

HST 209: American History: Civil War W14 (Escobar 32165)

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Forum 3

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Civil War Photography

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, January 26, 2014, 10:09 PM

To post, you will click the "reply" link MY post. If you want to reply to a specific comment made by another student, click the "reply" link located on that student's specific post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES As in all forums, put something descriptive in the subject line of your post, such as Confused Identity or Moved Body. Other students wanting to talk about the same issue can click the "reply" button to your post, thus helping organize this discussion.

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Dishonest Photography

by Joyce Gariepy - Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 3:05 PM

I believe that the most shocking is the *Case of Confused Identity*. This particular case has the photographer claiming that the first picture, Plate 36 contains a group of deceased soldiers that are dishonored Confederate soldier. The second picture, Plate 37, has very likely the same soldiers, but the photographer claims they are Union troops. This is totally dishonest and hinders are knowledge of historical truth.

In the *Case of the Moved Body*, we have the same soldier in each picture. However, the body was moved to an alternate location and a different firearm was placed with the body. With this particular case, the photographer doesn't try to make his audience believe that in one picture the soldier is a Confederate while in another he is Union. This is misleading, but doesn't seem to be quite as shocking as in the first case.

According to *Does the Camera Ever Lie?* Alexander Gardner, who was the

photographer for both cases, apparently “wrote poignant narratives to accompany his photographs, occasionally inventing stories to make his point.” It seems to me that the invented stories would be of more notable concern than the pictures. Images of the war are definitely an important part of history, but creating stories to go with the pictures seems more dishonest to me.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Dishonest Photography



by Kylie Emory - Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 4:56 PM

I almost think that the *Case of the Moved Body* is the most shocking. A group of dead men, is basically a group of dead men. But with the sharpshooter, the man wasn't even a sharpshooter! He was posed to look like one, which is very misleading. The entire picture is misleading, rather than just the description with the picture.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Dishonest Photography



by Jessica Mitchell - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 8:19 PM

It was hard for me to decide which of the two cases was most egregious to me. In the case of the moved body the photographer went so far as to move and manipulate the body to a completely different place. Showing no respect or care for the deceased by doing it. Staging a scene completely with a deceased soldier took me aback. This jumped out immediately as the worst case.

Then I thought about it and in the case of Confused Identity, it may have not been as horrible seeming a thing towards the bodies themselves, but to the viewer during the time it seems to be a choice made for propaganda purposes. To present the dead soldiers as two different sides, playing one side in a kinder light and one side in a less kind light had to have manipulated the opinions of the people who were looking at them.

I still think the case of the moved body was worse. But stopping to really think about it they were both very bad. And it makes me question a lot of what I might see.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Dishonest Photography



by Joyce Gariepy - Thursday, January 30, 2014, 3:22 PM

I had to think about it for quite awhile before deciding which one I thought was the most egregious. They are both pretty shocking! In the Case of the Confused Identity, I think you could be right and it may have been for propaganda purposes, but I think it could also be just because the photographer saw an

opportunity to save himself some time. Its apparent that he was not an honest person in his profession, so either reason would be plausible.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Dishonest Photography

by Jacob Nelson - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 12:04 PM

I agree with you that inventing stories are of more notable concern than that of manipulating images. There is only so much you can do to dramatically change a photograph while maintaining a some what authentic look. In the case of the moved body the photographer made very subtle changes to the soldier to dramatize the image by moving him to a snipers nest. However, this photo would be of much less affect to the viewer if it wasn't accompanied with the story. Thus, I too believe that inventing stories is more of a concern than manipulating images. While they are both unethical in practice, making up stories is a worse crime because they don't need to be accompanied by an image to be affective. A written story by itself can be just as believable as one that has an image attached to it.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Can a picture lie?

by Kylie Emory - Tuesday, January 28, 2014, 4:51 PM

Both cases are so shocking to me! What I find the most appalling though is the stories made up to accompany the photographs. A pictures is nice, but it does not tell the full story. I always rely upon the accompanying description to learn what is depicted in the photograph, so the fake stories are horrific.

