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Printing
DS Creative, Sheffield

Programme 2017 and Group Committee..... 2

In this issue.....3

Editorial..... 4

Recent Initiatives.....4

The RPS Collection at the V&A Museum..... 5

This issue includes the final selection of papers from Victorian Photography: A Scottish Perspective*, a symposium held jointly by The Royal Photographic Society's Historical Group and National Museums Scotland on 3 October 2015. The first selection appeared in* The PhotoHistorian *no. 177 (Winter 2016)*

George Washington Wilson: A reappraisal
Roger Taylor..... 7

Scottish Photographers in 19th-century India
John Falconer..... 14

From Antietam to Gettysburg to the *Sketchbook:* How Alexander Gardner created the American Civil War and became the Father of Modern Photojournalism
Mary Panzer..... 23

Scottish Photography: A Canadian perspective
Joan M. Schwartz..... 36

Review: Alexander Gardner: The Western Photographs, 1867–1868
Donald Stewart..... 43

Front cover: **George Washington Wilson, *Self-portrait with stereoscopic viewer*, *c.*1855. Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums.**
Back cover: **John McCosh, *Burmese Beauty*, 1852. National Army Museum.**

From Antietam to Gettysburg to the *Sketchbook*: How Alexander Gardner created the American Civil War and became the Father of Modern Photojournalism[1]

Mary Panzer

Throughout his photographic career, Alexander Gardner acknowledged his role as a creator of images, not simply a passive recorder, as shown when he called himself a 'Photographic Artist'. His friend (and portrait subject), the poet Walt Whitman, concurred, calling Gardner 'a real artist' who was 'also beyond his craft – saw further than his camera – saw more: his pictures are evidence of his endowment.'[2] This essay explores how Alexander Gardner and his colleagues came to create the powerful images of the battlefields of Antietam and Gettysburg which have made the American Civil War an especially vivid chapter of history. I also hope to show how, in the process of learning to present photographs of war to the American public, Gardner, James Gibson and Timothy O'Sullivan, among others, established conventions which photographers have used to represent war ever since.[3]

The two deluxe volumes of *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book* of the War appeared in 1866, 100 albumen prints chosen from nearly 3000 negatives made by Gardner and his firm between 1862 and 1865.[4] Each image was accompanied by an essay providing viewers (and readers) with information not included in the picture. We know from these essays, and from Gardner's terse introduction, that Gardner intended the Sketchbook for posterity, to give significance to places and events that would have otherwise been forgotten. Gardner explained that he designed the book to 'speak for itself', and expressed the hope that the images would achieve an 'enduring interest' as 'mementoes of the fearful struggle', in order to honour 'thousands of brave young men [who] yielded up their lives a willing sacrifice for the cause they had espoused.' Gardner expressed hope that his photographs would be 'accepted by posterity with an undoubting faith', as opposed to verbal accounts '[which] may or may not have the merit of accuracy'. Today we understand that every document inspires doubt of some kind, and all betray a bias. By observing the way Gardner's work changed from the first stereographic images on the fields of Antietam, to the final publication, *The Sketch Book*, which combined large images with text, we can see how Gardner created the war he wanted us to know.

The national significance of Gardner's contribution extends far beyond the representation of one historical conflict, for the Civil War affected generations of survivors and their families and informed American national identity, much as the First World War left its impact on Great Britain.[5] Speaking In 1961, Robert Penn Warren said 'The Civil War is, for the American imagination, the great single event of our history. Without too much wrenching, it may, in fact, be said to be American history.'[6] Penn Warren's remarks still hold, as is evident in the issues simmering just below the surface during the 2016 American Presidential election, including the conflict between regions of North and South, between urban and rural culture, between yearning for past glory and hope for the future, however uncertain, as well as the unresolved relationships among the many races of people which comprise the nation. Gardner's *Sketchbook* used photographs to collect and codify a set of myths that could justify the war, making him an early practitioner of photographic propaganda (though he

could not know this term, which first emerged around the time of the First World War).

To use photography to shape his viewer's vision of the war, Gardner had to understand photographic technology, including the light, lenses, chemicals, negatives and paper needed to make individual photographs, as well as the reproductive technology that translated them into images suitable for mass distribution through magazine and newspaper pages and stereographs. He also had to understand the visual habits of his viewers, how they understood pictures, and what they considered suitable subjects. Most importantly, he had to find a way to force (or enable) his viewers to see and accept something new.

In order to break with sturdy shared assumptions about what makes a picture good (or bad), and what could never be made into a picture (until photography made it possible), Gardner had to be aware of the clash between subject matter and the pictorial conventions artists used to turn those subjects, especially warfare, into works of art.[7] As early as 1857, Lady Elizabeth Eastlake (a friend and portrait subject of the Edinburgh photographers David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson) defined photography as merely an assistant to traditional art, 'the perfect medium' for 'all that requires mere manual correctness, and mere manual slavery, without any employment of the artistic feeling'. And Lady Eastlake firmly tied the new medium to the act of writing of history, for posterity.

> [N]o photographic picture that ever was taken in heaven, on earth, or in the waters underneath the earth of any thing or scene however defective when measured by an artistic scale, is destitute of a special, and what we may call an historic interest...Though the view of a city be deficient in those niceties of reflected lights and harmonious gradations which belong to the facts of which Art takes account, yet the facts of the age and of the hour are there, for we count the lines in that keen perspective of telegraphic wire, and read the characters on that playbill or manifesto, destined to be torn down on the morrow.[8]

However, photography did show how pictures could include such artistically 'defective' subjects such as advertising ephemera, telegraph wires, and wrinkled or misshapen materials that few traditional artists had considered aesthetically valuable or even important enough to represent.

