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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

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, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Civil War Photography

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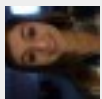
How much of history is the truth?

by [Tyler Peckham](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 11:13 AM

The case of the moved body I found to be the most shocking. The body had been moved forty feet and a gun, or as the article says “photographer’s prop”, had been added to the picture. These types of manipulations make me have doubt and question if other pictures and documents of history are telling the truth. How much of what we know is actually true? I don't believe its right for historians like Ken Burns to use photos like such without informing the viewer that they have been altered. I still believe the historical truth can still be found but the changing of documents and the re-telling of these documents doesn’t help.

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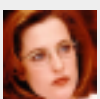
Re: How much of history is the truth?

by [Kayla Rogers](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 1:27 PM

Although I agree that these photos should not be used, there is no guarantee Burns would even know that the photo was altered before he used it. Ken Burns is not a historian, he is a producer. Unless you are a historian it would be hard to tell if a photo was altered. It is hard to tell the difference between guns. Typically when you see an old picture you believe it is true to the age, as would most producers and a majority of the public.

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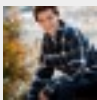
Re: How much of history is the truth?

by [Andrea Douglass](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 3:07 PM

Kayla,

Although it is possible Burns wasn't aware the photos were false, considering the amount of "digging" he had to do to acquire information for the series (as he mentioned in the Meet Ken Burns video from the beginning of the term) I find it hard to believe he didn't know. True, he is not a historian, but here seems to be a decent amount of controversy around the subject, and since these specific images have been outed as altered I feel as though whoever supplied them to him may have mentioned it?

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Re: How much of history is the truth?
by [Tyler Peckham](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 4:25 PM

Kayla,

I can see how Burns or anyone for the matter could perceive the photos are true. It can be hard to distinct between altered or un–altered photos. Although, like Andrea said, I believe that the fact of these photos being altered would have been brought up into discussion when looking through photos for the film. These cases might be more commonly know amongst historians then we think. Photo manipulation at such an early time is definitely an interesting aspect.

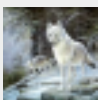
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Burns: Modern Day Gardner?
by [Andrea Douglass](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 12:29 PM

First of all, I think that *The Case of the Moved Body* is the most egregious. Taking a photo of the same subjects from different angles and selling it as two different stories is one thing, but physically altering a subject and completely erasing what actually happened by moving a body and using a prop rifle is just unforgivable. That being said, it's difficult to say if there is a difference between written and viewed information in terms of manipulation of the past and how we decipher it. On on hand, if there is no image provided to a reader, they have only the words to trust. If there is an image, there is at least some room to investigate and find any inconsistencies as Frassanito did. Putting a false image into someones head though, if the alteration isn't caught, lands a much heavier blow to a reader/viewer.

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Re: Burns: Modern Day Gardner?
by [Edith Ortega](#) – Friday, January 29, 2016, 5:00 PM

Hello Andrea

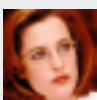
I understand where you are coming from and can see how you would choose The Body Moved as being most egregious. But unlike words, images are of such a nature in that it allows immediate (though sometimes less immediate) cognitive awareness of what we see, compared to what we hear and read.

Words by themselves can have an impact on what the viewer will look for in the picture presented to them. Say like for example: ***The blue uniform marks them as Union soldiers....*** Would you not look for the "blue" to separate the Union soldier(s) from the Confederate soldiers?

Though I do agree that moving a corpse just to get a picture "*the right way*" is not the way to go about bringing home the carnage that a war creates, in order to sell a picture.

Edie O!

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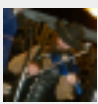
Re: Burns: Modern Day Gardner?
by [Andrea Douglass](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 8:17 AM

Yes, I would look for the "blue" uniform. But, if the image has been altered, (which we now know has been done), say by replacing a confederate soldier's outfit with a union soldier's, a photo paired with text

makes a much more convincing piece than writing alone.

Also, while I do understand the point you were trying to make, one would not be able to differentiate between uniform colors, as photos from the era were black and white.

