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The kibitzing archive

Abstract:

This essay investigates how nonfiction authors use archives. Whereas scholarly historians adhere to broadly agreed-upon research procedures, and generally work within the context of extant debates and existing, or new, research questions, writers (as well as artists and museum curators) more likely enter archives relatively ‘agenda-free’. This essay draws on the author’s experiences working with the Forensic Photography Archive (Justice and Police Museum, Sydney), and the personal papers of journalist-musician Merv Acheson and policeman Brian K. Doyle. It charts the ‘value-adding’ process whereby the writer-researcher examines archive material at sufficient depth, and for sufficient time, to order raw archival material into groupings and sequences. These, with the necessary background research, might become finished, published narratives. Working with two smaller archives, however, the author finds that the processes of surveying, reflecting and background-researching are somewhat thwarted by the residual ‘authorial’ presences of the original compilers. The Acheson and the Doyle archives, although seemingly random collections, prove to be the outcome of careful selection. Both compilers were adept narrators, and their personal papers, rather than being raw material, might be considered ‘voiced’ and, in a sense, already authored.

Biographical note:

Dr Peter Doyle is the author of *City of shadows: Sydney police photographs, 1912–1948* and *Crooks like us*, both of which were based on extended research into the Forensic Photography Archive at the Justice and Police Museum, Sydney. He is also the author of *Echo and reverb: fabricating space in popular music recording, 1900–1960* and the novels *The Devil’s jump*, *Get rich quick* and *Amaze your friends*, two of which won Ned Kelly Awards for Best Crime Novel. In 2010, he received a Ned Kelly Lifetime Achievement Award. He is currently a chief investigator on the Australian Research Council Discovery Project, ‘Popular music and cultural memory.’ He lectures in Media at Macquarie University, Sydney.

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Introduction

What use is the nonfiction writer to make of the archive? For historians that question would elicit complex, lengthy and contradictory answers, but among them would be specific, broadly agreed-upon procedures. The archive is the historian's coalface, the elemental source. The archive, as Foucault famously said, is 'a reflection that shows us quite simply, and in shadow, what all those in the foreground are looking at. It restores, as if by magic, what is lacking in every gaze' (1994: 15). Trained historians work within larger disciplinary contexts, addressing specific gaps in the knowledge, participating in extant scholarly debates, contesting or abiding by existing agendas and so on. But for the writer, artist or museum curator, for those who practice history without a license, encountering the archive is often an ambiguous, unsettling and uncertain project. We delve and explore, not sure what we may find, often not sure what we are looking for. Not sure even *how* we should look. And then not sure how we might present the things we find. Not sure, after a while, whether the things we find are of any interest outside our own enclosed world and increasingly feverish imagination.

The general expectation is that the serious writer might – *should* – produce from immersion in the archive something true – in all senses of the word – and literary: original, insightful and with sufficient poetic flare to interest the non-professional reader. We are not simply or unambiguously answering extant research questions, addressing more or less agreed upon gaps in the knowledge; we're involved in a more free-range project, with the ever-present risk that we'll end up with nothing, or nothing tellable. So we are looking out for the 'bumps' and jolts, consistencies or disjunctures that might signal the presence of a story waiting to be explicated. We are looking, sometimes a little desperately, for hints, for directions, for inspiration. We are looking for an *angle*. So we try to be open to the muffled and buried voices we encounter. Sometimes we encounter presences more powerful than we anticipated.

This essay concerns encounters with three very different archives, each of them comprising photographs and papers, each of them haphazard and random-seeming. One is very large, the other two are each no more than a couple of large boxes of jumbled documents. Without any particular advance plans to do so, I came to spend a great many hours delving into those collections, and conducting other background research regarding the materials therein.

The Forensic Photography Archive

The first archive in question is very large: the collection of around 130,000 recovered forensic photographs, now known as the Forensic Photography Archive (FPA), housed in the loft at the Justice and Police Museum in downtown Sydney. The photos – most of them in the form of uncatalogued negatives – were taken by police photographers in the early twentieth century. Many of the negatives are unidentified. Later photographs, those taken roughly from 1945 until 1964, are in envelopes, with usually no more than a date, a case number and a few cryptic words. Since 2003, I have spent around 3,000 hours examining negatives, one after another, on a lightbox in that loft.