Before Gardner, prints and paintings about war were filled with imagined action and composed with care, giving an orderly appearance to all kinds of suffering. Almost always, a general, emperor, or famous martyr was present. (And even after Gardner's photographs showed these conventions to be false, the old ways of seeing continued to thrive.) When Gardner took his camera onto the battlefield at Antietam, he saw chaotic subjects neither he nor his audiences had ever seen in pictures before, and few aside from soldiers had ever seen at all. For reasons we cannot know, he recognized the importance of preserving what he saw without resorting to the familiar methods that battle artists had used before. And counter to Lady Eastlake's assertion, these photographs necessarily included his own aesthetic response. In the process, Gardner created images that were harsh and ugly, without order or meaning, inspiring in his first audiences the same horror and grief he must have felt as he made the photographs, as well as a 'terrible fascination', as noted by an astute reporter for the *New York Times*.[9] However, as I discuss below, Gardner discovered that the photographs did not succeed, and his battlefield work changed as a result. If Gardner wanted to make pictures which could convey the sights he saw and the feelings they inspired without driving his viewers away, he had to develop a new visual vocabulary. Two years later, when faced with the battlefields at Gettysburg, Gardner found ways to redeem the deaths that had appeared senseless, in part by composing images of disturbing subjects with care. On final publication in the *Sketchbook*, he used captions to emphasise the humanity of the unburied dead. Gardner's captions also directed his viewers to understand that the heroism and conviction of the soldiers, and the survival of the nation, gave transcendent meaning to their sacrifice. In doing so, Gardner forged conventions for war photography that drew equally from what the camera revealed and what his viewers wanted to see, conventions that continue in place today.

Gardner, *Before Antietam*

Alexander Gardner achieved this great feat thanks to growing up in Scotland and living in Glasgow, a city that afforded an education for ordinary working men like Gardner, and that provided access to exhibitions and international publications, as well as regional practitioners of photography who led the world in innovation and technology, all described in glorious detail by Sara Stevenson and Alison Morrison-Low in

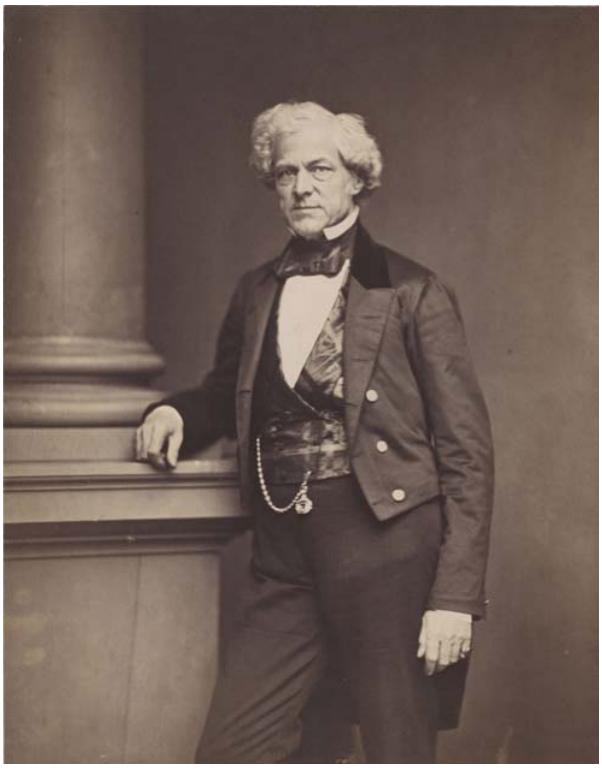

Figure 1. A Brady Imperial. Mathew B. Brady & Studio, *Mr. Walter Architect of the Capitol,(Thomas Ustick Walter)*, c.1857, salted paper print, Harvard University Art Museums.

Scottish Photography: The First Thirty Years (2015). No autobiographical statements from Gardner survive. His life story shows that he was restless, intelligent, and progress-minded.[10] Born in Paisley, Scotland, in 1821, he served seven years as a jeweller's apprentice in Glasgow, where he also studied at the Gorbals Popular Institution for the Diffusion of Science, and joined the Glasgow Athenaeum, where he had access to hundreds of publications from Britain, the United States and Canada. He became a follower of the utopian socialist Robert Owen, and in 1849 joined with two others in Glasgow to provide financial support for a new cooperative community called Clydesdale, in the American state of Iowa; established 1851; its members included Gardner's brother James, and his sister and her husband, but it disbanded about a year later. Alexander Gardner, who had stayed in Glasgow, became publisher of the *Glasgow Sentinel*, where he and his reporters expressed support for social reform, and reported on progress in science and art, including articles on exhibitions and lectures devoted to photography, 'the wonderful art of taking sun pictures'. In 1854, Glasgow became home to Scotland's first photographic society. In 1855, when the British Association for the Advancement of Science met in Glasgow and sponsored a photographic exhibition, the *Glasgow Sentinel* enthusiastically reported that 'Every time almost that we are called upon to inspect the exhibited specimens of this art, we are more struck with it capabilities.'

Early in 1856, Alexander Gardner opened his own photographic studio, but it was not a success, and by the end of the year, he had emigrated to the United States, taking along his wife, children and mother. In America, Gardner prospered. We don't know how he met Mathew Brady, the best known photographer in the United States. The introduction may have come from his brother James, who had emigrated five years earlier and also eventually worked for Brady. By 1858, Brady had put Alexander Gardner in charge of his Washington Gallery, and business flourished.