I think that discovering historical truth on the Civil War is very difficult, considering the fact that pictures can apparently lie, and that photographers were more concerned with making a story than with historical accuracy. It makes you question everything you have ever learned.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Can a picture lie?

by Joyce Gariepy - Thursday, January 30, 2014, 3:16 PM

The accompanying caption of the picture is supposed to be helpful in determining what we are looking at. I certainly don't always know exactly what an image is depicting. I often need to rely on the caption below it in order to fully understand what I am looking at. So, if the photographer is "occasionally inventing stories to make his point, " we are being misled.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Can a picture lie?

by Jessica Mitchell - Thursday, January 30, 2014, 8:47 PM

I am skeptical about how much trust I can personally place in the historical truth of what is said about these photographs. But the same can be said about photographs that are taken today. You can say they are anyone and anywhere and under whatever circumstance if you want, and only you and people who are somehow either connected to the shot or know the place or something can say any different. I know some landmarks from around the world, but have never traveled really out of the Northwest, so you could show me a photo that has no famous landmarks in it and tell me it is anywhere and I wouldn't be able to say otherwise. The circumstances of a photo can just as easily be said to be one thing when they are in-fact another.

Photographs can only provide a small portion of a narrative. It's the context they are viewed in that fills out the story.

For the most part we have to trust that what we are being told is truthful until we have reason to believe otherwise. Innocent until proven guilty is the idea I have in regard to historical photographs. It would be nice if we could count on the integrity of the photographer to be honest in their work, but we can't always. That is where the healthy skepticism comes in, for me anyway.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Can a picture lie?

by Kylie Emory - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 8:41 AM

That is a very good point you make about pictures taken today.. I am a big fan of Pinterest, and for awhile there was a picture of a baby alpaca floating around saying that it was a llama.. But unless you were raised around them like myself, you would never know that what the picture was of, and the caption with it were not correct.

The same applies to the pictures we are being shown of the Civil War. Show me a picture of some men in uniform, and say they are Union, and I believe you, take it from a different angle, and call them Confederates, and I will believe it again, because I wasn't there, and I am not versed enough in the subject to tell the difference.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Can a picture lie?

by Debra Moran - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 10:13 PM

I would like to know exactly what the pictures were used for. Was it just in Alexander Gardner's 1865 Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the

War? Were these photographs circulated amongst the general public or were they just for use in his book? This weighs in with me as well. No, it does not make his dishonesty ok, but how many people saw his work before the analysis was done and his dishonesty uncovered? It is not as if people were walking around with smart phones and could view the picture on Instagram and could be viewed instantly by thousands. How much time passed before the duplicity was discovered? Again this doesn't mean I agree with his dishonesty. But the coverage of the Civil War was pretty biased depending on where you lived and what you believed in. Most news coverage that I have seen from this era smacked of propaganda the whole purpose of this was to influence public views. It seems to be the customs of the times and this is why people must question history to keep it as honest as possible.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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More information on the photographers



by Bryan Sanders - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 10:51 PM

Something I found when researching Alexander Gardner and his partners is that they worked for Mathew Brady, called the 'Father of Photojournalism.' Brady sent his employees throughout the country to photograph events during the civil war. Their work was seen by people throughout the country. If you wanna know more, there's a link with more information.

<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/biographies/mathew-brady.html>

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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The Case of the Shocking Manipulation



by Melinda Parks - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 12:02 PM

It is difficult for me to decide which of these cases is the more shocking, because I think both are, but for different reasons. In The Case of The Moved Body, I thought that moving the body was incredibly disrespectful. The article states that, "The amount of time expended photographing this one body indicates that this may have been one of the last bodies to be buried and Gardner may have felt that he was running out of subjects." The idea that someone would move and pose a body because he "was running out of subjects" is repulsive to me. This act was, of course, also misleading to the audience, and even the weapon wasn't correct, as the article states, "The type of weapon seen in these photographs was not used by sharpshooters."

The Case of Confused Identity is also shocking because the same men are described both as Union and as Confederate soldiers. Not only is this again disrespectful both to the soldiers and to their families, but is also dishonest and misleading, presenting inaccurate information to the readers.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: The Case of the Shocking Manipulation



by Joyce Garipey - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 1:16 PM

I completely agree that moving the body to a different location just to get a better image is totally repulsive. The photographer apparently cared more about getting the "perfect" image than he did about a deceased soldier, killed in action. The firearm that is seen in the picture is believed to have been a prop of Alexander Gardner, the photographer. He used it in many of his photos taken at Gettysburg. It just leads me to further believe that Mr. Gardner was a dishonest person.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: The Case of the Shocking Manipulation



by Lauren Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 1:24 AM

That same quote about Gardner "running out of subjects" is one of the main reasons that I think that The Case of the Moved Body is the most shocking. The idea that someone would use a dead body as a prop is sickening. How Gardner presented the photo that was fabricated was incredibly misleading to the readers who took his word and his photos as the truth was terrible and abused their trust in him to present accurate facts.

