

“A Terrible Fascination:” Civil War Photography and the Advent of Photographic
Realism

by

Jarret Ruminski

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master’s of Arts

in the

History

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2007

“A Terrible Fascination:” Civil War Photography and the Advent of
Photographic Realism

Jarret Ruminski

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand that this thesis will be made available from the OhioLINK ETD Center and the Maag Library Circulation Desk for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Jarret E. Ruminski, Student

Date

Approvals:

Dr. Diane Barnes, Thesis Advisor

Date

Dr. Martha Pallante, Committee Member

Date

Dr. Thomas Leary, Committee Member

Date

Peter J. Kasvinsky, Dean of School of Graduate Studies and Research

Date

Abstract

This thesis deals with the social, aesthetic, and historical significance of Civil War era photography, with special emphasis on Alexander Gardner's photographs from the Battle of Antietam. My thesis argues that Antietam was a watershed moment in photography, for Gardner's Antietam images represented the medium's first step towards establishing its own unique photographic aesthetic. This new photographic aesthetic was firmly grounded in a literal realism that did not exist in other forms of representation, such as painting or engraving. This realism dispelled American ideological notions of God-sanctioned, pastoral innocence, and forced Americans to confront the savagery in their own midst. Apart from their aesthetic legacy, the Antietam images also gave birth to the separate medium of war photography, and represented the birth of photojournalism.

Chapter one addresses the origins of photography, with particular emphasis on its connection to the nineteenth century aesthetic movement and its close relationship to portrait painting. Chapter two examines in-depth the most important photographs from the Battle of Antietam. By analyzing how the American public reacted to these images, this chapter reveals how Alexander Gardner's photographs invalidated the aesthetic ideology of nineteenth century America. Chapter three examines some of Alexander Gardner's most important photographs from the Gettysburg and Virginia campaigns of 1864 and 1865. It emphasizes Gardner's drift from compositions depicting masses of battlefield casualties in favor of close-range, highly personalized images of individual corpses. The thesis concludes with the legacy of Gardner's Civil War photographs by exploring their value as pieces of commemorative art that invoke the true memory of the Civil War.

Acknowledgments

So many people helped me throughout the composition of this thesis, and I am eternally grateful to all of them. From my first day as a graduate student, nearly every faculty member in the History department contributed to my progression from an English literature undergraduate to a burgeoning historian. First off, thanks to Dr. Berger for agreeing to write me a letter of recommendation that got me into the program. His Second World War class was my first experience with real history writing. Thanks to Dr. Simonelli, who also wrote me a recommendation letter, served on my comps, and introduced me to history's copious supply of weirdos. Thanks to Dr. Pallante, in whose class I wrote my first real historical research paper, which eventually became this thesis. Your constant aide and enthusiastic encouragement are beyond appreciated. Thanks to Dr. Sinnreich, who contributed greatly to my understanding of historiography and who pushed me to do my absolute best at every turn. Thanks to Dr. Bonhomme for offering invaluable advice on my thesis prospectus and helping make History Club a force for good. Thanks to Dr. Leary for serving on my thesis panel, even in the midst of the Poland trip. Thanks to Dr. DeBlasio for the job transcribing oral history and the endless encouragement and reassurance. Thanks to Dr. Congdon for the much-needed moral support. Thanks to Dr. York for always being available for inquiries and for teaching one of my most enjoyable classes ever, the graduate readings course on women's history. Thanks to Dr. Smith for helping make French much more accessible. Thanks to Dr. Jenkins for pushing me to perfect that grueling Lincoln paper in American Historiography. Thanks also to Dr. Jenkins for being a superb boss and making my year as a graduate assistant a great experience. Much thanks also to Bonnie Harris, for always being there to answer my endless bombardment of questions and for helping me survive History Day. Finally, I never would have made it this far without Dr. Barnes. Thank you for being a most enlightening mentor who made my journey through the Master's program one I will always remember. Thank you for introducing me to historical editing, for giving me the opportunity to work on the Frederick Douglass papers, and for always giving me the encouragement and guidance that I so desperately needed. Thank you for suggesting the University of Calgary as a next step in my academic career, and thank you for being as good a friend as you were a professor.

In addition to the department faculty, I also want to thank my fellow graduate students for making my time in the Master's program an unforgettable experience. To Noelle, Kate, Rebecca, Tammy, Lisa, Greg, Shannon, Rachel, Ashley, Esther, Victoria, Zetta, Rachel, Jen, John, and anybody else I may have missed, I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors. Thank you for your friendship and furtherance. I also want to thank my wonderful fiancée, Abbey, for supporting and helping me through every step so far. You are the reason I have kept going and will keep going. At last, thanks so much to my parents. If they would have told me ten years ago that I would eventually pursue a career in academia, I would have questioned their collective sanity. But their dedication and patience made my career at Youngstown State a real pleasure.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: “A Great and Truthful Medium”.....	11
Chapter Two: “A Terrible Fascination”.....	49
Chapter Three: “To Perpetuate the Memories of the Battlefield”.....	81
Conclusion.....	113
Bibliography.....	122

Introduction

The American Civil War was the first war in history to be significantly documented by photography. The Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862, stands as the single bloodiest day in American history. On that day, 2,108 Union soldiers were killed, 9,540 were wounded, and 753 were listed as missing, a combined casualty total of 12,401. On the Confederate side, it is estimated that there were 1,546 soldiers killed, 7,752 wounded, and 1,018 missing, a total of 10,318 casualties. The combined casualties from both armies numbered 22,719.¹ The battle had profound political and military ramifications that altered the course of the Civil War, yet its photographic legacy is as significant and fascinating as its political and military legacies.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Antietam, photographers Alexander Gardner and James F. Gibson, employees of Mathew Brady, photographed the mutilated bodies of the dead on the battlefield. Brady displayed the images from Antietam in his New York gallery in October, 1862, where a simultaneously horrified and fascinated public visually witnessed, for the first time, the mass death that was the price of war. This was a watershed moment in photography. Alexander Gardner's images from Antietam represented the medium's first step away from its early aesthetic ideal, borrowed from portrait painting, towards a unique photographic aesthetic based on realism. This realism dispelled American ideological notions of God-sanctioned, pastoral innocence, and forced Americans to confront the savagery in their own midst. These photographs revealed the real faces of war in the form of decaying battlefield casualties, and contained an unquestionable moral charge; war meant destruction and death. Additionally, because

¹ Steven W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 294-296.

of their undistorted realism, Gardner's Antietam photographs represented the emergence of war photography as a unique medium.

Aesthetic is defined as anything treating of sense perception, be that perception beautiful or ugly, happy or sad.² To describe an image as "aesthetically pleasing" in the traditional nineteenth century sense meant that an image conformed to a series of compositional laws regarding taste and beauty. Photography before Antietam was governed by these laws, which were borrowed from the painted portrait. Consequently, what immediately separated early photography from painting in the nineteenth century was the photograph's "striking resemblance to visible reality," which at first inspired awe and wonder.³ Yet the earliest photographs were nonetheless designed to confine to the standards of painting; while their realism was undeniable, it was also suppressed so that photographs would elicit, as Alan Trachtenberg writes, "an air of generalization and historical allusion."⁴ With Alexander Gardner's Antietam photographs, however, a new photographic aesthetic emerged, firmly grounded in a literal realism that did not exist in other forms of representation, such as painting or engraving. Indeed, the photographs from Antietam combined a powerful moral charge with this uniquely realistic representation. Audiences at Mathew Brady's gallery were personally drawn into these horrific images. In the faces of those bloated bodies they could symbolically see their own sons, husbands, and brothers. In this respect, the Antietam images exacted a

² "Aesthetic" *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Simon Blackburn, Ed. Oxford University Press, 1996. *Oxford Reference Online*.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t98.e2563> Accessed November 7, 2006.

³ Hope Kingsley "Technology and Aesthetics in 19th-century Art Photography" *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*. Ed. Robin Lenman. Oxford University Press 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*.

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t207.e1524>. Accessed November 7, 2006.

⁴ Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (Toronto: Hill and Wang, 1989), 36.

profound influence on photography by making it into the characteristic medium of photojournalism.

Before Antietam, images of the Civil War depicted empty battlefields cleared after the fighting, regimental drills, army camp life, and men and officers posed eloquently by their field tents, amidst stockpiles of weaponry, or aboard massive ironclad warships. These early Civil War photographs were largely influenced by the contemporary aesthetic principles that had governed the relatively new medium of photography since its inception. As Miles Orvell notes in his book *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*, early nineteenth-century photography, as a medium still in its infancy, did not operate within its own pure aesthetic. Instead, it borrowed from the existing forms and approaches: painting, drawing, and engraving.⁵ Mary Panzer, author of *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*, writes that these forms and approaches dictated that photography, like other forms of representation in the nineteenth century, should emphasize the romantic glory of the age. Whether it captured great men or a great war, the purpose of early photography was to create images for posterity that were to be looked upon by contemporaries and future generations as aesthetically pleasing documents of a glorious era.⁶ Audiences of early photography believed that they were witnessing representations of the world as it was. There was no deviation from reality because the mechanical nature of the medium would not allow it. As Kendall Walton argues, the camera allows for an enhanced perception of reality. While paintings are mere representations, photographs, because of the way they

⁵ Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 94.

⁶ Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1997), 1-2.

are made, are realistic aides to vision.⁷ Yet, as noted by Mary Panzer, early photography operated within an aesthetic ideal that was only partially based in representational reality. This aesthetic ideal only began to dissipate in the wake of the Battle of Antietam.

The first war photographers, specifically Roger Fenton and Mathew Brady, initially ascribed to war the same aesthetic rules they applied to other subjects. Their early pictures of war were romantic, idealized, and entirely devoid of the true hallmarks of battle: blood, carnage, and death. The first war photographs depicted a false, sanitized vision of war that was only dispelled in October of 1862, when the photographs from Antietam forever shattered these prefabricated, sanitized visions of the battlefield. At the center of this break in perception is Alexander Gardner. Gardner meant for his photographs to be interpreted in certain ways, and he took each image with the goal of extracting specific feelings and impressions from viewers. Gardner did not rule out physically manipulating and staging his subject matter as a means of meeting those goals.

In lieu of this fact, Michael Griffin argues that Civil War photographs were not, then, presenting true representations of a grisly reality. These images were instead, Griffin argues, manipulations by photographers who wanted to symbolize abstract cultural concepts such as honor, patriotism, heroism, and national unity, not realism.⁸ What scholars like Griffin overlook is the unique power of photography to simultaneously convey abstract concepts, moral agency, *and* realism, all in a single image. A dead body on a battlefield is real. Even if that body was not photographed in the exact spot where it fell, the fact that it is a real image of a real event is not lost. So the

⁷ Kendall Walton, "Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (March, 1984): 67.

⁸ Michael Griffin, "The Great War Photographs," in *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, Eds. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 136-37.

soldier may have died thirty feet away. So what. No image, be it a painting, a drawing, or a photograph, is free from the bias of its creator. What Griffin and many others fail to recognize is that Civil War photographs, and other journalistic photographs, which depict real, significant events, are unique because they serve as both real images *and* as symbols of greater aesthetic importance. A painting can certainly serve as an abstract symbol, but because the painter maintains absolute domination over the image, it does not convey the sense of realism inherent in a photograph. The most striking Civil War photographs, those from Antietam and later battles, have remained morally relevant precisely because they are real historical documents of a place and time, and significant cultural and aesthetic markers.

Susan Sontag, in her book *On Photography*, writes that photographs have the power to express deep emotion because “they depict real people, events, and situations.”⁹ Yet Sontag denies the ability of photographs to bear moral messages. Even when photographs first seem to have the ability to convey moral messages, Sontag argues that as time passes and the events and points of reference are further distanced from the actual time period depicted in the photographs, “The particular qualities and intentions of photographs tend to be swallowed up in the generalized pathos of time past.”¹⁰ Photographs depict singular events, and thus their greatest strength, according to Sontag, is purely functional; the ability to show how people and things appeared at a given place and time.¹¹ Furthermore, Sontag argues that only through the existence of “relevant political consciousness” can photographs be morally charged. “Without politics,” she writes, “photographs of the slaughter-bench of history will most likely be experienced as,

⁹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 20-21.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 21.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 22.

simply, unreal or as a demoralizing emotional blow.”¹² Like Griffin, Sontag overlooks the ability of photography to combine the moral charge of painting with its own unique sense of realistic representation. The photographs from Antietam and later battles have not lost their moral power over time. On the contrary, to gaze upon these images is to feel the same stirring emotions that audiences first experienced when viewing these photographs in Mathew Brady’s gallery in 1862. One needs little prior knowledge of the Civil War to experience these emotions. They are powerful. They are uniquely human emotions that are not bound by historical or political chains. These photographs are, as Michael Griffin suggests, symbols of “transcendent cultural concepts.”¹³ Yet they are also historical and aesthetic documents of tremendous importance. They show us people and places in a given place and time, but they also continue to hold a vital moral charge. Indeed, they were the first photographs to hold this kind of moral charge. This thesis is based on an examination of the content of, and public reaction to these Civil War photographs. It argues that photographs, far from just serving as physical reminders of specific places and times, do possess the ability to convey moral messages in addition to a unique sense of realism. This remains true regardless of the fact that photographs always have been, and always will be, manipulated by the intentions of photographers.

There has been ample scholarship devoted to war photography, and historians have placed emphasis on the importance of the Civil War in the overall history of war photography. The most significant, detailed scholarly treatment of the Antietam photographs is *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America’s Bloodiest Day*, by

¹² Ibid, 19.

¹³ Griffin, ‘The Great War Photographs,’ 137.

William A. Frassanito, published in 1978.¹⁴ In this book, Frassanito traced the geographic paths taken by the Union and Confederate armies throughout the Maryland campaign. He examined the directions the photographers took in order to cover the area after the fighting ceased. He also provides a historical background description for each of the images. Frassanito considers Antietam to be a landmark event in the history of photography, and dedicates a section of his book to the public reaction to the photographs. But his book is less a study of the emotions and motives behind the images, and more a geographic examination of the battlefield and how those images came to be captured.

War photography as its own, separate branch of the photographic arts is thoroughly familiar to modern audiences. Historians have tended to classify war photography as a unique medium that only truly emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Jorge Lewinski argues that since World War II there has been more, abundant subject matter for war photographers to capture. Shifts in public aesthetics made them more receptive, and, indeed, more intrigued and fascinated by this abundant, gruesome imagery. Photographs from the British Crimean War and the American Civil War were not seen by the public for weeks, sometimes months after the event, while war photographs from Korea, Israel, the Congo, and Vietnam, were published more concurrently with the events they depicted. This resulted in the public identifying with the images on a more personal, intimate level, transforming them from “distant

¹⁴ William A. Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic legacy of America's Bloodiest Day*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978.)

witnesses” in the case of the Civil War, to the role of fascinated, “intense explorers” during Korea and Vietnam.¹⁵

Frances Fralin makes an argument concurrent with Lewinski’s. In *The Indelible Image*, Fralin argues that up to the Vietnam era, wars were photographed officially by governments and public agencies with the purpose of only showing enough to serve the public’s perceived needs.¹⁶ This resulted in viewers acting as casual observers with little personal reaction and investment in the images. According to Fralin, Vietnam brought with it independent and news-supported photojournalists, whose images directly affected the outcome of the war because audiences saw them in real time on television.¹⁷ Thus, Fralin argues that the journalism that emerged within the Vietnam era fully legitimized the medium of war photography.

This thesis offers a different perspective from the conclusions of Lewinski and Fralin. Based on the primary source material used in this study, which includes contemporary newspaper articles and journal articles that reveal public reaction to early war photography, it is clear that when confronted with the pictures from Antietam, early audiences did invest a large amount of personal feeling into the images they viewed. The Civil War era public were not merely “distant witnesses,” but were, in fact, very personally affected by the pictures of dead soldiers and carnage. Lewinski and Fralin are right in their observance that shifts in public aesthetic principles over time paved the way for more graphic photography, but their conclusion that war photography as a medium did not emerge until the mid-twentieth century is incorrect. Nineteenth century audiences

¹⁵ Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera Goes to War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1978), 9.

¹⁶ Francis Fralin, Jane Livingston, *The Indelible Image: Photographs of War, 1846 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1985), 9-10.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 11.

were used to getting news that was separated from the actual events by days, weeks, or even months. The immediacy of the Antietam images, in relation to the time period, was undeniable. To contemporary audiences who did not have round-the-clock news networks, Gardner's photographs were as immediate and personally affecting as anything witnessed by Vietnam-era audiences. Additionally, it must be noted that Civil War era photographs had an extremely limited audience. The privileged few that saw these images outside of the city galleries saw them reprinted as *carte de visites*, or as sketches in newspapers and journals. These images were not even seen in the South until after the war. In assessing the historical and aesthetical significance of these photographs, historical context must be considered in order to draw a fair and inclusive conclusion.

The availability of contemporary works on Mathew Brady and Civil War photography, coupled with the vast, though by no means complete, dispersion of the photographs themselves in books and electronic resources, provide solid evidence to back the conclusions presented in this study. Public reaction to the Antietam photographs can be gauged by referring to contemporary newspaper and journal reviews. Publications such as the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald* covered Brady's galleries, and publications like *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* reprinted his images in subsequent issues throughout the war. These newspaper reviews provide first-hand accounts of audience reaction to the photographs. Alexander Gardner provided a comprehensive list of his Civil War photographs titled, *Catalogue of Photographic Incidents of the War*, a source that reveals in detail the photographer's own intentions. The most important primary sources are the photographs themselves, as they are the most recognized documentations of the conflict. Besides being widely circulated in books

about the Civil War, the Library of Congress also maintains a collection of Civil War photographs.

This detailed analysis of the motives, reactions, and symbolism inherent in the Antietam photographs reveals that they had a profound effect on the aesthetics of photography. The Antietam photographs represent the crux moment when photography broke free from its early aesthetic confines, and became a medium for capturing a morally charged reality. The influence of the Antietam photographs can be seen in later Civil War photographs from Gettysburg and Grant's Virginia campaigns.

Before exploring the significance of the Antietam photographs, it is important to examine the origins of photography, with particular emphasis on its connection to the nineteenth century aesthetic movement and its close relationship to portrait painting. In its earliest years photography struggled to legitimize itself amid claims that it was not a true art form. The mechanized nature of the camera led many to argue that photography was merely representational, and could never compete with the aesthetic idealism of painting, sculpture, and other "legitimate" art forms.

Chapter 1: “A Great and Truthful Medium...”

In order to fully appreciate the monumental importance of the photographs from the Battle of Antietam, it is necessary to first examine the nature of photography in the decades before the outbreak of the Civil War. Before Antietam, photographers used their medium as a means of capturing portraits of national politicians, celebrities, military men, and eventually, romantic depictions of nineteenth century warfare. Through the first twenty years of photography’s existence as a mass medium, photographs were taken almost exclusively in studios or other pre-arranged settings in which subjects were prepared and posed. Though landscapes and other outdoor scenes were photographed much in the same manner as painters created still-lives, portraiture remained the primary focus of early photography. Indeed, it was only logical that photography should borrow from other time-tested artistic mediums. As Miles Orville notes, “photography in the nineteenth century could not be said to operate within what one might call a purely photographic aesthetic.”¹ As a medium still in its infancy, photography in its early years was simply too new, too dramatic in its ability to represent the “real,” to establish its own aesthetic.

So dramatic was the representation inherent in photographs that early photographers were forced to confront the notion that their work was merely mechanical, and thus inferior to the artistry of the painter. Lacking any substantial aesthetic grounding outside of the realm of the painted portrait, portrait photographers developed a “moral purpose” for their work. Grounded in connecting their photographs to the painted portrait, and consequently presenting themselves as “artists” as opposed to “mechanics,”

¹ Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 94.

photographers rooted their moral purpose in the photograph's ability to capture the moral character of individuals in portrait.² As Marcus Root described it, the goal of the artistically driven photographer was to capture the “*soul* of the original, - that *individuality* or *self-hood*, which differentiates *him* from all beings, past, present, or future.”³ In this respect photography became a way of artistically perfecting the job that painting had started. Out of this notion arose what Allen Trachtenberg calls the “mythos” of the public portrait. The sitter became intimately involved in the creation of their own representation. Their ability to hold a pose, convey “character,” would be represented in a photograph that was a “palpable object,” a physical, portable miniature replica of a living being.⁴ Even though their images were mechanically produced, portrait photographers like Mathew Brady found that through their own manipulation of light, surroundings, and the intricate posing of their subjects, they could compete on an artistic level with the portrait painter.

Portraiture was one thing, but in attempting to compete with painting, early photographers were limiting the ability of their medium to exploit its most unique strength, that of true, realistic representation. Additionally, portraiture was not allotted the same aesthetic respect as paintings that depicted historical narratives, biblical scenes, and allegories. “Face painting,” as portraiture was often called, limited the moral and didactic range possible within the art. Whereas a history painter could paint man in general, a portrait painter was confined by the impervious grasp of individuality.⁵ Joshua

² Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evens* (Toronto: Hill and Wang, 1989), 28-32.

³ Marcus Root, *The Camera and the Pencil: or the Heliographic Art* (1864, repr., Pawlett, Vt.: Helios, 1971), 390.

⁴ Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 29.

⁵ *Ibid*, 35-6.

Reynolds, British painter and expositor of art principles, noted that history narratives on canvas offered the opportunity to present generalized moral lessons that the “literal record” of photography could not.⁶ What deriders like Reynolds overlooked, however, was that photography’s supposed artistic and moral flaw, its inherent literalism, made it better suited to express these moral lessons, these elevated generalities, than any other medium. Photography’s inherent literalism made it the ideal medium for historical record keeping.

James F. Horan, in his 1955 biography *Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera*, recognized the immediate impact photography had on the way the masses perceived history. Horan explains that before the advent of the *Daguerreotype* in 1839, views of history were limited to either those who actually witnessed historical events, or the artists, be they painters, sketch artists, or engravers, who pictured the events after the fact. The public had to rely on the images created by artists for their physical views of history. These views were filtered through the artists’ own biases and interpretations, and thus the common masses were never able to see historical scenes as they appeared in life. With the Daguerreotype, Horan writes, “The veil had been torn from history’s eyes. She could see. Photography had been born.”⁷ Beaumont Newhall, in his *History of Photography*, echoes Horan’s sentiments that photography brought real life history to all people. Referring to a famous Alexander Gardner image of a dead Confederate sharpshooter at Devil’s Den, Gettysburg, Newhall explains, “This man lived; this is the spot where he fell; this is how he looked in death. There lies the great psychological difference between

⁶ Ibid, 36.

⁷ James D. Horan, *Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 3.

photography and the other graphic arts; this is the quality which photography can impart more strongly than any other picture making.”⁸

The Gettysburg photograph Newhall describes has since been proved by William Frassanito to have been posed by the photographer Gardner, thus it is not entirely a real representation of where and how that soldier died, even though the image is “real” in the sense that it depicts an actual scene. This kind of paradox in photography will be addressed periodically throughout this study. Yet despite Newhall’s choice of a photograph, his central point remains true. Photography presented real events more convincingly than any other visual medium available in the nineteenth century. To illustrate his point, Newhall compares Winslow Homer’s drawings of the Civil War for *Harper’s Weekly* with Mathew Brady’s war photographs. A Homer sketch of a sharpshooter in a tree was not necessarily real. Audiences had to rely on Homer’s word and credibility that the sharpshooter was actually there. A photograph of a sharpshooter, however, is a real-life duplicate of the scene. In this sense, Newhall writes, there was no question for audiences that the sharpshooter in the photograph actually existed.⁹ This was the immediate power of photography.

To fully grasp the aesthetic importance of Civil War photography, it is first necessary to observe the origin of photography as an extension of portraiture, and war photography’s origin as a branch of early photographic portraiture. The first true photographic image was the invention of Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre, a French

⁸ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*, revised and enlarged edition (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Doubleday and Company, 1964), 71. For additional sources on the history of photography, see Martin W. Sandler, *Photography: An Illustrated History* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2002.; and Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A History of Photography* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000).