Gardner brought with him the technology for making photographic negatives on glass, not yet common in the United States but which had come to Edinburgh in late 1849, and was available in Europe after 1851. Because the plates had to remain damp in order to be sensitive to light, it was called the wet-plate process. The glass negatives rendered light and dark with crisp precision, and could be used to print multiple photographs from a single plate. This process improved greatly both on earlier negatives, made of paper, which could not render fine detail; and on the dazzlingly detailed daguerreotypes, which could not be reproduced except by making another daguerreotype or by translating the image into an engraving. Because photographic prints were made by putting glass negatives in direct contact with light-sensitive paper, the only way to make a large photograph was with a large camera capable of holding a large sensitised plate, a technique that required great skill to manage. As a result, soon after Gardner's arrival, Brady's studio could boast about its new Imperial portraits, a grand 20 inches high and 16 inches wide (or 48 x 40cm), roughly the size of a small painting.[11] (Fig. 1)

In addition, Gardner knew how to make stereographs, a form of photography which exploited human binocular vision to make images that gave viewers the illusion of seeing in three dimensions by looking at two nearly identical images through a special device. This phenomenon had been illustrated in 1838 by the inventor Sir Charles Wheatstone, using nearly identical drawings, but became popular only

when his rival, the Scottish photography enthusiast Sir David Brewster, replaced drawings with precise, detail-laden daguerreotypes, and then albumen prints. In photographic form, the illusion was astonishing –human figures, architecture and landscapes all seemed to 'stand out in all the roundness of life.'[12] Moreover, in the form of albumen prints, stereographs could be produced by the thousands. Stereo cameras were also relatively small and easy to transport, making it possible for stereo photographers to bring back stunning views from places no ordinary person could hope to reach. They were collected and incorporated into home life, schools and libraries. Scholars have called stereographs the first modern mass entertainment.[13]

***Figure 2. Benjamin West, Death of General Wolfe on the Plans of Abraham,* 1770, painting, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.**

The American public learned of stereography through a series of essays by the popular writer and physician Oliver Wendell Holmes that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1859 through 1863. In his first description of the illusion, Holmes used an unusually harsh metaphor to explain the way viewing a stereograph made one feel part of the picture. 'The mind feels its way into the very depths of the picture. The scraggy branches of a tree in the foreground run out at us as if they would scratch our eyes out.' He compared painting to stereo photography, and favoured the latter, for the stereograph (like all photographs, as Lady Eastlake described) included ordinary, incidental information that artists discounted or overlooked altogether: 'the painter shows us masses; the stereoscope figure spares us nothing — all must be there, every stick, straw, scratch…'. This attention to the overlooked, combined with the physical sensation of being present at the scene, gave stereographs their force. 'The more evidently accidental their introduction, the more trivial they are in themselves, the more they take hold of the imagination.'[14]

Making Pictures of War

Traditionally, art about war was categorised as part of 'History Painting': story-telling pictures based on mythology, religious subjects, or ancient battles; its subjects wore togas or antique costume.[15] But by the late 18th century, artists sought to represent heroes and events of the present day, and to render their subject realistically. An early example of modern History Painting is Benjamin West's work of 1770, *Death of General Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham*, which memorialised a martyr in the 1759 battle that assured British dominance over France in North America. (Fig. 2) Wolfe expires in the arms of his colleagues, his uniform sparkling white, in a pose that recalls images of Christ. Light shines on him as it does on a saint in an altarpiece. West painted Wolfe and his companions in contemporary military uniforms, and despite the decade and more that separated the painting from the event, the first viewers understood this to be as much journalistic report as work of art. West's painting was much admired in England and America for its blend of tradition and the present, and set the standard for artists of war over the next century. Roughly a century after Wolfe's demise, the Mexican American War (1846–48) became the subject of much popular art in the form of prints, these sturdy visual tropes were still popular, as seen in this depiction of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Ringgold who expires in a position highly similar to that of General Wolfe. (Fig. 3)

Before Gardner arrived at Antietam, a small number of European photographers ventured into battle, but most produced images that obeyed

Figure 3. Jonathan Downs, *The Fall of Major Ringgold,* 1846, engraving, National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian Institution.

expectations.[16] All these images were limited by the capacity of the photographic technology, which required making negatives on the spot and could not record motion, so photographers were confined to still-life subjects such as soldiers posed alone or in groups, battle sites after the armies had gone, damaged architecture or landscapes. In the 1850s, Roger Fenton made landscapes as well as portraits of British generals and soldiers at war with the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean Peninsula, and some images were reproduced as woodcuts in the British illustrated press. Felice Beato followed him, and made far more grisly pictures, not only in the Crimea but also in India and China, where in 1858 he recorded both the ugly aftermath of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and the result of massacres of the Chinese by French and British soldiers during the Second Opium War. However, these images never circulated widely. In 1859, French photographers made records of their soldiers at war with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when the French, under Napoleon III, sided with Victor Emmanuel II in his successful effort to unite the Italian peninsula. One anonymous stereograph from that war's brutal battle of Solferino showed dead bodies abandoned in the cemetery at Melegnano.[17] (Fig. 4) A Boston collector shared it with Oliver Wendell Holmes, who found the depiction of death in stereo especially disturbing. As the viewer does with all stereographs, Holmes felt present at the scene, not a distant onlooker. He observed the awkward array and the excess of information, including the faces of the dead, and here the disorder appeared almost immoral, in harsh violation of all care normally given to human beings, alive or dead. In Holmes's imagination, they both live and die. Holmes himself steps in to mourn them, to provide the consoling grief that could somehow soothe their death.

> Who are those two fair youths lying dead on a heap of dead on the trench's side in the cemetery of Melegnano in that ghastly glass stereograph in our friend Dr. Bigelow's collection? ... Flung together, like sacks of grain, some terribly mutilated, some without marks of injury ... these...figures are not like the shapes put in by artists to fill the blanks in their landscapes but real breathing persons, or forms that have but lately been breathing, not found there by chance but brought there with a purpose, fulfilling some real human errand, or...waiting to be buried... The two youths...lie in the foreground so simple looking, so like boys who were overworked and had been lying down to sleep, that one can hardly see the picture for the tears these two fair striplings bring into the eyes.'[18]

Figure 4. Anonymous, V*ue du Cimitiere de Melegnano — le Lendemain du Combat* [View of the Cemetery at Melegnano, the day after combat], June, 1859, glass stereograph. vintagephotojohnson https://vintagephotosjohnson.com/2012/02/18/combat-photography-during-the-franco-austrian-war-of-1859/