By reading your thoughts on The Case of Confused Identity I can see that both cases used soldiers as props. The moved body case was much more literal with the actual moving and posing of the body but the case of confused identity also used the bodies to show whichever story that he wanted. Both were unethical and disrespectful to not only the soldier but to their families. I am not sure which case I would say is more shocking.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Historical Truth?



by Melinda Parks - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 12:31 PM

I think that discovering the absolute historical truth about any time period is difficult, if not impossible, as there are often so many differing accounts and, in some cases, outright lies. However, because there is so much information available about the Civil War, I think that there is a better chance of discovering the truth. Hopefully the number of honest accounts outnumber the dishonest. However, I'm not sure that it's really possible to discover the whole truth and nothing but the truth about every event and situation.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Historical Truth?

by Tiffani Brizendine Schnetzer - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 4:32 PM

You're right, there's no way for us to ever know everything or to know for sure what is a lie and what is a truth. One comfort is that there are people like Frassanito who have the attention to detail and love for seeking out truths needed to sort through histories falsities. While there have always been some lies in history, there have always been people who do their best to preserve facts as well.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Their Secret Is Out

by Eryne Grant - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 1:51 PM

Of the two cases, the one I found the most egregious was the "The Case of the Moved Body". The idea that the photographers moved the body to another location shocked me. I have always assumed that Civil War pictures were accurate due to the amount of equipment and technology that was being produced at that time. As a professional photographer myself, I would never think to move my subject if I'm going for an accurate and factual photograph. I found the case to be ridiculous, and the fact that the weapon was not one used by a sharpshooter settled the case nicely. In the end, it made me laugh. The photographers must have assumed they would get away with it, and they did for a while. If only we could see their faces now that their secrets are out!

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Their Secret Is Out

by Joyce Garipey - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 3:15 PM

The photographer used the same weapon as a prop in many of his photographs, so he apparently did assume he could get away with it. It seems as if he did get away with it for quite awhile until William Frassanito began to study and analyze the photographs. It seems rather gruesome to me to actually think it would be ok to move a body to another location in order to get a picture of him in the "picturesque sharpshooter's den."

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Their Secret Is Out

by Jacob Nelson - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 11:48 AM

I am curious if the photographer in the case of the moved body ever got found out during his lifetime? I'm sure veterans of the Civil War who saw this picture questioned it's authenticity since the so called sniper had the wrong weapon in his hands. If this photographer did indeed get found out, I am curious if there was any public backlash for the ways in which he manipulated his photos.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Their Secret Is Out

by Eryne Grant - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 1:10 PM

I also wondered if the photographer was found out in his lifetime. It's probably a good guess to say that people in the time period were emotionally stressed and heartbroken about the pictures shown, so I doubt anyone paid close attention to the body. But, I'm sure a few people noticed! I guess it would be hard for them to be heard because of the lack of national communication in the 1800s. Nowadays it is easy to broadcast our opinions and observations!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Their Secret Is Out

by Melinda Parks - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 5:24 PM

I'm with you--I, too, assumed that the Civil War pictures were accurate because of the lack of computers and the like. I never once considered that someone would move a body or photograph the same group of bodies from a different angle! It is shocking to me that a photographer, especially one who is supposed to be reporting the truth, would do such a thing, even if he was "running out of subjects." And then to add insult to injury, he added a story to go with the falsified photograph! While these photos and stories might have produced the desired emotional reaction in the audience, I think that Gardner went too far in this case.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Civil War Photography & The Moved Body

by Jacob Nelson - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 8:02 PM

I personally thought that the case of the moved body was the most egregious when it came to manipulating the image. The photographer took it upon himself to plant a dead soldiers body in a different place than it had originally been just to add some dramatic effect to the photograph. To me this shows a complete lack of respect towards the dead soldiers who had lost their lives in battle. Essentially, this photographer was using this dead body as a prop, just like the gun seen in the photograph which completely demeans this humans sacrifice. All of this was done for the sake of creating a more powerful image which I find totally unethical.

