



Forum 3

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Civil War Photography

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, January 25, 2015, 10:15 AM

After studying the required materials, address the various questions. Make your initial posts by the Wednesday deadline (if not sooner) in order to start the discussion. Then, continue your discussions until the Sunday deadline.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, such as which case study you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Civil War Photography

Sum of ratings: -

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It makes you think

by Jordan Hevern - Tuesday, January 27, 2015, 11:03 PM

Wow, after reading both of the articles and watching the video, I am a little taken back. I understand back then they did not have what we have now as in technology, but to actually know that these pictures that we see now are suppose to represent the civil war have been altered that much, actually shock me. I know, just as much as anyone else, that 1863 was not advanced at all, and I've never really thought about how we ended up with all the information that we do have about that time period, but to think of it as not in the moment, is kind of hard/different to take in. Now we get everything right in our face. The president says he like pancakes for dinner, it's instantly, as in live, televised for the world to see. When Osama Bin laden was executed, we saw exactly how it was done and what he looked like right away. Being in the generation that gets everything thrown in our face ever when you don't want it, is something that we have got so accustomed to, that reading these articles really made me think about how things really have not been this way for a long time.

The most egregious article for me was the "Moved Body." Mainly the simple fact that even after four months, bones and all, they moved the unknown soldier, they mangled his body, dragged him from one area to another, just to get a picture. No one knew who was, or even what side he was fighting for. They didn't even find out his name, which does hinder my knowledge and the accuracy of the civil war, but I do believe that the truth of this brutal battle has not been altered. Even though it's, in lamest terms, screwed up, to mess with a dead soldier's body, without things like that, we may not have knowledge of certain information of the civil war. It's not as though the photographer took the body from Gettysburg, to the Bull Run and made it seem that this particular shot was in a different area. He simply just moved the body to get a more accurate picture, and to tell a deeper story for the audience.

I think its worse to change the written word, then to alter a picture. Pictures tell a story, they show you how this person looked, their face expression; it's more of a deeper/emotional connection. The written word tells you the story. It tells you how the particular events happen, and how it got that point. The written word needs to be the truth, and even though it's not always the case, when pictures change, we still get a sense of what's going on, but words stick. Even though the pictures have been altered, I still believe we get the historical truth, because as I stated before the picture was not in a different location, just slightly moved to catch the audience attention.

Jordan Hevern.

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**Re: It makes you think**

by [Justin Wright](#) - Thursday, January 29, 2015, 7:21 PM

Jordan:

You made a very apt comparison to the image we lusted for after the death of Osama. It gripped the world, just like I suppose the Civil War had.

We could not wait for the official pics. Knowing the world-wide fever pitch desire to see his dead body (or for some to see them suppressed), I think this example provides a good example of the competing interests to get just the right shot.

The picture would mean everything, and bring some closure to one of the worst, harrowing ten years of terrorism the United States has ever seen.

In other words: The pics were absolutely priceless. So this gives rise to some discussion to how much do you alter the corpse before taking these grand historical photos, if at all? Hard to know, we were in a hell of a hurry to get out of there. But we needed pics that would verify.

I could imagine and even forgive some small liberty in perhaps removing a little blood from the face to make identification easier, or adjusting his beard, or.....?

I think we are far more concerned nowadays with authenticity, but sometimes adjustments need to be made. Perhaps photojournalists in the 1860's believed they had similar license that included far greater liberties, at least to serve their purposes. I don't know.

Great Osama analogy.

Sum of ratings: **2 (1)**

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**Re: It makes you think**

by [Alanna VanDreew](#) - Saturday, January 31, 2015, 3:58 PM

I don't think Alexander Gardner felt he had certain privileges to change the way the post battle scene was naturally presented. It's clear he didn't care at all about the truth of events. Considering he not only changed the circumstances in which the men in the picture died but also the very text under the picture was a complete lie about who they are, what side they were fighting, on and how they died. I think Alexander Gardner is a sell-out, trying to make his pictures worth more by creating the perfect story, and scenery to go along with a gruesome war. I would be willing to accept a tiny change to get the shot right or to have something more tangible to look at but Gardner moved a whole person!

I'd also like to state that people have the right to the truth. Especially the people who were suffering though the war. It didn't appear to me that Gardner was trying to prove anything other than; our side the right, theirs is wrong, and the war is awful. I think everyone already knew that sense many families lost multiple sons. Honestly, I don't think many people could be more disrespectful and insensitive to the repercussions of the war than he was. I think its impossible to know what his motives were but I imagine they were very self-serving.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

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**Re: It makes you think**

by [Jal Rial](#) - Thursday, January 29, 2015, 8:44 PM

Jordan,

Man I was shocked just as much as you where buddy. I couldn't believe that they would really alter pictures and letters of such an important event and time in our country upbringing. I just thought it was wrong and definitely un American especially since its about such as important part of the country. I could understand if it was just a regular picture or letter of something that had no meaning what so ever. I like how u stated that we get everything in our fc these days or in the moment because that is absolutely right, In other words we as a generation are spoiled id say.

