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Week 4 Forum
Civil War Photography

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Civil War Photography

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Saturday, January 23, 2016, 5:15 PM

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Desecration worse than dishonesty

by [Ryan OToole](#) – Tuesday, January 26, 2016, 9:11 PM

Personally, I find the moved body more egregious than confused identity. Not by a lot, mind you, but by enough that it's noteworthy. I am rather curious why Alexander Gardner decided to lie about this. Did he do it to assist the Union by creating propaganda for them? Or maybe he was in it for the fame and fortune? Maybe a mix of both?

I'm a little inclined to say that it isn't propaganda, mostly due to the text accompanying the second use of the moved body. It writes about a fictional confederate sharpshooter in a way that can be considered almost sympathetic, detailing how he picked off union officers before becoming mortally wounded. It even wonders what he thought of in his last moments, if he reminisced of his loved ones as the battlefield faded before him. This isn't the sort of written piece that inspires the common folk to rally behind their government, but it is the type that I would expect an aspiring photographer and writer to think what readers would crave.

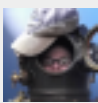
Regardless, while neither case is particularly ethical, moving the body is worse, for me. It wasn't enough to take a photo and lie about the circumstances, Gardner had to move what had once been this young man to a scenic location so that he could fabricate a tale about him killing union soldiers. Disturbing a body in wartime for purposes like that is morally dubious at best, and it's rather insulting to the young man he focused on and his family.

That being said, I think that changing the written word is worse than fabricating images, at least how it's used in this case. We likely wouldn't pay much mind to these images if they didn't have such fantastical stories backing them. Likewise, written word is far easier to manipulate than images, and I would bet that it would be far easier to fool the general populace back in the day with a few sparkly words than it would be today, making the written word all the more dangerous during that era.

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3

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Re: Desecration worse than dishonesty
by [Ashley Ramos](#) – Thursday, January 28, 2016, 2:56 PM

Good point about the written words being possibly more dangerous. Papers were more accessible than pictures at that time. Perhaps with the availability of written news, journals etc., it was easier to sway the populace one way or the other.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Desecration worse than dishonesty
by [Sara Baker](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 3:40 PM

I agree with your opinion about the written word being far more dangerous to manipulate or modify. However, I do wonder about your comment on how "sparkly" words were more effective because the public was more easily "led astray." I would argue that it is much easier now than it was in the past. In spite of our tremendous capacity and access to research most of us rarely go beyond what google and Wikipedia tell us, unless were instructed and "forced" to do otherwise. I am saying this as a general consensus, not as if every individual worked as I've above described. Why do you believe us so much better? Do we not kill and destroy just as much as they did? The only difference is the way we describe it and the distance we attach to death and destruction. Again, just questions. I look forward to hearing more from you this term.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Which is more Egregious?
by [Caitlyn Vermillion](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 11:15 AM

I was really upset with the deception of the photographer in all four photographs, however I feel that I was more upset about Gardner moving the young Union soldier's body. I feel so much more offended by Gardner moving the body than by any of his other deceptions because I think it is common courtesy to not disturb a dead body and especially not so that you can get a picture that will be used in a false article. I feel that this action was disrespectful to the soldier and to his family. This is so much more egregious than the other deceptions because I feel that by seeing the photo that we were shown in the article that this photo would be harder to disprove. I automatically saw that the bodies were the same in both photos in the first article that we read and I also had extreme doubt on the concept of a body being left for 4 months and the rifle not being found by anyone. Hopefully with the help of historians like Frassanito we can determine the legitimacy of photos such as these. I think it is worse to change what is written than what is photographed because a writer gets to pick and choose what he lets us know while a photographer, though he can change some aspects of a picture, cannot control every aspect of a photo.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Which is more Egregious?
by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 9:11 PM

If every single historian decided to lie about what was written then our country would lose that history. After reading these articles and watching the clips I would hope that this is a rare thing to come across. I mean how often does anyone hear about moving a dead body for the sake of the photography, not for the true history behind this dead soldier.