While this photo is indeed proof that we cannot rely solely on images to learn about the past, it doesn't mean that we should dismiss all the pictures taken during this time period. We can still learn from these images despite the fact that some have been altered. I think we just need to be more aware about this happening and question the pictures we are looking at to make sure that they are authentic.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Civil War Photography & The Moved Body

by Lauren Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 3:18 PM

I agree that the case of the moved body was the most shocking because of the fact that Gardner used the dead soldier's body as a prop. He had no respect for the life of that man and that sickens me. For someone to manipulate a photo just to create the dramatic story that he felt that his paper needed to grab everyone's attention is terrible not to mention unethical. I also agree with you that we can still learn from the images even though they have been altered. Not every photo from that time was altered but some were still based on the truth. By being more skeptical and questioning these photos we can learn which ones have not been altered and therefore which ones we can trust.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Moved Body Case

by Lauren Grant - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 9:05 PM

Between the two cases, confused identity and moved body, I found the case of the moved body to be the most shocking. The fact that the photographer purposely placed dead bodies around the battlefields to create the most dramatic story that he could is very surprising. He used the dead soldiers as props and then placed guns and other props around them to make sure that the photographs would match the story that he wanted to write. I am shocked at the lengths that he went to manipulate the photographs and even more shocked that he seemed to think that no one would notice which I guess no one did for quite some time.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Historical Truth Dishonest Photography

by Debra Moran - Wednesday, January 29, 2014, 11:07 PM

I would have to say the confused identity bothers me more than the moved body. The photographer was manipulating more than the image he was turning men from Unionists into Confederates and portrayed the Confederates as treasonous simpletons deserving of cold lonely death. Changing the color of their uniforms dishonored them, they were soldiers, men fighting for what they believed in and this changed those fundamental beliefs. What perturbed me the most was his statement that of the Union soldiers already being interred while the rebels as he called them were still strewn across the field two days later. Post mortem photography had been popular long before the war so the staging of the young soldier described as a sniper didn't seem to bother me as much. The country seemed to view the Civil War with a morbid curiosity, these photographs helped to satisfy that curiosity.

I don't know how much historical truth is in history. It seems that most historical truth was told by eyewitnesses or written down in diaries or educated guesses with archeological

finds. I suppose standing on a battlefield after a major battle such as this, one could look at any of the young men that died there and just fill in the blanks as they all died for the same war just different sides and as his photos were black and white no one would be the wiser. Can we rely on anything as historical truth unless we physically were there?

What bothered me was the author's lack of respect and derogatory comments through written word, for these men who lost their lives. I guess I have become desensitized with mainstream media constantly bombarding us with what they want us to think that the one thing that bothered me most was the obviously biased opinions of the author.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Both



by Tiffani Brizendine Schnetzer - Thursday, January 30, 2014, 12:01 AM

While the act behind the staged photo is more shocking, I think both alterations are equally awful in regards to how they affect the viewer or reader. Both alterations are deceiving and harm our understanding of history, which is something that's importance outweighs the importance of the point Gardner was trying to portray in his text (mentioned in *The Case of Confused Identity*) and the uniqueness of the photo he and O'Sullivan wanted to capture (mentioned in *The Case of the Moved Body*).

In the context of a book such as Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War, few would think they were being led astray or think to look deeper into the origins of the photographs being used. In this age of Photoshop and Wikipedia, we seem to be more suspicious of photographs and information provided online, however most of us don't think to second guess older photographs or texts, especially when used in a historical book or a reclaimed documentary.

There is little difference between misusing text and misusing photographs. One person may be more prone to absorbing information through text, while another may be more informed through photographs, but the end product is the same when those sources are edited, and that's simply that people are misinformed. Misinformation prevents us from fully understanding our past. It's unsettling to think about how much of history is altered intentionally in order to get across whatever the most convenient message is for the storyteller.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Both



by Joyce Gariepy - Friday, January 31, 2014, 2:38 PM

If I had spent time in the past looking through Alexander Gardner's 1865 *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War*, I would never have realized that at least some of those photos and captions were not the whole the truth. I would take it as an honest depiction of what the Civil War was like. We want historical information that is presented to us to be as accurate as possible, so this kind of manipulation by the photographer is disconcerting. I agree that in today's world, we are often suspicious of photos that appear before us in magazine, newspapers, the media, etc and we should

