristine replica of a convict uniform inside a glass case. In this context, the documentation of the *Success* serves, like the replica and the books, to illustrate convict history. Here, the 'convict transport ship' better serves to fill in the abyss of penal history, for revealing its original history would be an exercise in tautology, only drawing attention to the amount of replicas, and visual representations there really are.

³⁶ *Success* didactic, *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia Since 1788*, National Museum of Australia, 2007

Australia's development as a nation since white settlement has largely been documented through photography, which played a role in the invention of an idea of white Australia as a nation. With its removal of prisoners from England to Australia as a part the Victorian culture of containment, the birth of white Australia forms a part of Michel Foucault's work on the birth of the institution and the ordering of the positivistic sciences, such as astronomy, and sociology. Australia as a penal colony could be seen to be a reflection of the culture of surveillance and control, taking the method of positivistic categorisation from botany and astronomy to the human body.³⁷ The photographing of Australian history could therefore be seen as complying with Foucault's account of surveillance, mirroring his belief that man is an invention of recent date.

For the large part, the documentation of Australia's white history began in the era of the camera. To observe the history of photography, or to try and locate a photographic paradigm within Australian photography, or in the documentation of any place is to therefore question, as Geoffrey Batchen asks, 'in what ways is any photography informed by its place of production?' Furthermore, he asks, 'how do we delimit any photography's identity?'³⁸ Through this line of questioning, Batchen really asks, how are we to better understand the significance of photography through the use of photography to archive places, peoples, plant species and so on?

³⁷ Batchen, "Australian Made," *Each Wild Idea*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002) p.27

³⁸ *ibid*, p.27

Within the Foucaultian model of the panopticon, visual representations have served to point out all of the cultural stereotypes and brandings that are a product of the idea of nation, an attempt to unify and know a place through order. Through Foucault then, John Tagg's concept of 'currency' to this extent is exposed in the analysis of photographs, such as those that subscribe to an order of the 'state.' An examination of Australian photographs, in this case will also be an analysis of social practises as they are materialised in photographs. Photography, as we remember, has no identity of its own, it is only ever a product of its cultural make up. To that end, every nuance, and every visual sign that we can read, every stereotype that we can identify is also a product of this cultural conditioning.³⁹ Within this model then, our capacity to read photographs as history is also conditioned by the ideological 'apparatus of the state.' To insert the *Success* into the framework provided by Foucault and Tagg, is to lead into a belief that the photograph cannot escape the history of the state, or the context in which the photograph has been circulated. To this end it is as de Certeau puts it: 'perhaps the system of discipline and control which took shape in the nineteenth century is today itself 'vampirized' by other procedures,' such as carrying with it the conditions of its own fabrication – or its archivization.⁴⁰

Setting a fabrication loose inside a national archive is to facilitate a return of that which has been excluded from the archive, fiction. The consequences of fabricating material which is to be included into a national archive then calls into question what selection criteria, what modes of classification limit what we can know of ourselves

³⁹ Tagg, "The Currency of the Photograph," p.125

⁴⁰ Michel de Certeau, p. 49

and the world. This challenges us to rethink what it is that governs our relationship to our own 'national' history; to authenticity, and to the privilege of the visual.

As the photograph has continued to resemble the archive, it can also be seen to, as Nancy Armstrong put it, follow the 'cultural logic' of archive fever.⁴¹ To say that the photograph is an archive is to also say that photographs govern our experience of the everyday and inform us of what is real, through the endless circulation of the inside to the outside. It is also to say that the archive is the prosthetic body. In the previous chapters, I have stated that this was established in other systems of representation such as painting, drawing and literature that predated photography. The fragility of the visual, of the archive and its ability to be manipulated by other systems such as fabrication also illustrate that archives are an unstable way of storing memory and knowledge. If the archive has done anything, it has formed a relationship between seeing and knowing to the extent that such visual representations now drive belief.

⁴¹ Armstrong, p.15

6. INTO THIS WILD ABYSS

Putting theory into practise, and practise into theory

These Antipodes call to one's mind old recollections of childish doubt and wonder. Only the other day I looked forward to this airy barrier as a definite point in our journey homewards; but now I find it, and all such resting places for the imagination, are like shadows, which a man moving onwards cannot catch.

Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle*¹

When I began producing this body of work in 2002, I wanted to make a curiosity cabinet filled with tangentially related objects and photographs. I sought to make something that would fit into what Jorge Luis Borges, quoted by Foucault, so elegantly described as the absurdly eclectic 'Chinese encyclopaedia.'² I wanted to make an incomplete universe, as if a child had gone on a voyage of discovery in search of artefacts to learn about the universe, to fill in the many gaps of knowledge.

The Horniman Museum is a nineteenth century natural history museum in London that I used to visit frequently. From my visits there, I became deeply fascinated by its archaic systems for archiving and taxonomy. The displays of marine life I loved the most, the beautifully inaccurate sculpture of a blue sperm whale that looks like a giant blue log. From there, the slightly deformed polar bear that loomed in centre of the room looking down upon the monkeys, and the bats. In the Horniman, the whole

¹ As quoted in V.S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness*, (London: Picador, 2002) p. 21

² Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. xviii

animal kingdom was before me, but it was all just slightly wrong. But I didn't care, to me the Horniman represented the failure to organise and represent the whole natural world. In this museum, there was a strange relationship between what I could see, and what I 'knew' of these living species that didn't reconcile. It was like someone had fashioned them from verbal descriptions and drawings, and it was a source of great inspiration to me.

Before I came to commence this research project, I was making photographs that were faint images on white photographic paper called *Our Lady of Coogee* (2002). They are impossible to reproduce, and so I will describe them here. Each photograph was printed on a semi-gloss surface of paper and it featured images that were a faint grey. The images couldn't be seen totally, but required that the viewer move around the image, trace the lines on the photograph with their eye. It required that they engage in a leap of faith, and infer their imagination onto the missing portions of the image. I used the material surface of the photograph, and the material was part of the work itself. Similarly, in another body of work, I made a photographic video where I took hundreds of photographs and reanimated them using video editing technology. They were looped, and edited across television screens in a staggered sequence. It resembled a historical documentary, where the camera pans across images, bringing these images back to life – giving the still photograph back its own time. My practise before I came to this project was concerned with the photographic disruption of the passage of time, the awareness of distance that is brought about through the photograph. At the same time, my photographic work also involved

grouping photographs together according to patterns that they displayed in the frames and of course, faith and belief.

I made *Saturday Disappearance* (fig 6.1) for an exhibition that I curated called *Me and My Coma* at Firstdraft Gallery in 2003. It was a show about how artists come to terms with their existential anxiety using humour and art. When I made the work *Saturday Disappearance* (2003) I was interested in landscape issues, in the idea of a creation of an artificial landscape such as a garden. I selected a golf course for its gentle rolling hills and carefully planted trees. I also chose to photograph the golf course for what I thought was a strange sport. There are eighteen or nine holes that send the golfer on a circuitous tour of a fashioned landscape where the focal point is then a hole. In this work, I wanted to forge an unnatural connection between the images, and the objects in front of them: pieces of turf and wooden tees, as a way of drawing attention to the artificiality of the 'natural landscape' itself. In addition, I wanted to create a sense of seriality: to create a taxonomical aesthetic of the same – to suggest that each hole itself had been documented, that half the course was there in totality.

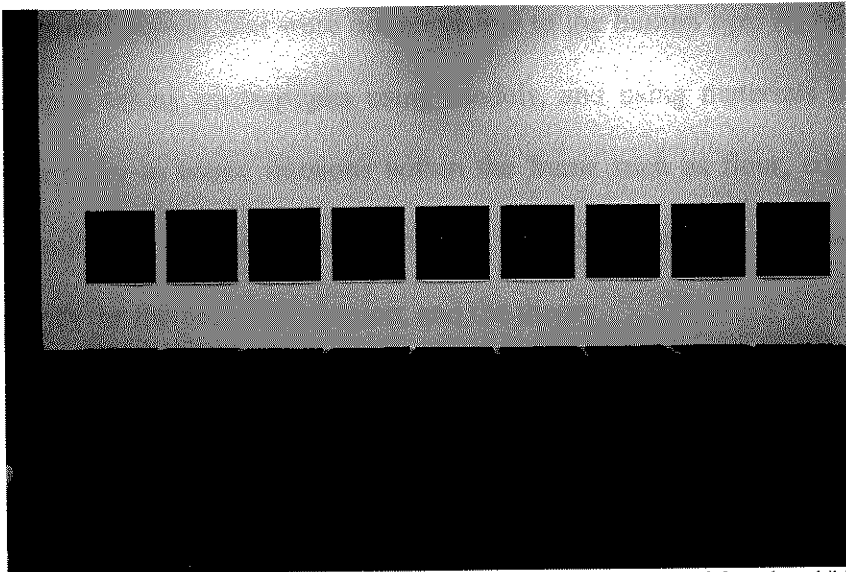


Figure 6.1., Sara Oscar, *Saturday Disappearance* (2003) C-type photographs, astro turf, from the exhibition *Me and My Coma*, 2003

When I came to make this body of work, I knew that I didn't want to make a literal translation of studio work and theory. Instead, I make the connection between studio practise and theory as being like a Möbius strip, with studio practise informing theory and theory informing practise. To that end, this body of work I have made responds to and has informed the themes within this dissertation. Truth, faith, vision, belief, knowledge, repetition, reproduction, original, artifice, nature, collecting, classification, misinformation, simulation, identification, and memory: these are the themes that inform this body of work.

To fabricate my own 'archive of the world' I wanted to use both sculpture and photography. Photography for its material affectation - which was a continuation from the work that I had previously made - for its relationship to the temporal, and for its two dimensional rendering of three dimensional space. Sculpture because it was a tangible medium, and because it allowed me a certain degree of freedom to

create scenes and objects that were not so visible to the human eye. At that stage, I had also begun taking photographs using models, and using materials that had a particular capacity to create illusions within the frame such as flour, cotton wool, fairy floss and plaster. And so it began here with the connections between these materials, with the themes of fabrication, and the theory.

In this exhibition, there are a number of works which come together to form the show *Into this wild abyss* (fig. 6.2) that have been made over a four year period. Each work addresses the themes of the research and is situated against and in contrast to another work to suggest a dialectical relationship that plays on the themes in the dissertation.