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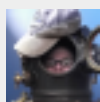
Moved = Misleading
by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 3:03 PM

I find The Case of the Moved Body to me the more horrendous of the two cases. The photo Alexander Gardner took was basically a complete falsehood. The tale Garner spins is moving to be sure but we aren't really learning the truth by this type of staged photo. This isn't "reality TV" it's "Garner's reality photo" and it did have shock value. How are we 150+ years later supposed to what was reality from "reality"? I don't think we can discover the true historical truth with such blatant manipulation. I'm not sure I can find a distinction on whether the written

word or the photo is worse.

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On Historical Manipulation

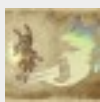
by [Ashley Ramos](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 3:50 PM

I can't say if manipulating what is written is worse than manipulating images, but of the examples we were given, I would have to say manipulating the body has to take the cake. Gardner's acts seem like something out of a Terry Gilliam film to me. That being said, this seems to be in a way, an early case of the media putting a spin on things.

Ken burns using these images makes sense to me, they suit his purpose as they are dramatic and engaging pictures. But Burns is more of an entertainer to me than a historian. I like his series despite it's inaccuracies.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: On Historical Manipulation

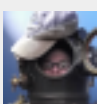
by [Ryan OToole](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 3:40 AM

Well said. Ken Burns also might not have known the inaccuracy. I didn't see any dates on the articles, so it very well might have been discovered after *The Civil War* was made. That said, even if he was aware I could see him using them anyways, considering past inaccuracies. It seems that the more we learn about the civil war the more it feels like *The Civil War* is more drama with historical elements rather than a straight up historical documentary. Even so, at this moment it still seems trustworthy enough to provide a wealth of valuable information, but if we hear about another major cover up next week then I'll be greatly disappointed.

As manipulative as today's media is, I really, really hope that they wouldn't resort to moving a corpse just to get a news story. Would that make our media more trustworthy than it was back then? That's weird to think.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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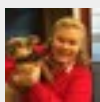
Re: On Historical Manipulation

by [Ashley Ramos](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 3:41 PM

I don't believe our modern media is very trustworthy for the most part especially the larger news outlets. It's important to know who is working for whom when relying on any source. This is part of why I don't don't take *The Civil War* quite as seriously as I would other ways of learning about the Civil War. I know that Burns will have a set of guidelines when he is working for PBS, so he needs to make sure his production is entertaining and will gain PBS some viewers. I kind of doubt that he put the pictures in there knowing they were fake. He probably just thought they looked visually striking and wanted them for shock value or something. That's my guess anyways.

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Re: On Historical Manipulation

by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 12:38 PM

Ashley,

In the article, "Does the Camera Ever Lie?" it claimed that Gardner began to make his photograph prints in competition with Matthew Brady. I think this gives a clear indication as to why he would commit such a disrespectful act and make false claims about the pictures taken. He would want to sell his prints and make a name for himself. It would indeed be fair to say he put a "spin on things".

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Re: On Historical Manipulation

by [Ryan OToole](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 1:30 PM

That makes a lot of sense, to me. I was curious what his motivation was for lying about his photos. It's a little disappointing, actually, to know that he lied about and desecrated the bodies of men who fought for what they believed in just to one-up his rival. I wonder if Matthew Brady did anything so disrespectful just to compete with Gardner.

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Re: On Historical Manipulation

by [Sara Baker](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 3:46 PM

What do you mean by "taking the cake?" Are you speaking only of the "shock value" the images caused or do you mean to say manipulating images is worse than the written word? If you are saying that the manipulation of photographs is worse than the written word why, and how did you come to that conclusion? Photos can always be subjective, and in spite of the written word equal failing in the ability to be twisted you can, in my opinion, much easier discern the intent, where photos are always going to be art, the written word can be a multitude of things.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: On Historical Manipulation

by [Ashley Ramos](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 9:40 PM

What I meant was that for me personally, it was more disgusting that he resorted to moving a dead body around to get "good" photos. That was for this particular instance though. I believe this argument (lying using written words vs. visuals) is on a kind of moral spectrum with some opinion sauce on the side. For example: I believe this (Gardner's) act is disgusting. On the other hand, during this time period people somewhat regularly posed the bodies of their loved ones when they passed away so they would have a portrait to keep. This I don't find as disgusting because there is no insidious intent behind the photography. But this is all just my opinion, dead bodies are yucky to me. I hope that makes sense.