I'd definitely have to disagree with you on changing words and letter being more important then changing a picture. I think that both have the same value and both can be used for very important stuff. There fore I believe that it is equally as bad to change words as it is to alter a picture. You said words need to be the truth because they tell a story but don't

you think picture or imagine can tell or show a story? I do

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"One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words"

by [Edgar Rodriguez](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 6:25 AM

Photographs, a marvelous invention by mankind in my opinion. The ability of a person to take a picture and have that image for all time, is just incredible. Pictures can tell stories and for me that is the most fascinating elements of the Civil War. The ability to see the carnage, destruction, and havoc that these historic Civil War battles created are a very, very powerful tool when learning about history. The images taken during the Civil War captivate and empower the students and viewers to want to know more about the image. Picture take us back in time and can show us the many changes that have taken place since the time of the Civil War.

I was going over the articles for this week's forum and I was captivated by the article titled "The Case of Confused Identity". This article was very interesting because of the pictures of the dead soldiers that participated in the battle of Gettysburg. I found it confusing that Alexander Gardner used two different photographs of the same people that lay dead on the battlefield to describe the Confederacy and The Union. By reading the article we know that the soldiers are Union casualties, but Alexander Gardner uses one of his photographs to describe how the dead soldiers are Confederates who paid for their treason with death, killed by strangers far away from home. I this amazing because of how a simple image is able to tell another story after all like the saying says" One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words".

I think that Alexander Gardner did this because the technology of the time was just in the beginning stages of development and the common person couldn't really tell the difference either way. Most people think that the Vietnam War was the first war in which the media was able to capture the carnage that was happening to young Americans and to show it to the American public. Alexander Gardner in my opinion with his photographs of the Civil War technically was the first to show the American public the amount of dead soldiers on the battlefield during the Civil War. I don't really know why he took two different pictures of the Union soldier at the battle of Gettysburg and said that one of the photos were of dead Confederates but if I were to guess, I think he did it because it was convenient for him at the time.

I think when it comes down to historical truth it would be hard work in general to decipher the actual events of a certain point in history. The discovery of an altered text or photo is still the same in my opinion because essentially they become lies that have been preserved in time, waiting to be discovered and when they are most historical researchers end up finding the truth. Whether it's altered as a photo or altered as a text there can be no difference in that fact that it has been altered but a picture tends to captivate a person more than something that is written.

I was deployed to the war, I went and did my service to this country in Iraq. I remembered how important it was for a person in the Armed Services to have a camera. Whether it was a Marine, Soldier, Sailor or Airman we all had cameras on us at all times to capture stunning events during our deployment. Photographs are an amazing tool that have had a major impact on how civilian see war. I think it helps them understand, I know that all the photographs I took during my tour have helped me understand how much the common soldier has to endure during a war. I hope that others can use photos to do the same. Alexander Gardner was a pioneer in this aspect even if he had altered some photos to show the public the reality of the conflict during that time period.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: "One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words"

by [Jal Rial](#) - Friday, January 30, 2015, 3:51 PM

Edgar,

Your subject line is very strong and when I read your response it just fires me up because you are totally right. Pictures are worth a thousand words and for individuals to alter images really ticks me off! It just isn't right because not only are they changing the image but they are also changing the story the images are telling which really can change how people see and feel about things. I like how you said these pictures are a very tool when learning about history because your completely right. Without certain images from the past we wouldn't be able to tell or really convince each other how certain aspects of life where really like. I think Mr. Gardner is a terrible person for some of his actions. Not only do I think he provided false information but I feel that he was simply performing these acts for self benefit. Why lie about dead confederates soldiers? That would benefit no one except Alexander Gardner that is why my respect for him has significantly declined. I agree with your statement about "when it comes down to historical truth it would be hard work to general decipher the actual events of a certain point in history" couldn't be put in better. I stated in my response that both altering images and changing words or letter are the same and both wrong. Really enjoyed reading this Edgar!! Keep up

the good work.

Sum of ratings: **2 (1)**

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Re: "One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words"

by [Alanna VanDreew](#) - Saturday, January 31, 2015, 4:47 PM

I have to say that I didn't think about the fact that taking photographs was a new technology 1860's. While I still think that Gardner was incredibly selfish and deceptive in his work, I just realized that our rules and norms about photography may not have existed back then. Perhaps we just can't understand what he was doing or planning because our culture is so different now. Photos are in everyday life and everyone has experience with them. I still think he knew he was lying because, in the text about the pictures he was blatantly making things up, but maybe he didn't recognize that changing the scenario was lying too.

Although, I really do wonder why he would feel the need to change anything at all. With the hundreds and thousands of men who died though out the war, wouldn't it be just as easy to take pictures of actual Confederate soldiers and say how they payed for with their lives with their treason? He was out there in the field, with his hard to manage equipment which is apparently a huge chore to even use and he chose to go though the painstaking process of taking pictures of the same gentlemen twice but from different sides. I find that every strange. There were 51,000 soldiers who were either killed, wounded or missing. I want to believe that there is something more to Gardner actions than to just say he's a liar and an awful person. I think it has to do with the emergence of photography. I'm just not sure in what way.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

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Hey, Alanna!

by [Edgar Rodriguez](#) - Saturday, January 31, 2015, 10:15 PM

So in my opinion Alex took both of the photos using the dead Union soldiers because it was much easier than walking around the battlefield with heavy equipment, not to mention the time it took to set it all up. I think what he did was smart by using the dead Union soldiers to create those powerful images in one setting. He was after all a war correspondent if you think about it.