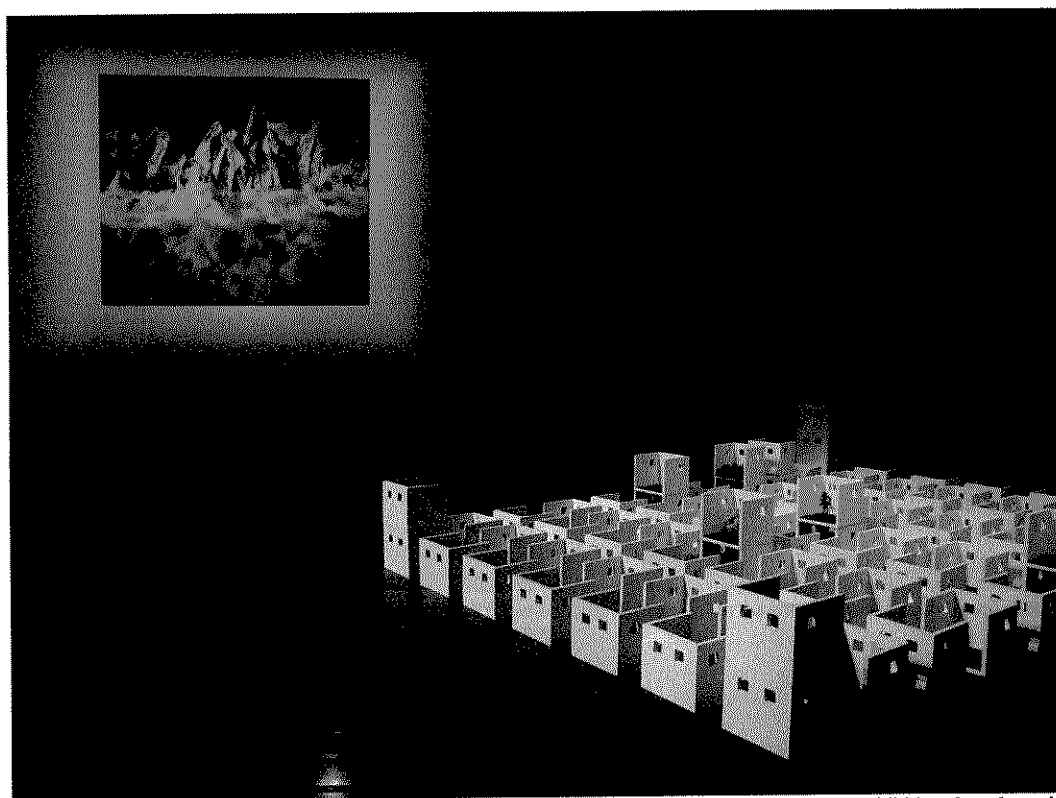


Figure 6.2., Sara Oscar, Installation view of *Morning* featured on the wall and *Trees Houses* from the exhibition, *Into this wild abyss*, 2007

Saturn Return

At the point of making the series *Saturn Return* (fig. 6.3 – 5). I wanted to create photographic works using paper, plasticine, cotton wool, plaster, and thread to make a 'landing on the moon.' My choice to use these domestic objects was a way of seeing how far I could travel without having to leave my house. I mapped my techniques over those used by the nineteenth century astronomer, James Nasmyth to fabricate his scenes of the moon. In some way, this was also a means of getting closer to his work, to try and understand what he was doing by 'reworking' his method. In this process of re-enactment I felt like an astronomer myself, drawing lunar craters, drawing Nasmyth's photographs, sculpting them out of plaster, and lighting them to simulate the suns rays.

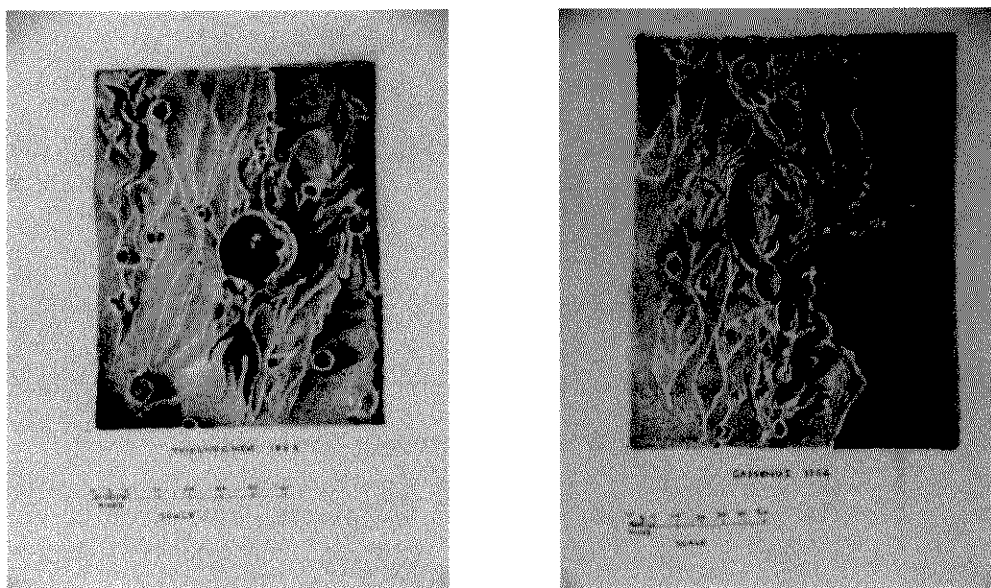


Figure 6.3 Sara Oscar, *Triesnecker after Nasmyth*, and *Gassendi after Nasmyth* from the series *Saturn Return* Pencil sketch, 2006

This moving backwards and forwards between Nasmyth's experiments and my own experimentation was a way of learning more about the way that he produced objects

through the process of copying. My initial drawn translations of Nasmyth's work were ridiculously inaccurate, and I decided to go with that aesthetic. I wanted the photographs to look imperfect, in great contrast to the high resolution 'perfect' satellite photographs that NASA pump out. In doing this, it was my intention to draw attention to the relationship between seeing and knowing that appears to be a perfectly natural one. By making a work that was inaccurate, I wanted to play on the idea that these photographs were filled with childish curiosity for the world, made by someone whose brain was a blank slate.

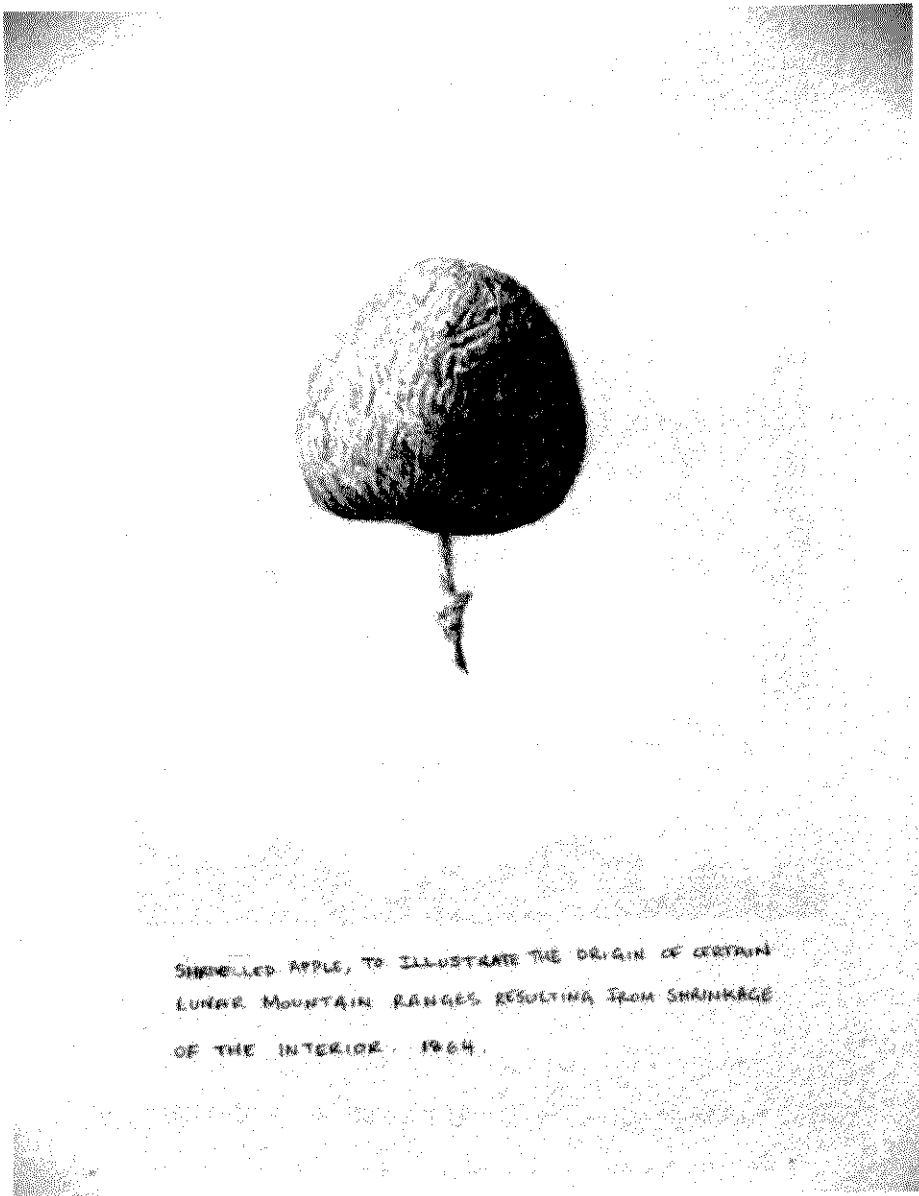
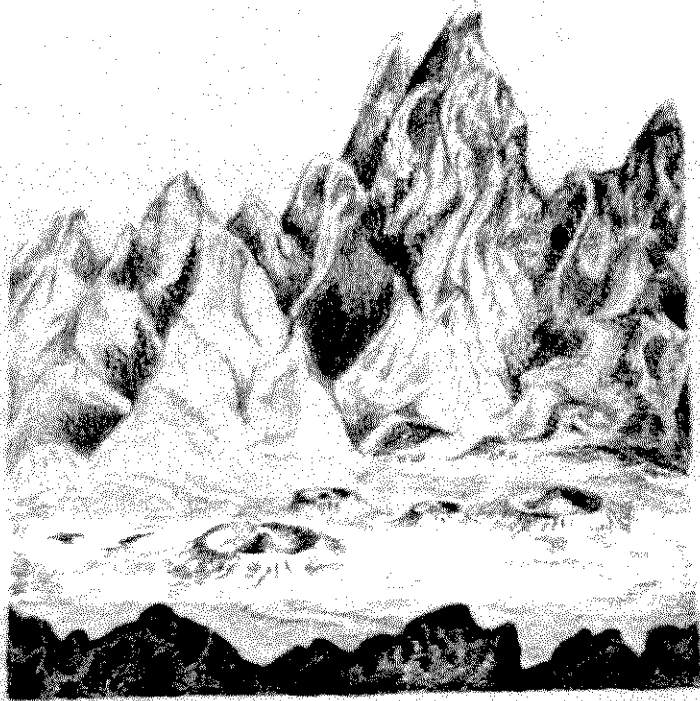


Figure 6.4 Sara Oscar, *Shrivelled apple after Nasmyth*, from the series *Saturn Return*, 2006



AN IDEAL SKETCH OF "PICO" AN ISOLATED LUNAR
MOUNTAIN 5000 FEET HIGH, AS IT WOULD POSSIBLY
APPEAR IF SEEN BY A SPECTATOR LOCATED ON THE
MOON. 1874.