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Re: Burns: Modern Day Gardner?
by [Jake Beckwith](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 10:53 AM

I'm not sure if anyone ever went so far as to actually remove the clothes of the dead men and replace them with the uniform of the opposite side, but the photos were absolutely altered in other ways. As far as differentiating between uniform colors, there were ways to tell which side they were fighting for, even in black and white. The lightness or darkness of the outfit would suggest blue or grey, and many companies had symbols or pins that were unique to their company. There were absolutely ways in which they could tell what side the dead man was fighting for.

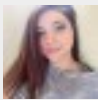
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Re: Burns: Modern Day Gardner?
by [Andrea Douglass](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 2:55 PM

I agree that there are ways to differentiate, I was just responding to the specific statement and perhaps being a little too nit-picky. As far as the replacement of clothes, I wasn't suggesting that it actually *did* happen, just that it *could* have. Since it has been brought to our attention that photos have indeed been altered, it is certainly possible that they could have been manipulated in ways that we don't know of.

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Re: Burns: Modern Day Gardner?
by [Abigail Tatum](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 6:29 PM

Do you think alteration of a photo is worse than the manipulation within writing? I like to think they work hand in hand especially in History. The historian can tell us one thing, while the photo can interpret another. I like the way you put it in your response, just curious if you think one is worse than the other?

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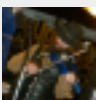


Re: Burns: Modern Day Gardner?
by [Andrea Douglass](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 2:58 PM

Abigail,

Morally, I feel as though they're neck and neck. I'm personally just a little more unsettled by the idea of tampering with physical evidence and selling it as an accurate image of the situation.

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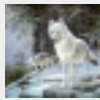
Deceitful Photography
by [Jake Beckwith](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 3:08 PM

In my opinion, while changing the image through manipulation of the camera angle is an incredibly deceitful practice, the actual moving of a dead body and positioning it to create a completely false story is more reprehensible, mainly because it is incredibly disrespectful to the dead man. I think the big problem I have with both of these actions is that it was the job of Gardener and O’Sullivan to preserve the history of the war. In the case of Ballou’s letter, there were no actual facts involved that would have compromised our understanding of the war. It was meant more to set the mood, not set hard evidence in front of us. Manipulating the images, however, creates false stories that *do* affect our understanding of the events that occurred, which in turn directly

effects the preservation of evidence. It seems deplorable to me that Gardener and O’Sullivan would put money ahead of preservation, but that seems to be exactly what happened. They fashioned their photographs and stories in a manner that would sell more copies while twisting the actual stories which may not have been as intriguing to the general public.

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Re: Deceitful Photography

by [Edith Ortega](#) – Friday, January 29, 2016, 5:10 PM

Hi Jake,

You made a very astute statement in my opinion when you said: ***It seems deplorable to me that Gardener and O’Sullivan would put money ahead of preservation, but that seems to be exactly what happened.***

Not just because they did indeed put money ahead of preservation, but because of other civilians who also put money ahead of preservation in the form of higher cost for basic necessities like flour, which at the beginning of the war sold for around \$70.00 a barrel only to balloon in price to \$250.00 a barrel by the end of the war.

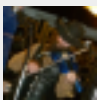
Deceitful behavior is not a new concept in today's society, but rather a ancient problem since the dawn of time itself. Maybe by looking at the past (without rose colored glasses) we can determine what images were "doctored" and maybe find a clue in them to get at the truth of the event/image and why it was to use a modern term...photo-shopped.

Just something to think about.

Edie O!

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Re: Deceitful Photography

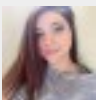
by [Jake Beckwith](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 10:48 AM

It is interesting that the prices of basic necessities soar as much during times of war, but a large part of that is supply and demand. The army needed to feed its soldiers and there is only so much flour to go around. I wouldn’t necessarily call that deceitful, just incredibly unfortunate for the average consumer.