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The Truth and Falsity of Words and Images

by [Sara Baker](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 5:39 PM

Images are horrifying, amazing and awe inspiring. They tell us things that we cannot comprehend, or wish not to. While Gardener did dramatize his photos, can we claim, even amongst the legitimate who practice in the modern world, to do any different? I'm sure there were photographers that kept to the truth rather than using emphasis and props, much like there are those that choose to do the same now. Never the less, my question remains the same. Photographers are creators, artists, and when you take art, no matter the medium, at face value, you often miss or ignore things that are hidden beneath the surface. Each of his images, regardless of the props or staging used is equally horrifying, and saddening. In the modern world images flicker and pass through our minds at a dizzyingly rapid rate. During the Civil War they did not get the intake of false and digitized horror we are so apt to expose ourselves to. So, when you try and look at each image as if you've never seen carnage or battle (fake or not) before you are able to partially understand just how horrific and shocking these photos must have been. Personally I found the staged bodies more gruesome, more stomach churning, than the earlier works which weren't as clear, nor as focused on the expression and humanness of the dead. Based on my own experience and understanding of the power of words and images, I still find “staging” and falsifying words much worse than changing the landscape of the image ever could be. I came to this conclusion with the knowledge of how photos are taken in addition to the process of writing words. While photos can be staged and “misinterpreted” based on the individual who is gazing at them, words have a much more clearly defined line between what is true and false. It's one thing to embellish or pose a photo, but there are much more lasting effects when one lies with words. Photos change meaning and value based upon who gazes upon them. While it can remain somewhat the same for words, there is truth a falsity among them, with much smaller grey area than photos often carry. Also, words remain the same, and in spite of the passing of time words are much easier

to look back into and "check" the context and sentence structure of that time, thus giving the reader the ability to see where the line between truth and falsehood lay. In spite of my belief that words are more “damaging” to falsify, I think doing either is deplorable when one has published it as “the truth.”

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Nothing New

by [Kyle Quinoveva](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 6:02 PM

To be fully honest, while I find both types of manipulations about as equally egregious the sheer laziness of the “confused identity” case is what makes it worse for me. At least with the “moved body” case and effort was made to try and make the picture its self seem more real. On the other hand though: it is far easier for misinformation like the “confused identity” case to be an accident made long after the photos were taken while the “moved body” case could not.

As for whether or not we can ever get to the historical truth while relying on sources that may misinform us: misinformation and biases like this is not a new phenomena. Ever since the beginning of recorded history there have been people who have recorded the events as they saw them, or even as they would rather they have happened. It’s the job of those who study history to analyses and determine what’s credible and what’s not and make interpretations from there.

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Re: Nothing New

by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Thursday, January 28, 2016, 7:24 AM

When reading the articles I was equally just as egregious. I think that both sides are very misinforming. In the article "moved body" it does state that he placed different props around the wrong men. Such as, guns that infantry men did not use during the war. This in itself is very misleading. Both of these articles are very upsetting to read about.

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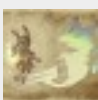


the truth

by [Tyler Yrineo](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 8:27 PM

personally I found the first image "a harvest of death" to be the more obvious of the two because you can see the obvious similarities between the two photos that gives away that it was simply taken from two different angles. I believe yes you can still discover the truth even though some pictures may have been altered, since these photos were carefully examined the truth was revealed, and the alterations that changed the picture were not very complicated, I'd think that any kind of alterations to the picture would either be very simple like the moving the body or taking the photo from another angle or perhaps some kind of change with the negatives and combining two photos as one, which I think would be obvious to many people.I believe changing text would be considered worse because it would be much harder to prove what somebody wrote in a book 100+ years ago is a lie, rather than looking at photographs from the same period and concluding they are the same place but different angles I just think it would be easier to figure out if a photo was altered than a book.

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Re: the truth

by [Ryan OToole](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 2:50 AM

Agreed. The written word can oftentimes only be disproved by other written pieces around that time, which makes it rather difficult to set the record straight. Inconsistencies, as we've seen, can be spotted in pictures, given some time. Who knows how much of our history is inaccurate due to falsehoods written by our forefathers, though. Nothing too major, I would think, since large events would likely have multiple articles on it, but any event with only a single account to document it can and should be considered suspect.

