THE ABSENCE THAT IS PRESENT:
CIVIL WAR PHOTOGRAPHY, 1862–2015

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ABSTRACT

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In 1862, Alexander Gardner captured some of the best-known photographs of the Civil War at Antietam. Since then his photographs have been part of a varied history cycling from open publicity to obscurity and back again. In recent years, photographers have turned to Gardner’s photographs for inspiration when creating new photographs of the Civil War: rephotography. David Levene and Sally Mann are two examples that approach rephotography from different directions. Levene and Mann go to Antietam to photograph what the war left behind. The content of the photographs was analyzed to see what was present and what was not. The artists’ intent was taken into consideration where possible. The photographs represent the Civil War through what is absent, through what is missing. Gardner’s photographs depict the aftermath of the battle; Levene’s highlight what is there no longer; Mann’s explore the spectral traces that remain. They each commemorate Antietam while making September 17, 1862 more real for modern viewers.
Civil War battlefields are touchstones for memory.

They contain traces of great struggle, commitment and suffering.

... Photographs of such places are gravestones.

– John Huddleston
For my mother,

who taught me to love learning and books,

and made me go outside every once in a while.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I first encountered Civil War photography in the form of Timothy O’Sullivan’s *A Harvest of Death* in an elementary art appreciation course. That photograph remained with me and it was the inspiration behind my initial foray into the world of Civil War photography. I have my teacher—my mother—Mary Stricker to thank for that. She could not have known that that class and that single photography would result in a master’s thesis, but she provided me with the essential tools that I needed to reach this point.

Lisa Molnar and Marisa Cline helped me navigate the maze of official paperwork. Without their assistance, I would still be lost.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the decades since the American Civil War (1861–1865), the Civil War has remained a topic of interest for many Americans. This grants it an abiding place in contemporary American culture. Scholars estimate that, on average, one book has been published on the Civil War every day since 1861.¹ Books are not the only cultural product to be consistently produced about the war since General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee signed the treaty in the Appomattox Court House. Historical reenactments, which began before the war even ended,² allow people to revisit events that have already passed. Rebecca Schneider, a professor in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University, begins her 2011 book, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, by saying that she “went to [the] Civil War.”³ Schneider went to the past by attending an historical reenactment. She is not alone in her description of visiting the past by way of historical reenactments and historical sites. Andrew Schocket, an historian at Bowling Green State University opens a chapter about historic locations and museums in much the same way: “In the summer of 2011, I travelled to the pasts [sic].”⁴ However, there are more ways of engaging with the past(s) than by visiting physical locations or physical reenactments. Kendall Walton, a philosopher at the University of Michigan, argues that “[w]e can see into the past” through photographs; they are

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transparent windows. This paper will deal with three main foci: exhibitions of Civil War era photographs, recreations of those same photographs, and an engagement with sites of historic interest through photography. Photographers such as Sally Mann, David Levene, and others return to battlefields like Antietam to create modern views of historic photographs of the Civil War and to create new photographs of the Civil War.

This paper will also explore Gardner’s photographs of Antietam and rephotographs—a word Jason Kalin, an assistant professor of writing, rhetoric, and discourse at DePaul University, uses in his work—of those historical photographs of Antietam in the present day through Antonio Monegal’s theory of absence. In his article, “Picturing Absence: Photography in the Aftermath,” Monegal, a professor of literary theory and comparative literature at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain, explores how victims of war and the tragedies of war can be represented through their absence. He asks: “What happens when the subject is absent? How to document what is no longer there? How to photograph the missing? How to represent the unscarred wound of loss?”6 All photography seeks to represent absence to some extent, as will be seen in the main chapters of this. Gardner’s work sought to recognize the infantry soldiers who were often ignored in official accounts and in heroic stories. Mann and Levene’s rephotography of Antietam continues the commemoration and memorialization of fallen soldiers through their absence. The photographs are gravestones, the markers of absence—of events and people who are no longer present. Monegal writes, “Instead of documenting events and experiences, of using

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photography as evidence of violence or atrocities, picturing absence is a way of confronting loss and representing pain and suffering through the traces they leave behind.”

To put it simply, absence is the lack of something. It is an empty chair that was once filled. It is a grassy field that was once teeming with life but that is now empty. But that field once held a home, a barn, and crops. It is a body that has been deprived of life. Absence is the lack of something: buildings, people, events, life. This paper explores the absence that is present in Alexander Gardner’s original photographs of Antietam, and in David Levene and Sally Mann’s rephotographs of those same fields in the 2000s. It considers the significance of absence, a quality that is especially important in Levene and Mann’s rephotographs because of the temporal gaps they illustrate and delineate for their viewers.

The idea of absence as significant to photography is not new. Roland Barthes discusses seeing death in a photograph of his recently deceased mother in *Camera Lucida*. Her absence is present, always. If a person can see their death in all photographs (as Barthes also insists), then they are always looking at their own absence. Photographs also allow viewers to consider the eyes of the dead while the subjects were still alive, and then once they are dead too. This will be discussed in reviews of Gardner’s show, *The Dead at Antietam*, 1862. Susan Sontag expounds on this quality in her book, *On Photography*, where she agrees with Barthes concerning the link between photography and death. But, absence does not always, necessarily, engage with death. Jacques Derrida’s idea of *différence* can also apply: “the representation is different from the

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7 Ibid., 267.
event, and deferred. In this sense, a photograph is always the sign of an absence, though in some absence is more conspicuous than in others.”

The first chapter of this paper will examine Gardner and the photographs that he captured during the Civil War at Antietam. The history of Gardner’s indelible images will be charted through their loss after the war and then through their rediscovery. While Gardner’s photographs function as a body of work, they will not be dealt with in their entirety. Rather, this chapter will focus on the photographs that Gardner and his team captured after the sanguinary and gruesome battle of Antietam. The battle was over and burial squads had begun their work by the time Gardner arrived on the scene in 1862. Due to this delay and to the technological restrictions of the time period, he was unable to capture scenes of the raging battle itself. As a result, he chose to pay attention to the scenes of fallen soldiers. As these scenes of human wreckage were Gardner’s focus, this paper will deal primarily with those photographs and the absences therein.

The second chapter delves into the realm of David Levene's rephotography—the act of returning to a site with the explicit intention of recreating, to some extent, previously captured scenes. This chapter will also consider rephotography as a whole and why some artists choose to rephotograph the Civil War. Levene travels to Antietam and to other sites of Civil War-era photographs to take modern versions of the historic photographs, and to retrace the exact steps of Gardner, and of Timothy O’Sullivan (one of Gardner’s colleagues and later one of his employees), and others. Levene seeks to stand where they stood and to capture the same scenes that they captured. The final form of many of Levene’s photographs are combinations; Gardner

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and Levene’s photographs are presented as one overlapping image; the juxtaposition highlights the absences found in Levene’s photographs.

The third and final chapter explores Sally Mann’s photographs of Antietam from her *Battlefields* series. Mann goes “looking for the answer to [the] very question: does the earth remember? Do these fields upon which unspeakable carnage occurred, where unknowable numbers of bodies are buried, bear witness in some way? And if they do, with what voice do they speak? Is there a numinous presence of death in these now placid battlefields, these places of stilled time?” Mann rephotographs, but her technique differs from that of Levene. She does not endeavor to capture the same views that Gardner captured. Instead, she goes to the same battlefields and uses antiquarian processes to create her own original photographs. They do not visibly mimic Gardner’s in any way except for the photographic technology that she uses: wet-plate collodion glass negatives. She endeavors to photograph what is absent or invisible. This idea is not new to photographic theory either. Stanley Cavell, a philosopher of aesthetics, claims that ontologically “we see things” in photographs “that are not present.”

Gardner focused on the "invisible" casualties of war: infantry soldiers who were rarely identified when they fell on battlefields unless they took it upon themselves to provide identification (often tintype portraits with their names on the back) should they perish. Officers, however, were noted. While some of Gardner’s photographs are of places where high-ranking officers died (e.g., the famous *Field Where General Reynolds Fell, 1863*), his overall focus was on the unidentified soldiers. Gardner’s photographs depict the otherwise invisible casualties of

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war and all the devastation that the viewers cannot see, while Levene and Mann’s photographs continue to represent the victims of the Civil War through their physical absence from the scenes. They each provide a window into the past that engages the viewer. They depict war indirectly through absence and commemorate those who died.
CHAPTER ONE: ALEXANDER GARDNER AND THE CIVIL WAR

Since its inception photography has been used to document conflicts. An early example is the work of Roger Fenton (1819–1869). He photographed men and battlefields during the British involvement in the Crimean War (1853–1856) and was supposed to follow the wishes of the Royal Family and not depict dead bodies. Photographic technology of the time prevented Fenton from capturing much more than the portraits of soldiers on locations where battles took place, and photographs of battlefields after the engagements were over. A famous example of the types of photographs that Fenton was able to capture within the Royal mandate and within the limits of technology is Valley of the Shadow of Death, 1856 (Figure 1). All that is present in this iconic photograph is a path that leads through low rolling hills which are littered with spent cannonballs fired during the Siege of Sevastopol in 1855. This photograph does not include the furious activity of battle; it does not even include people. Nevertheless, the photograph holds meaning, and viewers are able to understand the image when provided with contextual information, which is supplied by the title. The battle is represented, even though combatants and their weapons are absent through the inclusion of what the battle left behind: cannonballs.

Photographic technology rapidly advanced during the intervening years between the Crimean War and the American Civil War. These advancements allowed a photograph to be

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captured in a matter of seconds rather than minutes through the use of the wet-plate collodion process.\textsuperscript{15} Despite the astonishing decrease in necessary exposure time, however, exposing the image still took too long to capture most action scenes. This meant that most, if not all, photographs of the Civil War are static images that depict posed figures. If the people moved, then they blurred often beyond recognition.\textsuperscript{16} Despite the new, toxic, and highly flammable chemicals and the cumbersome equipment used in the new process, Mathew Brady (1822–1896), Alexander Gardner (1821–1882), Timothy O’Sullivan (1840–1882), and others are estimated to have produced between 7,000 and 10,000 negatives—some of which have been lost or are still waiting to be found—throughout the duration of the Civil War.\textsuperscript{17} This vast number of negatives makes the Civil War the first military conflict to be extensively photographed, unlike the Crimean War, or the Mexican-American War (1846–1848) where many Civil War officers began their careers.\textsuperscript{18} These photographs served and serve as visual placeholders for a war that many viewers had not and have not experienced first-hand, a function that paintings fulfilled to some extent for previous wars.