When it comes to the past, there are enough sources for historical detectives to research that they have a pretty good idea of what *exactly* happened during the war. Like you say, they are able to find the clues in the doctored images and compare them to what they know as fact in order to come up with an answer to “exactly what happened”. It is absolutely difficult to find the absolute truth when we have to deal with altered images and stories full of half-truth, but I feel like there is enough accurate information that this can be achieved.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

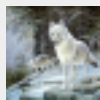
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Lies Within Photography

by [Abigail Tatum](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 3:44 PM

I found the case of the “Moved Body” to be more egregious than “Confused Identity” solemnly because they physically moved the body of a deceased man to capture a better picture. Not only did they move this poor man, but they also lied about the facts: who he was, what he did, and how he passed. Trusting the facts and images from the war is going to be hard due to biases, altering of information, and creating a more dramatic story line. I’m not going to say we can’t discover the historical truth about this time period, but i’m not sure how we can decide who is credible and who has the information altered without a deep background check on the people or sources we get the information from. Corrupting the information is easy, and unfortunately, being able to know the difference between altered information and correct information is not. It’s hard to say which is worse between false print or photographs because they both alter our understanding about the topic. I depend on photos for extra understanding and helping me picture the scenario, but the information in print is where I get the majority of my knowledge from. There is no difference, these two factors both play an important part in my learning, and having either of them altered would affect my comprehension of the material.



Re: Civil War Photography
by [Edith Ortega](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 6:04 PM

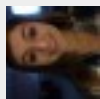
I think both “cases” (*confused identity and moved body*) were equally egregious. Both forms of photography, though they conveyed the good and the bad sides of the war, put into doubt the authenticity of the pictures said to be historical records of the outcome of the battlefield fighting.

To have altered (staged) the placement of the wounded, the photographers showed what they perceived to be the truth in their eyes. But that unfortunately, leaves a gaping hole through which people can manipulate the circumstances to benefit themselves, which most photographers of that time period readily admitted to.

As for the worse being the changing what is written or revealed in print line of thought....I think that either one can and will be worse than the other, depending on who is doing the telling of the story. But when you compare “what is written” with manipulated images....that is when things (historical information) take on a much broader stroke and in some cases, a much more serious digression from the actual facts concerning the event they are being used to record the issues of.

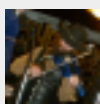
A lie by omission is still a lie, though it may be said that the omission is used in the form of softening the blows that occur when viewing the “facts” as they happen.

Edie O!



The Moved Body
by [Kayla Rogers](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 8:13 PM

The Moved Body was a little more upsetting to me about how it was altered. There were too many facts that had been altered in the image. Not only were the soldiers laying next to guns that did not suit their combat position, but miraculously a blanket was displayed in a picture that had not been there in the image taken previously. I think no matter what time period we see images from, they will be altered to some extend. Propaganda has always been prevalent since they had a way to spread it to the masses. Media then and now will do a lot of things for money. The positive however, is that there are a variety of sources available for almost everything, so if there are doubts you have the ability a majority of the time to fact check and make your own inferences. Seeing a distorted image is worse than reading an altered article because they saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words" really is true. That picture helps make connections but articles are not remembered word for word and are typically written by numerous sources.

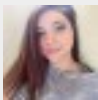


Re: The Moved Body
by [Jake Beckwith](#) – Friday, January 29, 2016, 5:42 PM

While I agree that it is important to question many things we hear in media and to learn from various sources, Gardner was not actually a media person. He was an independent photographer who sold his pictures to Matthew Brady, who in turn reproduced and sold the photos to various sources. Neither of them were working for the newspapers at the time. What they were trying to do is make money.

Gardner was a real work of art. Quoting the first article we read for this forum, “They reveal that in order to achieve a more striking effect or to cater to the interest of the public, Gardner sometimes rearranged the elements in his photographs or departed from the facts in his writing.” He wasn’t in the business to preserve history, it was a straight money job for this guy, and he knew what would make him that cash.

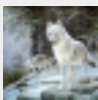
I also agree that pictures are important when it comes to making connections to a certain event, but I might disagree that articles are any less important. I feel like they work hand in hand to bring us stories from the past. While news articles aren’t always remembered word for word, they are preserved in order to be referenced when a question arises. When reading about the Civil War, I find it helpful to have pictures, even if they have been altered, in order to more fully understand the feeling and the impact of the event.



Re: The Moved Body

by [Abigail Tatum](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 11:20 PM

I agree, alterations or photoshopping really isn't limited to this time frame. We notice it more now, and see it almost everywhere but just because our era does it more often does not eliminate that the past era's have been guilty of it also. The problem now is that we aren't sure what's accurate or false anymore because its so prevalent. The fact that the photographer will move a deceased body and change the position and add props just for another shot to make better their careers and be more successful is sickening and scary.