I claim no privilege in regard to these photos, and I am not the first or only researcher to search through them.¹ But they were made in the city that I grew up in, in the three or four decades before I was born through to the first decade of my life, and much of what I see here is immediately familiar to me. Sydney still looked that way when I was a child. And, indeed, many of those gloomy monochrome scenes are reminiscent in spirit of, and sometimes just the same as, views of Sydney that still turn up as fragments in my dreams. Going through those negatives is like exploring a real city, but also like wandering in my own unconscious, a kind of lucid dreaming.

The subjects of the photos include accidents, crime scenes, mug shots, objects and documents. This is like one of those Borgesian repositories, which promises to reveal, in principle, every possible truth. In 2005, I found photos of the very house I was then living in, from 50 years earlier. I recently found another set, from another time, of the same stretch of street.

The photographs, when encountered as a sprawling, uncatalogued whole, have the ability to astonish, to baffle, to disgust, to enlighten. And, much of the time, to bore the researcher rigid: the huge majority of the images are unspeakably drab. I resolved early on that I would look at everything I lifted down from the shelf: look at every negative in the box, at every box in the particular stack, and every stack on the shelf, and so on. Early in the piece I started making rough groupings of images I had set aside, such as ‘creepy interior’, ‘creepy interior with suggestive blood stains’, ‘creepy interior with dead body’, ‘famous crime, famous criminal’, ‘forgotten crime’, ‘forgotten criminal’. I put exterior shots together, idly started giving them noirish group titles: ‘lost highway’, ‘where the sidewalk ends’. Likewise, I made categories comprising the particularly strange and inexplicable (‘surreal moment’, ‘unintended performance art moment’, ‘strangely disquieting views of apparently banal everyday things’, and so on). Unusual mug shots formed their own large group, with subsets such as ‘smiling criminal’ and ‘vintage gender-bender’. The next step was to try to find the larger series of events the image related to, by searching newspaper reports for the time and police files.

The latter can be a nearly endless task. Many images remain utterly cryptic: nothing is found in the records to explain or identify the scene. When circumstances are found, they can be dauntingly dense, since every single image is associated with a complex series of events, and often a complex and contradictory investigation and trial, with its own secondary history.

The negatives are dark windows onto events long past. They are documents that redirect our attention to those external circumstances and happenings. But they are also objects that are in themselves important items of material culture. Their ‘payload’ is two-tiered: as well as the informational content of the item there is also the thing itself, with its particular constitution, its intrinsic fascination and visual-aesthetic charge. Peter Vergo in his *New museology* notably referred to ‘the reticent object’ (1989: 41) and the museum curator’s task of unlocking, opening up, rendering the object less reticent. Making it speak.

The FPA occupies a fair-sized storage space in the Justice and Police Museum. The museum by now also has a substantial secondary collection of files relating to many

of the photographs. My own collection of printouts, clippings, notes, spreadsheets, bits and pieces, emails, much of it carefully arranged in folders, some of it loose and disorderly, comprises a third instalment of the archive. (As though the museum staff and I are each rebuilding our own *de facto* police archives.)

The material uncovered and researched in the FPA has found its way into major exhibitions. I present the material in talks – at museums and galleries, in municipal libraries, at research conferences, writers’ festivals, to local history groups and camera clubs, and in university lectures – and write about it in books and scholarly articles. Audiences for the material are diverse: artists and hipsters, elderly suburbanites, schoolchildren, professional ‘crime-workers’ (lawyers, coroners, police), but I find that the tone and the narrative sequences I arrive at, are remarkably stable from group to group. There has been much thought and discussion about the ethics of these projects, both inside the institution that manages the collection (Sydney Living Museums) and outside, and debates about competing interests and impulses continue around questions of privacy versus access, ‘sensitivity’ versus openness, the urge to censor versus the urge to reveal, and so on.

But from my standpoint, as an interlocutor, presenter and writer, I know that all narration, all exposition, is subject to both stable and shifting rules and conventions; there are opportunities and traps in how you arrange your material. Dynamic tensions between elements, and between separate layers (image layer and text layer, for example) are everything; they comprise the syntaxes by which meaning is made. The core professional work of the writer, second only to getting the story in the first place, involves finding and settling on a suitable meta-language and ‘concept-syntax’ with which to present the story. This is largely a work of collaboration with an absent reader – engaging attention, anticipating affective reactions, judging mood and the duration of any ‘mood moment’, heading off reader boredom by using those dynamic shifts, surprises, affirmations and judicious denials of reader expectations, and so on.