In the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, Swiss historian Jean-Jacques Babel estimated that in the 5,500 years of recorded history there have only been 292 years of peace and 14,352 wars.\textsuperscript{19} Despite the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Wagner, 59. In the “Preface” to his Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner, D. Mark Katz states: “There has been some difference of opinion about the spelling of Matthew Brady’s name. I have chosen the spelling that Brady seems most likely to have used. He always went by “M. B. Brady,” so it has proved impossible to definitively confirm his spelling, but New York and Washington business directories from the time list it as “Matthew.” And in fact “Matthew” was the common spelling of the name until the late nineteenth century, at which point “Mathew” became the predominant form.” In this paper, I will use “Mathew” as it is the accepted spelling that is most common.
\textsuperscript{19} Garrison, 6.
apparent prevalence of war, only a small fraction of people experienced war directly.\textsuperscript{20} As such, war was something that could be remote; its consequences were not likely immediate to most people. “Total War,” the permeation of war into all parts of society, did not occur until World War I. “Many heard of [war]. Some read about it, Very few actually saw it,” \textit{until} the American Civil War.\textsuperscript{21} Much of the visual documentation of the Civil War exists in the form of the then relatively new and immediate technology of photographs, rather than in paintings, prints, or writings, which were the dominate forms of visual documentation during previous wars. Despite the large number of negatives and their relative immediacy, however, the photographs of Gardner may not have been widely available to the public in the 1800s. Amy Kostine, a graduate research assistant at the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, claims that “Gardner offered his images for sale via a mail-order catalog, with prices ranging from $.50 to $1.50 per image. Through this catalog, other galleries around the country could purchase Gardner’s images at wholesale prices and sell them in their own galleries.”\textsuperscript{22} Kostine cites an e-mail from Bob Zeller, a photo historian who claims that Gardner’s Antietam and Gettysburg series were quite popular.\textsuperscript{23} However, no sales figures are available to corroborate this claim. This leaves us to assume that relatively few people who were not in New York to see Brady’s exhibition, which depicted Civil War battlefields by Brady, Gardner, and O’Sullivan, and others, ever saw Gardner's photographs of Antietam at that time. For those who did attend the show, the photographs allowed them to see a representation of what soldiers would have seen

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} Amy Kostine, “A ‘Terrible Reality’: Alexander Gardner’s Photographs of the Dead,” Middle Tennessee State University, http://library.mtsu.edu/tps/Alexander_Gardners_Photographs_of_the_Dead.pdf. These prices equate to between $11.51 and $34.54 in 2017 USD.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
in the aftermath of a battle. Walton argues that “photographs are transparent. We see the world *through* them.”\textsuperscript{24} Oliver Wendell Holmes, an American author and contemporary of Gardner’s, would have agreed with Walton. He believed that a person need only look at photographs of Antietam to know what the battle was like.\textsuperscript{25} Other photographic theorists, however, disagree. Iranian-American artist Aphrodite Désirée Navab argues that the idea of a photograph as transparent, as a window, is a “fallacy.”\textsuperscript{26} She does not believe that photographs act as windows. Such a delusion, she claims, relies on the artistic perception present in Western civilization of the function of art and in linear perspective, which would imply that outside of Western influence photographs would not be seen as transparent windows.\textsuperscript{27}

Yet, according to Walton and Holmes, the photographs in the show made the distant and unimaginable battlefields of the war imaginable and *real* for those who visited Brady’s New York studio, where the show was held.\textsuperscript{28} Despite the physical distance of war it may have been immediate in other less tangible, yet more direct ways—lost family members and friends, and increased taxes, among other things—but the battlefields themselves were often remote and indescribable. Photography changed this.

\textsuperscript{24} Walton, “Selections from *Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism*,” 286.
\textsuperscript{25} Oliver Wendell Holmes, “Doings of the Sunbeam,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 12, no. 69 (1863), n.p.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Holmes, n.p.
The Civil War

The Civil War, which pitted states against one another and tore families apart, is the bloodiest war in which the United States has participated. An estimated 620,000 Americans died during the Civil War, a domestic war that did not directly involve foreign powers. This number is greater than the number of Americans who have died in all of the other wars prior to the Vietnam War combined, all of which involved foreign countries.²⁹ During the Civil War, the population of the Northern states was about 22,000,000, while the Southern states only had a population of about 9,000,000.³⁰ About ten percent of the North’s entire population—2,128,948 men (extrapolating a 1% sample of the 1860 census data this would account for approximately 19% of the North’s male population)³¹—were members of the army at some point during the war’s duration. A similar percentage of the Southern population, 11 eleven percent—1,082,119 men—served in their army (approximately 23% of the male population).³² Ten percent of all Northern men between the ages of 20 and 45 would perish; thirty percent of all Southern men between the ages of 18 and 40 would die.³³ Those that lost their lives were more likely to die from disease than from the enemy’s bullets or cannonballs—a soldier was two times more likely to die from

³³ John Huddleston, Killing Ground: Photographs of the Civil War and the Changing American Landscape (Baltimore, Md.: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 3. To compare the percentage of deaths to other wars can be helpful. During World War II the United States lost only 0.32% of its total population. During the Revolutionary War the population of the United States was about 2,500,000 and about 23,800 American men died, approximately 0.95% of the total population.
an illness (dysentery, typhoid fever, smallpox, pneumonia, malaria, yellow fever, ague, and others) than in a battle or from the wound he received in battle. This meant that many were affected by the events of the Civil War even if they did not see the battlefields in person or in photographs. The Civil War remains the worst war, in terms of its death toll, which may explain why many Americans remain interested in the conflict, as is evidenced by the enormous volume of material published about the war. Photographers such as Levene and Mann may be attracted to it for the same reasons. Gardner was certainly struck by the amount of human wreckage that he encountered at battlefields like Antietam.

**Antietam**

Of all the major and minor battles that make up the Civil War, the Battle of Antietam is still known as the bloodiest battle ever fought on American soil. It overshadows the better-known four-day battle of Gettysburg. As evidenced by the existence of many casualty estimates (as cited in the section above), the catastrophic nature of the Battle of Antietam makes the exact number of casualties—missing, wounded, and dead—difficult to calculate. While Gettysburg would result in approximately 51,117 casualties, that battle lasted for four days. Antietam only lasted a single day and resulted in an estimated 22,717 casualties; 13,860 during the morning phase, 5,500 during the mid-day phase, and 3,720 during the afternoon phase.\(^{34}\) According to the National Park Service’s webpage on Antietam, the only battles that resulted in a greater number of casualties were those lasting for more than a day.\(^{35}\)

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\(^{35}\) Ibid.
Gardner took many of his photographs of Antietam in the places where the combat had raged fiercest. Gardner’s photograph, *Confederate dead by a fence on the Hagerstown road*, was taken on the site where the most savage fighting of the battle took place (Figure 2). After the battle, Edward S. Bragg, a Lieutenant Colonel commanding the Union’s Sixth Wisconsin regiment, wrote: “I counted eight rebels in one row along the fence in front of us, lying so thick you could step from one to the other.” Many of the men that Bragg saw lying before him and that Gardner would photograph the next day were unidentified. The Union held the field at the end of the day and they had more on their minds than identifying the Confederate soldiers that had died, a nearly impossible task without dog tags or family members to identify their bodies. By the Battle of Cold Harbor almost two years later, in 1864—during which 7,000 men would either be killed or wounded in 20 minutes—Union soldiers had begun pinning pieces of paper to their uniforms with their names written on them so that they could be identified in the event of their demise.

**Alexander Gardner**

Alexander Gardner, the photographer who captured the most iconic scenes of the American Civil War, immigrated to the United States from Scotland, where he had been the owner of the *Glasgow Sentinel*. Gardner was born in Paisley, Scotland, a small town west of

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37 Huddleston, 3.

Glasgow, in 1821.\textsuperscript{39} In 1850 Gardner’s future brother-in-law and his brother James came to the United States to establish a cooperative community in Iowa, which Gardner had a hand in organizing.\textsuperscript{40} Gardner remained in Glasgow in order to procure more funds for the venture.\textsuperscript{41} In 1851 he purchased the \textit{Glasgow Sentinel}, which would quickly become the second largest newspaper in Glasgow.\textsuperscript{42} That same year he saw the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, London.\textsuperscript{43} It was there that he first encountered the work of his future employer, Mathew Brady; Gardner may even have had the chance to meet Brady.\textsuperscript{44} After this exhibition Gardner began reviewing photographic exhibitions in the \textit{Glasgow Sentinel}; one of the exhibitions that he reviewed was Fenton’s Crimean War photographs: “The portraits of the heroes who have done so much for the honor of the allies are most vividly portrayed. We can hardly commend any of the photographs more than another, but we would suggest to the visitor to pay particular attention to the one on the ‘Council of War’ held on the night previous to the taking of Mamelon.”\textsuperscript{45} It was also during this period that Gardner began experimenting with photography himself.\textsuperscript{46} In 1856 Gardner permanently immigrated to the United States. He settled in New York and quickly found employment under Brady.\textsuperscript{47} Initially, Gardner worked primarily making extra-large Imperial-sized photographs which measured 17 x 21 inches.\textsuperscript{48} However, when Brady’s eyesight began to

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 3.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 4.  
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 5.  
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 6; \textit{Glasgow Sentinel}, December 8, 1855 in Katz.  
\textsuperscript{46} Katz, 5–6.  
\textsuperscript{47} Garrison, 9; Katz, 7; and Weber, 215.  
fail him, Gardner took on additional responsibilities, which culminated in 1858 when he was placed in charge of Brady’s entire Washington, D.C. gallery.49

By the advent of the Civil War, Gardner was part of a team that consisted of over 20 photographers, including his younger brother James, and Gardner was one of Brady’s chief photographers. Brady’s established relationship with President Lincoln and other prominent politicians enabled him to obtain passes that permitted him and his photographers to come and go freely with the army.50 In November of 1861, Gardner himself received the honorary rank of Captain on the staff of General George McClellan, and this gave him unlimited access to the army.51 Gardner’s rank, along with the passes obtained by Brady, placed Gardner in the perfect position to photograph battlefields.