⁹ Newhall, *History of Photography*. 69-71.

painter who specialized in painting large stage sets for Opera and popular theater.¹⁰

Daguerre developed the first camera, called a *camera obscura*, which operated through “a chemical and physical process which gives Nature the ability to reproduce herself.”¹¹ It had long been known that the right mixture of certain types of chemicals, namely chalk, silver, nitric acid, and salts, when poured on a surface, stenciled into shapes, and exposed to light, could produce an imprint of the stencil in a dark, metallic silver color. This technique was developed by the German physicist Johann Heinrich Schulze in 1727.¹²

The challenge that remained was using this chemical process in such a manner as to recreate images of real life onto a flat surface. Daguerre was the first, through his *camera obscura*, to patent this process in a relatively fast series of steps. He debuted the details of his technique at a meeting of the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris on August 19, 1839, the day photography was truly born.¹³ Daguerre’s process, the results of which were christened the *Daguerreotypes* (see Fig. 1), was an immediate sensation. It made its way across Europe and soon established itself in the United States. The June, 1853 issue of the *Photographic Art Journal*, one of dozens of publications that arrived in the wake of the invention of photography, described Daguerre’s common process for creating a *Daguerreotype*:

A plate, composed of copper and silver, in the proportion of one-sixteenth of the latter and the remainder of the former, the silver being on the surface, is brought to a high state of polish by the use of rottenstone, rouge, &. It is then galvanized, thus receiving a fine coat of pure galvanic silver, when it is repolished, and then submitted to a primary coating of the fumes of dry iodine, and also of bromine or other accelerating compound. Having been carefully shielded from the light, it is then placed in a camera of achromatic lens, through which the reflected rays of the sun upon the sitter are transferred to the plate, when crystallization takes

¹⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹¹ Ibid, 17.

¹² Ibid, 1.

¹³ Ibid, 17.

place. No impression, however, will be visible until the plate be submitted to the heated fumes of mercury, when the picture stands boldly forth, a daguerreotype being nothing more than an amalgamation of mercury and silver.¹⁴



(Fig. 1) *Daguerreotype of a Woman*, 1850. Unknown French photographer. GEH. An example of an early Daguerreotype. From Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*, revised and enlarged edition (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Doubleday and Company, 1964), 11.

Numerous publications wrote of this amazing new “revolution in art,” which many believed would forever make traditional imaging techniques obsolete. An article in the April 13, 1839 issue of *The New Yorker* boldly exclaimed, “The Dagueroscope and the Photogenic revolutions are to keep you all down, ye painters, engravers, and, alas! ye harmless race, the sketchers...you must positively abscond.”¹⁵ *The Corsair*, a New York-

¹⁴ “Photography in the United States,” *Photographic Art-Journal* 5 (June, 1853): 334-341.

¹⁵ “New Discovery in the Fine Arts,” *The New Yorker*, April 13, 1839.

based art journal, echoed *The New Yorker's* sentiment when, referring to the power photography wielded to capture perfect images, begged the question, "Who will make elaborate drawings from statues or from life, if he can be supplied in a more perfect, a more true manner, and in the space of a few minutes, either with the most simple or the most complicated forms?"¹⁶ Other views on the impact photography would make on other artists were not quite as dour. In a speech given at the annual supper of the National Academy of Design in New York on April 24th, 1840, Samuel F. B. Morse predicted that photography would not spell the end for other artists, but would actually help them in perfecting their work. Morse stated, "By a simple and easily portable apparatus, he (the artist) can now furnish his studio with *fac-simile* sketches of nature...which will enable him to enrich his collection with a superabundance of *materials* and not *copies*."¹⁷

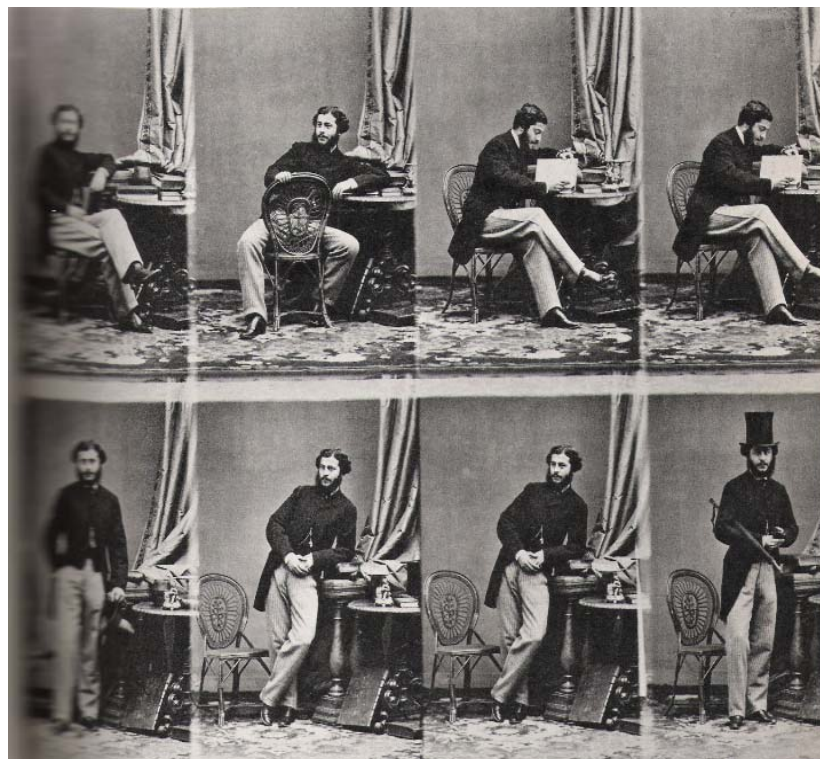
Whether photography was perceived as the death knell for other art forms or as a tool for improving the existing methods, all agreed that the *Daguerreotype* was a great discovery. As groundbreaking as the *Daguerreotype* was, however, it had its disadvantages. The reproduction process was so lengthy that objects that did not remain still for minutes on end, such as people, could not be captured in the final image. The *Daguerreotype* also could not be mass produced. Each image was unique and only duplicable by capturing the same scene again with the camera or by sketching or engraving a copy of the existing image.¹⁸ This problem of mass copying was solved by the invention of the *carte-de-visite*, patented by the Frenchman Adolphe-Eugene Disderi in 1854. The *carte-de-visite*, a paper print pasted on a mount that averaged 4 by 2.5

¹⁶ "The Pencil of Nature, A New Discovery," *The Corsair: A Gazette of Literature, Art, Dramatic Criticism, fashion and Novelty* 5 (April 13, 1839): 70-72.

¹⁷ Samuel F. B. Morse, "Probable Effects. . .the Discovery of Daguerre," repr. in Marcus Root, *The Camera and The Pencil: or the Heliographic Art* (1864; repr., Pawlett, Vt.: Helios, 1971), 390-392.

¹⁸ Newhall, *History of Photography*, 19.

inches, was created through a camera that had several lenses and a moving plate-holder. This camera made it possible to capture up to a dozen poses on a single negative¹⁹ (see Fig. 2).



(Fig. 2) *Uncut Print from a Carte-De-Visite Negative, c. 1860, GEH.* Adolphe-Eugene Disderi, photographer. From Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*, revised and enlarged edition (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Doubleday and Company, 1964), 16.

The versatility of the *carte-de-visites*, commonly known as true photographs, soon rendered the clunky copper *Daguerreotype* sheets obsolete. No American artist capitalized on the potential of mass-produced photography better than Mathew B. Brady (Fig. 3), the photographer whose name is synonymous with antebellum and Civil War era American photography. Brady was born in Warren County, New York around 1823 (his exact birth date is not known). He traveled through New York state in his teens and early twenties, finally arriving in New York city in the early 1840s, where he became a

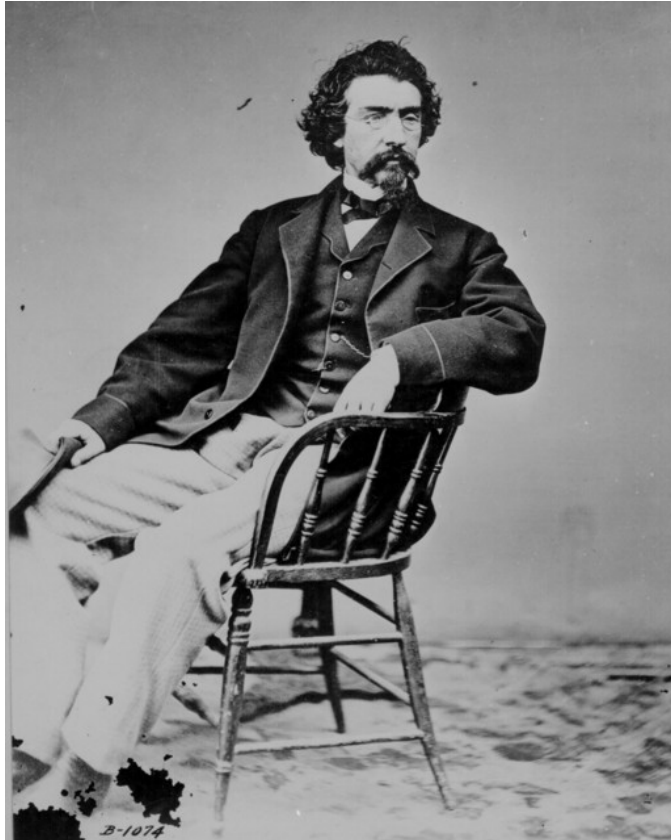
¹⁹ Ibid, 49.

member of the circle of artists and daguerreotypists who enthusiastically embraced the new Daguerrean art and made New York City the center of photography in America.²⁰ Brady established his first New York gallery in 1845, and quickly stood out among the dozens of other local photographic artists by seeking out the most well-known celebrities and politicians of the time and filling his gallery with their images, which the public came in droves to view.²¹ Although Brady initially worked with *Daguerreotypes*, he soon embraced the more versatile photograph, positive prints on paper made from negative glass prints. Brady saw the commercial advantage of paper photographs, which were light, easily reproducible, and could be enhanced with paints, chalk, ink, or pencil.²² He immediately set out to catalog images of all of the important individuals of the day, hoping that such work would solidify his reputation as a revered pictorial historian who brilliantly cataloged the nineteenth century.

²⁰ Horan, *Mathew Brady*, 9.

²¹ Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1997), 9-11.

²² *Ibid*, 11-13.



(Fig. 3) *Mathew Brady, Photograph Taken by Assistant, c. 1862-63.* Library of Congress.

Photographic historian Mary Panzer, in her book *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*, thoroughly documents Brady's compulsive drive in "creating images that would allow artists to perpetuate a glorious image of an enduring nation."²³ Brady ascribed an early aesthetic ideal to photography, gleaned directly from portrait painting, in order to produce pictures that were artistically appealing, but also served as spectacles of lasting impact and power.²⁴ Brady's contemporaries recognized the effort the photographer made to make his mechanical process a legitimate art form. In 1864 the *New York Herald* wrote of Brady, "he is a man of artistic aspirations, who looks upon the mechanical features of his art as subsidiary to the higher aims which should guide those professing to

²³ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

strive for excellence in it.”²⁵ Brady himself stated, “My greatest aim has been to advance the art [of photography] and to make it what I think I have, a great and truthful medium of history.”²⁶ Brady was one of the first to recognize, and exploit, the unique ability of photography to be both mechanical, in its ability to literally reproduce an actual scene, and symbolic, in that he could control the poses, lighting, and background in his work. Thus, Brady considered himself to be an artist and historian. He hoped that future generations would view his images as historic postcards that depicted the nation’s glorious past.

Brady often posed his sitters in variations of the classical, “hand-in-coat” Napoleonic fashion. (see Fig. 4) The origins of this pose date back to classical sculpture, when statues of ancient Greeks and Romans featured hidden hands.²⁷ Eighteenth-century painters then adopted this pose as a way of signifying men of breeding and “persons of quality and worth.”²⁸ The pose became especially popular in England in portraits that depicted individuals displaying “manly boldness tempered with modesty.”²⁹ Classical writers also suggested that the pose was an appropriate posture for oration, and many eighteenth-century textbooks on oratory also recommend this pose.³⁰ Portraits of Napoleon made the pose famous in a military context, but by the nineteenth century, the pose became less directly associated with the French general and came to be seen as a

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Faces of Great Men: An Endeavor to Establish a Gallery of Portraits in This City,” *Washington Post*, December 18, 1889.

²⁷ Arline Meyer, “Re-Dressing Classical Statuary: The Eighteenth-Century ‘Hand-in-Waistcoat’ Portrait,” *Art Bulletin* 77 (March 1995): 1-3.

²⁸ Ibid, 3.

²⁹ Ibid, 4.

³⁰ Ibid, 4-5.

pose that was fitting of distinguished military gentleman. It was meant to signify dignity, glory, and timelessness, hence its popularity in Civil War era photographs.³¹



(Fig. 4) *Napoleon in His Study*, by Jacques-Louis David
1812 (130 Kb); Oil on canvas, 203.9 x 125.1 cm (80 1/4 x 49 1/4 in)
The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/david/>

All of these qualities are evident in Brady's portrait of Winfield Scott (Fig. 5). The old general stands erect, steely-eyed, in full military dress, exhibiting the classic Napoleonic pose. Brady took care to set Scott against a bare, darkened background, the manipulated light shining directly on Scott's right profile. The emptiness of the backdrop

³¹ Ibid, 7.

all the more emphasizes the tremendous stature of the old warrior by making him the sole occupier of space in the photograph. Only a half-presented drape shares space with the general, a portraiture standard that harks back to the days of the Renaissance. The photograph's ability to reveal detail, however, also showcases the seventy-five year-old general's grayed hair, wrinkles, and pot belly, features which a painter, the full master of his medium, might be inclined to omit for posterity's sake. Yet despite these human flaws there is a stern elegance in this image. Brady presented Scott as a towering figure of a bygone military era.

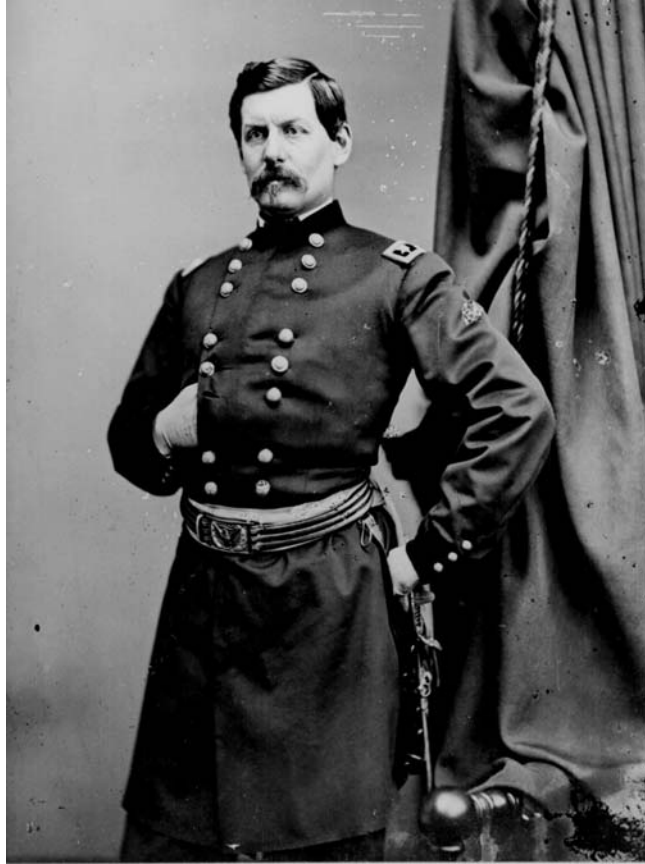


(Fig. 5) *Winfield Scott, 1861*. Imperial salted-paper print. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted from Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 79.

A similar example of Brady's depicting the elegance of nineteenth century military leaders is his portrait of General George B. McClellan (Fig. 6). Brady posed the Union general, aptly nicknamed "The Young Napoleon," in an almost identical fashion to that of Winfield Scott. McClellan stands erect in full uniform, slightly to the side, gazing off camera as if surveying a battlefield. Like Scott he is the sole occupier of space save for the elegant drapery at the general's left side. Brady allowed more light to illuminate "Little Mac," perhaps to showcase the general's youth in contrast to Scott's grizzled fixture. These two portraits, taken before the death scenes of Antietam, reveal men of war in the most heroic, cleansed style. The setting is a constructed studio, not the battlefield. These are not men who would lead armies to be butchered in hails of artillery fire. They are men who would instead boldly maneuver their great armies in pursuit of causes worthy of Iliad-style praise in generations to come. These two prints also serve as fine examples of Brady's skill at manipulating light and shade in his portraits. Brady aimed to capture in these types of portraits a "depth of tone and softness of light and shade [which] display all the artistic arrangements of the highest effort of the painter."³² This explicit link to the painted portrait was central to Brady's early success as America's most renowned portrait photographer. The portraits of McClellan and Scott represented the real individuality of the two living men, yet through his manipulation of light and surroundings, Brady simultaneously imbued in these images what Alan Trachtenberg has called the "air of generalization and historical allusion" that elevated them above mere likeness.³³

³² "Brady's Daguerreotype Portraits and Family Groups," *New York Evening Post*, August 1, 1848.

³³ Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 36.



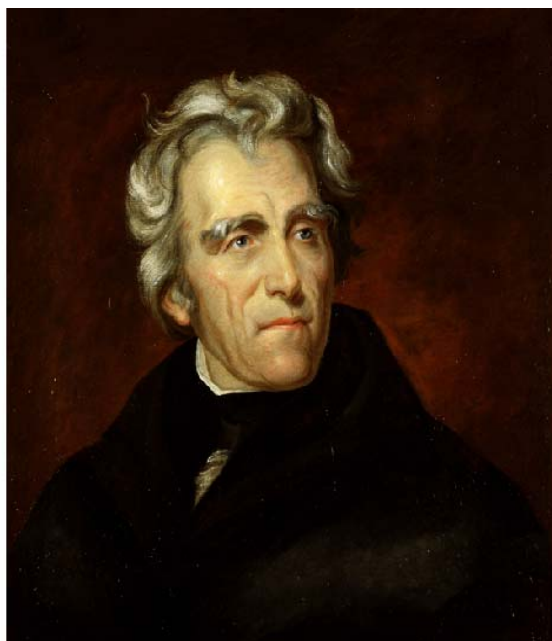
(Fig. 6) *Portrait of General George B. McClellan*. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer.
From Roy Meredith, *Mr. Lincoln's Cameraman, Mathew B. Brady* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), No. 119.

Brady applied this same technique of elegance in his numerous photographs of the great politicians of the time, the most famous being President Abraham Lincoln, of whom Brady took many famous pictures. In this 1862 Lincoln photograph (Fig. 7), Brady presents a young, virile Lincoln, in only the second year of his presidency. The president is dressed in a formal white collar and black jacket. His hair is neatly parted, shiny, and jet black without a touch of gray. His beard and characteristic bushy eyebrows are full and dark, giving him an unmatched air of refined dignity. Lincoln is the sole occupant of space in the photograph, a nod to his stature as the supreme commander in chief of the Union, and his gaze is confident, fixed into the distance, the gaze of a man in complete

control of his life and duties. With this image Brady intended to place Lincoln on the pantheon with history's great leaders. Here is the man who led the nation through its most crucial period, and all of his strength and intelligence are showcased in Brady's image. Brady's photograph is directly influenced by the great portraits of past presidents, all of which were meant to convey the same air of strength and dignity. When placed next to Thomas Sully's 1824 portrait of Andrew Jackson (Fig. 8), the similarities are plain to see. Both Brady and Sully's works depict presidents in similar poses, with similar gazing, confident expressions, and both images were meant to provide future generations with heroic images of great leaders of the past.



(Fig. 7) *Abraham Lincoln at Brady's Washington Gallery, 1862*. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. Library of Congress.



(Fig. 8) *Andrew Jackson, ca. 1824*. By Thomas Sully, (1783-1872). From http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/artifact/Painting_32_00018.htm

Brady's New York galleries of "Illustrious Americans" (see Fig. 9), in which he showcased portraits such as the latter three, were an immediate sensation with the public. Brady fancied himself as the vehicle through which nineteenth century America would be

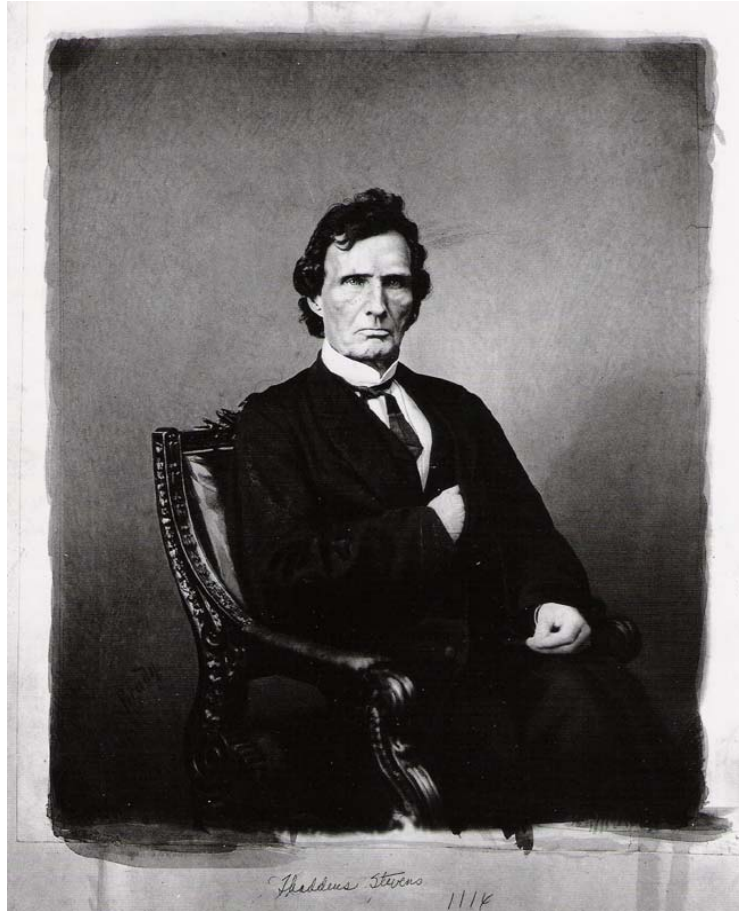
preserved for the ages. The images that lined the walls of his galleries featured, at various times, Popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, doctors, pastors, ambassadors, judges, lawyers, artists, authors, prima donnas, society women, actors, actresses, army and navy officers, politicians, and other people that occupied the top rungs of society.³⁴ The public came in droves to see these exhibitions, and many contemporary publications sent reviewers to chronicle Brady's work. The *New York Times* called Brady's 1858 gallery a collection of "the most interesting exhibition of art in the City."³⁵ Many who visited Brady's galleries agreed that the intrepid photographer was just the man to preserve the spirit of the times. An October, 1860 issue of the *American Journal of Photography and the Allied Arts & Sciences* praised Brady for his contributions to history, and championed the photographic art as the best medium to picture history. "The prosperity which Brady has now opened, throws a marvelous light upon the means which we shall bequeath to our posterity of knowing what manner of men and women we Americans of 1860 were," the article stated.³⁶ The review continued, "All our books, all our newspapers, all our private letters...will not so betray us to our coming critics as the millions of photographs we shall leave behind us."³⁷ Brady hoped that later Americans would view the past through his images, and Brady's contemporaries agreed that the photographer's work would stand the test of time.

³⁴ Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*, 55-60.

³⁵ "Brady's Gallery," *New York Times*, August 11, 1858.

³⁶ "A Broadway Valhalla: Opening of Brady's New Gallery," *American Journal of Photography and the Allied Arts & Sciences* 3 (October 15, 1860): 151-53, in Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*, 220-21.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 220-21.



(Fig. 9) *Thaddeus Stevens, 1858*. Imperial salted-print paper with ink and pencil. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. From Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 98.

Mathew Brady's early, pre-war portraits, however, only partially depict the realism that contemporary observers attributed to them. They are, in fact, carefully constructed artifacts molded by an aesthetic ideal that encompassed the generality of painting and the literalness of photography. These photographs do represent literal realism in that they are reproduced images of actual, living individuals. Yet because they were intentionally manipulated to conform to the aesthetic of the historical painting, they exist in a sort of limbo. They do not fully depict a unique photographic aesthetic, but they also are too real, indeed, too lifelike to fully conform to the standard of painting.