Sum of ratings: **1 (1)**

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Re: "One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words"

by [Justin Wright](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 6:15 PM

Responding to Alanna's comments:

First, you made comments about deception and selfishness which causes us to question his motives. I feel that is a great place to start when trying to understand why this behavior was utilized.

Our Instructor is an Historian, and probably knows quite well the development, or evolution of journalistic standards throughout history. I don't know it so well. Perhaps Mr. Gardner thought his actions were (to some degree?) acceptable because he had a specific readership he was serving.

Like you said, "with the hundreds of thousands of men that died in the war"....well, maybe that's why he found it just as easy to snap this shot and call them Rebs. Looked at this way, his actions are less deceptive. Facts: Rebs died, and they died for treason (in the North's view), and they died on the battlefield. And they almost all looked like the dudes in the picture.

So, like you, I wonder at how "deceptive" he actually felt about his actions. Did he feel ANY compunction about "changing facts", or did he maybe feel he was just being economical with his time?? Or, Or?

How he felt about it, and how his contemporaries felt about it is probably the most important to me. Lastly, I'll have to add that while I dislike any misrepresentation of facts, I am also not yet convinced that anything I've seen would rise to the level of egregiousness.

Can't wait to learn more.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: "One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words"

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 11:16 PM

Your title says it all. In today's society pictures really do say it all so we rely on the fact that photos are accurate. Though now a days we tend to be more cautious of what's real or photoshopped we would never think twice about something from the 18th century. So of course we believe that the guy laying on the ground isna sharpshooter, but in reality the gun was all wrong and it was am everyday soldier. But we see that and would never know because we would never guess it's nothing but the truth.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Too important to fake

by [Jal Rial](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 9:41 AM

After reading these articles and watching the video I'am in pure shock! Obviously during the civil war they didn't have the tools we have today or even ten years ago, but to find out hat these images that represent the war have been changed that much is just plain wrong and changes m whole mindset. The civil war was a very historic part of our country so o feel like they are almost giving us the wrong image of what really happened or what it really looked like. No matter how bad or different the real images looked they should of been shown as occurred because it shows us Americans today how our country was formed and what these solders and family really went through. Other then writing, pictures are all we have from the past and in a very important war like this nothing should be alter. It would almost be like in 30 years we change how 911 happened and alter the images from the bombings, towers, and even the plane crash. That just wouldn't be right to our kids or even our grand children so im highly disappointed. Maybe I'm wrong because I was raised in a era that everything is shown on tv or on the internet even the horrifying images we wouldn't want to see.

The most egregious to me was the "moved body".I was just disgusted by the actions they chose to take towards a soldiers who lost his life defending his country weather it was the north or south doesn't matter in ky eyes. They moved the mans body from place to place just to get picture that the thought where good What kind of way of lifestyle d you live to have the audacity to do something like this. You have to be extremely cold hearted to perform such an act. The worst part o me other then moving bones was that they didn't know the soldiers name or what side he fought so this told me they didn't care of it was one of there own. I don't think that telling a story is that important enough to disrespect someone like they did by performing this act. Yes all know how nasty the war was ,so moving dead bodies of soldiers who gave there life wouldn't help.

I believe it is just as bad to change written words as it is to alter an image. Both pieces of work show you emotion and have so much feeling and meaning behind it that you ant rule one out or give one the upper hand. Letters tell a story and so pictures not only through emotion but also through the setting and how the imagine is viewed by individuals. Yes its easy to still see or paint a picture in your brain from an altered picture but it still changed what the actual meaning or emotion shown. Personally I feel the two are on the same status and and just wrong especially in such a life changing time and war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Too important to fake

by [Heather Reed](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 5:10 PM

"Too important to fake" you hit the nail right on the head with that subject line. These men fought for what they believed was right and Gardner had the nerve to not even give them credit for what side they were fighting for. It truly amazes me that this man had the audacity to disrespect the fallen. Don't get me wrong, I understand taking the photographs of the war and of the fallen so that we as a nation would have these memories and history to look back on but to be completely lied to is wrong. These men and their families deserve much more respect than what Gardner gave them.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Too important to fake

by [Justin Wright](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 11:54 PM

Heather:

I really hadn't taken to this view, but I have to agree you seem to make a very good point when you argue for the families of the fallen.

Very interesting....what if a Northern family member saw his deceased family and the line about him being a Reb!?

In those times, I suppose that would be an extreme outrage.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Dumbfounded!

by [Heather Reed](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 5:01 PM

I am completely and honestly disgusted by the manipulation of historical photos. I guess I really never took the time to think about photos being manipulated back in the past. I know it happens know a days without batting an eyelash. It's quite shocking to know that bodies were being disrespected for a photo opp! Alexander Gardner took it upon himself to pose bodies and then "draft a dramatic narrative to accompany the picture". It is bad enough that he fabricated the truth to the public or even out right lied but to dishonor the fallen is out right wrong. How do we know to trust what we have been told and seen about the Civil War. I honestly do not know what is worse; changing what is written or what is revealed in print. I would have mostly likely said that it was worse changing what is written. However, it truly rubbed me the wrong way about posing and moving bodies. At this point I can not say which I think is worse.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Dumbfounded!