Gardner's rank preserved his access to battlefields even after he left Brady's employment sometime between October 1862 and May of 1863,52 at which time he opened his own studio in Washington D.C.53 William Frassanito, a Civil War photographic historian, believes that his departure may have resulted from the lack of recognition that Gardner received for his work.54 “Mathew Brady’s photographs” refers to photographs with his name on them but it does not necessarily denote Brady's authorship—as that concept is now commonly understood.55 Roland

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49 Ibid.
50 Garrison, 11.
51 Katz, 28.
54 Frassanito, *Antietam*, 54.
Barthes claims that “the author is a modern figure, a product of … the prestige of the individual.”

Barthes proposes that an author is a result of capitalist ideology. As such, according to Barthes, an “author” would not have been important before the advent of a capitalist society and the apprenticeship model may have been a holdover from the pre-capitalist system.

The older system was that of apprenticeship, where the owner of the studio received the majority of the credit. Since Brady owned the studio that employed Gardner, Gardner's photographs were referred to as “Photographs by Brady” regardless of that statement’s veracity in more contemporary parlance. Brady is known as the “father of photojournalism” for his extensive documentation of the Civil War despite the fact that his eye was not the only eye behind the ground glass plates in most cases due to his failing eyesight. Conversely, in the case of the exhibition, The Dead of Antietam (discussed in-depth later), Gardner is the “author” meaning that he was the creator, which is synonymous with artist. Moreover, Brady’s name is remembered while others have been forgotten or pushed to the sidelines, an omission which has recently been undergoing correction. Much of Gardner's—and others’—work has been misattributed (in today's way of thinking) to Brady, and it would continue being attributed to Brady even after Gardner left Brady’s employment, because Brady’s name was better known, and later scholars celebrated "Brady's" work.

Gardner seems, therefore, to have left Brady's employment in a dispute over authorship rights.

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57 Ibid., 143.
58 Wagner, 57.
The fact that photographs that came from Gardner’s own firm would bear not only his company’s name but also the name of the individual photographers (and printers sometimes) responsible for capturing the scenes lends credibility to Frassanito’s claim that Gardner left due to lack of recognition. D. Mark Katz, however, disagrees and argues that “Brady’s employees were actively copyrighting their own materials as early as May 5, 1862—freely assigning … titles and negative numbers.” On October 7, 1862, Gardner did copyright 18 of his 95 Antietam negatives, but on his application, he omitted Brady’s name as the publisher. Gardner’s new studio competed with Brady’s studio to the point that Gardner even hired away some of Brady’s best photographers. After Gardner’s split with Brady, many of the Civil War’s iconic photographs were produced by Gardner’s firm. This is partially due to the fact that Gardner took several of Brady’s most accomplished employees with him when he left.

Gardner continued his photographic career after the end of the Civil War, focusing on a variety of projects including printing and publishing Henry DeWitt Moulton’s *Rays of Sunlight from South America* series as a photographic book. He took the final portrait of President Abraham Lincoln just five days before his assassination, and he later photographed the conspirators and their execution. Gardner then left Washington for a time, following a fire that

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62 Katz, 47.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid., 51.
66 Katz, 143–201.
seriously damaged his studio.\textsuperscript{67} In 1867, Gardner was appointed as the official photographer of the Union Pacific Railroad.\textsuperscript{68} The company charged him with documenting the building of the railroad in Kansas and with recording the numerous Amerindian groups that they encountered.\textsuperscript{69} In 1871, however, Gardner gave up photography to devote his time to “the Washington Beneficial Endowment Association and the Masonic Mutual Relief Association.”\textsuperscript{70} He remained working there until his death in 1882.

**Gardner’s Photographs**

Gardner’s photographs selected for this paper were chosen from the 70 negatives that he made in Antietam, Maryland, in September of 1862.\textsuperscript{71} Although the Battle of Antietam took place on September 17, Gardner did not begin photographing until September 19—two full days after the battle had ended, and after the burial crews had begun their work and buried many of the dead.\textsuperscript{72} This fact, however, does not make the carnage and human wreckage any less poignant. This paper analyzes two photographs: *Confederate dead by a fence on the Hagerstown road* and *Bodies in front of the Dunker church* (Figures 2 & 3). These two photographs depict the horrors that were present in the aftermath of the battle that many reviewers and authors noted. Gardner focused on deceased soldiers from both sides of the conflict and on the Antietam landscape itself. In his later photographs at Gettysburg, Gardner emphasized the human remains

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, 215.  
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 210.  
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 264.  
\textsuperscript{71} Jones, n.p.  
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
while ignoring the landscape to the point that the locations of many of his photographs cannot be identified.\(^{73}\)

Many photographers attempted to capture the Civil War per the artistic traditions of the time. They endeavored to portray the war as a noble and honorable affair that was full of glory and victory.\(^{74}\) This attitude is common and persistent in historical studies. Kenneth Stampp, a professor of American History at the University of California, Berkeley, claimed in 1965 that many historians treat the Civil War not as “a tragedy … [but] a glorious time of gallantry, noble self-sacrifice, and high idealism.”\(^{75}\) He argued that even historians who consider the war “needless” and “condemn” those who brought it about still write about it with “reverence”—”the martyred Lincoln, the Christlike Lee, the intrepid Stonewall Jackson, and many others in this galaxy of demigods.”\(^{76}\) Contrary to this mode of popular portrayal, Gardner wanted to portray the “naked reality” of war, the carnage and death that he saw on the battlefields.\(^{77}\) It was this uncommon attitude and practice that instigated the reviews written for the show, The Dead at Antietam, which opened in Brady’s New York studio in October of 1862. The New York Times noted that “Mr. Brady has done something to bring home the terrible reality of war. If he has not brought the bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets, he has done something very like it.”\(^{78}\)

\(^{73}\) Frassanito, Gettysburg, 21.
\(^{74}\) Garrison, 10.
\(^{76}\) Ibid.
\(^{77}\) Garrison, 10.
Of all the photographs in Brady's show, *Confederate dead by a fence on the Hagerstown road*, became one of the most reproduced images of the fallen from Antietam (Figure 2). It is also a photograph that laid the dead "in our dooryards." In this photograph, we can see that when Gardner arrived, the field was no longer as Bragg described it. Nevertheless, the wreckage is no less palpable. While horrifying, it must have been visually striking to Gardner. Of the 70 negatives that Gardner and his team produced at Antietam, five of them were of the Hagerstown Road. The carnage that Gardner sought and that drove other viewers away, as we will see in Holmes’s review later on, would draw in some who attended Brady’s New York exhibition, as was remarked upon in *The New York Times*' review:

Crowds of people are constantly going up the stairs; follow them, and you will find them bending over photographic views of that fearful battle-field … Of all the objects of horror one would think the battle-field should stand preeminent … But… there is a terrible fascination about it that draws one near these pictures, and makes him loth [sic] to leave them. 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.  

This review suggests that the visitors to Brady’s gallery were not content to look at the photographs passively. They engaged with the images, which was necessitated by their small

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79 Jones, n.p.
80 Ibid.
size. A full plate photographic print that was not enlarged would have been 6 ½ by 8 ½ inches. In fact, one of Gardner’s photographs, *Antietam Battlefield*, was done as an albumen silver printed from one half of a stereoscopic negative—it only measured 3 ¾ by 4 ¼ inches. Visitors desired to meet the eyes of the dead, to look into the eyes that had seen the battle. Author Stephen Crane, would refer to this as trying to read “the answer to the Question.”

The idea that the human eye recorded the last thing a person saw before dying was, in the 1860s, scientifically based. The earliest known reference to an optographic image was in the mid-1700s when Christopher Schiener, a Jesuit friar observed a faint and fleeting image on the retina of a dissected frog. During the 1870s and 1880s a German physiologist Wilhelm Kühne devised a process to fix the image from the retina; he performed his experiments on rabbits and was successful. These optograms were not limited to the world of science. Salvador Dali produced several which went on display in 2007 for the first time as part of an exhibit in Derek Ogbourne’s Museum of Optography. Optograms were also used in forensics. In 1914, *The Washington Times* ran “Image on her retina may show girl’s slayer” as a headline. Presumably

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85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.
those optograms did not include any decisive information, because the accused was tried twice and found not guilty both times.\(^{88}\)

The desire to look into the eyes of the dead is not exclusive to Americans in the 1800s. Barthes, in his *Camera Lucida* (1980), discussed this phenomenon too. He recalled encountering a photograph of Napoléon Bonaparte’s brother, Jérôme Napoléon Bonaparte (1805–1870), who was very much alive when the photograph was taken in 1852. Barthes describes his amazement when he realized “[he was] looking at the eyes that looked at the emperor.”\(^{89}\) He wrote that he would mention this amazement to others, but when no one else shared his interest he moved on to explore different topics.\(^{90}\) It was this photographic encounter that sparked Barthes’ interest in the medium and led him to write *Camera Lucida*, which was a “cultural turn” for his interest in photography.\(^{91}\) While Barthes claimed that he moved on, he returned to this subject with death in tow. For Barthes, photography acted as a means of gazing into the eyes of dead men while they were still alive (and vice versa: meaning, gazing into the eyes of living men once they were dead). For him, a person’s current state of living does not mean that their death cannot be seen. Barthes expanded on this when he discussed Gardner’s portrait of Lewis Payne, the man who attempted to assassinate the U.S. Secretary of State, W.H. Seward, in 1865 (Figure 4):


\(^{89}\) Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 3.

\(^{90}\) Ibid.

\(^{91}\) Ibid.
Alexander Gardner photographed him in his cell, where he is waiting to be hanged. The photograph is handsome, as is the boy; that is the studium. But the punctum is: he is going to die. I read at the same time: This will be and this has been; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose … the photograph tells me death is in the future. … I shudder … over a catastrophe which has already occurred. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe.

Barthes continued by saying that death is “vividly legible in historical photographs: there is always a defeat of Time in them: that is dead and that is going to die…. They have their whole lives before them; but they are also dead.” While Payne is present in the image, he is also absent, because he is already dead according to Barthes’ theory that a living person’s death can be seen in a photograph a priori while they are still alive and after they are long dead.