Additionally, Brady's portrait galleries did not present a historically broad vision of nineteenth century American life. His portraits on display depicted the wealthy, the powerful, the famous, the upper "crème" of society. Brady's view of American society was shared by the established and the rising middle classes. Through the making of portraits he hoped to embody an almost mythical ideology of American success.³⁸ In the midst of this ideology there was no room for the rabble. Brady's galleries did not showcase the everyday farmers, the factory workers, the small business owners that represented ninety-five percent of American society. Nor did Brady's images portray anything less than the high aesthetic the photographer felt would best enshrine his era. The galleries did not depict the ugly and less glamorous elements of society, the vagabonds, the criminals, the yeoman farmers, the filthy factory workers toiling for slave wages, and they had not yet depicted war. Brady's images were a romanticized vision of his era. Therein lies the paradox of pre-Civil War, and more specifically, pre-Antietam photography.

In the 1840s, '50s, and early '60s, few questioned the apparent truthful realism of photography. As one article put it, photography had "furnished to us with a truthfulness and accuracy which the pencil of the artist, however skillful he may be, can never approach in the remotest degree."³⁹ The realism of photography, presented with "nothing left to be filled in from the fancy and poetry of the artist,"⁴⁰ was generally accepted. Mathew Brady took pictures of real, living people. Some subtle manipulation of light and shade notwithstanding, these pictures in turn depicted those people as they were, for

³⁸ Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 38.

³⁹ W.P. Strickland, "The Fine Arts-Photography," *The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature, Arts, and Religion* 19 (Aug., 1859): 477-78.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 477.

Brady did not have the technology to “alter” his photographs as later photographers did. Brady, however, chose what, where, when, and how he wanted to photograph his subjects. While the bias of the photographer is inescapably present in every photograph, the early photographs by Brady and other photographers were trapped in state of controlled, sanitized realism. True realism involves “the practice of regarding things in their true nature and dealing with them as they are.”⁴¹ Brady’s portrait photographs were realistic, but they completely omitted the undesirable aspects of human existence. War, perhaps the most unsettling byproduct of human hubris and frailty, was the event that broke photography away from its confined aesthetic. This transition did not happen instantaneously.

As the technology of photography improved, the great photographic artists set out to break free from the studio and chronicle history as it happened. No events have made their marks on history more effectively than war, and thus, war became a prime target of photographers seeking to catalog history. The first war to be chronicled by the camera was the British-French Crimean War with Russia. The man who photographed this war was Roger Fenton. Fenton’s Crimea photographs strongly influenced Mathew Brady, who utilized Fenton’s style in his early coverage of the Civil War. Fenton’s work also demonstrates how the aesthetic principles carried over to photography from painting remained intact even in the documentation of war.

Roger Fenton, a native of Lancashire, England, was already an established photographer when the British entered the Balkans war against the Russians in 1854. In the early months of the war the *London Times* newspaper sent correspondent William

⁴¹ Christine A. Lindberg, Sue Ellen Thompson, eds. *The Oxford American Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus, Second Edition* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001), 694.

Howard Russell down to the Balkans to report the events of the battlefield to the British public. British Imperial tradition expected Russell to bring back reports of heroism and chivalry that the public associated with England's many imperial wars. Instead, Russell filed reports detailing starvation, disease, and squalor. He wrote of an army that was poorly supplied, poorly led, and ill-equipped for the conditions of the Balkan climate. These reports unnerved the British public, and in response the War Department sent a photographic expedition to the battlefields, led by Roger Fenton, to bring back visual proof that would discredit Russell's dire reports.⁴² Fenton's expedition was the first instance of photography being used as state-sanctioned propaganda.

Fenton's images from the Crimea did indeed portray a very different war than the one Russell described. A view of *The Provost-Marshal* (Fig. 10) is typical of Fenton's photographs of officers in their camps. The Provost-Marshal stands gallantly, posed in Napoleonic fashion, in full dress, his sword on display but not in use. His expression is a cool, confident gaze. Like Brady across the pond, Fenton drew his inspiration from painted portraits. A similar officer photograph is *Lieut.-General Sir John Lysaght Pennefather* (Fig. 11). In this image the General sits calm and collected in his tent, he is a figure marked by experience and dignity, a classical warrior in every sense of the word. Neither of these two officers are depicted leading troops into battle. While it is true that cameras at this point could not pick up motion, Fenton explicitly chose to capture images of military leaders that emitted classical virtues of honor and bravery, of which the most common depiction was the gallant military pose. These types of images contrasted the William Howard Russell's reports of inept, incompetent commanders.

⁴² John Hannavy, *The Camera Goes to War: Photographs from the Crimean War, 1854-56* (Edinburgh, U.K.: The Scottish Arts Council, 1974), 7-8.



(Fig. 10) *The Provost-Marshal, General Bosquet's Division, 1855.* Roger Fenton, photographer. Gernsheim Collection.



(Fig. 11) *Lieut.-General Sir John Lysaght Pennefather, 1855.* Roger Fenton, photographer. Gernsheim Collection.

Both images From Fenton, Roger, *Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters from The Crimea*. Ed. By Helmut and Alison Gernsheim (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), 24, 56.

One of Fenton's most striking photographs, and one which he almost certainly constructed through careful posing of his subjects, is *Cantiniere Tending a Wounded Man* (Fig. 12). In this image a young women (the Cantiniere) offers water to a soldier who evidently suffered a head wound as evidenced by the bandage around his skull. To the right a fellow soldier offers comfort to his wounded comrade. Based on the barren background, this photograph depicts a wounded soldier on the battlefield as opposed to in camp. The battle itself is in question. If this was a genuine scene untouched by the photographer's hand (a doubtful scenario), then the battle was finished, for no canteen girl would be out on the battlefield with shells still flying the air. The more likely explanation is that Fenton carefully posed the three subjects on the battlefield in order to

give the impression that wounded soldiers received first-rate care. Such scenes undoubtedly did occur on the battlefield, and the soldier may very well have been actually wounded, but the scene itself was most likely posed to elicit sympathy for the soldier, and reassure the public that wounded men were well-cared for.



(Fig. 12) *Cantinière Tending a Wounded Man, 1855*. Roger Fenton, photographer. Gernsheim Collection. From Fenton, Roger, *Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters from The Crimea*. Ed. By Helmut and Alison Gernsheim (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954).

Perhaps Roger Fenton's most famous image from the Crimea is *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* (Fig. 13). In this photograph two barren, rocky hills flank an equally barren valley that has clearly been the scene of intense fighting. A road cuts through the center of the valley, and the ground is strewn with cannon balls and artillery. This photograph leaves only the suggestion of war. There are cannonballs but none of the human wreckage that they would have been left in their wake. Of course, the British public knew that war meant fighting and killing, but Fenton was aware that to show

bodies littering the battlefield would have been detrimental to public moral for the war, and would have gone against the express instructions of the War Department. Certainly Fenton had opportunities to photograph casualties. In one of the many letters he wrote while on the Crimea he described the aftermath of a particularly nasty midnight skirmish. “The bodies lay unburied all the next day,” he wrote, “two men from our ship were up there and saw them lying in heaps, the Russians and the French in lines with their feet almost touching.”⁴³ It must be noted that propaganda was not the only reason Fenton avoided taking any grisly photographs. The sheer difficulty of photography on the battlefield played a role in limiting the kind of images he could capture. Heavy rains often turned the barren battlefields to muck, making it impossible for Fenton to slog his photographic van to certain sights. He noted in one letter how “the men turn out in hope of getting photographed in a group...and had it not been pouring with rain I should have got there this evening.”⁴⁴ At other times the terrain was hot and dry, making work with glass negatives difficult. “Many pictures are spoilt by the dust and heat,” Fenton wrote.⁴⁵

⁴³ Fenton from the Guard’s Camp, Balaclava, 28 March 1855, in John Hannavy, *The Camera Goes to War*, 54.

⁴⁴ Fenton to William Agnew, 9 April 1855, in *Ibid*, 62.

⁴⁵ Fenton from the Guard’s Camp, Balaclava, 28 March 1855, in *Ibid*, 57.



(Fig. 13) *'The Valley of the Shadow of Death,'* 1855. Roger Fenton, photographer. Gernsheim Collection. From Fenton, Roger, *Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters from The Crimea*. Ed. By Helmut and Alison Gernsheim (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954).

Yet bad weather notwithstanding, the War Department sent Fenton to the battlefield under specific orders to take photographs that would show the British public a smoothly run war. Fenton went so far as to imply carnage and death by depicting cannonballs strewn across the landscape, but any images of human casualties were out of the question. The images Fenton took instead reveal the same romanticized, classical visions of war that were a direct extension of war paintings. These were the same qualities that characterized the portrait photography of Mathew Brady and others, and Fenton's images from the Crimea directly influenced Brady's coverage of the first two years of the Civil War.

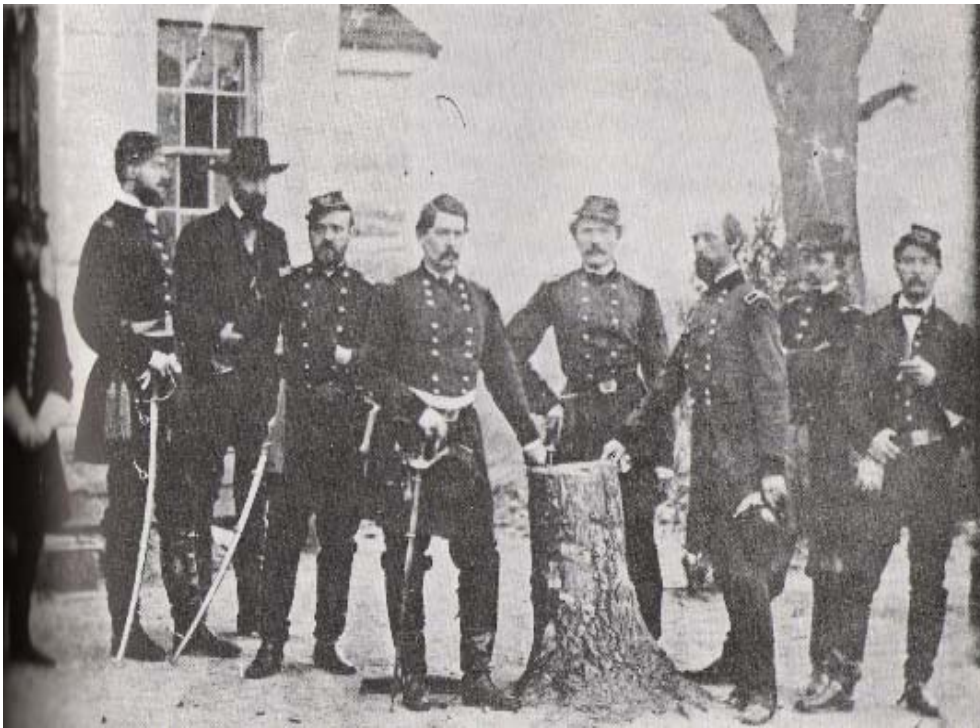
When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Brady immediately recognized the need to document the conflict through photography. The most trying moment in the young

nation's history was to be captured for the ages by the daring historian with a camera. In 1861, the notion of "war photography" as a medium did not exist. Roger Fenton's Crimean War images were merely photographic portraiture transplanted to exotic locations. Brady's early war photographs were taken in the same manner. As Mary Panzer states, Brady brought to the battlefield conventions that were synonymous with the art of portraiture in the form of "conditions that would mimic the empty, placeless setting of the studio, with its dreamy, constant light."⁴⁶ Brady's first war images convey a sense of heroic destiny and grand appeal. He posed military leaders in the same magnificent postures that characterized their studio portraits. He captured army camps and drills through vast, wide angle shots that depict the grand size of the Army of the Potomac, and at least until October, 1862, his battlefield images were ghostly, barren terrains with only hints of war's destructive touch.

An example of Brady's portrait conventions applied to war is *Gen. George B. McClellan and Staff at Upton Hill* (Fig. 14). In this photograph the young General McClellan stands with one arm resting on a tree stump, a classical military pose influenced by eighteenth century war paintings like Charles Willson Peale's 1780 portrait of George Washington (Fig. 15). Brady's photograph employs all of the characteristics of portraiture, the symmetrical line formation of McClellan and his staff, the sparse, uninhibited background, and the stern yet bold gazes of the men as they focus their eyes into the distant unknown. Brady meant for this image to convey the common nineteenth century convention of "generals as gods." The men in this photograph are gallant, poised, competent, and ready to defend a nation under attack. Brady placed particular visual emphasis on the presentation of the officer's swords. Swords were outdated weapons by

⁴⁶ Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*, 103.

the time of the Civil War. Officers used swords primarily as symbols of military status, as honorable artifacts retained from a bygone, more civilized era. Here, Brady uses the men's swords to exact an air of honor and classical tradition that future generations of viewers would recognize and revere.



(Fig. 14) *McClellan and Staff at Upton Hill. 1861.* Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer.
Library of Congress.



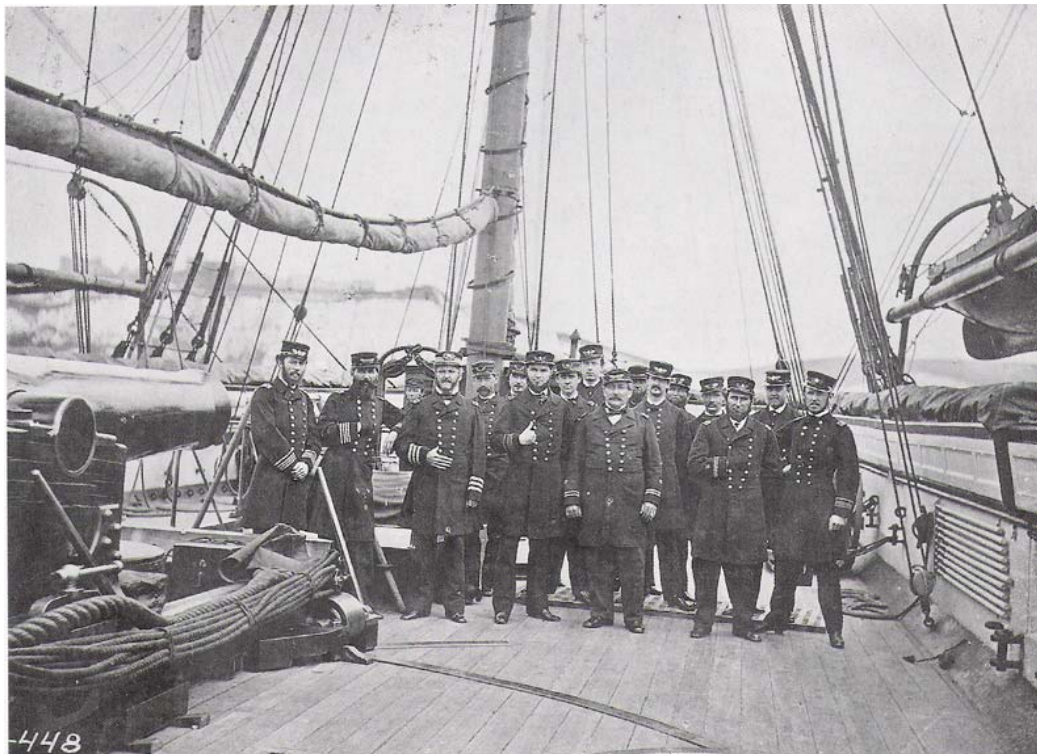
(Fig. 15) *George Washington, ca. 1779–81*

By Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827). From

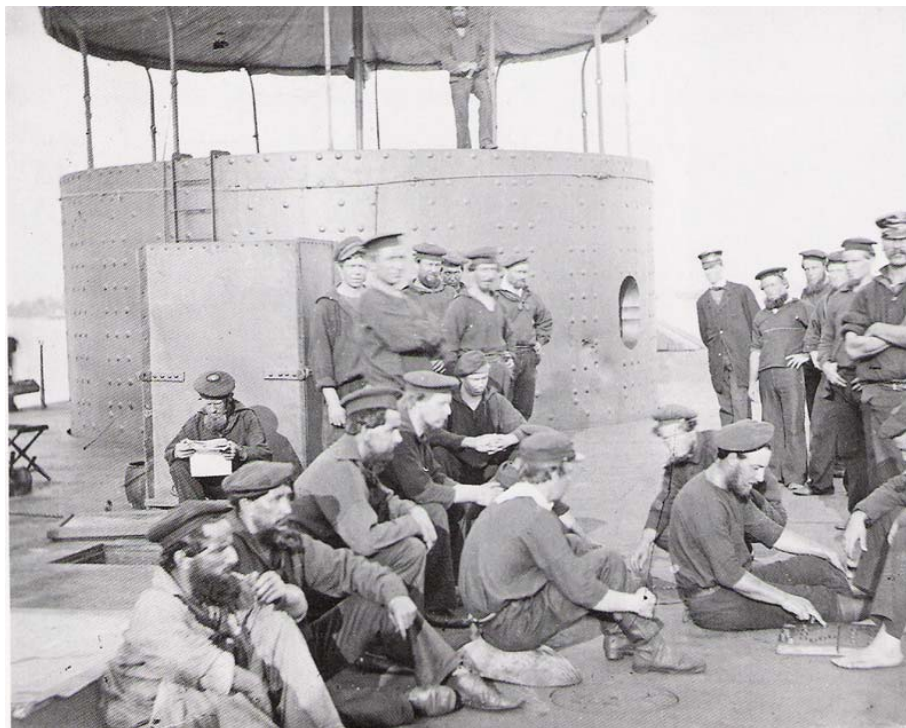
http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/viewOnezoom.asp?dep=2&zoomFlag=1&viewmode=0&item=97%2E33

Brady's group photographs are the most common of all of his early war images. Similar to *McClellan and Staff* are naval pictures such as *Officers on Deck of Federal Screw Sloop Kearsarge* (Fig. 16), and *Deck and Turret of the U.S.S. Monitor, James River, Virginia, July 9, 1862* (Fig. 17). In Fig. 16 the officers are posed in a fashion similar to that of McClellan and his generals. The men are fully attired in uniforms from head to toe. Third from left in this image is Captain John A. Winslow, who, along with three other officers, exhibits the Napoleonic pose. The men are arranged linearly across the photograph amidst the backdrop of a grand Federal ship. This picture depicts a

classical formality drawn from a long tradition of military leaders as stately, well-dressed, civilized, noble men. Brady's depiction is a far cry from the harsh realities of Civil War naval life. Less formal is Brady photographer James F. Gibson's *Deck and Turret of the U.S.S. Monitor* (Fig. 17). In contrast to the picture of naval officers, this photograph depicts a group of common sailors aboard the famous Federal ironclad. Though this image certainly could have been posed, the overall sense is that of a spontaneous shot of sailors exhibiting the everyday drudgeries of naval life. Some sit and smoke, while another reads a pamphlet. On the far right, two sailors play a board game, and in the background on both sides groups of men stand posing for the camera. This image is a mere snapshot of Civil War naval life. In no way can it convey the horrors of naval combat, the blazing artillery, the decks littered with severed limbs, and the ear-splitting clashing of metal against metal. Like all of Brady's early war pictures, this photograph is revealing but sanitized.



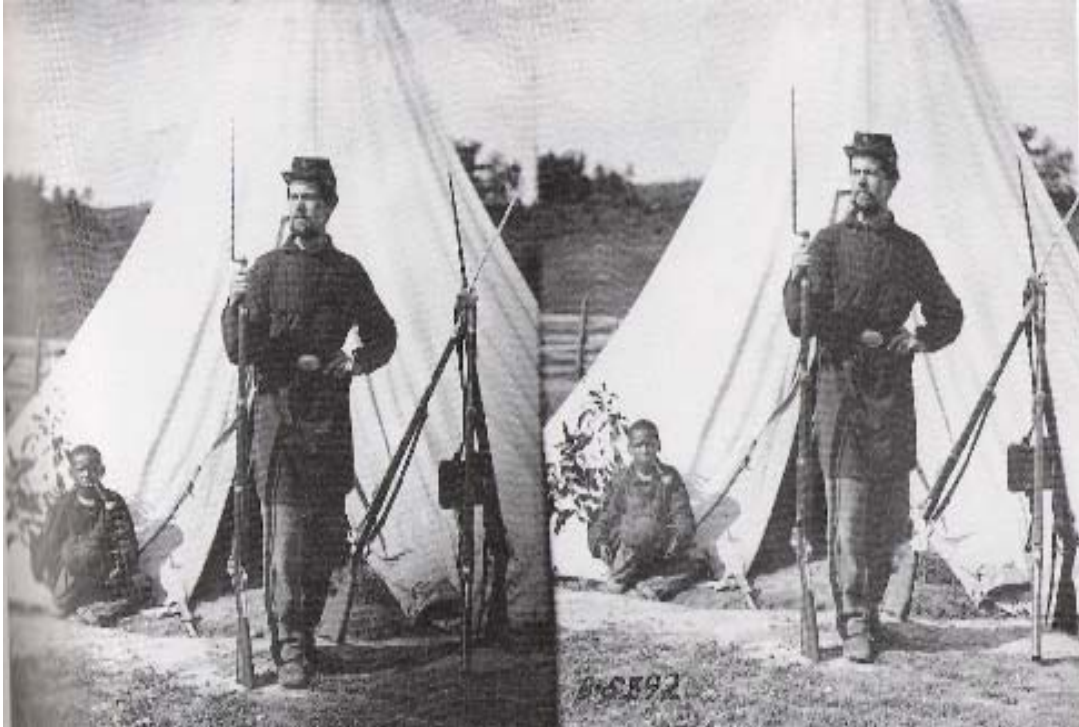
Previous Page (Fig. 16) *Officers on Deck of Federal Screw Sloop Kearsarge, with Captain John A. Winslow, Unknown location, 1861*. Photographer unidentified. Library of Congress.



(Fig. 17) *Deck and Turret of the U.S.S. Monitor. James River, VA, July 9, 1862*. James F. Gibson, photographer. Library of Congress.

Along with his pictures of officers and generals, Brady often photographed infantrymen in individual or group poses that emphasized the noble character of the common soldier. A good example of this type of image is *Infantry Private* (Fig. 18). In this photograph taken at an unidentified Federal camp, an infantryman stands poised in the classical leaning position, his gaze focused far off into the distance. He is in full dress, and his bayonet, another somewhat antiquated weapon that was only used during the most savage instances of Civil War hand-to-hand combat, is fixed. To the soldier's left are three more rifles, bayonets fixed, carefully arranged in a symmetrical pyramid construction that matches the straightened pose of the soldier. On the soldier's right sits a young African-American boy, probably a camp servant. In his right hand the boy clasps a branch with foliage, which he holds straight up. The purpose of this image was to convey

a sense of bravery, heroism, and readiness. The photographer carefully arranged a perfectly balanced, aesthetically-pleasing image. The soldier is the centerpiece, tall and straight. The rifles to his left and in his hand, the tent, and the boy holding the branch are all perfectly straight and linear with the soldier, creating an overall composition that is proud and strong.



(Fig. 18) *Infantry Private. Unknown location, 1861.*
Photographer Unidentified. National Archives.

Another hallmark of Mathew Brady's war photographs is his skilled use of the traditional landscape format in order to convey the awesome size and scope of the Union Army. This application can be seen in *Federal Encampment, Cumberland Landing, Virginia, May 1862* (Fig. 19), and *Federal Encampment on Pamunkey River, Cumberland Landing, VA, May 1862* (Fig. 20). These two images portray two distinct views of Federal camp life during McClellan's Peninsula Campaign. Fig. 20 shows a portion of a Federal camp, mostly horses and wagons, against a vast backdrop of rolling

hills and tree lines. Fig. 20, taken by James. F. Gibson, is a complete, sweeping shot of a massive Federal camp, seen from the point of view of the six seated soldiers who form a straight line across the bottom of the picture. The encampment covers the entire width of the image and descends off into the distance until it can no longer be seen with the naked eye. This image captured the massive size of the grand Army of the Potomac, presenting the great fighting force in full glory. The image presents to viewers a perfect dual perspective of the army. The thousands of tents in the distance signify the great fighting mass that the army became, but the group of soldiers that anchors the bottom of the image reminds viewers that this great mass was made of individual men ready to sacrifice their lives for the preservation of the Union.



(Fig. 19) *Federal Encampment. Cumberland Landing, VA, May 1862.* Photographer Unidentified. Library of Congress.