Figure 6.5 Sara Oscar, *An ideal sketch of "Pico" after Nasmyth*, from the series *Saturn Return*, pencil sketch, 2006

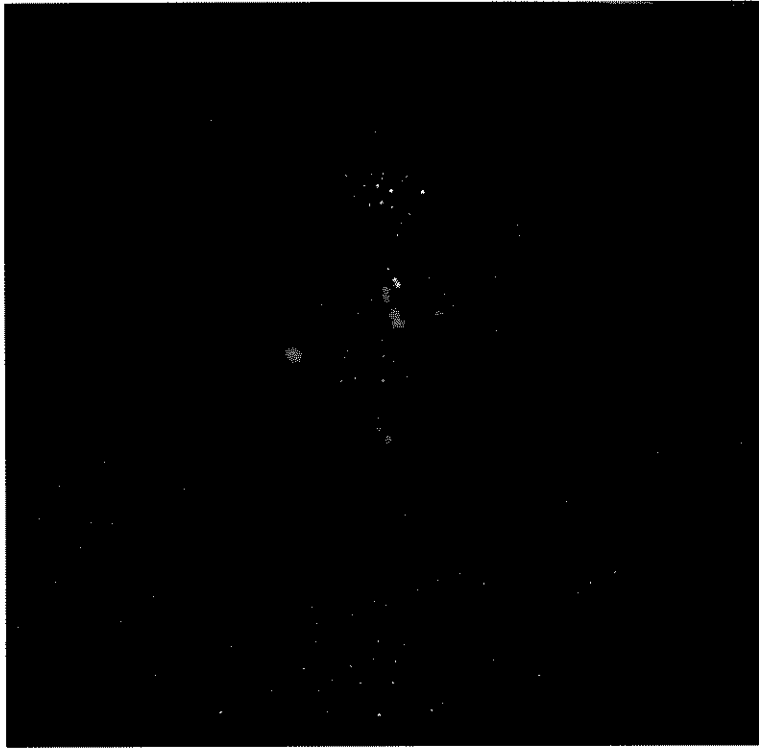


Figure 6.6 Sara Oscar, *Cardboard and cotton wool*, from the series *Saturn Return*, 2006, Photograph



Figure 6.7 Sara Oscar, Installation view of the *Saturn Return series* and *Morning* from the exhibition *Into this wild abyss*, 2007



Figure 6.8 Sara Oscar, Detail, *Saturn Return* series from the exhibition, *Into this wild abyss*, 2007

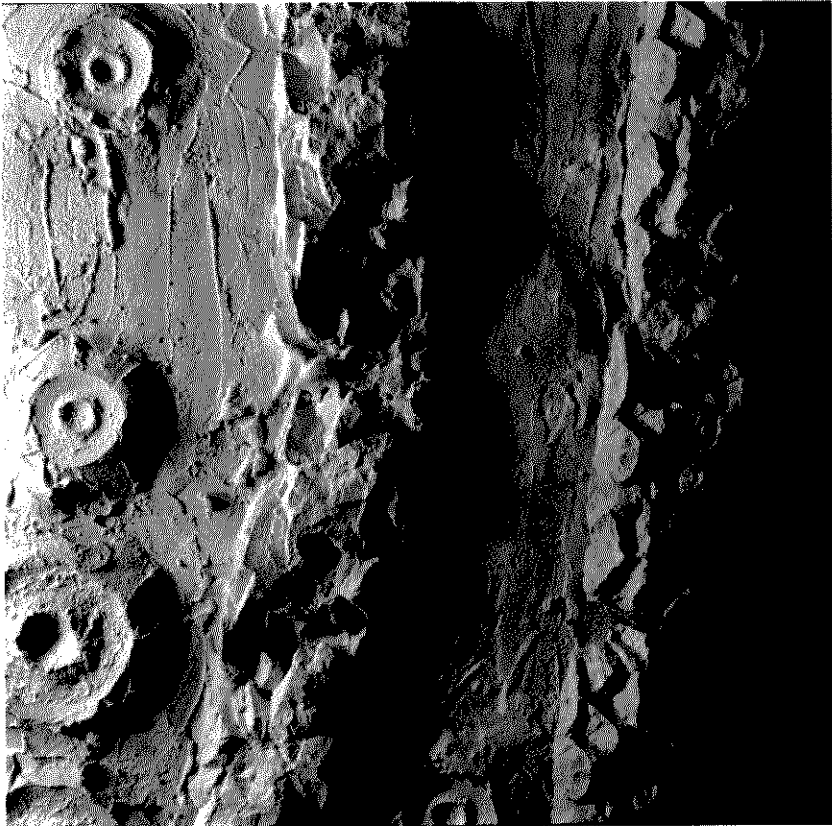


Figure 6.9 Sara Oscar, *Plaster*, from the series *Saturn Return*, 2006, Photograph



Figure 6.10 Sara Oscar. Installation view from the exhibition *Into this Wild Abyss*, 2007

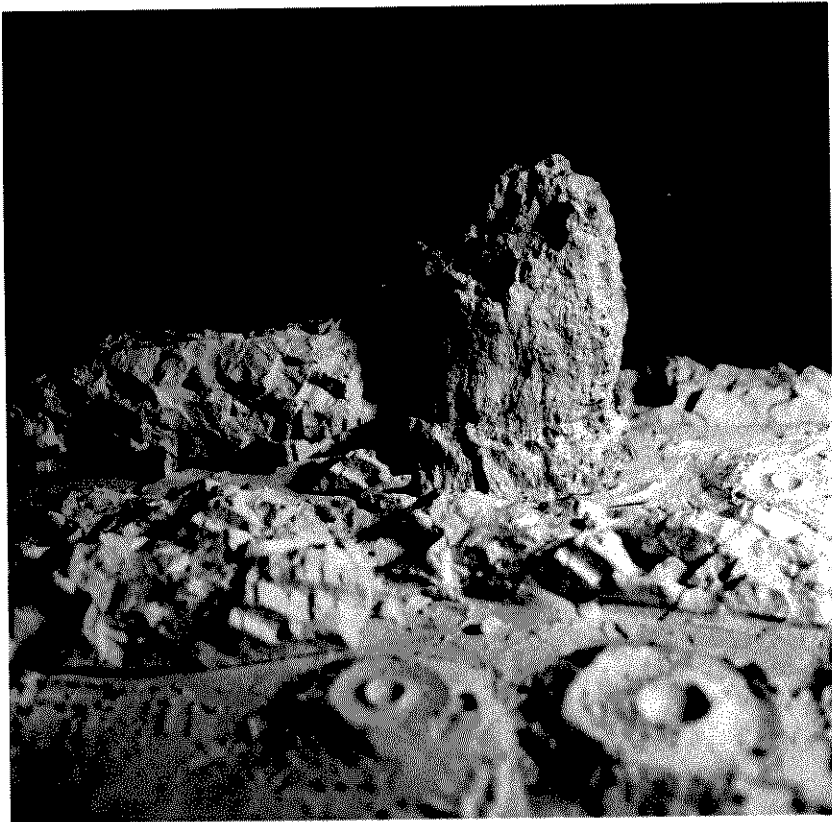


Figure 6.11 Sara Oscar. *Plaster and Cardboard, or the moon's Vesuvius* as it would appear to a spectator standing on its surface from the series *Saturn Return*, 2006, Photograph

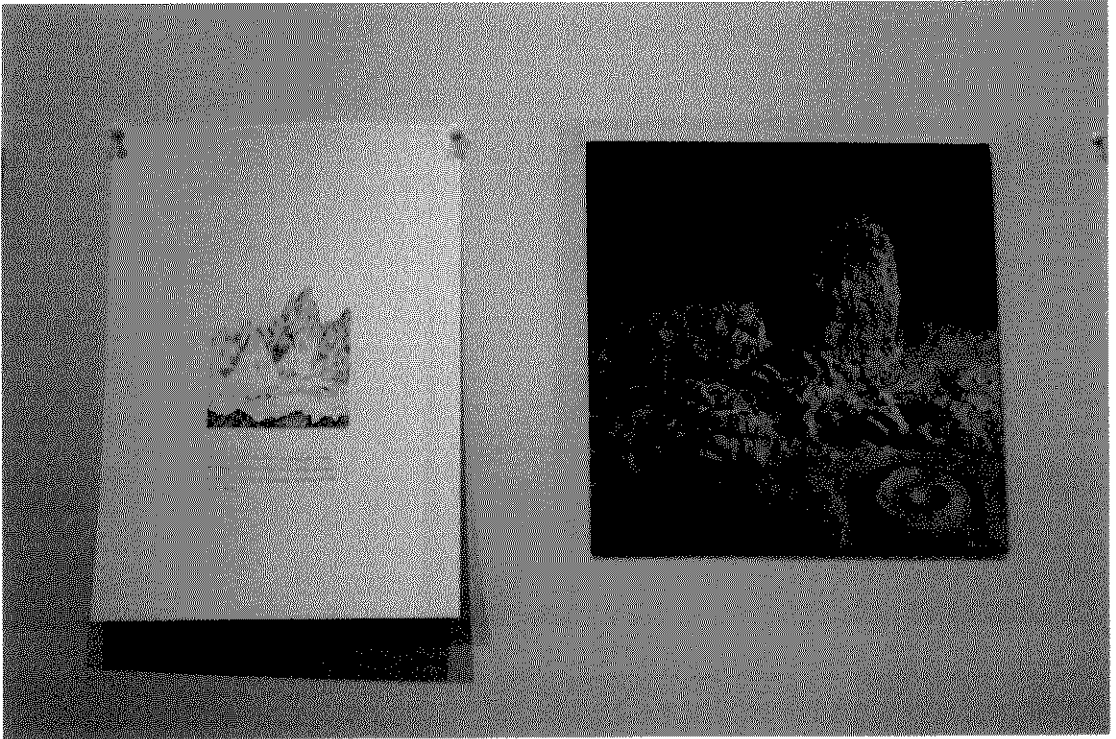


Figure 6.12 Sara Oscar, detail from the series, *Saturn Return* as featured in the exhibition, *Into this wild abyss*, 2007