Not all visitors to Brady’s New York studio were “chained by the strange spell that dwells in dead men’s eyes.” Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894)—who visited the Antietam battlefield to search for his son who was injured there—wrote in “Doings of the Sunbeam” for The Atlantic Monthly in July 1863 that:

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92 Studium, according to Barthes, is the “cultural interest.” (Barthes, Camera Lucida, 95).
93 In a photograph the punctum is the “unexpected flash” or detail that stands out to the viewer. (Barthes, Camera Lucida, 95–96). He says that the detail is the first punctum while the second punctum is “Time, the lacerating emphasis of … ‘that-has-been’.” (Barthes, Camera Lucida, 96).
94 Barthes, Camera Lucida, 96.
95 Ibid.
We have now before us a series of photographs showing the field of Antietam and the surrounding country, as they appeared after the great battle of the 17th of September. These terrible mementos of one of the most sanguinary conflicts of the war we own to the enterprise of Mr. Brady of New York. … Let him who wishes to know what war is look at this series of illustrations. These wrecks of manhood thrown together in careless heaps or arranged in ghastly rows for burial were alive but yesterday. How dear to their little circles far away most of them!—how little cared for here by the tired party whose office it is to consign them to the earth! An officer may here and there be recognized; but for the rest—if enemies, they will be counted and that is all. … Many people would not look through this series. Many, having seen it and dreamed of its horrors, would lock it up in some secret drawer, that it might not thrill or revolt those whose soul sickens at such signs. It was so nearly like visiting the battlefield to look over those views, that all the emotions excited by the actual sight of the stained and sordid scene strewed with rags and wrecks, came back to us, and we buried them in the recesses of our cabinet as we would have buried the mutilated remains of the dead they too vividly represented.96

The unnamed New York Times reporter reviewing The Dead of Antietam wrote that one would find visitors peering into the eyes of those photographed; the visitors were tied to the photographs. The reviewer noted that the visitors were loath to leave. We see something different in Holmes’ commentary—Holmes was on the battlefield after the battle—and he said that many would not want to see these photographs. He claims that many viewers would “lock [them] up in

a secret drawer” and “[bury] them” as they would have buried the bodies. While Gardner’s photographs enticed the viewers nearer and encouraged them to look into the eyes of the fallen, they also repelled and horrified, and illustrated to those not present at the battlefield the bloody nature of the battle of Antietam, which might now haunt their dreams. For a time, therefore, these photographs of death and absence disappeared from the public mind, perhaps for reasons not unrelated to the many horrors they “too vividly represented.”

Gardner’s Photographs After the Civil War

In 1865 Gardner sought to make some of his photographs readily available to the public—as original albumen prints hand-printed and glued into the pages of his book, titled Gardner’s Photographic Sketch book of the Civil War (1866). He did this rather than printing them as carte-de-visite images or visiting cards, which might have been more popular.97 Gardner actually introduced Brady to the carte-de-visite camera that produced “small, inexpensive portraits” and ranged in size from 3 by 5 inches to smaller than a postage stamp.98 Families collected these and placed them “in leather-bound albums.” Portraits of famous personages were placed alongside “their carte portraits of family and friends”99 While these started as calling cards (portraits that a visitor left behind on an entryway table after a visit), they soon expanded to include “theatrical personalities [and] historic sites,” among other things, similar to modern day

souvenir postcards. They were popular. When Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s consort, died in 1861, 70,000 carte-de-visite portraits were sold. Gardner’s book received little interest at the time; part of this disinterest can be credited to the price tag of $150. Upon his death in 1882—ten years after his Washington D.C. gallery closed—Gardner’s “estate consisted of, many other things, books and furniture, but, apparently, no photographic material.”

It was not until 1893 that J. Watson Porter, a photographer who had worked for Gardner’s studio, remembered the negatives, went in search of them, and found them. Porter located a large collection of 5,000–6,000 negatives in boxes under the stairs of a house on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., where Gardner used to live. Included in these dusty containers were portraits of Lincoln and other famous personages. Porter then went to visit Gardner’s son, Lawrence, to inquire after the photographs he had found, and Lawrence agreed that “the negatives were probably his father's.” While Porter discovered a large number of negatives, by the time he did, many of Gardner’s other negatives had been lost, sold, scattered, or even destroyed.

Prior to that discovery in 1893, Katz believes that some negatives ended up in the hands of collectors. General Albert Ordway and Colonel Arnold Rand, photography collectors,
purchased 2,000 negatives in 1882 that were made by Gardner or under his direction after he left Brady’s staff. Ordway and Rand attempted to sell the negatives to the government, but the United States government was not interested. In 1885, Ordway and Rand’s collection of negatives was sold to John C. Taylor of Huntington, Connecticut. Taylor offered prints from the negatives to the public. In 1905, the collection was sold again, this time to Edward B. Eaton of Hartford, Connecticut. Eaton stored them in the vault of the Phelps Publishing Company in 1916. They remained there until 1942; that was the year that the Library of Congress paid the storage fee and acquired the whole collection. However, it is still unknown if the boxes of negatives uncovered by Porter were included in the collection that ended up in the Library of Congress or if they were sold to other collectors. The Library has 8,705 photographs by Gardner, which is enough to encompass the boxes found by Porter. The Smithsonian owns a handful of negatives that lack provenance, and a former curator of photography at the National Portrait Gallery, William Stapp, noted that some of Gardner’s negatives have simply “vanished.”

Katz posits that some of these negatives were even sold as scrap glass. A scrap glass dealer, Charles Bender relayed his story to Katz in 1953 about buying glass negatives 45 years ago.

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108 Katz, 277.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ruane, n.p.
earlier from Moses Preston Rice, a photographer who may have been one of Gardner’s employees:  

… I purchased all the original wet-plate negatives made by Brady. There were about ninety thousand of these negatives stored there. There were a lot of original negatives made by Brady of Abraham Lincoln, General Grant, and all the officials and celebrities, the entire collection gathered by Brady. … [M]y dad told me that if the negatives had any value, Brady and Mr. Rice would not have sold the collection to us, and so we went to work and salvaged the negatives by removing the emulsion and retaining the silver, and we sold the glass to photographers, and gas meter manufacturers.

It is possible that this collection also included some of Gardner’s missing negatives, or those uncovered by Porter. Gardner was the original photographer for all of the photographs published by Rice, who even copyrighted some of Gardner’s portraits as his own work in 1891, 1892, and 1901.  

Like so many others, Gardner’s photographs of Antietam were, perhaps, actively forgotten. Perhaps they were too painful to preserve as Holmes suggests, or, at the time, did not initially engender enduring interest. This last prospect seems unlikely. The Tyson Brothers’ photographic company in Gettysburg continued publishing their views of the Gettysburg battlefield even 20 years later. The striking difference between Tyson’s and Gardner’s

\[117\] Ibid.
\[118\] Ibid.
\[119\] Ibid., 277.
\[120\] Frassanito, *Gettysburg*, 45.
photographs of Gettysburg—and, by extension, Antietam—is the presence, or lack thereof, of corpses. Gardner’s scenes include fallen soldiers while the Tyson Brothers’ were landscapes devoid of the dead. That means that it is more likely that Gardner’s photographs were actively forgotten because they were too painful to remember just as Holmes suggested in his review: “Many people would not look through this series. Many, having seen it and dreamed of its horrors, would lock it up in some secret drawer.”

**Absence**

In the “Introduction” to this paper, Derrida’s idea of *différence* was mentioned—“the representation is different from the event, and deferred. In this sense, a photograph is always the sign of an absence, though in some absence is more conspicuous than in others.” In Gardner’s photographs of the Civil War, this absence is less overtly noticeable. The absence that Derrida mentions, the absence that is present in all photographs because they are latent images, is minimal. All photographs are latent images because there is a delay between the moment that the photograph is captured and when it is visible. Once the photograph is captured the scene is no longer as it was; it changes, even if only imperceptibly. The gap in Gardner’s work is not just a few seconds or even a few minutes. The temporal gap between the battle of Antietam and Gardner’s photographs of Antietam is two days. Soldiers' bodies were buried, and the scene had changed. The difference between Lieutenant Colonel Bragg’s description and Gardner’s photographs of that scene is clear even though Holmes argued that if one “wishes to know what war is [then] look at this series of illustrations.” Holmes’ point indicates that there is no

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121 Holmes.
122 Derrida in Monegal, 253.
difference between the photograph and the physical space, that the time-altered image still conveys the full sense of being present in the moment.

Nevertheless, there is more here than meets the eye. Absence is more than the temporal gap. While Gardner was restricted by the technology of the time period, his work takes on a poetic quality even if that is not what he intended. Gardner intended to have as small a gap as possible between an event and his photographing of it. In the future, such as after the battle of Gettysburg, he would show up before other photographers, sometimes to his own detriment.123 Brady, who arrived later, after the burial operations were finished, was able to wait until atmospheric conditions were best whereas Gardner was rushed and could not wait.124 His greatest advantage, arriving on the battlefield soon after the battle was over, also proved to be his greatest disadvantage. The town was still recovering from the battle and no one had mapped out where the events that had taken place which means that there was no one to guide Gardner to places where significant events took place on the battlefield.125 Monegal claims that photographs like Gardner’s have “a poetic quality that points to its reading as a synecdoche or metonymy, to the fact that it refers to something that is not seen” but is, nevertheless, in the photograph.126 This relates to Cavell’s idea about how photographs show things that are not present.

Something else that is not shown is violence. There is no violence in Gardner’s photographs even though that is what he is referring to. His images are not as graphic as those that future wars would produce; they are tranquil by comparison. Bodies lay resting in fields where they fell or in neat rows awaiting burial. However, this lack of “explicit violence …

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123 Frassanito, Gettysburg, 30 & 38–39.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid., 33–34.
126 Monegal, 259.
[refers] to its consequences [and] tears up the peacefulness."\textsuperscript{127} The bodies of fallen soldiers are indexical proof that a battle took place, that the fields were thick with smoke from rifles, and that the air was rent with the sounds of cannon and rifle fire and screams of pain. These fallen bodies speak to the terrible nature of the war even while they fail to depict it directly. The violence is absent and the viewer is left to imagine what else happened, what other horrors they are not being shown. Just as they are left to imagine all of the battles and skirmishes that were not documented, the viewer cannot escape the violence that Gardner’s work addresses.