(Fig. 20) *Federal Encampment on Pamunkey River. Cumberland Landing, VA, May 1862.* James F. Gibson, photographer. Library of Congress.

Brady's few battlefield images from the early years of the Civil War are perhaps most telling in that they reveal the type of sanitized, aesthetic consciousness he brought to his early war photographs. The photographs from the battle at Cedar Mountain, during the Second Battle of Bull Run (Manassas) in July and August of 1862, are typical of war photography up to that point. The September 26, 1862 issue of the *New York Times* reviewed these images in an article titled "Brady's Photographs of the War." This article is revealing in its content regarding both the nature of Brady's photography and how the public reacted to his work. The image labeled *Family Group Outside Home Where Gen. Charles S. Winder, C.S.A. Died* (Fig. 21), depicts a small farmhouse nestled among a group of trees. Next to a tree is a group of four women and one man gathered around a modest table, a group the *Times* referred to as "a group of country people – the natural

Arcadians of the soil.”⁴⁷ The *Times* article aptly stated, “there is nothing in the scene to suggest the throws of war – nothing to arrest the fancy or the eye.”⁴⁸ When referring to the title of the photograph, however, the *Times* recognized, “Over this common-place corner of the Old Dominion then, as over historic Yorktown, and Williamsburgh [sic], and Richmond, the red light of battle has fallen. Never again shall the new glow depart from the scene.”⁴⁹ The author of the article saw that in this photograph war was only implied. The scene of a place where death occurred is present, but the death itself is not caught on camera. Brady managed to capture a battlefield-related scene without actually revealing the true human devastation of the battlefield.



(Fig. 21) *Family Group, Outside Home Where General Charles S. Winder, C.S.A., Died. Cedar Mountain, Virginia, 1862.* Timothy H. O'Sullivan, photographer. Library of Congress.

⁴⁷ “Brady’s Photographs of the War,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1862.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Brady's aesthetic conscience is apparent in other Cedar Mountain photographs such as *Cedar Mountain, VA, Battlefield Viewed from the West* (Fig. 22) and *Union Graves on the Battlefield, Cedar Mountain, Virginia* (Fig. 23). In Figure 22, the barren battlefield is viewed off in the distance between two trees on the right and left of the photograph. Beneath both trees on each side are small groups of Union soldiers, some sitting and others standing. Though this is a battlefield, there are no casualties, no dead horses, no graves. Were it not for the title it would be difficult to discern if this actually was a scene where fighting took place. The presence of soldiers and the geography of the area are the only indicators that this was a battle sight. Somewhat more explicit in its implications is Figure 23, *Union Graves on the Battlefield*. In this photograph the ground is strewn with the remains of fence wood, and a group of six men stands around the barely visible piles of dirt that are the final resting places of Union soldiers. In this photograph, as in Figure 22, the carnage of war is only implied. The battlefield has been cleared and the bodies already interred, and the viewer is left with only the ruined fences and men surveying the graves as indicators that this was a scene of mass death.



(Fig. 22) *Cedar Mountain, VA. Battlefield Viewed from the West, August 1862.* Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. Library of Congress.



Previous Page (Fig. 23) *Union Graves on the Battlefield, Cedar Mountain, VA, August 1862*. Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. Library of Congress.

The *New York Times* praised Brady for preserving images of these now sacred sights so that future generations could view them “as their fighting fathers saw them.” The article stated, “In the case of our American battle-fields, the debt we owe to the art (photography) which seizes their main features before decay, or...*improvement's* ‘effacing fingers’ have begun to sweep their liniments, is peculiarly heavy.”⁵⁰ The *Times* article shows how the public saw Brady as both an artist and historian. “Mr. Brady is rendering us all a real service...by this work of his, undertaken so courageously,” the *Times* stated. “It is no holiday business this taking the likeness of ‘grim-visaged war’ – and it is no mere gratification of idle curiosity which its results may afford us.”⁵¹ Ironically, Brady debuted these images of a “grim-visaged war” a mere month before his gallery featured “The Dead of Antietam,” where the public saw the true grimness of war for the first time.

Brady's pictures from Cedar Mountain were among the last battlefield images taken before Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia invaded Maryland in September of 1862. The next group of battlefield photographs depicted the aftermath of the clash between the Union and Confederate armies in Sharpsburg, Maryland, near Antietam Creek, on September 17, 1862. An expedition led by Brady-employed photographers Alexander Gardner and James F. Gibson arrived on the battlefield in the early morning of September 19, only hours after Lee's Army of Northern Virginia retreated across the Potomac. Gardner and Gibson arrived on site quickly after the fighting with the specific intention of taking photographs of the dead on the battlefield before they were buried.

⁵⁰ “Brady's Photographs of the War,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1862.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

They knew that such images would cause a sensation when displayed before the public. History more than validated their assumptions.

Chapter two examines in-depth the most important photographs from the Battle of Antietam. This group of images is among the most celebrated and famous of American photographs. They are invaluable visual documents of a major event in American history, a battle that changed the course of the Civil War. Yet these photographs serve as much more than historical markers. They are artifacts of tremendous symbolic, artistic, and aesthetic importance as well. By analyzing how the American public reacted to these images, the next chapter reveals how Gardner's Antietam photographs invalidated the aesthetic ideology of nineteenth century America. This ideology was centered on the pastoral and notions of God-sanctioned natural innocence inherent in American society. The Antietam images, by establishing photography's unique realistic aesthetic through their unsanitized depiction of war, forced Americans to reevaluate their dearly held notions of innocence.

Chapter 2: “A Terrible Fascination...”

The Battle of Antietam, called the Battle of Sharpsburg by the South, was a major event in the course of the Civil War. The early months of 1862 were a time of great opportunity for the North and restless peril for the Confederacy. Union General Ulysses S. Grant captured Fort Henry in Tennessee, and Fort Donelson in Mississippi. Admiral David Farragut captured New Orleans, the Confederacy’s main port and largest city. These Union military victories raised northern spirits and left a dark cloud over the South. As news of the string of Union successes in the Western theater reached Washington D.C., President Abraham Lincoln urged the newly appointed Commander of the Union Army of the Potomac, General George B. McClellan, to destroy the Confederate army stationed at Manassas Junction, a mere twenty miles from Washington.

The Union’s eastern fortunes in 1861 and 1862, however, did not mirror those of the West. Though the U.S. Navy’s blockade of southern ports was becoming fruitful by 1862, the Federal army suffered a humiliating defeat at Bull Run in July of 1861. The situation worsened when two Confederate envoys en route to Great Britain were taken prisoner by Northern ships. The British demanded the release of the envoys, threatening war with the Union. Lincoln badly needed a solid northern victory in the East, and believed the destruction of the southern army under General Joseph E. Johnston was Gen. McClellan’s goal. McClellan, a flawed and overly cautious commander, instead sent 100,000 Union troops down to Fort Monroe on the Virginia Peninsula with the hope of capturing the Confederate capital of Richmond and ending the war.⁵²

⁵² James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam, the Battle that Changed the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1-38.; and Charles P. Roland, *An American Iliad: The Story of The Civil War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 80-83, 86, 99.

The ensuing Peninsular Campaign found the cautious McClellan overestimating the size of the Rebel forces, and the Union army settled into a nine-month-long siege that brought them within six miles of the Confederate capital. Fortunes reversed, however, when Confederate Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson won a series of victories against an adjunct Union force in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley, and the wounded Gen. Johnston was replaced with General Robert E. Lee, a commander who, unlike McClellan, built his reputation on taking risks. Concentrating his armies in what became known as the Seven Day’s Battles, Lee struck repeatedly at McClellan’s entrenched forces, sending the Union army retreating back to Maryland, dissipating all hopes of a short war.⁵³

The mood of the northern population sank into despair following the failure of the Peninsular Campaign, and no citizen felt it more deeply than Abraham Lincoln. The South sought diplomatic recognition as a nation from Europe, particularly Great Britain and France. Confederate president Jefferson Davis counted on diplomatic recognition from the European powers to boost southern morale, increase the value of Confederate war bonds overseas, and enable the Confederacy to negotiate war treaties with foreign powers. The recent southern military victories reinforced the belief in England and France that the North could never subdue the rebellion. President Lincoln believed that now was the time to adopt the policy of emancipating the southern slaves as a Union war measure, to take the South’s property and use it against them as soldiers and workers for the North. He drafted a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, but felt that before releasing such a document, that elusive victory was still needed to convince both the

⁵³ McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, 41-44.

European powers and the northern public that the Union was capable of subduing the South.⁵⁴

Lincoln's opportunity came in September of 1862 when Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia launched an invasion of Maryland with the hope capturing Washington D.C. Once again facing George McClellan's massive Army of the Potomac, Lee divided his forces. After a series of confrontations on the Virginia-Maryland border, both armies converged on the village of Sharpsburg, Maryland, near Antietam Creek, on September 17. The ensuing battle was fierce and unrelenting. Whole divisions fell in lines as combat condensed into small patches of woods, cornfields, and a sunken road that would forever be known as "bloody lane" to the soldiers who fought there. The battle was fought to a brutal stalemate, but the Union claimed ultimate victory when the Army of Northern Virginia, exhausted and suffering severe casualties, retreated across the Potomac River on September 19, 1862. Lee's retreat saved Washington D.C. and the Union army survived to fight again.⁵⁵

Though Lee's army was not destroyed, news of the battle boosted northern moral, and Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, changing the nature of the conflict from a war to preserve the Union to a war to abolish slavery. The failure of the southern army to reach Washington D.C. and to deal a final, deadly blow to the Union war effort halted the South's military momentum. Europe was impressed with the North's resilience in the wake of so many losses. Following the release of the Emancipation Proclamation, pro-Union sentiment surged in Europe. When the Union war

⁵⁴ Ibid, 56-60.

⁵⁵ Roland, *An American Iliad*, 82-83.

goal became emancipation, nations like Great Britain, which had abolished slavery decades before, could not bring themselves to side with the slave-holding Confederacy.⁵⁶

William Frassanito established that the smoke was still heavy in the air when photographer Alexander Gardner and his assistant, James F. Gibson, arrived at the Antietam battlefield on September 18, 1862, only a few hours after it was confirmed that the Confederate army had retreated across the Potomac River. Gibson had already photographed earlier campaigns in the war's eastern theater, but this was the first time a battlefield would be photographed so soon after the fighting ended. Gardner arrived on site quickly after the fighting with the specific intention of collecting images of the dead on the battlefield before they were buried.⁵⁷

Alexander Gardner (Fig. 24) was born on October 17, 1821, in Paisley, Scotland. Shortly after Alexander's birth, his parents, James Gardner and Jean Glenn, moved the family to Glasgow, where Jean gave birth to twin-sisters, Agnes and Catherine, in 1826 and to James in 1829.⁵⁸ Early on young Alexander's mother encouraged her son's scholastic studies, and he particularly excelled in astronomy, botany, and chemistry. By age fourteen Gardner was apprenticed to a jeweler in Glasgow, a position that brought considerable status. This status, however, did not interfere with Gardner's interest in the plight of the working class.⁵⁹ Initially stirred by his Calvinistic upbringing, Gardner further stoked his interest in social justice by studying the ideals of the early-nineteenth-century Welsh Socialist, Robert Owen, the founder of a utopian society in New Harmony,

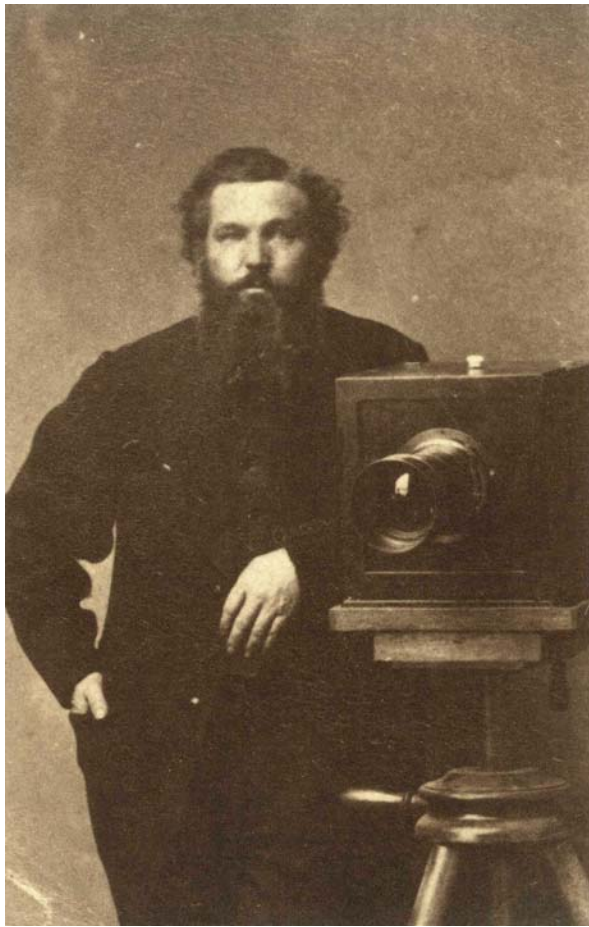
⁵⁶ McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom*, 154-56; and Roland, *An American Iliad*, 166.

⁵⁷ William A. Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 52.

⁵⁸ D. Mark Katz, *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner, The Civil War, Lincoln, and the West* (New York: Viking, 1991), 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

Indiana.⁶⁰ Owen's ideas inspired Gardner to support Scotland's cooperative movements, and in 1848 he devised his own plan to establish a utopian social justice colony in the United States, officially titled the Clydesdale Joint Stock Agricultural and Commercial Company.⁶¹ Eight of Gardner's close friends, and his twenty-year-old brother, James, established this cooperative community in Iowa, near the township of Monona, in the summer of 1850. Gardner remained in Scotland to manage the colony's business interests and recruit new members. Starting in April 1851, Gardner also became the proprietor of the *Glasgow Sentinel* newspaper, where he advocated for the rights of the working class through the editorial page.⁶²



⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 4.

Previous Page (Fig. 24) *Alexander Gardner*. Possibly taken after his arrival in Washington D.C. 1858. From D. Mark Katz, *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner, The Civil War, Lincoln, and the West* (New York: Viking, 1991), 17.

On May 1, 1851, Queen Victoria opened the Crystal Palace Exhibition at Hyde Park in London. Billed as a display ground for new lessons and gadgetry that would aide the work of craftsmen and merchants, Gardner covered the exhibition for the *Sentinel*. Among the outstanding exhibits were photographs, especially those of the American artist Mathew B. Brady, who won the Grand Prize Medal for the best *Daguerreotypes*.⁶³ It is quite possible that Gardner met Brady at the exhibition. Yet even if he did not make physical contact with America's prince of photography, there is no doubt that Brady's work made a lasting impact on Gardner.

In early 1852, Gardner resigned from the *Sentinel*, and in 1853 the Clydesdale colony dissolved its company. Photography was a natural next-step for the Scotsman, who long excelled in chemistry and science. Professional *Daguerreotype* societies were active in Scotland as early as the mid-1840s.⁶⁴ Outside influences also flourished, as the British Association for the Advancement of Science held its annual seminar in Glasgow in September 1855, with photography a major part of the exhibit. Gardner had the opportunity to learn the process from eminent local artists like Stephen A. McLeod Young and John Urie.⁶⁵ By the end of 1855, Gardner produced prints out of his own small photographic gallery, offering the gift of a gold watch with the purchase of a calotype portrait to entice customers. In early 1856, however, discouraged by the apparent lack of interest in his work, Gardner sailed with his wife, Margaret, his mother,

⁶³ Ibid, 5.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 6-7.

Jean Glenn, his brother, James, his son, Lawrence, and his daughter, Eliza, from Scotland to America.⁶⁶

Gardner eventually settled in New York City, where he initiated contact with the city's premier photographic artist, Mathew B. Brady. Brady had by this point recognized the tremendous potential of photography as a business, not just an art form. As his eyesight continued to worsen, Brady sought a qualified assistant to help streamline his enterprises. Gardner proved the perfect match for Brady's ambitions. As an experienced businessman, the Scotsman immediately cleaned up the Brady gallery's sloppy bookkeeping, and successfully managed the New York and Washington galleries.⁶⁷ When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Brady was adamant about documenting the conflict through photography. It was Alexander Gardner's friendship with Alan Pinkerton, a fellow Scot and chief detective and head of Union General George B. McClellan's Intelligence Network, who gave Brady access to the Army of the Potomac and the battlefields.⁶⁸ After his appointment to McClellan's staff, Pinkerton recommended Gardner for the position of chief photographer under the jurisdiction of the United States Topographical Engineers.⁶⁹ By November of 1861 Gardner's managerial position at Brady's Washington studio was augmented by a new position as one of Brady's leading field photographers.

Having spent most of the first year of the war managing Mathew Brady's Washington studio, Alexander Gardner was fairly new to battlefield photography. Thus, he brought along his associate, James F. Gibson, to the Antietam battlefield in September

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 14-15.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 26-27.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 28.

1862. Gibson, like Gardner, was a Scottish-born cameraman who worked at the Brady studio in Washington. He was one of the photographers, along with George Barnard and John Wood, that Gardner personally dispatched to Virginia to cover George McClellan's Peninsula Campaign in early 1862. Gardner relied on Gibson's field experience to help properly document the aftermath of Antietam.⁷⁰ Gardner and Gibson's early arrival on the Antietam battlefield on September 18, 1862 reveals that they wanted to photograph the unburied dead.⁷¹ They knew that such images would be important and profitable. Reviews of Mathew Brady's gallery reinforce the notion that Gardner and Gibson were aware of the emotions their photographs would elicit.

The most famous images Gardner and Gibson took on the Antietam battlefield were images of soldiers lying dead where they had fallen, lines of bodies gathered for burial, whole regiments wiped out along fence lines, dead horses, bodies strewn one on top of the other in burial pits, and individual bodies with clearly visible faces. It is through these remarkable images that the first true photographic aesthetic was born. The moral power of these photographs comes from their unique grounding in realism. These photographs, as evidenced by the public reaction to them, brought the ugly reality of the war from the battlefield to the home front. Through the unquestionable realism of photography, people saw the real human cost of war. This new photographic aesthetic only emerged through the depicted realism of war. This realistic aesthetic could not emerge in the pre-Antietam Civil War images, which were shackled by pre-ascribed nineteenth century notions of aesthetic beauty and portrait conventions.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 36.

⁷¹ Ibid, 45.

Many have argued, however, that the realism of photography is little more than a convention of the medium, that photographs merely present an impression, conception, or an interpretation of things rather than the things themselves. As noted in the first chapter, Susan Sontag denied the ability of photographs to convey a moral message. Sontag's argument stems from her belief that "one never understands anything from a photograph."⁷² By this statement Sontag means that photographs always hide more than they disclose. Without grounding in narrative, understanding, and time perspective to inform the viewer of the history and relevance of the image, no moral charge can be extracted from photographs because they become "inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy."⁷³

Sontag's argument that photographs only serve as agents to tell us how people and things appeared at a given time is shared by Gregory Currie in his article "Photography, Painting and Perception." Like Sontag, Currie believes that seeing a photograph of a thing is not akin to seeing the thing itself.⁷⁴ He writes that in ordinary seeing a person can get information about the spatial and temporal relation between the object and the viewer. But referring to seeing through a photograph, Currie explains, "I could not place myself in the world if I saw the world from no particular perspective."⁷⁵ So in Currie's reasoning, the information contained in photographs is subject to discriminatory error. Thus, photographs exist in a skewed form of reality that devoid of proper time and spatial perspective cannot exhibit true moral and/or realistic relevance. Yet this argument could easily be made for other representational arts, like painting, in

⁷² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 23.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 23.

⁷⁴ Gregory Currie, "Photography, Painting and Perception," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (Winter, 1991): 25-6.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 26.

which the authenticity of the representation is entirely dependant on the painter. As Stephanie Ross notes, photographs, because they are taken directly from reality, provide a special link to the real thing that painting cannot provide.⁷⁶ Photographs, by their mechanical nature, are not entirely at the whim of the photographer. Kendall Walton explains that regardless of their potential to be manipulated, photographs are uniquely realistic. “Photographs are *transparent*; in looking at a photograph of something one sees the thing itself,” Walton writes.⁷⁷ This fact must not be watered down, Walton continues, because unlike in a painting, where one sees the artist’s impression, a substitute for the real thing, a photograph of deceased ancestors *literally* allows people to see their deceased ancestors.⁷⁸ In this respect the photographs from Antietam represent the crux moment in American visual consumption, when the realism of photography created an aesthetic that came to influence subsequent war photographs and created the unique mediums of war photography and photojournalism. In addition, these photographs helped to dispel the pervading nineteenth century mythos of American ideological primitivism and innocence.

Timothy Sweet convincingly argues in his book *Traces of War*, that pastoralism was the leading aesthetic consciousness in nineteenth century American visual representation. He explains that pastoralism, representative of an agrarian ideal characterized by innocence and tranquility, provided a vision of a microcosm, “a sociopolitical configuration that could typify American life.”⁷⁹ This American pastoral

⁷⁶ Stephanie Ross, “What Photographs Can’t Do,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (Autumn, 1982): 10.

⁷⁷ Kendall Walton, “Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism,” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (March, 1984): 67.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Timothy Sweet, *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 8.

ideology was typified by images of small-farm, free-labor agriculture, and the sense that the true American landscape was symbolized by the rebirthing power of nature.⁸⁰ Sweet writes that the Civil War was a disruption of this pastoral harmony, and that Civil War photographers attempted to use the pastoral aesthetic to sentimentalize and symbolically “heal” the destruction as represented in their photographs of dead bodies. Sweet writes that Civil War photographers framed their photographs of violent death within the context of idyllic, pastoral landscape modes. “As manifested in the semiotics of the pastoral mode,” Sweet argues, “the organicist aesthetic subordinates traces of violence to the unifying power of the compositional whole.”⁸¹ Sweet makes a convincing case for the importance of pastoral ideology in Civil War photography, yet he fails to recognize the new aesthetic importance inherent within the photographs from Antietam. Sweet believes that even though the Antietam photographs documented death resulting from war, they do not actually show war, and thus “they do not produce any significant (that is, unsentimental) political or ethical knowledge of the relations between the Unionist ideology and the presence of corpses on the battlefield.”⁸²

Like Susan Sontag, Sweet denies the ability of these photographs to hold a moral charge. These images are not important beyond their trifling, sentimental qualities, because they provide no contextual information outside of the visual to control the viewer’s “free-floating contemplation.”⁸³ In dismissing these photographs as no more than sentimental postcards, Sweet and Sontag marginalize photography’s ability to depict “the real,” and the tremendous power “the real” holds over viewers. For one thing, no

⁸⁰ Ibid, 8-9.

⁸¹ Ibid, 137.

⁸² Ibid, 117.

⁸³ Ibid.

human artifact on its own can tell a complete story. An archeologist cannot deduce the history of ancient Egypt from a single small statue, but he or she can deduce *something*. By combining this fragment of information with other pieces of information, a more complete story of ancient Egypt unfolds. Thus, the photographs from Antietam are crucial pieces of information that, when combined, served to add a significant new dimension to American visual consumption and American aesthetic ideology. As will be seen from the public reaction to these photographs, it is their unquestionable realism that gives the images their moral charge. The realistic aesthetic of the photographs was such that the pastoral elements of American visual and ideological aesthetics could no longer be considered absolute and infallible. To be sure, pastoralism remained. Such a powerful ideological hold does not disappear from a society overnight. But the realistic photographic aesthetic of the Antietam images assured that the primitivist, pastoral innocence of America had to be retained through force and denial, not through accepted doctrine.

In October 1862, one month after the battle, Mathew Brady displayed Alexander Gardner's Antietam images in his New York City gallery. Brady titled the gallery, "The Dead of Antietam," and the pictures created an immediate sensation as crowds of onlookers filed in and out of the studio to gaze at the morbidity displayed therein. Prior to these photographs, listings of fallen soldiers in the newspapers limited the public's visual knowledge of what happened on the battlefield. War is an easy thing to romanticize and glorify, and the long lists of names in the newspapers were little more than distant, detached reminders of the men who died in combat. Now, for the first time, Brady confronted the public with graphic, visual reminders of the reality of war. Viewers not

only read about, but also saw the young men who had died in battle. With the aid of magnifying glasses, onlookers easily discerned the faces of these dead soldiers. The battlefield dead were no longer just lists of names, they were now fathers, brothers, nephews, uncles, friends, and sons.