The modern museum, however sombre, official and forbidding it may be, is – like cinema – in part descended from the nineteenth century ‘attraction’: the naïve museum, the gentleman’s collection, the cabinet of curiosities, the carnival, the freak show. As every narrator and every curator knows, however high or low, however lofty or tawdry the project, there is always an element of sideshow in the finished product. (And that is nothing to be ashamed of.)

I find myself presenting and writing about forensic photographic material in certain set ways. One approach is to start with a series of moody exterior photographs: ‘establishing shots’, as they say in filmmaking. Then, to work further and further ‘inside’ – to the progressively darker, more disturbingly suggestive crime scenes. Homicide and suicide scenes are a small part of the entire collection, but form its radioactive core: homicide scenes provoke the strongest responses; elicit the strongest interest. Death scenes are the dark heart of any written or spoken presentation of forensic photographic material.

So I choose carefully: many of the police photographs take us so brutally and intimately ‘into’ the scene, so close to the events, as to be unshowable. And no matter how careful and nuanced the commentary may be, viewing homicide scenes is a

profoundly depressing business. So I have learned to never end a presentation or disquisition at that point, but to try to take it somewhere else. Perhaps lead the reader/auditor out of the scene as it were, back into the street, back to the everyday. Or lead the attention away from the obscene specifics of the scene to larger, other or more ‘meta’ considerations. And again, this requires a careful use of dynamics. The same sense of dynamics we all use, everyday, whenever we tell a story or yarn of any sort: we all know that to end at the low point, on the complaint, the point of discomfort, is to emotionally ‘dump’ on our listeners. Our listeners’ attention is handed over to us for safekeeping, and we have responsibilities regarding the state in which it is returned. The archival forensic photo is powerfully attention grabbing, which removes the most burdensome single task in any sort of interlocution or narrating: ‘slowing up’, delaying the reader, and getting his or her concentrated attention.

So, in narrating this huge archive, I keep going back to those original rough groupings I made: they provide ‘units of content and meaning’ that are the building blocks of my narrative interventions and explications, the basic elements, like scenes in cinematic montage. Others, no doubt, would handle the material differently.

The musician’s papers

About a decade ago, around the same time I started working on the forensic photo archive, the personal papers of the late Merv Acheson – tenor sax player, journalist and raconteur – were passed to me for safe keeping. Their erstwhile custodian, musician and musicologist Bruce Johnson was heading overseas for an indefinite period, and he felt the Acheson papers might be of interest to me.

I had been aware of Acheson since the early 1970s when his band held down the Saturday afternoon spot at the Windsor Castle Hotel in Paddington, Sydney. Acheson, with his shock of white hair and florid complexion, his bulbous drinker’s nose, looked more than a little like W. C. Fields. But I wasn’t paying much attention back then: Acheson and his cronies of the Sydney jazz world were 30 years my senior, nearer my parents’ age, and not much on my radar.

Then in the early 1980s, a drummer friend worked for a while in Acheson’s group at the Mansions Hotel in Kings Cross, and eagerly relayed to me some of the legends, apocrypha and musicianly scuttlebutt that surrounded Acheson. There were still bullet holes in a wall in Womerah Avenue in Darlinghurst, he said, where Merv had shot it out with someone back in the forties. (Merv had with some pride taken my friend to the spot to show him.)

In the late 1980s, my curiosity about Sydney history slowly became more active than idle, taking me to newspaper and magazine repositories. To browse, not sure what I was looking for. Acheson was a recurring figure in the printed primary and secondary sources: in the daily newspapers and in magazines such as *Music maker* and *Tempo* in the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s, and later in the 1980’s era *Jazz Australia* magazine.

Eventually some of my research found expression in a trio of crime novels, set in Sydney in the early post war period, and this led in time to invitations to work in the

‘heritage industry’ – specifically the exhibition and book projects with the Justice and Police Museum photo collection discussed above. (The brief was, simply, to explore their collection and piece together as best I could narratives for a museum exhibition.) Almost by default, I found myself investigating the zones in which music, popular culture, writing, historiography and criminality (both borderline and fully-fledged) intersected and overlapped. This is precisely the zone Acheson occupied.²

Mervyn Fletcher Acheson was born in Sydney, 1922, son of a professional violinist. At age 16, Acheson, already a proficient tenor saxophonist, began work as a cadet journalist for the *Labor daily*, assigned to the police rounds. He was soon writing reviews of movies (then a relatively low status assignment) and, not long after, a regular column called ‘Swing notes’, which may be the earliest regular jazz or swing writing in any Australian newspaper. By 1940, at eighteen years old, Acheson was producing reviews, ‘think pieces’, music gossip columns and other news for a number of magazines and newspapers. He was a handsome young man: with thick dark hair brushed back of his forehead, dressed in a zoot suit, he along with a few like-minded young men and women, equally devoted to the new small band swing sounds comprised the vanguard of what might be called ‘Sydney hep’.