This inescapable violence is not exclusive to Gardner’s photographs. Barthes saw the catastrophe of his mother’s death in a peaceful photograph that was far removed from the ravages and terrors of war. For the unfortunate souls photographed by Gardner, that catastrophe has/had already come and gone. Gardner’s photographs mark the absence of the viewer from the battlefield at the time of battle; they cannot approach the dead or bury them despite their fervent wishes to do so. Such catastrophes of death and war are preserved in these photographs as a reminder of the absence that war can create. These photographs made those scenes of battle real for many viewers. Even today, one cannot imagine learning about the Civil War without the aid of Gardner's photographs and others like them.

The disappearance of these photographs after the war indicates that while Gardner’s photographs were shocking, and, while the New York show was popular—“crowds of people are constantly going up the stairs”—after the war no one could bear to look at photographs that so brutally portrayed the catastrophe of, and the permanent absences created by, war. The healing country put these images away, preferring instead to purchase simple landscapes like the

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 265.
photographs of battlefields produced by Brady and other smaller photographic studios such as the Tyson Brothers. Gardner’s photographs were simply too much to bear.
CHAPTER TWO: REPHOTOGRAPHY AND DAVID LEVENE

The past is something that can be visited or seen according to some scholars. Schocket claims he went to the past in general, while Schneider went to the Civil War in particular, and Cavell and Walton say that photographs let us see into the past even if we cannot visit it. However, this past or pasts that Schneider and Schocket visit, that anyone who attends an historical reenactment visits, is a reconstructed past, because the past—everything that came before the present moment—is constantly being reconstructed by history and memory to suit the needs of the present. The story is never complete; it remains fragmentary. Current historians continuously put together the fragments that we see today in new ways with different emphases. New ways of understanding the past emerge from new information and a totality of knowledge that comes from temporal distance. Each generation of historians rewrites history for themselves, drawing from, arguing with, discounting, and sometimes ignoring the histories written by previous generations. In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal, an emeritus professor of history and geography from the University College of London, argues that “[t]he past we know is partly a product of the present; we continually reshape memory, rewrite history, [and] refashion relics.”

David Levene and Sally Mann’s rephotographs of Antietam take part in this rewritten discourse; they construct memorials through the ritual of reconstructing Civil War era photographs. These memorials function as commemorative acts for the fallen, many of whom remain anonymous.

In “The Civil War Dead: Realism and the Problem of Anonymity,” Ian Finseth, an English professor with a focus on Civil War studies at the University of North Texas, insists that

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the Civil War dead—and the photographs of them—are as present today as they were over 150 years ago. They have not been laid to rest. Through photography, the dead are kept “alive.” They are continually brought out and put on display.\textsuperscript{129} In fact, it can be argued that these photographs are more relevant today than they were in the 1860s. The war is commemorated throughout the United States with the aid of Gardner’s photographs. For example, the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery memorialized the Civil War’s sesquicentennial by hosting multiple exhibits of Civil War artifacts and photographs in 2015.

These commemorations are by no means a modern invention. Memorials of the Civil War began before the resolution of the conflict, and they continue to this day.\textsuperscript{130} One form that these commemorative events take are physical reenactments of battles and episodes. Reenactments prior to the end of the war were used to remember fallen comrades and to teach others what war was all about; a memorial reenactment that took place on February 22, 1864, acted as a commemoration of George Washington’s birthday.\textsuperscript{131} After the war, these reenactments continued. The largest Civil War reenactment took place in 1913, and involved Civil War veterans.\textsuperscript{132} Over 50,000 former soldiers from the Union and Confederate armies participated in the event and helped to reenact the Battle of Gettysburg. Different events from the battle were incorporated, including Pickett’s Charge.\textsuperscript{133} Even the sitting president Woodrow Wilson, the first

\textsuperscript{129} Finseth, 557.
\textsuperscript{131} Eisenfeld, “The Birth of the Civil War,” n.p.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
Southern president since the conclusion of the Civil War, attended.\footnote{134} The urge to recreate, to reenact, and to rephotograph seems powerful and longstanding indeed.

Rephotography

The visibility of Civil War photographs, be it through contemporary exhibitions or their availability online through the Library of Congress website, leads to increased consumption of Civil War memories. Attending exhibitions, memorial sites, or reenactments of battles, leads visitors to remember the war. Caroline Janney, a professor of history at Purdue University, claims that what the war generation and, sometimes, their children feared most was forgetting; “remembering was … paramount.”\footnote{135} Readily available images aide remembering. This visibility also prompts contemporary artists to re-address the issue of the Civil War. Photographers in particular reexamine the Civil War through their own photographs of the same battlefields where physical traces of the war can still be found.

People living today have no first-hand experiential knowledge of the Civil War or the battlefield of Antietam that inspired such horror for Holmes. Although many viewers who originally saw Gardner’s photographs during Brady’s exhibition may have lacked direct knowledge of the war itself, viewers today possess even less direct comprehension because they are removed from the context of the original photographs by more than 150 years. Nevertheless, those who are alive today can traverse battlefields, gaze upon Dunker Church, tread upon

Burnside Bridge, and walk along the Hagerstown Road. They may not see the battles or live the experiences, but they can visit the spaces and places that shaped American history, both physically, and through photographs, either through original Civil War photographs, or through more recent photographs of the same sites; photographs that may draw them to the physical sites the way that they draw both Levene and Mann.

David Levene and Sally Mann use their photographs to create this memorial experience for viewers in their respective photographic series, *The American Civil War: Then and Now* and *Battlefields*. Levene returns to the scenes of the Civil War, and places Gardner’s photographs inside his own photographs by blending them together (Figures 5–8).136 Mann does something very different. She returns to the battlefields and photographs landscapes using Civil War era technology (Figures 10–11).137 Levene and Mann are both participating in a practice called rephotography. Levene’s work more closely resembles the common examples of rephotographic works in their creation and appearance. Rephotography demonstrates an engagement with past sites that are being precisely photographed for a second time, a third time, or more. Photographs that mirror their historic photographic counterparts take time and patience on the side of the photographer to create. Levene and Mann, therefore, engage with Gardner’s works and Antietam in an intimate way. Rephotography often attempts to remove, or to explore, the temporal gap between the present and the past, while simultaneously acknowledging the distance. Levene and Mann’s works may remove the 150+ years that stand between the viewer and the Civil War,

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while drawing attention to it at the same time.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, their images blend together both two different times and two different, but similar, spaces.

Rephotography takes a variety of forms. Despite their differences, rephotography as a process always engages with the past and the collective memory of the past. The distance between the present and the past is reconfigured by the juxtaposition of an historic photograph and a contemporary photograph, two possibilities, two lives, and two separate experiences.\textsuperscript{139} Rephotography engages the photographer and the viewer with the past. Photographers like Levene and Mann both engage with history when they go in search of places where history was shaped, where human presence is weighty and tangible.\textsuperscript{140}

Jason Kalin, the professor of rhetoric and discourse at DePaul, studies rephotography as a means of social engagement with the past. Kalin argues that “rephotography, rather than the representation of memory, suggests a practice of actively constructing and inhabiting memories and their times and places while also incorporating them into the present."\textsuperscript{141} There is no agreed-upon sense of exactly how far it is necessary to go into the past in order to apply rephotography to it. Rather, it seems that for rephotography to work, there is either a significant period of time between the two images that are compared, or a remarkable change has taken place at the location. The past is not all that is represented through these new photographs of the Civil War, however. Not only are viewers are engaging with the past, but they are vigorously creating new

\textsuperscript{138} April 9, 2015, marked the sesquicentennial from Appomattox and the treaty between General Robert E. Lee and General Ulysses S. Grant that brought the Civil War to a close.
\textsuperscript{140} Lowenthal, 60; and Perkins, 21.
\textsuperscript{141} Kalin, 170.
memories of events that happened in the past. Such memory creation happens on a large scale at Civil War-related National Parks.\textsuperscript{142}

Kalin’s 2013 article, “Remembering with Rephotography: A Social Practice for the Invention of Memories,” addresses two different forms of rephotography. The first consists of the sharp delineation between the historical and contemporary photographs (Figures 5 & 12). The border of the historical photograph acts as a second frame and focuses the viewers’ attention. This frame also acts as a window into the past (a thought that is common in photographic theory as described earlier). The second, photographic image is very much like the first except the two photographs are blended together almost seamlessly without the need for a secondary frame (Figure 13). This blending creates a seamless transition from past to present (in this example, from 1942 to 2015); the two times co-exist alongside one another.\textsuperscript{143} The past and the present, both experiences, are laid on top of one another in the same way that the digital imaging software layered the two images together.

These layered images/time periods are difficult to create; the photographer must stand in the same place that the original photographer stood. In \textit{Gettysburg: A Journey in Time} and \textit{Antietam: A Photographic Legacy of America’s Bloodiest Day}, Frassanito attempts to find the exact locations of Civil War photographs, though he often finds that the landscape has physically changed. With his books, which explore Civil War photographs and the challenges he faces when trying to locate where they were taken, he hopes to “present the reader with a unique visual experience.”\textsuperscript{144} He attempts “to focus the overwhelming reality of each photograph, thereby

\textsuperscript{142} Perkins, 36.
\textsuperscript{143} Kalin, 173.
\textsuperscript{144} Frassanito, \textit{Gettysburg}, 18.
transporting the reader back to the moment of exposure.”¹⁴⁵ He wants to impress upon his reader that “the moments captured by Gardner, Brady and other photographers were, and are, as real as the moments now being experienced by reading these very words.”¹⁴⁶

However difficult the process may be, rephotography is an act of remembrance and recreation that can be accomplished at some level by anyone with a camera or a smartphone. Blending the images together requires basic skills with digital imaging programs. Also, there are applications for smartphones that blend the images for the photographer. One such application is Timera; it is devoted to the social engagement of rephotography by allowing users to upload historical photographs and tag them with locations. This allows other users to see and incorporate those photographs into their own work. When taking a photograph, Timera will overlay a transparent copy of the historic image to assist the user in lining up the two images. It also allows the user to adjust the opacity of the two images; allowing for stark contrast or subtle blending (Figures 12–13).