One of the many visitors to Brady's gallery was a reporter for the *New York Times*. The images deeply moved this anonymous writer, and the article detailing his visit to the gallery appeared in the October 20, 1862 issue of the *New York Times*. The *Times* writer recognized the personal impact photographs had over names in a newspaper. "The dead of the battle-field come up to us very rarely, even in dreams," he wrote, "We see the list in the morning paper at breakfast, but dismiss its recollection with the coffee."⁸⁴ The reporter, speaking for many who saw the gallery, realized that the names in the paper did indeed have faces. "There is a confused mass of names, but they are all strangers; we forget the horrible significance that dwells amid the jumble of type...Each of these little names that the printer struck off so lightly...represents a bleeding, mangled corpse," he continued.⁸⁵ These images created emotions that no list of names equaled.

By bringing the horrors of war away from the battlefield and to the public's doorstep, Gardner and Gibson created a revolution and helped bring a harsh reality to the surface of American life; war is about fighting and killing. Yes, Americans knew, as did every society, that war brought death. But to know what war is cannot compare to actually experiencing war. As the *New York Times* recognized, "We recognize the battlefield as a reality, but it stands as a remote one. It is like a funeral next door, the crape on the bell-pull tells you there is death in the house...it attracts your attention, but does not

⁸⁴ "Brady's Photographs," *New York Times*, October 20, 1862.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

enlist your sympathy.”⁸⁶ The Antietam photographs did not present the illusion of experiencing war first hand, but they did do the next best thing, they realistically depicted the aftermath of war. “If he (Brady) has not brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets, he has done something very like it,” the *Times* noted.⁸⁷ In New York, viewers who had never seen military combat now saw the death and destruction that came in combat’s wake, and they could not look away. The *Times* stated, “There is a terrible fascination about it (the battlefield) that draws one near these pictures...you will see hushed, reverend groups standing around these weird copies of carnage, bending down to look in the pale faces of the dead, chained by the strange spell that dwells in dead men’s eyes.”⁸⁸ The pictures simultaneously repulsed and entranced viewers, and the *Times* reporter wrote that Mathew Brady had done a great service by showing the tragedies of the war, and finally putting human faces to the names that the public might otherwise quickly forget. The reporter did notice, however, that while these photographs displayed the dead soldiers, they could not show the widows and orphans, the mothers, fathers, families and homes that were devastated by the loss of those men. Yet even if they could not depict such scenes, the Antietam photographs made people *aware* of them. This effect is most effectively rendered through the realism of photography.

In the October 5, 1862 issue of the *New York Herald*, another anonymous writer reported on Brady’s gallery. He wrote that Mathew Brady had, through these images, “rendered to the country an invaluable service.” Recognizing Brady as an artist as well as a historian, the reporter added that Brady “obtained for his art a historical distinction that

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

it had not previously enjoyed.”⁸⁹ This reviewer observed the aesthetic importance of the photographs. The “historical distinction” refers to the realism, the photographic aesthetic, which had not previously existed in photography. The Antietam photographs were not romanticized. They showed the realities of war better than any previous “war” images of army camps and posed officers.

Just as the author of the *New York Times* article noted that the Antietam photographs gave faces to the lists of battlefield dead, the author of the *Herald* article also commented on the images’ superiority over the written word. “As records of the great and vital struggle in which we are engaged, they possess a value far beyond that of any written descriptions,” he stated, “they offer to the eye the dreadful actualities of scenes which the pen of the most skillful writer could only reproduce with a remote degree of accuracy.”⁹⁰ This piece, along with the *New York Times* article, is a testimony to the peculiarity of this new photographic aesthetic. The authors of these pieces recognized the sheer power of a photograph, its ability to show the real, “the thing itself,” in a way no painting or woodcarving could. War as depicted through a painting glorified battle through romantic imagery. Paintings presented generals as god-like, and war was a chance for noble young men to give their lives for ideals that were for the betterment of God and country. Even war paintings that showed the dead in gory, bloody struggles were not real; they were only paint on canvas. The Antietam photographs were real because they were not an artist’s interpretation of dead bodies, they *were* dead bodies.

Not only were these corpses real, their agony was real as well. The author of the *Herald* article wrote of the dead in the photographs, “You can, by bringing a magnifying

⁸⁹ “Brady Incidents of the War-The Battles of South Mountain and Antietam, &c., &c.,” *New York Herald*, October 5, 1862.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

glass to bear on them, identify not merely their general outline, but actual expression.”⁹¹

These photographs extracted the macabre, voyeuristic impulses of viewers. It was disrespectful to gawk at the dead, but viewers were nonetheless compelled to use magnifying glasses in order to discern the most detailed expressions of agony on the faces of the bloated corpses. Referring to this use of magnifying glasses, the author stated, “This, in many instances, is perfectly horrible, and shows through what tortures the poor victims must have passed before they were relieved from their sufferings.”⁹² The author went on to describe images of a beautiful natural landscape scarred by war, of fields littered with dead horses, human corpses, and fresh graves yet to be filled. As Timothy Sweet notes, these photographs are indeed contained within a pastoral setting, but the camera’s ability to show the real forced viewers to look beyond the fancified ideals of the pastoral and recognize the distinct ugliness of reality. Concluding his review of Brady’s gallery, the *Herald* writer noted that “the photographic art has never contributed to the historical memories of our time anything that at all approaches it in value.”⁹³ The *Times* and *Herald* writers both understood the aesthetic importance of the Antietam photographs. It was not the idyllic pastoral landscapes that were striking in these images, but the unnatural war that defiled them.

Among the most vivid of the photographs taken from Antietam is *Confederate Soldiers as They Fell Near the Burnside Bridge* (Fig. 25). In this haunting image lay the bodies of two dead Confederate soldiers. Alone in a desolate field, the soldiers’ bodies are frozen in agony. The face of the soldier in the background is hidden, but the features of the soldier in the foreground are clear and visible. A close look at the corpse reveals

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

that his face was smooth, lacking a beard, mustache, or even stubble. This soldier was just a boy, perhaps barely out of his teens when he was gunned down. The photographers recognized the emotional impact this image possessed. No doubt the many mothers who viewed this photograph in the New York gallery saw in this young man's swollen visage the faces of their own boys, many of whom may have been fighting in the Union army. The air evoked in this photograph was that of youthful lives cut short by war. This photograph, frank and brutal in its depiction of battlefield casualties, evoked the serenity of the pastoral scarred by carnage. This image represents the power of photographic realism.



(Fig. 25) *Confederate Soldiers as They Fell Near the Burnside Bridge. Antietam, MD, September, 1862.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.



(Fig. 26) *Body of a Confederate Soldier, Antietam, MD, 1862*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. From William A. Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 105.

Gardner intentionally used his camera to personalize battlefield casualties. One such sobering photograph is *Body of a Confederate Soldier, Antietam, Maryland, 1862* (Fig. 26). Like *Confederate Soldiers as They Fell Near the Burnside Bridge*, the corpse in this photograph was just a boy when he fell; his smooth, youthful face is clearly distinguishable. Gardner photographed this soldier in a barren field. The trampled earth seems to cradle the body in a grim indentation, as if the corpse was in the process of assimilating into the battlefield itself. There is certainly a pastoral overtone to this photograph, yet there is nothing serene or divine about the image. The realism of the photograph dispels any notion that this boy's passing was peaceful. The corpse's contorted body suggests an agonizing death brought about by nineteenth century warfare, a hideous, unnatural form of destruction that soiled the pastoral field with the blood of American youth. Gardner's image does not depict a noble sacrifice on the field of battle;

rather, it reveals in graphic detail the savage reality; the rotting flesh, the contorted limbs, the agonized expression frozen in death's grip that was the true hallmark of the Civil War.

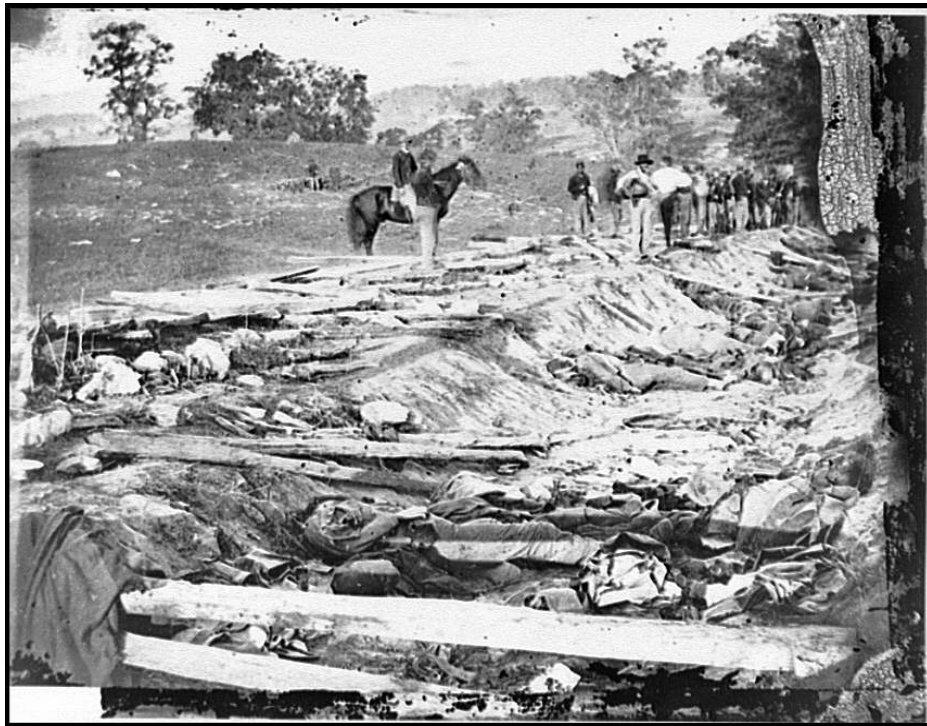


(Fig. 27) *Scene of Sedgwick's Advance and the Grave of Lt. John A. Clark, Seventh Michigan, 1862.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. From Frassanito, *Antietam*, 180-81.

Another photograph similar in content to that of the *Confederate Soldiers* is *Scene of Sedgwick's Advance and the Grave of Lt. John A. Clark, Seventh Michigan* (Fig. 27). In the center of this photo laid a young Confederate soldier, the background a scene of utter destruction. The bodies, the remains of a fence, the trampled earth, trees reduced to splinters, and a horse carcass all served as ghastly souvenirs of the battle that took place on this field. To the right of the dead Confederate soldier was a fresh grave marked by a board inscribed, "J.A. Clark, 7th Mich." William Frassanito identified the occupant of this grave as 1st Lt. John A. Clark, Company D, Seventh Michigan Infantry.⁹⁴ Though the dead Confederate's (were he a Federal soldier he surely would not have been left to lie

⁹⁴ Frassanito, *Antietam*, 178.

next to the grave of a comrade) identity is impossible to know, the fact that Alexander Gardner captured an image of an unburied rebel soldier next to the fresh grave of a Union soldier suggests a heavy symbolic intent in this image. The Civil War pitted Americans against Americans, yet this photograph reveals war's distinct ability to dehumanize the enemy, as shown in *Confederate Dead in a Ditch on the Right Wing used as a Rifle Pit*. (Fig. 28).



(Fig. 28) *Antietam, Md. Confederate Dead in a Ditch on the Right Wing used as a Rifle Pit*, 1862. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

Union dead were buried first, most in mass graves. But some were buried in makeshift cemeteries with proper headstones, while other Union bodies were even shipped back to their place of birth to be interred in family plots, as was the case with Lt. Clark, whose family exhumed his remains and re-buried them at his home in Monroe, Michigan.⁹⁵ No such dignity awaited Rebel soldiers at Antietam. Union soldiers assigned

⁹⁵ Ibid, 185.

to burial duty at Antietam gathered Confederate corpses for interment in mass graves. They were merely collateral, strewn together in mangled heaps far from their homes, their humanity lost as their bodies became discarded shells, grim reminders of the enemy Confederacy's attempt to destroy the Union.



(Fig. 29) *Scene of Sedgwick's Advance and the Grave of Lt. John A. Clark, Seventh Michigan, 1862*. Alternate Shot. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Reprinted from Frassanito, *Antietam*, 180-81.

This reality is more explicitly captured in an alternate shot of *Scene of Sedgwick's Advance and the Grave of Lt. John A. Clark, Seventh Michigan* (Fig. 29). In this image the camera range was widened to reveal an onlooker, most likely a member of a burial party, gazing on the fresh grave on Lt. Clark. Again, the dehumanizing aspect of war is strikingly portrayed in this photograph. Next to Clark's grave the young rebel soldier still lay on the ground. There was no one to mourn the end of his short life. His body remained, but his identity, his very humanity, was consumed by war. Paradoxically, Lt. Clark, though he met with the same fate as the rebel, was interred with dignity, his

sacrifice symbolized in his literal physical absorption into the battle-scarred earth. Thus, both the rebel and Lt. Clark became physical additions to the battlefield, yet one is pictured as a corpse, cleaved of identity, the other memorialized with a respectful burial. This does not alter the reality, however, that both young men were ultimately dehumanized in the end. It was the mere circumstance of the battle that dictated which man was properly interred and which was left unattended. Had the battle resulted in a Confederate victory, it may have been Lt. Clark's body left to lie exposed in the September heat. This photograph purged the battlefield of any lingering romance, and it showed that war took no sides. Both of these men were prematurely robbed of life. That one was given a proper burial did not alter this ultimate truth. Lt. Clark's sacrifice was recognized, but was his death truly justified? Furthermore, was the macabre fait of so many other thousands of men justified? Images like this forced Americans to confront the savagery that dwelled in their supposedly enlightened existence.

Gardner's photographs put human faces on battlefield casualties, reminding viewers that war took the lives of individual men. But on another level, the Antietam photographs also depicted the mechanical slaughter, the mass death that resulted from nineteenth century warfare. Such images invoked inevitable questions for nineteenth century Americans; was the preservation of the Union truly worth the price of so many lives? Did the ends truly justify the means? How noble could the causes of both sides have been when the end results were savagery and death? How, in the most refined, civilized, and democratic of societies, could such barbarism be justified? These questions cut to the very heart of American aesthetic and ideological consciousness, and thanks to Gardner's Antietam photographs, these questions could not be ignored.



(Fig. 30) *Confederate Dead by a Fence on the Hagerstown Road, 1862*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

Such an image of grisly mass-slaughter is *Confederate Dead by a Fence on the Hagerstown Road* (Fig. 30). Along a high fence line adjacent to one of the Miller farm lanes laid a string of bloated rebel bodies that continued as far down the fence line as the eye can see. These were men of General William E. Starke's Louisiana brigade who paid the ultimate price when they were systematically gunned down by Union General John Gibbon's Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer brigade.⁹⁶ This photograph depicted the swift manner in which the living became the dead during the Civil War. These bodies were not moved, not yet positioned for burial. They were pictured as they fell in battle, as individual men became heaps of nameless, mutilated carcasses. Gardner positioned his camera angle so that viewers in New York got a first-hand account of how quickly, and

⁹⁶ Frassanito, *Antietam*, 128.

in what huge numbers life ended on the battlefield. The *New York Herald* described the ugly reality depicted in this image. “Traversing it (the photograph) is seen a high rail fence, in the foreground of which are a number of dead bodies grouped in every imaginable position, the stiffened limbs preserving the same attitude as that maintained by the sufferers in their last agonies.”⁹⁷ The author of this article recognized the camera’s ability to capture the reality of the moment by “preserving the same attitude” of suffering in an image that was not romanticized. This was war: death on a massive scale.

Gardner photographed the same scene from a different angle, straight ahead facing the fence (Fig. 31). In both images the swollen, bloated faces of the dead in the foreground are clearly visible, explicitly so under magnification. As the *New York Times* stated, “These pictures have a terrible distinctness... We would scarce choose to be in the gallery, when one of the women bending over them should recognize a husband, a son, or a brother... ready for the gaping trenches.”⁹⁸ These scenes reminded viewers that in the time it took rifles to flash, living, breathing loved ones became lifeless shells on a muddy field.

⁹⁷ “Brady Incidents of the War-The Battles of South Mountain and Antietam, &c., &c.,” *New York Herald*, October 5, 1862.

⁹⁸ “Brady’s Photographs,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1862.



(Fig. 31) *Confederate Dead by a Fence on the Hagerstown Road, 1862. Alternate View.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. From Frassanito, *Antietam*, 135.

These photographs forced Americans to reexamine the prevailing notion of the United States as a uniquely civilized society whose actions were sanctioned by God himself. The photographic aesthetic, defined by the literal realism inherent in these images, forced Americans to confront the savagery in their midst. At risk was the dispelling of what Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen have identified as the American myth of “first times,” a desire to use American society to restore an age of perfection uninhibited by the evils of literal history.⁹⁹ Indeed, this age happened before recorded history. This notion, referred to alternately as millennialism or restorationism by Hughes and Allen, suggests that America, as a nation that overthrew the yoke of old world European control, was “cut loose from the constraints of history and time and stood on the threshold of a radically new age which was wholly discontinuous with all

⁹⁹ Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xiii.

previous epochs.”¹⁰⁰ This idea, rooted heavily in Christian humanism, attempted to restore a great primordium. This primordium was likened to the Eden of the Old Testament, and this Eden could be found in the natural frontier, the pastoralism, of America.¹⁰¹ America itself became identified with the primal state of things, and thus, whatever America did was right in the most infinite sense, because America and American actions were sanctioned by God.¹⁰² If, then, America felt the need to expand its civilization westward, in the process slaughtering thousands of native inhabitants, such actions were legitimized because as a primitivist, “natural” civilization, America was only fulfilling its quest to restore first times. As Hughes and Allen explain, this restoration ideal has informed the fundamental outlook of preachers, politicians, and soldiers. “The restoration perspective has been a central feature of American life and thought from the earliest Puritan settlements,” they write.¹⁰³ In this sense, American values were rooted in the primitive innocence of first times, and were thus not mere values but universal ideals applicable to all humans.¹⁰⁴

The slaughter of non-Christian, Native American peoples could be justified in the name of restoration to first times. Ridding God’s new Eden of heathens posed no moral qualms. But how to explain the Civil War? Gardner’s photographs begged the question: could this war truly be the action of a civilized nation cradled in the approval of the divine? This was not the mass slaughter of heathens. It was the mass slaughter of thousands of Anglo, Christian *Americans*. The Civil War and Gardner’s photographs came at a time of philosophical transition in American society. In the early decades of the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 14.

¹⁰² Ibid, 22-23.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 229.

nineteenth century Unitarian religious ideals were the dominant religious and cultural frameworks of America's Northern cultured classes.¹⁰⁵ These ideals rose out of the triumph of the Newtonian scientific model of the universe in the eighteenth century. Physical occurrences were now explained by universal laws, not divine interference. With the rise of Newtonian science, Unitarianism increasingly emphasized a "natural theology," and religious thinkers' knowledge of God became dependent on the view that nature was His revelation.¹⁰⁶ Cultured Americans fused this natural theology of nature manifesting the deity, into the framework of American philosophical consciousness.¹⁰⁷ As stated by Hughes and Allen, America, as a new nation formed out of the ashes of Old World European repression, became the unspoiled promised-land for which to restore God's true kingdom on earth. America's vast collective of natural landscapes and resources symbolized God's blessing, the physical manifestations of a natural theology that set America apart from the rest of the world and its vicious history.¹⁰⁸

Gardner's Antietam photographs challenged the validity of this restorative, natural theology. The Civil War defiled the primitive, innocent, pastoral landscape of America, both physically and philosophically, and Gardner's images depicted this in unflinching detail. Those far from the battlefields who desired proof of this defilement needed only to turn to these photographs, for there was no arguing with their reality. In the flash of a camera's lens, the sanctification of America came into question. The innocent, God-sanctioned nation was engaged in savage brutality, and its pastoral fields were soaked in the blood of its own sons.

¹⁰⁵ Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977), 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁸ Hughes and Allen, *Illusions of Innocence*, 1-24.

Gardner's photographs forced Americans to confront this terrible ideological contradiction. One such American who saw the ugly truth in Gardner's images was the physician, teacher of anatomy, and man of letters, Oliver Wendell Holmes. A prime representative of the cultured, nineteenth century Renaissance man, Holmes wrote of the impact of the photographs almost a year after the battle in the July, 1863 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. "Let him who wishes to know what war is look at this series of illustrations," Holmes wrote.¹⁰⁹ He further described how the images displayed "wrecks of manhood thrown together in careless heaps or ranged in ghastly rows for burial," and questioned the existence of war in a civilized nation.¹¹⁰ "What a repulsive, brutal, sickening, hideous thing it is, this dashing together of two frantic mobs to which we give the name armies," he stated.¹¹¹ So realistic were Gardner's photographs that Holmes likened them to actually visiting the battlefield, which he did a year before to visit his wounded son. These images made Holmes question the very ideological framework of American society. Was the preservation of the Union truly worth the price of so many men's lives? Did the ends truly justify the means? How noble could the causes of both sides have been when the end results were savagery and death? "The sight of these pictures is a commentary on civilization such as a savage might well triumph to show its missionaries," Holmes stated.¹¹² Holmes likened the Civil War to the actions of "savages," yet Anglo, Christian America was supposedly the true, natural civilization, the restoration of Eden on earth. Gardner's photographs from Antietam rendered this naïve ideology invalid.

¹⁰⁹ Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Doings of the Sunbeam," *Atlantic Monthly* 12 (July 1863): 11-12.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Following the initial shock brought about by these photographs, Holmes, like most Americans, attempted to restore America to its pedestal. “Through such martyrdom must come our redemption,” he reasoned, “Bad as it is in itself, it always implies that something worse has gone before.”¹¹³ Such reasoning was wishful thinking. The very existence of this “martyrdom” meant that America’s pastoral innocence never existed. Holmes recognized this, but as most Americans have done since the Civil War, he attempted to camouflage this fact with platitudes. Because of the realism of Gardner’s Antietam photographs, Holmes’ rationalization had the effect of a Band-Aid over a severed limb. The ideology of a primeval, God-sanctioned American innocence could no longer be taken as infallible truth. Those wishing to retain this ideology reverted to forcefully ensconcing, through flat denial, the ugly reality exposed by Gardner’s images.

The thoroughly Christian aspect of the American restorationist ideology must not be downplayed. Indeed, Christianity was at the heart of this ideology. Gardner’s photographs from Antietam directly addressed the paradox of a Christian nation slaughtering its own. One such image, *Confederate Dead Near Dunker Church, Antietam, MD, September, 1862*, (Fig. 32) is among the most famous of American photographs. In the foreground of this image are dead Confederates, their corpses lined up for burial. In the background, the Dunker church, a Christian house of worship, reminding all who viewed this photograph that the men fighting this war were Christians and fellow countrymen. The contrast was striking. Both sides worshipped the same god, each claiming God’s support and sanction for their own cause. Yet here were sons of God’s primeval nation on earth engaged in brutality associated with “savage” nations.

¹¹³ Ibid, 11-12.



(Fig. 32) *Confederate Dead Near Dunker Church, Antietam, MD, September, 1862*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

This savagery is further depicted in *Bodies of Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial* (Fig. 33). Approximately twenty-five rebel bodies were laid out for burial in a mass grave in two lines that met to form an angle. This field was part of the farm property owned by David R. Miller. In the early morning hours of September 17 the brigades of General Roswell S. Ripley, General Alfred H. Colquitt, and General Samuel Garland occupied Miller's field. The soldiers in these brigades hailed from Georgia, Alabama, and North Carolina. Many of them met their doom in the form of heavy Union artillery fire hailing from across the Antietam creek.¹¹⁴ Gardner used this photo as a purposeful contrast to his other scenes of individual dead soldiers. The rebels gathered for burial reminded viewers that while it was easy to personalize a closer view of one or two fallen soldiers, the ultimate fate of most of the men who fought that day was to become

¹¹⁴ Frassanito, *Antietam*, 108.

nameless corpses strewn together in a gruesome pile. There was no glory in this mechanized destruction. The moral charge inherent in this image is as effective now as it was in 1862; if America was to claim the grace of God, it would have to directly confront the evil of war that robbed these young men of life. Furthermore, to justify these deaths as martyrdom in the name of God and country required a drastic reexamination of the nature of America's spiritual and moral purpose.