I'm actually a little curious why Alexander went about *A Harvest of Death* the way he did. I can see what he

was trying to do, what with the fabricated story and all, but why take a photo of the same corpses at a different angle? Would it not be safer to snap a shot of some other corpses on the battlefield to avoid suspicion? Or at the very least move the bodies a little like he did with his other photo? I find it very odd. Perhaps he wasn't a very bright person, despite being a gifted storyteller.

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Re: the truth

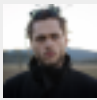
by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 1:06 PM

It’s shocking to realize this information was not widely known until William Frassanito published this information in his book, “Gettysburg: A Journey in Time”, published in 1975. It takes years and years for such information to come to light. I don’t think we will ever know the full truth. How could we?

The Washington Post (2013): n. pag. Web. 26 Jan. 2016.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/civil-war-historian-makes-gettysburg-his-focus-and-his-home/2013/06/29/e216c950-d9b6-11e2-a9f2-42ee3912ae0e_story.html>.

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Re: the truth

by [Tyler Yrineo](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 8:12 PM

For a while, I was shocked to think that somebody would actually move a body in order to get more recognition, but comparing it to today’s society, mass media still lies and warps the truth and panders to the public, whether it be starting gossip to get the people talking or fabricating a story to appeal to the masses emotions.

For example, Trump constantly panders to his audience and they in return eat it up. He has said some of the most preposterous things I’ve ever heard and still people believe him. What these reporters did was similar, they wanted to create exciting stories for people to remember or appeal to their emotions.

What really makes me think is how they must feel, knowing inside they created this big lie that everyone thinks is truth and they cannot reveal it or else they could be mocked for their entire lifetime. How did this person sleep at night after moving a dead soldier's body in order to create a fake story, did they have no conscience?

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Re: the truth

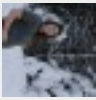
by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 10:31 PM

Tyler,

I totally agree with your stance, it is unethical and not something most people would ever think to do. As sad as it is examples like this are becoming more common in our society like you said above. Maybe money is the motivation? Maybe they can sleep at night because their bank account is higher than it was? It seems like everything comes down to money these days.

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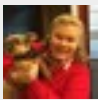
Altering Pictures

by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 9:20 PM

- The case of the Moved Body was the most horrific to me. Moving dead soldiers bodies to get the best picture with the best looking props is astounding. The weapons of these men were not even the correct weapons that they used during the war. Why would you want to change history?
- We can still figure out the historical truth about the time period by different resources. I would not rely on looking at pictures to be the source of my knowledge on the war. I feel that reading is something that gives you more truth than browsing pictures.
- I personally think that changing the print is much worse than altering pictures. For some reason I trust what I read in history books and read about at historical museums. If you cannot trust either one then what is history? What are we really learning about. In reality, there is no difference between altering pictures and altering the text. They are both wrong and not considered history in my eyes.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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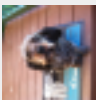
Re: Altering Pictures

by [Taralee O'Connor](#) - Sunday, January 31, 2016, 11:54 PM

I, too, am more likely to trust what I read in history books. If both can be altered, I'm especially of glad of the work [William Frassanito does to correct some of these mistakes](#).

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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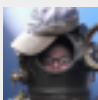
which is worse?

by [Molly Townley](#) - Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 11:23 PM

I don't know that one is worse than the other. Deceiving with pictures or with words. In the end don't they both have equal importance on our historical understanding of what happened. They both are thought out methods to get the viewer/reader to understand the situation from the writer/photographers point of view. Both have to fudge things around to make their version of a the story make sense. Have you ever heard of a story that only had one side? Why would history be different? Every person telling is going to tell it from their view point, wether it be through a film, a picture or an article. So in my opinion one is not worse than the other, but it seems neither can be avoided.

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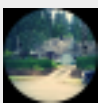
Re: which is worse?

by [Ashley Ramos](#) - Friday, January 29, 2016, 7:13 PM

In this specific case I found moving the body around to be more depraved than lying in the stories. The fact that he touched the bodies repulses me a little more than lying through written words. But they are both his form of propaganda. He was using these photos to stir up people's emotions.

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Re: which is worse?