This process is similar to combination photographs that were popular for a period of time during the mid-1800s. Thomas Annan (1830–1888), a Glaswegian photographer, provides an example with his Main Street, Gorbals, looking South (Figure 14). This is a carbon print of a photograph from 1868–1871 that was printed in 1877 and the clouds were added from a separate negative (and the clouds might have been painted onto that negative).¹⁴⁷ Exposure time for wet-plate collodion negatives required overexposing the sky to get a crisp, well exposed foreground, which is why Gardner’s photographs lack clouds. David Levene’s work very closely resembles

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 59.
this style of combination print rephotography. Interestingly, it is likely that Gardner would not approve of any of these new combination photographs. Katz argues that “[h]e was … adamant in his disdain for the composite photograph, which was difficult to produce, quite expensive to print, and popular only for a short time.”\(^{148}\)

**David Levene**

David Levene is a photojournalist for *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, and his work has been featured in the paper’s *Eyewitness* series over 120 times.\(^{149}\) Running since 2005, *Eyewitness* is a celebration of photography, and *The Guardian* is the only newspaper in the United Kingdom that consistently devotes significant space to a photograph of a current event.\(^{150}\) These photographs are featured daily as a double-page spread at the center of the newspaper. Levene has received numerous awards for his work. However, for the series discussed here, *The American Civil War: Then and Now*, he deviates from his photojournalistic practices into the realm of documentary photography. Photojournalism and documentary photography often consist of the same subject matter; photojournalism is often about speed—instant transmission of a story—whereas documentary photography is about showing daily life rather than only what is newsworthy. Levene's series about the Civil War connects the reader with the past by emphasizing that the places and moments shown in Gardner’s photographs are real, just as

\(^{148}\) Katz, 16.


\(^{150}\) Ibid.
Levene’s photographs are real. To emphasize the connection between his photographs and Gardner’s, Levene practice rephotography.

**Levene's Rephotographs**

Levene’s series, released in 2015, was created for and coincides with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War (2011–2015). It was the latest in a string of commemorations associated with the war. Levene's interactive website contains the historic photographs, his own photographs, and audio segments from custodians and curators of the historic sites depicted. One custodian stated: “My family lived here during the civil war [sic]—they were farmers with 13 children. Their lives were devastated forever. There were wounded here for a year after. Bodies were left in the fields. My great uncle got paid 25 cents per skull to give them a proper burial.”¹⁵¹ The titled images on the webpage begin as the historic photographs of the locations and then they automatically transition into Levene’s photographs. After the initial transition is complete the viewer is free to use a slider beneath the photographic set to move between the original and Levene’s photography, by allowing the viewer to manipulate the level of opacity between the two photographs. The past literally fades into the present and back again.

For this series, Levene traveled throughout the United States rephotographing places of the Civil War using 23 large format prints of original photographs as his guides.¹⁵² The task of achieving his goal, of recreating the exact camera position, angle, height, and perspective that

¹⁵² Levene, “Blasts from the Past.”
Gardner and others had had, was more difficult to attain than he had originally thought (Figures 8–9):

I was wading in the North Anna river [sic], camera in hand, trying not to get sucked downstream by the current. In my hand was a 150-year-old photo by Timothy O’Sullivan of a group of Union soldiers bathing in the North Anna towards the end of the American Civil War. I had been warned that the bridge O’Sullivan stood on for his picture was gone, and halfway across the water, I realised [sic] that there was no way I could achieve his vantage point to re-create the shot.153

These are just some of the challenges that rephotographers like Levene face when they try to recreate a photograph identical to an historical one. When Levene was unable to create a contemporary photograph of the site on the North Anna River, he took a photograph of himself standing knee deep in the waters of the North Anna River in a close approximation to where the Union soldiers bathed (Figure 9).

Levene and O’Sullivan’s photographs are neither the first nor the last memories of the North Anna River; “there is never a last image or a last time or a last memory, but rather only a last in a flow of images, times and memories.”154 Lowenthal argues that places bear traces of the people who have been there before.155 In accordance with this idea, this means that the river contains traces of the soldiers along with traces of Levene. The river bore witness to the bathing

153 Ibid.
154 Kalin, 170.
155 Lowenthal, 57–62.
Union soldiers in 1863 just as it bore witness to Levene in 2015. The photographs act as evidence of the ephemeral traces that Lowenthal speaks of, which exist even if the physical traces are gone.

In Levene’s *Antietam Dunker Church*, 2015, we are not looking at the original church that was on the site. A storm destroyed it in 1921. It was rebuilt in 1962 for the centennial of the battle (Figure 6).\(^{156}\) Nevertheless, the two churches appear to be one and the same in the merged image. The historic church seamlessly gives way to the modern reconstruction (Figure 7).

Undoubtedly, Gardner’s photographs were used to aid in the reconstruction. If one moves the slider beneath the photograph(s), one drifts between the two overlaid images, seeing first Gardner’s photograph with Confederate soldiers lying around the cannon in the foreground, and as one moves the slider across the screen—and through time—a memorial obelisk, a telephone pole, and a white pickup truck appear in the background as the bodies fade away. The tree line recedes and the topography changes due to erosion. This erosion not only alters the landscape, but it reveals history as well. In 1989, water erosion led to a previously buried body resurfacing and making local headlines.\(^ {157}\) In this composite image the viewer is not looking through a separate frame into the past, nor is a section of the image wholly past or wholly present. In the composite image, past and present are merged. The gap between the two is indistinguishable because we cannot point to one part and say that it is the past and to another and say that it is the present. The obelisk may be modern, but, while the photographs are blended, it is seen *through* the wheel of the cannon in the foreground, and trees are visible *through* the obelisk. The entire image is both the present and the past. They appear simultaneously; the boundaries have been

\(^{156}\) Levene, “The American Civil War: Then and Now.”

\(^{157}\) Ibid.
erased while the photographs are blurred together. Levene’s photographs blend the present and past together in a seamless transition linking the two times and emphasizing the absence that is present in the contemporary photograph.

**Absence**

Gardner’s photographs of Antietam are heavy with absence. These photographs represent something that is no more. The soldiers are gone. They were most likely buried in unmarked graves on the vast expanse of the battlefield. Gardner’s photographs, in a way, are their final resting place in collective memory. The people are remembered through the photographs. During the early days of photography, family portraits sometimes included earlier photographs of deceased family members. Using this tactic, although the person is gone, but he or she remains virtually present in the portrait and in the family’s memory.

Levene is exploring how to represent the soldiers when they are no longer present in much the same way as Victorians were when they included portraits within portraits. Derrida’s aforementioned idea of *différence* is more pronounced in this type of rephotography; the representation of the event is deferred and is therefore different. Levene is photographing the aftermath of the Civil War even though 153 years (give or take a few months) separate Levene’s photographs from the event. He is telling the story of an event that happened long ago and layering that past event with others telling the same story. Through the juxtaposition of Gardner

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and Levene’s photographs, Levene is highlighting the temporal gap between their photographs and the event.

Levene’s photographs force the viewer to confront time and how much has changed—or has not changed—between 1862 and 2015. When it comes to the juxtaposition of the past and the present, Monegal says, “absence is inscribed in the photograph by the parallel composition, like in those pastimes for children where you are asked to spot the differences between the two pictures.”159 When viewers see Levene’s composite images they cannot help but see what is no longer present. The bodies are gone and in their place we have a white, memorial obelisk. The absence of the bodies is conspicuous, making it clear that “one image by itself would not tell the same story.”160

The empty fields of Levene’s photographs bring to mind the unseen physical traces. The bodies no longer await burial, but they are still present. Knowing that a heavy rainstorm uncovered a previously buried body, it is imaginable for there to be more unmarked graves in these seemingly innocent and now-painless landscapes. In her autobiography, Mann recounts her trip to Antietam and how either she or her dog dislodged a lead bullet from the ground: “the spoils of war still surfacing, unbidden and irrepresible. It sculpted this ravishing landscape and will hold the title to it for all time. The down payment, a deposit of fallen bodies, hopes, loves, joys, and fears, is now the dark matter of death’s creation.”161

159 Monegal, 265.
160 Ibid.
161 Mann, 416.
**Importance of Rephotography**

One might ask, why is it important to rephotograph old wars? Why are rephotographers like Levene drawn back to these sites of destruction? Kenneth Foote, professor of geography at the University of Colorado, Boulder, explores how and why people respond to landscapes with a violent past. He delves into America’s landscapes and battlefields in his book *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy*. Foote claims that sanctification takes place when people desire to remember and a sanctified site attracts further, unofficial acts of commemoration, such as Levene and Mann’s. Foote is specifically interested in how violence shapes the American landscape. He proposes four categories for the changes that he observed during his studies. He places these four categories—sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration—on a continuum. Sanctification sits at one end of this sliding scale, and takes place “when events are seen to hold some lasting positive meaning that people wish to remember.”

Obliteration is located at the other end; it acts as the opposite of sanctification. As one might expect, “obliteration results from particularly shameful events people would prefer to forget.” Designation and rectification are located between these two opposites. Designation acts as an indicator “that something ‘important’ has happened [here].” This is often a transitory phrase before a place becomes sanctified. Rectification “involves removing the signs of violence and tragedy and returning a site to use, implying no lasting positive or negative meaning.”

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163 Ibid., 7.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid., 8.
166 Ibid., 18.
167 Ibid., 8.
According to Foote, a site requires a ritualistic component before it can move from designation to sanctification. A site must be formally consecrated through an event that states the site’s significance and why it should be remembered.\textsuperscript{168} Gettysburg is a sanctified site, according to Foote.\textsuperscript{169} The space has memorials and monuments, it is a National State Park, and large reenactments are held there. All of these components act as a formal consecration, because they speak to the site’s significance on an official level. Foote also claims that sanctified spaces are often distinguishable by their appearance.\textsuperscript{170} Some sites are characterized by a change from private to public possession (as was the case at Antietam) and by the attraction and accumulation of other memories through visitors, reenactments, and other events. These sanctified spaces “act as foci for other commemorative efforts.”\textsuperscript{171} Levene, Mann, and others who wish to remember will be drawn to the site.