Re: The Moved Body

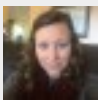
by [Edith Ortega](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 12:07 PM

I agree with your statement that: "I think no matter what time period we see images from, they will be altered to some extent." And I agree that the media, no matter the event or time period, will do a lot of things for money.

Thankfully as you said, there are lots of sources available to check the accuracy of the images and stories (written articles) of the event we are studying.

A picture is worth a thousand words, but an image is worth an unimaginable amount of unspoken and spoken words.

Edie O!



Re: The Moved Body

by [Jessica Mckee](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 10:46 PM

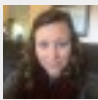
I am a visual person and so I feel the same way that you do. I tend to trust pictures more; as they say "seeing is believing" and so to have something like this changed is upsetting. Trying to learn what happened in the past is complicated enough. Everyone has different stories and opinions about what happened depending on their perspective, and I wish that we could at least have one thing to depend on for honesty.



Photo Manipulation

by [Woodrow Elsasser](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 9:30 PM

For myself, I found the second of the two cases, “The Case of the Moved Body,” the most shocking. The manipulation of a deceased soldier, who laid his life on the line for his country, is certainly egregious. If you have to alter the reality of what happened, even slightly, you are no longer really telling the story. With that being said, I certainly think that altering with images is worse than print. Most people learn best visually, so seeing an image can be a very powerful tool for helping people understand something. A photograph is supposed to be a timeless capture of a moment that illustrates exactly what was happening in that moment. When photos get altered, they lose their true value and their ability to tell a story. Unfortunately, we see far too much photo manipulation today, and apparently, even during the civil war.



Re: Photo Manipulation

by [Jessica Mckee](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 10:00 PM

I agree that what was done was awful. The manipulation seems to only be for personal gain. I agree that manipulating the images is worse than the print because for me I tend to believe what I see more than what I

read. Especially in this time period. In the age without photoshop I feel like I have more faith in what is being show. Which has now been proven to be misguided faith.

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Re: Photo Manipulation

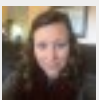
by [Abigail Tatum](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 11:39 PM

This is a response to Jessica!

I am a visual learner also, and just looking at these photos impair my train of thought about the Civil War. If the picture is different from the text I am more likely to assume it was a fluke in the writing due to being a visual learner. After seeing what they did to General Grant's photo and how blending it with 3 other pictures can look just as realistic as the true photos leaves me a little disgruntled.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Civil War Photography

by [Jessica Mckee](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 9:47 PM

I feel that the defense to this is that he was trying to bring more to the cause and try to make people understand the severity of the battles, but honestly when you have such an event as the Civil War I do not believe you need manipulation to convey how awful the event was. Brother fought against brother and I cannot help but think that the manipulation of the photographs was for personal gain. Honestly is the best policy, and as we have seen you will eventually be caught for what you have done. The case that disturbed me the most I would have to say was the Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter and what really stood out to me was in the analysis when they stated that they had dragged the body to support their story because Gardner may have felt he was running out of subjects. That one line seems so heartless and unsympathetic. It really makes it seem that his work was mainly for personal gain. I think that it is worse when an image is manipulated because for me whenever I read something I realize that there will be the bias of the author and that you have to take it with a grain of salt, but with an image I feel that I trust it more because I am seeing something with my own eyes. It is terrible to me that in this era we cannot trust this although in this day and age you cannot trust an image at all.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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There's a difference between journalism and wedding photography

by [Thomas Brokaw](#) – Wednesday, January 27, 2016, 11:51 PM

For me, the more egregious photograph was ‘the Case of the Moved Body,’ because the scene was manipulated to create something using available props (war scene, dead body), then not being truthful about the picture, whereas the ‘Case of Confused Identity’ is just being untruthful about the images’ history without having manipulated the scene.

Wedding photographers will manipulate the scene and/or alter the image later in Photoshop. Journalism photographers, however, must adhere to ethical standards or risk losing their jobs because they can adversely affect a newspaper or magazine’s credibility.