Holmes's second essay on stereography appeared in the *Atlantic* in July 1861. Whether Gardner saw the essay – or the stereograph – we cannot know. However, in my experience, this anonymous stereograph on glass

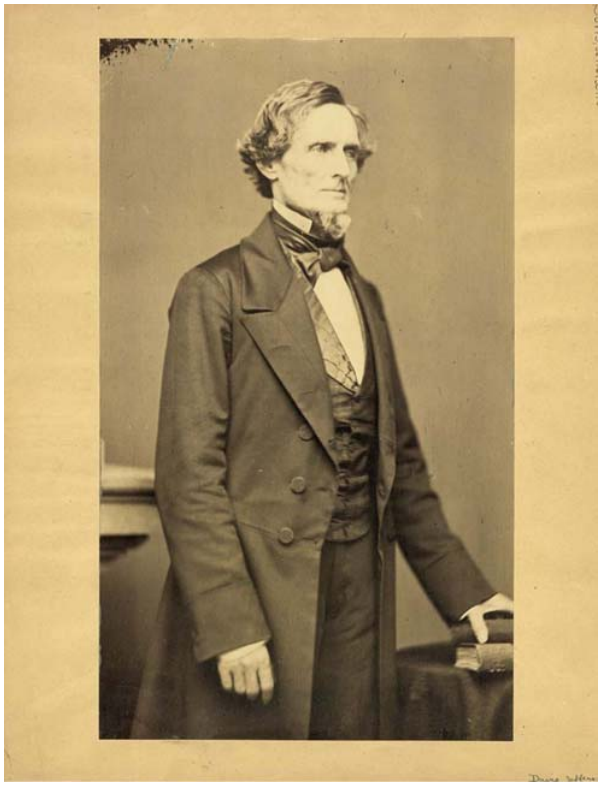

Figure 5. Mathew Brady Studio, *Senator Jefferson Davis*, albumen print, c. 1859, Library of Congress.

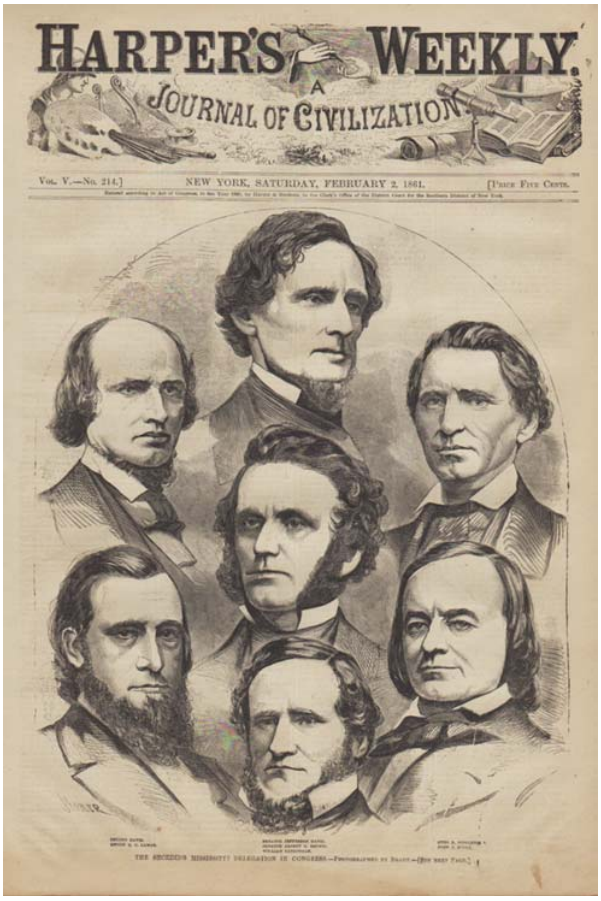

Figure 6. 'The Seceding Mississippi Delegation... from Photographs by M.B. Brady', wood engraving, *Harper's Weekly*, 2 February 1861.

provides the only photographic precedent for the stereographs he would produce just two years later at Antietam. (I expect future scholars will uncover others.)

For a photographer prepared to understand what he saw through stereographs, these simple effects – the viewer's sense of being part of the picture, the overwhelming volume of detail rendered, the mystery of the uncontrolled, anonymous figures that inevitably trespassed into the frame, and the prevalence of anonymous soldiers, rather than a general or well-known martyr, overturned the artistic conventions that artists everywhere had used to represent war before 1860.

According to the photographer A J Russell, who worked for Brady, the first portable darkrooms left Brady's Washington studio in July 1861, carrying cameras, glass for negatives, and chemicals for sensitizing the glass and for developing the plates on the spot immediately after exposure. Printing took place back in the studio. Though Brady later claimed he was impelled by the call of history, the decision to send men out into the field was surely economic, inspired by the overwhelming success of the new portrait format made on glass negatives, called the carte de visite (cdv), which could be easily made by the dozen for individual sitters to share with friends, or by the hundreds by publishers, who sold them in print shops and stationery stores to be collected like stamps or baseball/football cards today. Russell himself linked the new form to 'the beginning of celebrity work in this country'. In the years before war began, political tension made politicians into celebrities. As notable journalists and diplomats and soldiers came to Washington, Brady's studio photographed them all. These old negatives became valuable when publications like *Harper's Weekly* reported on the new Confederate States, whose leaders had all once served in the US Congress.[19] (Figs 5 and 6)

Cartes de visite, made all over the world throughout the 1860s, have unchanging formal characteristics. The subject (or subjects) occupy the middle of the frame, kept motionless by iron posing stands, or props such as a chair, book or table top; behind them a fringed velvet curtain or a stone column mimic conventions of eighteenth and early nineteenth century

Figure 7. Ball & Thomas Photographic Art Gallery Cincinnati, Ohio, *Unknown Union soldier*, *c.*1862, Library of Congress.