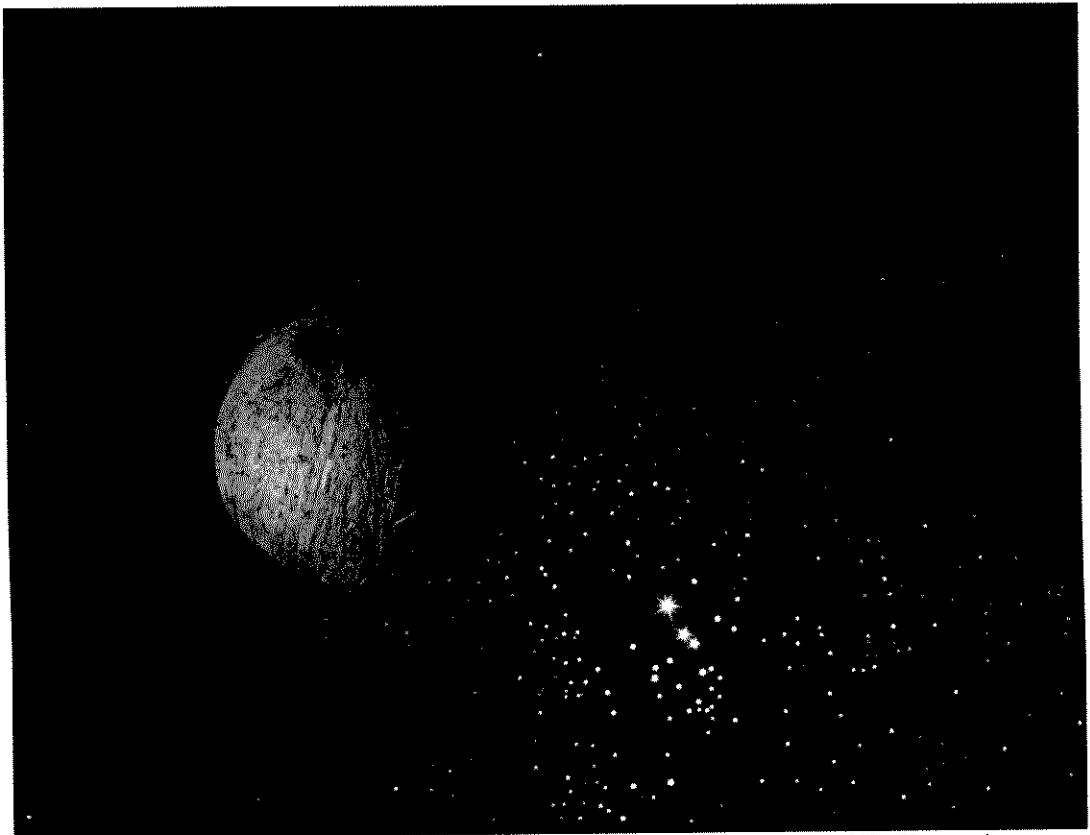


Figure 6.13 Sara Oscar, *Coconut planet suspension*, 2006 from the series *Saturn Return*, 2006, Photograph

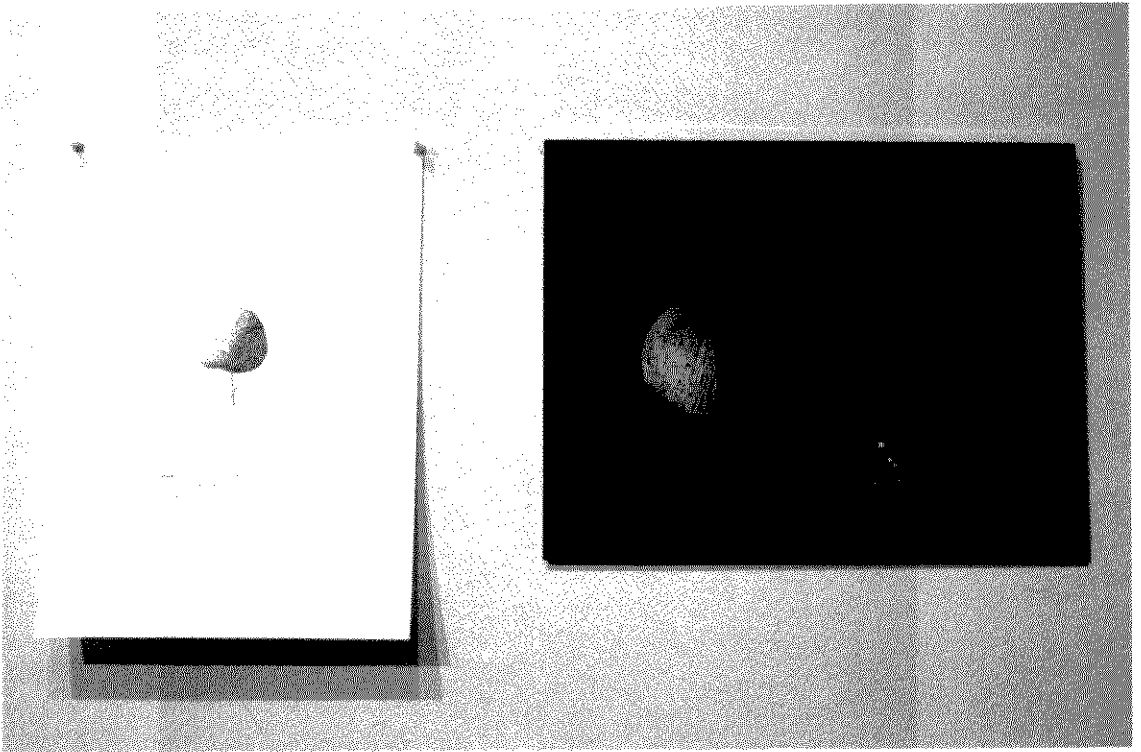


Figure 6.14 Sara Oscar, *Into this wild abyss*, 2007, installation detail featuring images from the *Saturn Return* series



Figure 6.15 Sara Oscar, *Into this wild abyss*, 2007 installation detail featuring images from the *Saturn Return* series

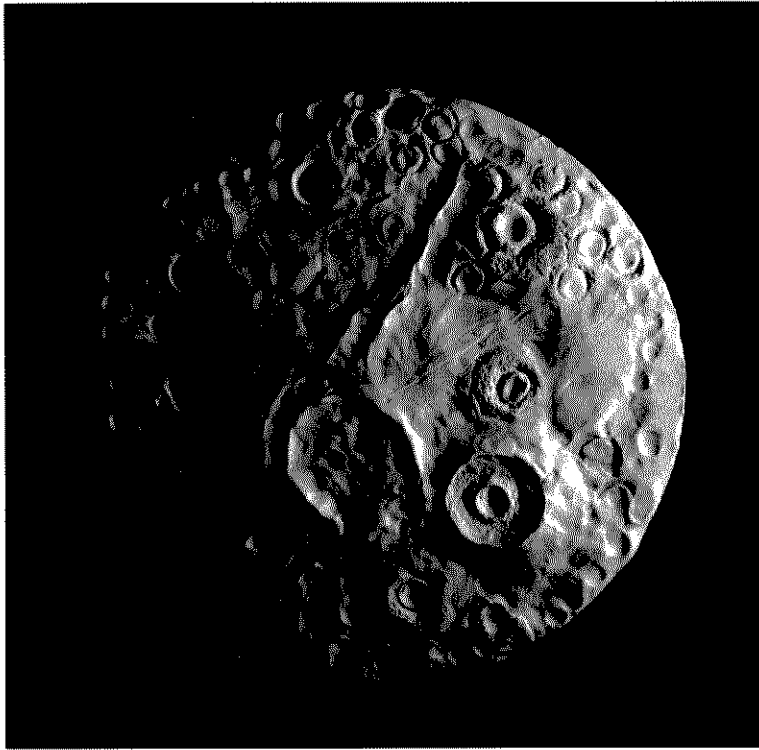


Figure 6.16 Sara Oscar, *Plasticine moon*, from the series *Saturn Return*, 2006. Photograph

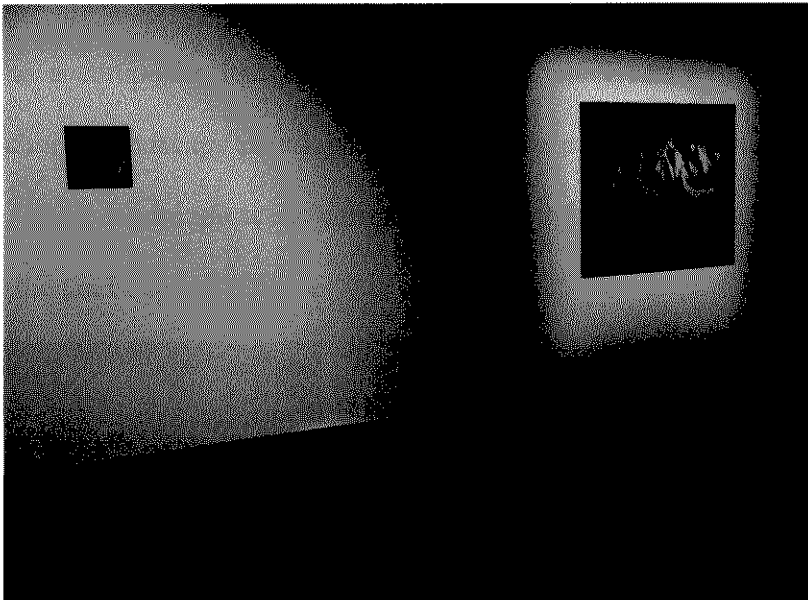


Figure 6.17 Sara Oscar, installation view *Into this Wild Abyss* featuring *Plasticine Moon*, 2006, *Pinocchio topiary (the wanderer)*, 2003, and *Midnight, looking out to mountains*, 2007