At the outbreak of World War 2 Acheson was working suburban ballrooms, parties and jam sessions, as well as illegal after hours joints. Through the early years of the war, in uniform, he played in a military dance band based in Marrickville, mixed with US Service musicians and like-minded young Australian swingsters. It was a busy time for professional musicians.

The Marrickville band was broken up and Acheson was posted to a remote base in central Queensland. He grew bored, and simply wandered off. To his surprise, no one came after him. He drifted back to inner Sydney, which by then was teeming with US servicemen, many of them African-American, many of them jazz aficionados, some of them musicians.

Acheson played at the now legendary Booker T. Washington Club – the Red Cross dancehall in Darlinghurst for black US serviceman – with Giles O’Sullivan’s band. He was involved in the illegal sale of spirits on the side. He carried a gun. In 1943 he shot a man at the 2KY Swing Club, a weekly dance in the basement of the Dymocks Building, over a missing truckload of whisky. He spent some time in military prison then served nine months in Long Bay Gaol for malicious wounding – his defence was that he’d been too drunk to harbour any serious intention of murder.

Sentence finished, war over, Acheson teamed up with young alto player Rolf Pommer. They were the hottest band in Sydney by then, playing the easy driving, Kansas City style small band jazz. Music press reports of Pommer-Acheson gigs use words like ‘new’, ‘fresh’, ‘exciting’ and ‘young’. This was the moment of a new phenomenon in popular music – the emergence of the saxophone star. Acheson, with his smoky playing, his good looks and mauve zoot suits, was it. By that stage, Acheson was earning his living through a roughly fifty-fifty combination of writing and playing. He was as frequently the subject of news stories as he was a producer of them.

By the late 1960s, the professional music scene in Sydney had changed, totally. ‘Professional musicians’ in the old senses of the term were a rapidly dwindling cohort. Pop and rock were ascendant, and most rock players were not union members. In the February 1971 issue of *Music maker* editor John Clare announced that coming soon would be ‘THE REAL MERV ACHESON STORY’ – the caps hinting at scandalous revelations. The story duly appeared in the April issue, written by *Music maker* regular Ray Sutton. It is admiring of Acheson as a superior musician, and is frank about his heavy drinking. It also talks plainly about the Swing Club shooting of 1943, the gaol time, the association with gangsters (good jazz fans, said Acheson). By 1971, Woodstock, the movie *Bonnie and Clyde*, and the stage show *Hair* had come and gone, screen nudity was commonplace, and all the major swear words were acceptable in print culture. The western world’s crisis in manners had passed, and the notion of ‘respectability’, such a powerful force for the past century, had been swiftly relegated to suburban enclaves and country towns. Merv’s demi-monde associations and his louche, nonconformist spirit were now bankable cultural capital. In the mid-1980s Acheson began publishing his memoirs in *Jazz Australia* magazine. Acheson died in 1987, aged 65, before completing the series.

When I was handed Acheson’s papers, a decade and a half later, I felt that anticipatory jolt, the onset of ‘archive fever’: the eager hope that the archive would duly surrender the story behind the story – the *real* story³. The papers themselves were bundled up in a couple of large plastic carry bags. I took them home, started going through them. There were letters, photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings, old gig fliers. Exercise books with chord charts, and other bits of sheet music. At first look it seemed random: just the stuff that Acheson had not got around to throwing out. It was in no special order.

But the letters – and there were not many – were instructive. One from 1951 bears the letterhead of a Sydney theatrical agency. The writer expresses appreciation for Merv’s columns in *Tempo*, and goes on to suggest angles and subjects Merv might like to address in his columns. But, for a piece of official correspondence, there are a lot of misspellings and typos, and a slightly plaintive request that Merv write back to state ‘weather’ he has taken the writer’s advice. (I have redacted the sender’s name and signature, but let’s call him ‘Jim’.)

Then another letter from Jim, a couple of months later, desperately begging Merv to 'distroy' the previous letter and forget Telecast. He, the writer, should never have written to Merv, as he is only 15, he says, and his 'manger' would not like him 'interfering'.

There is a letter too from Merv's sometime partner in crime, promoter-impresario-bookie-gangster, Harvey Bruce. He's fallen on hard times, he writes, and reminds Merv of the great times they had shared; then touches him for a loan.