grand portraiture. (Fig. 7) Their monotony made them easy to produce. In his memoir, Russell described heading into the field 'for the purpose of making pictures of the officers and subordinates in the army of the Potomac'. Many of these images, as well as original negatives from the Brady Studio, survive in the US National Archives and the Library of Congress. Portraits of individual soldiers closely follow the rules of the carte de visite, with guns supplying support, tent or canon replacing curtain and column, while camp life (including a young African American servant) enhanced the too-predictable genre.[20] (Figs 8 and 9)

The Dead at Antietam

In September 1862, Gardner joined the Army of the Potomac to make photographic copies of maps and other documents.[21] He even photographed a personal cheque – and then arranged to cash it – before

Figure 8. Mathew Brady Studio, *D. W. C. Arnold, private in the Union Army,* 1861, modern digital image from original negative, U.S. National Archives, Identifier: 529535.

revealing the stunt to the clerk and bank president, as a reminder to be on the look out for photographic counterfeiters. As part of the Army, Gardner found himself near Antietam battlefield after the fighting ended on 18 September, leaving over 22,000 dead, wounded or missing. He and his assistant James Gibson travelled to the battlefield where hundreds of bodies of men and horses were still lying on fields and in ditches. They began by making images in stereo, the relatively new and 'unsparing' medium, and quickly wrote back to Washington for more supplies. Over several days, Gardner and his team exposed over 100 negatives. Three-quarters of the images took the form of stereographs, of which twenty showed dead soldiers. Gardner's compositions resisted imposing any order on the corpses; bodies are scattered, piled and sprawled just as he found them. (Figs 10 and 11) Gardner included serene architectural views of important battle sites, such as the Antietam Bridge and the Burnside Bridge. Gardner's picture of the Dunker Church included a heap of bodies in the foreground; some variants include an empty pair of shoes, which scavengers regularly removed from bodies before burial. (Fig. 12)

In New York City, in mid October, Brady exhibited Gardner's images under the bold title, T*he Dead of Antietam* and the *New York Times* reported hushed crowds filling the gallery. But was the exhibition a success? Illustrators such as those for *Harper's Weekly* and Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper* did incorporate Gardner's images into their woodcut illustra-

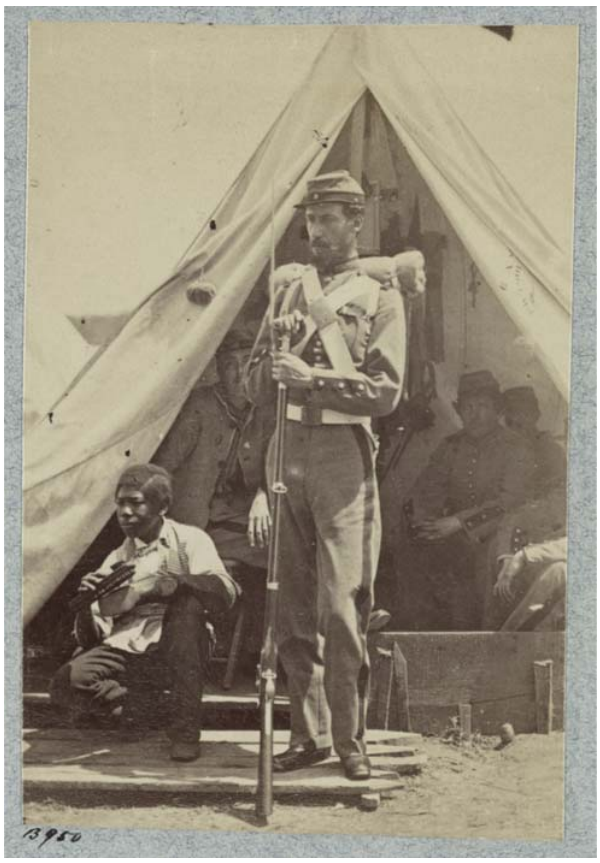

Figure 9. Mathew Brady Studio, *Unidentified Soldier, 7th N.Y. State Militia, Camp Cameron, D.C.,* 1861, Library of Congress.

tions, as seen in this full-page spread published in *Harper's*, 18 October 1862. But by the time an engraver copied the photographic image onto a woodblock for printing, the illustrator's conventions had softened the shocking photographic detail, as if pulling a semi-transparent scrim across a stage, and greatly diminished the overwhelming verisimilitude of the photograph or stereograph. (Fig. 13)

In Boston, the stereo enthusiast Oliver Wendell Holmes published his response to Gardner's work at

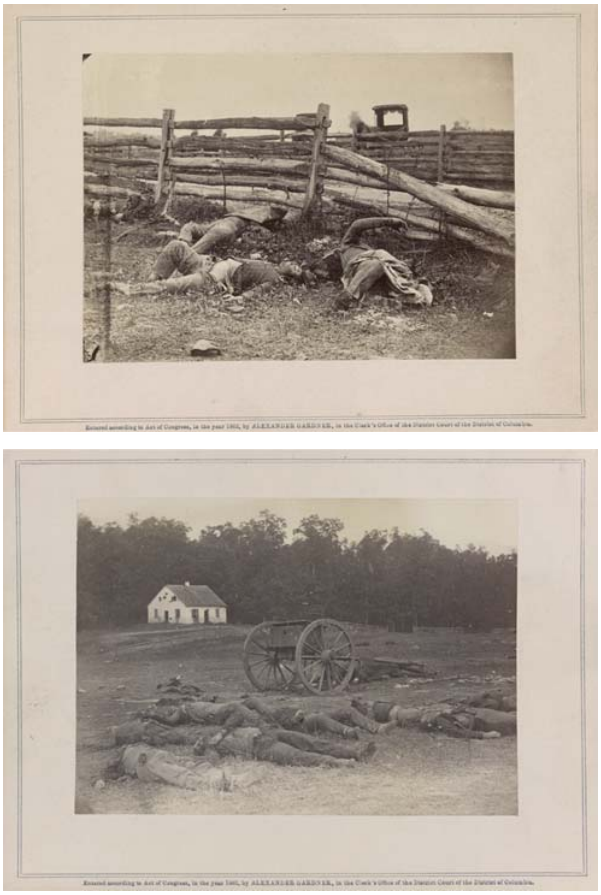

Figure 11 (*top*). Alexander Gardner, *View on Battlefield of Antietam,* 1862, albumen print, Library of Congress. Figure 12 (*above*). Alexander Gardner, *Completely silenced! Dead Confederate artillerymen, as they lay around their battery, after the Battle of Antietam*, 1862, Albumen print, Library of Congress.