(Fig. 33) *Bodies of Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial, Antietam, MD, September, 1862.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

Alexander Gardner's experience at Antietam provided a framework for his photographic coverage of the remainder of the Civil War. Chapter three of this thesis picks up where Gardner left off. The Union victory at Antietam was followed by devastating defeats at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, Virginia. The Confederate victories drastically limited Gardner's ability to record more battlefield death studies. With the resounding Union victory at Gettysburg, however, Gardner and his team had

fertile subject matter to photograph. Gardner's images from Gettysburg depicted the thousands of bloated corpses that littered the Pennsylvania fields after three days of horrific violence. This final chapter examines some of Gardner's most important photographs from Gettysburg, especially in regards to the photographer's controversial decision to physically manipulate the composition of at least one of his famous images. Also addressed is Gardner's gradual drift from compositions depicting masses of battlefield casualties in favor of close-range, highly personalized images of individual corpses.

In addition to Gettysburg, chapter three examines selected photographs from Union General Ulysses S. Grant's Virginia campaigns of 1864, during which Gardner's depiction of the deeply personal cost of war came full circle. The chapter concludes with the legacy of Gardner's Civil War photographs by exploring their aesthetic and historical value as pieces of commemorative art. The memory of the Civil War as conveyed through these images differs drastically from other types of commemorative art, such as sculpture and painting. Because of their aesthetic base in realism, Gardner's pictures continue to hold a profound moral charge that cannot be duplicated with a paintbrush or hammer and chisel. These photographs continue to remind Americans of the harsh reality and sacrifice that was nineteenth century warfare.

Chapter 3: “To Perpetuate the Memories of the Battlefield...”

In the wake of the commercial success of the Antietam photographs, Alexander Gardner and his team of photographers made a concerted effort to capture images of battlefield dead after subsequent Civil War engagements. On October 7, 1862, Gardner copyrighted eighteen of his ninety-five Antietam negatives, well aware that these images could form the nucleus of his own successful collection.¹⁰² At this time he was still in the employ of Mathew Brady, and up to Antietam all of Gardner’s photographs were published in association with Mathew B. Brady.¹⁰³

As D. Mark Katz points out in his biography of Gardner, it is a misconception that Gardner split from Brady’s employ over issues of credit and copyrighting of photographic negatives. Brady’s employees, Katz notes, were actively copyrighting their images in early May, 1862, and freely assigned their own image titles and negative numbers.¹⁰⁴ Thus Gardner chose to separate himself from Brady on two important grounds. First, he knew that it was his guidance, leadership, and keen eye for composition that were behind the successful marketing of his war photographs.¹⁰⁵ Secondly, and most importantly, Gardner separated from Brady on ideological grounds. After Antietam, Gardner realized that he and Brady carried vastly different conceptions of what the documentation of the Civil War should constitute. Gardner wanted to continue photographing the reality of warfare through the depiction of casualties and destruction, for it was these types of images that imprinted themselves on the public’s consciousness. Brady, however, continued to produce the types of images that were more in tandem with

¹⁰² D. Mark Katz, *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner, The Civil War, Lincoln, and the West* (New York: Viking, 1991), 47.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 50.

the romanticized, pastoral landscape aesthetics of pre-Civil War America. A comparison of Gardner's post-Antietam Civil War photography with that of Brady's leaves no doubt as to the aesthetic concerns of the two men. Gardner chose photography's most unique aesthetic quality, its realism, to document the remainder of the conflict. Brady continued to pursue the artistic side of photography by maintaining the pastoral aesthetic, as if the slaughter at Antietam never occurred. The split between Gardner and Brady was amicable; each maintained a healthy respect for the other's work for the remainder of their lifetimes.¹⁰⁶ Brady's war images are by no means lacking in historical value, but in terms of visual consumption and memory, it is Gardner's post-Antietam work that more permanently imprinted itself on the American visual and memorial psyche.

Upon splitting from Brady's employ, Gardner brought along many of his associates from the Brady gallery, including Timothy O'Sullivan, James F. Gibson, and John Reekie, among others.¹⁰⁷ Gardner and his team opened their new gallery in early 1863, at 511 Seventh Street at the corner of Seventh and D streets in Washington D.C. In February, 1863, Gardner, Gibson, and O'Sullivan shadowed Union General Joseph Hooker around Falmouth and Fredericksburg, Virginia, hoping to capture their first post-Antietam battlefield images.¹⁰⁸ The humiliating Union defeat at Chancellorsville, at the hands of General Robert E. Lee's and General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's divided Confederate forces, put a quick damper on Gardner's plans to extensively document the battlefield. The one surviving image from the battle is a precursor to the crowning achievements he captured at Gettysburg and in Virginia.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.



(Fig. 34) *Confederate Dead Behind the Stone Wall of Marye's Heights, Fredericksburg, VA, May 1863*, Alexander Gardner, photographer. http://www.civil-war.net/cw_images/files/images/096.jpg

Confederate Dead Behind the Stone Wall of Marye's Heights (Fig. 34) was clearly influenced by Gardner's own previous images from Antietam, *Confederate Dead by a Fence on the Hagerstown Road* and *Antietam, Md. Confederate Dead in a Ditch on the Right Wing used as a Rifle Pit*. As with those images, the dominant theme in this photograph is swift, mass death. A rifle pit ditch became a deathbed for these Confederate troops. Gardner positioned his camera at a slightly elevated right angle, capturing a string of bloated corpses that seemed to have no end as it disappeared in the distance, far from the camera's range. In the foreground a corpse sprawled out in a state of permanent agony, his visible face soiled by dried blood and dirt, emphasized the aspect of the personal that became lost in the torrent of mass slaughter. Amidst the corpses lie various effects, including rifles, supplies, hats, and other articles of clothing that recalled

the young lives ended by the war. Because battlefield dead were nearly always picked clean of effects, either by enemy troops or their own comrades, the objects in this photograph were almost certainly props placed in position by Gardner and his assistants. On a practical level, this allowed viewers a glimpse of the suddenness with which death occurred during battle. This image was an attempt to recreate the very moment these men fell to the earth, their rifles silenced with them. On another level, however, Gardner's inclusion of rifles and other personal objects provided visual aides to the grim final resting place, the eternal "home" of these poor young men. The overall composition suggested that these men were taken before their time, robbed not only of life but also of a proper burial in death; their ultimate fate was to become anonymous chunks of rotting flesh in a hollowed out section of earth. The remaining rifles and other effects were the only reminders of the individuality of these corpses. Gardner used this trick to greater effect at Gettysburg, where his photographs once again revealed the horrendous defilement of American pastoral innocence.

The Federal Army of the Potomac, under the new command of General George Gordon Meade, defeated Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia at the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania after three days of horrific fighting on July 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 1863. Meade repelled the Confederate army in what many historians consider the crucial military turning point of the Civil War. The costs on both sides were enormous. The Confederates suffered some 27,125 casualties, the Federals, 23,813.¹⁰⁹ Alexander Gardner and his cameramen, James F. Gibson and Timothy O'Sullivan, arrived on the Gettysburg battlefield a day after Lee's army retreated across the Potomac River back

¹⁰⁹ Steven W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 496-98; and Charles P. Roland, *An American Iliad: The Story of the Civil War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 145.

into Virginia. As at Antietam, Gardner's early arrival, only two days after reports of the battle reached his Washington studio, was intentional. William Frassanito writes, "Gardner's motivation to reach Gettysburg as soon as he did was prompted by a desire to capture death images similar to those taken at Antietam."¹¹⁰ In fact, 75 percent of Gardner's Gettysburg photographs featured the bloated corpses of soldiers and horses.¹¹¹ Gardner's photographic coverage of the battlefield began in earnest on the morning of July 5, and wrapped up in the evening of July 7.¹¹²

Among the most iconoclastic of all of Gardner's Civil War images is the pair known as *A Harvest of Death* (Fig. 35) and *Field Where General Reynolds Fell* (Fig. 36). Taken by Timothy O'Sullivan, Gardner titled these two images and included them as Plates 36 and 37 in his *Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War*.¹¹³ As Timothy Sweet notes, the pastoral ideology is suggested by Gardner through his choice of titles and descriptions. The represented Confederate dead are the "fruit of the rebellion cut down in the field and left to decompose into the land."¹¹⁴ Thus, the bloated corpses in these photographs have, as at Antietam, defiled the American pastoral ideological and physical landscape. Their very existence suggests an unnatural event, war, ravaging the innocence of the natural field. The pastoral element is certainly evident in Gardner's images; it was this very aesthetic base from which he, and all other nineteenth century photographers, composed their work. Sweet, however, marginalizes the intrinsic, realistic power of photography that makes these two images so striking. Sweet targets Gardner's own

¹¹⁰ William A. Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 285.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 285.

¹¹² Katz, *Witness to an Era*, 61.

¹¹³ Alexander Gardner, *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the War* (1866; repr., New York: Dover, 1959).

¹¹⁴ Timothy Sweet, *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 126-27.

Sketchbook caption for *Field Where General Reynolds Fell*, as evidence that these images were meant to *reduce*, not enhance the initial shock of death on the battlefield. “As the wind swept across the battle-field it waved the hair, and gave the bodies such an appearance of life that a spectator could hardly help thinking they were about to rise to continue the fight,” Gardner wrote in his description.¹¹⁵ Commenting on this description, Sweet argues that the pastoral does not revitalize, or depict the reality of such death, but, in fact, it sentimentalizes and marginalizes it.¹¹⁶ “This particular text displays (albeit unwittingly) the *rupture* in the organicist ideology effected by the violation of bodies: it momentarily gives up the ‘realistic’ pastoral in favor of pure fantasy,” Sweet writes.¹¹⁷



(Fig. 35) *Union and Confederate Dead*, ('A Harvest of Death'), Gettysburg, PA, July, 1863. Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. Library of Congress.

¹¹⁵ Gardner, *Photographic Sketchbook*, Plate 37.

¹¹⁶ Sweet, *Traces of War*, 127-28.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 128.



(Fig. 36) *Bodies of Federal Soldiers, Killed on July 1, near the McPherson Woods ('Field Where General Reynolds Fell') Gettysburg, PA, July, 1863.* Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. Library of Congress.

Sweet suggests that the presence of wind blowing over the wheat field represented an imagined resurrection of the dead, and that this phenomenon in turn removed the image from the realm of the natural pastoral and placed it into fantasy. Sweet's argument is flawed on two important levels. Firstly, these images on their own do not show movement, namely the wind that blew the corpses' hair giving the appearance of the dead rising. Sweet acknowledges that capturing such movement was beyond the photographic technology of the time, but he does not make the necessary distinction between written and visual documentation. Because the camera could not depict physical movement, it was not the photographs that expressed the abandonment of the "realistic pastoral," it was only Gardner's description that could possibly evoke such an interpretation. Secondly, the realistic photographic aesthetic, something Sweet marginalizes, blocked any attempts to present these images in terms of traditional pastoral composition. The realism of

photography was the ultimate delineator of what sentiments these images conveyed, and those sentiments were not sentimentalized or fantasized. These were dead bodies after a battle. This was real, unromanticized war. Gardner knew this. In his description of *A Harvest of Death*, Gardner flatly stated, “It shows the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry. Here are the dreadful details! Let them aid in preventing such another calamity falling upon the nation.”¹¹⁸ It was no coincidence that one-third of Gardner’s Gettysburg photographs depicted casualties. He knew what to photograph because he knew the camera’s uncanny ability to show the reality of war. Even if some of Gardner’s descriptions “unwittingly,” reverted to the pastoral fantasy, the images themselves brought reality back in full force.

Gardner and his team traversed the Gettysburg battlefield extensively to record death images from several key points. In each of these photographs they were careful to emphasize the mass death that characterized the battle, through scenes of bodies gathered for burial and through scenes of corpses as they fell during the fighting. The reoccurring theme remained war’s ability to strip the humanity from the individual men who made up the two great armies. Photographs like *Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial at the Southwestern Edge of the Rose Woods* (Fig. 37), and *Four Dead Soldiers in the Woods near Little Round Top* (Fig. 38) continued to expose the mechanical slaughter of the Civil War. In the *Rose Woods* photograph, corpses were laid out in rows for burial. In the *Little Round Top* image, soldiers lay where they were gunned down at the base of Little Round Top, the Union’s extreme left flank. Here again, Gardner’s image depicts the suddenness with which life ended on the battlefield. These men were probably from Brigadier General Evander Law’s 4th, 15th, and 47th Alabama regiments, who attempted to route

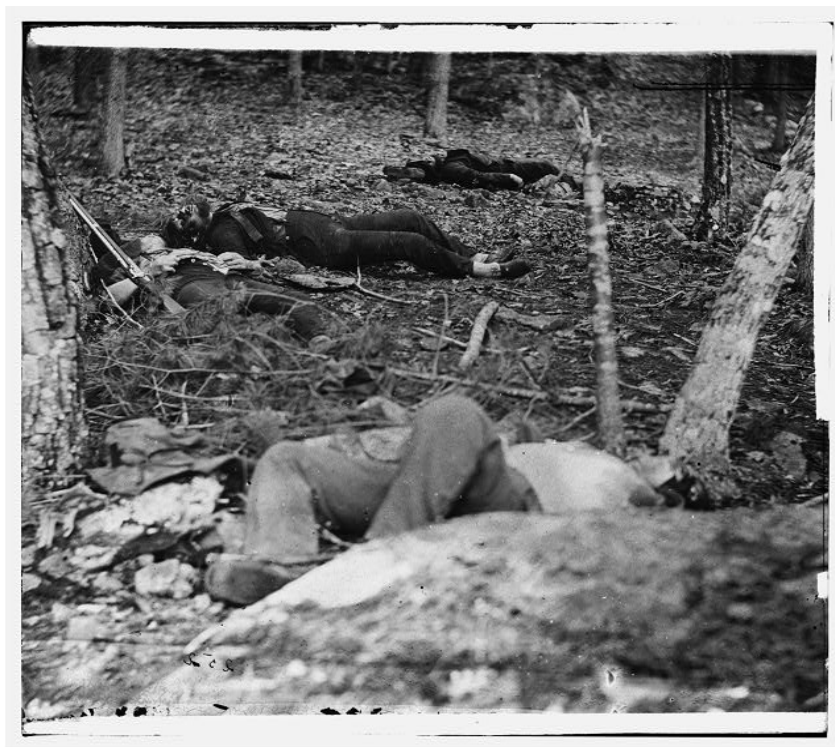
¹¹⁸ Gardner, *Photographic Sketchbook*, Plate 36.

the Union left flank defended by Col. Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain's 20th Maine.¹¹⁹ The Confederate assault failed, and these soldiers were cut down like wheat, their lives and their very identities consumed by the battlefield. Gardner's photograph depicts this reality in vivid detail.



(Fig. 37) *Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial at the Southwestern Edge of the Rose Woods, Gettysburg, PA, July 5, 1863.* Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. Library of Congress.

¹¹⁹ Sears, *Gettysburg*, 294-97.



(Fig. 38) *Four Dead Soldiers in the Woods near Little Round Top, Gettysburg, PA, July, 1863.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

Gardner's most controversial photograph, in terms of how Civil War photography is to be interpreted, is *Devil's Den with Dead Confederate Soldier* (Fig. 39), titled *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* in Gardner's *Sketchbook*. This image featured the body of a young rebel soldier, probably from either the 1st Texas or 17th Georgia Infantry, lying between two megaliths at the rock formation known as Devil's Den.¹²⁰ Through meticulous field research, photographic historian William Frassanito discovered that the "sniper" did not die between the two boulders pictured, but, in fact, died beside another large boulder on the southern slope of Devil's Den. Gardner had actually photographed this same body for another famous image, *A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep* (Fig. 40).¹²¹ Recognizing the chance to create a truly artistic composition, Gardner and some

¹²⁰ Katz, *Witness to an Era*, 69.

¹²¹ William A. Frassanito, *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time* (New York: Scribner's, 1975), 24-29, 34-36.

colleagues drug the body to the rock-wall and positioned his head against the boulder on the right. Gardner placed two props, a knapsack and a rifle, near the corpse to give the appearance of a sudden death by gunshot.¹²² In light of Frassanito's discovery, cultural historians have seriously questioned the infallible truth so long associated with Civil War photography. Alan Trachtenberg, writing about Gardner's staging of the Devil's Den photograph, believes that the whole truth is not represented in the literal content of such images, that these images were only "true" because people believed in photographic "truth."¹²³ Trachtenberg argues that the "truth" in a photograph like *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* is not the truth originated from the world itself, that is, the physical scene at Devil's Den, but is actually the truth as devised in the imagination of the photographer.¹²⁴ "This becomes a serious liability," Trachtenberg writes, "when the staging of scenes, even scenes of death, suggest the photographer's desire to satisfy a need (his own and his audience's) for order, even that of theatricality."¹²⁵ According to Trachtenberg, if the viewer's vision of reality is constructed by the photographer, then the medium cannot be said to depict true realism.

Michael Griffin, writing in "The Great War Photographs," takes a stance similar to Trachtenberg's when addressing the "truth" of the *Sharpshooter* photograph. Griffin believes that this image, because of its composition, actually romanticizes death rather than depicting it as a grim reality.¹²⁶ Noting that such a transparently staged photograph became "perhaps the single most famous image" among Civil War photographs, Griffin

¹²² Frassanito, *Gettysburg*, 28-29.

¹²³ Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (Toronto: Hill and Wang, 1989), 83.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Michael Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs,' in *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, eds. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 135-36.

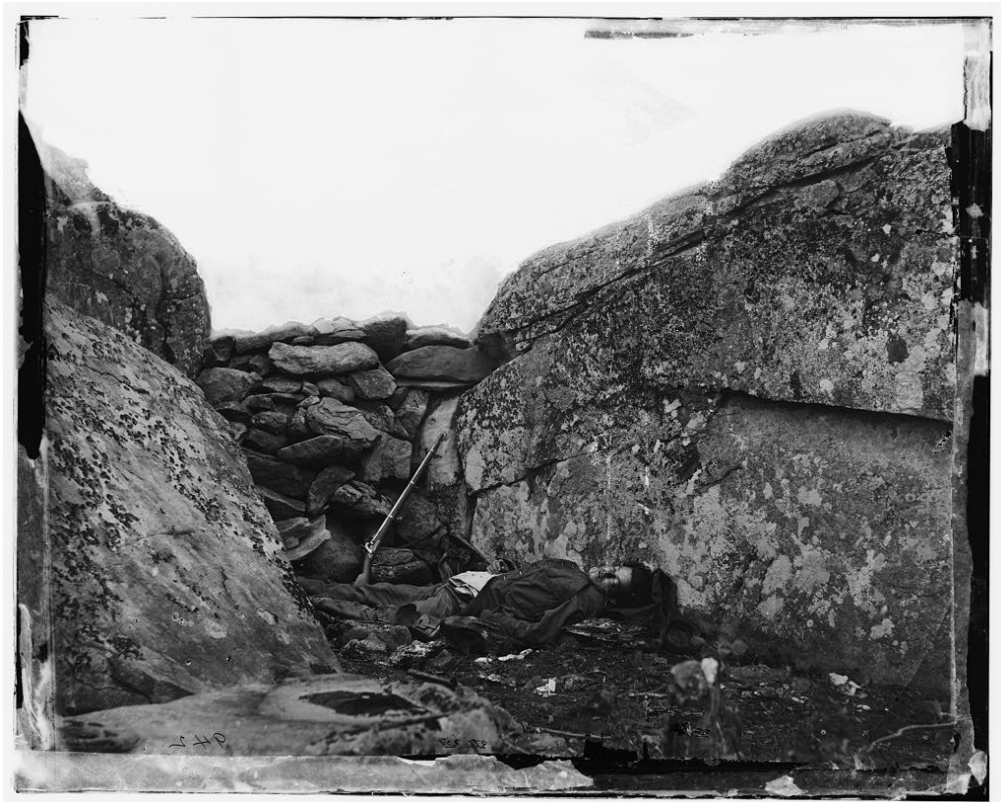
argues that Civil War images were absorbed not as realistic documents of the conflict, but as “images that abstracted and symbolized transcendent cultural concepts.”¹²⁷ Griffin believes that because knowledge of manipulation has not dampened viewer’s enthusiasm for Gardner’s photographs, they exist merely as “mythic symbols,” robbed of any traces of reality that might expose them as frauds.¹²⁸

On one level, Trachtenberg and Griffin are right. An image manipulated by the photographer cannot be called as literally true as an image captured untouched by the artist. But does this really strip a photograph like *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* of all literal truth? Does physical manipulation by the photographer actually render such an image to the abstract dustbin of mythic symbolism? No, it does not. Trachtenberg and Griffin fail to recognize the unique ability of the photographic aesthetic to transcend philosophical nitpicking. The fact that Gardner dragged the rebel’s body to a different spot on the battlefield does not change the ultimate fact that the rebel died *on* the battlefield. Gardner’s *Sharpshooter* photograph is real because it depicts an actual death that occurred as a result of war. That the body was moved a few hundred feet does nothing to alter this truthful reality. Photography’s ability to show “the real” superseded any of Gardner’s manipulations. Furthermore, Gardner’s placement of props, a rifle and a knapsack, into the image was an attempt to recreate the suddenness of a battlefield death. The rifle and knapsack provided visual aids, to capture the moment after this soldier fell to earth. Gardner used these props in his previous image, *A Sharpshooter’s Last Sleep*, for the same purpose. As he wrote in the *Sketchbook*, “His (the sharpshooter’s) cap and

¹²⁷ Griffin, “The Great War Photographs,” 137.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

gun were evidently thrown behind him by the violence of the shock.”¹²⁹ Viewers of this photograph, whether they are aware of the manipulation or not, walk away with the same knowledge: this soldier died on the battlefield at Gettysburg. In the ultimate moral evaluation, the exact spot this man died is not nearly as important as the simple fact that he did, in fact, die in that battle. The realistic aesthetic of photography depicted unsanitized views of war at Gettysburg that, aside from the photographs from Antietam, were entirely different from any other images at the time. For evidence of this one needs only to observe Mathew Brady’s photographs of the Gettysburg battlefield.



(Fig. 39) *Devil’s Den with Dead Confederate Soldier* (‘Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter’), Gettysburg, PA, July 1863. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

¹²⁹ Gardner, *Sketchbook*, plate 40.



(Fig. 40) *A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep, Gettysburg, PA, July 1863*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Library of Congress.

Mathew Brady and his crew arrived at Gettysburg a week after Alexander Gardner left.¹³⁰ By this time the landmarks of the battle were well known to a number of guides whom Brady enlisted to traverse the battlefield with his camera crew. Brady photographed McPherson's Woods, Lee's Headquarters, the Lutheran Seminary, Pennsylvania College and Little Round Top.¹³¹ As can be seen in the *View from Seminary Ridge* photographs (Figs. 41 and 42), Brady's Gettysburg images were very much composed in traditional pastoral landscape settings, and lacked the dramatic impact of Gardner's work. Again, this is not to say that Brady's photographs lack historical value, quite the contrary, they remain invaluable visual documents of a hallowed American historical site. Brady's images showed many of the battle's geographical

¹³⁰ Katz, *Witness to an Era*, 63.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 63-69.

highlights. By August 22, 1863, the press made these locations familiar to the public, and thus Brady's landscape photographs were reprinted more frequently than Gardner's death studies in newspapers like *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.¹³² Brady also had an advantage over Gardner in that his name was long familiar to the press and the public, which likely allowed his images to receive greater circulation.