be. We know that Photoshop and airbrushing are used to make photographs more acceptable or appealing to whatever audience it is being presented to. This isn't a secret. However, back in Civil War days there was no such thing as the internet or Photoshop. Alexander Gardner and I'm sure other photographers, presented the pictures to the general public as if they were the whole truth. Until these photos were analyzed, no one realized that they were getting false information.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Both



by Jacob Nelson - Friday, January 31, 2014, 4:54 PM

Interesting perspective Joyce. I think I agree with you in the sense that we look at photographs presented in different forms of media today a lot differently than the way people probably did during the Civil War days. In my opinion people today are more skeptical about everything that is presented to them in the media. Now a days we tend to question the authenticity of the photographs being presented to us because we are aware of the ways you can alter pictures through the use of such applications like photoshop. However, during the Civil War era people probably assumed that the pictures that were being presented to them were original and authentic. People were probably much less skeptical about photographers taking illegitimate photographs than they are today.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Both



by Melinda Parks - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 5:03 PM

I agree that many of us don't think to question older photos and written texts. Because Photoshop and computers hadn't been invented, it's easier to just assume that the photos simply *can't* have been altered.

Looking at these photographs makes me wonder how many photos from past times were manipulated and if any of them were ever found out. I wonder what the reaction of, say, the family of one of those fallen soldiers would be if they found out that their relative was being represented as fighting for the other side?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Confused Identity and Moved Body



by Bryan Sanders - Thursday, January 30, 2014, 4:42 PM

These two cases both share levels of deception to serve some objective. In at least one of the examples we saw tampering for the purpose of propaganda. This occurred with the confused identity when the photographer claimed two pictures represented two separate groups, one Confederate and the other Union. We now know the truth, but it's still important to be weary of this trick. It may be easy to accept the tampering since the agenda he was

pushing was pro Union, but what if that happened nowadays? If a photographer overseas found an abandoned combat zone, took pictures, and placed a headline of his own over it, there's a good chance we would never know the true circumstances.

Pictures can be used to move viewers to tears or to joy, and we've seen that in this documentary series by Ken Burns. They're powerful, which is why we need to be mindful of either fallacy, whether Confused Identity or Moved Body. People with a less critical eye may not be bothered as much, but when attention is called to this, we have to be weary of the source.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Confused Identity and Moved Body

by Eryne Grant - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 1:14 PM

I think you made a really good point with the comparison of if the situation happened now. I never thought of the situation that way, and now that I have thought about it, it *would* be easy to manipulate the photo and get away with it. With all of the technology available to photographers and reporters today, anything is possible. But, if a photographer was found doing the "moved body" trick, I'm sure they would be ridiculed and lose their job.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Confused Identity and Moved Body

by Tiffani Brizendine Schnetzer - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 3:52 PM

I really like what Bryan said and believe it's a big part of why we should never rely on one source, but what you said about the modern day photographer being caught, that's what scares me. If he were caught by the public, I completely agree he would have a lot to answer to; but if he were caught by the company that hired him, I wonder how they would respond?

A lot of news companies fight for the best story, it worries me that they may commend a photographer who altered his photos to boost a certain story or perspective. This isn't something I've researched, I'm merely speculating, but if Gardner and O'Sullivan were so okay with story and photo alterations, it's easy to assume people in the 21st century would feel the same.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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historical truth

by Kylie Emory - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 8:34 AM

Do you think we can discover the historical truth about this time period when some of the very things we rely on, such as photographs, have been altered.

I think discovering the historical truth on any piece of history is very difficult. It is important that we don't take everything we hear or see as absolute truth. It is very helpful though that we do have photographs from this time period, even though they may not be completely accurate. We are at least able to study them and compare them to others taken. Yes, it is terrible that these pictures were altered, but through close examination we were able to discover the truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: historical truth



by Lauren Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 3:06 PM

I agree that we can not take everything that we see or hear as the absolute truth. Photographs can be a key piece in discovering the truth but without information few can stand on their own. These photographs are very helpful in gathering facts and ideas of what happened even though some were altered. If we took a group of photos from any period in time we are bound to come across some that have been altered. It is only by studying these photos and not taking every photo as the whole truth, we are able to decipher what really happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: historical truth



by Jacob Nelson - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 11:08 PM

Even though some photographs have been altered from this time period it doesn't necessarily mean we can't find the historical truth. I think it just means we have to pay more attention to the photographs and literature we are being presented with. It is always important to double check both the images and writings we are being assigned with. Cross referencing this information not only gives us a better understanding of the material, but also gives us a better idea of if its accurate.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Reliable Photographs