Antietam in 1863, roughly a year after the battle. Gardner's stereographs recalled his own miserable trip to Antietam after the battle, where his son's regiment fought, and where he spent days before learning that his son had survived. As Holmes told his *Atlantic* readers,

> Let him who wishes to know what war is, look at this series of illustrations. It was so nearly like visiting the battlefield to look over these views that all the emotions excited by the actual sight of the stained and sordid scene,

Figure 10. Alexander Gardner, *Bodies of Confederate Dead, Gathered for Burial,* 1862, albumen stereograph, Library of Congress

Figure 13 'Scenes on the Battlefield of Antietam — From Photographs by M.B. Brady,' 1862, wood engraving, *Harper's Weekly*, October 1, 1862, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library / University of Georgia Libraries.

> strewed with rags and wrecks came back to us, and we buried them in the recesses of our cabinet, the mutilated remains of the dead they too vividly represented.[22]

Brady, as proprietor of the studio, received all credit for these images, and continued to publish them in stereo and single-picture format throughout the war and after, as part of 'Brady's Album Gallery'. Gardner, who retrieved many of his negatives when he set up his own business in 1863, called his stereographic series 'Photographic Incidents of the War'.

Gardner had chosen the forceful medium of stereography to show his audience 'the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry'.[23] Holmes's horrified reaction may have surprised Gardner. Evidence suggests that the photographer began at once to review his work in order to better convey his intention. Just weeks later, when Gardner and his team returned to Antietam to photograph President Lincoln's visit to General McClellan, his brother James made a new image of the Dunker Church, surrounded by an empty field with two figures in conversation, as well as two other views, all of which later appeared in the *Sketchbook*. (Fig. 14)

Figure 14. James Gardner, *Dunker Church Battle-field of Antietam, MD.,* 1862, albumen print, *Gardner's Sketch Book of the War*, vol. 1, Plate 21, Library of Congress.

Gettysburg and After

Gardner and his team arrived at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, around 5 July 1863, just days after the end of a battle that the Confederates nearly won. Casualties for both sides totalled over 50,000 men, and were evenly divided between North and South – 7,000 deaths, 33,000 wounded, and 10,000 missing. Gardner brought both large format and stereo cameras. His team made roughly 50 battlefield stereo views and 35 large plates; eight of these large views later appeared in the *Sketchbook*. The Gettysburg stereos are as graphic and repulsive as those from Antietam, and of the eight plates devoted to Gettysburg, six depict death. But as is evident in the large plates chosen for the *Sketchbook* three years later, some devoted to the same scenes shot in stereo and published in 1863, Gardner's approach had changed, along with the titles. When collected in the *Sketchbook*, the most awkward corpses are those of horses, lying on the ground around Trossel's House. In *Slaughter Pen, Foot of Round Top*, bodies are nearly concealed in the rock crevices. In four images dead soldiers lie on the ground, set apart, human bodies, not inert trash. *Bodies of Federal Soldiers killed on July 1* became *The Field Where General Reynolds Fell* (Fig. 15), *Dead sharpshooter on the right of the confederate line* became *A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep* (Fig. 16), and *Body of Confederate sharpshooter* became *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* (Fig. 17) . Timothy O'Sullivan composed the large plate *A Harvest of Death* (Fig. 18) with a high horizon, and placed the focus in middle distance, giving foreground and background a soft haze, the location unspecified. A mounted figure appears far away. Only one face is visible, so distorted that it retains humanity but no resemblance to a living person, and poses no danger of being recognized. Gardner also carefully observes that while these are 'rebels', their 'heroism' was matched by their oppo-

Figure 15 (*top, left*). Timothy O'Sullivan, *Field Where General Reynolds Fell, Gettysburg,* July, 1863, albumen print, *Gardner's Sketch Book of the War*, vol. 1, Plate 37, Library of Congress. Figure 16 (*top, right*). Alexander Gardner, *A Sharpshooter's Last Sleep, Gettysburg,* July 1863, albumen print, *Gardner's Sketch Book of the War*, vol. 1, Plate 40, Library of Congress. Figure 17 (*lower, left).* Alexander Gardner, *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter, Gettysburg,* July 1863, albumen print, *Gardner's Sketch Book of the War*, vol. 1, Figure 41, Library of Congress. Figure 18 (*lower, right*). Timothy O'Sullivan, *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg,* July, 1863, albumen print, *Gardner's Sketch Book of the War*, vol. 1, Plate 36, Library of Congress.

nents, and all equally risked dying 'far from home and kindred'. No matching stereograph has been found for this photograph.

As Gardner made plain, the soldiers, whether Rebel or Union, were all Americans, and looked very much the same in death. Current research published by the Library of Congress shows that Gardner stood in nearly the same spot to photograph both *A Harvest of Death* and *The Field where General Reynolds Fell*, and the same bodies appear in both images, though he calls them 'rebels' in the former and 'our own men' in the latter. The same universal quality that applies to corpses can also apply to battlefields. The location that these three images share is in actuality very far from the actual place where Reynolds died. After recounting the events surrounding Reynolds's death, the essay describes the peaceful faces of the soldiers (all hidden from view), inviting viewers to see the bodies resting 'as if friendly hands had prepared them for burial', and concludes with a consoling if ghostly allusion to the breeze that 'swept across the battlefield and waved the hair and gave the bodies such an appearance of life that a spectator could hardy help thinking they were about to rise to continue the fight'.[24]

Modern controversy surrounds *A Sharpshooter's Last Rest*, and *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter*.[25] Did the photographers drag the corpse in 'Last Rest' to the

site of 'Home'? Many historians (including myself) believe they did, though this is a very rare instance of such complete manipulation.