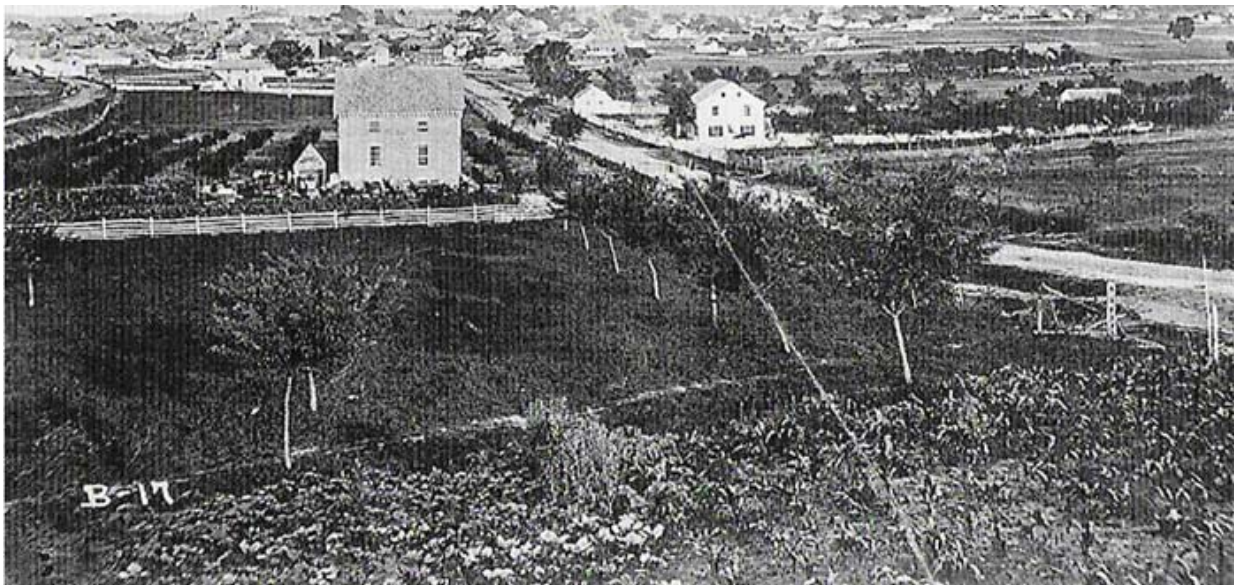
In terms of aesthetic realism, however, Brady's Gettysburg photographs cradled the war's battlefields in serene visual settings that had little connection with the bloodshed that took place on those fields. Brady's *View from Seminary Ridge* and *View of Little Round Top* (Fig. 43), as examples, depicted nothing that visually suggested the bloodiest battle in American history recently unfolded on those grounds. On their own, Brady's photographs are unquestionably "real;" they show real places in real detail. Yet in terms of depicting the reality of the battlefield, these images do not have the same impact as Gardner's Gettysburg images. Without textual information, Brady's photographs cease to show battlefields. Instead they become mere pastoral landscapes. A New York *Herald* review of Brady's Gettysburg photographs consistently invoked the serene pastoral in its descriptions of these images. The view of Cemetery Hill was "very picturesque and suggestive," while the wheat field where General Reynolds fell, a place that was the scene of horrendous death and carnage, became "a spot rendered sacred and truly memorable," an image that "cannot fail to be always attractive to the patriot in civil or in military life."¹³³ The Gettysburg battle depicted in Brady's photographs only happened in a distant past, not a recent present. Because his images did not show casualties and destruction, their pastoral framework relegated the conflict to the

¹³² Katz, *Witness to an Era*, 69.

¹³³ "The Late Battle of Gettysburg-Brady's Photographs of the Scene of the Conflict, Etc.," *New York Herald*, August 6, 1863.

romanticized myths of history. Influenced by Brady's photographs, the *Herald* in 1863 already described the battle in tones of distant, gallant memory. "A better memorial of that sanguinary conflict cannot well be imagined," the *Herald* stated, "...in the history of the past, these faithful sketches of Brady will be invested with an importance and patriotic beauty which at this moment can scarcely be sufficiently appreciated."¹³⁴

Brady's photographs were so far removed from the reality of the war that they called to mind visions of sanguinity, patriotism, and memorial, not death, destruction, and sadness. Thus, it was not Mathew Brady's efforts to, as the *Herald* stated, "perpetuate the memories of the battlefield," that immortalized Gettysburg as the terrible sacrifice that it was. It was Alexander Gardner's images, in their unflinching realism, that burned the conflict into America's collective memory.



(Fig. 41) *The Town of Gettysburg, July 1863, View from Seminary Ridge*. Mathew Brady or Assistant, photographer. Library of Congress.

¹³⁴ Ibid.



(Fig. 42) *The Town of Gettysburg, July 1863, View from Seminary Ridge.* Mathew Brady or Assistant, photographer. Library of Congress.



(Fig. 43) *View of Little Round Top, Gettysburg, PA, July 1863.* Mathew Brady or Assistant, photographer. Library of Congress.

In the last two years of the Civil War, Gardner's photographs showed an intentional trend towards deep personalization of the war. While his Antietam death studies tended to emphasize mass death, his work at Gettysburg indicated a drift in the opposite direction, towards even more personalized depictions of battlefield casualties. At Gettysburg, through images like *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter*, Gardner placed increasing emphasis on photographing battlefield casualties as individual men, not mass, collateral damage. "Was he delirious with agony...while memories of home grew dearer as the field of carnage faded before him? What visions, of loved ones far away, may have hovered above his stony pillow!" Gardner wrote in his *Sketchbook* description of the *Sharpshooter* photograph.¹³⁵ The emphasis in such images was of individual lives destroyed by the war, of loved one stricken with grief over the loss of a son, father, brother, or nephew. This trend came full circle in Gardner's coverage of General Ulysses S. Grant's Virginia campaigns against General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in 1864 and 1865. At Petersburg, Spotsylvania, and the Wilderness campaigns, Gardner's death studies showed, for the first time, a preference for images of single corpses.

A distinct trait of these photographs was the explicitly close proximity of the camera to its grim subjects. This was an effort on Gardner's part to show, in the most explicit way possible, the cost of war. Young men died in these battles. Gardner drifted from photographing mostly far-range groups of corpses at Antietam, to capturing even closer-range corpse studies at Gettysburg, to focusing in on the very faces of the dead in point-blank proximity at Grant's Virginia campaigns. Gardner wanted to make sure that it was no longer necessary to apply a magnifying glass to distinguish the agonized facial

¹³⁵ Gardner, *Sketchbook*, Plate 41.

features of these soldiers. In Virginia, in the wake of the Civil War's most savage fighting, Gardner and his associates' depiction of war's human cost reached its apex. This was an explicitly conscious decision by a war-weary photographer who used his medium to show in graphic detail the senseless slaughter of America's young men.



(Fig. 44) *Body of a Confederate Soldier near Mrs. Alsop's House, Spotsylvania Court House, Vicinity, VA, 1864.* Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. Library of Congress.

Photographs like *Body of a Confederate Soldier near Mrs. Alsop's House* (Fig. 44) were, in terms of sheer clarity and explicitness, the most realistic of all Civil War images. Looking upon this close-range image of a stiffened corpse, it is almost conceivable that a mother could recognize in his swollen visage her own son. The clarity of this photograph makes such an identification seem possible. The photographer, Timothy O'Sullivan, focused directly on the body for this exact purpose, to remind viewers that someone they knew intimately, be they family or friend, could be that corpse

on a muddy Virginia field. This photograph distinctly personalized war, and through the realism of the photographic aesthetic, this personalization was clear, gripping, and unquestionable. As in previous images by Gardner's team, the canteen, hat, knapsack, and rifle were probably photographer's props, left to recreate this man's death fall. In addition to being a heavily symbolic image of horror and sacrifice, this photograph provides a valuable glimpse of a Civil War soldier, effects and all, as he would have appeared in his final moments of life.

Even more explicitly grotesque an image is *Dead Confederate Soldier, Petersburg, Virginia, April 2, 1865* (Fig. 45). The central focus in this photograph was the dead Rebel's face, so hauntingly clear that every feature, save for the smears of dried blood and dirt, was distinguishable. As was the case in many of Gardner's photographs, this picture depicted a young man; his face devoid of any stubble, swallowed in the war's deadly vice. The unrelenting realism of this image was complimented by its symbolic undertones of a great war on which the very future of that nation hinged. In fighting this war that would determine the future of the United States, both armies tragically sacrificed the very vessels of their future, the youth of the North and South. This fact is brutally represented in the bloodied face of this dead Confederate. In these later images Gardner's intentions took on a decidedly more moralistic arch. While all of his photographs, starting with the Antietam death scenes, harbored an air of moral relativism, the pictures from Grant's Virginia campaigns suggested a turn towards the openly political in a manner often only associated with photojournalistic images from the Vietnam War in the late twentieth century. By capturing such explicit images of death, Gardner hoped to force Americans to confront their own savage inner demons.

The close proximity of the corpses in Gardner's Virginia photographs conveyed a simple, ugly message: this war was slaughtering America's youth in the most mechanical, savage fashion. What Oliver Wendell Holmes described as a "repulsive, brutal, sickening, hideous thing...this dashing together of two frantic mobs to which we give the name armies," was laid out in full, uncensored view by Gardner's photographs.¹³⁶ Photographs like *Dead Confederate Soldier, Petersburg, Virginia, April 2, 1865* again brought into question the supposed God-sanctioned innocence of America. If Americans believed, as Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen write, that their country's principles exemplified "the natural human being, that universal 'man-in-general' discerned in nature and ultimately the creation," what are we to make of Gardner's photographs?¹³⁷ How could Americans explain and justify such a savage and unnatural war if the ideal, universal state of "man-in-general" was epitomized in the existence of their nation? If these philosophical notions were to be upheld, the reality shown in images like *Bodies of Confederate Soldiers Lined up for Burial, Spotsylvania Courthouse, May 20, 1865* (Fig. 46), had to be suppressed. That the young men so vividly depicted in this image died for a cause that was anything less than noble was, and remains, a difficult admittance for Americans. Even in the present day, Gardner's macabre pictures still resonate. These photographs constitute a vital memorandum of the Civil War. Indeed, the most important historical event in terms of American national identity has been subjected to conflicting memories, and memory is among the central components of these photographs.

¹³⁶ Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Doings of the Sunbeam," *Atlantic Monthly* 12 (July 1863): 12.

¹³⁷ Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 209.



(Fig. 45) *Dead Confederate Soldier, Petersburg, Virginia, April 2, 1865.* Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. From Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Phillip B. Kunhardt Jr., *Mathew Brady and His World* (Alexandria, VA: Time Life, 1977), 256.



(Fig. 46) *Bodies of Confederate Soldiers Lined up for Burial, Spotsylvania Courthouse, May 20, 1865.* Photographer Unknown. Kunhardt, *Mathew Brady and His World*, 257.

America after 1865 was, and continues to be, profoundly shaped and reshaped by the memory of the Civil War. In the twenty-first century, Civil War battle reenactments are an immensely popular hobby among amateur and professional historians alike. Thousands of books on the war, scholarly and non-scholarly, are published every year. South Carolina continues to invoke controversy over its bold display of the Confederate battle flag over its state capital. On February 24, 2007, in the former Confederate capital of Richmond, the Virginia General Assembly voted unanimously to formally apologize for the state's role in slavery, the first state in the union to do so.¹³⁸ There is no doubt that the memory of the Civil War is very much alive, but it is remembered in different ways. To view the conflict through the romantic paintings of modern Civil War artist Mort Kunstler, for example, is an experience far removed from gazing on Alexander Gardner's grim photographs. Gardner's photographs have maintained the true memory of the war through their realism: even in modern times their moral charge is no less jolting. These images represented the birth of true American photojournalism. Their endurance as the only realistic visual accounts of the war makes them objects of tremendous artistic and historical value.

In the forward to Marianne Fulton's book *Photojournalism in America*, Howard Chapnick writes that photojournalists have created a unique visual history that is far superior to any previous periods of human existence. "The camera," Chapnick writes, "provides us with images of unprecedented power and indisputable information about the world in which we live-its agonies, its struggles, its accomplishments...to ignore

¹³⁸ Larry O'Dell, "Virginia Lawmakers Apologize for Slavery." *Washington Post Online*, February 25, 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/25/AR2007022500470.html> (accessed February 30, 2007).

photojournalism is to ignore history.”¹³⁹ Alexander Gardner’s Civil War photographs depicted the agonies and struggles of the conflict more realistically than any newspaper article, wood engraving, or painting. Gardner, and Mathew Brady for that matter, produced pictures intended for public consumption. In his *Photographic Sketchbook of the War*, Gardner presented his photographs replete with textual descriptions to convey specific information to his viewers. It is the combination of text and photographs that is the guiding principle of photojournalism.¹⁴⁰ As Michael Carlebach writes, photojournalism did not exist as an identifiable enterprise in the nineteenth century, as photography itself was still a new medium, but the drive to use photography to aid in the reporting of historical events was nonetheless present from the beginning.¹⁴¹ In terms of sheer scope, Mathew Brady’s extensive photographic coverage of the Civil War was nothing less than the biggest photojournalistic project of the nineteenth century. Yet it was not Brady, but Gardner, whose work made war photography into a distinct medium, and created a lasting memorandum of America’s great conflict.

Gardner’s photographs were the first examples of war photography. In the documentation of war, the realism of photography depicts the horrors of the battlefield more convincingly than any other medium. Cultural historians, however, tend to relegate war photography as a product of the late twentieth century. In *The Camera Goes to War*, Jorge Lewinski argues that in the last thirty years war photography came into its own and made its mark on how people see and think about war. This mark is drastically different

¹³⁹ Howard Chapnick, fwd. to Marianne Fulton, *Eyes of Time: Photojournalism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1988), xii.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Carlebach, *The Origins of Photojournalism in America* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Press, 1992), 1; and Alexander Gardner, *Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the War* (1866; repr., New York: Dover, 1959).

¹⁴¹ Carlebach, *Photojournalism*, 2-3.

from the way nineteenth century audiences saw war. Lewinski attributes this change not only to the fact that since World War II there has been abundant subject matter for war photographers to capture, but more importantly, he points to shifts in public aesthetics that made people more receptive, and, indeed, more intrigued and fascinated by gruesome imagery. “The twentieth century has done little to preserve man’s traditional concepts and beliefs,” Lewinski writes, arguing that nineteenth and early twentieth century viewers were little more than distant witnesses to scenes depicted in war photographs.¹⁴² It was not until Vietnam that audiences became “intense explorers,” and true, unmitigated war photography emerged. Political censorship and limited technology meant that early photographs from the British Crimean War and the American Civil War were not seen by the public for weeks, sometimes months after the event. Lewinski argues that a photograph’s immediate impact depends on the amount of time separating the event depicted in the image, and the impact that event has had on the viewer. In this respect, nineteenth and early twentieth century audiences were witnesses and observers, their consciences and emotions “were stirred more by the facts about the war than by the pictures.”¹⁴³ During the post-war period, war images were published more concurrently with the events they depicted. This resulted in the public identifying with the images on a more personal, intimate level.

Like Jorge Lewinski, Francis Fralin writes in *The Indelible Image* that before the Vietnam era, wars were photographed officially by governments and public agencies with the purpose of only showing enough to serve the public’s perceived needs. This resulted in viewers acting as casual observers with little personal reaction and investment in the

¹⁴² Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera Goes to War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1978), 9.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 11.

images. The Vietnam era, however, brought with it independent and news-supported photojournalists whose images directly affected the outcome of the war. Fralin writes, “For many people worldwide, dinner was often eaten, if not digested, in the atmosphere of electronically communicated carnage in Vietnam – proving that photography can make a difference.”¹⁴⁴ Fralin argues that despite the evolution of war photographs toward more graphic and brutal subject matter, it is still easier to describe the horrors of war in words, because pictures of such horrors can still be seen as crossing the line of political, ethical, and moral decency. This fact highlights the unique and important power of a photograph, its ability to acutely represent reality.

The arguments of Lewinski and Fralin are based on the perceived distance between photographs and their audience. In their view, the moral charge and descriptive power of a photograph diminishes the longer the event it depicts is separated from the public consciousness. This type of conclusion, however, is ignorant of historical context. Nineteenth century audiences’ perception of time was different from that of a modern audience weaned on twenty-four hour television news networks. Mathew Brady publicly displayed Gardner’s photographs from Antietam a mere month after the battle itself took place, a relatively short span of time for the period. Even though the battle took place in September, 1862, it was still fresh in the public’s mind. The *New York Times* recognized the deep personal impact Gardner’s Antietam photographs made on viewers of Brady’s gallery. Elaborating on the pictures’ “terrible distinctness,” the *Times* stated, “how can a mother bear to know that the boy whose slumbers she has cradled, and whose head her bosom pillowed...how can this mother bear to know that in a shallow trench, hastily dug,

¹⁴⁴ Frances Fralin, Jane Livingston, *The Indelible Image: Photographs of War, 1846 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers. 1985), 9.

rude hands have thrown him.”¹⁴⁵ This was an intensely personalized reflection on the power of Gardner’s photographs. A mere written account of the battle could not invoke this type of sentiment. Words could describe the horrors of the “gaping trenches,” but to actually see these pits filled to the rims with rotting corpses was to see the war itself.

Gardner’s photographs held a moral charge wholly unique to the realism of photography. The war depicted in the Antietam images was uncensored and real. Thus, to state, as Jorge Lewinski does, that nineteenth century viewers were not personally affected by Gardner’s images, is to ignore an account like that of the *New York Times*. Additionally, it must be taken into account that these photographs had a very limited audience. Those who did not attend Brady’s galleries only saw these pictures as sketches reprinted in newspapers and journals. In this situation the realism of photography was lost. There is also no existing evidence that Southern audiences saw these photographs before the end of the war. Indeed, had the technology of the time allowed for broader distribution of these images, their impact would have been even greater. As such, even amid the technological restrictions, Gardner’s photographs managed to show a substantial portion of the American public what actually happened on the distant battlefields. Gardner’s Antietam images marked the beginning of war photography because they showed the reality of war, not romanticized fantasy.

War photography preserves a distinct memory of its subject matter. Its realism ensures that the memory of war as depicted through photography is decidedly different from the memory preserved in other commemorative art forms, such as sculpture and painting. The Civil War is the ideal conflict with which to make this point. Barbara Groseclose writes that the war has been remembered through the destruction of bodies,

¹⁴⁵ “Brady’s Photographs,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1862.

depicted in Alexander Gardner's photographs, and through the resurrection of bodies, in the proliferation of garden cemeteries, monuments, and paintings.¹⁴⁶ All of these mediums are forms of commemorative art, which Groseclose defines as art intended for public consumption "to inscribe important local and national myths on memory: founders and saviors are honored, values asserted and preserved, cultural patterns shared."¹⁴⁷ A common American Civil War monument is the statue of a single white soldier, his body whole and uninjured, and his face in mournful or contemplative reflection (see Fig. 47). The Civil War literally destroyed tens of thousands of bodies, thus, the single soldier monument serves to symbolically represent the restored bodies of every soldier, North and South, who fought in the war.¹⁴⁸ This type of monument commemorated the fallen by insinuating their final, immortal resurrection.

¹⁴⁶ Barbara Groseclose, *Nineteenth Century American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 175-76.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 175.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 179.



(Fig. 47) *Civil War Soldier Memorial*, St. Boniface Graveyard, Chicago, Illinois. <http://www.graveyards.com/IL/Cook/stboniface/civilwar.html> (accessed May 1, 2007).

Civil War monuments are meant to invoke notions of bravery, mythos, and solemnity, not violence and death. The memory of the war as filtered through such monuments is not of a conflict in which thousands were killed, maimed, or physically and psychologically wounded. War monuments generally tend to bypass the ugliness of battle so that higher, more aesthetically pleasing notions, such as patriotism and sacrifice, can be the primary focus of public reflection. Even more so than sculpture, paintings of the Civil War favor the depiction of an American mythos. Charles P. Roland writes, “The story of the Civil War is the epic story of the American people. It is their *Iliad*.”¹⁴⁹ More than any other medium, painting reinforces the memory of the Civil War as a heroic conflict, an *Iliad*-like epic played out by mythical figures like Lee, Grant, Davis, and

¹⁴⁹ Roland, *An American Iliad*, xii.

Lincoln. To view the conflict through the paintings of historical artist Mort Kunstler, for example, is to step into a romanticized past, into a war where Generals were gods and notions of chivalry, honor, and sacrifice were upheld (see Fig. 48). However realistic Kunstler's paintings appear, they perpetuate an idealized memory of the Civil War, a memory that goes hand in hand with the idea of the Confederate Lost Cause, and long-held notions of American God-sanctioned innocence. Through such depictions, Kunstler's work actually facilitates the proliferation of American restorationism, what Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen identified as America's attempt to reclaim an ahistorical "first times," in which America was the new Eden. The memory of the war as depicted in Mort Kunstler's paintings is rooted in mythological narrative, not realistic representation.



(Fig. 48) *His Supreme Moment*. By Mort Kunstler. Oil on Canvas. 1995.
http://www.mortkunstler.net/gallery/product338_lastcat68.ihtml

Unlike painting and sculpture, there is nothing romanticized about the Civil War as depicted in Alexander Gardner's photographs. The inherent realism of these pictures still reminds Americans of the destruction that occurred. At Cold Harbor, Virginia, Gardner's photographs symbolically depicted both the horrors of the war and the agonies of Reconstruction. Two images by Gardner photographer John Reekie reveal in stark, gruesome detail the fate of the battlefield dead, whose remains did not rest, even in death. In *African Americans Collecting Bones of Soldiers Killed in the Battle, Cold Harbor, VA* (Fig. 49), African-American workers collected the dried, skeletal remains of soldiers for interment at another burial location. Reekie's image reminded viewers that war had permanently defiled the pastoral. Like the workers in this photograph, America, through Reconstruction, had to gather its remains piece by piece to rebuild. The task was not easy, as the burdens of the war laid heavy on the nation's collective conscious.¹⁵⁰

In *Unburied Dead from Gaine's Mill, Cold Harbor, VA, 1864* (Fig. 50), a skull, ribcage, and some tattered clothing laid bare, souvenirs of the hell that engulfed Virginia. Rather than bestow unto these men a peaceful rest beneath America's pastoral fields, the war continued to violate their bodies, their bones serving as grim reminders of the conflict's savage nature. From this point on there was no reverting back to naïve notions of a new Eden. Paintings and memorials cannot evoke the emotions elicited from these photographs. The memory of the war as preserved in these photographs is rooted in realism, not fantasy. Historians and the populous alike will continue to cloke the Civil War in mythos and romanticism, but Gardner's photographs ensure that the harsh reality will never be entirely suppressed.

¹⁵⁰ See David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).



(Fig. 49) *African Americans Collecting Bones of Soldiers Killed in the Battle, Cold Harbor, VA, 1864.* John Reekie, photographer. Library of Congress.



(Fig. 50) *Unburied Dead from Gaine's Mill, Cold Harbor, VA, 1865.* John Reekie, photographer.
<http://www.civilwarphotos.net/files/casualties.htm>

Conclusion

It is ultimately the realistic memory, embodied in the photographic tradition of Alexander Gardner and his associates that is the most significant legacy of Civil War photography. Even today, attitudes towards history and memory of the Civil War continue to change, yet it is these pictures, with their harsh realism, that are embedded in America's national consciousness. It is nearly impossible to open a book about the Civil War without encountering images like *Bodies of Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial, Antietam, MD*, or *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg, PA*. It is no coincidence that these photographs are used to illustrate and compliment historical texts: these are real images of the war itself, not sketches, not paintings. As Stephanie Ross explains, these photographs offer us links to a casual chain that leads directly back to the objects as they existed.¹⁵¹ "Light rays traveled from that very object (that very person, that very panorama) to expose the film," Ross writes.¹⁵² It is this intimate linkage with the past, the notion that in viewing a photograph of a Civil War soldier one sees a trace of that very soldier, which sets photography apart from other mediums. The essence of "the real" makes these photographs artifacts of national collective memory; they are invaluable, realistic links to America's past.

This realistic link, however, is intrinsically connected to the emergence of the photographic aesthetic in the aftermath of the Battle of Antietam. Photography required a cataclysmic event in order to shake off the influence of early nineteenth century aestheticism. Embodied by the painted portrait, this aestheticism was meant to convey romanticized notions of taste and beauty, embodied by the great Victorian age.

¹⁵¹ Stephanie Ross, "What Photographs Can't Do," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (Autumn, 1982): 10.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

Photography arrived in the very midst of this collective visual proscription, and as a revolutionary new visual medium, it was naturally assigned the same aesthetic guidelines as long established mediums like painting and engraving. Thus, the first great photographers, epitomized by Mathew B. Brady, diligently worked to gain acceptance as legitimate artists in the face of their medium's obvious mechanical properties. The result was the semi-realistic nature of Brady's photographs prior to 1862. With his New York-based galleries depicting portraits of illustrious Americans, Brady set out to capture a visual history of nineteenth century America that would bequeath to posterity a glorious, enduring image of a great nation. While Brady's photographs from this period certainly did depict a form of reality, as a collective whole they obscured the less romantic aspects of human existence, including that great measurer of human frailty and egotism, war.

The Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862, was the catalyst for the emergence of the first true photographic aesthetic, distinguished by realism. In direct contrast to Brady's work, Alexander Gardner's photographs were not romanticized, not artificially constructed to conform to standards of taste and beauty. They were real. These images of rotting corpses on the battlefield provided Americans with a harrowing glimpse of warfare with which no newspaper description, no sketching or engraving, could compete. Gardner's photographs represented the birth of the photographic aesthetic because they effectively showed what no field sketching could: the reality of war. Through the visual consumption of photography, Americans became aware that nineteenth century life was not all glorious and beautiful. In this respect the impact of Gardner's Antietam photographs reached far beyond the confines of visual consumption. Through their unmitigated depiction of a contemptible human reality, these images challenged the very

moral and ideological foundations of American society. As a society that viewed their country through the restorative lens of primitive, primeval innocence, the Civil War as depicted in Gardner's photographs presented a terrible contradiction. Americans perceived their country as the embodiment of a pre-historical "first times," as the new Eden sanctioned by God and imbued with pastoral, naturalistic landscapes. Americans, in turn, saw themselves as God's new chosen people. Gardner's photographs of the savagery at Antietam revealed the uncomfortable truth: Americans were not an innocent and natural people. They were, as was the rest of the world, subject to the influence of history and human weakness.

Gardner continued to depict this weakness in his photographic coverage of Gettysburg and Grant's Virginia campaigns. Over the course of the war his photographs exhibited a tendency toward the personalization of the conflict. At Gettysburg, his most famous images were of single dead soldiers, their presence symbolizing the war's destruction of individual identities, and relegation of these identities to the anonymous burial pits of history. This personalization came full circle in Gardner's coverage of the Wilderness campaign in Virginia, where his photographs of casualties reached such a level of clarity that one could almost envision a mother identifying her dead son amidst the piles of corpses. At the Virginia campaigns Gardner's coverage became more identifiably photojournalistic in nature. Whereas his pictures from Antietam and Gettysburg did emphasize the political and moral aspects of the war, his 1864 Virginia images, through their close range depiction of casualties, exuded a more specific moral charge; that the war was destroying America's youth. Through his medium Gardner made his own, personal anti-war statements.

Gardner's photographs allowed Americans to remember the war as it was, violent, savage, and bloody. His images remind modern Americans, who are often subject to mythologizing their Civil War, of the sad brutality such mythos tends to obscure. The realism of Gardner's images contrasts sharply with the romanticized canvases of modern artists like Mort Kunstler. As the war came to a close in 1865, it was apparent that photography was all *too* real, so much so that the government and the American public had no desire to relive such horrors through photographs. While the war did not kill American photography, it did alter the careers of Alexander Gardner and Mathew Brady.

After Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Mathew Brady's fortune of \$100,000 was almost completely exhausted. Faced with a slew of younger competitors, poor health, and deeply in debt, Brady struggled during the post-war years.¹⁵³ He disbanded his twenty-two photographic teams, and stored his collections in Washington and New York warehouses, hoping to regain a substantial amount of his fortune by selling his photographic negatives to the government.¹⁵⁴ First, Brady campaigned to sell his entire archive to the New-York historical society. In 1866 he opened an exhibition of mostly war-era prints at the society to arouse interest in the historical value of his work. The press, critics, and historians, as usual, praised the exhibition, but the general public's interest was nil. After almost five years of blood and death, the public's apathy towards reliving the war through the realism of photography was obvious.¹⁵⁵

An apathetic public notwithstanding, Brady scored a resolution from the Council of the National Academy of Design, which acknowledged his 'extensive and valuable'

¹⁵³ James D. Horan, *Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1955), 63-4.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 64.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 73.

collection as a possible ‘nucleus of a National historical Museum.’¹⁵⁶ At a proposed price of \$30,000, Brady’s offer was not cheap, but his reputation preceded him. In addition to his endorsement from the National Academy of Design, men of no less eminence than Ulysses S. Grant wrote, ‘(Brady’s collection) will be valuable to the student and the artist of the present generation; but how much more valuable it will be to the future generations.’¹⁵⁷ Yet Brady was unable to sell his photographs to the New York historical society. On February 17, 1869, Brady petitioned Congress to buy his collection of negatives, also to no avail.¹⁵⁸ For one thing, the ubiquity of his most popular images, in the form of public *carte de visites*, made a large sale seem pointless. Competition from other photographers also diluted the marketplace.¹⁵⁹ But as Mary Panzer explains, contemporaries simply wanted to forget the four years of bloodshed that Brady’s images invoked. “Immediately after the war, audiences found it impossible to welcome a glorious rendering of patriotic portraits,” Panzer writes.¹⁶⁰ Grant was certainly right in recognizing the value of Brady’s work to future generations, but to contemporaries, these images of the war were too painful, and too soon.

Though Brady did manage to sell a group of negatives to the United States government in 1872, his reputation suffered after the war. The violence destroyed his romantic notions of the nineteenth century as a golden period, and the hypocrisy and corruption of the Gilded Age only heightened the public’s disenchantment towards his portraits that supposedly depicted the honor and integrity of American political leaders.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 73.

¹⁵⁷ Horan, *Mathew Brady*, 73; and Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1997), 115-6.

¹⁵⁸ Katz, *Witness to an Era*, 260.

¹⁵⁹ Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*, 116.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 118.

Brady continued to work, beset by failing health and bankruptcy, until his death in 1896. Not until the mid-twentieth century did interest in Brady's life and work by historians restore much of the luster (imperfect as it was) that eluded the great photographer and entrepreneur in the last decades of his life.¹⁶¹

Mathew Brady's photographs did not come close to depicting the realism of the battlefield. Thus, if Brady's work elicited no interest from the government or the public, what became of Alexander Gardner's work? It was Gardner, after all, who was responsible for perpetuating the memory of the battlefield as one of death and destruction. Gardner's images sealed Brady's fate, as the Scotsman's work was intimately associated with that of Brady. Gardner suffered the same setbacks as his former employer. On February 21, 1869, Gardner petitioned Congress to buy his collection of war negatives, writing the petition in his own hand. He asserted that his collection contained "*all* and the *only* photographs taken representing the Battlefields of Antietam, Gettysburg, and Spotsylvania Court House during and immediately after the engagements."¹⁶² This, of course, was the problem. Congress showed no interest in either Brady's or Gardner's petition.¹⁶³ In 1869 the memory of the war was still too fresh in American's minds. Gardner's photographs, which initially shocked and fascinated the public through their realistic depiction of the war, were later rejected for the very same reasons.

Unlike Brady, however, Gardner was not plagued by bankruptcy or ill health. Even before his petitioned his war views to Congress, the industrious Scotsman set out to photograph a new America, far removed from the brutality of the Civil War. The opening

¹⁶¹ Horan, *Mathew Brady*, 68.

¹⁶² Katz, *Witness to an Era*, 259.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 260.

of the Western frontier provided the opportunity to do this. In 1867 Gardner was appointed chief photographer of the Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division.¹⁶⁴ In September, 1867 he closed his gallery and headed for St. Louis and then to the offices of the Union Pacific Railway in Wyandotte, Kansas.¹⁶⁵ From September to October, 1867, Gardner completed one of the great photographic documentations of the Western frontier, capturing railroads, wagon trains, pioneers and industrialists.¹⁶⁶ When a fire at the Smithsonian building on January 24, 1865, destroyed numerous priceless American Indian paintings, Smithsonian secretary Joseph Henry suggested that photographers be arranged to photograph the various Indian delegations visiting Washington.¹⁶⁷

Through the patronage of wealthy English collector and speculator, William Henry Blackmore, Alexander Gardner and fellow photographer Antonio Z. Shindler began photographing the Indian delegations. From 1867 to 1872, Gardner photographed Indian delegations in Washington as well as encampments in Wyoming. His images included portraits of the great Oglala Sioux leader, Red Cloud, and Spotted Tail, who served as mediator at the Fort Laramie Treaty Council and later fought with Crazy Horse at the Little Big Horn.¹⁶⁸ In 1872 Gardner became the official photographer for the Office of Indian Affairs. His portraits were later installed in the William Blackmore Museum, in Salisbury, England.¹⁶⁹

Alexander Gardner spent his last years involved in philanthropic activities. On April 13, 1874, he was appointed secretary pro tempore of the Masonic Mutual Relief

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 215.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 205-230.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 235.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 235-244.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 235.

Association, founded to provide relief to widows and orphan of Master Masons. Gardner was later elected president of the Association in 1882. Through this position he worked at building a solid business regimen so that the Foundation might provide more reliable life insurance to members.¹⁷⁰ He continued to operate his gallery until 1879, when he formally retired from photography to focus his energy on the Masonic Mutual Relief Association and the Washington Beneficial Endowment Association. Unlike Mathew Brady, Gardner never found himself in financial ruin. The stream of available work after the Civil War allowed him to operate his gallery and pursue philanthropy until his death on December 10, 1882, at the age of sixty-one.

It was not until the twentieth century that historians began to rediscover the Civil War photographs of Brady and Gardner. Indeed, Gardner's death studies are most commonly used whenever historical studies require a visual companion to their text. The enduring popularity of Gardner's photographs attests to their value as artifacts of tremendous historical and cultural significance. The true modern memory of the Civil War is constructed in large part through Gardner's images. To look upon these heaps of dead soldiers is an emotional reminder of the terrible tolls suffered by a young nation at war with itself. The men in these pictures paid the ultimate price for their cause, and millions more have followed in their footsteps since September 17, 1862. Photographs of the dead, the aftermath of war, remind all who view them that war does indeed mean killing. In addition, Gardner's Civil War images remind Americans of their own failures and weaknesses. The restoration perspective continues in America today, amid political assertions that the almighty reserves his divine intervention and blessings for America alone. But Gardner's photographs continue to remind Americans of the first time their

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 262-3.

new Eden was buried under the savagery that periodically engulfs all peoples, and that America is not immune from this fate.

Bibliography

Primary Sources – Illustrations

1. *Daguerreotype of a Woman*, 1850. Unknown French photographer. From Newhall, Beaumont, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*, revised and enlarged edition. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Doubleday and Company, 1964, 11.
2. *Uncut Print from a Carte-De-Visite Negative*, c. 1860, GEH. Adolphe-Eugene Disderi, photographer. From Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*, revised and enlarged edition. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Doubleday and Company, 1964, 16.
3. *Mathew Brady, Photograph Taken by Assistant*, c. 1862-63. The History Place.
<http://www.historyplace.com/specials/calendar/docs-pix/brady.jpg> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
4. *Napoleon in His Study*, by Jacques-Louis David.
1812 (130 Kb); Oil on canvas, 203.9 x 125.1 cm (80 1/4 x 49 1/4 in).
The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/david/> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
5. *Winfield Scott, 1861*. Imperial salted-paper print. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. From Panzer, Mary. *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997, 79.
6. *Portrait of General George B. McClellan*. c. 1861-2. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. From Meredith, Roy. *Mr. Lincoln's Cameraman, Mathew B. Brady*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946, No. 119.
7. *Abraham Lincoln at Brady's Washington Gallery*, 1862. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. Abraham Lincoln Art Gallery.
<http://www.abrahamlincolnartgallery.com/archivephoto.htm> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
8. *Andrew Jackson*, ca. 1824. By Thomas Sully, (1783-1872). United States Senate.
http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/artifact/Painting_32_00018.htm (Accessed May 3, 2007).
9. *Thaddeus Stevens, 1858*. Imperial salted-print paper with ink and pencil. Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. From Panzer, Mary. *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997, 98.
10. *The Provost-Marshal, General Bosquet's Division, 1855*. Roger Fenton, photographer. From Fenton, Roger. *Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters from The Crimea*. Ed. By Helmut and Alison Gernsheim. London: Secker & Warburg, 1954, 24.

11. *Lieut.-General Sir John Lysaght Pennefather, 1855.* Roger Fenton, photographer. From Fenton, Roger. *Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters from The Crimea.* Ed. By Helmut and Alison Gernsheim. London: Secker & Warburg, 1954, 56.
12. *Cantinière Tending a Wounded Man, 1855.* Roger Fenton, photographer. From Fenton, Roger. *Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters from The Crimea.* Ed. By Helmut and Alison Gernsheim. London: Secker & Warburg, 1954, 59.
13. *'The Valley of the Shadow of Death,' 1855.* Roger Fenton, photographer. From Fenton, Roger. *Photographer of the Crimean War: His Photographs and his Letters from The Crimea.* Ed. By Helmut and Alison Gernsheim. London: Secker & Warburg, 1954, 68.
14. *McClellan and Staff at Upton Hill. 1861.* Mathew Brady or assistant, photographer. From Panzer, Mary. *Mathew Brady and the Image of History.* Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997, 157.
15. *George Washington, c.. 1779–81.* By Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827). Metropolitan Museum of Art.
http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_Of_Art/viewOnezoom.asp?dep=2&zoomFlag=1&viewmode=0&item=97%2E33
16. *Officers on Deck of Federal Screw Sloop Kearsarge, with Captain John A. Winslow, Unknown location, 1861.* Photographer unidentified. CivilWarPhotos.net.
<http://www.civilwarphotos.net/files/images/054.jpg> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
17. *Deck and Turret of the U.S.S. Monitor. James River, Va., July 9, 1862.* James F. Gibson, photographer. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:33:./temp/~ammem_EhoP: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
18. *Infantry Private. Unknown location, 1861.* Photographer unidentified. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog.
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
19. *Federal Encampment. Cumberland Landing, Va., May 1862.* Photographer unidentified. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog.
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:2:./temp/~ammem_XrhO: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
20. *Federal Encampment on Pamunkey River. Cumberland Landing, Va., May 1862.* James F. Gibson, Photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:58:./temp/~ammem_XrhO: (Accessed may 3, 2007).

21. *Family Group, Outside Home Where General Charles S. Winder, C.S.A., Died, Cedar Mountain, Va., 1862.* Timothy H. O'Sullivan, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:17:./temp/~ammem_Iquf: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
22. *Cedar Mountain, Va., Battlefield Viewed from the West, August 1862.* Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:7:./temp/~ammem_Iquf: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
23. *Union Graves on the Battlefield, Cedar Mountain, Va., August 1862.* Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:8:./temp/~ammem_Iquf: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
24. *Alexander Gardner.* Possibly taken after his arrival in Washington D.C. 1858. From Katz, D. Mark. *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner, The Civil War, Lincoln, and the West.* New York: Viking, 1991, 17.
25. *Confederate Soldiers as They Fell Near the Burnside Bridge. Antietam, Md., September, 1862.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. Robert McMahan Photography. <http://www.mcmahanphoto.com/mathewbradybiography.html> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
26. *Body of a Confederate Soldier, Antietam, Md., 1862.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. From William A. Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978, 105.
27. *Scene of Sedgwick's Advance and the Grave of Lt. John A. Clark, Seventh Michigan, 1862.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. From Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978. 180-81.
28. *Antietam, Md., Confederate Dead in a Ditch on the Right Wing used as a Rifle Pit, 1862* Alexander Gardner, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:23:./temp/~ammem_dwSu: (Accessed may 3, 2007).
29. *Scene of Sedgwick's Advance and the Grave of Lt. John A. Clark, Seventh Michigan, 1862.* Alternate Shot. Alexander Gardner, photographer. From Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978. 180-81.
30. *Confederate Dead by a Fence on the Hagerstown Road, 1862.* Alexander Gardner, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:14:./temp/~ammem_dwSu: (Accessed May 3, 2007).

31. *Confederate Dead by a Fence on the Hagerstown Road, 1862*. Alternate View. Alexander Gardner, photographer. From Frassanito, *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978, 135.
32. *Confederate Dead Near Dunker Church, Antietam, Md., September, 1862*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. Historic Gardner Photographs. http://www.nps.gov/archive/anti/photos/G_DunkerC.htm (Accessed May 3, 2007).
33. *Bodies of Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial, Antietam, Md., September, 1862*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:29:./temp/~ammem_dwSu: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
34. *Confederate Dead Behind the Stone Wall of Marye's Heights, Fredericksburg, Va., May 1863*, Alexander Gardner, photographer. CivilWarPhotos.net. http://www.civilwar.net/cw_images/files/images/096.jpg
35. *Union and Confederate Dead, ('A Harvest of Death'), Gettysburg, Penn., July, 1863*. Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. CivilWarPhotos.net. <http://www.civilwarphotos.net/files/images/537.jpg> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
36. *Bodies of Federal Soldiers, Killed on July 1, near the McPherson Woods ('Field Where General Reynolds Fell) Gettysburg, Penn., July, 1863*. Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:22:./temp/~ammem_6nJb: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
37. *Confederate Dead Gathered for Burial at the Southwestern Edge of the Rose Woods, Gettysburg, Penn., July 5, 1863*. Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:25:./temp/~ammem_6nJb: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
38. *Four Dead Soldiers in the Woods near Little Round Top, Gettysburg, Penn., July, 1863*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:16:./temp/~ammem_6nJb: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
39. *Devil's Den with Dead Confederate Soldier ('Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter'), Gettysburg, Penn., July 1863*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:13:./temp/~ammem_6nJb: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
40. *A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep, Gettysburg, Penn., July 1863*. Alexander Gardner, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:12:./temp/~ammem_6nJb: (Accessed May 3, 2007).

41. *The Town of Gettysburg, July 1863, View from Seminary Ridge*. Mathew Brady or Assistant, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/tl1863.html> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
42. *The Town of Gettysburg, July 1863, View from Seminary Ridge*. Mathew Brady or Assistant, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/tl1863.html> (Accessed May 3, 2007).
43. *View of Little Round Top, Gettysburg, Penn., July 1863*. Mathew Brady or Assistant, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:2:./temp/~ammem_5YAY: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
44. *Body of a Confederate Soldier near Mrs. Alsop's House, Spotsylvania Court House, Vicinity, Va., 1864*. Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:16:./temp/~ammem_X8fz: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
45. *Dead Confederate Soldier, Petersburg, Va., April 2, 1865*. Timothy O'Sullivan, photographer. From Meserve Kunhardt, Dorothy and Phillip B. Kunhardt Jr., *Mathew Brady and His World*. Alexandria, VA: Time Life, 1977, 256.
46. *Bodies of Confederate Soldiers Lined up for Burial, Spotsylvania Courthouse, May 20, 1865*. Photographer Unknown. From Kunhardt. *Mathew Brady and His World*. Alexandria, VA: Time Life, 1977, 257.
47. *Civil War Soldier Memorial, St. Boniface Graveyard, Chicago, Illinois*. Graveyards of Chicago. <http://www.graveyards.com/IL/Cook/stboniface/civilwar.html> (accessed May 1, 2007).
48. *His Supreme Moment*. by Mort Kunstler. Oil on Canvas. 1995. Mort Kunstler, America's Artist. http://www.mortkunstler.net/gallery/product338_lastcat68.ihtml (Accessed May 3, 2007).
49. *African Americans Collecting Bones of Soldiers Killed in the Battle, Cold Harbor, Va., 1864*. John Reekie, photographer. From the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?cwar:13:./temp/~ammem_X8fz: (Accessed May 3, 2007).
50. *Unburied Dead from Gaine's Mill, Cold Harbor, Va., 1865*. John Reekie, photographer. CivilWarPhotos.net. <http://www.civilwarphotos.net/files/casualties.htm> (Accessed May 3, 2007).

Primary Sources – Other

Fenton, Roger. Fenton from the Guard's Camp, Balaclava, 28 March 1855. In John Hannavy, *The Camera Goes to War: Photographs from the Crimean War, 1854-56*. Edinburgh, UK: The Scottish Arts Council, 1974.

———. Fenton to William Agnew, 9 April 1855. In John Hannavy, *The Camera Goes to War: Photographs from the Crimean War, 1854-56*. Edinburgh, UK: The Scottish Arts Council, 1974.

———. Fenton from the Guard's Camp, Balaclava, 28 March 1855. In John Hannavy, *The Camera Goes to War: Photographs from the Crimean War, 1854-56*. Edinburgh, UK: The Scottish Arts Council, 1974.

Gardner, Alexander. *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the War*, 1866. Reprint, New York: Dover, 1959.

Holmes, Oliver Wendell, "Doings of the Sunbeam." *Atlantic Monthly* 12 (July 1863).

Root, Marcus. *The Camera and the Pencil or the Heliographic Art*. 1864, Reprint. Pawlett, Vt.: Helios, 1971.

Strickland, W.P. "The Fine Arts-Photography." *The Ladies' Repository: A Monthly Periodical, Devoted to Literature, Arts, and Religion* 19 (Aug., 1859).

"A Broadway Valhalla: Opening of Brady's New Gallery." *American Journal of Photography and the Allied Arts & Sciences* 3 (October 15, 1860). In Panzer, Mary. *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1997.

"The Pencil of Nature, A New Discovery," *The Corsair: A Gazette of Literature, Art, Dramatic Criticism, Fashion and Novelty* 1 (Saturday, April 13, 1839): 49-51.

The New Yorker, (1839).

New York Times, (1858-1862).

New York Evening Post, (1848).

New York Herald, (1862-1863).

"Photography in the United States," *Photographic Art-Journal* 5 (June 1853): 334-341.

"Daguerreotypes – The Art Perfected," *The Spirit of the Times*, (July 4, 1846.)

Washington Post, (1889).

Secondary Sources

- Blackburn, Simon, ed. "Aesthetic" *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 1996. *Oxford Reference Online*.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views.ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t98.e2563>
 Accessed November 7, 2006.
- Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Brennen, Bonnie and Hanno Hardt, eds. *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Carlebach, Michael. *The Origins of Photojournalism in America*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Press, 1992.
- Currie, Gregory. "Photography, Painting and Perception," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49 (Winter, 1991): 23-29.
- Fralin, Francis, and Livingston, Jane. *The Indelible Image: Photographs of War, 1846 to the Present*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1985.
- Frassanito, William A. *Antietam: The Photographic Legacy of America's Bloodiest Day*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978.
- . *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.
- Fulton, Marianne. *Eyes of Time: Photojournalism in America*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1988.
- Griffin, Michael. "The Great War Photographs," in *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, eds. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Groseclose, Barbara. *Nineteenth Century American Art*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Hannavy, John. *The Camera Goes to War: Photographs from the Crimean War, 1854-56*. Edinburgh, UK: The Scottish Arts Council, 1974.
- Horan, James D. *Mathew Brady: Historian with a Camera*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1955.
- Hughes, Richard T. and C. Leonard Allen. *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

- Katz, D. Mark. *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner, The Civil War, Lincoln, and the West*. New York: Viking, 1991.
- Kingsley, Hope. "Technology and Aesthetics in 19th-century Art Photography" *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*. Ed. Robin Lenman. Oxford University Press 2005. *Oxford Reference Online*.
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t207.e1524>
 Accessed November 7, 2006.
- Kuklick, Bruce. *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Lewinski, Jorge. *The Camera Goes to War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1978.
- Lindberg, Christine A. and Sue Ellen Thompson, eds. *The Oxford American Desk Dictionary and Thesaurus, Second Edition*. New York: Berkley Books, 2001.
- McPherson, James M. *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam, the Battle that Changed the Course of the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Meyer, Arline. "Re-Dressing Classical Statuary: The Eighteenth-Century 'Hand-in-Waistcoat' Portrait," *Art Bulletin* 77 (March 1995): 45-63.
- Newhall, Beaumont. *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present Day*, revised and enlarged edition. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Doubleday and Company, 1964.
- O'Dell, Larry. "Virginia Lawmakers Apologize for Slavery." *Washington Post Online*, February 25, 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/25/AR2007022500470.html> (Accessed February 30, 2007).
- Orvell, Miles. *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- Panzer, Mary. *Mathew Brady and the Image of History*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1997.
- Roland, Charles P. *An American Iliad: The Story of The Civil War*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991.
- Ross, Stephanie. "What Photographs Can't Do," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (Autumn, 1982): 5-17.
- Sears, Steven W. *Gettysburg*. Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

- . *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam*. Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983.
- Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.
- Sweet, Timothy. *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evens*. Toronto: Hill and Wang, 1989.
- Walton, Kendall. "Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (March, 1984): 67-72.