by [Jal Rial](#) - Friday, January 30, 2015, 3:57 PM

Heather,

I'm right aside you!! I too believe these acts performed by our fellow Americans are just wrong and disgust me to the maximum. I cant believe they would of the nerve to move bodies of soldiers who dedicated there lives for the better of there country for a freaking photo. These men left there loved ones to fight for our country and we disrespect them by trying to capture a better photo? why? I think its plain wrong and who ever did it just had no type of heart or morals. Yes we change photos today and do other things but I don't think we would take it to the extent , or even perform acts like this in a such a terrible time of war. Not only did they lie but the disrespected good people who dies for the country. The more I learn about the war the less and less respect im starting to have for a lot of these people other then the dead soldiers. Glad we see eye to eye Heather. Good Work!!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Dumbfounded!

by [Micah McJunkin](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 8:26 PM

Heather,

Before this forum, the possibility of staged photos from the civil war never occurred to me. I am not really sure why it hadn't, and the more I think about it the more skeptical I become. The media today is known as manipulating and untruthful. Why would the media back then be any different? This forum shows just how long the abuse of power has been occurring. I am grateful for this opportunity to be reminded about the truth, and to remember to keep a skeptical eye on the stories presented to me. The public is also to blame because we see what we want to believe. We just have to remember that seeing doesn't always mean believing.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Dumbfounded!

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 11:25 PM

I love that you bring up it dishonors the fallen. That was one of my thoughts as well. These men fought for so much and to have them be propped up, drug around and photographed with whatever prop was around them is disgusting on so many levels. They were heroes, fathers, sons. Not a prop. Screw that guy and what he did. If someone did something like that now and was caught there would be an uproar.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Don't always believe what you see

by [Matthew Wymore](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 6:50 PM

I found both cases to be particularly shocking, but personally I felt that the Case of the Confused Identity was more egregious. The fact that someone would take a picture of there own fallen soldiers and try to pass them off as enemy troops to "boost moral", and gain support for their cause is sickening. I couldn't imagine seeing such pictures broadcast on the TV, or printed in newspapers (although I'm sure similar things might occur in the media, just not to this extent).

In terms of using these photos as tools to discover the historical truth about this time period, it clearly shows how desperate each side was to gather support and moral for their cause. It makes me wonder how accurate other sources of history can be viewed, and how much (if any) of it has been embellished. Cases like this make it very hard for historians to accurately analyze the events that occurred, which in turn makes it hard for students to accurately learn the information.

I think the changing of written text is worse, mainly because you are changing someone's recanted tale of an event, versus an interpretation of a photograph. Both are horrible events to think of, but personally I think that changing written text is like rewriting history. There is no difference in all actuality, both are misconstruing some event that took place.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Don't always believe what you see

by [Jal Rial](#) - Friday, January 30, 2015, 5:00 PM

Matthew,

You are completely right man its a very a thing to even think about. Not only did he lie about the solider being confederate, but he was willing to use his own fallen men to perfume such a lowball act. There I nothing anyone can say to me that would make this alright .It is obvious that it was definitely to "boost moral", and also to "gain support" that wasn't deserved. I mean Id disagree with you on the fact that I wouldn't be surprised to see something like this happen on tv or on the internet and newspaper because people are selfish I just don't think they would take it to the extent nor disrespect a very important mark in our country. This is like a spit in the face to everyone that fought and lost there life in the civil war .

I really never thought of how desperate the two side where to gain support but you definitely just cleared that up for me. If they where willing to do such a thing to these images it is obvious they where just plain desperate., and I don't care how far they took it to gain support. The best thing you said was "how accurate are sources of history" I too believe its hard to really tell what's real or what's made up now. This messes up trust and the simple fact that its hard to want to learn something that you know has a huge chance of being false.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Don't always believe what you see

by [Heather Reed](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 7:37 PM

Not only is Gardner disrespecting the fallen but he is also disrespecting the troops. I can't imagine that the soliders would be too happy knowing that one of their own was being called the "enemy" or vise versa. There would have been plenty of dead bodies from both sides for him to take pictures of. He was in my opinion being lazy. Yes, I understand that to take a photograph in those days was difficult and time consuming but that doesn't make up for out right lying to the public.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Don't always believe what you see

by [Micah McJunkin](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 8:53 PM

Matthew,

I agree with you in that the Case of the Confused Identity was worse. The main problem I had with it is that those soldiers died for a cause that they truly believed in and was worth dying for, and they took that away from them after they had paid the ultimate price. Before your post I had not thought about the effect it would have on future generations in the classroom. So, thank you for making that point. I just believe that even if the cause for which a soldier dies is something you disagree with, you still owe that person the respect of telling the truth about their story.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Fifty Shades of Manipulation

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 7:37 PM

I think that the moved body image is a little more disturbing to me than the confused identity issue. The confused identity photos are interesting because of the obvious spin put on each caption by Gardner. The illusion in the first photo, the southern rebels who "paid with life the price of their treason," or in essence, got what they had coming. And the same photo, but depicted as Union soldiers, who appeared "about to rise to continue to fight"; even death could not dissuade their commitment to their cause. There is definite manipulation of the public with these photos, but the images themselves are still honest and real. The moved body, however, is a deliberate, pre-meditated manipulation of an actual scene, making the photo in itself a fallacy. I think this is less forgivable. Perhaps as a Unionist, Gardner felt compelled to make up descriptions for the first photo to discourage the Confederacy, and encourage the Union. The second photo seemed to have been staged only in the interest of getting a good shot, and with no regard for accuracy, or even respect for the dead.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Fifty Shades of Manipulation

by [Micah McJunkin](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 9:01 PM