The long caption that accompanies *Home of a Rebel Sharpshooter* contains many clues to the purpose Gardner intended this image to serve. Like a first-person narrator in a novel, the artist is a character in the story he tells. He carefully describes his path to the scene and what he sees there, and he concludes by speculating about the soldier's last thoughts before this 'long, last sleep'. The artist reports that when he returned to witness the consecration of Gettysburg Cemetery, he found the site undisturbed, gun in place, the unburied corpse now a skeleton, one of the thousands of 'missing' soldiers, whose mother 'May yet be patiently watching for [his] return'. Once more, the rebel has been transformed into a universal soldier and son. But the story is as improbable as Wolfe's sparkling uniform on the Fields of Abraham.[26] No gun would ever have survived unclaimed on a battlefield, it was far too valuable; and the composition, unusual for Gardner, is far more elegant than all his other views of battlefield dead. However, this is the message of the *Sketchbook*: we must remember the war; everyone suffered; both sides deserve sympathy; and with a sense of shared purpose and sacrifice, the Nation endures. This narrative, which celebrates forgiveness and lacks any reference to the reason the war was fought – to end slavery – was not unique to Gardner. The characterisation of slavery as simply a 'peculiar institution' at the heart of an otherwise genteel Southern culture prevailed through most histories of the United States, until forcefully challenged by the historian Kenneth M. Stampp in T*he Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (Knopf, 1956).

Figure 19. Luc Delahaye, *Taliban*, chromogenic print, negative 2001, print 2002, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Ralph M. Parsons Fund, Los Angeles, California © Luc Delahaye

Just as durable are the tropes Gardner introduced – the soldier without nationality, the site without specific context, the universal condition of suffering, empathy with the subject inspired by careful captions – which show up in photographic representation of war throughout the 20th century. Larry Burroughs and Don McCullin used these tropes to make sympathetic images of soldiers in Vietnam for *LIFE* magazine stories when controversy over the war was raging. In 2001, journalist Luc Delahaye photographed a dead Taliban soldier in a ditch, and just months later removed it from the magazine page to the gallery wall, turning the death of a terrorist into a beautiful, universal work of art while the world was still shocked by the events of 11 September 2001, an old-fashioned History Painting for the twenty-first century. (Fig. 19) Gardner's *Sketchbook* provides an early, if not the only, source for these conventions. Now clichés, their endurance attests to the power of the new visual strategies that Alexander Gardner devised to find an audience for his photographs of war, and for the message he wanted those pictures to convey.

Gardner's contemporaries were probably more familiar with the images that Mathew Brady's team made a few weeks later after the bodies had gone. Brady went to specific battlefields, and recorded empty vistas, and his images were published in the widely read *Harper's Weekly* in a double page spread. Brady chose an alternative way to use photography to represent sites of battle – empty battlefields, architectural views of local landmarks, no sign of the men who died there – a screen on which the reader could project written accounts of the battle. (Fig. 20) But as new generations returned to the photographic legacy of Civil War photographers, Gardner's work has become the most cited, most reproduced, and most remembered.

Gardner's photographic career continued through the 1860s. He photographed the conspirators who assassinated President Lincoln, as well as their death by hanging. He documented the progress of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, published as *Across the Con-*

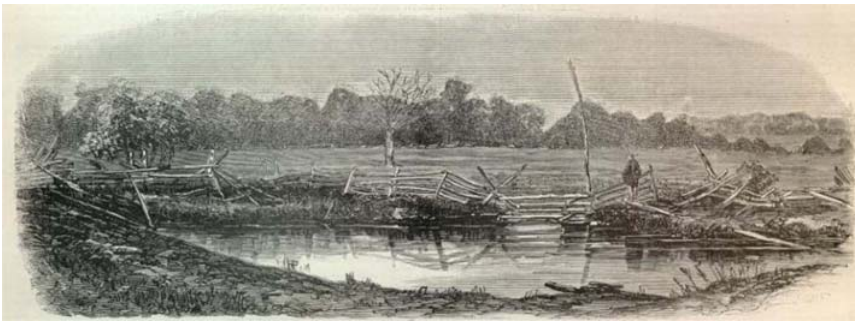

Figure 20. Mathew Brady, *Wheat Field in which General Reynolds was Shot*, 1863, woodcut after original photograph, *Harper's Weekly*, 22 August 1863, pp. 532–533.

tinent on the Kansas Pacific Railroad (1867–68) and recorded the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 between the US Government and American Indian tribes, published as *Scenes in the Indian Country* (1868). In the 1870s, Gardner established an insurance company to guarantee protection for working men and families, and was a philanthropist. He died in Washington in 1882, aged 62. Contemporaries recognised his talent and the magnitude of his contributions. In a published eulogy, his friend Joseph M Wilson said, 'There are always men who seem to be made for the times in which they live; men who are generic forces, who originate thought, create circumstances and stamp their own impress upon the community.'[27]

Alexander Gardner, an immigrant to America, brought with him a fresh sensibility, informed by Utopian politics, Scottish photographic prowess, and a serious commitment to leave the world, and his adoptive nation, a better place than he found it. He quietly used his photographs to convey both fact and feeling. The proof can be seen in the portraits of men he admired, like Lincoln and Walt Whitman, in his photographs of the Civil War, and his views of the American West and the Native American populations that were being displaced by industry and political indifference. Gardner's success lies in the continued strength and immediacy of his images, even among those who never knew the tragic times he represented for posterity.