by Eryne Grant - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 1:21 PM

I think that we can still discover the historical truth about this time period despite altered materials such as photographs. I highly doubt that all photographs from the Civil War were altered, so some information must be accurate. It generally isn't the first thought in a photographer's mind to perform the manipulation that the two photographers in these situations used. I'm not saying that all of the photographers were truthful, but I'm not saying that all of them weren't. History can be easily altered with little insight to the past. For example, in 100 years people could look at altered images that photographers, digital editors, and reporters have taken from the late 1900s and 2000s and believe every sight they see, but not all of the photographs are reliable sources of information. I believe that as

long as we keep this idea in mind, we can use a filter to decipher what information is reliable and vise versa.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Reliable Photographs

by Tiffani Brizendine Schnetzer - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 3:59 PM

I completely agree. For example, when Gardner finds the "sharpshooter's den" he and O'Sullivan feel the need to forge a story for the den by including a body in the scene. A different photographer could have approached the same spot and believed that a photo of the den as is was enough.

I'm glad that amidst all of us focusing on the negatives of *Confused Identity* and *The Case of the Moved Body*, you brought in a contrasting positive view.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Reliable Photographs

by Lauren Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 3:05 PM

I agree that we should not automatically assume that every photographer was truthful but at the same time we can not rule it out. All history can be altered and we can not be certain that something hasn't been. However, we should be able to discover the truth behind the images since like you said, not every photo was altered. Gardner was one of many photographers of the time and it is most likely that not every one of them was as dishonest and disrespectful as he was with his stories and images. I liked your example of how people will see our images in 100 years. With so much Photoshop and digital editing that goes on many people could see that as being dishonest, especially since it is hard to see what photos are edited today. Not every photo has been altered but not every photo should be taken as the absolute truth and as a reliable source.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Worse when images involved?

by Jessica Mitchell - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 5:57 PM

I'm not sure if I think there is a difference between changing something that is written and changing something when images are involved. I think it's all relative. Every case varies, because every case is different. I think in general people tend to place more trust in the honesty of what they are seeing opposed to the honesty of what they are reading or hearing though. Still, in the age of photoshop, more people are inherently wary of what they see. I am a photographer, and I do edit my photos in slight ways to enhance their composition. But I would never fathom staging a scene and claiming it was truth when it was really fiction. Nor would I take a photo and tell a different story about what it is.

Both reporters and photographers have a set of ethics and it is their responsibility to follow them. To do anything less is in my opinion a crime against their audience.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Worse when images involved?



by Tiffani Brizendine Schnetzer - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 11:31 PM

"Crime against their audience" is the perfect way to put it. I also really like the point you make by pointing out that there are multiple variables to each story therefore alterations of any kind in one may be worse than alterations in another. For example a more insignificant story such as "Man rescues cat from tree" being exaggerated or falsified to fill in a news stations air time, wouldn't be nearly as ill-received as a picture of the President shaking hands with Fidel Castro accompanied by an altered story. Because the stories are on completely different scales, lies in the latter story would be far worse in the public eye than lies in the first story.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Worse when images involved?



by Jessica Mitchell - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 7:57 PM

I fully agree that it is all relative. Everything has to be considered within a context. Things that are altered related to important issues, policies, or events being altered are far far worse than things of little consequence or importance being altered. When anything is altered that can effect the outcome of something or change a persons life or the opinion people have, it is far worse than something that may be done for entertainment or that brings no personal consequence to another. No one image can tell a complete story. Context is necessary. It would be nice if we lived in a world that we could count on those informational gaps could be filled in with truth, but we don't so we have to be wary. And sometimes there is more than one perception of the truth. Two people could witness something and see it completely differently. Their stories could be completely different. But they would still both be telling the truth. It's the perspective that is different.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Worse when images involved?



by Jacob Nelson - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 12:35 AM

I do agree that people in general tend to place more of a premium on photographs versus that of literature. The saying "a picture is worth is a thousand words" really does ring true in this particular example. However, I still believe that making up a fake story is more egregious than creating a fake image. I think this is true because there is a limit to how you can manipulate a picture. However, when you are dealing with

writing a story there is no limit to how much false information you can provide in the story to dramatize it.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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When government gets involved

by Bryan Sanders - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 6:24 PM

It's interesting we've been going over the photo manipulation here in the civil war, and so far we've seen instances of individuals looking to bolster propaganda, make money, or both. In more recent times, we've seen even more of this. However, the recent examples I show here are not propagated by individuals, but by government, albeit foreign.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Yezhov