Jessica-

I have a hard time understanding the motivation behind wanting to move a dead body to get a better shot, particularly in a war setting. I certainly am not a professional photographer, but I understand the idea of wanting the perfect shot. I think the important thing to remember about any professional whos work will be judged by the public is that credibility is everything. I'm sure other photographers have moved objects or doctored photos to get the perfect result, but I think they should make that fact known so the public knows what they see is not natural. I think the shocking thing in this case is the setting in which it occurred. The line must be drawn somewhere, and I think manipulating bodies in a war setting is way beyond that line.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Unbelievable!

by [Alanna VanDreew](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 8:57 PM

I am really taken back that anyone could disgrace so many people, who paid with their lives fighting for what they believe in. Not only that but, that anyone who would claim themselves to be a patriate would exploit fallen soldiers to sell the story of a truly horrific war that tore our nation apart. Just reading about the Civil War makes me shudder to imagine what could have or what did happen, what the soldiers felt, and how afraid they were. I think to be in a war must be like living in a nightmare. Furthermore, I can't believe that someone like Alexander Gardner who was living in that era, felt the effects of the war, and saw the aftermath could distort the reality in which these men who died lived in.

In our reading of the introduction to *Does the Camera Ever Lie?*, it says that, "Gardner sometimes rearranged the elements in his photographs or departed from the facts in his writing." My first thought was, "Oh, that doesn't sound too bad" In my mind I thought that maybe he embellished a little bit to make his pictures relate to whatever story he was describing, or maybe he changed the scenery though strategic camorra angles or lighting. I did not think for a moment he would make a complete fabrication of who these men were, what battle was fought, or to completely move a fallen soldier to a different location. Truly, I'm really upset. I had it in my mind that people were so greatly affected by this war that it made them more sincere to their humanity because, largely it was a war that no one really wanted or thought it would have lasted for so many years.

I am equally offended by both the capturing falsified pictures and creating the circumstances of which these men died. They

are both lies that discredit the lives those men had. After reading *The Case of Confused Identity*, I was astonished that Alexander Gardner, who seemed to be proud to be on the Unions side during the war, would incriminate his own countrymen as being rebels. That he would even go so far as to write that they, "...Paid with life the price of their treason". What an outlandish lie, considering that they were in fact Union soldiers. Also I'm upset that in *The Case of The Moved Body*, that he would have most likely move a soldier's body with a blanket and then leave it under him as if he had laid himself down to die on it. I find it totally unbelievable that he would dishonor the men who died, and that he also blatantly lied to countless others who read and saw those photographs. Upon my first examination, I could not tell that those photographs were the same people, and I doubt that the people of the 19th century, who experienced that war, would think that they were false. It seems to me that we should never accept something as truth at first glance. There is always more evidence to be found and things to learn.

Sources

Does the Camera Ever Lie?

The Case of Confused Identity

The Case of The Moved Body

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Unbelievable!

by [Jordan Hevern](#) - Saturday, January 31, 2015, 3:08 AM

Dear Alanna,

I agree with what you have to say about how our own American soldier could blatantly lie about our own American war, and advertise false information to make it seem different from what it actually was. It would be like the President withholding information about our country now, and then telling us everything is going to be ok. It is not alright, but it does happen. Many people lie about what they see or hear, because of many different reasons.

Alex Gardner could have been highly against the war and was trying to get everyone else on the same page. Like they said, no one expected this war to last as long as it did. No one expected that many American to die on American turf. There are many different reasons why he could have altered the picture, many reasons we will never know.

I think with this new information that we have received we have to take like any news, with a grain of salt. We have to realize that just because we think we know what happened in 1863, we honestly never will, and with what we have, we have to grow a general idea and understanding of why things happen in the past. Not everything is black and white, well it was, but as in information, nothing will ever be completely accurate. That generation is not even alive anymore, so even though some of the facts are unjustified or even hard to swallow, without them, we would not know what we know today, even if it was a bit altered.

Jordan Hevern

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: Unbelievable!

by [Heather Reed](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 7:41 PM

I am very impressed with what you had to say. Your opinion really stood out to me. I agree with everything you said you were able to put it into words that made much more sense than mine. Very good job, it was a pleasure to read.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Photoessays

by [Justin Wright](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 9:53 PM

This one's tough.

One of the first things that came to mind reading all this was my experience learning Shakespeare. I was quite shocked that many of his plays were rip-offs of other people's work that he would simply make better. Then I was politely informed that this was actually totally acceptable in his day and age.

First, I'm disappointed to learn that photojournalists in the Civil War were sometimes not true to the actual facts.

Second, it's hard to know why. I mean, are we talking laziness here? Somehow I doubt it.

I don't know why this was practiced. Maybe in some way it was socially acceptable. As in, I'm just doing my best to bring to the public the most desirable views, even if they're part manufacture.

Perhaps in their minds they were just recreating a scene right in front of them, that just as easily (and quite likely) happened someplace else. I suppose I'm saying that maybe they felt some sort of moral justification.

"Confused identity" wins by a nose for most egregious misrepresentation over "Moved Body." I find the latter more of an acceptable form of battlefield re-creation, if you will. It does less to sully the reputation of the soldiers of either side.

I will not decide which is worse when it comes to changing written-history or photo-history. They both have very unique advantages and disadvantages. Most people have little time, and images convey a quick and powerful message that will satisfy their desire for information, and they move on. For the more curious and dedicated learner, written text is far more important. Because s/he can learn much more about context.