Levene and Mann represent the Civil War through absence. Some of Levene’s pieces include Gardner’s shocking images, but some do not (Figure 6). Shock moves viewers, but the shock loses its potency over time. Lowenthal cites Penelope Lively, an award-winning British author, who argued that repeated exposure to shocking images from history removes their power.\textsuperscript{172} In other words, photographs that were once shocking and disturbing will lose their potency through repetition. Jacques Rancière addresses this same concept but in a different way in \textit{The Emancipated Spectator}: “If horror is banalized, it is not because we see too many images of it. We do not see too many suffering bodies on the screen. But we do see too many nameless bodies, too many bodies incapable of returning the gaze that we direct at them, too many bodies

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\bibitem{168} Ibid.
\bibitem{169} Ibid., 127–133.
\bibitem{170} Ibid., 9.
\bibitem{171} Ibid.
\bibitem{172} Lowenthal, 67.
\end{footnotesize}
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that are an object of speech without themselves having a chance to speak.\textsuperscript{173} Rephotography and its absence of horror (in some cases like the Civil War), represents violence without shocking the viewers, because there are no more nameless soldiers' bodies that cannot speak lying above ground. Today, Gardner’s photographs are less shocking than they were, although whether this is due to the overrepresentation of horror in general or the passage of time is irrelevant. A modern viewer can regard Gardner’s images without feeling the need to lock them away, as Holmes suggested.

Levene is participating in the process of accretion at Antietam and at other sites of the Civil War; he is adding further memories, all of which maintains the importance of the site. The site itself drew him there. Levene, unlike John Huddleston, another Civil War rephotographer, does not seek out little known sites that have not been commemorated. Levene seeks out places of significance that are already remembered and seen through photographs. His work is not shocking in the same way that Gardner’s was in 1862, but it is, nevertheless, powerful. His photographs commemorate the dead of Antietam because his work, as did Gardner’s, speaks to the nature of the war without directly depicting it. He emphasizes to the viewer that the field they see through his photographs (à la Walton and others) are real; they are just as real as Gardner’s photographs were and are today. This reduces the sense of temporal distance that a person might feel when viewing an historical photograph.

\textsuperscript{173} Monegal, 257.
CHAPTER THREE: REPHOTOGRAPHY AND SALLY MANN

Although Sally Mann practices rephotography, she approaches her subject matter quite differently than does Levene. She does not aspire to recreate Gardner’s photographs from a modern perspective. Rather, in her 2003 series, *Battlefields*, she returns to the battlefields of the Civil War and photographs them using the same wet collodion process that had been used in the original Civil War-era photographs. Her *Battlefields* series is hazy and uncertain, which obscures the details of the scene and symbolizes the impaired memories of those who may have seen the place or even been present at the event itself. It also reawakens a way of seeing that we have long associated with the time period of the Civil War, a way of seeing *not* associated with "our" own contemporary time period. The photographs are hazy because Mann wishes to portray ephemeral emotions or re-portray that earlier way of seeing rather than concrete facts. In relation to this older-era technology, Mann explicitly discusses the interactions between photography and memory: “[u]sing photographs as an instrument of memory is probably a mistake because I think that photographs actually sort of impoverish your memory in certain ways, sort of take away all the other senses—the sense of smell and taste and texture, that kind of stuff.”174 Here, Mann discusses photographing events and using the photographs in the future to recall the original photographed event. She is not saying that photographs are an impairment to those who were not present at the event. In the case of modern viewers remembering the Civil War 150+ years afterwards, they are left to imagine those other senses mentioned by Mann rather than experiencing them firsthand.

Mann was born in Lexington, Virginia, and her work exhibits an enduring interest in mortality, life, and her Southern heritage. While she has experimented with color photography, her focus remains in the black and white realm. Her work has won her significant recognition, including grants from the NEH, the NEA, and the Guggenheim Foundation. It is displayed at international institutions such as the Guggenheim Museum, and there are multiple books chronicling her photographs—such as *Southern Landscapes* and *Proud Flesh*. There is even a film about her work, *What Remains*, which debuted in 2015 to critical acclaim. Her autobiography, *Hold Still*, also released in 2015, was nominated for the National Book Award and the Andrew Carnegie Medal, making her not only an accomplished photographer but a celebrated writer as well.

Mann's series of landscapes entitled *Battlefields* deviates from her earlier works, some of which are described as warm and romantic. In *Battlefields* she demonstrates “a peculiarly Southern absorption with history” according to James Steward, the current director of the Princeton University Art Museum. Of that history, Mann states that “as a southerner you can’t ignore our history any more than a Renaissance painter can ignore the Virgin Mary.” Mann goes to the battlefields looking for answers to questions: “does the earth remember? Do these fields upon which unspeakable carnage occurred, where unknowable numbers of bodies are buried, bear witness in some way? And if they do, with what voice do they speak? Is there a

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numinous presence of death in these now placid battlefields, these places of still time.”

Steward claims that “Mann explores how mass death turns ordinary landscapes into hallowed ground, asking us to look at landscape in new ways and to question how art affects our sense of landscape, of place, of history.”

Man describes her experience photographing with wet collodion glass negatives on the battlefields as “Holy Communion:” “When I was shooting with collodion, I wasn’t just snapping a picture. I was fashioning, with fetishistic ceremony, an object whose ragged black edges gave it the appearance of having been torn from time itself. The whole operation had a contemplative, solemn, even memorial feel to it. There was a gravitas to the act, as if it were a form of Holy Communion.”

This exploration intimately ties into Foote’s investigations on how violence shapes the landscape through how people respond to it. Mann responds to landscapes molded by violence by returning to the battlefields of the South; she follows the footsteps of photographers from the 1800s through her choice of locations and through the photographic process that she uses. Yet, her motivations are different. While Gardner set out to document the deceased soldiers and the ravages of war, and Levene endeavored to replicate the scene to explore how much has changed, Mann wants to “[walk] among the accretion of millions of remains—the bones, lives, souls, hopes, joys and fears that devolved into the earth—walking, in effect on the shifting remains of humanity.”

She wishes to represent the emotions she felt when walking on the bones of the dead and surrounded by their memory. The dead are physical absent but spiritually present.

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183 Steward, “A Recent Museum Acquisition.”
184 Mann, 223.
185 Ibid.
To accomplish these goals, Mann utilizes the antique practices and methods that were exercised by photographers during the Civil War, methods that were cutting-edge for their time but were later abandoned due to their inherent technical difficulties. This process is nostalgic and allows Mann to represent time and emotion in the way she desires. Mike Lim, a photography instructor at the Centre of Creative Photography in Adelaide, Australia, describes this process as follows: “Gardner, or his assistant, would have had ten minutes to coat the glass plate, mount it in the camera, expose it, and develop it—all very fiddly under the best conditions.” For Gardner, these chemicals would have been stored in a wagon that doubled as a mobile darkroom Mann had to have a mobile darkroom with her at all times too, when working with wet collodion material: it must be exposed wet and developed wet, or it does not work. These chemicals (collodion is a mixture of gun cotton, ether, and alcohol) were also highly flammable and dangerous. Mann, who used her vehicle as a mobile dark room, describes her car as “a rolling bomb.”

Lim discusses Mann’s photographs alongside those of Richard Barnes, a photographer from New York who takes wet-plate photographs of Civil War reenactments. Lim argues that not only are these two photographers are connected to the 1860s through their methods, but he claims that this nostalgic process affects how viewers see the photographs as well.

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186 Ibid.
188 Mann, 224.
189 Lim.
There is the nostalgic quality that the process itself brings … but there’s also something like a transference of vision with his pictures. The logic of photographic empathy, which I’m suggesting, goes like this: the present, which is alive and real, can look collodion-like—so the past, which also looks collodion-like, must have been also real and alive to its inhabitants. … If we accept that the present can be made strange, then perhaps by grasping that strangeness the past can be made familiar.  

Lim suggests that by giving the present the feel of the past Mann encourages viewers to “take an imaginative leap.” A leap that will take them into the past and into the construction of memory, even though they are looking at a photograph of Antietam from the 2000s, not 1862. This leap reminds us that the past and the present can be closer together than we might think.

Mann certainly would not disagree with Lim’s ideas of nostalgia. She explains her feelings regarding the wet-plate process, “It was the perfect technique … for the granddaughter of that sentimental but methodical Welshman to use on her travels to the nostalgia-drenched … South.” Lowenthal defines nostalgia as “memory with the pain removed.” Photographs in the 21st century of modern conflicts may be painful due to their temporal and personal proximity, while the immediate pain of the Civil War is removed from the present moment. The soldiers that died may still be mourned, but the memory of them is not as painful as it once was. Even though Mann’s work addresses places that were sites of great pain, loss, and horror, they allow for nostalgia: memories without the pain that comes from first-hand experience. No one that

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190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 Mann, 224.
193 Lowenthal, 4.
encounters Mann’s photographs of Antietam wishes to put them in a drawer and forget about them, not today.

**Rephotographs**

Mann’s photographs are intentionally less carefully composed than Gardner’s; her foregrounds are underexposed, while, in Gardner’s images, the sky is often intentionally overexposed in order to attain the detail in the foregrounds that he desired (Figures 2–3 & 10–11). Steward claims that Mann’s underexposed images and their imperfections give the photographs a spectral quality: “In absence of the most definable landscape elements, these resulting points of lights and surface modifications intimate a kind of spectral presence in the photographs suggestive of the spirits of those who fell on the lands and who may still … inhabit the land for which they died.” These points of light that indicate to Steward a “spectral presence” are the results of “mistakes” that Mann purposefully allows to exist in her prints. Mann’s work is often serendipitous; she embraces “mistakes.” When it comes to the wet-plate process, Mann allows dust to gather on the plates and other imperfections—such as bubbles or drips—to linger in her negatives. The gathered dust results in the points of light and spectral presence to which Steward refers. These imperfections add to the atmosphere of the scenes.

Although Mann intentionally employs the same technique as Gardner, her artistic approach differs from that of Gardner. His photographs are crisp, clear, and “perfect.” His

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194 Steward, “A Recent Museum Acquisition.”
collodion did not drip due to over application, nor did he allow dust to gather. It is clear that he and, by extension, his assistants took great care while developing the negatives in their mobile darkroom despite the time constraints. Streaks, bubbles, and other imperfections are rare in Gardner’s prints. In comparison, Mann’s photographs are not crisp, they are not clear. Grace Glueck, in her review of Mann’s work for The New York Times, describes these blurred images as “painterly.” Mann’s photographs of Antietam are intentionally dark and cloudy, so that the viewer is looking at the scene through a fog. Viewers struggle to make sense of what exactly is depicted. Lim claims that “[t]his adds to the dream-like quality of the pictures, and also suggests … [the] haziness of memory.”