References and notes

1. This essay began as a talk for the Royal Photographic Society's symposium in honour of an exhibition (and catalogue) curated by A D Morrison-Low, *Photography: A Victorian Sensation*, held at the National Museums of Scotland in October 2015. My thanks go to the colleagues who inspired and welcomed me, Geoff Blackwell, John Falconer, Anne Lyden, A D Morrison-Low, Joan Schwartz, Sara Stevenson, Donald Stewart and Roger Taylor. Bob Zeller's books made this essay possible, as did the pioneering work of Brooks Johnson and Donald McCoo. My readers Beverly Brannan and Andrew Eskind asked essential questions when it counted most.

2. Sara Stevenson and A D Morrison-Low, Scottish *Photography: The First Thirty Years* (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 2015), p.209. Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden: November 1, 1888 – January 20, 1889*, 9 vols, (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1912), Vol 3, pp 234, 346.

3. Bob Zeller, *The Blue and Gray in Black and White: A History of Civil War Photography* (Westport and London: Praeger, 2005, the best single account of photographic practice during the Civil War, and best authority on Alexander Gardner's practice, provided essential information for this essay, including the research on copyright records that allows us to assign authorship to many photographs.

4. According to the short introduction that appears on the unnumbered page following the title page of the *Sketchbook*, volume 1.

5. Throughout this essay, I relied on information about the Civil War and Victorian America's culture of death and mourning set forth by Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

6. Robert Penn Warren, *Legacy of the Civil War*, (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 3.

7. The aesthetic tension between artistic conventions and lived experience in relation to photography and art has been discussed by William M Ivins, Jr. in *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952); and Heinrich Schwarz, 'Art and Photography: Forerunners and Influences', *Magazine of Art* 42 no. 11 (November 1949), reprinted in Heinrich Schwarz, *Art and Photography, Forerunners and Influences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). The best contemporary discussion is in Robin Kelsey, *Archive Style: Photographs and Illustrations for U.S. Surveys, 1850-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

8. Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, 'Photography', Q*uarterly Review*, March 1857; reprinted in Beaumont Newhall, *Essays and*

Images (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980). Anyone familiar with French printmaking in the mid nineteenth century, especially the work of Charles Daumier, will recognise the flaws in Lady Eastlake's argument.

9. 'Brady's Photographs: Pictures of the Dead at Antietam', *New York Times*, 20 October 1862.
10. This account relies on Donald McCoo, 'Gardner and his Contemporaries' and Brooks Johnson, 'A Man and his Era', in *An Enduring Interest: The Photographs of Alexander Gardner*, edited by Brooks Johnson, with contributions by Donald McCoo, William F Stapp, Lloyd Ostendorf, Susan Danly, Paula Richardson Fleming (Michigan: The Chrysler Museum, 1992). In many ways Gardner resembles Holgrave the daguerreotypist in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *House of Seven Gables*.
11. For a more complete history of Mathew Brady's studio, see Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1997).
12. Robert Hunt, *A Manual of Photography*, 4th Edition, revised (Glasgow: Richard Griffin and Company, 1854), p.312.
13. Edward Earle, *Points of View* (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1979); William Culp Darrah, *The World of Stereographs* (Gettysburg, Pa: W C Darrah, c. 1977).
14. Reprinted in Oliver Wendell Holmes, 'The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,' S*oundings From the Atlantic* (Boston, MA: Ticknor & Fields, 1864), p.142.
15. Sir Joshua Reynolds defined History Painting in Discourse IV, delivered before the Royal Academy of Arts, 10 December 1771; the complete *Discourses* are reprinted widely.
16. This account follows William S Johnson, 'Combat Photography During the Franco-Austrian War of 1859'. VintagePhotosJohnson https://vintagephotosjohnson.com/tag/battle-of-solferino/
17. Seeing these bodies in 1859 led the Swiss businessman Henri Dunant to write a memoir which inspired the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863, and the following year to convene the first of a series of four international treaties, known as the Geneva Conventions, that established standards of conduct during war that still stand today.
18. Holmes, 'Sun Painting and Sun Sculpture', *Soundings*, p.218.
19. George Alfred Townsend, 'Still Taking Pictures: Brady the Grand Old Man of American Photography, Hard at Work at Sixty-Seven', *New York World*, 12 April 1891; http://civilwar.picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/presentations-about-visual-media/photo-graphy/george_alfred_townsend_still_taking_pictures_new_york_world_1891/i/8/; A J Russell, 'Photographic Reminiscences of the Late War Part 2,' *Anthony's Photographic Bulletin* 13, (July 1882), p.311.
20. *Ibid*.
21. This discussion follows Bob Zeller, *The Blue and Grey in Black and White*. Anecdote about the cheque comes from Russell, 'Reminiscences', cited by Brooks Johnson.
22. Holmes, 'Doings of the Sunbeam', *Soundings*, p.266–67.
23. *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook*, 'A Harvest of Death', opposite Plate 36.
24. http://www.loc.gov/collections/static/civil-war-glass-negatives/articles-and-essays/does-the-camera-ever-lie/the-case-of-confused-identity.html
25. See especially the work of William A Frassanito, beginning with *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time* (New York: Scribner, 1975).
26. According to 'The Tragedy of Devil's Den', *Confederate Veteran*, vol 33 (1925), p. 20 – affixed to a photographic print of the image in the Library of Congress – the young man, Andrew Johnston Hoge, was recognized by his cousin, former Governor Hoge Tyler,when he saw the image in print.
27. From Joseph M Wilson, 'A Eulogy on the Life and Character of Alexander Gardner, January 19, 1883', p. 5. A recent exhibition and catalogue explore Gardner's later work: Jane L Aspinwall, *Alexander Gardner: The Western Photographs, 1867–1868* (Kansas City: Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2015.)

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