But if I had to choose, (which I hate to do because their both terrible), I'd have to say that changing "print" or written-history is the greater sin. Perhaps because I'm an avid reader and a little biased.

Nevertheless, these journalistic liberties taken during the Civil War was complete news to me. Very, very interesting.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Photoessays

by [Micah McJunkin](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 9:18 PM

Justin,

Your comparison to Shakespeare was interesting, and I agree with you that being put in position to choose which one of these cases is more egregious is very difficult. I thought the Confused Identity case was worse because it took away from the dead soldiers beliefs and what they died for. The Moved Body case was the same soldier moved to an unnatural setting, but his story and beliefs were not manipulated for the general public. I feel bad trying to decide between the two because they are both awful, but in my opinion I think disrespecting the beliefs of the deceased is worse. Especially after they paid the ultimate price for what they believed in.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Photoessays

by [Roxanne Lindquist](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 10:23 PM

I was surprised to learn that many of Shakespeare's plays were rip-offs. Thanks for the information. I agree that I don't think it was laziness on Gardner's part. I know the text says that he may have felt that he was running out of subjects and time. But I feel that is not a good reason especially when it comes to the case of the confused identity, which I find very disrespectful. I didn't stop to think that maybe this was acceptable back then and when it comes to the moved body and it being a reenactment maybe but either way I feel it is disrespectful

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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War and Photography

by [Roxanne Lindquist](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 10:09 PM

It was said that to cater to the interest of the public, Gardner would sometimes rearrange the elements in his photographs or departed from the facts in his writing, in the Does the camera ever lie? Reading section. For this to mean that he actually moved a deceased fallen soldier's body so that he could photograph it from another place as a different person going from infantryman to a sharpshooter is wrong on a few different levels and unacceptable. This man whether he was union or confederate just died fighting for something not to die and be used as a prop for someone's photograph and make lies. I do understand that he was trying to show what went on and that is important but I believe that what ever else he could have photographed instead would have made a powerful statement as well and been the truth.

I think that now days it is so common to see things photo shopped that it is expected, but thinking of it being done in a way

back in the civil war doesn't seem right. As for the case of the confused identity I also think is wrong to take a picture of union troops saying calm and peaceful in death, so tranquil that they seem about to wake and rise. Than taking a shot from another angle and Gardner describes the soldiers as dishonored **confederate** troops who paid for their treason with their lives, dying a lonely battlefield death, buried by strangers in graves far from home. To me this is just disrespectful.

I feel that changing or making up text or pictures are both wrong. It seems that when it comes to pictures of history though people believe them more easily. It makes you think how much of what you have learned about history is actually the truth.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Personal Gain At Any Cost

by [Micah McJunkin](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 10:29 PM

Wow, of course situations like this exist in today's media, but I never would have imagined it happening during the Civil War. Trying to decide which of the "cases" is more egregious to me is really difficult. I think moving a deceased soldier, and then surrounding them with props for a picture is absolutely disgusting.

I guess if I had to choose between the two, I would pick the case of confused identity. The fact that the picture of the dead soldiers was used for two completely different stories is an example of complete disrespect for the deceased. Those soldiers fought and died for a cause that they believed was worthy, and the photographer took that away from them after they had paid the ultimate price. The families of the dead soldiers deserved to know the real story about the battles where their loved ones died. By making up stories about the battles the photographer not only disrespected the soldiers, but also the soldier's families.

I think we can discover the historical truth about this time period as long as we continue to observe with critical eyes and look for contradictory clues within the stories and photographs. I think altering what is written and altering images are equally bad. The reason I think they are equal is because it is always done for the personal gain of the person doing the altering, whether it's a photographer, writer, or videographer. It can be done for financial gain through increased viewership, or for an opportunity to try and influence people for a cause. Altering a photo by creating a dramatic story about either a union or confederate soldier could be used to sway the public towards the cause favored by the author.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Personal Gain At Any Cost

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Thursday, January 29, 2015, 10:39 AM

Somehow I hadn't considered the disrespect to the fallen soldiers who were portrayed as fighting for a different side, but you are absolutely right. They continued to be a media tool of their enemy even after their deaths, which is pretty disturbing. I feel like the Confederacy was probably the greatest victim of this, because the Union had so many more resources to be able to swing opinion and alter perceptions in their favor.

I agree with you that both forms of alteration are terrible, and especially disgusting because they are done solely for personal gain. It seems unfathomable to a normal person that during wartime, a civilian's main concern would be how to get ahead. It is especially disconcerting that these were their motives when confronted with fields full of dead men. You would think that would shock the greed right out of just about anybody. However, we certainly know that is not the case in present-day. I like to think that the 1800's were a more pure and honest time for our country, but there certainly was a lot of manipulation going on.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Personal Gain At Any Cost

by [Gabrielle Jones](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 12:21 PM

I completely agree with you on disrespecting soldier. I hate when people disrespect them now. It makes me sick and makes me sad. And the fact that they did this way back then just to make a pretty penny makes me mad.

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Re: Personal Gain At Any Cost

by [Jordan Hevern](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 8:31 PM

Micah,

I think that your point you make is very good, and totally agreeable. The fact that they moved/alterd people is really disrespectful, because you are right, those people fought for what they believed in, died for their country and than were treated like they were nothing. Its unjustified, and their families don't deserve to have their loved ones treated like that.