Morning and Midnight

In the works *Morning, looking out to mountains* and *Midnight looking out to mountains* (2007) I wanted to create a relationship between two photographs in such a way as to suggest that they had a temporal connection. I intended to artificially create records of the passing of time. For this work, I fabricated 'alpine' mountain peaks using architectural modelling materials, flour, cotton wool, and fishing line. Through my research I learnt that cotton wool had been used in special effects to create 'make believe' table-top photographs of reconnaissance war plane photography.³ Plain flour was also used in cinematic special effects to simulate snow.⁴ These 'special effect' materials were arranged and rearranged in both the photographs and the mountains were also lit according to night and day. But at the same time as providing this illusion, I wanted to expose it. I wanted to destroy what I was simultaneously trying to fabricate. Moreover, the mountains were constructed according to a composite image of every alpine view I can remember seeing in tourist brochures, landscape paintings and so on. *Morning and Midnight* (2007) is a composite 'ideal' landscape scene composed to the rule of thirds, a traditional way of framing the landscape.

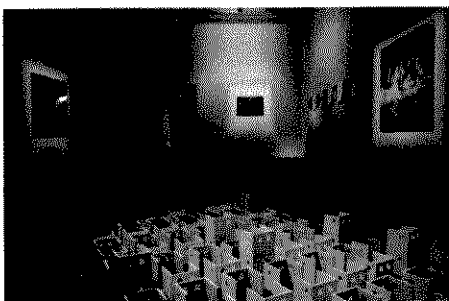


Figure 6.18 Sara Oscar Installation detail, *Into this Wild Abyss*, featuring *Midnight* (left) and *Morning* (right), 2007

³ Ann Elias, "Make Believe, Australian Amateur Table Top Photographs of 1942 Faking Enemy Combat and War Action Abroad" in *Art and Australia*, Vol 36, No3, 1999, pp 379 - 385

⁴ *An Aside* selected by Tacita Dean, Catalogue, Camden Arts Centre, February – May 2005



Figure 6.19 Sara Oscar, *Morning, looking out to mountains*, Photograph, 2007 and *Midnight, looking out to mountains* Photograph, 2007

The tip of erupting Mount Vesuvius



Figure 6.20 Sara Oscar, *The Tip of Erupting Mount Vesuvius*, Photograph, 2007

Made from the same materials as *Morning and Midnight* (2007), the work *The Tip of Erupting Mount Vesuvius* (2007) (fig 5.20) references the materials used to create optical tricks in cinematic special effects. The photograph also plays on an image from James Nasmyth's *The Moon* called "Crater of Mount Vesuvius," (fig 5.21) and uses similar modelling techniques to fabricate the lunar craters of the

moon. For James Nasmyth, the volcano was particularly symbolic in that it bridged the distance between the earth and the moon. Nasmyth believed that lunar craters on earth resembled those on the moon and this helped him come to terms with the age of the earth. In my interpretation of Nasmyth's work, the image takes on the colours of Neapolitan ice cream, a fluffy white plume of smoke shoots straight out of the chocolate apex of a mountain into a candy pink sky. In using these colours, I wanted the photograph to take on a naïve aesthetic and evoke the idea that the image was fashioned according to verbal descriptions, as Nasmyth's image appears to be. In the exhibition, the work bridges my own photographs of mountains on the earth and the moon and the images featuring archaeological reconstructions. As it is used in Nasmyth's project, my photograph asks the viewer to apply their own powers of deductive reasoning and make 'cause and effect' connections between the architectural and landscape works.



Figure 6.21 James Nasmyth. *The Moon*, Plate I, "Crater of Mount Vesuvius 1864", 1874

Pinocchio topiary (the wanderer)

Pinocchio topiary (the wanderer) (2003) (fig. 6.22 - 24), plays on the themes of misinformation and artifice. The object is made out of architectural clump foliage, a material that train set fanatics and architects use to create model landscapes. Making this image, I wanted to create an object that appeared as if it was once a statue that was so old it had been covered in foliage, but it had to look clumsy. The sculpture takes the story of Pinocchio, the little boy who was once made out of wood. Traditionally, Pinocchio tells lies and each time he does his nose grows longer as a consequence. However, here Pinocchio is presented as a topiary tree; a landscaped garden feature who is a trace of the boy who was once made from wood. Placed in the centre of the room of *Into this Wild Abyss*, Pinocchio stands by himself as if to be engaged in an act of observation, and is surrounded by works evoking the aesthetic of amateur science.



Figure 6.22 Sara Oscar, *Into this Wild Abyss* installation detail featuring *Pinocchio Topiary (the wanderer)* 2003



Figure 6.23 Sara Oscar, *Pinocchio Topiary (the wanderer)* 2003, clump foliage, and, Sara Oscar, study for *Pinocchio Topiary (the wanderer)*

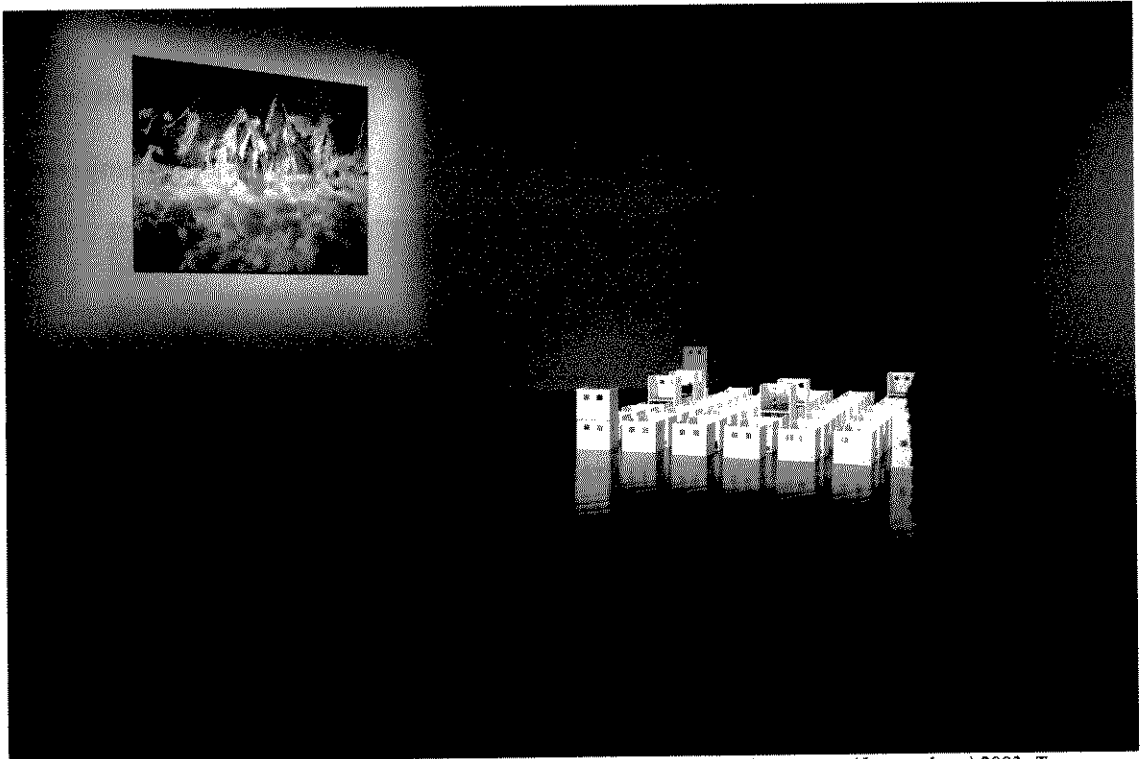


Figure 6.24 Sara Oscar, *Into this wild abyss* (2007) installation detail featuring *Pinocchio topiary (the wanderer)* 2003, *Trees Houses* 2005, *Morning, looking out to mountains*, 2007

One Hundred Trees Houses

When I made *Trees Houses* (2005) (fig. 5.25) I wanted to recreate an image of what it would be like to look over a housing estate from an aerial perspective. I wanted to translate a three-dimensional object using a hypothetical two-dimensional image. At the same time, like the golf course work, the tree houses were a way of establishing a system of classification and identification based on the repetitious aesthetic of taxonomy. There are one hundred houses arranged into rows of ten by ten, in lines of slight order and disorder, the houses resemble both a model suburb, and the subdivision within an archive itself. They were based on Jacob Riis' models of a tenement suburb and the photographs that he had made of air shafts as a documentary series. By building houses in line with pictures that I had seen and then translated, I wanted to perpetuate a way of seeing the three dimensional object in two dimensions.