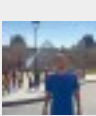
by [Caitlyn Vermillion](#) - Saturday, January 30, 2016, 5:24 PM

I agree with you that neither of these deceptions can be avoided. However I disagree with your comment that neither is worse than the other because I personally agree with Ashley that the act of disturbing a man's corpse is wrong. The photographer was disrespecting the man when he touched his body. He also made himself out to be a jerk in the story he fabricated since he did not tell the people clearing the field of bodies where the soldier lay so that he may be returned to his family, instead he was supposedly left to the elements.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Two case studies



by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 11:36 PM

If i had to pick one of these cases being the worst one i would pick the Moving the Body. I think they are both unethical and the wrong thing to do, especially to publish them to the public. If you do want to take pictures then do it but don't lie about it to the public. I thinking Moving the Body is slightly worse because Gardner had pre intentions to lie about it, he stages it up completely different. With A Harvest of Death, Gardner might of not have enough pictures for his collection so went back later to change it. Its like nowadays if someone commits a crime and it is pre determined they get in more trouble with the law then if it wasen't. However i think they are both unethical and not the right thing to do.

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Re: Two case studies

by [Carissa Kernutt](#) – Friday, January 29, 2016, 8:51 PM

In the two case studies I thought that it was detrimental that he moved the body to take pictures. Especially, when he predetermined to lie about doing so is just an outrage. I feel like if this way nowadays he would be in a large amount of trouble by not only the government, but the people. They are both the Wrong thing to do, but moving a deceased body is taking it to a whole different level.

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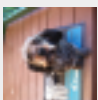
Re: Two case studies

by [Caitlyn Vermillion](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 5:13 PM

I agree that when this happens that if the photographer/journalist was caught that he would be in a lot of trouble both by the government and the outraged public. However it saddens me to say that we are tricked by photographers/journalists everyday and I doubt that there will ever be full integrity in either of these fields of work. It is the job of photographers/journalists to sell us on their point of view, they photograph a subject or tell a story in a way that will show us what they want us to see. It is naive to think that we get the whole truth even now.

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Re: Two case studies

by [Molly Townley](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 7:18 PM

I agree. And they should get in trouble for moving someone's body. It is both disrespectful to the dead soldier, and deceiving to the public. But like you said, we are lied to on a daily basis by journalist. While it is different now, they can photo shop or take a photo out of context, back then moving a body was like photo shop now... still worse, but the same idea. Make it tell the story you want it to say.

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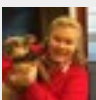
Re: Two case studies

by [Tyler Moffett](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 10:47 PM

I think that the predetermined part is something that should not be overlooked. He had pre intentions to lie and that is something the government or police should use on Gardner to convict him of lying. I agree with you, he should get in some sort of trouble so that people know they can't do that.

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Yes, It Lies

by [Taralee O'Connor](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 2:39 AM

I reviewed the articles provided as well Burns video again. I still stand by my earlier post. I feel the The Case of

the Moved Body is grossly manipulative to the reader. I don't think we will ever be privy to the complete and factual events of the time. I was drawn to a quote in the article, Does the Camera Ever Lie? It states the photographer "constantly judges, deciding what to photograph and how to photograph it -- focusing on creating a strong image that will communicate the desired message". Gardner gave the message that would create the strongest image possible just not the strongest continuity to the facts.

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Question almost everything
by Tyler Yrineo – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 7:54 PM

After viewing the 3rd episode and just thinking more about the deception shown here, It's not really surprising that these people would go to such lengths to create a story in hopes of being recognized as a great reporter or just recognized in general, people love attention to the point of lying in order to get a little recognition.

Who really knows what else could have been faked then, or about any other historical event. Now I think there is a minority of people in favor of figuring out the truth, fact checking and are less susceptible to lies and fabricated stories.

The majority can still be easily swayed by altered images and fabricated stories and evidence of this is all over the internet. People lie and make up stories all the time to get attention and they get it until the minority begins to question their story. I'm really thankful that people choose to question much of what they see because without that our minds could be filled with the furthest thing from the truth.

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Incentives for lying
by Tyler Moffett – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 10:39 PM

After watching Episode three i was thinking more about incentives to lie about pictures or captions. During the civil war telegraphs and photography were just invented and being used. In the video it was talking about how photographers would always be following the battles and taking pictures of significant figures like the generals. Maybe photographers wanted to capture that new BREAKING NEWS picture that would attract a lot of attention and possibly money. By no means to i find that to be right just thinking of some incentives.

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