Some of the material in the collection was like these examples, poignant, and of some interest. But somehow the whole was less than I'd hoped for. Mostly what I was finding were replays of the well and oft-told Acheson legend. My pace slowed, my enthusiasm lessened.

True detective

While I was still trying to work out what might be made of Acheson's papers, I was given another collection of personal papers, of roughly the same size, also contained in a couple of large tough plastic bags (fertilizer bags, in this case). These were the personal papers of the late Brian K. Doyle, a policeman, and my own uncle, who had died in 2004. My cousin passed this collection on to me a couple of years after his death. The stuff had been stored as these things are, in a back shed, in their home in the Sydney suburb of Kingsgrove.

When my cousin first presented the material to me, spread out on his dining room table, a large piece of cardboard was visible through the semi-opaque plastic. Written in marker pen, in a spidery hand were the words CRIME PHOTOS USED FOR TEACHING.

Inside the bags were photos, foolscap folders, notebooks, diagrams, case notes, correspondence, even items of evidence. There were also receipts for expenses incurred on the job, and prompting notes for an after dinner speech to detectives in Colombo. And, as with Acheson's papers, a large number of clippings, loose and pasted in exercise books, going back to the late 1930s (just like Acheson's), when Brian Doyle had started as a cadet policeman.

Brian Doyle was a media cop. Amid much press coverage he arrested the 'Kingsgrove Slasher' in 1959, a career-making achievement, and a couple of years later was one the two main detectives (the other was Detective Sergeant Jack Bateman) on the Graeme Thorne kidnap-murder case, possibly the most publicised crime and investigation in Australian history up to that time. 'Detectives like Doyle and Bateman were made familiar night by night [on television] as "glamour adults"', writes Noel Sanders, 'like the sheriffs and detectives in the westerns and crime series ... personalized, individualized forces of the law, people you could "talk to"' (1983: 66).

Doyle went on to become Assistant Commissioner for Police. He was regarded as a good cop. He had a prodigious memory. He performed brave acts involving dangerous people with guns, for which he received the Queen's Medal. But was also a pioneer of scientific policing, and a strong advocate of police education in high forensics (Brown 2002).

He was regarded as extremely honest, maybe too honest. He quit the force in a rage when he was passed over for the top job. He gave evidence to royal commissions, appeared on TV and radio. He wrote occasional pieces for the *Catholic weekly* (in which he would denounce the rising tide of permissiveness and such matters). He was a devout catholic and a social conservative. Later in his career and in his retirement he lectured police recruits, and was an in-demand after dinner speaker at men's smokos, Rotary clubs, St Vincent De Paul Society meetings and the like.

The photographic prints in the collection, the ‘crime photos used for teaching’ were, like the material in the Forensic Photography Archive, unidentified, and sometimes extremely cryptic. (Doyle himself knew what each of them meant and so had no need to annotate them.) I was already familiar with a few of the photographs from my work at the FPA: I had set aside some of the very same negatives. (*That was weird.*) But I also instantly recognised the *range* of forensic subjects there. Homicide horror scenes, with varying degrees of ‘showability’. Also:

Material relating to famous, historically important crimes

Material relating to forgotten crimes, obscure criminals

Curiosities, instances of black humour

Sinister and strangely disquieting views of apparently banal everyday things

Car crashes and other *memento mori*

And, of course, some vintage gender bending. (The photograph immediately above is one of a number of apparently seized snapshots of young men in elaborate drag, snapped at balls, at parties, or posing in private flats.)

Yes, I knew that subject mix. Exactly.

The Forensic Photography Archive with its 130,000-plus stories is like a city in itself, one in which I and others can wander about, making our own connections, not bumping into one another. It is a kind of collective (and personal) unconscious, a through-the-looking-glass other to the contemporary everyday reality of Sydney.

Acheson's and Doyle's papers are each in their own ways rich. But these were two shrewd and seasoned storytellers. Acheson, the hard living pub habitué journalist, was a dedicated and expert guardian of his own mythology. Those two letters from the 15-year-old Jim? Merv put them there for me. He knew that I, or someone like me would be along. It is a writerly gift: here's a gag for you, you'll be needing a couple of those. I get it Merv. Thanks.