This journalistic ethics article lists their ethical standards:
<http://seantelfordphotography.blogspot.com/p/editorial.html>

Journalistic photographers are held to a higher standard. There are several historically famous altered images that are interesting because they show how easy it can be for an image to be changes that will help the photographer sell or make famous their image.

Ken Burns is apparently in the same camp as ‘the Case of Confused Identity,’ although I don’t believe Burns cared one way or another whether or not the image portrayed accuracy. He went for emotion as he is more photographer than journalist. In another life he would be more likely to be a wedding photographer rather than a photographer for a newspaper or magazine.

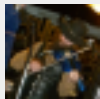
Our local Register Guard newspaper would fire a photographer for passing a manipulated photo as real.

Some years ago an NBC newsperson was fired for exaggerating the depth of water in a flooded town for a news spot that went bad on the air. See it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sIEPV9LyS0>

Some photographs are manipulated for good (wedding photography) and some photography is held to a higher standard (journalistic). And even with higher standards the temptation to make a god image better is too tempting to insure 100% accuracy.

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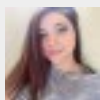
Re: There's a difference between journalism and wedding photography

by [Jake Beckwith](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 10:39 AM

Is it possible that Burns does care about accuracy but didn't have the foresight to fully research the photos that he was using in his production? I got the feeling while watching the first video that he really did care about history, but he was also trying to introduce it to us in an emotional manner. I'm not convinced that he purposefully manipulated events in order to achieve this, but it is quite possible that he didn't do as much investigating as he should have. This doesn't make it right, but it would explain why he used the doctored photographs in his film. Maybe he didn't have enough time or manpower to do the full extent of research that he should have, but I'm not sure that I would say he didn't care.

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Re: There's a difference between journalism and wedding photography

by [Abigail Tatum](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 6:24 PM

I believe that Ken Burn's did care about the accuracy of the photo but maybe was not aware that it was altered due to the fact that he might have not researched the photo as much as he should have. Burn's does go for emotional connections with his audience, but in this particular case I would like to believe that he was not fully aware that this photo was altered causing the inaccuracy to be because he was misinformed and not over looking the alterations for a emotional affect over the audience. I really like the reference with the Register Guard, it's crazy to think about how morally wrong it is to photoshop a photo to sway opinions, yet so common.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: There's a difference between journalism and wedding photography

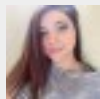
by [Thomas Brokaw](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 9:40 PM

I believe Ken Burns to be first and foremost an artist-photographer-filmmaker. He would have wanted the history part to be as accurate as was reasonable. But if he was missing an important image that he needed, he would use whatever image he came across.

The photographer who moved the body was trying to create a compelling image rather than trying to change history. For him, I believe he would have thought he was accurately capturing the essence of what had happened on the field of battle. He would have also chosen the right time of day for good lighting, the right camera angle, the right lens, etc. He may have felt that without moving the body, he could not have otherwise captured the visceral image he wanted others to experience.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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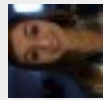
General Ulysses Grant

by [Abigail Tatum](#) – Saturday, January 30, 2016, 6:37 PM

On another note, the effort put into photoshopping the picture of General Grant was thought out and executed well. Looking at the original picture I didn't notice the awkward head position or any of the other clues, but once pointed out to me it became very apparent. How often this can happen, along with how subtle it may be is frightening . This simple photo of a General was blended with multiple pictures. How long did it take to make this photo? Why waste time on creating a false photo when historians will know the difference if they actually

look at the picture? How long has this inaccurate picture been floating around being used as an educational photo?

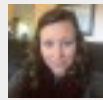
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Re: General Ulysses Grant
by [Kayla Rogers](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 1:33 PM

Thankfully, in most cases, if a picture is not exact to the original the purpose of the picture is not stripped away. The photo paired with an article is typically used to enhance the article. So although the General was altered, the photo does not make him look like any less of a general or take away from his contributions to the war.

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Re: General Ulysses Grant
by [Jessica Mckee](#) – Sunday, January 31, 2016, 10:40 PM

I like your question of how long did it take to make the photo? And why waste the time? Because honestly with how gruesome the civil war was and how many casualties took place you would think that there would be candid photos that captured the significance of the battles without having to manipulate them. Why go through that time and effort it seems extreme to me.

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