This man appears in a photo with Stalin, but got edited out after his execution. The Soviets made it a habit of altering photography. We've seen individuals able to move public opinion, but when government gets involved it becomes even more dangerous.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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An alternative view on the Sharpshooter

by Bryan Sanders - Saturday, February 1, 2014, 6:58 PM

<http://www.jamescgroves.com/henry/hcp1a.htm>

This is a link to an article by a man, James Groves, who raises doubt as to whether the sharpshooter was moved or not. He introduces himself, then goes on to mention the sharpshooter and the most common interpretation of the photos. He states that the only proof of photo tampering is rationale. It sounds like he is using his rationale to argue against the dominant rationale concerning the photos.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Depriving Readers of the Truth

by Lauren Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 1:12 AM

Between changing what is written or revealed in print and what is changed in an image I would have to say that changing an image is more damaging to the reader when I first think about it. Most readers are more likely to be skeptical and challenge writings than photos. Readers take photos as the absolute truth and rarely ever question whether or not it has been manipulated in any way. However, many readers will look for inaccuracies in print or research the written topic to see if anything has been changed. Often the accuracy of photos are overlooked and taken for granted which makes it much worse. The more that I think about which is worse, the more that I come to think that they are equally terrible. Both are taking advantage of the reader and hoping that they will overlook important details. However when it comes to historical accuracy in print and images they are both the same.

Both keep the reader from knowing what took place and deprives them of the truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Depriving Readers of the Truth



by Melinda Parks - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 4:37 PM

"Readers take photos as the absolute truth and rarely ever question whether or not it has been manipulate in any way." Photoshop is so widely used now that I actually do tend to question photos often, especially those found on the internet or in magazines. I do agree, though, that written facts are more likely to be researched and probably are easier to research, as well. You hit the nail on the head when you say that "both are taking advantage of the reader and hoping that they will overlook important details." Overlooking details is easy to do, and that makes manipulation of facts through print and images that much worse. People want to believe that what they are reading or looking at is real/true, especially, I think, when it come to history, so I think it is incredibly irresponsible and dishonest to manipulate either form of information.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Historical Truth



by Lauren Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 3:20 PM

I do think that we can discover the historical truth about this time period because not all of the photographs were altered. We can not assume that every photo that we see has been altered in some way but at the same time we can not rule that out. Keeping a skeptical eye can help us discover the truth. Since we were not there we have to take these photographs as pieces of evidence that we can use to decipher what actually happened. No photo in any time period can be taken as the absolute truth but they can be clues to what actually took place. However, if we look at text as well as photographs we can have a better understanding of what happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Historical Truth



by Eryne Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 8:22 PM

I completely agreed with what you mentioned. Learning from the past isn't necessarily relying on facts, but how people think. I find it fascinating that the photographers took the time and effort to move the body, but the action shows that the desire to alter what a picture is naturally isn't a new concept.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Power of photojournalists and reporters





by Bryan Sanders - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 10:13 PM

You said that the photos can be clues as to what happened, but I would go one step further and say that they help reveal the photographer's self interest. These individuals chose their photos, whether altered or not, according to preference. No matter what the times, the photographers still had discretion. We've already seen with the text accompanying the confused body case the bias of the photographers, for the Union. Since the civil war, we've seen continued bias illustrated in wars such as the Vietnam war. Reporters focused on the negatives such as the intelligence before the Tet Offensive, and in the process helped drive public opinion against it. Whether reporting bad news or manipulating photos, both instances go to show the power photojournalists and reporters possess.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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They Are The Same

by Eryne Grant - Sunday, February 2, 2014, 4:08 PM

I don't believe there is a major difference between changing what is written in print and changing what is in images. They both are different mediums, but to me they are similar in the sense that they portray information to the viewer. Text could be seen as more distinguishably worse because facts can be easy to switch and identify as false, but photographs and point out with plain eyesight its flaws. For example, if a textbook posted an incorrect fact about the Civil War and claimed for this said fact to be true, historians, students, and teachers would call upon the mistake immediately. But, if a textbook included one of the two photographs mentioned in the two articles at hand, the same group of people would call upon it as well. Changing information, whether it be written or photographed, is still changed information. Reliability comes from the trust that the source is using factual data.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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