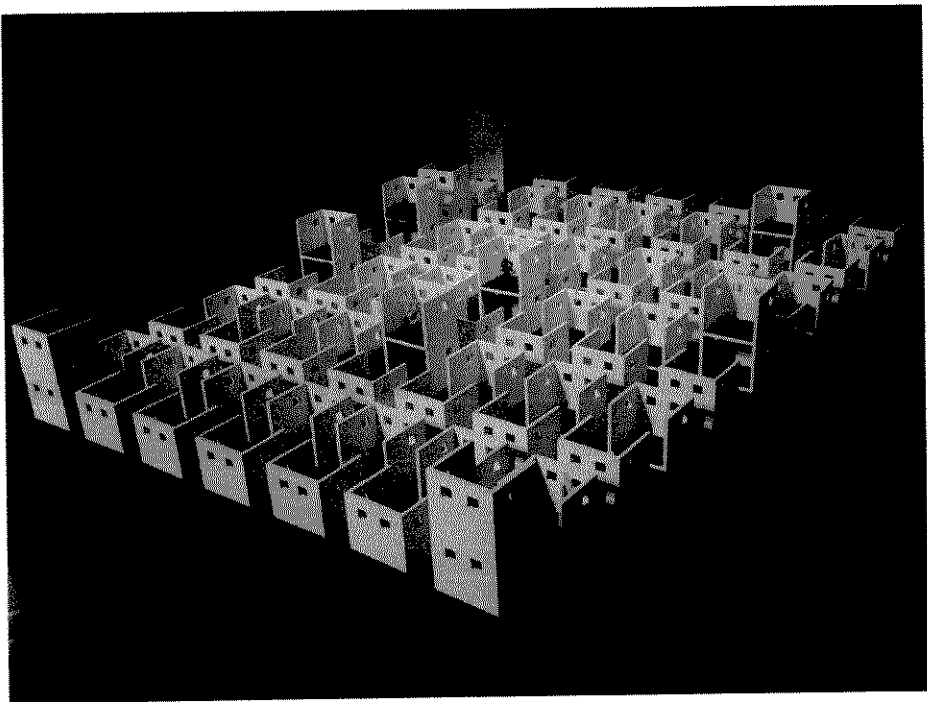


Figure 6.25 Sara Oscar, *One Hundred Trees Houses*, sculpture, 2005

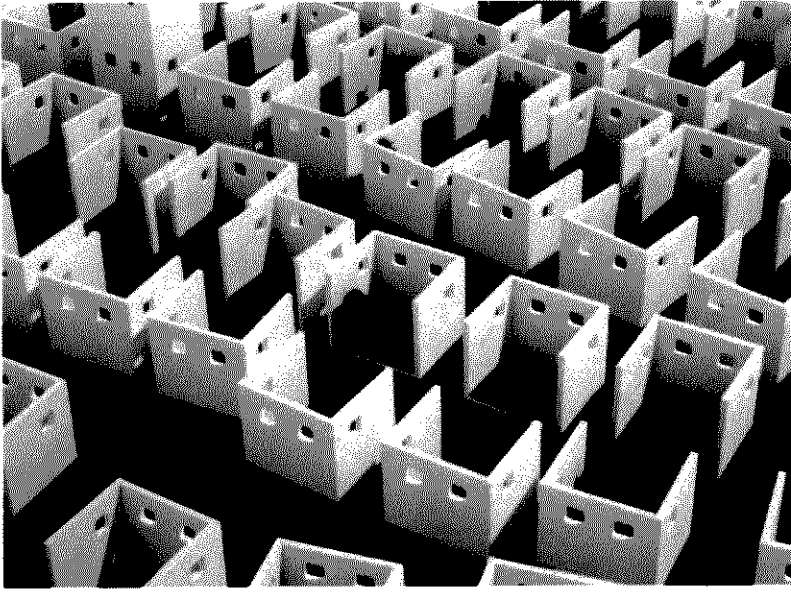


Figure 6.26 Sara Oscar, detail, *One hundred Trees Houses* (2003), MDF, model trees, green carpet, dimensions variable

Plasticine archaeology (after Vesuvius)

Plasticine archaeology (after Vesuvius), 2007 (fig. 5.27) is a plasticine 'archaeological reconstruction' of the façade of a building. The photograph is based on a display in the Musée de Arlés in Arles, France (fig. 5.28) in which the façade of an old building has been reconstructed featuring a headless statue in the foreground. I found the reconstruction of scant archaeological artefacts filling in white outlines representing a building to be quite comical and not unlike picturing a complete image of a jigsaw puzzle when it is half-made.

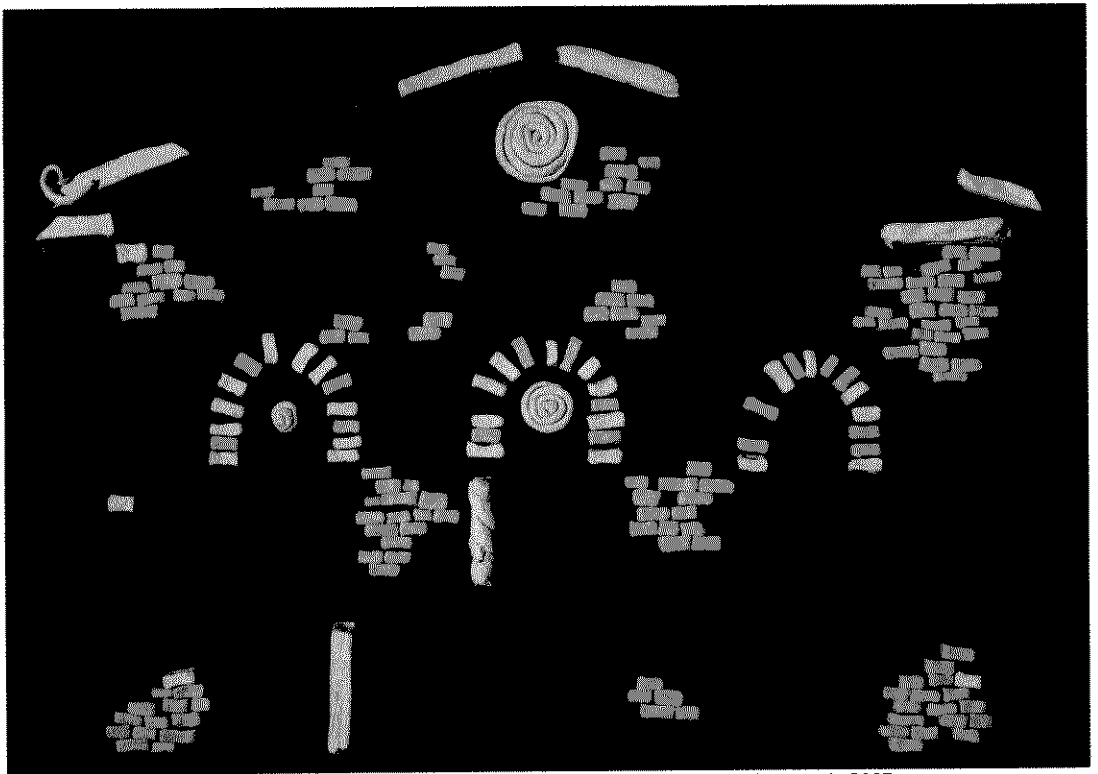


Figure 6.27 Sara Oscar, *Plasticine archaeology (after Vesuvius)*, photograph, 2007

The leap of faith involved in believing in the reconstruction of the past is facilitated by the physical ‘currency’ of the artefacts and this is never questioned. In *Plasticine archaeology (after Vesuvius)*, 2007 I wanted to play on this idea. Each of the bricks, building features and columns have been randomly placed in the drawn building to look farcically inaccurate. By making the pieces of the building out of plasticine and replicating the sparse use of ‘artefacts,’ the intention of the work was to draw attention to the absurdity of assuming knowledge through the process of deduction. The work could be applied to the use of photography as a means to attain history and to the themes that have been explored in this research project. The work asks the viewer to think about the process of obtaining knowledge itself particularly in the instance when that knowledge is based on observation alone.

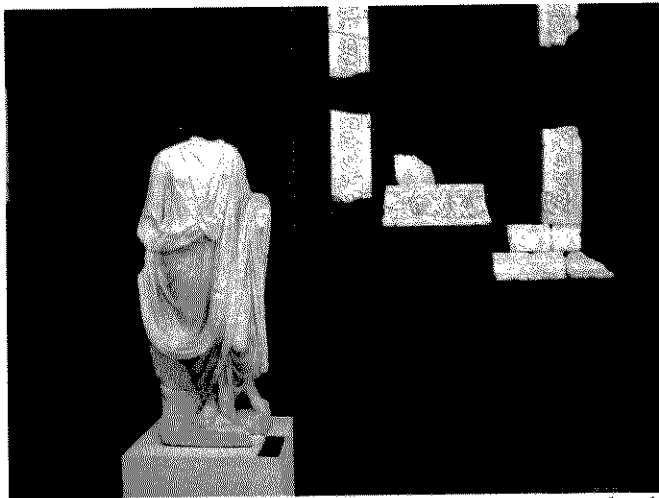


Figure 6.28 Sara Oscar, detail from the Arles museum, study for *Plasticine archaeology*, 2005

Museum of the Volcano and topiary elephants

Museum of the Volcano and topiary elephants, 2004 – 2006 (fig. 6.29) is a diorama of a house like structure that references the façade of *Plasticine archaeology*, 2006 (fig. 5.27). The house has a tall steeple roof, features a white door with a single looking hole. Inside, two green elephant topiaries stand in a dark Victorian style room next to an overturned lamp. An armchair is situated opposite the door looking out. Hung on the walls are miniature versions of the photographs *Morning looking out to mountains*, 2007 and *Plaster and Cardboard, or the moon's Vesuvius as it would appear to a spectator standing on its surface*, 2006. As a 'room within a room,' *Museum of the Volcano* is a self-referential work that is a conceptual extension of the previous works cited which plays on themes of archiving, history and memory. Just as the works in the *Saturn Return* series try to bridge the gap between domestic and the universe, this miniature museum also draws relationships among inside, outside; representation and replication. Referring also to theories of the archive and the desire 'to house,' I wanted the work to connect the works in the

gallery space with the works inside the room, particularly the green elephant topiaries with the long nosed Pinocchio.