Although its a very valid point, things back than were very different, and they did not have the technology nor the ability to save information as we do now. So when they did get the chance to get information they had to get it. If that happened now, it would be different because they have the ability to get the information.

Jordan Hevern

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19th Century Photoshop

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 10:45 PM

I have to say it never would have occurred to me that photographers in the 19th century would even have the ability or skills to pull this off. I suppose the first set of images "A Harvest Death" and "Field Where General Reynolds Fell" doesn't shock me as much because it was just a matter of angles the photo was shot at. What does get me in the Sharpshooter images! These photographers went the extra mile in this case to make this photo, photos what they came to be, I mean for christ sakes they moved a body and found a gun to make it look like it was some crazy sneak attack type ordeal. When in actuality it was probably just an everyday guy in the wrong place at the wrong end of the gun.

I mean these photographers literally screwed with what is now major history. These photographs are in history texts, and even films(like Ken Burns)(though is he really considered a historian?) and now have been discovered to basically be the equivalent of a front page tabloid of its time.

I understand why they did it, but it never was a thought in my mind this type of thing was relivent so many years ago. So now I have to think about this being a factor in photos 100s of years old as well. Can you imagine what they would have been like if they did have all the photo tech. we have now? Also now wondering about the photos taken in more recent wars and how accurate they are.. anyone else have that thought?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Ulysses S. Grant?

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Thursday, January 29, 2015, 10:31 AM

If you haven't already, you should look at the alternative link he posted at the bottom of the page, regarding a picture of Ulysses S. Grant. Although it doesn't have the same weight as alterations to pictures in the battlefield, I thought that the lengths they went to in order to make this picture were really disturbing.

I think you're smart to make the connection between these alterations, and the manipulations that would be possible now with all of the technology we have at our fingertips. I have also wondered about the validity of photos taken in more recent wars. Honestly, the best way I've found to combat this skepticism is by trying to avoid long, detailed captions. I think the photo should speak for itself, because a caption allows the photographer or editor to put their own twist on the subject matter. Of course, this doesn't always work. I also think that simply being aware that these alterations can happen so easily is a really important component of critical thinking when it comes to history. If the creators of these historical photos were willing to go to such great lengths and efforts to portray the desired image to the public, imagine how many altered photos are now being fed to us because of the ease with which they are changed.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Ulysses S. Grant?



by [Heather Reed](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 7:26 PM

I myself really never pay attention to what a photograph is captioned. I have always let the photo speak for itself. Especially photography from the past whether historical or not. After reading what I did this week it completely changes my way of thinking. I never thought that people had the technology to change a photo back then. Nor did I think that a photo "journalist" would manipulate dead bodies to get a shot. It enrages me that these men were treated so badly in death all for a story. Gardner could have taken the photographs as they were and then said how he felt about what he was seeing. I believe his message would have been just as powerful. I don't think he even really cared about getting the right message out to the people. He just wanted to get out his message which was misleading and for the most part an out right lie.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Ulysses S. Grant?

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 11:36 PM

Yeah I don't usually read the caption until after, which in this case could be good and bad. good in maybe I see it's not what the caption says it is, but also maybe the caption makes me believe it is what the photographer says it is. But these dudes were on a whole other level. I'm still floored its something I now have to worry about in 19th century photography.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Ulysses S. Grant?

by [Opal Burdge](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 11:50 PM

I did look over Grants photo a bit and was amazed and disturbed by it, just really cannot fathom the minds of the 19th century being so canning. Which than again brought up the if they did this is the 19th century what are they doing now? i mean what are our great great grand kids going to discover are fake photos from the wars more recent where Photoshop is a thing? I mean it's a big touchy subject yes, but I'm beyond curious now.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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I can see it with my own eyes

by [Jessica Ballestrazze](#) - Thursday, January 29, 2015, 10:19 AM

Personally, I think I am more trusting when it comes to photographs, and view written historical material with a more critical eye. For this reason, I feel a little betrayed by Gardner's manipulations of the photos. I think most people take photos at face value. If they've seen it with their own eyes, as in a photograph, it must be true. Pictures are a medium that generally allow a person to take in the scene and details without an outside interpretation diluting or influencing their understanding. Unlike writing, in which it is virtually impossible to write from a position of neutrality, photography can and should be a pure form of historical reflection. Another reason I feel especially enraged by photo editing is that these photos can never be reproduced by a more reputable source. Much of the writing from the Civil War is now obsolete, as it has been replaced by well-researched accounts from historians who are now able to assemble facts and have a greater picture of the whole story. So in a sense, the written account of the Civil War has grown stronger. But photos started off at their maximum value, and have continued to be valuable through the years...until their validity is brought into question. The photos Gardner took would be more valuable to us today if they had not been staged and manipulated. It's a shame that because of his alterations, we are now able to glean so much less from such a potentially valuable and powerful learning material.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: I can see it with my own eyes

by [Roxanne Lindquist](#) - Thursday, January 29, 2015, 9:59 PM

I completely agree with you in that when looking at pictures from the past you take it at face value. most people wouldn't think twice looking at photographs like this. I know I personally wouldn't have if it was not pointed out to me, like the one with Grant. I believe that photography should like you put it be a "pure form", especially of the war and past. I think that if Gardner would of just used what he had instead of staging photos it still would be as valuable as these would be if they

were not staged. How many other photos in our history that are used to teach and represent our past out there have been altered or miss labeled for some one's gain? I feel that the men in these photos as well as future generations have been shamed and robbed of the truth. Than again looking at history I have always felt that a lot of it is what people want us to know, don't get me wrong i'm not trying to put down what is taught but also saying that there are more sides to a story than one.