Detectives write and tell stories all the time. Assembling and delivering plausible narrative is part of the job. That 'Crime photos used for teaching' label is not a middle-aged man's hand: in fact, it is eerily like my own father's shaky handwriting in the last few years of his life. Who was that for? It was for me. Brian Doyle knew someone like me would be along. There is an anxiety there; it is a disclaimer, acknowledging none-too-obliquely that this, the collection, could look pretty perverse. It is in fact, he asserts, strictly for lofty purposes. (We are back almost in the realm of the sideshow, the exploitation paperback, the B grade film, the fifties-era plain-brown-wrapper 'marital advice' book and so on – prefaced with the thundering declaration that the whole enterprise is intended for the highest-minded educational purposes, to banish ignorance and hypocrisy, and is, in no way, meant to titillate.) The anxiety driving the disclaimer arises from the aged and ailing Brian Doyle's realisation that the material will soon be divorced from him, from his guiding, explaining, contextualising interlocution. From his curatorship.

Both Acheson's and Doyle's papers contain letters to and from respected journalists and filmmakers. Both men were highly aware of the narrative potentials of their own lives. The most 'natural' stories to be extracted from each archive would obviously be their compiler's biography. Acheson and Doyle wanted to help. They knew that storytelling is hard work. They had mature, developed, insider knowledge of rhythm, cadence and narrative dynamics. They were high-level practitioners.

We immerse ourselves in archive material in order, we hope, to produce encounters. To turn up a nugget, a sequence of nuggets, that becomes a syntax. Or the bedrock hitherto hidden truth, which completes, or answers or complicates the already known, 'above ground' story. As Carolyn Steedman says, 'You find nothing in the Archive but stories caught half way through: the middle of things; discontinuities' (2001: 45). Those middles invite us to complete them, not to the point of 'closure' or finality, but to develop them to the point that they, or something like them, can be told. Our 'value-add' is in constructing the sequence, implying, inferring, sometimes stating outright the meaning and significance of the raw unprocessed data.

Antoinette Burton counsels that researchers maintain an attitude of suspiciousness and 'radical doubt' towards the archive, resisting its tendency 'to normalize, through classification and re-presentation, what are invariably "fragmented, fractured and disassembled" strands of historical evidence and experience' (2001: 66–7, citing Kale 1998: 9). The archive is a flawed mirror, screen, window. The work is collaborative and dialogic. It is also alchemical, transformative. The archive as Id, filled with sprawling, scandalous and novel material in relation to the quotidian Ego. The researcher is the Hermetic go-between, restoring – 're-storying', we might say. But there are curatorial presences already lurking in the Doyle and Acheson collections. They were ready for me. Almost too ready. I have come to realise that personal archives are a second person form, addressed to an imagined 'you'. Personal papers are kept because the person keeping them trusts that some day, someone will be interested, that someone known or unknown will be along to read them. It is likely their author-compiler will have started thinking about that 'you' a long time ago, before the 'you' started thinking of him or her.

Merv Acheson and Brian Doyle, almost exact contemporaries, hover about the material they compiled, much the way I do the FPA material. Constantly offering angles, knowledges, opinions – about everything. At my shoulder, *kibitzing*. The deeper into it I get, the more present they become. I was looking for Id but found Ego.

Acknowledgment

Images courtesy of the estate of the late Mervyn Acheson and the estate of the late Brian K. Doyle.

Endnotes

1. The first public showing of material from the Forensic Photography Archive (named in 2006) was the exhibition *Crime scene*, at the Sydney Justice and Police Museum, 1999, curated by Ross Gibson and Kate Richards, who also produced a series of installations using FPA photos under the title *Life after wartime* (see <http://www.lifeafterwartime.com/>). The exhibition *City of shadows* (2005–2007, 2013–), also at the Justice and Police Museum (and book of the same name),

featured a large number of FPA photographs. *Femme fatale*, (book and exhibition, 2008) written/curated by Nerida Campbell and Ross Gibson's novel *The summer exercises* (2008) were illustrated with selection of FPA images, as was the author's *Crooks like us* (2009).

2. In fact, the museum research project, which eventually became *City of shadows* (book and exhibition) was intended originally to be an investigation of interzones where inner city crime met the rowdy cultural life of pubs, clubs, dancehalls, gambling joints and illicit taverns. It was to draw on the photo collection and the Acheson papers. But the enormity and power of the photo collection soon eclipsed everything else, including the Acheson story.
3. The term 'archive fever' was famously put back *into* circulation by Derrida in his *Archive fever* (1996). The term, as Steedman points out originally referred to a range of actual and imagined organic pathologies suffered by bookbinders, leather-workers, archivists and such, brought about through contact with contaminated animal products used in binding and printing (2001).

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