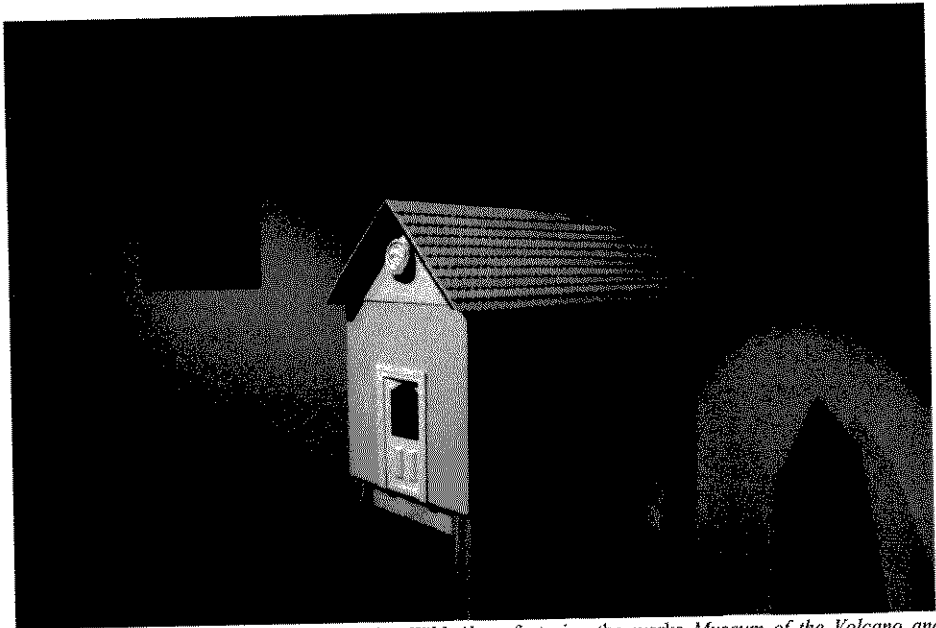


Figure 6.29 Sara Oscar, installation detail *Into this Wild Abyss* featuring the works *Museum of the Volcano* and topiary elephants, 2004 – 2006 and *The Tip of Erupting Mount Vesuvius*, 2007

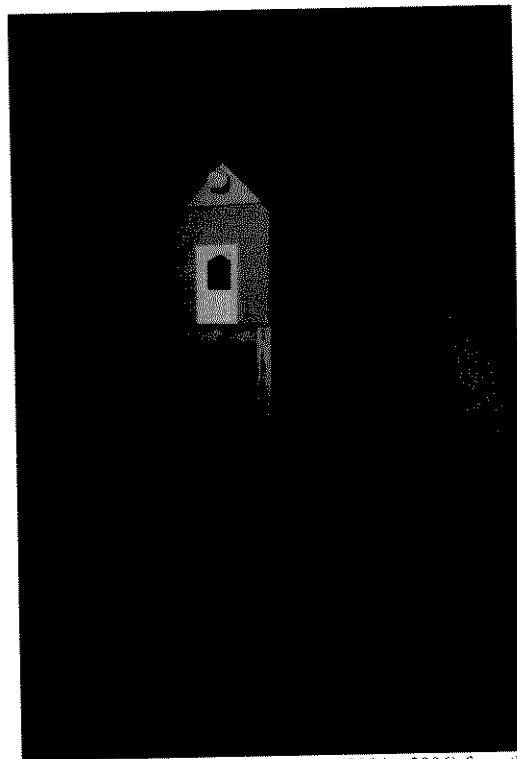


Figure 6.30 Sara Oscar, *Museum of the Volcano* and topiary elephants (2004 – 2006) from the exhibition *Into this Wild Abyss*



Figure 6.31 Sara Oscar, *Museum of the Volcano and topiary elephants* (2004 – 2006) detail

I acknowledge that by focusing on three male case studies in the making of my work, this study could be criticised in the context of feminist theories, such that I could be fostering a modernist 'gaze' through the focus on the ordering of nature, or that my focus is perpetuating an 'absence' within this discourse. Victorian women came to terms with spatial and temporal 'loss' in different ways to their male counterparts of the era. They established their own 'domestic archives' and they also contributed to the sciences through botany. Female 'scientific' photographers such as Anna Atkins, was also engaged in her own attempt to order ferns from Britain, and seaweeds from around the world. Women were collecting flowers, shells and seaweed specimens on the shores of England, while men were creating their archives of the world.⁵ Often their archives involved combining tactile object with photograph as a way of remembering. My choice of using domestic materials, my adoption of an 'anti classificatory' style all identify with works by women of the time. My decision to work with photography and sculpture is also my way of coming to terms with the anti-ocularcentric discourse; to find an 'antidote' for it. By including shells, feathers and attaching them to their photographs, the tactile worked with the two dimensional to make the visual (knowledge and history) come to life.

When I came to think about creating an archive of 'the world,' I wanted to make something like the Horniman museum, which would accentuate all the gaps, all the doubts and all the discrepancies I possibly could. I wanted the mark of the child, the naivety of the child to stand as a marker for the mind as a blank slate: full of wonder

⁵ Grace Seiberling, *Amateurs, Photography and the mid Victorian Imagination*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986)

for the world. I wanted to show that 'knowledge had great gaps in it, like a map of the world largely eaten by mice.'⁶

⁶ Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights*, (London: Scholastic, 1995) p. 83

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the moon was to James Nasmyth what colonial India was to my grandfather in terms of its physical unattainability and distance. This research has shown that conditions such as time and distance have prompted the desire to fabricate in order to bring the distant into closer visual proximity. The photographs of colonial India that my grandfather later altered while in Australia served to help him see a past that he was no longer able to physically reach. As the only member of my family to stay in India after Independence in 1957, the trauma of having experienced the familiarity of his world erased before him prompted the desire to refigure the past through photographs. This scenario, brought about by imperialism was an underlying factor behind my grandfather's motivation to fabricate photographs, and so too was his willingness to mix truth and fiction in the quest to see history. In many ways, the conditions under which the fabrications produced by Schaaf, Nasmyth, and Hurley were all similar insofar as the threads of imperialism, science, and history were contributing factors to their fabrication. Needless to say, so too did their desire to see surpass their regard for protecting 'truth' in photography.

The previous chapters in this thesis have examined four accounts of photographic fabrication through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which are a microcosmic representation of issues pertinent to the greater discourse of photography. The fabrications have furthered an understanding of the utilisation of photography in the areas of knowledge, the construction of landscape, memory and identity. Each chapter has encountered paradoxes of photography in relation to the desire to

counteract the passing of time, and the blurring of truth and fiction through fabrication. These chapters have also raised questions about the myth of originality in the creation of fabrication. Despite all of these paradoxical elements to photographic fabrication and their blurring of the boundaries between truth and fiction, artificial and real, and originality and copy; each chapter has demonstrated that the desire to see in the nineteenth and twentieth century has bypassed these issues. This illustrates that photography has since continued to be used as a privileged and prosthetic form of visualising history, obtaining scientific knowledge and establishing identities within the order of the world.

Larry Schaaf's fabrication of Henry Talbot's original photographic work was made to facilitate seeing photography through the lens of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, Talbot believed that photography had changed our relationship to posterity in that it fostered a shift towards a privilege of the visual from previous modes of communicating history such as writing and illustration. Schaaf's attempt to recreate the experience of *seeing* an edition of the *Pencil of Nature* for the first time raised questions about the role of photography and its contribution to history by copying. As a historical reconstruction of the original, Schaaf's work served to highlight Talbot's own uncertainty about the identity of photography, and its confusion of seemingly dichotomous terms such as nature and culture, and original and copy. Relationships between Henry Talbot's ideas on photography and photographic theorists such as Roland Barthes and Eduardo Cadava were drawn; particularly the idea that photography has a paradoxical relationship to history and memory because it only ever affirms the antithesis of these terms. Notwithstanding

this, Talbot continued to see the photograph as being of central importance to history because it facilitated an ability to see and this was also perpetuated by Schaaf's engagement of photography to facilitate seeing the *Pencil of Nature* in a historical context.

James Nasmyth's fabrication of the moon led to his imaginary journey there, however this was not without its own problems. Nasmyth used fabrication as a way of replacing what he saw through the telescope with his eyes so that he could materialise the lunar surface. We saw that James Nasmyth encountered issues surrounding the way he would present the landscape of the moon, and that he paradoxically utilised traditional modes of landscape painting in order to illustrate this 'new' landscape. This helped him to establish his theory that mountains on the earth are just like craters on the moon. Just as we saw with Schaaf, the process that Nasmyth used to produce his fabrication was integral to his ability to establish theories about the lunar surface and imagine the landscape from the position of the spectator situated there. For Nasmyth, fabrication was instrumental in the way that it helped him to primarily conceive of the moon as a physical place and this indicated that there was no distinction between artificial and real when it came to travelling to the moon.

Frank Hurley's fabrications illustrated a desire to visualise the Shackleton expedition in terms of the idealistic and heroic way that he experienced it and fabrication was used as a way of recreating the past and fusing together reality and the heroic idealism that was implicit to Antarctic exploration. Unlike in the other chapters,

what we came to see with Hurley was his awareness that the fabrication had the capacity to be used to foster an illusion of the vision of the photographer. That what one person saw could be made spectacular, and woven into the myth of masculinity and heroism also illustrated the extent to which audiences were eager and willing to invest in heroes to enlighten them to new ways of seeing the world. Hurley's fabrication also perpetuated the idea of heroism inherent to the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration and provided justification for their expedition while their fellow patriots were fighting for their country in a World War. It was no surprise that Hurley's fabricated photographs always featured beams of light and moody skies as this was a sign that he saw what was invisible to others; which made him a photographer of the supernatural, the chimerical. Hurley's fabrication illustrated its ability to cultivate masculinity, identity and heritage through the repetition of symbols and stereotypical images.

The *Success* demonstrated the power of the fabrication to arouse emotive reactions in audiences when it pictured a past that those audiences did not want to be made visible. Even though the *Success* fabrication reconstructed aspects of convict history based on factual events, Australians went to great lengths to avoid having their convict shame sold as history. This chapter showed us that the underbelly of fabrication was the desire to forget and not see; which went against the purpose of taking photographs and creating archives for posterity. This demonstrated the role of fabrication to forge cultural heritage and it illustrated that the desire for heritage fostered this compulsion to include and exclude pieces of history according to ideals based on identity. From a contemporary perspective, the positioning of the *Success*

in the archives and museums of Australian heritage blur truth with fiction, questions the role of the archive and the use of visual media to picture history.

In all of these cases, fabricated photography has been used to materialise and visualise what the eye has not been able to see, be it an image of the ideal, past time or the physically distant. In all of these cases, it is the separation of the eye from the object of representation that has prompted the desire to fabricate. Whilst these chapters have considered the motivations behind each fabrication and the way that they play out in the discourse of photography, there have also been thematic undercurrents linking each chapter. Science, history and imperialism have all played important roles in the development of each instance of fabrication explored in this thesis, and are interwoven themes which have formed the backdrop to these accounts of fabrication because they all privilege the sense of sight in the acquisition of knowledge of the world.