Sum of ratings: **2 (1)**

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A convenient truth.

by [Edgar Rodriguez](#) - Friday, January 30, 2015, 5:35 PM

I would just like to say that Alexander Gardner was doing what you would expect a war correspondent to do and that it to take pictures and tell the create a story with those pictures to keep the public intrigued. In episode 3 they talk about how General William Tecumseh Sherman discovered that if you declare war on the civilians it was much easier for an enemy army to stop fighting thus effectively ending a war. Alexander Gardner In my opinion was doing the same thing but without the total destruction of entire cities like General Sherman did in the South. He did so with his pictures, sure he moved some Union and Confederate soldier to get that million dollar shot but you have to put yourself in his time period. A camera was a high-tech piece of equipment and he had to make every picture count after all he didn't have an iPhone or Android where he could just delete a picture if he made a mistake.

I honestly think that he took pictures like that to make the best of everything he had at the time. I think it was convenient for him as I had stated in my prior post which makes sense if a person thinks about it. Alexander Gardner was creating images for people to see which in turn made those same viewers realize what the Civil War was leaving behind on those battlefields; death and destruction. In short he was creating propaganda that impact people all the while putting some coin in his pocket, capitalism at work. In 2003 Abu Ghraib prison was the sight of some grim pictures that emerged from that prison. Those pictures were taken because of the "convenience" of having enemy combatants at the disposal of the military police in charge of the prison. The military police are not front line troopers like the infantry and therefore did not have the chance to take pictures that would create a profound impact on the people back home. Alexander Gardner was the same way and but keep in mind that those pictures he took have given us a glimpse of the past.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

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Re: A convenient truth.

by [Heather Reed](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 7:14 PM

I would expect a war correspondent to take pictures and to tell the story that goes along with those pictures. However, I don't expect a war correspondent to lie. I understand that taking a photograph back then was a extremely difficult and time consuming process. Even with that said what was the point of calling a soldier a Union troop or a Confederate troop if they weren't. The picture of a dead human being is a sad and horrible thing to look at no matter union or confederate soldier. He could still made an impact by telling the truth. He could have given details of the stench, the cold, the wet ground anything that could put the viewer in his shoes. A journalist is there to report the facts not lies whether they are a photojournalist or a traffic report. The truth speaks volumes and we shouldn't be lied to, to get ratings or attention even back then.

Sum of ratings: **2 (1)**

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Is that General Grant?!

by [Heather Reed](#) - Saturday, January 31, 2015, 2:40 PM

I went on further and read about whether General Grant at City Point is fact or fiction. The reading claims that it is indeed fiction. There are numerous things wrong with the picture. Claims of falsehood range from Grants head joining the body at a odd angle to having the dates wrong. When you look closer at the photograph there are scratch marks around Grant's head and the horses body. Suggesting that it was made by combining different images. What I don't understand is why. Why would someone lie about a simple photograph. Not only was it not Grant's body, horse or even the correct time period but they did a dishonor to General Grant by using a uniform that didn't even have the correct number of stars that he had earned. This photograph gives us a falsehood of the Civil War without us knowing it. I would have never ever given another thought to such a photograph of that time period. I think a lot of people feel that believing is seeing especially looking back into history. I am wondering what was the point of this particular photograph. Was it to make General Grant look like he was ready to ride into battle. After this weeks forum I will definitely be much more aware of not only visuals but also the written

context of the Civil War.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Whats the point

by [Roxanne Lindquist](#) - Saturday, January 31, 2015, 11:02 PM

To be honest I think it was very genius of L.C. Handy to be able to come up with the idea of "photo shopping" the picture General Grant at City Point. I don't believe that it was right or know why he did it. But for his time I think it was a smart idea, to exposed negatives multiple times, sandwiched two negatives together, or pasted parts of different pictures together and photographed the result again I don't agree with him falsifying the photo. This does leave me question more about what other history Photos are fake and unreal. The fact that Grants Jacket only had one star on it in the photo seems like an insult to grant since he should have three stars on it for his rank. I know for me someone who is definitely not a professional on this I would not have thought anything to be wrong with the picture when seeing it. It's amazing that the lie of this photo took 106 years to be verified as a false photo, at least from a professional. I don't know what he gained from making this photo but whether I think it was wrong does not cover up the fact that it was genius idea. But like I said what else is made up about the history we are taught?

Resource- Case of the Photographic Mystery

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Fake Photography?

by [Gabrielle Jones](#) - Sunday, February 1, 2015, 12:15 PM

I'm shocked after watching the video and reading the articles. I know that back then they didn't have the technology we have today, I know as a multimedia design major altering pictures may be needed but to alter historical pictures makes me upset. The case that was more egregious to me was the confused identity when it came to the manipulation. I don't think we can discover the whole historical truth when images or writing are altered like this. Because then we're not seeing the whole picture. I think what is worse when it comes to altering written work or photographs is that both are worse so I don't see a difference in the importance of keeping things right.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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