### Absence

If Gardner’s photographs are poetic because they indirectly reference battle, then Mann’s are even more so. Gardner’s photographs can be deciphered without the aid of text. Levene’s function without text as well through the juxtaposition of his photographs with Gardner’s. Mann’s works, however, so indirectly reference Antietam that they cannot be understood without text. Without the titles of Antietam #5 and Antietam #7, a viewer may never learn where these photographs were taken and what they depict. There is no juxtaposition to guide the viewer, no indirect or direct indexical reference to violence in these pictures. There is no indication of the physical traces of the war, not through the depicted landscape. Mann is more concerned about the ephemeral traces that are left behind, the spectral presence and the absence of physical

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197 Lim.
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reminders of war in the landscape. Mann would not argue with her work being called poetic, or as a symbol for the entire battle or the entire war. When she talks about photographing Southern landscapes, she claims: “I tried with my camera, composing silver poems of tone and undertow, the imagery saturated still with the words of authors I read in my teenage years—[William] Faulkner, [Walt] Whitman, [William] Merwin, and [Rainer] Rilke. Many of my (poem-) photographs would sing those words, heady with beauty, ponderous with loss, right back to them.”

These “(poem-) photographs” could be called nostalgic (in Lowenthal's definition) because the pain is removed. Mann uses these dark, peaceful landscapes to reference the great battle that took place. The absence represents a previous pain. It is a way of confronting a loss through what is left behind: the landscapes. However, Antietam is not remembered for its landscape; it is remembered and made famous for the thousands of lives lost and for its role in the outcome of the Civil War as documented in Gardner’s and other’s photographs. Visitors to Gettysburg—and, most likely, by extension, Antietam—today often say that it is difficult to imagine “great violence taking place on such picturesque pastoral ground.” In 1909, when George S. Patton, a student at West Point, visited Gettysburg, he wrote: “The trenches are still easily seen … their grass grown flower strewn slopes agree ill with the bloody purpose for which they were designed and used.” In Mann’s photographs, we see battlefields without bodies. They are peaceful and green like Patton describes. Viewers link Mann’s comparatively

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198 Mann, 208.
199 Monegal, 267.
“innocent” photographs with the painful warfare and death that existed in the past on the same
ground because Mann’s landscapes are heavy with that remembrance, but light on gory details.
They draw a pall over that memory, thereby lessening of the potency of the war over the years.
The absence present at the battlefields and in Mann’s photographs only further this decrease in
the terrifying effect that the Civil War, and photographs of it, had on Holmes's generation in the
1860s.

The war’s potency is diminished now that many of the physical traces have been
removed. The landscape is no longer littered with bodies or bullets. The damage that cannonballs
left behind has long since been repaired, but the unseen traces still remain. These traces captivate
Mann:

As I watched, rising tendrils of ground fog pierced the gloaming, as if the spirits of the
battlefield dead were drifting toward me. Those men, once vehemently real, are now
vanished as utterly as I myself will be, these fields and distant mountains the final vision
for their closing eyes, as they are for mine. The rich body of earth took them in its loamy
embrace, acknowledging with each spring’s luxuriant rebirth their dumb demands for
remembrance.202

In another instance earlier that day, Mann and her dog, Honey, went into the woods to
escape the afternoon heat. She describes the trees as “unconfident,” “spindly,” and “poorly

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202 Mann, 418.
needed.” She is not thinking only of these trees but of those that stood on the field that September day—“These had to be the great-grandbabies of the trees that stood during the Civil War, but still they seemed sickly, as if the hot metal embedded in their ancestors had weakened the saplings as they struggled up through that lead-poisoned soil.”

Mann’s work is nostalgic in a way that Gardner and Levene’s are not. Her work presents the landscape of the battlefield, which viewers today can see, but her works do not "show" the battlefields to us but rather offer them to us in a transformed kind of time-fogged sacrament. By using the wet-plate collodion process, she creates a photographic empathy that makes the past more real. If the landscapes modern viewers see can see for themselves can be made “strange,” and collodion-like, which in turn makes the past more familiar because it too is collodion-like to our eyes in Gardner's images. Visitors see the landscape; they do not see the bodies of soldiers through, the victims are never far from their minds. Mann fills her tranquil landscapes with the spectral presence that she believes is present but remains unseen. The spectral presence may be real, or it may be the specter that haunts the visitor who tries to imagine the battle. The absence of the physical traces of war decreases the potency of the violence of war while increasing the spiritual and emotional impact of sanctified sites like Antietam.

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203 Ibid., 416.
204 Ibid., 417.
CONCLUSION

Gardner, Levene, and Mann’s photographs all represent the Civil War through the traces that it left behind. They refer to violence without depicting it directly. The battlefields the photographers go to “are touchstones for memory. They contain traces of great struggle, commitment, and suffering. … Photographs of such places are gravestones.” These photographs are a synecdoche for the entire battle, and, in some cases, the entire war. Gardner photographed the physical aftermath of the bloody battle(s), while Levene and Mann photographed the aftermath over 100 years later. The land is not free of the battle, and maybe it never will be. Mann says, “death owns these fields entirely.”

Gardner photographed Antietam days after the bloodiest day in American history. His photographs shocked viewers. But, the photographs were ultimately lost for a time before resurfacing in the 1900s. They may have been too painful. Viewers may have preferred the landscapes produced by Brady, the Tyson Brothers, and other photographic studios, or they may have been deterred by the price of Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook. Today, however, instruction of the Civil War relies heavily on his photographs. Gardner’s photographs act as windows into the past; they transport the viewer to the day that the photographs were taken.

Photographic technology of the time prevented Gardner from capturing the furious action of the battle. He was left to make do with what was left behind. He chose to spend much of his time photographing the most poignant trace he could find: deceased soldiers. Active violence is

205 Huddleston, 3.
206 Mann, 416.
absent, but the viewer never thinks that brutality did not occur. The viewer is painfully aware of what occurred during the battle even though they cannot see the action itself.

Levene’s *The Civil War: Then and Now* also provides a window into the past, albeit a different one than Gardner’s. Levene endeavored to create a modern view of historic photographs that are layered with Gardner’s photographs. The tranquil and peaceful fields of Antietam in 2015 are blended with the bloodied fields of 1862. Levene’s photographs are less shocking to viewers today, but they still act as windows into the past. The Antietam of 2015 is the past too, because a photograph is always separated from what it depicts through an ever-increasing gap of time. Levene’s past in 2015 is inseparably linked with the past of Gardner’s photographs. The viewer sees into 2015 then into 1862. Hence, the time gap, is lessened.

The original photographs included in *The Civil War: Then and Now* do not include the bodies of soldiers, but they still depict what the war left behind. Levene’s photographs reveal the reconstruction of Dunker Church on the site of the original. They reveal just how much the landscape has changed. The hills have moved somewhat (could also be an artifact of different lens focal lengths: very likely that contributed to the apparent hill movement too) and the tree line has receded. The cannon and bodies are gone, having been replaced by a memorial obelisk. They display absence; especially when they are blended with Gardner’s photographs.

Mann’s *Battlefields* series was created with an antiquarian wet collodion process dating from 1851. Her photographs act as windows to the past, but they only, or mostly, reveal Antietam in 2000. However, her nostalgic process links her photographs with the much more distant past of 1862. Photographic empathy means that if the present, which is real and immediate, is made to be collodion-like, then the past, which also appears collodion-like must
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have once been as real and as immediate as the present. Her photographs are hazy, which provides the viewer with the feeling that they are looking through time.

Mann photographs to see if Antietam remembers what has passed. She wants to know if the bodies still speak and if death is still present there. Barthes says that death is always present, especially in photographs. But, Mann’s work addresses the great battle while holding pain and loss at a distance. Her photographs are not shocking. They do not horrify some viewers the way that Gardner’s did. Her photographs represent the soldiers found in Gardner’s photographs through the points of light that indicate some spectral presence. According to her photographs, the earth remembers; the dead are spiritually present if only because they are physically absent.

Gardner’s photographs allow the Civil War to seem more real than wars that took place before the advent of photography. Levene and Mann’s photographs, through the process of rephotography, seek to make the war even more real to modern viewers. All the photographs refer to something that is absent, something that is no longer readily represented. Gardner’s photographs reference violence, while Levene’s signal how much has changed, and Mann’s explore the spectral traces that remain on the battlefields. Levene and Mann’s photographs also add the official and unofficial commemorations and the accretions of memories that have been experienced at Antietam since 1862. The photographs all refer to the same war, but they all do so by looking at what is missing and what is unseen. These photographs (or variously clear or hazy windows into the past) make a September day in 1862 more real for modern viewers by depicting the absence of what has been.
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Figure 1: Fenton, Roger. *The Valley of the Shadow of Death, Crimean War (La Vallée de l'ombre de la Mort)*. 1856. Salted paper print from a wet collodion glass negative. 284 x 356 mm. Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France. Available from: ARTstor, http://library.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8CJfdzIoMloylwyfD91T30q&userId=hDJOeJ1g&zoomparams= (accessed October 25, 2016).
Figure 4: Gardner, Alexander. Washington Navy Yard, D.C. Lewis Payne, in sweater, seated and manacled. Glass, wet collodion. April 1965. Selected Civil War photographs, 1861–1865,

Figure 6: Levene, David. *Antietam Dunker Church.* 2015. From: The Guardian, [http://media.guim.co.uk/496acf86e4ea3c35d474854f8b66d8146f0798/0_0_4064_3202/1000.jpg](http://media.guim.co.uk/496acf86e4ea3c35d474854f8b66d8146f0798/0_0_4064_3202/1000.jpg) (accessed October 25, 2016).
Figure 8: Levene, David. *The Guardian’s David Levene wading in the North Anna River*. 2015.

Figure 14: Annan, Thomas. *Main Street, Gorbals, looking South.* 1868–1871. Carbon print. 28.5 x 22.5 cm. George Eastman House, Rochester, New York. http://library.artstor.org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu:8080/library/secure/ViewImages?id=8DVEZjI%2Fjjs0ljZUej54RnoqX3gqdw%3D%3D&userid=hDJOejIg&zoomparams= (accessed November 15, 2016).