None of these instances of fabrication would exist if their producers were not aware of the inherent qualities of photography, or if they did not invest in the currency of the medium to deliver 'objective' truths and visual knowledge about the world. Primarily, the role of science in the invention of photography and the use of photography by various institutions of science contributed to the nineteenth century currency of the photograph, its perceived objectivity and alignment with truth. Science has been a recurring theme in this research due to the role that objectivity has played in its discourse, and it has also provided justification for the exploration into the exotic and undiscovered world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Science, history and exploration also led Talbot to invent the medium of photography and contributed to Schaaf's use of the photographic technology to create a facsimile of Talbot's original work. Henry Talbot's involvement in botany and his membership with the Royal Society also contributed to the way that he viewed photography in terms of visual order and classification within the spheres of science and history. James Nasmyth also used the taxonomical aesthetic of positivistic science and scientific theories established by his nineteenth century peer and member of the Royal Society, Sir John Herschel in order to fabricate his way to the moon. This led Nasmyth to be able to establish theories regarding the formation of the moon's surface and allowed him to conceive of it as a physical place beyond what his eye could see. Science even provided the rationale behind Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic exploration and subsequently, Frank Hurley's involvement in that trip. The taxonomical aesthetic used by scientific disciplines such as botany and archaeology are not dissimilar to the archiving and curatorial techniques used in history as was illustrated in the chapter on the *Success*.

Science's contribution to the photograph's currency of truth has facilitated the production of fabricated photography. The taxonomical aesthetic promoted by science with its privilege of the visual and use of visual classification to contribute to logical reasoning has fostered the use of photography by the various institutions within science. The subsequent accessing of these powers of photography by photographers using fabrication illustrates their awareness of this value of photography. One could go so far as to say that the age of science has also fostered

the production of fabricated photography through a desire to see and establish evidence based truths.

These case studies have shown that notions such as truth and fiction were not clearly defined in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, and that photographers were comfortable tampering with the truth when it came to being able to see what they wanted to see. This illustrates that the desire to see took precedence over an investment in the idea of objectivity in photography. From this, it could be established that fabricated photographs only retain their currency so long as the truth value of the photograph is maintained. If the truth value of the photograph is undermined, then fabrication also loses its currency and hold on reality. Nevertheless, each of these case studies have illustrated that truth has had no bearing on the viewer's faith and belief in the ability of the photograph to visualise knowledge according to their ideals.

All of the chapters presented in this thesis have demonstrated an imperialist lust for images of faraway places, however none more than Nasmyth metaphorically illustrates the role of science in the justification for the desire to travel. Nasmyth's project of creating a visual topographical map of the moon also provided the reasoning behind his coming to terms with the age of the earth and the overwhelming experience he had gazing at the expanse of the solar system through his telescope. Nasmyth's attempt to impose order upon the lunar craters on the moon through a system of classification was a form of imperialism that was only hindered by physical unattainability. Little variation exists in the methodology that Nasmyth

engaged to visually order and 'know' the undiscovered landscape of the moon and the work of his contemporaries. Examples such as Francis Galton's attempts to classify the criminal body; Charles Darwin's *On the Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*; and Francis Frith's documentary photographs of street life in London, China and the Middle East, bear little differentiation to Nasmyth's own attempts to colonise the lunar surface. Even Nasmyth's presentation of the moon using of traditional landscape techniques attempted to impose an order of the same on the lunar surface to make it seem more like earth.

Similarly, Frank Hurley's photographs from Antarctica also perpetuated imperialist ideals of heroism, masculinity and illustrated the desire to penetrate the unknown regions of Antarctica in the name of both science and the patriotic expansion of the British Empire. These desires were demonstrated through Hurley's fabrication of key incidents on the Shackleton Expedition, and in his extensive collection of photographs of both the *Endurance* and images of man juxtaposed against the Antarctic landscape. Hurley's method also mirrored Nasmyth's in that he utilised traditional ways of 'framing' Antarctica and resorted to photographing images of heroism as a way of exercising control over the wilderness. Just as Talbot's inspiration for the invention of photography was raised as a way of 'capturing' the landscape while he was travelling, the methods used by Nasmyth and Hurley also represents how fabrication can be used to create a sense ownership over an impenetrable landscape or the past.

The popularity of photographic images of the faraway has been fuelled by the desire to see images of the expanding Empire and establish oneself within the order of history and the world. This urge to know, to travel and to visualise the self within the order of the world provided audiences with the scope to suspend their disbelief in the photographic representations of the world before them. The fabricated photographs of Antarctica by Frank Hurley continue to allow audiences to mythologize Antarctic exploration in terms of heroism, and have fuelled a belief in the idyllic yet inhospitable nature of the Arctic landscape. In the same way, the *Success* provided audiences overseas with a visual display of Australian convict history and sold them what they wanted to see and know of convict history. The *Success* assisted audiences in England and the United States to 'safely' see the convict criminal body. To this end, the culture of imperialism has fostered the regime of looking and has provided audiences with images of foreign and distant places which has enhanced their sense of identity, heritage and created a boundary between the self and the expanse of the world which could be bridged by images.

Whilst science and imperialism have played a significant role in establishing the currency of photographic truth and the will to see, photographic fabrication has also allowed its producers to develop an artificial relationship to time and history. In each of the studies, fabrication allowed its producers to rewind time and expand pockets of time in order to see things differently. The desire to use photography to contribute to a visual posterity was displayed by Talbot in his attempts to replace writing with photographs, and subsequently in Schaaf's project. For James Nasmyth, the fabrication of the moon's surface enabled him to visualise what he believed to be an

image of eternity and allowed him to believe that he was providing the future with an image of the lunar surface that would remain the same throughout time. These cases demonstrate a means of using fabrication as a way of grasping on to time using photography as a historical artefact according to the ideals of science and imperialism.

The themes of science, imperialism and history provide the subject matter and inspiration for the visual presentation of the works featured in the accompanying exhibition, *Into this Wild Abyss*. This exhibition relocates the visual taxonomical aesthetic used within disciplines of science and archaeology and examines this in the context of art. Fabricated images of the solar system, mountain ranges, volcanoes and architectural ruins form the exhibition and each of the works draw attention to the production methods used to establish visual knowledge about the world. The work makes the taxonomical processes used to gain knowledge within science a primary feature of the exhibition and it does so using ridiculous subject matter such as comparing a planet to a coconut and creating architectural ruins out of plasticine. In doing so, the work intends to draw attention to the farcical nature of these modes of gaining intelligence about the world, and to the unquestioning faith that is placed in vision.

Into This Wild Abyss features a range of works in different media such as photography, pencil sketches and sculpture. The first photograph in the exhibition features an archaeological reconstruction of the ruins of a building made from plasticine. The works that follow feature photographic fabrications of the moon and

solar system, pencil drawings to accompany the formation of the moons surface, a day and night photograph of fabricated mountain ranges, a topographical reconstruction of half built houses with trees growing inside them, a fabricated erupting volcano, a house on stilts which is a replication of the room that the viewer stands in whose exterior mirrors the first photograph of the archaeological reconstruction. The exhibition also features a small green Pinocchio topiary made out of fake clump foliage standing in the centre of the room before what appears to be the 'abyss' of each work. Each of the works refer to each other and invite the viewer to develop meaning by establishing 'cause and effect' relationships between the photographs and the sculptures.

The works were positioned in the exhibition so that the viewer would actively engage in a process of deciphering meaning through each object, which all featured similar forms such as mountain ranges or architecture. Adopting the taxonomical aesthetic of nineteenth century science, the viewer takes the semiotics of each individual image in order to create a narrative of the total works. The placement of the works *Morning, looking out to mountains* (2007) and *Midnight, looking out to mountains* (2007) within the gallery asked the viewer to consider how photography could create a sense of the passage of time through the juxtaposition of images. Together, these works invite the viewer to play the role of the archaeologist and recreate a fictional history through the dialectic of the objects and photographs placed in the room.

The intention behind placing these objects together in *Into this Wild Abyss* was to ask the viewer to think about the act of forming meaning and relationships through the objects presented – as an archaeologist, or a botanist would come to scientific explanations for history through the observation of evidence alone. However, the aesthetic of the works were naïve and inaccurate, and by taking on this ‘low-fi’ aesthetic, the viewer was invited to think about how much investment is placed in the act of looking when it comes to deriving meaning from objects and images, and to the likelihood of any relationship ever having existed between them. The work therefore draws relationships between the historical and scientific technique of collecting artefacts and images, and its tendency to re-position these items inside the space of the museum or the archive in order to create the illusion of totality and the salvation of lost time. The viewer in the museum wants to fill in the gaps, wants to form a relationship between the objects and the images and this functions to illustrate the underlying process of fabrication itself.

What we have seen in all of these cases is that photographs are an artificial memory, an ever expanding archive that is constantly reflecting back to us what we want to see in two dimensions. As an archive, the photograph represents the desire to see, remember and know. Seeing the archive simply as a repository for memory and objective knowledge, or truth is too narrow a conception of its purpose. What we saw with our four case studies was that it wasn’t enough just to know about the past in a theoretical sense of the term. In every case, knowledge has had to be supplemented with vision – all of these photographers had to see to know. Seeing what they knew made their knowledge seem more real. It was as though seeing

became believing, and the process of fabricating overcame the distance of time. Seeing through photographs was a way of pursuing knowledge and in each of these cases, seeing became more important than knowledge.

The archive, the photograph fills in empty spaces and bridges the divide between the real and the ideal. If archives are always forgetting what it has included, what is haunting the archive is the fabrication. If the desire to fill the abyss of memory and knowledge allows fabrications to slip into archives, then the consequences are that truth and fiction are intertwined concepts. But we know from Derrida and Foucault that archives are already flawed systems of classification. Yet archives serve greater purposes than knowledge. Archives bridge a need for meaning, identity, heritage, lineage and sentiment. The photographs proliferation through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries bears no indication stronger than the fact that people want to see history, want to see what they know and this allows them to suspend their disbelief in the photograph. Fabrications explain why we take photographs: in order to supplement what we know with what we can see. This desire to see is at the heart of all fabrication, all photography. Just as my grandfather's collection of photographs featured sections that tampered with the truth, or the inaccurate creatures in the Horniman museum, the archive has its own value despite its fabrication and flaws.

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